

Your Future in This Chaotic World



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Scripture: Romans 8:28; Luke 4:18; John 1:4, 8:12

EVERY person from time to time during his life takes a look ahead at the future and wonders what it holds for him. He is also likely to ask himself in what way he can determine that this future shall be one of dignity and honor and usefulness and a fair degree of human happiness and victory. What is to be his future in this chaotic world?

I recently had an experience that bears on this, an experience that was rather touching to me. I went back to a hometown of mine, Findlay, Ohio. I have several hometowns due to the fact that as a boy my family lived in several different places. But we lived in Findlay longer than in any of the other places. It is a beautiful little city, with a population of about thirty-five thousand - I think one of the loveliest cities of its size in the whole country.

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This is a recorded transcription of a sermon delivered extemporaneously by Dr. Peale at Marble Collegiate Church.

Thousands of people around the world receive each month these printed copies of Dr. Peale's sermons. We will also gladly mail them to you, your family and friends. Simply send names and addresses (with Zip no.) to: Foundation for Christian Living, Pawling, N.Y. 12564. I thought of it when talking with those fine young people I was speaking at a convention in Columbus and these present were Mr. and Mrs. John Glenn.

They have a custom there of presenting at intervals what they call the Fort Findlay Award to some former resident of the city. It would seem there was a scarcity of candidates this year, for they gave it, ~~to which~~ I am sure I didn't deserve, but which I nevertheless greatly appreciated. Accordingly I went to Findlay to receive it.

Before the presentation I was interviewed by reporters of the high school newspaper and the city newspaper, on both of which some forty-five years ago I myself served as a reporter, having in mind at that time to be not a minister, but a newspaperman. I sat there being interrogated by two boys and a girl, three of the nicest, most straightforward young people you could possibly imagine. They were intelligent, too - much more intelligent, I am sure, than I and others of my generation were at that age. They had a grasp of life that was quite mature. They asked me the usual kinds of questions: what did I think about Viet Nam and this and that - essentially the same kinds of questions I asked when I was a reporter back in the days when we'd never heard of Viet Nam, but were similarly troubled about other situations in the world. Finally one of them looked at me and asked, "Dr. Peale, have you any advice for young people about how to work for a good future for themselves and, beyond that, they can help make the world a better place for mankind?"

I thought that was a very intelligent, proper question, and I endeavored to answer it as best I could. But I think my answer was inadequate. The next morning an encounter with certain friends brought to my mind one of the finest inspiring texts in all the Bible, and I wished I had thought of it when talking with those fine young people. I was speaking at a convention in Columbus and these present were Mr. and Mrs. John Glenn.

parents of John Glenn, the astronaut. They gave a most interesting pocket-sized booklet of Scripture passages, which they autographed for Andel. I chanced to open it to the great words from Romans 8:28, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose."

THAT is a tremendous text. means that everything that happens in your life - harsh, painful, hard though it be - combines with all the rest of your experience for your good if your life is dedicated to God. This is one of the deepest philosophies ever enunciated, that we are to take all things - what we think is good and what we think is bad - and draw them all together into a symphony of creativity and make it work for good. And that's the way it is, if we are in harmony with God's love and mindful of His love. So I submit that this is the secret of having a bright future in this chaotic world. If enough people were to take hold of this idea and live by it, key with it, moving out from the churches into the world outside, we could make all things work together for good in the world too.

With that idea as a background, the essential first step would be to let God release a fuller measure of our potential. I do not believe any individual will have a truly great future who doesn't somehow tap his inner resources and latent powers more effectively. To what extent have you drawn your powers into action? It is an interesting question to try to answer.

Some time ago I got to discussing with a group of psychologists the pathetic fact that most men and women live and die and never get their resources, their personal resources, released to any high degree. One psychologist

said he thought the average person didn't use more than twenty percent of his brain power. And maybe he was being an optimist at that. This goes for me, of course, the same as it does for you - or for that psychologist. In preaching this sermon I'm perhaps using somewhere between ten and twenty percent of my brain power. And, friends, even that is an effort. Just suppose that I could get free - just for once - and use fifty percent of my brain power! Well, fifty percent of mine might not be too impressive, but it would surely be memorable at least to myself.

Everybody has potential. God put it in you. That is a tremendous word: potential. It means that you have powers that are incipient only or are dormant that could be used, and that would be tremendous. Why then don't you use them? Why don't I use mine? That would be the way to have a bright future, for sure, both for ourselves and in future service in the world. Why, there is enough potential in any sizable group of Christian people to turn a great modern city upside down and correct all its evils. And why limit it to a city? Eleven men once got their potential freed and began to use it, and they turned the whole world upside down. They were so dynamic that wherever they went they turned things upside down, bringing new life, new understanding and new joy. Did anybody ever say that about you? About me? How to release our potential is the problem.

