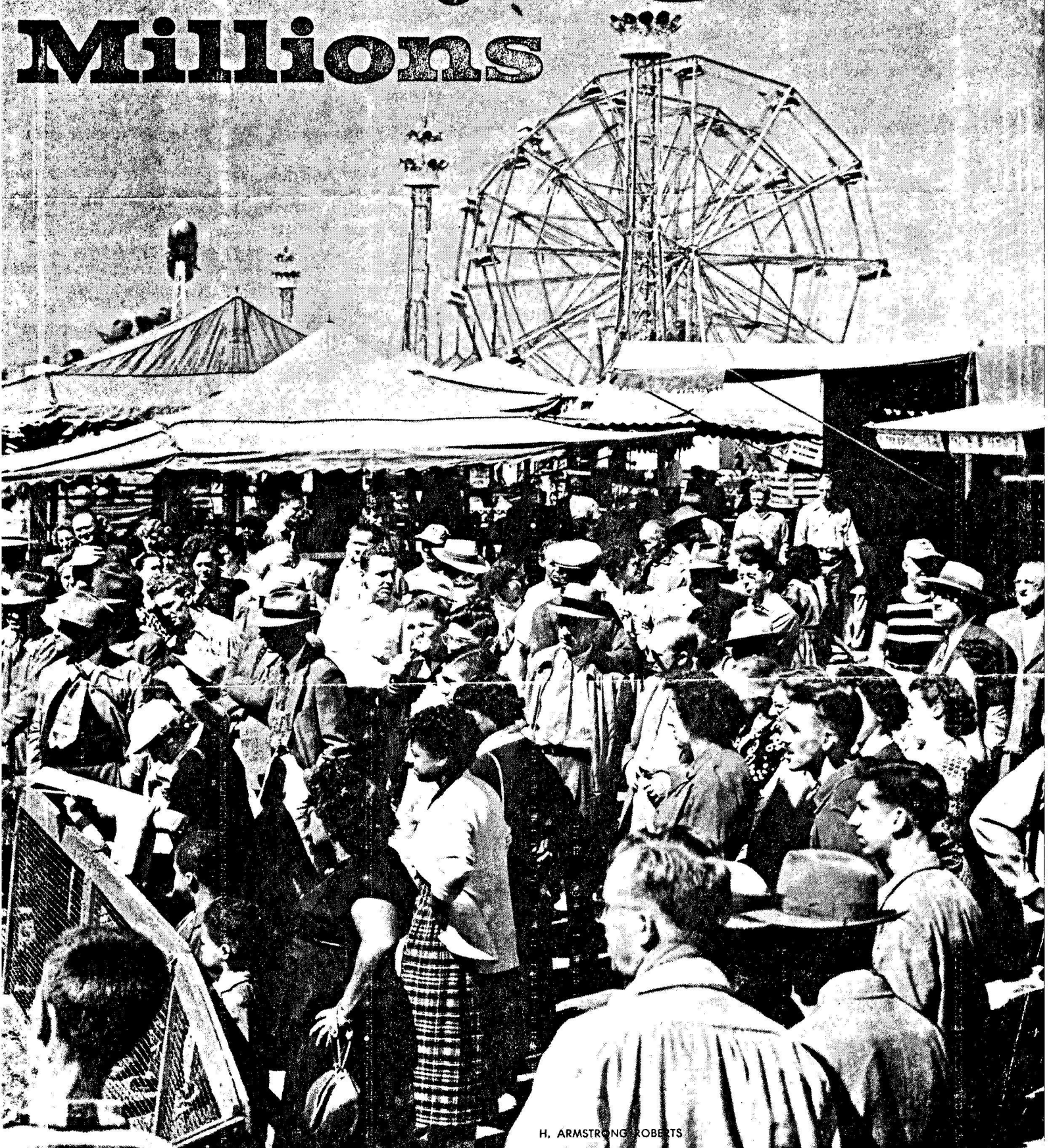


The Fatal Word Destroying Millions



TOO MANY of us postpone living. That word which on the one hand signifies hope and promise and on the other hand expresses delay is the most ominous word in our vocabulary. "Tomorrow" is frequently the motto of the lazy and the foolish. Only he who accepts the Scripture dictum that "now is the accepted time; . . . now is the day" has discovered the key to the meaning of time.

It has been said that "we must laugh before we are happy, or else we may die before we ever laugh at all." Similarly, we must live truly before every problem or difficulty is simplified and before all our ambitions are realized, or we will die before we ever live at all.

A Mr. Worldly Wiseman of two years ago reflected as follows: "What hinders us from drinking and taking our ease now, when we have already those things in our hands at which we purpose to arrive through seas of blood, through infinite toils and dangers, through innumerable calamities, which we must both cause and suffer?"—Plutarch. In others words, why postpone enjoyment, why look to the end of the rainbow for satisfaction when it may be ours right now?

