

The Law of Life

by James Blaine Chapman

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing our unique challenges and opportunities in today's world, urging us to rise to the occasion with courage and faith.

Scripture: Esther 4:14, Proverbs 22:29, 1 Corinthians 16:13, Ephesians 5:15, 2 Timothy 2:15

Topics: "Moral Character", "Faith Foundations"

Description

James Blaine Chapman preaches about the significance of the present time and the unique challenges and opportunities it presents. He emphasizes that each generation faces its own difficulties and must rise to the occasion, just as historical figures like Alexander, Napoleon, Washington, and Lincoln did in their time. Chapman highlights the need for men and women of character, integrity, and courage to navigate the complexities of modern society, including in areas of material success, domestic life, and social interactions. He stresses the importance of strong moral and religious foundations in a time marked by skepticism and indifference, urging individuals to embrace their role in making a positive impact in the world.

Transcript

"And who knoweth whether thou hast come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14).

Times are discriminatory and will not use out of date material. It is a common idea with each generation that the world's work is all done and that there is nothing left but to admire the accomplishments of the fathers. What is the use? Columbus has already discovered America, Watts has discovered the hidden power of steam; Bell has invented the telephone; Edison has perfected the phonograph, and Ford has made the automobile. What is left to do, and to what new place can a man go?

Alexander could not have conquered the world at any other period than the one at which he appeared and Napoleon arose by means of the crisis in French politics. The birth of Washington was timed, earlier or later would not have done. Lincoln might have died in obscurity had he waited twenty years to have been born.

The steamship seems to have been perfected before our day and the frontier of American civilization seems to have jumped into the Pacific Ocean. The sciences and the arts are so far developed that one may study and work all his life and then not add one iota to the sum total of human knowledge or leave a single masterpiece.

And the fathers did their work so well that it is difficult to improve their models. The fathers had the advantage: many of their discoveries were really just on the surface any way. They picked up a lot of gold that did not have to be mined. They did not have to be very high to be above the masses. They did not have to know much to be teachers in their day.

Yes, the easy things are all done every succeeding generation has found it so. It is more difficult to make good this year than it was last. Tomorrow will require better timber for its construction than we have used today.

It is doubtful whether Wesley could "hold the crowds" today with his doctrinal and argumentative sermons as he used to do in England; the methods used in the great universities of the Middle Ages would leave a school today without a student; Socrates discussed questions in which we are not interested and Thales was mistaken in his scientific guesses. So, you see, it was easier to "get by" then than it is now.

The early financiers have "gobbled up" the country's resources and "there is no chance for a poor man now." The fact is, we have fallen upon the hardest times that the world ever saw--I say this seriously. It is difficult to make good now days.

But "easy times" have always fathered weak men. There are no great nations within the limits of the torrid zone. It requires the winds and snow of winter to drive men to the development of architecture, and to the weaving of cloth. When nature is too kind, she spoils her child. And like things are true of organized society. The more strenuous the times the better opportunity for developing the texture of manhood. If the air offered no resistance, the wings of the bird would never enable him to rise and fly. If our tasks are hard today, they present the opportunity for us to rise higher than any before us.

The labor of the fathers is not lost, unless we either ignore them or go back and spend our time doing their work again. We may become "the true ancients by standing upon the shoulders of those who have gone before us." We must begin where they left off. We have often spoken of the wisdom of our fathers, but, as a British statesman recently said, "we would do well to imitate their courage." They traveled much in paths that others had never seen, and if we are as courageous as they, there are pathless continents of progress and possession ahead for us, also.

Starting with the material side of life, we must admit that the times call for men. The surface coal is gone and we must now mine deeply. The well watered sections are occupied, we must build great irrigation projects. Timber is becoming scarce, we must now build more substantially of iron, stone and concrete. Life's standards are lifted, we must all "speed up" on production. Individually, it takes a better man to succeed than formerly. It is necessary now for any worth while enterprise to be "taken apart." That is, no man can do much without co-operation. But not very many competent people are willing to cooperate with an incompetent, a tyrant or a rogue. No matter what we may think of our men of big business, it speaks well for them that there are so many who are willing to work with them. And it is not a question of one man getting a great many people to let him do their thinking and planning, it is the much more difficult thing of getting an army of people to associate their thinking and planning for a common end.

