

# GREAT RESOLUTIONS

Program Five

## The Little Known Burden of D. L. Moody

The name of D. L. Moody is almost synonymous with gospel preaching, but what was the other great burden of our brother D. L. Moody? This is the question we will consider today on this program of Great Resolutions.

In Ephesians 4:11 we learn that the Lord Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers. No doubt, Moody was a great gift given by the Lord to the church. This simple man from the country, without much education or theological training, became one of the greatest evangelists in the history of the church. His life was focused on preaching the gospel of Christ. He knew that the world could not be changed by social work or other means, but only by the gospel of Christ and by the Lord's return and the establishing His kingdom on the earth. This conviction led him to many cities and nations as he travelled nearly one million miles to reach 100 million people with the gospel.

But, as we shall see, Moody was not only burdened to reach the lost. He was also burdened to awaken the slumbering church. Moody hoped and labored to the end of his life that many believers would rise up to do the same work of evangelism that he himself was engaged in. This is in line with the purpose of the Lord in giving gifts to the church. In Ephesians we read that the gifts were given "for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ (4:12)." Although Moody may not have clearly seen the vision on the Lord's heart to build up the church as the Body of Christ, he did see the need for all the members to be perfected in order to do the work of ministry.

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### His Beginning

Moody may have been impressed from the time of his salvation that all believers can and must preach the gospel. Indeed, the very man who brought him to the Lord was not that gifted or bold. But he had had a burden from the Lord and was faithful to that burden!

As a young man at the age of 18, Moody was just keeping a promise to his uncle to attend church after having recently left home to begin a life on his own in the city of Boston. He was religious, but ignorant of the Bible and not regenerated. It was his Bible-class teacher who took an interest in Moody. Mr. Edward Kimball was not satisfied just fulfilling his teacher's duty. Kimball took time to know the young men in his class. He became acquainted with their occupations and aims and visited them during the week. One day Kimball resolved he would go to the shoe store where Moody worked and speak to him about Christ. His recollection is as follows (Moody 39:.

*I determined to speak to him about Christ and his soul, and started down to Holton's shoe store. When I was nearly there I began to wonder whether I ought to go in just then during business hours. I thought that possibly my call might embarrass the boy, and that when I went away the other clerks would ask who I was, and taunt him with my efforts in trying to make him a good boy. In the meantime I had passed the store, and, discovering this, I determined to make a dash for it and have it over at once. I found Moody in the back part of the building wrapping up shoes. I went up to him at once, and putting my hand on his shoulder, I made what I afterwards felt was a very weak plea for Christ. I don't know just what words I used, nor could Mr. Moody tell. I simply told him of Christ's love for him, and the love Christ*

wanted in return. That was all there was. It seemed the young man was just ready for the light that then broke upon him, and there, in the back of that store in Boston, he gave himself and his life to Christ.

Many years afterward, Moody himself told the story of that day:

*When I was in Boston, I used to attend a Sunday school class, and one day I recollect my teacher came around behind the counter of the shop I was at work in, and put his hand upon my shoulder, and talked to me about Christ and my soul. I had not felt that I had a soul till then. I said to myself, this is a very strange thing. Here is a man, who never saw me till lately, and he is weeping over my sins, and I never shed a tear about them. But I understand it now, and know what it is to have a passion for men's souls and weep over their sins. I don't remember what he said, but I can feel the power of that man's hand on my shoulder tonight. It was not long after that I was brought into the kingdom of God.*

This story is not complete without mentioning that 17 years later Moody was instrumental in leading Mr. Kimbal's son, Henry, to salvation.

From the time Moody received Christ, his life greatly changed. He also began to taste the joy of serving the Lord.

One memorable day Moody went with his ailing teacher from house to house and saw one after another get saved. From that time, he testified that, "God kindled a fire in my soul that has never gone out." He said, "Let me die rather than lose this blessing." Moody truly had the spirit of the gospel. He took a personal and vital interest in others and had a heart for all men to be saved. He said, "No place is too bad, no class is too hard to be despaired of."

