

Give God A Chance

by James H. McConkey

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Give God a Chance

"Prove me now" Mal. 3:10.

In a great city telegraph office scores of instruments were busily clicking away. Presently, in the midst of the din and clatter, the door opened, and in walked a young man—a stranger. He was tall, and rather awkward, with a linen duster reaching nearly to his heels. In response to his request for employment the chief operator motioned him to a chair. By and by another instrument began to click. The most important work of the day was on hand. The press dispatches were ready, at a distant city. And by his table in that city sat one of the swiftest writers, and most skillful operators in the service, waiting to begin his rapid sending. The chief motioned to the tall young man to take his seat at the table at which the press news was to be received. He quietly did so. The other workers lifted their heads from their instruments, to look askance at the rustic stranger in his attempt to "take" the fastest man on the line. They were watching for him to fail. But he had no notion of doing so. Answering the call, he took up his pen and began to write. And there for hour after hour he sat. Without a break, without a halt; writing a hand like a

copper-plate in its clearness and beauty, he tossed off sheet after sheet of copy to the waiting messenger boy, while all the office stared in astonished admiration. When the work was finished, the position was his without any further question. When asked his name, he replied—*Edison*. It was the beginning of his world-wide fame. All he wanted was—a chance. And when he got it he did *marvels*.

And is not this the homely expression of the real thought in the verse from Malachi, cited above. "Bring ye all the tithes. . . . *Prove Me* now . . . if I will not open the windows of heaven." What is God saying here but this? "My child, I still have windows in heaven. They are yet in service. The bolts slide as easily as of old. The hinges have not grown rusty. I would rather fling them open, and pour forth, than keep them shut and hold back. I opened them for Moses, and the sea parted. I opened them for Joshua,—and Jordan rolled back. I opened them for Gideon, and the hosts fled. I will open them for you,—if *you will only let me*. On *this* side of the windows heaven is the same rich storehouse as of old. The fountains and streams still overflow. The treasure rooms are still bursting with gifts. The lack is not on My side. It is on yours. *I am waiting. I am ready. Prove Me* now. Fulfill the conditions, on *your* part. Bring in the tithes. *Give Me a chance*.

And first, then, let us

Give God a chance,—by Trusting.

Faith opens the soul to God. It is the channel

down which God's heavenly blessings flow to us-ward. It is the bridge which leaps the chasm between heaven and earth. It is the ladder over which God's messengers of help journey to us needy earthlings. It is Faith which gives God a chance to work in your life and soul. Turning away from God in un-faith is putting a plate-glass between you and an electric current; it shuts off the flow of life. It is stopping your ears with cotton, so that no note of a song can float in upon your soul. It is wearing a bandage over your eyes, so that no glint of the beauty of dawn or sunset can come to your blinded vision. The life, the light, the song are there. But you shut them out. You give them no chance.

A simple picture illustration comes to mind here. It is that of a human hand. In the hand is an empty bottle. The bottle is under a fountain. The waters are flowing atop, at the sides, all over the bottle. But there is not a drop inside. Underneath is the legend: "Why is the bottle not filled?" The reason is simple. *There is a cork in the bottle. It has no chance.* Even so Faith is the soul's intake. Through it God's life comes in. Love is the soul's outlet. Through it God's life pours forth. To clog either is to stay the flow of life. You give God no chance.

Unsaved friend, why do you continue to live in the shadow of death? Why has not the miracle of the new birth been wrought in your soul? Why do you, every moment, stand in jeopardy of a catastrophe which all the years of eternity can never set right? Simply because you will not fulfill God's simple conditions. *You*

will not accept and trust Jesus Christ as the Saviour of your soul. You will not give God a chance. Suppose the delicate mechanism of your gold watch has a breakage. You take it to the watchmaker and ask if he can repair it. He says he can, if you will but leave it in his hands for a few days. At once you trust him with it. For you know he can do nothing unless you give him a chance. Or you want your portrait painted. You go to an artist friend. He tells you he will do it. But he says you must come daily to him, for so many sittings. You straightway obey. For you know he cannot paint your portrait unless you give him a chance. Or you go to a dock, and ask the captain of a steamship if he will land you on the other side of the ocean. He says he will, if you will buy a ticket, step aboard the boat, and trust him to carry you over. This too you do. For you know you can never cross the ocean unless you trust yourself to the ship. You must needs give it a chance. How strange then, that you will not give God the same chance in eternal matters which you give to men in temporal ones! There is a breach in your soul of vastly more moment than the breakage of your watch. God will mend it—if you give Him a chance. There is a picture—the image of Jesus Christ—to be painted upon your inner being,—as upon every other life that would enter heaven. God will paint it—if you give him a chance. There is a journey out into the unknown abyss of eternity, which no man can ever take save by God's way, and God's guidance. God will pilot you all the way—if you

give Him a chance. Be as fair to God in matters of eternity, as you are to men in the concerns of time. Fulfill His simple conditions of salvation. Give yourself to Him. *Trust Him*, in Christ. He will surely save your soul—if *you only give Him a chance*.

