

The Gospel Witness

PUBLISHED EVERY THURSDAY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF EVANGELICAL PRINCIPLES
AND IN DEFENCE OF THE FAITH ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS.

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Editor: T. T. SHIELDS

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."—Romans 1:16.

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"Growing Wings and Learning to Fly"

"What am I thinking about, you ask? So help me God, of immortality. What am I doing? Growing wings and learning to fly." In these arresting and suggestive words the great Puritan poet, John Milton, described his aims for a long period of intensive preparation to which he devoted himself in his youth. But "the labour and intensive study" which the young poet "took to be his portion in this life", seemed to some of his friends to be a fruitless waste of time, and Milton felt constrained to defend himself from their censures. The most famous and probably the most complete reply he made to such criticisms has been preserved for all generations in the beautiful sonnet, "On His Having Arrived at the Age of Twenty-Three". He confesses, not without sorrow, that in his life

"inward ripeness doth much less appear,
That some more timely-happy spirits endu'th"

but the slowness with which his powers mature will not deter him, as he says in a letter accompanying the poem, from pursuing "a sacred and religious advisement how best to undergo, not taking thought of being late, so it gives advantage to be more fit; for those that came latest lost nothing when the master of the vineyard came to give each one his hire."

"Yet, be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure even
To that same lot, however mean or high,
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven.
All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great Task-Master's eye."

The same patient determination to be thoroughly furnished for what Milton believed to be his divine vocation had been expressed in a negative way nearly ten years before he wrote the above lines. The sentences in which he describes his fellow-students at Cambridge have the sound of early rumblings of the mighty thunderbolts he was later to hurl at the enemies of liberty:

"At any rate, so far as I know, there are but one or two among us who do not take their flight to theology before ever they are fledged, almost untrained and uninitiated in literature and philosophy alike. And even of theology they are content with a mere smattering, if it be but enough to enable them to piece together after a fashion some little homily and patch it up as it were out of scraps of other men's rags. So much so, that there is a serious risk of our clergy gradually falling into the popish ignorance of former ages."

As one reads these lines, one is constrained to wonder what Milton would have said of theological training in our day. Of those who now prepare themselves for the ministry of the gospel, how many are there who share the Puritan poet's "sacred and religious advisement how best to undergo"? Christianity has ever been wounded in the house of its friends, and on this continent it has suffered not a little at the hands of those responsible for theological short-cuts and the "quick-lunch counter" type of school. The evangelicalism of such institutions is praiseworthy, though some of them show signs of compromising on the great verities on which they were founded, but there is nothing to compensate for the superficiality they have wrought in the churches through their graduates. Men not thoroughly grounded in the great doctrines of the faith are disposed to emphasize one aspect of the truth at the expense of the rest and to make of the resultant distortion a hobby-horse, or worse still, to make a criterion of orthodoxy of their peculiar view of some subordinate detail of the gospel.

No man of any experience in the ministry needs to be persuaded of the value of the best training possible, but young recruits, eagerly looking forward to doing exploits for the King, are apt to be impatient of the time spent in preparation, imagining that the issue of the battle depends upon their immediate arrival on the scene of action. But they have not yet had experience of the truth that Milton learned when darkness settled down upon him.

"They also serve who only stand and wait".

The forty years Moses spent in the school in the backside of the desert were not lost, nor was David's long exercise with sling and stone useless in the day of battle. The Teacher of teachers kept His disciples with Him for three years, night and day, without holidays—in point of actual teaching hours surely the equivalent of thrice that number of years in a modern school, and in point of quality, without comparison.

A school capable of providing all the requirements of the gospel ministry does not exist, for such is not the work of human teachers. Nevertheless the type of school in which a pastor receives his early training is of paramount importance to the effectiveness of his future ministry. This article is addressed particularly to young people who have heard the Master's call and who are

making plans for their training. We would urge them to meditate, as did Milton, upon the necessity of "growing wings and learning to fly", if they also

"with no middle flight intend to soar
Above the Aonian mount".

Toronto Baptist Seminary was established to train men who, as much as may in them be, would be eager to preach the gospel; it regards as its supreme task the exposition of the principles of that gospel in all their unsearchable riches, and the development of the whole personalities of those committed to its care. The success which has attended its efforts as demonstrated in the lives and ministry of its former students is an ever-increasing cause for joy, and we trust that it will enjoy an ever increasing ministry.—W.S.W.

WELL DONE, BOBCAYGEON!

We publish the following letter for the double purpose of congratulating the Bobcaygeon Church on its courageous decision to carry the whole burden of the expense of its own work, and secondly, of sharing the good news with all the other churches that have had a part, through the Union grant, of making this work possible. Nothing could give greater joy to the members of the Board, than the manifest blessing of the Lord that has rested upon Pastor Gillion and his work at Bobcaygeon. It is our sincere prayer that pastor and people may go on to ever greater conquests in the future:

Bobcaygeon, Ont.