One of the moderns, Paul Tillich, offers the same warning as Plutarch but with higher intent. "Have we not lost a real present by always being driven forward, by our constant running, in our indefatigable activism, toward the future? We suppose the future to be better than any present; but there is always another future beyond the next future, again and again without a present."—*The Shaking of the Foundations*, p. 36.

Transcending the counsel of all others, Christ urged men to begin real living by accepting Him now. "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." John 6:47. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." John 10:10. "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." Verse 9.

Thus our Lord declared that the highest quality of existence is available now—that heaven and eternity may commence right at the immediate moment for the one who commits himself fully to God. Christ also affirmed that to fail to stand with Him now is to

stand against Him. "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." Matthew 12:30. Note that it is the present tense He employs throughout. To promise Christ obedience *tomorrow* is to decide against Him at the point of contact which is *now*.

One of the pivotal words of Scripture is *today*. "To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." "Now [today] is the day of salvation." "This [today] is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." Hebrews 3:7, 8; 2 Corinthians 6:2; Psalm 118:24. The great snare in the philosophy of "tomorrow" is that there may be no tomorrow. The Bible declares of thoughtless men that "their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever." (Psalm 49:11.) Could all sense the brevity of life, their perspective would be truer and their aims and pursuits more accurate, worthwhile, and rewarding.

The poet Robert W. Service suggests:

"Just think! some night the stars will gleam

Upon a cold, grey stone,
And trace a name with silver beam,
And lo! 'twill be your own."

How distant is this possibility? How "long" is man's span of existence in this life? How enduring will be our "tomorrows"?

There are some forms of life, that of insects with neither mouths nor stomachs, which live for less than a day. In comparison with these our lives are not short. If we were to reach the age of seventy, we would live more than 25,000 times as long as such insects—we would have 25,000 "tomorrows"!

"We are not conscious of growing older. Somehow we feel that we are ever the same and ever will be. This, however, is only an illusion."

But wait a moment. Let us work it out. How much time do we actually have, how much *free* time, in which to choose to do what we like to do, rather than what must be done? That is, how much time do we have in which we may really *live*? None of us would measure our lives just by the time spent in doing the regular daily chores.

Suppose we are one of the privileged persons who will reach seventy. Not all do, but just suppose. Of those 25,000

days approximately one third would disappear in sleep and another third in earning our daily bread. This leaves us with the equivalent of about 9,000 days. A sixth of the original figure will be devoted to such necessities as eating, drinking, dressing, and bathing; and another sixth to fulfilling our social obligations, however unwillingly. This now leaves us with but thirty-six months of free time to enjoy. We are not deducting such amounts of time as are consumed by sickness and other eventualities, and furthermore this final figure represents the free time for those who reach seventy. Most do not attain to this age and therefore cannot count on even a thousand days of free time. Besides, for many reading this, at least half of life has fled.

Let us ask those who are twenty-eight years old or more, "Which period of life went quickest for you, from eight years to eighteen, or from eighteen to twenty-eight?" Invariably the answer is the latter. The years accelerate as they increase, and the saying is true which claims, "The first twenty years is the longest half of your life."

When as a child I laughed and wept,
Time crept.

When as a youth I dreamt and talked,
Time walked.

When I became a full-grown man,
Time ran.

