

*Energized
By New Life*



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FIFTH AVENUE AT 29th STREET • NEW YORK, N.Y.

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2My65 Vol. 16 No. 23

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This is a recorded transcription of a sermon delivered extemporaneously in the Marble Collegiate Church.

Distributed by
FOUNDATION FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING
Pawling, New York 12564

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ENERGIZED BY NEW LIFE

*Scripture: John 1:4, 10:10, 14:19; I John 5:12;
I Corinthians: 9*

Do you really know how to live? I wonder how many of us could answer that question with a resounding affirmative. Are you living fully or only partially? Do you stand up to things with a sense of control and victory, knowing that you possess the ability to cope with the vicissitudes and circumstances of everyday existence?

Jonathan Swift said, "May you live all the days of your life." Do you have only now and then an isolated day when you are fully alive? Do you ever get that delicious sense that you are thrillingly alive to your very fingertips? Does the world with its beauty and its charm inspire you so that you have ecstasy in your mind and heart? Do you feel a sense of rapport and joy in connection with people, with challenges, with battles and with events? This is to live. And how many of us really do?

Edward R. Murrow, that outstanding, much-loved personality and one of the greatest geniuses in the whole realm of radio and television reporting, challenged people with this question: "Are you living a life or an apology?" Do you ever get into any of the great battles of our time? Have you ever put yourself on the firing line against evil? Or have you indulged and pampered yourself through your days? It's a pretty solemn question. "Are you living a life or an apology?"

Now the religion which you and I espouse, Christianity, is, in my humble judgment, the greatest philosophy of life ever enunciated. It promises life in fullness on earth; and it promises life eternal. This is absolutely thrilled the ancient world. Christianity was so alive that it was compared to the babbling of brooks and the singing of sky larks. Everybody was fascinated by it, for if it did people they could be alive.

Then it settled down and became an institution with hard and fast doctrine and creed. It developed organizations and committees and preachers wearing black gowns like myself. The great struggle is to keep the feet from going out of it. I think no religion has been so mistreated by its adherents.

People have said, "Christianity is a system of doctrine." It is that, but far more than that. They have said, "It's a social reform program." Well, it is that, but not finally more than that. They've said, "It's a system of worship." It is that, but it's infinitely more than that. Or they've said, "It's a great organization moving forward to make a better world." And it is an organization, but it is also an organism - and that basically is what it is: something that is alive.

Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly." Life. What is life? Life is vitality. It is excitement. It is enthusiasm. It is motion. And the Bible says, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." Jesus was the most alive being who ever walked the earth. Even death couldn't crush Him. And He said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." And there is a statement in 1st John which is really tremendous, a ringing message to anybody who wants to live. And everybody wants to live, whether we act half

alive or half dead, and in our hearts we want to live. In 1st John the Bible tells, "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

Christianity is a either-or business. It lays it on the line. Either you have it or you don't have it. Christianity tells us that if you want to have life, real life, life so exciting that you can hardly stand it, so thrilling that you never can erase it, so good that you can never get over it, then have the life that is in the Son. If you don't have this you're not really alive.

I have seen some wonderful people who have this life. And I've seen people live for years in a desultory fashion and then all of a sudden come really alive. They had a new birth. If you're dead you can be reborn. And Christianity is a continual rebirth from death to life. Have you ever thought of Christianity this way? Or have you imagined it to be a nice thing centered within church walls that you take out once in a while on Sunday and look at and put back again? Oh, no! It could not have flourished so long if that was all there was to it. Through Christianity people can be alive.

Not long ago I made a speech in Sioux City, Iowa - on the edge of the great West. I made this speech in the evening, and after it was thinking fondly of going to bed. But my host, a man older than I asked me "How do you feel, Norman? You don't want to go to bed yet; do you?"

"Oh, no, not at all," I replied. "What're we going to do?"

"The evening is young," said he. "Let's go for a drive. I want you to see the way the light are reflected in the Old Muddy. So off we went, and a few minutes later he was saying, 'Do you see that moon then? That is

a landmark of the thrilling Old West. When Lewis and Clark came through here to open up the great West the only man who died on that expedition died right where that monument is. It's called Sergeant's Bluff. And look at the stars. The stars never shine anywhere as they do in Iowa over the Missouri River. If it was daylight I would take you up on a high hill where you could see three states at once, and you'd see all the activity of one of the richest river valleys in the world. And in the quietness you'd feel the eternal movement of man and God."