July 16th, 1938.

Rev. W. S. Whitcombe,
337 Jarvis St.,
Toronto, Ont.

Dear Mr. Whitcombe:

I am writing you as the Secretary of the Executive Board of the Union of Regular Baptist Churches; to inform you that the Bobcaygeon Baptist Church, at a regularly called meeting held July 7th, decided on self-support, and will therefore not require any further support from the Board.

We wish to express our deep appreciation and thanks for all the support the Union Churches have given to us through the Board.

We are confident that the churches will not only feel justified in their investment in the Lord's work here, but will rejoice in knowing that over one hundred have followed Christ in baptism, and that some five preaching stations have been established, a Sunday School room built, a parsonage at Bobcaygeon, and a church building at Kingmount, all in connection with our work.

Thanking you again, I remain,

Sincerely yours,
(signed) Mrs. Aylmer Sutton, Church Clerk.

A SYMPATHETIC LETTER FROM GOLD COAST. B.W.A.

Methodist Mission,
Sefwi-Bekwai,
c/o P.O. Box 81,
Dunkwa (on offn),
via Takoradi,
Gold Coast, B.W.A.

"THE GOSPEL WITNESS,
Toronto 2, Canada.

"My dear Editor:

"It greatly saddens my heart to learn from THE GOSPEL WITNESS, the burning of the great Baptist Church in Toronto; and hasten to sympathise with you in this great loss. I am now living here on transfer as school teacher.

"Into God's hands we commit all loss, trusting that He will in one way or the other build you, a new church of the most finest fashion surpassing the old. In resigning sorrows at this thought, we hear the voice of Jesus.

"Am very sorry that money is not in favour with me now. But as the case stands, I shall sometime give you something for the building of the new church.

Most grateful thanks for your frequent supply of THE GOSPEL WITNESS. THE WITNESS has been my inspiration from time to time and is still the same. I feel that God is speaking to me each time I read THE WITNESS. I find therein the way of life in Christ Jesus. I pray God that He may help me to practise Christianity through and through.

"The spiritual food of THE WITNESS is very sweet and healthy in which abide strength and bliss. May Jesus Christ be praised.

"With best regards,

Yours Sincerely,
(Signed) Stephen Anaman."

NEWS OF UNION CHURCHES

GOOD NEWS FROM SUDBURY

The following is taken from a letter written by Pastor John Boyd of Sudbury on July 26th. We remind our readers that it is only two years since Mr. Boyd went to Sudbury unknown and almost literally penniless. In that time a strong work has been built up and several outstations opened. This letter will be of the greatest encouragement to those who support our Home Mission programme, for which we have recently made several appeals.

"The work is slowly going on in size and strength. We have not had large crowds at our tent meetings, but seem to have been blessed by the attendance of hearts definitely prepared by God. We have had some conversions every week since the campaign started, and rejoice to see the new converts really going on with the Lord. The Holy Spirit has worked with real power among some of the Catholic people here, and a young Ukrainian woman and two young Frenchmen have made very clear professions of faith in Christ. One of the men has already asked to be baptized, and I expect will be accepted and baptized next Sunday afternoon. Our expenses, though surprisingly high, are all being met by the free and joyful contributions of the Lord's people here. I regret that we have not been able to send as much as before to the Union Fund, but our special efforts to reach the lost around us has cost a great deal over and above our regular operating expenses. But we rejoice that we have been able to purchase and fully equip our tent, and reach a number of precious souls, all of whom have heard the gospel, and several of whom are whole-heartedly working for Jesus Christ.

"We had great joy in outside expansion work also, especially in a new district we visited four weeks ago. It is a Finnish farming community, and when we went in we found a Finnish mother who was saved in Jarvis Street Church seventeen years ago, and who for nine years has been faithfully testifying to her friends, and praying for someone to come with the gospel. She was almost overcome with joy as we met her, and announced that we would come once a week for a meeting; but last Wednesday night that joy became unspeakable to us all as one of her grown up sons and a neighbour man found their way to Calvary, and another son was restored from a backslidden condition. We expect to continue there every Wednesday night, and hope to see a great harvest from this faithful mother's years of sowing.

"More and more as I see the need, and look upon the lost and dying, I feel the need of men of purpose and Divine power for the work of the ministry. I more than ever pray that such will be found this year to begin their special preparation for the work."

Mr. Boyd also commends the ministry of Rev. Frank Wellington, who has been assisting him in the special tent campaign: "I cannot speak too highly in expressing our appreciation of Mr. Wellington's ministry. I have never had any one who more whole-heartedly and energetically worked in every possible way to win souls for the Lord. Thanks indeed for sending him."

The Jarvis Street Pulpit

"OUR MOUTH FILLED WITH LAUGHTER, AND OUR TONGUE WITH SINGING"

A Sermon by the Pastor, Dr. T. T. Shields

Preached in Massey Hall, Toronto, Sunday Evening, July 24th, 1938

(Stenographically reported)

"When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.
 "Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them.
 "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.
 "Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south.
 "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.
 "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."—Psalm 126.

