

ADDRESS TO GRADUATING STUDENTS AT COMMENCEMENT
FAITH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
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by
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President

At this time it always falls to my lot to say a few words to the graduating class. I would like to start with a passage from the book of James, the fourth chapter, verses 13-15:

"Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that."

This passage is very appropriate to my own experience in the last few days. On Tuesday afternoon a week ago I knew exactly what I was going to do just about every hour during the following week, I had the whole time planned out and knew just what I expected to accomplish. Then almost exactly a week ago, but a little earlier in the evening, the car in which I was driving rapidly, suddenly began to skid in the rain, shot across the divider in the middle of the turnpike, and started to fall on its side. Here I blacked out. While I was unconscious the car turned over, I do not know how many times, and another car hit it on the bottom, bending the drive shaft so that it pushed the floor of the car up to a level with the seat, and smashed my ankle in two places. My whole week has been entirely different than it would have been if the accident had not occurred. One moment I knew exactly what I was going to do every hour of the succeeding week; the next moment it was all swept away.

Actually I have no right to be here tonight. A person who goes through such an accident as I went through that evening, should either not be in the land of the living, or, if surviving, would usually be lying on a bed with his arms and legs in traction, and suffering from all sorts of injuries. Well, I do have all sorts of injuries. Actually it is a miracle that I am here, a miracle of the Lord's grace. The Lord must have work that He still wants me to do; He must have a purpose in causing my life to continue, or He would not have worked such a miracle of grace, to take me through such an accident and cause me to survive--yes, not merely to survive, but to be in remarkably good condition. Many people have said to me today: "Certainly just a week after an accident like that you are not going to attempt to come to the Commencement exercises." Well, I certainly would not have been able to be here, if it were not for the miracle of the Lord's grace. None of us has a right to say, "I will go here, and go there, and do this, and do that;" we must always say: "If it is the Lord's will." Our life is a vapor, and at any time the Lord may choose to take us away.

Sometimes we incline to forget the reality of death--that unnatural monster which is in the world as a result of man's sin. One moment we may be active and strong and well, and then in another moment we may disappear. Why is this? It is because man has turned against God and defied God. Man has chosen to go on in his own way, and to seek what he wants instead of what God wants. God, the righteous Judge, the Holy Ruler, the One who does all things for the best, sees us turn in rebellion against Him and throw His righteous law out the window, seeking our own desires instead of what He wants for us, ignoring His goodness and His mercy. Sin has come into the world and death is the consequence of sin.

As I went through this experience I thought, "Why should this happen to me? Why should death come to me?" The answer was not long in seeking. I have no right to expect anything else. I have sinned against God and the wages of sin is death. I have done what was contrary to His will and the little suffering that I have gone through is nothing compared to what every one of us deserves.

But oh, think of the One Who did not deserve to suffer, the One Who had no need to suffer for anything He had done, because He had never done anything wrong. He was the Holy One, the righteous Son of God. He looked down from heaven and He saw us in wickedness, headed for eternal misery. He came to this earth and went through suffering such as no man has ever experienced, in order to take our sins upon Himself and to die in our stead.

As I went through that experience last Tuesday night, I had not a single bit of fear. Humanly speaking, that is one of the reasons why I came through it so well. I knew that if it should be the Lord's will that I should die then--and I had no reason to think that it was not--there was still no reason for me to fear. I knew that the Lord Jesus Christ had borne my sins on the cross. I knew that I had received Him as my Saviour, and that the Holy Spirit had come into my heart. I knew, therefore, that if He chose to take me, I would awaken in the presence of Christ to experience eternal joy. I had no reason to fear death.

What a privilege it is for the believer in Christ to know the wonderful Biblical teaching of the sovereignty of God. As I was hurled repeatedly from one side of the automobile to the other, and thrown violently against various parts of the car, just a slight change here or there in the way I hit could have caused very serious or even fatal results. God controlled and directed at every move. Not only is this true in such experiences as that which I went through but it is true in everything that happens to us at every instant of any day. The Lord holds us in the hollow of His hand. He controls and directs everything that happens. Each of us is here because God chooses to permit us to stay, He has a purpose in allowing our life to continue. As the years go by, if we do not accomplish that purpose, then there is no reason why He should have kept us here.

This is the twenty-third time that I have looked into the faces of a group of fine young men going out from this seminary. As I look at these men I think of the talents they have. I think of the study they have done. I think of what they have learned about God. These men, going out to serve the Lord, can make an impact on our generation.