

CHAPTER V

WITH ALL HIS MIGHT

The book of Ecclesiastes offers this sage advice: **"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, no device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest"** (Eccl. 9:10.) The point of the Scripture involves action. When you die it is too late to pursue your dreams.

Whatever criticism we may level at G.H. Walsler, we can never accuse him of being lazy, lukewarm, or indifferent. He was a man of action. Even though he was wrong, he deserves some credit for not sitting on the sidelines.

Wise King Solomon reminded his readers that when you die, it is too late to do anything. There is no work, device, knowledge, or wisdom in the grave. These four different words describe a wide variety of human activities. Many come down to the last days of their lives regretting the fact that they had been too restrained, cautious, and careful. Their major theme is "if only." George H. Walsler never had these regrets.

There is another passage in the Bible that offers some consolation to people like Walsler. The following words were written to the church at Laodicea. **"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou were cold or hot. So then because thou are neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth"** (Rev. 2:15-16)

It seems that God prefers people to be anything but lukewarm. Hot is best, cold is next best, lukewarm is last. Walsler's coldness to Christ may have been an advantage. Like Saul of Tarsus, he was an opponent to Christianity. It seems, however, that opponents to Christ are easier to convert than those who are not opposed to anything.

It seems that Walsler was opposing God with "all his might." He was risking everything. Proving his liberal theories seems to have been the all consuming passion of his life.

Among the town's first buildings, was a small frame structure that Walsler constructed for his law office.

GEORGE H. WALSER

The first newspaper in Liberal was initially called "The Liberalite." Its Publication started within a year or so after the town was founded. G.H. Walser was the first owner and editor.

The first hotel was called the "Ozark House." It was also started by Mr. Walser.

Liberal's first park was called "Catalpa Park." It also was Walser's project. Ruth Black Aten describes Catalpa Park on page 163 of her book, "She Kept Men Standing."

"This Catalpa Park, a thirteen-acre plot a half mile south of town, was designed and built by Mr. Walser, Liberal's founder, at a cost of some forty thousand dollars. He maintains it at his own expense for the public's enjoyment. It surely is beautiful. It has many flower beds and ornamental fountains; twenty latticed, vine-covered pergolas; an artificial lake that is used by bathers and boating enthusiasts in summer and ice skaters in winter; and a wonderful picnic area in a grove of catalpa trees. Nobody seems to know why Mr. Walser chose the catalpa, but he ordered a thousand from a nursery and had them planted in his park in his town.

In the park there are summer cottages, an excellent boarding house, and an ice cream and lemonade stand. For indoor events there's what is called the 'Celestial Dome.' It is a large octagonal building, complete with stage and moveable seating. Three public lectures are held each Sunday. On Wednesday and Saturday afternoons there are band concerts, and at night there is dancing. Lighted by kerosene lamps, this place is large enough to accommodate as many as twenty-eight sets or 224 square dancers at one time. The caller is a Freethinker by the name of Guffy."

The Liberal City Cemetery was Walser's project too. It was fashioned in a circle, and every person buried there is facing the center. The center lot is a perfect circle, ninety-eight feet in diameter. It is neatly bounded by a concrete retaining wall about six inches high. This, of course, is where Mr. Walser planned to be buried. It was commonly believed that he designed the cemetery so that should there be a resurrection, his followers would rise to hail him as their leader.

As I have said before, Walser was wrong! His great gamble did not work! His theories failed! At least, however, he had the courage to try. His long and difficult pilgrimage brought him at last to faith in Christ. At the end of his life, when his health was

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gone, and his money was gone, he changed. He deserves credit for this too. In his last book, written in 1909, he described himself as a "converted infidel."

The late Jim Elliot observed that a man is not a fool for giving up those things that he cannot keep, to gain those things that he cannot lose. We cannot take it with us, but we can send it ahead so that it will be there when we arrive.