Last Sunday evening the basis of our meditation was the one hundred and thirty-seventh Psalm, when we endeavoured to understand something of the experience of Zion's exiles, as by the rivers of Babylon they sat down and wept at the remembrance of Zion, and hanged their harps on the willows in the midst thereof. The Psalm before us this evening relates also to the captivity; but it is the story of the experience of those in whose behalf God has graciously interposed. The long and seemingly interminable seventy years of captivity at last are ended, and by God's grace the people are brought back again to their own beloved land: the temple is restored, divine worship is once again observed; and as they reflect upon it all, and see what God has done for them, they say, "We were like them that dream—it is too good to be true—then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing."

But this Psalm has something more than an historical significance and application: it is really the voice of universal Christian experience. It is contemporary with every age. God's people in successive ages and generations have found in it a vehicle admirably fitted for the expression of the emotions of their own hearts. This evening I ask you to look at it with me, that we may derive some comfort therefrom, some instruction, and I hope some inspiration too.

I.

WHAT ARE THE CAPTIVITIES TO WHICH MEN ARE SUBJECT, men who were created in the image and likeness of God, upon whose brow the divine Creator set a crown, and in whose hand He placed a sceptre, under whose rule He established a kingdom and said, "Have dominion"? How is it that men thus created to be free, created for the exercise, within the limits of the divine order, of a human sovereignty, in bondage to no man, are now in chains, the noise of whose shackles can frequently be heard? What are some of the captivities into which men made to be free, are brought?

Some of those who sang this song *were born in captivity*. They had never seen the favoured land that was flowing at one time with milk and honey. They opened their eyes upon a scene of bondage, wherein they were subject to foreign masters, and could not do what they would, nor go where they desired. They were born to a life of captivity and bondage. So is it true of us spiritually—of all flesh. Paradise has been lost. "So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of

Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." Men have been born without the garden, amid conditions of bondage. We read this evening, that we were by nature "the children of wrath, even as others"; born with an inheritance of guilt, and an inheritance of impotence too, unable to exercise ourselves, or to possess ourselves of that which, by creation was to be our right the right of being free. How many there are to-day who have never seen within the garden gate, who have never heard the music of the waters of a land of freedom, but only the sobbing fret of some Babylonian stream, knowing nothing of freedom themselves, because born to captivity.

By long practice the bands of their bondage had been strengthened. They had become the servants of their captors. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" "Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage."

What a multitude of people are habit-bound; by the powers of their own nature, cribbed, cabined, and confined—their wings clipped so that they can no longer mount up with wings as eagles:

"Look how we grovel here below,
 Fond of these earthly toys;
 Our souls can neither fly nor go
 To reach immortal joys."

Men are bound by habits of thought, unable to deliver the mind from those "furrows of long thought" of which Byron speaks. A man came to see me some years ago, a man in his eighties, who was bound with chains—not physical. He leaned upon the arm of his daughter. Perhaps his mind was weakened somewhat, but he was in bondage to the mental life he had lived. He said, "I cannot free my mind from thoughts that are horrible and corrupt. Sometimes I feel as though I shall go mad in the night-watches when I cannot sleep. These thoughts that in my earlier years I welcomed, and gave them hospitality, have now become masters of my mind. I cannot read a good book; I cannot read the Bible. These dreadful thoughts surge like unclean birds through my mind, and I cannot free myself from them." He was a captive.

Many, who by the exercise of a strong will are able to conceal their inner life, occasionally involuntarily reveal the quality of their minds. There is a column in one of

our newspapers I have stumbled upon once or twice, but have never read it through. The man who writes it must live in the sewer, and delight in all unclean things. Poor soul! You can hear his chains rattle in the head lines.

There are men who are thus brought into captivity by actual practices. I have known men who have acquired the habit of untruthfulness until they would tell a lie when the truth would serve them better; people who have given themselves to dishonest practices, until they cannot act honestly; people whose habits of life are deceptive, so that no one dare believe them. A little experience with such a man absolutely destroys all confidence in him. One cannot trust him—he is brought into bondage.

What shall one say of *the grosser sins*, of that dreadful evil that is now so rampant in this province? I do not think that Canada ever had so many drunkards. I do not think there ever were so many women who had lost all the refinements of womanhood, and become beasts through this accursed drink traffic. You can see them by the hundred in Toronto at any time, born in captivity, and the chains of their captivity strengthened by their subjection until they cannot break them.

How sad it is! So blinded by sin have men become that all the—I had almost said divine powers, powers at least that were designed to be put to noble uses have been prostituted to the making of manacles and chains. Men boast of science, and of its accomplishments—and now you see hell let loose on the world, and all men's power concentrated upon the work of destruction. What an aggregation of fools we are! This world is populated with people who are morally insane: there are plenty of them in Europe, and plenty of them in Canada, and in the United States as well, who have become slaves to a superior power.

