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Speaks

Essay #12
BY-PRODUCTS OF WASTED TIME

Have you ever considered a time of your life as simply time wasted? Maybe it was a time when you were unemployed, or you were forced into some kind of idleness because of some illness or incapacity of some sort.

No period of time need be wasted. One of the great challenges of our modern world is being met in a way that waste is being turned into valuable by-products. Waste which once presented a problem is being made to yield new wealth in useful ways. All too often we think of waste as being nothing but waste. Not too long ago I had to smile when I came across a book in which I read that uranium was a worthless, white metal not found in the United States, yet today everyone is alert to the importance of uranium. It is true that treasure is not always easily separated from waste material, and yet it was from waste material that the wonders of radium were given to the world.

In the lives of many of us there are conditions that seem nothing but wasteful, periods of disappointment and sorrow. There are often barren times in life until we can see them in the light of useful by-products. One man who was facing a crisis in his life said that there was only one thought that he could cling to and that was he must take the viewpoint toward his personal tragedy that he felt God would want him to take. So, slowly, he made the wasted experience yield the needed by-product of continued usefulness. Now you may say that you have tried and failed, but you see this is only your present score--the final score may yet turn in your favor. Who knows how your persistence, your faith and hope may yet turn the score in your favor. Perhaps what we now call waste may be the carrier of a treasure that you have not yet learned to recognize and use. It is a mistake to let yourself become a loser simply because you have become discouraged and have stopped trying too soon.

I know a reporter for a very important business magazine who discovered this for himself. He had relinquished a business of his own in order to interview and to write about successful businessmen. The one thing which impressed him most was their perseverance. He concluded that he might have been a success in his own business if he had tried as faithful and as long as these businessmen had tried. This was a very important revelation. Failure should never discourage anyone; failure can actually become a challenge that makes life endlessly interesting. Many businessmen have failed at one time or another in their business ventures, but the desire to overcome their failures and their obstacles actually gave them a goal and a purpose towards which they could center their thoughts and their actions and even their friendships. Eventually, these same businessmen who had failures came to do better work and even to reach higher goals.

No one knows when his dreams through continued pursuit may come true. It is encouraging to think how very many persons in every field felt that they had no chance to succeed but who went on to succeed. Emmet Fox in his little booklet entitled The Golden Key, which has been sort of a classic in this field, says that when problems seem too great we should stop thinking about the problem and start thinking about God instead. This is getting the right perspective. A person can get so bogged down in the idea of materiality, in the limitations involved in learning, that it can actually be a hinderance instead of a help. We can think of the difficulties so much that the difficulties become our whole world. Then we lose our sense of perspective like the person who lost a job and said, "The world is over...I have nothing to live for." To which someone replied, "Oh, I am sorry to hear that your wife died, that you lost your children, and that your home was destroyed." The man seeing that he had lost his perspective responded with, "Touche!"

Many years ago a former king lay ill and penniless in a tenement room in a large city. From his room he could only see a patch of sky from his window. Having lost luxury, ease, and health, he still didn't feel bitter. He found joy in watching the sky every day. He never complained, nor did he see life as anything but cause for

gratitude for he had riches of mind and spirit, riches he knew would not vanish as his earthly kingdom had vanished. Now I know that an example like this certainly does not solve our own problems, but perhaps it does show that our problems can be solved or dis-solved.

By-products of waste come in strange guises sometimes. For example, experiences of grief can give us new strength when we learn to stand on our own feet and remain able to discharge our duties faithfully. We are also benefited as we learn the precious work of friends who stand by us and help us to see. One woman who had never been ill in her life tripped and fell over a stone. Although a broken hip with a long convalescence resulted, she didn't complain. Instead she focused on the expressions of affection and friendship that came to her as a result of the fall. She had never dreamed that she had so many good friends. So instead of terming the accident a calamity, she acclaimed that it had been the means of deepening bonds of friendship that she might never have known so well otherwise. Yet, many persons would probably have bemoaned their ill fate.

Is there something in your life that you think of as wasted? If so look carefully to see if this apparent waste cannot be useful as a by-product. Arnold Bennet once pointed out the daily miracle of the twenty-four hours that are presented to each of us. From these hours we can spin success, wealth and happiness. What a difference in attitude toward daily routines makes for millions of persons who rise each morning to face a new day. Some rise tired, bored, disgruntled; some expect to do nothing but the things to be done that day; others have managed to have sufficient rest so they can get up early and meet the day's serious problems, trying to see the direction their lives are taking is the very best for them; they are on the lookout for ways to crowd things that are interesting and happy events for them into their day. They prepare to meet the day with a good frame of mind. In this way, they can take advantage of their opportunities for joy, and be able to handle positively any incidents of defeat. They know that if the important things are right, then the unimportant trifles will certainly have no adverse affect on them

Sometimes we show by our attitudes and actions that we have no confidence in a power higher than ourselves. When you feel this way, you may be sure that you are the one responsible for this feeling. If you feel this way, you should realize that it is your own fault; you are responsible for the feeling. But if you do your part, and ask for help from your own inner God-self, you may become suddenly conscious that you are helped in ways and in greater measure than you feel you actually deserve. All too many of us are wasting time on unimportant things, spending time on almost none of the important tasks that we say we want to accomplish.

Can you avoid labeling any unfortunate or discouraging experience as an entirely evil experience? Of course, you can. Often you may find that failure carries with it the key for success. By correcting the mistakes that you made you can go forward with new courage and enthusiasm. Now, most people agree that whatever seems to be waste in our lives should be turned into useful by-products. There is no lack of assent as to the worth of this idea. The few people who realize this are able to convert this waste into that which is useful. Many persons, however, fail to do this because they lack the power to carry their ideas into action. Just at the time they really need inner power, they are and become vulnerable to feelings of defeat, and thus they cannot continue in their work. Of course, it is because of this that one needs to go on building day by day, so that in times of stress one can be strong enough to master his problems.

If you feel that you lack power, it is because you are trying to work things out alone. If you realize that your power and your strength come out of a divine flow, that you are one with the infinite process, then you can look at any situation or difficulty objectively and consider it prayerfully. You can learn to have a deeper trust in the activity of God within you. When you do, you can accept any challenge, knowing that you can turn it into success. You can actually find the by-products of any so-called waste.