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**A Life at Its Best ...**

**Edwards Richard Henry**

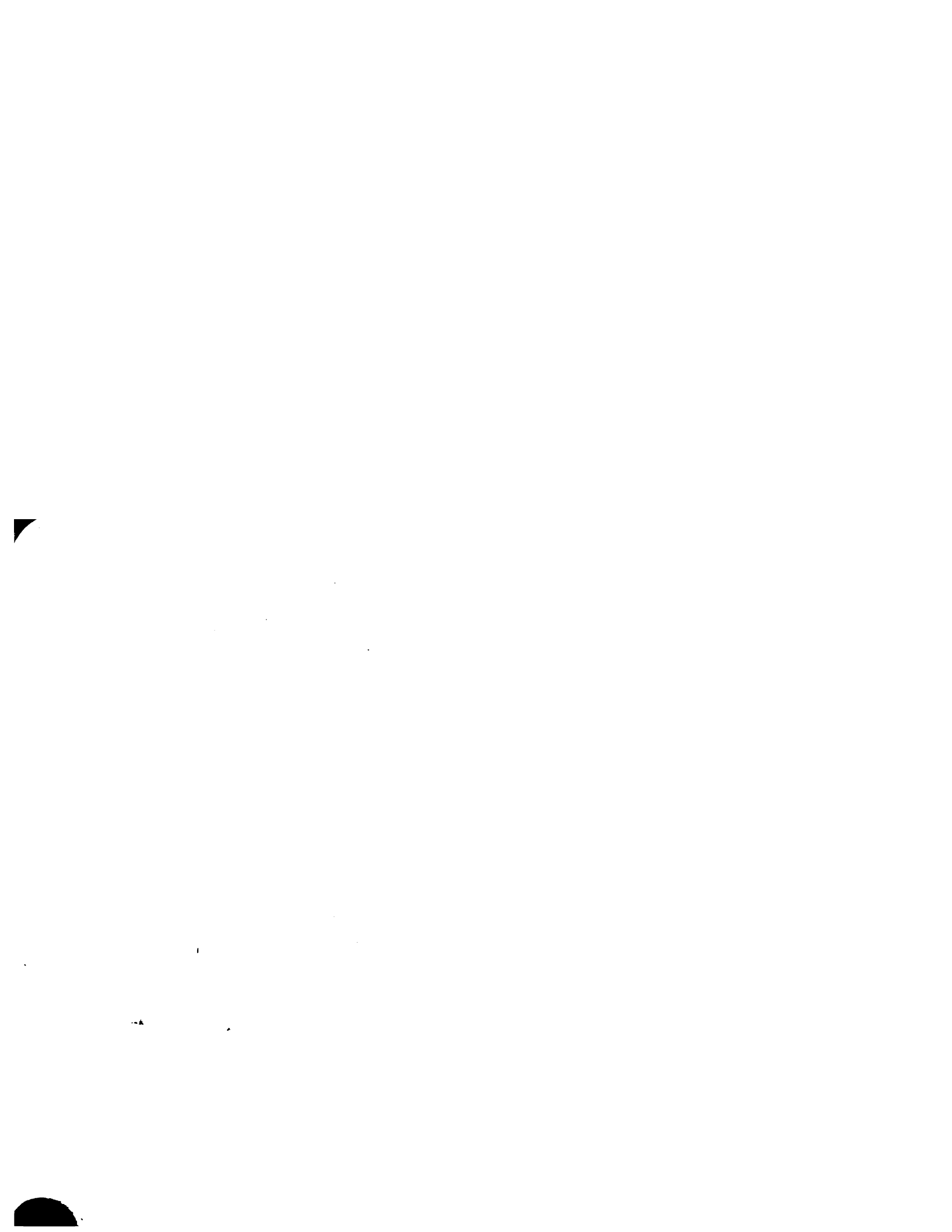
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**Title: A Life at Its Best ...**

**Author: Edwards Richard Henry**

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COLLEGE VOLUNTARY STUDY COURSES

SECOND YEAR—PART I

**A LIFE AT ITS BEST**

*"This one thing I do."*—PAUL OF TARSUS

BY

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## COLLEGE VOLUNTARY STUDY COURSES

"A Life at Its Best" is the third of a series of text-books known as College Voluntary Study Courses. The general outline for this curriculum has been prepared by the Committee on Voluntary Study of the Council of North American Student Movements, representing the Student Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations and the Student Volunteer Movement, and the Sub-Committee on College Courses of the Sunday School Council of Evangelical Denominations, representing twenty-nine communions. Therefore the text-books are planned for the use of student classes in the Sunday School, as well as for the supplementary groups on the campus. The present text-book has been written under the direction of these Committees.

The text-books are not suitable for use in the academic curriculum, as they have been definitely planned for voluntary study groups.

This series, covering four years, will form a minimum curriculum for the voluntary study of the Bible, foreign missions, and North American problems. Daily Bible Readings are printed with each text-book. The student viewpoint is given first emphasis—what are the student interests? what are the student problems?

### BOOKS IN THE SERIES

#### *First Year:*

PART I—STUDENT STANDARDS OF ACTION, by Harrison S. Elliott and Ethel Cutler.

PART II—CHRISTIAN STANDARDS IN LIFE, by J. Lovell Murray and Frederick M. Harris.

#### *Second Year:*

PART I—A LIFE AT ITS BEST, by Richard Henry Edwards and Ethel Cutler.

## INTRODUCTION

This book is not a chronological study of the life of Paul. Neither does it attempt to expound his theology. It is intended to present the great apostle as a man of action, as a messenger of the Gospel at work in the world. In this presentation it is hoped that the leading characteristics of a life at its best stand out unmistakably.

