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Could I Retrace My Life . . .

By General William Booth

A certain celebrated authoress is reported to have said that were she called upon to live her life again, she would commence by hanging herself!

Now were the privilege of repeating my early career allotted me, I am quite sure that I should not be tempted to inaugurate it after that fashion. It is true I have had my share of sorrow—perhaps more than ordinarily falls to the lot of man; but after all, I have not been so disappointed with my life's happenings, or so maddened by its failures, as to be tempted to take the effective method of preventing their recurrences by bringing my existence to a violent conclusion.

No, that is certainly not the course I should adopt; but I will tell you what I should do, could I go back once more to the beginning of my career and be assured that a long spell of vigorous life was before me. I should offer my life up, without a moment's hesitation, on the altar of redeeming love. I should place myself—spirit, soul, and body—at the feet of Jesus Christ, ready and willing literally to live, suffer, fight, and die for Him.

But did I not do this many years ago? Certainly I did! When a lad of only fifteen years of age, I made this offering so far as my limited knowledge would allow. But if found in the circumstances I have imagined—with all the light that has, since those days, come into my soul through experience, observation and instruction—I should make the same offering, only far more wholeheartedly than I did then. And having made the offering, I should at once proceed to act in harmony with my consecration, and that in the most thorough manner possible.

I should say, "Oh, my God, I am Thy son, Thy servant, Thy soldier. Henceforth let me do nothing and allow nothing in my heart or in my life but what is calculated to promote Thy interests on earth, the purpose for which I have been entrusted with my being. And then let me come up and reign with Thee forever and forever." In pursuance of that object, I should resolve to be something that would count in the strife between good and evil raging around me. No silly wasting of time, or strength, or faculties, or goods, or opportunities would satisfy me. All would be consecrated, all baptized with holy power, all made truly divine.

To further my design, I should do many things. I should be a man of spiritual skill—I should learn how best to fight the enemies of God and man, bring them in submission, transform them to good soldiers of Jesus Christ, unite them for the most effective action, and lead them forth to combat with the foe. By night and by day I should read, inquire, plan, scheme, and experiment, until I could do this work, either as leader or as a follower, as Providence should decide, up to the full level of my highest natural powers.

I should be a man of sacrifice—I would accept a life

of poverty, privation, and toil, as being my heavenly Father's way for me. And I should struggle until I attained that state of mind which would enable me to endure hardship without a murmur or complaint.

I should be a man of prayer—I should accustom myself to holding intercourse with heaven, until my spirit was ever communing with God, interceding for man, and crying for the Holy Ghost—that is, until I prayed "without ceasing." Oh, when I look back over the course I have traveled through the world, my comrades, what a precious, invaluable privilege of prayer has been mine! Were I, while I write this, again standing on the threshold of my earthly life, whether long or short, I should at once start to pray. Indeed, I should pray in public and in private; yes, everywhere I should pray, until my every thought was a prayer.

I should be a man of holiness—I should rejoice in being known, revered, and feared everywhere for truth, honor, purity, and generosity—a truly righteous man. One of my officers was telling me the other day that such was the effect produced upon his mind by his first reading of the Gospels that he could not bring himself to believe that the apostles were natural men. He thought they must be spirits sent down from heaven, who had assumed a human form in order to show the poor, blind world what real religion was. Oh, if I were young again, with the prospect of a long life before me, I should surely say, "Oh, my God, my God, let me indeed and of truth be a holy man, that I may make men know what the kingdom of heaven really is!"

I should be a man of compassion for human suffering—I should cultivate the spirit of sympathy with human distress wherever and whenever I might find men and women and children in sorrow, no matter whether their distress had been brought about by their own evil conduct or the evil conduct of others, or by some mischance for which they were not responsible.

I should be a man of faith. In reply to our Lord's question, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" I should say, "Yes, Lord, if in no other heart, Thou shalt find the precious principle reigning and ruling in mine."

To that end I should cultivate the holy habit of trusting God. In season and out of season I should practice believing.

Under the most difficult conditions that could possibly befall me, I should accustom myself to a bold reliance on the protection and provision and direction of my loving Lord.

In every hour and in every place I should believe all the time that my Father's arms were around me, that my Saviour's wings were over me, that the Spirit's light was guiding me, and that all was going well and could

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