So may it happen in *the lives even of those who are the Lord's people*. One needs to exercise great care that he may "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." How easily men become enslaved to the customs of the times, surrender their individual lives until by and by they are as putty, moulded by the hands of fashion and habit. Even the Lord's own children lose their freedom to do the will of God out of an active conscience and a pure heart. Sometimes God's people, like ancient Zion, fall into evil ways, and are literally carried into captivity; the candle of the Lord no longer burns upon them. They are carried to alien lands and foreign situations, and live amid conditions of life that are entirely out of harmony with the realm of free grace.

How the church gets into bondage! God's Zion throughout the world, it seems to me, is almost generally in exile. How little there is nowadays of heart-religion! I went a few days ago with our Building Committee, to see some things in relation to our building. We went to one firm where there was a large room where men were constructing a chancel, with lectern, and pulpit, and all the rest of it. We learned the name of the church that had ordered it, not an Episcopalian Church—not a Roman Catholic Church. They are spending nearly one hundred thousand dollars in alterations in their building, that they may have a chancel, an altar, and I think a lectern on one side and pulpit on the other.

Do you know, historically, why the pulpit was put on one side, and the lectern on the other, and all the centre left free? To make room for the sacrifice of the Mass.

The whole thing is unscriptural anti-Christian, Roman Catholic; it puts the preaching of the gospel on one side, and the reading of the Word on the other—and magnifies a wafer and the priest in his vestments.

We went to another manufacturing concern and they also were busy building a chancel for still another church that is spending about one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars in this way. I said to our Building Committee, "If Rome gains the ascendancy in Canada, as she seems determined to do, she will find church buildings already prepared for her possession and use: she will not have to rebuild them." I talked with the architects about it, and one of them said to me—a Christian man, whose father was a Christian and an architect: "My father used to say that in the measure in which the churches lose the presence and power of God, they fill them with chancel, and lectern, and all the rest of it."

A man told me when he attended college in this city in the late eighties, that at that time there was not a church in the city of Toronto in which one could be sure of finding a comfortable seat after seven o'clock. Most of the churches were crowded to the doors before the time of service. In our day three or four churches unite so that they may have at least a handful of people for someone to go through a form of service before them. "The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate." These are sad days for the church of Christ generally.

The professed church of Christ, like the individual sinner, never knows the strength of her bands until she tries to escape therefrom. A man says, "I am not in bondage to any man: I am free." The poor victim of his cups says, "I can drink, or I can let it alone." Then why does he not let it alone? Be honest. You have tried, and you cannot. "I can do as I like." No you cannot. The people of Israel when in Egyptian bondage did not know how rigorous was their bondage until they tried to escape therefrom. Then they felt the lash of the taskmasters' whip; then all Pharaoh's horses and chariots of war were let loose upon them. The man who docilely does as he is told, a slave to his own sin, boasts of his freedom until he tries to use it, then he finds his chains hold him fast in the bitterest kind of bondage.

I read sometimes the reports of conferences like that of Oxford or Edinburgh, wherever it is held from time to time, when the heads of various denominations come together in conclave, put their heads together and talk about how to better their own condition, how to free the church from her bondage, how to increase her influence—and there is almost invariably the proposal, "Let us unite." The Anglican with the Roman Church, and the Greek Church with the Roman Church; all the free churches in England with the Anglican—"Let us unite." What does it mean? Only the beginning of a chain factory, only a forge in which to fashion still heavier shackles. The last state is always worse than the first.

What shall we do? *How shall the captivity of Zion be turned again?* I wonder is there a backslider here this evening, a man who once walked with God, who has lost the joy of His salvation? Why do you not come back? "I cannot." Why do you not return to the Lord with full purpose of heart? "I have tried." What! "Yes, sir; but what you say is true. I am a captive." We have our choice always. Every man is either the bondslave of Jesus Christ—and that is the most glorious liberty in the universe, for "whom the Son makes free is free indeed"—either the bondslave of Christ, or he is

under a cruel taskmaster, led captive by the devil at his will.

II.

Let us see HOW THESE CAPTIVITIES ARE TERMINATED BY DIVINE GRACE: "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion." For seventy long years the people of God languished in Babylon. They could not return to their own land. The time to favour Zion, the set time, was not come. They had been sentenced by the divine Judge as a chastisement, to seventy years of servitude. They were held fast, and there was no power on earth that could break the captives' bonds until God should arise. But He did arise; and when at last the captivity was ended, it was the Lord Who "turned again the captivity of Zion". It is always the Lord's doing—and "it is marvellous in our eyes".

It is so, dear friends, in conversion, when a man is set free by the power of God. Often have I seen it, I testify to His praise. I know I can say without exaggeration, in many thousands of cases, I have seen God come into a human life and bring the soul back into the enjoyment of all the beauties and splendours of Eden itself. He has brought men from Babylon back to the land of promise,

"He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood avails for me."

