

“Don’t Miss the Train!”

Rev. G.H. GROSE

My wife has at least one awful memory about me. We were due to go on a long journey and as the train was scheduled to depart at an early hour of the morning we had decided to book a Retiring Room so that we would be on hand at the railway station in good time for our departure. As the evening wore on and I had quite a lot of paper work to complete it was arranged that my wife would go to the station and settle the children for the night and I would follow as soon as I could. To cut a long story short, I never saw the Retiring Room. My family were on the platform waiting for the train when I eventually got to the station with only minutes to spare. Having reserved my berth, obtained the ticket and labelled my luggage, I still had to get to the train!

Getting on to a railway train is an example of faith. You trust the railways to get to your destination. No amount of shouting, arm waving or running up and down the corridor will assist your progress. You put all of yourself on the bogie and the driver does the rest. So it is with faith in God. We cannot pressurise God into action, nor do we need to do so. We have to accept the facilities He offers and use them trustingly.

But, today, we are thinking about the effort we have to make; the need to get to the station. To accept a ticket for a journey is one thing. To pack your bags and get to the station on time is another. What we do does not earn us salvation, but what we do depends on what we are. What we are,—our current state of being in relation to God,—is a vital factor in our personal experience of God’s saving power. If we are trusting God and are obedient to Him, then God-inspired actions will surely happen. I shall see beauty in God’s creation and shall strive to create things that are beautiful as far as I am able. I shall warm to goodness and shall myself endeavour to present “good” examples of conduct and create conditions so that others may enjoy goodness, too. I shall appreciate the fact that I am an object of God’s love; but to appreciate that means to mirror it—to help other people appreciate it—to make it possible for them to understand it, which will certainly mean readiness for effort and sacrifice on my part according to my particular opportunities.

So, this article, “Don’t miss the train”, seeks to underline the aspect of personal effort. I cannot act instead of you. You cannot act in my place. You and I have to decide in our own case what we must do. Most of us have compartments to life. We have ‘Home and Family’. We have the ‘Official/On Duty’ compartment. We have ‘Friends’ and ‘Leisure time’. According to your situation and mine we affect the other people who occupy these compartments with us. We can appreciate what our parents have done, or we resent it. We can take time to play with or share the concerns of our own children, or we can say “Run away and play” and hope they will play out of earshot. We can view a report to be prepared as a boring task or as a useful bit of information, and a colleague can be regarded as ‘stupid’ when really it is us overselves who failed to explain things clearly.

Our effort involves personal discipline, meaningful action and the right use of relationships,—and this is where we need help. We need help to check self-indulgence and to regulate our comforts. We need to have good judgement as to what will best suit another’s interest. We need to spend a moment or two reviewing our activity day by day, lest it should happen that we are neglecting to ‘catch the train’. This is where the Quiet Time for prayer is invaluable.

“Many thanks, O God, for the gift of leisure,
even for the time taken to read this article,
for eyesight,—and hands to hold this page,
for education received; and for all the help I’ve
had in making way through Life.

I think of the crowds of people I have met who have,
a little by little, helped me to build my life. Those who
have taught me, thought for me, cooked for me, written to me,
even those who have disciplined me. I thank you for these.

Thank you, O God, for those who have been good examples;
who have shown me how to be gracious; who have shown me how to be generous;
for those who have shown me how to meet frustrations and how to react to difficulties.
They have all been part of your gift to me.

Help me to have the grace, imagination and determination
to make worthwhile and wholesome things available to others. Amen.”