A man who is reported to have made two million dollars in the business of farming was approached by another in this wise: "Well, of course, you have made a success, but you had the opportunity. Land and labor were cheap when you required them both and you got in on 'the ground floor.'" But the great man of success said that if he were a young man of twenty-one now he could start in with nothing and die at seventy worth a million dollars. When asked how he would do it, his answer was different from what the

majority of us would have expected. He said, "First, I would go and marry a good, intelligent girl who had been brought up in about the same circumstances of life as myself; I would then go and hire to some successful farmer in a good, well-developed section of the country. I would want the farmer to furnish me a house, a cow, a garden spot, a place for chickens and pay me fifty dollars a month. My wife and I would live on the income from the cow, chickens and garden and would use only one hundred dollars a year of my wages. I would open an account with a conservative, progressive bank, and would make my deposits regularly. At the end of two years, I would be free from debt, would have a thousand dollars in the bank and my banker's confidence; the rest would be easy." I don't think a young man should set in to get rich; he should have a higher purpose: I do not know whether this man's plan would bring the remarkable success that he suggests or not; but it takes a better man to make a success in temporal things than it ever did before; for even thieves will not trust a thief and a tyrant will not brook the tyranny of another.

You can be a Bolshevik without any one's consent, but if you succeed with the management of property and goods, you must be a man that others can trust. If you teach others to steal for you, they will steal from you. No man ever laid the foundation for an enduring fortune with money that he won on a bet. You who are looking out upon the prospects of life and planning for temporal gains; have you really "come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Or will you sit around and envy the lucky dead and curse the prosperous living, and wait for chance to make you rich?

Domestic life is a more serious matter than it used to be. I know we speak much of "the good old days" when separations were few and divorce was a scandal, and we all admit that we have fallen upon evil times from the standpoint of the home. But we, as usual, want the good things of the past without accepting the evils. How many who rejoice over "the emancipation of woman" realize that this is one of the very things that makes the domestic life of today the problem that it is? In the "good old days" there was almost no alternative for a girl but matrimony. Woman was offered but few educational advantages and almost all the lucrative and honorable positions of life were closed to her. And after she married, there was nothing for her to do but to stick to her husband. If she left him, there was scandal, and the matter of a material existence was a real problem to face, while a remarriage would be another doubtful venture. The result was that as regularly as girls came to womanhood they married, taking "the best the market offered at that time"; and they endured the brutality and neglect which were so often their lot; for there was no better alternative.

But whether we like it or not, a new day has come. Girls are this day taking better advantage of educational opportunities than boys, and they are making good. Almost every occupation and calling in life is as open to women as to men. And there is no more reason why a girl should marry now than there is why a boy should marry. And there is no more reason why a woman should live with a drunken, adulterous husband than there is that a man should keep a drunken, unclean wife. What is the result? Well, people are no better on the average, than they used to be and so the young women who prefer "single bliss" go on the even tenor of their way without the necessity of having any one provide "bread and butter" for them. Also the divorce mills grind merrily on and women put away their husbands and husbands put away their wives. I do not say that men and women are either any better or any worse than they used to be; only just the times are different and "what's in, outs" more than it used to.

Nevertheless, human society can not stand without the home. If the home dies, civilization will perish. "Male and female created He them," and designed that one man should have one woman for his wife and that they two should become one flesh, live together after God's ordinance, bear children and train them up to fear and honor God and to fit their souls for the sky. But with our changed conditions, home building

has become the highest art. The "cave man" could go out and drag his wife in by the hair, beat off competitors with a club and keep his spouse and progeny in subjection through fear. Our forebears of contiguous generations allowed a lot of license to the husband who was "a good provider," and held their women in line by bribes of "bread and butter" which the woman did not have ability to get, apart from her husband, and by threats of slander and disgrace. But every young woman now is expected to "look before she leaps," and even after she has "leaped" she is still capable of forcing Father Time to give her bread and persuading Mother Earth to give down her milk, and if she has cause, the public conscience does not damn her for ruing her bargain and going back to her maiden rights. I do not think more stringent marriage requirements or more exacting divorce conditions will either one do much to alleviate our difficulties. The trouble is not in our laws, but in us. It is ourselves that need the "revision."