Give God a chance,—by Praying.

There are many things too difficult for you to do. But you do not hesitate to seek someone more skillful and give *him* a chance to do for you. You have a precious gem to reset. You cannot do it. But you are quick to give the expert jeweler a chance to do it for you. There is a dangerous mountain steep to climb. You do not know how to find the pathway. But you give the mountain guide a chance to lead you in it. There is a deep ford to cross. You cannot risk it. But you give the hardy ferryman a chance to pilot you across it.

It is not otherwise with you and God. There are many things *you* cannot do. But God says: "If ye *ask* I will do." There are burdens you cannot bear. Give God a chance through prayer, and *He* will bear them for you. There are problems too knotty for your solution. Give *God* a chance by prayer, and God will solve them for you. There are barriers too high for you to overleap. Ask *God*. They are not too high for Him. Somehow when there seems no other chance for *us*, prayer gives *God* a chance. And behold He does for us what we had forever despaired of doing ourselves.

A Christian business friend was in sore straits. A sudden demand has been made upon him for a large sum of money. Every consideration of business honor demanded its payment. Yet he was helpless to meet it. The only possible way out of the crisis seemed to be the sale of a piece of real estate. But the market was discouragingly dull. There was scarcely a buyer in it. In short there was no human chance of selling it. So we determined to give *God* a chance. Spreading the whole matter before Him, we began to pray. After two weeks of earnest supplication a man came to ask our friend if his real estate was in the market. In another week he came again and asked the price. A little later he made our friend an offer. The latter, however, deemed it too low. So we prayed on, that God might work His perfect will in it all. At the end of six weeks of prayer the sale was made, and our friend came to us with a check for many thousands of dollars in his hand. With tears in his eyes, he said: "It seems to have come as directly from God as though He Himself had handed it to me over the counter of the bank." That was true. It was all *of God*. We had simply given Him a chance.

*It takes God Time to answer prayer;
give Him a chance.*

We often fail to give God a chance in this respect. It takes time for God to paint a rose. It takes time for God to grow an oak. It takes time

for God to make bread from a wheat field. He takes the earth. He pulverizes. He softens. He enriches. He wets with showers and dews. He warms with life. He gives the blade, the stock, the amber grain, and then at last the bread for the hungry. All this takes time. Therefore we sow, and till, and wait, and trust, until all God's purpose has been wrought out. We give God a chance in this matter of time. We need to learn this same lesson in our prayer life. It takes God *time* to answer prayer.

A Christian worker had reached the end of the week, well wearied with service. The sunshine and rippling river were luring him to an hour's rowing. Boarding a passing car he was soon on his way to the river bank. As he neared it he remembered that it was late in the season, and there was a likelihood of the boathouse being closed. But the outing for tired nerves and weary body seemed a clear need. So he lifted his heart quietly in prayer that if it were the Lord's will He might send along the caretaker of the boathouse to furnish the boat. Reaching the spot he found to his disappointment that the house was closed. Turning to leave under the impulse of the moment, the thought flashed in "It has only been a moment or two since you prayed the Lord to send along the boatman, and now you are going away without even waiting long enough for him to get here. Why don't you give God a chance?" So he sat down by the river bank to wait. In ten minutes the boatkeeper came strolling along. The house was opened, the boat secured, and

the refreshing of an hour's outing enjoyed to the full. With it came another simple lesson in the prayer-life, that it takes God time to answer prayer, and that we therefore need to give God a chance.

Take this matter of conversion. You have an unsaved loved one. You have prayed for him—for months—for years. He is still outside the kingdom. God has not answered your prayer, you say. But perhaps you are at sea in your view of conversion. Does God bring a soul into His kingdom as you might lift a child over a hedge, or hurl a stone across a stream? Does man's choice have no place in this? It surely does. It matters not by what theological side-path you approach this matter of conversion. One thing is certain, however God may *move* upon man's will He does not *supplant* that will. Whatever may be the mystery of *God's* choice, no soul ever comes into the kingdom without his own choice.

Hence concerning the conversion of a resisting soul remember this. *God is striving with a human will.* But do *you* know what it is to move upon a human will? This very love one *you* have warned. With him *you* have pleaded. With him *you* have reasoned. Yet all these years that strong will has stood out against you. Now, at the last, you have given up in sheer despair the attempt to move upon a human will. Do you not realize then what it means for *God* to do it? God may have heart-idols to overthrow. God may have to foil chosen plans. God may suffer afflictions to come. God must press in

upon the man engrossed in the temporal, a growing vision of the eternal. God must needs cherish, woo, disappoint, uplift, bereave, enrich, impoverish,—yea, bring to bear a multitude of influences upon a resisting will, ere it yields to Him. But to unstop ears deaf to the voice of God—to open eyes blind to the vision of God—to turn aside wandering feet into the path of God—all this takes *time*. Therefore—*Give God a chance.*

Give God a chance,—by Yielding.
God can do nothing with us if we do not yield—
He has no chance.