When Jesus Christ stood up in the synagogue at Nazareth at the opening of His public ministry, and there was handed to Him the roll of the prophet Esaias, "he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." He is the one and only Deliverer of the captive. We found it so when we were saved by His grace, did we not? And what a happy time we have had since then!

It is His work, dear friends; and if there is a captive sinner here this evening, let me tell you that you cannot go to a locksmith and get a key made that will unlock the shackles that hold you. No file that has been fashioned in any human forge can cut those bands. There is only One Who can restore to a habit-bound soul the freedom of his birthright, the freedom that he was made to enjoy from the beginning. Our God turns again the captivity of the captive, blessed be His name for ever!

He brings the backslider home. What a joy it is to see him come! There was Peter—"The Lord looked on Peter." Have you noticed the men working with the electric torch, as they welded car tracks, or cut a piece of steel? It is a very hot flame. There is One Whose eyes are like a flaming fire, and when He directs His gaze upon the fetters that bind, they dissolve. Peter suddenly became a free man, and went out and wept bitterly, in sound, truly genuine godly repentance. If there be one in the far country this evening who remembers the days when you were happy in Zion I beg of you to remember that there is no one in the land of the Chaldeans who has power to liberate you. Our God must turn again your captivity—and He will do it if you ask Him, if only you pray, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord

hath dealt bountifully with thee." I beg of you, cry to Him.

I would not ask you to come yourself, but He will meet you where you are. Only let the cry go heavenward from a contrite heart, "Lord, save me"; and He will be at your side to turn again your captivity.

That is true of the church. No one but God can do it, but He can. I am sure He can: I am sure He will. Sometimes the period of declension which has spread over the world seems to us to be very long, but it is not long by God's reckoning. It may be that His seventy years have not yet passed, but He has a time when He will arise—and His enemies shall be scattered. Let us pray for it.

You say, "Can it be really so? Do you really mean to say that it is possible we may see such revivals as we saw in our youth?" Yes. God is not dead. The Spirit of Christ is not withdrawn. Let me say again that I have no patience whatever with that alleged interpretation, which is a misinterpretation of Scripture, which would lead us to believe that the days of revival, when thousands turn to the Lord, are for ever past. The world is dark, I grant you; but no darker than in the middle ages, or the dark ages which preceded them; not as dark as in the pre-Reformation period—and God shook all Europe, and used one man to bring in a world-revival. Again and again God's people in their folly and wilfulness have gone to Chaldea but ever and anon, in His good pleasure, He brings them back again. I believe He will in our day. I hope to live to see a greater revival than this world has ever seen.

"The world by wisdom knew not God." That is not ancient history. It pleased God, when the world by wisdom knew not God, when God had allowed the world to run its course and try to save itself—"it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." We are going to have a new church in Jarvis Street. The rest of the churches can build all the chancels they like, with the pulpit on one side: our pulpit will be in the centre! It will be a place for the proclamation of the gospel of God's grace; not for sacrifice, but for the proclamation of the great Sacrifice, that "once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." The day of preaching is not done. The day of revival is not over. I verily believe that God will bring again the captivity of Zion.

Would it not be a great thing if, in the city of Toronto, that seems, with the help of the beer-parlours, so determined to go to the devil with all speed—you and I should live to see the day when tens of thousands would hurry through their evening meal and say, "We must be in haste, we must get to the place of prayer"—not caring where they go, finding all the places of worship filled and overflowing with people who desire to hear the Word of God, when there will be multitudes in the valley of decision enquiring their way to Zion "with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten."

Jarvis Street members—and members of other churches that are present—will you open your heart to that great truth, that God, in unabated, undiminished power and love, still possessed of sovereign grace, will turn again the captivity of Zion? He can bring in the days when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. "The Lord turned again the captivity of Zion." Again I say, Blessed

be His holy name for ever and ever! Our God is able to do it—and He will in His own good time.

III.

WHAT WAS THE EFFECT OF THIS REVIVAL GRACE UPON THOSE WHO HAD BEEN CAPTIVES? They said, "We were like them that dream." I hope you are dreamers, I hope you are able to dream. I am not much interested in dreams that are due to indigestion, the dreams that some people have in the night. The dreams I have when I am asleep are usually upsidedown: they have no sense in them. But I hope that you can dream while you are wide awake—and I hope you can dream of the possibilities of divine grace.

Many a night have I spent dreaming while wide awake, dreaming I saw this place crowded with people seeking the Lord, and other churches crowded with people seeking the Lord. I like to dream of revival; I like to think of multitudes of people coming to the Lord; I like to think of my brethren in the ministry—many of them who know the Lord, who have been turned aside and no longer lie down in green pastures, nor are led beside the still waters, who are out in the by-paths, spending their time criticizing and pulling to pieces the Word of God—I like to dream of a day when they will come back again. I have dreamed of a day when ministers will walk down the aisle and say, "I have been wrong. I will put the Word of God back in its central place; I will rededicate myself to the service of the Lord." Many ministers need revival—in fact, we all need it.