THERE is a member of Mark Collegiate Church who is a great expert in the field of merchandising. His name is Anos Parrish. And "A.P.," as he is called by his friends, says, "There ought to be eleven commandments." He believes in the ten, but he would like to add another.

And what do you think would be his suggestion for the eleventh commandment? "Thou shalt use all thy talents to the uttermost."

Well, I'm not so audacious, nor is he either, as to think we can rewrite the Decalogue. But I am sure that this idea fits in harmoniously with the Gospel of Jesus Christ who came to set men free, to break the shackles off them and release them from the prison of self-constructed limitations. The fourth chapter of the Book of Luke tells us Jesus said the Spirit of the Lord had anointed Him to heal the broken-hearted and, among other things, to pre-ach deliverance to all. What captives? Men imprisoned in fortresses, behind bars? Much more than that. People everywhere who are imprisoned in their own states of mind. And Mr. Parrish believes this implies we should all seek to develop our inner potential to the maximum.

The key for doing this is the key of faith. It is the key of surrender to Jesus. It is the key of opening your heart to God. Anybody who will truly take that key and turn it in the rusty lock of his own personality will bring out of himself, from his buried potential, new power by which to live and by which to serve in the world.

"Thou shalt use thy talents to the uttermost." I suggest you use your next free quiet hour at home to ask yourself what your talents are, what they really are, and then ask Jesus to take charge of your life and help you start using your talents to your uttermost. You'll be surprised by yourself. And your life will be so much larger and more joyous.

Now in order to live and work serenely and at one's best in a world of turmoil and difficulty and pain one

must also develop an unwavering confidence in one's power to overcome, with God's help, all the adversities life brings along. Life in this world is so full of trouble. Recently I made a speech to a group of fifteen hundred women. And when I had finished my speech they asked me questions. Now I tell you, gentlemen, it can be quite an ordeal to stand before fifteen hundred women and try to answer their questions. Again and again I was asked such questions as, "My boy is going to Viet Nam - what job I do about?" or "When are we going to have peace so my boy can live an orderly life?"

Well, I didn't mince words with them. They have great respect for mothers. I'm sure glad I'll never be one myself. But there is a greatness in motherhood like no other greatness. Mothers have love and gentleness, but they also have a powerful lot of steel in them. And it has been given them to rear the citizens of the United States, generation after generation of citizens who have had to endure and perform their duty, even to death itself. All I could tell those mothers was to go home and start praying and to get out and start working for us to bring enough Christianity to bear against the problems of this world so that we would no longer have to have such evils as this war in Viet Nam. For any way you look at it, it's an evil thing. The world is full of evil. And a Christian has to live in the midst of it and combat it. And this can't get you down, it can crush you and break you. But it won't break you if you love God, for then "all things work together for good" at long last.

ONE blessing you get from love of God is light in your mind, radiance in your heart. And if you have a mind full of light, the darkness can't overcome it. Throughout

the world there are these two great forces of light and darkness. And there never was darkness that could stand before the light. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." So get Him in your heart; darkness will be defeated.

At the time of my recent visit to Findlay I was driven part of the way by a friend who works for the Ohio Light and Power Company. The country we drove through is a rich farming area, and I noticed that in almost every barnyard there stood a pole with a soft light at the top of it - not a brilliant light, but soft and pervasive. And I asked my friend, "What are these lights?"

"Oh," he said, "we supply those to the farmers." And he explained that for three dollars a month, I think it was, you can have one of these lights. You have it put in your barnyard to keep intruders away. Thieves will venture in only if the place is dark. Thus your barn and house are protected, but without a brilliant illumination that would keep you from sleeping. The type of light used is called a mercury vapor lamp. When the sun sets and twilight comes and darkness is coming on, a mechanism built into the lamp triggers it on, and it remains lit all night. Then in the morning the rising daylight automatically turns the lamp off.

I said to my friend, "John, isn't there a parable in that? If I am in tune with Almighty God and the life which is in Jesus Christ our Lord, then when darkness or pain or trouble comes ~~the~~ ^{Divine} mechanism turns on within me the inner light which I have through faith, and this sustains me through the period of darkness."

To have a bright future you must ~~be~~ ^{read} ~~live~~ ^{live} personally, I am a great believer in being fully alive. I love

live people. And I like to be alive myself. The Bible tells us of Jesus that "in him was life." When you really have Him in you, you couldn't possibly be dull or dopey, as many people are. I think it would be a very good thing to pray to the Lord and ask Him, "How alive am I?"

