

ONE HUNDRED BEST SERMONS FOR SPECIAL DAYS AND OCCASIONS

WITH ACCOMPANYING CYCLOPEDIA OF
CHOICE ILLUSTRATIONS

CHRISTMAS, OLD YEAR DAY, WATCH-NIGHT, NEW
YEAR, EPIPHANY, VOCATION DAY, YOUNG PEOPLE'S
SERVICE, LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY, WASHINGTON'S
BIRTHDAY, LENTEN SEASON, PALM SUNDAY, GOOD
FRIDAY, COMMUNION SUNDAY, EASTER, ARBOR
DAY, ASCENSION DAY, WHITSUNDAY, TRINITY
SUNDAY, MOTHER'S DAY, MEMORIAL DAY, CHILD-
REN'S DAY, COMMENCEMENT, INDEPENDENCE DAY,
AGED PEOPLE'S SERVICE, THE SABBATH, LABOR
DAY, RALLY DAY, ELECTION DAY, THANKSGIVING
DAY, UNIVERSAL BIBLE SUNDAY, FOREFATHERS'
DAY, CORNER-STONE LAYING, CHURCH DEDICATION
SERVICE, DEDICATION OF CHURCH BELLS, SERVICES
FOR LEADING FRATERNITIES, ETC.

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HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

NEW YORK AND LONDON

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**ONE HUNDRED BEST SERMONS
FOR SPECIAL DAYS AND OCCASIONS. VII**

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

burden down!" The Lord will carry both it and you! "I will give thee rest"; not by the absence of warfare, but by the happy assurance of victory; not by the absence of the hill, but by the absence of the spirit of fainting. "I will give thee rest."

And so I commend you, and all who are near to you, to the kindly care and fellowship of this great Companion. May you each and all have a happy new year, spent, every moment of it, in the light of his most gracious presence.

GRANDLY BEGIN: NEW YEAR SERMON

By Rev. James I. Vance, D. D.

Text: "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Col. 3:2.

The old year is behind us. Its record is made. We cannot change it. Doubtless there is much in it we would like to change, some things we have done that we are ashamed of, some left undone which we regret, but the page is turned, the year is gone, and its record stands for good or bad, for weal or woe, to shame or blame or praise us, as the case may be. The new year is before us. Its dawn has just come up out of the radiant east. Its record is to be made. It is within our power to determine what it shall be. We are at the top line of the new page. What sort of a start shall we make? Here is my message. Grandly begin!

I. A straight start. Start straight. That much, at least, we can do, and that much we must do if we are ever to do better than we have been doing, and every man ought to do better than he has been doing, even if he has been doing his best. The kings of the world in every line of business are those who are everlastingly trying to beat their best. This is what I mean by my subject. Start out on the new year, not to do well enough, or as well as others, but to beat your best. Grandly begin!

I am familiar with the uncomplimentary remarks sometimes made about new year resolutions. Some say they do not amount to much—that they are soon broken, and that those who break them are like the bedeviled wretch in Scripture concerning whom it was said, "The last state of that man was worse than the first." Somebody will doubtless make fun of you, but critics of things that are right are not to be taken too seriously. Such critics are usually more heavily stocked with noise than sense.

There is a bigger and better crowd cheering a new year's resolution. "We are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses." Therefore, start right. I hail the new year's resolve. Some have been saved that way. Many have failed. But if just one has kept on, nerved to nobler things by the high resolve made at the year's threshold, the custom is redeemed.

It is a great thing to have an hour when the best stirs you, to come to a summit on life's long, rough road, when you catch sight of a landscape or hear a snatch of a song or a bar of music, or see a look in the face of a friend, that sends all the good in your surging to the front until you say: "I will be a man! I will shake off shabby habits, crucify lusts, cleanse my heart of filth, snap the shackles, and be free." That is where you were at your best. I am sorry for the man who never had such an hour, who never climbs a peak, who never feels an ecstasy, who never has a thrill, who never scents the fragrance blowing in from flowers which blossom in Elysian fields, who is always mediocre, and who trudges on with his head down, his pulses dull and his senses stale.