But my dream has not come true. I have dreamed of revival; spiritually, I have built castles in the air. No one builds castles *in Spain* now—they are destroying them there! You will have to find some other place to build them. Many a place of worship have I built in my fancy as I have seen multitudes coming to God. Then from my dream I have awakened, and there was no reality—for the present. I have had to come back to a realization and acknowledgment of the sad fact that the ways of Zion mourn because few come to her solemn feasts.

Yonder by the streams of Babylon, when they looked at their harps hanging upon the willows, perhaps those musicians among the Levites—the singing Levites—dreamed of going back home again, dreamed of a day when instead of the ruins of a temple, there would rise in all its splendour and divine beauty a temple unto the Lord, when the glory of the Lord should fill the house, and when again the high priest would go about his ministry, and they would hear the music of the golden bells—when the multitudes would keep holy day, when once again they would say, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." They had dreamed of it—then awakened from their dreams to say, "The reality is not Canaan's land, but Babylon; here we are captives still."

But now the Lord turns again the captivity of Zion, and they say, "Our dreams have come true. There is the temple; there is the Shekinah glory; there are the people prostrate before the Lord. There is a nation whose heart has been turned back again—can it be true?" Oh yes, it was true. Their dream had come true. I recommend to you the habit of spiritual dreaming—only do not spend all your time in dreaming. Let faith take a far view, and as it does, you will find, "Imagination's utmost stretch in wonder dies away." You will declare, "It is

grander and more glorious than I ever dreamed, ever imagined it could be." Some day, dear friends, we shall know what an inspired apostle meant when he ascribed, praise to Him "that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus"—when?—"throughout all ages, world without end, Amen." God has not forsaken His church. To Him there is to be glory in the church "throughout all ages". There shall be such glory as we cannot even ask or think, and when it comes to pass we shall be "like them that dream".

One, however, gives an alternative rendering of that phrase: "We shall be like those who have recovered their health." Ah yes. The nation was sick. Zion was ill—so is she to-day. Have you ever had an illness that confined you for a period in bed? Have you ever been shut away from the sanctuary? I had not for many years until last year, but I thought I sympathized deeply with people who were ill—until the Lord put me to bed for a while. Then I tried to imagine I could hear the singing of the songs of Zion—but I could not. When at last my period of exile and captivity was over, and the doctor said I could get up, I said to my nurse, "I can get up any time; I am well." I got up—but I could not stand, much less walk; but after a little practice I was able to get about, and by and by to go downstairs. "When the Lord turns again the captivity of Zion, we shall be like those who have recovered their health."

Some of you have had illnesses during which you could not sleep, and you thought you would never sleep again; you could not walk; you could not work. Then when you got up, you wanted to do two men's work. That is the meaning of our text. Zion has been long in bed; Zion has been ill. "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." What a picture! But when the Lord lays His healing hand upon His church, when He shall say, not to an individual but to His Zion, His redeemed people, "I say unto thee, arise", when the church's feet and ankle bones shall receive strength, and leaping and walking she shall go in to the temple praising God, what a day that will be! I believe such a day is coming.

"Then was our mouth filled with laughter." Did you ever feel like laughing when you had nothing in particular at which to laugh? I do not like to laugh at people, but I like to feel sufficiently happy to make laughter easy. Watch little children at their play, with no care, no worry—and apparently at nothing at all they will burst into laughter. There is nothing sweeter in the world. They love to laugh.

I may have told you of hearing Mr. Greenway and Mr. Barham talking one evening in the waiting room next to my vestry in the church, and Mr. Greenway remarked, "Well, when I am forbidden to laugh, I want to go home to heaven." I did not know to what he referred, but I called out, "Amen! What is the trouble now?" Then they told me that a very lugubrious brother we had in Jarvis Street some years ago, a good man, a godly man, had prayed at the prayer meeting preceding the evening service, that the Lord would graciously restrain the Pastor from saying anything that evening that would make the people laugh! When Mr. Spurgeon was once accused of making people laugh, he said, "If they knew

how much I keep in, they would not criticize me!" We ought to be in a condition where laughter is easy. These people did not laugh at something, but because of something. Their whole condition had been changed, their whole outlook on life altered. "Then was our mouth filled with laughter."

I used to know a minister who was one of the jolliest souls I have ever met. I have a picture in my mind that I treasure highly. A company of ministers were together, and he was the centre of merriment, although by many years the senior of all of us. We were having holy fun; everybody was happy; and right in the midst of it, before the laughter died away, he said, "My brethren, we will talk to the Lord"—and down on his knees he went and poured out his soul to the Lord, thanking Him for His goodness, and for making life full of pleasant things, for making the children of God able to laugh. So ought it to be.