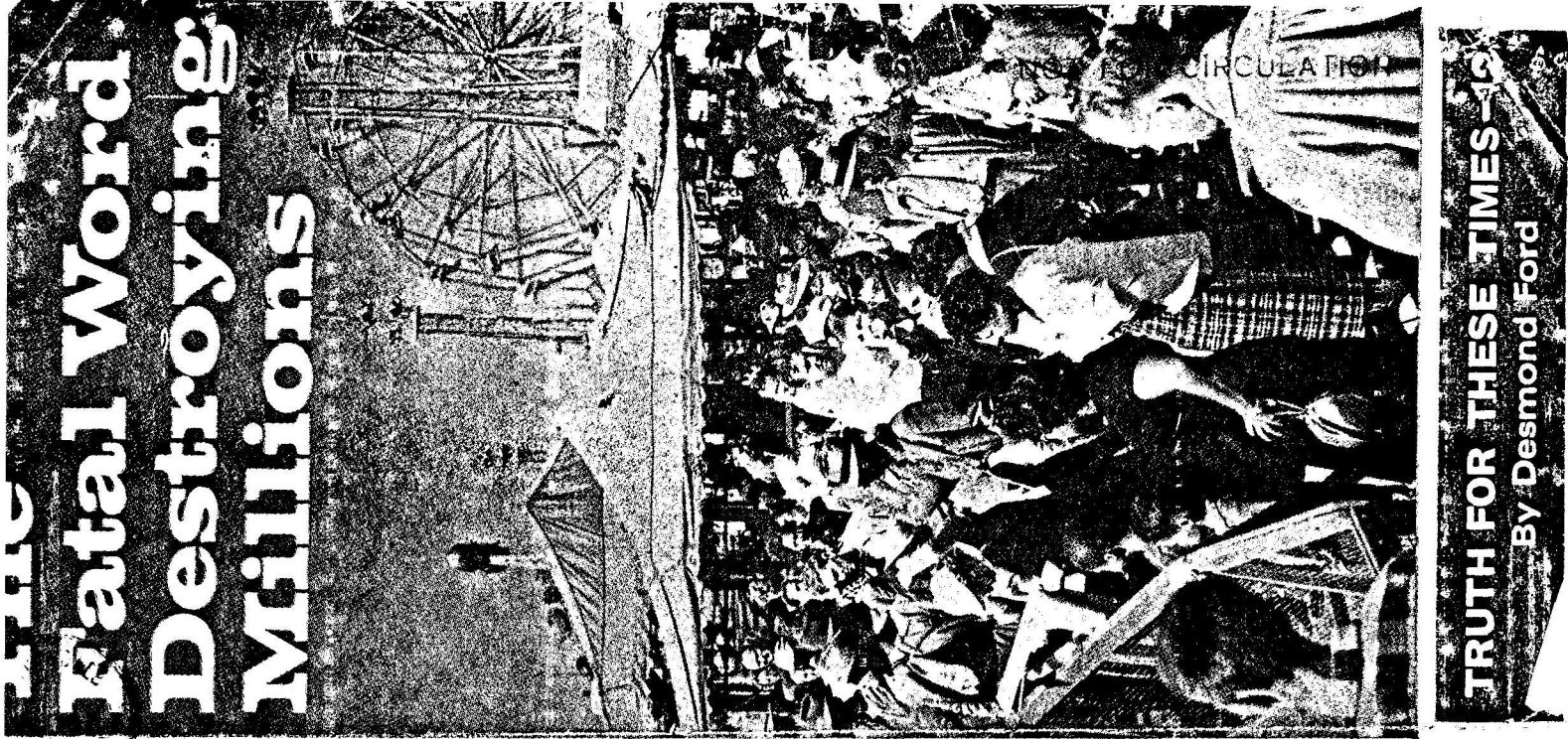
When older still I grew,
Time flew.

Soon I shall find in traveling on,
Time gone.

O Christ, wilt Thou have saved me
then?

Amen!

What does Scripture say concerning the possible number of our tomorrows? We have seen the short-lived vapor of our breath on cold mornings. The Bible says our life is just like that. "For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanishes away." James 4:14. First Chronicles 29:15 declares, "Our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding." Job exclaimed, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shut-



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TRUTH FOR THESE TIMES - 10
By Desmond Ford

candle, and when that is burned, I am through." Unlike the candle, the flaming wick of our lives may be extinguished not only unexpectedly but finally. As a philosopher of long ago pointed out, it is not for most men the thought that death means annihilation which causes pause, but the probability that it does not. (Epicurus.) "It is appointed unto men' once to die, but after this the judgment." Hebrews 9:27. This life is the sowing time, and all must face the harvest. The solemn truth is that what we make of ourselves in this life we are to remain in eternity. Death, which closes our probation, works no change in our character. At that time God's decree is, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." Revelation 22:11.

In this connection it should be remembered that "there is one case of death-bed repentance recorded, . . . that none should despair; and only one that none should presume," and that "those who plan to repent at the eleventh hour die at ten-thirty." A warning to all, given in love by Christ, is the story of the wealthy farmer. We read:

"The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he

thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" Luke 12:16-20. After relating this parable, Jesus, thinking of those who defer godliness till "tomorrow" and who make this world their home, added, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." Verse 21.

How may one be rich toward God? "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver." "Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold." Psalm 119:72, 127. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him," said Jesus in John 14:21.

But how hopeless is the attempt to truly obey if the heart is yet unchanged! And how impossible it is to change the heart any other way than by contem-

plating the love of God as revealed in the Christ of Calvary.

"Under the law with its ten-fold lash,
Learning, alas, how true,
That the more I tried the sooner I died,
While the law cried, You! You!
You!

"Hopelessly still did the battle rage,
'O wretched man' my cry,
And deliverance I sought by some penance bought,
While my soul cried, I! I! I!

"Then came a day when my struggling ceased,
And trembling in every limb,
At the foot of the Tree where One died for me,
I sobbed out, HIM! HIM!!
HIM!!!"

(Poem from *We Would See Jesus*, by Roy Hession, p. 61.)

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One of the most meaningful questions ever put to Jesus Christ was, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." John 6:68. Yes; where can we go for help but to our Creator? Truly there is no hope in the counsels of man. Despite flashes of brilliance, even the wisest of men fail to provide the ultimate answers to life. Only God has these. He says, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." Rest, joy, dynamic, satisfaction, hope—all these are yours in Christ. Our free Bible course will make all this very plain. Simply send in the coupon at the left. There is no obligation.