Moody knew he needed training. He learned the Bible mainly by reading it. Initially, in an early Sunday School class, he looked in the Old Testament for a verse in the book of John. He also learned to speak mainly by practicing. He would walk about town and

speak to men, women, and children. Later, after moving to Chicago, he was very active in going to the streets to find people to come and hear the gospel. He started his own Bible class with a group of boys



and young men he rounded up off the streets. Some people referred to this motley group as "Moody's bodyguard." Moody picked up a burden for young people, much the same as had his spiritual father, Edward Kimball.

### **Satan's Strategy**

Moody began to encounter the enemy's strategy – to get him to stop speaking. Satan fights against the speaking of the Lord's children, knowing that their witness will bring others to the saving knowledge of Christ. This is the reason that many throughout the centuries have been censured, imprisoned, or banned from speaking for Christ. Moody encountered criticism, scoffing and insults.

Because of his lack of education, Moody was a bit of a rough speaker. On one of his first attempts to preach the gospel in public, he was advised that he could best serve God by keeping still. He was also told, "You make too many mistakes in grammar." Moody replied, "Look here, friend, you've got grammar enough – what are you doing with it for the Master?"

He recognized his own inabilities, and thanked his critics for pointing out his shortcomings, but asked them to pray for him. He was not about to stop his announcing of Christ! He continued to proclaim his three R's; that man was Ruined by the fall, was Redeemed by the blood of Christ, and could be Regenerated by the Spirit.

### **Simple Approach and Vow**

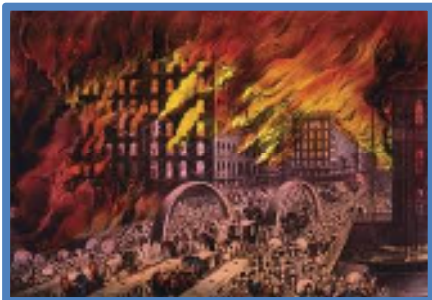
In presenting the gospel, Moody would simply ask, "Are you a Christian?" Sometimes he would be told to mind his own business – his reply was that this *was* his business.

Moody made a vow to never let a day pass without speaking to at least one person about his or her salvation. One day after he went to bed, he remembered he had not yet shared the gospel with anyone that day. He quickly dressed and went out again to look for someone to speak to. It was late at night, and the streets were empty. The only person he saw was a policeman. Moody told him, "You must believe in the Lord." The policeman was in a bad mood and scolded him saying, "Do you not have something better to do than persuade me to believe in Jesus in the middle of the night?" Moody went home, but a few days later he received a visit by the same policeman – who now wanted to be saved.

### Now is the Time

As believers we don't always sense the urgency inherent in the gospel. Yet the Lord told us that we should not say that there are yet four months and then the harvest comes. He said, Behold, I tell you, Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are already white for harvest (John 4:35). Moody learned this lesson through great suffering. While preaching the gospel in Chicago in 1871 he shared regarding the examination of Jesus before his crucifixion, and of Pilate's question to the people, "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" Moody felt this was a crucial question for people to consider. He asked his hearers to take the question home and to return the next week with their answer. Sadly, Moody was never to see that congregation again, for many were lost that night in the great Chicago fire. Moody asked God to forgive him, and from that time on, determined to bring people to a decision on the spot from then on. He realized that "now is the well-acceptable time, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).

Moody would not get caught up in



theological arguments concerning the value of preaching the gospel. Some argued that it was all a matter of God's sovereign choosing, and others said it was of man's responsibility. One day a confused student came to Moody saying, "I dare not to go out to get people saved because I am afraid that someone may be saved whom God did not choose." Moody answered, "On the outside lintel above the gate into heaven it is written, 'Whosoever will may come,' but on the inside it says, 'Chosen before the foundation of the world.'" Moody felt that since we do not know who is chosen, we must simply do our duty to preach the gospel to all.

### His Burden

In the book of Romans Paul describes the need for the believers to cooperate in the preaching of the gospel – *How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without one who preaches? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who announce glad tidings of good things (Rom. 10:14-15)!* Calling upon the Lord requires believing in Him, believing in Him requires the hearing of Him, and the hearing of Him requires the preaching of the gospel. If the gospel is to be preached, someone must be sent by God.