I do not know anything that would make me laugh like a great revival. That will not be a time for long faces, but for gladness and rejoicing, when God comes nigh.

"And our tongue with singing." They could not help singing. They had something to sing about. Contrast that with our meditation of last Sunday evening: "They that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" No singing! No music! The harps were on the willows. But when they got back to Zion, they had brought their harps with them, and to the accompaniment of many instruments, they praised the Lord together.

In the Levitical order, music had a very large place in the service of the Lord. I believe it ought to have. I have not much interest in a choir that does all the singing. They may be able to sing well, but I do not want to hear the choir only. I want all the people to sing. "Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee." "Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing." Every revival has been marked by a revival of music, by the songs of Zion. Where did the great hymns of the church come from? Many of them were written by Charles Wesley, and by others contemporary with him in the great days of the Wesleyan revival. John Wesley was the preacher, and Charles Wesley was the singer. The Wesleys set the whole church of God singing. Why? "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad."

It used to be common in Christian homes for the family to join of a Sunday evening in singing the songs of Zion. There was a day when housewives went about their work singing. Do you? "It is out of fashion now", you say. It is scarcely ever heard now. Let us cultivate the art of singing; let our mouths be filled with singing. If our mouths are filled with God's praise all the day long, they will not be filled with anything else. Keep singing.

IV.

WHAT EFFECT DID THIS HAVE UPON OUTSIDERS? "Then said they among the heathen, the Lord hath done great things for them." In effect they said, "Something has happened in that church." God had done something for Zion. He had broken their bands, brought them back to their own land, rebuilt the temple, melted the hearts of kings, who put all their resources at the command of the people. Now they were a nation once again. The heathen

said, "We did not know anything about Jehovah, but lo, the Lord has done great things for them."

The church can profess as loudly and as long as it will, but the world about us will never believe in our religion until we give evidence that the Lord has done something for us, and is doing something for us. There is no use our writing our experience in the past tense. Let the Lord do something for you. There is nothing that will command the attention of the ungodly like a divine visitation, when God does something for His people. The world says, "I did not know God could do that. That man used to have a temper like a barrel of gun-powder", or, "That woman had a tongue like a serpent, but now her mouth is filled with laughter, and her tongue with singing. Something must have happened. The Lord has done great things for her." When that is true, the ungodly will know it. "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad."

When the church says, Amen, to the testimony of the heathen respecting the works of God, when the presence and power of God in the midst of His people are so manifest that even the eyes of the ungodly can behold it, and they must say, "The Lord is there, He has done great things for them," revival has come.

They prayed: "Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south." All the captives did not come home at once. They came back by instalments, and they prayed, "Lord, send the rest of them home." So ought we to pray for an ever-deepening work of grace, as streams water the desert.

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." Sometimes we sow in tears. Sometimes, if it were not that we have an upward look to God, we should wonder if there were any use of our labour. You teachers in your Sunday School classes have sown in tears, you have gone home sometimes and said, "I do not know that there is any use in my keeping on." Go on sowing; sow in tears. I have done it many a time—preached in tears, felt when the service was over that I should like God to take me home right away! but—"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed." The Word of God is the seed; there is no substitute for it. Sow it! Sow it! Sow it! Sow beside all waters. "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly." Do not spare the seed; sow with a liberal hand; sow the precious seed; "whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear," sow it!

"Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." I do not believe a gospel sermon is ever preached in vain. I am coming more and more to believe—and to believe more profoundly—that when the Word of God is preached, it never returns void: Let us look forward to the day of fruitage. Some day we shall come together rejoicing, bearing our sheaves with us; in a great and glorious harvest—here if God will; in any event, hereafter, by His sovereign grace.

Let us pray:

O Lord, we pray Thee to deepen our faith in Thee and in Thy Word. We have sought to magnify thy Word, the Word of the Lord that cannot be broken. So we pray to-night that Thou wilt water the seed already in the ground, the testimony of mothers and fathers, some of them long gone to glory. Sons and daughters there are scattered abroad, who are living ungodly lives, and yet in their hearts mother, or father, or Sunday School teacher, or preacher, or perhaps all of them, have planted the precious seed. O God, Thou God Who

giveth the increase, water the seed already sown! May it bear fruit to Thy praise and glory. Bless us therefore, and help us with confidence to go on in the Lord's work. Send us away from this place this evening, those of us who are Christians, with our mouths filled with laughter, and our tongues with singing. And if there be any who came into this place without Christ, may such an one receive Him, and, receiving Him, be saved forever, Amen.

Bible School Lesson Outline

OLIVE L. CLARK, Ph.D. (Tor.)

Vol. 2 Third Quarter Lesson 32 August 7th, 1938

PREACHING IN THE HOUSE OF CORNELIUS

Lesson Text: Acts 10.

Golden Text: "Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." —Acts 10:33.