I looked at him and asked, "How do you stay this way? How are you so vital and so alive at your age?"

"What is my age?" he challenged. "There is no such thing as age. It's eternal youth."

"Well," I asked again, "how did you get this way? I'd like to know for my own sake."

"Oh," he said, "it's simple, my boy. You just get your life embedded in Christ. That's what I did. That's what my wife did. We were sleepy, dull people until we found Christ and then we came alive."

As I went back to my hotel that night I was thinking of the Bible text, "He that hath the Son hath life." Life, vitality, enthusiasm, excitement, self-mastery, victory, anticipation, hope, courage. What else? You name it and you have it when you have the Son and He has you.

And the way to get this is to have your life organized according to the laws of God. Now the laws of God include the laws of the mind. In a very large sense, life depends on how you think. You can re-create yourself or you can destroy yourself by how you think. Think prejudice, hate, depression, fear, guilt and you de-energize yourself, take from your own mind its pristine freshness,

interfere with its synchronized operation, actually coagulate the mind so delight and power no longer come through to you. But when you live according to the laws of God and you cast resentment away and hate away and prejudice and fear away and begin to live as He teaches, with love and goodness and hope and faith, then life begins to surge through you and you become energized with new life.

I've met so many people who demonstrate this. Recently I got into a taxi in New York and met a wonderful man. You know if you had the money and could ride around all day in taxicabs you could pick up a lot of good ideas. Taxicab drivers oftentimes are men with subtle knowledge of human nature sharp, keen, canny, discerning, intuitive. They are not always the most polite characters in this crowded city of ~~over~~ but very often you will find an interesting person behind the wheel. This cab I got into was spotlessly clean, and this, in itself, indicated something about the driver, for it bespoke an orderly mind. He was a Negro man, very gentlemanly in manner. It was a kind of overcast day, but I thought it was a good day. I like all days. I wonder about people who always have to have the sun shining to be really contented. I like days when it doesn't shine; and this day it wasn't shining. But it was shining in that man's heart and I think in mine also. I said to him, "Wonderful day, isn't it? How are you today?"

"It sure is a wonderful day," he replied. "As for how I am feeling, I'll tell you. I feel very much alive."

Well, that astonished me, and immediately I was interested in the man. "Tell me why you feel very much alive."

"Why," he said, "it's very simple. I am not worrying

about anything. And I don't hate anybody. And I never get mad."

"You mean to say that if you live in that kind of a mental climate you can feel very much alive?"

"Sure. Those hate thoughts and fear thoughts and mad thoughts drain off your energy and leave you limp like a rag."

His words inspired me and I began to share with him my own ideas. He didn't know me from Adam. But presently he turned around and looked at me and said, "You know, from what you say I gather you must be a practicing Christian."

"And from what you say," I responded, "I know you are a practicing Christian." And by the time we got to my destination, I can tell you, he and I had had one wonderful time together in Christian fellowship. When he drove off, I said to him, "Stay alive all your life!"

"The same to you," he replied. We were two Christians who had shared our answers to life and we had found these to be in the Son. It showed in that man's face. It showed in his demeanor. It showed in his orderliness, in his delight in life. He had the Son and therefore He had life abundantly.

If our minds are bogged down with energy-depressants there can be no vitality. And the best thing any one of us can do is really to get healed of such things. Isn't it a pity that anybody should have a depressed life, a partial life, an inadequate life, a sick life, when it could be a life healthy and vital in mind and in soul?

Down south some time ago I had dinner with a group of about twenty men, all sitting around one big table. There was one man who was a terrific story teller. Some of his stories were terribly old, but he made them sparkle

anew. He was a raconteur to speak; and he had every body rocking with laughter. The minister sitting across the table from me shook his head, as if to say, "What a guy!" And I had the same thought. After dinner his minister came up to me and asked, "What do you think of our jocular friend?"

"He is really something."
"He is one of our best exhibits."
"What do you mean by 'exhibits'?"

"He is a shining example," said the minister, "of what Jesus Christ can do for a defeated depressed person."