Moody touched this burden in his own life and went forth to many people and places to announce Christ. He realized that faith comes by hearing the Word of Christ (10:17). If others are to believe and call upon the Lord to be saved, then we must go forth to announce. Moody was aware of his inadequacies, but did not let that keep him from sharing the gospel: "I feel that Jesus Christ ought to have a far better representative than I am. But I have lived long enough to discover that there is nothing perfect in this world. If you are to wait till you find a perfect preacher, or perfect meetings, I am afraid you will have to wait till the millennium arrives." He took his responsibility before God seriously saying, "I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do

everything, but I can do something. And that which I can do, by the grace of God, I will do.”

But Moody also realized that the harvest was great and that there was an urgent need to encourage and equip others to rise up to preach the gospel. Some feel it was Moody who truly incited and enabled thousands of others to be perfected to some



degree in the preaching of the gospel. As one biographer noted, “Moody played a significant role in mobilizing unnamed thousands to do personal work.” (Dorsett 219)

Moody awakened an enormous army to be useful for rescuing, healing, and nurturing. He trained workers to help in his crusades. He endeavored to employ all saying, “Every man can do something. If you can’t speak English – pass out invitations.” He was bold to charge all, and could not take it when faultfinding went on among the believers. He said, “Get those to say what they think ought to be done, and then ask them if they are doing it.” He said he would rather wake up the slumbering church than the slumbering world. Concerning his role in mobilizing the saints, he felt that “the man who does the most good in the world is not the man who works himself, but the man who sets others to work.” Again, this is in line with Paul’s writing concerning the gifts in Ephesians chapter four. The gifts were given not just to function in their particular area of learning and skill, but were to perfect many others to do the same work as they. Moody was not satisfied with just preaching the gospel himself, he wanted many others to rise up to do the same. He said, “You have had enough pulpit preaching. What we want now is hand to hand work, personal effort, individuals going to people to press on them the claims of Christ.” He charged believers to

put away all the excuses saying that they were just the cradle used by Satan to rock men off to sleep. He pleaded with other believers to be faithful to lead at least one person to Christ each year.

### **Confirmation of Moody’s Burden**

Moody’s burden was only partially realized for a time. Through the past centuries millions of people have been brought to Christ, but not that many have been brought into function. The matter of preaching the gospel has become an optional matter with too many. It has been easy to depend on large gospel meetings or crusades, and at the same time remain dormant. Due to this lack of a gospel-preaching life, many congregations dwindle away to nothing. They become like old people without children.

Watchman Nee encouraged believers that as soon as they believe in the Lord, they should make a resolution before the Lord to lead men to Christ for salvation. He charged all believers to keep a record of how many souls they save in a year. He compared it to lighting candles. He said, “Let every Christian go forth to light others. The testimony of the gospel needs to go out from us until the Lord’s return. We should not be lit ourselves without lighting others. We should light more and more candles. So many souls before our eyes are in need of salvation. We must try our best to testify to them and lead them to Christ.” (Nee, Vol.2, Ch.1)

### **Recovery of the Universal Priesthood**

In the past years there has been more emphasis on all the members functioning by visiting people with the gospel to impart Christ into them. We have come to realize that this should be part of our normal Christian living. The Lord desires that all of his children would function as priests of the gospel to impart Christ into sinners that they may

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We can come before the Lord to pray and also go forth to announce such a glorious gospel to others (1 Pet. 2:9). As Witness Lee noted, "The church has become fallen. As a result, the organic function of many believers is killed. The gospel preaching which depends on the speaking of one or two, though able to save sinners, kills the universal priesthood of the gospel which makes all the believers priests of the gospel" (Lee, ch. 3 and 10). May we all be willing to be perfected that we may learn to function in bringing the gospel to many others.

### Conclusion

We can learn from Moody to be a little crazy and thick-skinned. It matters whether or not we lead others to salvation. This is our obligation before God and we are debtors to all men (Rom. 1:14). In Mark 16:15 the Lord charged us to "go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to all the creation." And in Matthew the Lord Jesus said, "Go therefore and disciple all the nations" (28:19).



Praise the Lord that He is doing a work of recovery among us. He is recovering the function of the members of His Body. We can open to the Lord and to the gifted persons to be perfected in the priesthood of the gospel for the carrying out of God's eternal economy (Rom. 15:16). Let us go forth to preach the gospel. Woe to us if we remain indifferent to our responsibility. But if we rise up to preach the gospel we will be rewarded (1 Cor. 9:16-17). May we all be the Lord's true witnesses in our time!

Marty Robert and Bill Lawson

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