What if the man who grandly begins does lamely finish? What if he does invite that reproach of going up like a rocket and coming down like a stick? His heart was not wrong. No stagger in the direction of anything right is ever lost! No good deed was ever wasted. No high motive was ever penalized. The recording angel writes down not only every good deed, but also every noble impulse, high thought, brave resolve, and it is all on the credit side. Nothing good or beautiful ever perishes. The fragrance of every flower that ever bloomed, the glint of every sunbeam that ever gilded the day with gold, the sanctity of every sob of pity that ever broke over a desolate heart, the challenge of every song of courage that ever saluted a battle line, the breath of every prayer that ever stormed Heaven, is somewhere, for the good never dies. Therefore, grandly begin!

II. A lame finish. But it is not necessary to make a lame finish. The man who argues that a fair start must have a foul finish uses logic that is all to the bad. The truth is, a grand beginning contributes to a grand continuing. After one starts right, it is easier to keep going right. A car gathers momentum as it moves, so that less power is needed to keep going than was required to start. If you know anything about automobiles you

know that most cars have to be started in low gear. After the start is made, you can change to a speed where less power is needed to move the car, because a car in motion helps to move itself. It is the same with life. A life in motion helps itself. If the start is wrong, it is easier to go wrong; if right, it is easier to go right. Therefore, a straight start does not involve a lame finish.

Besides, help is to be had. There are divine resources for the man who tries to live right. The God who starts us stays with us. The God who saves us is able to keep us saved. A soul in action is not deserted by the Saviour. Therefore, move out. God means us to be steadily and permanently what we are in our best moods, not what we are at the worst, at low tide, when we are surly and sour and dull and heedless, but what we are there on the summit, where we see green fields and hear the song of birds, and look into the faces of friends, and feel Heaven astir in the air about us. The man you are as you grandly begin is the man God wants you to be always.

And so it is possible to keep step right through the year with the start. Grandly begin with the determination of grandly continuing. Entertain no mental reservation of reforming for a fortnight. Burn the bridges behind you. "Whosoever putteth his hand to the plough and looketh back is not fit for the Kingdom of Heaven." These back-lookers are in a bad business. They soon become backsliders. Start right, and keep right on, for you can.

III. The big motive. At the same time, let us not forget that the motive is the big thing in life. It is not what you do, but why you do it, that counts. A girl who occupies a hall bedroom and works for five dollars a week, but has humanity in her heart and in her prayers, and who, out of her meager earnings gives something to send the Gospel around the world, is living a bigger life than the millionaire who hardens himself against the need about him, and who squanders his princely gains in the empty pursuit of selfish pleasures. The girl in the hall room is a cosmopolitan, and the man with the clutch of mammon at his heart is a mere provincial. It is not how long you live, but how you live, that counts.

It is not how high you climb, but how hard you struggle. People travel the road of life with different handicaps must be

taken into account in estimating one's record. God certainly takes it into account. He says: "To him that overcometh," not "To him that maketh a mile a minute, that crosseth a goal first, that maketh a new speed record," but "To him that overcometh, is the crown."

It is not how many victories you win, but how hard, how courageously, how desperately, you fight your battles. Yonder on the battlefield are dead soldiers. The colors they followed wavered and went back. The world calls it defeat. But there is no such a thing as defeat for a soldier whose courage is steadfast, whose honor is white, and who dies fighting for his cause.

It is not what success you have gained in life, how much money you have made, how many honors you have captured, but have you played the game clean? Since motive is the big thing,

"Grandly begin, though thou hast time,
For but a line, be that sublime,
Not failure, but low aim, is crime."

IV. Secret of a straight start. The text gives us the secret of a grand start. "Set your affection on things above." Aim high. Have a lofty ambition. Cherish noble aspirations. Think big thoughts. Set your heart on great treasures, for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. People follow their hearts. They become their thoughts. What one is thinking about, he is getting to be. What he is loving, he is going after. If one is to live a clean life, he must think clean thoughts. If he is to climb high, he must set his affection on things above.