The parties to matrimony have few allies, outside of themselves; and there are many things to make this old-fashioned art the most difficult of all, just now. But, in spite of all, marriage is an institution of God and is the highest, noblest and purest of earthly relations; and it is worth all that it costs to make it a success. True love, genuine religion, industry and common sense will brook every hindrance to matrimonial felicity and make the estate a glorious success. But each thing I have named is a gem of character within itself, and too many try to get by without some of these most essential possessions. Our task is a difficult one, and it requires better men and better women to build homes now than it ever did before. In all seriousness, I ask, "Can you qualify for the undertaking?" Social life, also, is now so complicated as to be all but undefinable. The ancient master and servant have been replaced by the corporation and the labor union. King and subject have become government and "the people." Men no longer get their clothing from the backs of their own sheep and their food from their own fields and olive yards; but we go to the utmost parts of the earth for the things we have learned to want. Duty and mercy, honesty and truthfulness, business and politics are not simple words any more. The definition of these terms may be clear enough, but the application is not easy. Freedom and liberty, patriotism and justice--what do these terms mean to us when we try to calculate the scope which they are permitted to cover? What is justice, and who is my neighbor? How may I do good to some without doing ill to others, amidst the complications and the clash of interests of my own times?

These are not idle questions. It is true, our fathers never had to answer them, but must meet them and answer them. In all reverence for their memory, I do not believe our fathers could have answered these distressingly perplexing questions. But every man to his own generation. Ours is both the best and the worst day that has come yet. If we can only be sufficient for this day! But God knew the times in which we were to serve, and we may be assured that He will help us in answer to our plea for succor in this great time of need.

But our most perplexing sphere is our moral and religious situation. Old-fashioned virtues, and old-time religion are both fundamental as realities, and unchanging as to essence. We may well be glad for these facts. The fundamental needs of men are the same now as in the days of our fathers. A Christian of the first century was, in every essential, characteristic and practice, the same as a Christian of the twentieth century. And the task of bringing men to God is unchanged as to its purpose and results.

But we are living in "strange and awful times." The pendulum of religious attitude has swung clear away from the side of superstition and credulity, where it was in past days, and is now over on the side of irreverence and doubt. The brutality of an honest past has given place to the refinement of a shallow gentility. The piety of the ancient who acknowledged his lack of enlightenment has been replaced by ungodliness of the modernist who claims to know. The open, fierce opposition to the work of God, which

usually could be transformed into zealous care for the upbuilding of the faith which once they sought to destroy, has been succeeded by a sullen and stubborn indifference which is as hard as adamant. People used to "come to the meetings to scoff, and remain to pray" now they will scarcely come at all. The holiness meeting used to be an attraction, but now the cheap, vile picture show entertains the light minded, seven nights in the week.

In spite of the large proportion of religious professors and church members in this country, there are but few vital Christians. In spite of the unusual amount of philanthropy, there are few revivals. Church hospitals get more "penitents" than the mourner's benches in the churches. Genuine salvation work is an unusual spectacle in more than half the churches of the nation. And there is no use for us to sit about and sigh, "Oh, for the return of the days of Wesley"; "Oh, for the raising up of a Finney or an Inskip." Wesley's days will never come back, and Finney and Inskip served their generation. There is really not going to be any one here but just us until we leave, and when we leave our day will also be passed. So, we are our day's only dependence. However poor we may serve, we have come for just this time.

God's plan for "making disciples of men" does not include a very active ministrations of angels. God will send the saving message through men who have been saved themselves. And His plan does not include a very full ministry on the part of those who are dead. He evangelizes each generation by and through the men of that generation. We know our own age, and its needs better than any other men could know them. We have literally "Come to the kingdom for such a time as this." God has complimented us by giving us so difficult a generation to reach and save. The fact that He put us here at this time is proof that it is in us to make good, if we do not cheat ourselves out of our own resources.

A man has to be stronger, better educated, and a more earnest worker today to succeed in breaking through the Devil's trenches and capturing souls for God than would have been necessary in doing the same work in the days of the past. These are days that try one's mettle. If you are unwilling to study until you secure a good education, you can not do much good in this day. If you are not sanctified wholly by the baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire, you may be able to keep out of the clutches of the Devil, but you will not snatch many souls from the burning.

"Such a time as this!" There was a crisis on when these words were spoken; the lives of tens of thousands were in the balance and the odds were against them. There was only one who might be able to stay the catastrophe, and this appeal was addressed to her.

"Such a time as this!" A crisis is on now the souls of the millions of our generation are in the balance and the odds are against them. The appeal is to the only ones who can possibly help--the appeal is to you and me. Can we cope with the situation? God is looking down upon the thousands of our young men and young women to see if they will awake and arise to the demands of their hour.

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