We recall a day of sightseeing in the palaces of Genoa. From room to room we had followed the caretaker in his tour. Paintings, sculpture, curios of all sorts had followed each other in rapid train. Finally we entered a room seemingly empty. Bare walls, floors, and table alone greeted us. Presently the guide led us across the room to the wall at the farther side. There we espied a niche in the wall. It was covered with a glass case. Behind the case was a magnificent violin, in perfect preservation. This, said the guide, was Paganini's favorite violin; the rich old Cremona upon which he loved most of all to display his marvelous skill. We gazed intently upon the superb instrument, with its warm, rich tints, sinuous curves, and perfect model, listening meanwhile to the estimate of its almost priceless value. And then we tried to imagine the wondrous strains the

touch of the great master would bring forth if he were there in that quiet palace chamber. Then came the thought: Nay. But this could not be. For it would not matter what rich melodies were in the inner soul of the master. It would not avail how eager he might be to pour them forth in sweetest, tenderest strain through that magnificent instrument. He could not possibly do so. For it was locked up against him. It was an unyielded instrument. It was like thousands of lives which are padlocked against God, not back of a fragile, easily shattered glass case, but behind the impenetrable armor plate of an unyielded human will. *It gave the Master no chance.*

Friend, is this why your life seems barren and fruitless? Is this why God does not seem to be using that life? Is it that, however willing, He cannot use it because unyielded to Him? For this picture of an instrument is no fancy, but the very one God employs in His Word. "Present your members as *instruments* to God," He says. And how can He use an unrepresented instrument? The very word "present" pictures the secret of your trouble. It means "to place near the hand" of one; to set at the hand of another as one might set a tool or instrument. To be a surrendered man, a yielded man, is simply to be God's *handy man*. The carpenter is at work. Some of his tools are hanging on the wall of his workshop. Some are right at hand on his workbench. When he wants one quickly and urgently which will he use? The one he can reach quickest—the one "set at his hand."

This is precisely where God wants your life. Not hanging on the wall of selfishness, but yielded—reachable—usable. This is what gives God a chance.

Moses, with his hesitation and stammering tongue, seemed but a weak instrument. But he gave God a chance. And God made him the lawgiver and leader of His people. Gideon looked with fear and trembling upon the great work before him. Yet he gave God a chance. And God routed a great and mighty host with his puny lamps and pitchers. David was but a stripling shepherd, shut up in obscurity. But he gave God a chance. And God brought him to a throne. The little lad with the loaves and fishes had but a mite. But he gave God a chance. And the Master brake, and brake the morsels until a famishing multitude was fed before the wondering eyes of the grateful boy. The man on the Damascus road gave God a chance on that fateful day. And God shook the world with him. Seven weary fishermen peered through the morning gloaming upon the form of one standing upon the shore. The night was far-spent. The day was at hand. The hour for successful fishing was past. But when the voice rang out over the waters: "Cast the net on the right side of the ship," they yielded to the Master. And He gave them such a catch as they had never known in all their fisher days—when they gave Him the chance.

It is not how much do you have, but how much of yours does God have. It is not a question of bemoaning what you have not, but

of yielding what you have. One talent yielded, is worth more than ten simply possessed. Is your handful of grain in the hands of the sower? That bit yielded, is worth more than a bin, hoarded. The nugget of gold, which has been minted and coined, and is purchasing hourly blessing as it passes from hand to hand, is worth all the undug tons of treasure which the earth conceals.

Reader, you have given pleasure a chance. Has it paid? You are giving ambition a chance. Does it satisfy? You are giving money-getting a chance. Is it for self or God? Have a care. When life comes to an end is it going to be ashes—emptiness—fruitlessness? What a pity! Try God. Give *Him* a chance. What is your life, anyhow? Where is it centered? On self or God? Is it counting for eternity? Or only for time? Sit down a while and think, not only about your *soul*, but your *life*. Ask yourself not necessarily what *God's* judgment will be, but what *your own* honest verdict upon your life will be if it goes on to the finish exactly as it is now. Any Christian man who will do that honestly will begin to live for God. He will see that an immortal life which does not take into account God's eternal plan for it, must be a failure.

Friend, when you come to the end where the world will have shriveled to its true littleness, and eternity loomed up to its real bigness; when the things which are seen are really found to be temporal and the things which are unseen, eternal; when you are on the brink of stepping over into the glory where God is all

and in all; then you will be glad, oh, so glad, that today, when you finished this message, you laid it down and decided that as for *you* and your life, from this time forth you would

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Published by and available from:

SILVER PUBLISHING SOCIETY

2700 Stuart Avenue

Richmond, VA 23220

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Printed in U.S.A.
The Continental Press, Philadelphia