My text takes it for granted that one can control his mind and heart. He is told to set his affections himself, not to beg God to do it for him, not to seek a mourner's bench and request his brothers and sisters to pray that his affections may be set. It is something he can do for himself. You can allow yourself to be interested in good or bad, fair or foul, in people who lift you up or drag you down. You have will power. You can control your optic nerve. You can allow your eyes to gaze on sights which fan into flame the fires of hell that slumber in your flesh, or on visions that take you into the company of the angels. "It's your game," says a card that came to my desk this Christmas; "Play it like a gentleman."

“Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.” Which shall it be, above or on the earth? Where are your interests? What are you thinking about? Where are your pleasures located—in your brains or heels, in your head or feet? Where you locate your affection you take up your residence, and where you reside powerfully affects what you become. To-day for a grand beginning, set your affection on things above.

If you have a habit that is dragging you down to hell, a grand beginning means breaking with that habit. Are you the victim of a drug, an illicit love, drink, a passion for cards, of impurity, profanity, of anything that has a pull downward? The thing to do is to let go. You imagine the habit has hold of you. How did it ever get hold of you? You took hold of it. The trouble is, you have been holding on so long that your fingers have stiffened, your hand is cramped. But now let go, even if you have to break a bone to loosen your grip and be emancipated.

Are you playing with fire? Many are. They like the game. As yet there are no confirmed habits. They are merely tasting forbidden sweets to vary life's dull monotony and get some new sensations. They are gambling a bit, drinking a bit, swearing a bit, seeing the part of the town that is up when all decent-living folks are abed—just nibbling at the naughty side of life. Poor little fools! Don't they know the devil's bait when they see it? This is the way all ruin started. There is not a soul in hell but began by just playing with fire. A grand beginning means to quit.

Are you trifling with your life work, allowing pleasure to interfere shirking every task that calls for toil, trying to win by playing the game of bluff, depending on somebody's pull to get you over the grade, shrinking from sacrifice, unwilling to pay the price? A grand beginning means taking off your coat and rolling up your sleeves and getting down on your marrowbones.

Are you trifling with God, putting him off? Has he startled you with some incident in the experience of a friend or neighbor until you said, “I must change my course,” but you did not change? Has some experience come into your own life that made you stop and think, something that for a day clipped your wings, lamed you, reduced your income, singed you with the flames, until you said: “I must change my life,” but you did

not change? You are playing with forked lightning. Suddenly retribution will come, and will not tarry. A grand beginning for you is to set your affection on Jesus Christ, to accept him and confess him as your Saviour. He is the beginning and the ending, and it is those who start in him that run well, and win the crown.

WHEN THE DAYS TALKED TOGETHER

(New Year Sermon to Children)

By Rev. George N. Edwards

Text: "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge." Ps. 19: 2.

Did you ever hear of the days talking together? They do. You will find a place in the Bible where it mentions it. A line of the nineteenth Psalm says, "Day unto day uttereth speech." But you never heard them talk? I don't wonder for "their voice is not heard." They use a kind of sign language. But you can hear murmurings of the seconds, and the whisperings of the minutes, and now and then the hours speak real loud. Listen. Tick-tock, tick-tock four times a second.

A clock is a kind of animated sign-post to tell us where To-day is. But Yesterday is hard to find though you can see his tracks everywhere. To-morrow is never seen, but is said to live just over the hills to the westward. People have always been going that way to meet him. I'll tell you a secret. To-morrow will never be found because he has not been born yet. To-morrow seems to have a queer way of reaching people's hearts. They are always saving things for him, for they feel sure he will come. They are always planning for To-morrow whom they never see, and leaving a great many things for To-morrow which ought to be done To-day.

There is one time in the year when Yesterday, To-day and To-morrow all get together for a little talk. It is on New Year's Eve, just about the time when the clock strikes twelve; and some time when your five senses are all asleep you can hear and see them with your sixth sense? Did you know that you had a sixth sense? It is with this that you see things invisible, like goodness and love in other people or in God.