While no extended study of the epistles of Paul is here included, large use has been made of selections. These have been used, just as passages from any correspondence, simply as suggestive of the character and ideals of the writer.

In many of the Scripture passages quoted in this book, some use has been made of italics. These have been introduced, as a general rule, by the authors for purposes of emphasis. Since it is the custom of our English versions to introduce italics to indicate words inserted by the translator for the sake of greater clearness, the authors' practice occasionally results in slight confusion. It seems, however, that the advantages of the practice far outweigh the really slight disadvantage.

Grateful acknowledgment for persistent and painstaking help in the preparation of this manuscript is made to the members of the Committee on Voluntary Study of the Council of North American Student Movements and to the members of the Sub-Committee on College Courses of the Sunday School Council of Evangelical Denominations. Special thanks are tendered to the Reverend Melancthon W. Jacobus, D.D., Dean of Hartford Theological Seminary, for manuscript revision with regard to the use of Bible passages.





## CHAPTER I

### A MAN OF ACTION

*"I can do all things."*

A man of intrepid action, alert, eager, vehement, quick in decision, swift in his movements, always getting things done—such a man was Paul of Tarsus. A strong sense of momentum permeates everything he does and says. He speeds from city to city, intense and restless as a modern; or dictates letters which surge so full of ideas that the words come tumbling down over each other upon the page. No one ever seemed to know where he might be expected to break out next. Now at Tarsus, now at Jerusalem, now at Rome; men hailed him as he passed, went out to bid him goodbye, or found a little note asking them to send along a coat and parchments he had left behind. There seemed to be an inner clutch in the life of the man which carried him on from city to city like one who said, "Let us go elsewhere *into the next towns*, that I may preach there also; for to this end came I forth" (Mark 1:38).

Nevertheless Paul came to a dead stop every little while, for he met opposition and defeat. He knew ill-health and brutal treatment. Yes, *he* knew how to be abased as well as how to abound, and yet nothing stopped him for long. He was always up and on again, overcoming obstacles, defying the opposition, circumventing his enemies, and forth-putting his deepest convictions into effective action. Paul was a man who welded ideals into deeds and paid the price of fearless loyalty to those ideals, whatever the odds against him. He set down once a list of his great experiences, writing more with pride of what he had stood than with any

desire for sympathy. His physical endurance alone is a surpassing achievement.

"Ministers of Christ? yes perhaps, but not as much as I am (I am mad to talk like this!), with all my labours, with all my lashes, with all my time in prison—a record longer far than theirs. I have been often at the point of death; five times have I got forty lashes (all but one) from the Jews, three times I have been beaten by the Romans, once pelted with stones, three times shipwrecked, adrift at sea for a whole night and day; I have been often on my travels, I have been in danger from rivers and robbers, in danger from Jews and Gentiles, through dangers of town and of desert, through dangers on the sea, through dangers among false brothers—through labour and hardship, through many a sleepless night, through hunger and thirst, starving many a time, cold and ill-clad, and all the rest of it" (II Cor. 11: 23-27, Moffatt).

But he gloried in what he had to bear and whipped even his own hardships into use that he might wrest from them still further achievement—a spiritual achievement for Christ. "So I am proud to boast of all my weakness, and thus to have the power of Christ resting on my life. It makes me satisfied, for Christ's sake, with weakness, insults, trouble, persecution, and calamity; for I am strong just when I am weak" (II Cor. 12: 9, 10, Moffatt).

Pioneer that he was and leading an unpopular cause, he reveals the endurance of a soldier, the vision of a prophet, the heroism of a martyr, and through it all the very Spirit of Christ Himself.

Wherever Paul went, *he said straight out what he had to say*. He was ever forthright with his words, and shot the truth home to men's hearts with absolute directness. Once he went to the synagogue at Damascus and "proclaimed Jesus." The amazement of the people that one who had persecuted those of "The Way" should come to such a position intensified his zeal. He became more and more vigorous, "speaking freely in the name of the Lord" (Acts 9: 28, Moffatt).

There was no escaping the soundness of his arguments, and the Jews, "convinced against their will, yet of the same opinion still," enraged, "conspired to make away with him. But this plot came to the ears of Saul, and, although they kept watch on the gates day and night in order to make away with him, his disciples managed one night to let him down over the wall by lowering him in a basket" (Acts 9:23-25, Moffatt). And he went to Jerusalem.

*Paul was a resourceful man in the face of opposition.* He always had a second plan of attack ready for use if his first one failed, and was quick-witted enough to match any competition that his enemies might bring. When opportunity sought him out, he went with Barnabas to Antioch and set out on a world tour. His experience when he came to Corinth was intensely human. When the Jews "opposed and abused him, he shook out his garments in protest, saying, 'Your blood be on your own heads! I am not responsible! After this I will go to the Gentiles.' Then he removed to the house of a devout proselyte called Titus Justus, which adjoined the synagogue" (Acts 18:6, 7, Moffatt). If he could not preach in the synagogue itself he would at least preach "hard by."

But the Jews bided their time. With the coming of Governor Gallio—brother of Seneca the Great—they saw their chance and haled Paul before the tribunal. But they had reckoned without their host. Gallio saw through their flimsy accusations, and did not even require of Paul a defense before rendering his verdict. "If a misdemeanor or a crime were in question, ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you; but if they are questions of word, *not deed*, and of names, *not things*, and of your law, *not Roman law*, ye yourselves will look to it" (Acts 18:14, 15, Ramsay). And Gallio drove them from the judgment seat, nor cared at all that they fell on Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him right in court, while Paul went his way.

Paul was no dodger of trouble. While he was lecturing at the school of Tyrannus at Ephesus, the results of his preaching began to be felt. Real religion threatened the com-