Three years ago that man was generally acknowledged to be the biggest sourpuss south of the Mason-Dixon Line.

He was full of gloom and full of ill-will. And then he began to have pains around his heart, pains in his stomach, headaches, pains in his joints. He went to every doctor in this town. Finally, one doctor shipped him off to Chicago to a specialist. The specialist went all over him to give him a just about every test known to the medical profession, then told him, "As far as your body is concerned there isn't anything wrong with it that wouldn't be all right if you would correct something else. You're not sick in your body - you're sick in your thoughts. The seepage of illness from your mind has been going

through your whole system, and that is what makes your stomach and your heart and your joints malfunction.

But since you came all the way here to Chicago I am going to give you a prescription. This is it. Go back home and see your pastor and get some honest-to-God religion. Fifteen hundred dollars, please."

"Fifteen hundred dollars! For what?"
"For knowing what to tell you," the specialist told him. He knew you see, that this man rated everything

on the basis of its money value and if charged a fee would take it seriously and for a good result. And he was right. Our friend came back home mad as a hatter, calling the specialist a highwayman and holding up an artist, but he did go to see his pastor.

"And the pastor knew his man. He said, 'Bill, you have paid for it; and I can tell you how to get it. You haven't paid half the price yet.'

"Do you mean it's going to cost me more than five hundred dollars?"

"It certainly is, Bill. It's going to cost you a lot more than that. You come into the church with me and kneel down there and tell the Lord that you'll give everything you've got - your whole self.' The man knew what the pastor meant. And with the pastor's help he prayed things through. And he found Christ, he really did. And now if he has aches and pains you never know it."

Vital, vibrant, exciting life. That is the medicine that flows out of the New Testament. "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." To be energized with new life you have to be re-created. The process of your creation didn't end when you were born. True, God breathed into you the breath of life. But as we get older we sometimes breathe the breath of life out of ourselves. As you stay in contact with God the creative process continues, and as you develop from a child to teenage, young adult to middle age and on to old age there should be a continuous process of growth and demonstration of life force. But people often inhibit the creative process, and when that is the case then, if they want to be energized with new life, they must be re-created by the Creator constantly re-creates those who will come to

If you will break loose from yourself and quit hiding behind some barrier you've built up in your mind, and let God re-create you and continually re-create you so that you will no longer feel depressed, inferior, weak or unhappy. You can have a perpetually energized life.

You think I'm promising too much? On the contrary, not nearly enough. The Bible says, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." I cannot promise too much. My words are partial; God's words are full and complete.

I was thinking recently of a gentleman I used to know. John Riley has gone on to heaven now, and I'm sure he is having the time of his life there. I know that because he had the time of his life here. In the last years of his long life, which was when I knew him, he had the distinction of being the oldest practicing physician in the State of New York. He used to sit in the front pew in Marble Church and, knowing that he was past ninety, I used to watch admiringly the way he walked down the aisle straight as a soldier on parade, full of vitality and zest. One day I asked him how he managed to keep on having all that energy.

He replied, "You reach the peak of physical vitality and resilience at about age nineteen. From then on the natural trend physically is downhill. However, if there is a daily influx of new life and vitality in your mind and soul this greatly slows the long gradual process of physical decline."

Every day since I found the great Truth as a young man I have sought to keep myself renewed by the creative hand of God. So I begin each day with devo-

tions using my own little method of thanksgiving and affirmation. I give thanks for my wonderful body. I give thanks for the marvelous beating of my heart all these years. Just think of it! Lub, dub, lub, dub, lub, dub ... for ninety-one years and still going! I give thanks for my marvelous nervous system, for my digestive system with each organ functioning in harmony with the others. What an amazing instrument the body is! And I thank God for my mind and soul and ask Him to keep my mind pure and my soul in His hands."

The following year Dr. Riley lay down one day and sank into sleep and passed away. God took him. Afterwards his nurse telephoned and told a few hours before he died. Dr. Riley said, 'You tell Dr. Peale I'll be working for him from the other side.' " And I truly believe he is doing so. John Riley lived all his life like a child of God, with health and vitality, always energized by new life. He knew the truth in "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." This is the secret of how to be energized by new life.

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for the great truth that Jesus is full of life and that as we come to Him He touches us and we become full of life. We thank Thee through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.