I. The Hearer Prepared to Receive the Message—verses 1-8.

Caesarea, situated on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, about 68 miles from Jerusalem; was the place of residence of the Roman Governors. A division of the army known as the cohort was stationed there, and to ensure peace, this cohort consisted of Italians, rather than natives, as was the case in many places. Cornelius, as commanding officer of the cohort, would be a man of prominence and ability. Scripture mentions several centurions of merit (Luke 7:2-10; Matt. 27:54; Acts 22:26; 27:1, 43).

Cornelius was a devout man, one who had evidently turned from the many gods of paganism to the worship of the One God, Jehovah. He himself feared God, and exercised his influence in such a way that his family and attendants also feared God. Though a Gentile, he felt kindly toward the Jews, because they, too, worshipped God (Deut. 6:4).

The Lord hearkened to the prayer of Cornelius. Doubtless he had been asking how he might know God, and how to approach Him. He was in the proper attitude to receive light from God, for he was living up to the light which he had, longing to know the truth, that he might obey it (John 7:17). God hears the cry of those who long for Him with all their hearts (Exd. 2:23-25; Rom. 10:13).

By Divine revelation Cornelius was directed to send for Peter, who was residing at Joppa, 30 miles away. God knows where his saints dwell (Psa. 139:1-3; Prov. 3:33).

II. The Preacher Prepared to Deliver the Message—verses 9-22.

Compare Acts 11:5-17.

Cornelius was the first Gentile of whom we have record to enter the Church without first becoming a proselyte to Judaism. The unusual circumstances of the case demanded unusual wisdom, and the same Holy Spirit Who directed Cornelius, prepared and guided Peter to perform the unique task. The sovereign grace of God in equipping the messenger and illuminating the hearer is illustrated also in the narrative of Philip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-40).

Peter was transported beyond the realm of sense, and he saw in a vision the heavens opened (Acts 7:56), a large, four-cornered sheet descending, and upon the sheet animals of various kinds, some of which were clean and others unclean, according to the Levitical law regarding food (Lev. 11:4; 20:25). Peter was invited three times (Luke 22:34; John 21:17) to eat any of them, without distinction.

God had done away with their ceremonial uncleanness by His command, and Peter needed to be taught that in the New Covenant the separation between clean and unclean was a matter of the spirit, not of the flesh (Rom. 14:14, 17; 1 Cor. 10:23; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Tim. 4:4; Tit. 1:15). The children of Israel, as God's holy people, did not have close fellowship with other nations for fear of contamination (Lev. 20:26; John 4:9; 18:28). Thus the sacred testimony was preserved. Now that the message of the gospel was to be given to all nations of the world, God Himself abolished the distinction between unclean and clean men and things. On the cross Christ broke down the partition between Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:13, 14), so that salvation was made available for all. Christianity is designed for men of every tribe and nation (verses 34, 35).

The Holy Spirit did not give Peter full information; only the truth which he could not find out for himself was revealed to him (Compare Acts 12:8-10). Not till he reached the house of Cornelius did he know exactly what he was to do. He was given explicit guidance in response to his implicit obedience.

"You shall not full direction need,
Nor miss your providential way."

III. The Message Delivered and Received—verses 23-48.

The fact that Peter's prejudice against the Gentiles had been overcome by the revelation from God is shown by his willingness to entertain the messengers in his own home, and to sojourn in the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:48; 11:3).

Cornelius was waiting expectantly for Peter and his companions. The desire to worship the apostle was a reflection of his pagan background. One providentially-sent would seem to Him to be Divine (Compare Acts 14:11-13; 16:29). But, though ignorant, he was hospitable to the truth. Whenever a congregation of men and women gather as did these Gentiles, with hearts open to receive the Word of God, they will not be disappointed (Acts 16:14). Likewise, they will refuse to hear from the pulpit a discourse which is dishonouring to God and contrary to His declared will. The responsibility of hearers is expressly stated in the Word of God (Luke 8:18; Mark 4:24); the state of the ground frequently determines the growth of the seed (Matt. 13:18-23).

Peter emphasized three important principles of salvation: (1) God is Lord of all. His laws are just, and binding upon all alike, and His mercy has been extended to all, regardless of race or station. He demands righteousness from all (Deut. 10:17; Rom. 2:11; 3:22; Gal. 2:6; 1 Pet. 1:17). (2) Christ is Lord of all (Gal. 3:28; Col. 1:20). He lived a life of purity and power upon earth, was crucified, raised, exalted and glorified. He is to be the Judge of all (John 5:22; Acts 17:31; Rom. 14:9; 2 Tim. 4:1). (3) Christ is the Saviour of all who believe (Acts 13:39; 26:18; Rom. 10:11; Gal. 3:22; 1 Tim. 4:10).

Even before the message was concluded the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentile believers as upon the Jews at Pentecost (Acts 2:2-4), demonstrating the fact that God had accepted them on the basis of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:26).

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