God created us to be alive. He breathed into us the breath of life. But judging from the condition of some people I see, maybe they resisted the breathing.

How would you feel if your boss spent two hundred dollars just to try to wake you up? I was at a convention at the Conrad Hilton Hotel in Chicago, and just

before my speech this man came up to me and said, "Dr. Peale I have one salesman who wouldn't have the initiative {come here himself, so I invested two hundred dollars to bring him up here. I expect you to get him activated so I get my money back. I got him a seat right down front."

"My friend," I said, "I don't think I can do that from the platform." He pointed the man out to me. As I was talking, I looked at this salesman now and then. He had a kind of blank, aimless expression on his face; showed no sign of reacting to anything I was saying. Afterwards, as I was shaking hands with people, I noticed him still sitting at the table, his head resting on his hand, looking at me. I went over to him and asked, "How are you?"

"I'm not too good."

"What's your name?"

"My name is Frank," he replied. "I'm the man Mr. invested two hundred dollars in, to get me here to this convention."

"You know about it then, do you?"

"Yes, I do."

I got him to come up to my hotel room so that we

could talk, and I asked him, "What's the matter with you, Frank?"

"I don't know."

"Did you go to college?"

"Yes." And he told me the name of his college.

"Did you do all right there?"

"Well, I got by."

"That's good," I said. "And how have you been doing in business?"

"Oh," he answered, "I get by."

"Boy, you're not getting very far, if you ask me," I said. "Your boss is really upset about you. What's the matter with you?"

"I haven't got any energy. I don't feel lively. In competitive work you've got to be alert, you've got to be on the ball, you've got to be out and after them."

"Where did you hear that?"

"In the sales meetings. And," he added, "it wears me out to hear them talk that way. I have no interest in anything."

"Do you go to church?" I asked.

"Oh," he said, "once in a while."

"Do you belong to any clubs or associations?"

"No, nothing."

So you can see he was completely dead. What would you say to such a character? I said, "I want to do something, Frank. Or, rather, I want to ask you something. Do you believe in Jesus?" He said he did. I asked, "What's Jesus supposed to teach you?"

"Well, He teaches us to be good."

"That's true," I said, "but did it ever occur to you that Jesus Christ is energy, that He is vitality, that He is life, and that if you get Him in you you'll come alive?"

The man looked at me with interest. "How do you get this?" he asked.

"You get it by giving - giving yourself." And finally I said, "Let's pray." He then, to my surprise, got down on his knees. It was a sort of extra, out of earnestness, I thought. And I offered a prayer. Then I said, "Frank, why don't you say a few words of prayer?"

"Well, there is nothing so thrilling as to see someone come alive. I can't remember his prayer word for word. I wish I could. I wish I had been able to copy it down."

It was one of the most affecting prayers I ever heard. It went something like this: "Lord, I'm a dull, lifeless clod. I just don't amount to anything nohow. But revitalize me, Lord." Then he got up, sat down and looked at me and said, "You know, I think the Lord is going to answer that prayer."

"If you think so, He will," I replied.

He surely did. I soon began to get reports about Frank.

He became active in the church, joined one of the service clubs in town and became active in them.

Three years he was president of the local chamber of commerce. It seems eventually he did more for his town to build it up than any man had done in a decade. People used to come and tell me Frank was a ball of fire. And on Frank's request I went to his town one time to make a speech. He met my plane and at once took me to see the town's new hospital. Then he showed me the city hall and several other civic attractions. Finally I said,

"Frank, I want to go to my hotel room and lie down and rest before I make a speech."

"Rest?" he echoed. "Why should you rest? A Christian is supposed to have undying energy."

I gave in. I said, "All right, let's forget the hotel."

Finally he took me to his home. He and his wife and I sat and had prayer together. And when I left she said to me, "Isn't Jesus Christ wonderful? Look at this fine man. Isn't he great? I used to worry about him so much. But Jesus made a new man of him."

That's it. "All things" come together, flow together, coalesce for good to those who really love God like that, who are called like that for His purposes. That is how to build your future in this chaotic world.

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, bless this message and bless Thy great Word as it gets into our lives, takes away all that which is destructive, activates our potentials and brings us truly alive. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Recommended Reading

PRAYING WITH PAUL, by R. L. BRANDT

(Baker Book House, \$2.50)-

Prayer — our direct relation to God — is life's greatest source of inspiration. It is through prayer and closeness to the Holy Spirit that we achieve joy, happiness and a satisfying way of life. Yet we must practice it regularly to attain spiritual heights.

This rewarding little book shows how Paul's timeless prayers can help us today.

Good Reading!

Norman Vincent Peale