

THE WORD AND WORK

(Volume XLVI, February, 1952)

His Plan for Me

When I stand at the judgment seat of Christ,
And He shows me His plan for me,
The plan of my life as it might have been
Had He had His way; and I see

How I blocked Him here, and I checked Him there
And would not yield my will—
Will there be grief in my Savior's eyes,
Grief, though He loves me still?

He would have me rich, and I stand there poor,
Stripped of all but His grace,
While memory runs like a hunted thing
Down the paths I cannot retrace.

Then my desolate heart will well-nigh break
With the tears that I cannot shed;
I shall cover my face with my empty hands,
I shall bow my uncrowned head.

Lord of the years that are left to me,
I give them to Thy hand;
Take me and break me, mould me to
The pattern Thou hast planned!

—Martha Snell Nicholson

WORDS IN SEASON

R. H. B.

WALKING BY FAITH

There is nothing greater than that a man should do what God says, even against his preferences, and when he sees no particular use of it. Then is the time to walk by faith. How we sometimes shrink from obeying God! How, when we are struck fairly between the eyes by a passage of scripture, we yet try to let it glance, to find an excuse, to explain away what God has said! How all kinds of considerations rise up and mistaken notions of duty, gratitude, or love, and we even persuade ourselves that in our case it would be wrong to obey God! "How weak is thine heart, seeing thou doest these things!" says Jehovah. To be sure, "we cannot see"; but we walk by faith. To be sure, there are "if's" and "but's" in plenty, and preachers without number who will explain the very face off of any

passage of scripture that goes against our wills, and, if you are looking for such consolation, "opinions do differ." But if you will obey God, you need not be perplexed, and you will know what God said and do it at any cost, and God will bless your faithfulness. For such things are tests, and God sets much by them.

THE END OF YOUR FAITH

Once, so runs a tale, a boy dreamed that he had hold of a string the other end of which was many miles away and had a priceless precious jewel attached to it. So he began to pull it in. It was long, tedious work; but when he flagged, he remembered the jewel at the other end, how it was well worth the while and the trouble, and began to pull and gather in again; for every arm's length he drew in brought the treasure that much nearer, and he knew he could not miss it if he kept on pulling. Whether he slept long enough to get to the jewel, the story does not tell; but here is one of the finest illustrations of faith. For away off in the land of promise is the jewel, and my faith is fastened to it and it to my faith. Keep pulling. You know it is there; you know every day of trusting Christ will bring it nearer, and in due time you will receive "the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." (1 Pet. 1:9.) Nay, you are receiving it day by day as each day's pull brings it nearer, and you may confidently say with Paul: "Now is salvation nearer to us than when we first believed." (Rom. 13:11.) But when your spirits flag and you grow doubtful or weary or impatient, remember this: "My righteous one shall live by faith: and if he shrink back, my soul hath no pleasure in him. But we are not of them that shrink back unto perdition; but of them that have faith unto the saving of the soul." (Heb. 10:38, 39.) "For we are become partakers of Christ [joint heirs], if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end." (Heb. 3:14.)

PRESENT BLESSINGS OF FAITH

As most other human illustrations of God's things, the one given above, good as it is, is deficient. The string with the distant, unseen jewel attached does illustrate that idea concerning our faith that it is our connecting line to the promise of God, and the means for attaining it, and beautifully represents the lesson that we must steadfastly persevere in faith to receive "the end of our faith." But it shows not an item of the blessings of faith here and now. The dry, bare string, even if it has a treasure at the other end, is not good enough for us, God thinks. The while we pull on it there comes to us blessings and grace for grace. Our faith brings joy with it—joy in the midst of afflictions, and songs in the night; joy unspeakable and full of glory. (1 Pet. 1:6, 8.) It holds peace—the peace which the world seeketh and cannot find, even the peace of God which passeth all understanding. (Rom. 15:13; Isa. 26:3.) It guarantees us the unassailable protection of the Almighty, for we "by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Pet. 1:5.) By faith we live, stand, walk, fight; and by our faith we gain the complete victory unto all assurance and hope. (1 John 4:4.) Would you have such glorious faith?

Hear the word of God and put your trust in it, and, through it, in Him. (Rom. 10:17.)

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"WHO MIND EARTHLY THINGS"

It is the way of the world (and very naturally) to make much of any matter pertaining to this life—eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage; to harp on the material things, the welfare of the body and the mind, industrial and social affairs. These are of paramount importance to "men of the world, whose portion is in this life." (Ps. 17:14.) These engross their thought and call forth their best efforts. Over these they become greatly wrought up. Immersed in these affairs up to their ears will they be found in the day when the Son of man shall be revealed. (Luke 17:26-30.) Money and labor, traffic and industry, science and invention, politics, and governmental, socialistic schemes for the betterment of earthly conditions—these are the topics beside which others pale away. The final beneficiary of all this stir is, we are reliably informed, "the belly." (Phil. 3:19.)

But that unworldly generation, which though living in the world are not of the world, whose citizenship is in heaven, whence also they look for the true hope of mankind, are of another turn. To them the things of the Spirit, the things of God, the things of eternity, compose the overshadowing issue. Eat and drink, buy and sell, plant and build, they must and may; but God comes first though all else be lost. Though filling their place in the world efficiently, working and doing their duty as God directed, they hold those earthly matters lightly, as being only a temporary makeshift, and are not greatly exercised over them. The will and kingdom of God comes first though every worldly prospect fail. The saving of souls, the redeeming of ruined lives unto God; the service and worship and praise of Him—these things consume their thought and interest and emotion. And of all people they alone are really sane. They alone see things in proper proportion and according to their relative importance. The Lord increase our faith and give us such a spirit as that, that when Jesus comes we may be found waiting for Him, our minds set on things above, not on things of the earth. (Col. 3:1-3.)

* * * *

RETURNS

It has been well said that "curses come home to roost." Yea; so do blessings. Every ray of sunshine we send forth into the world comes back to light up our own hearts. That bitter, fault-finding, censorious, judging spirit has its intensest effect on him who has it. It mars his happiness, it embitters his life, it destroys his power. Worse still, he will begin to think of God as being that way, for we cannot avoid measuring him by ourselves. Thus we grow hopeless and are driven away into the darkness of despair. For "he that loveth not knoweth not God." But love increased a hundredfold comes back to him that has abandoned self in the love of God and man.

NEWS AND NOTES

Dallas, Texas: "The Lord has blessed us, at the Mt. Auburn church of Christ, the past two or three months with 8 or 10 responses to the invitation, including two baptisms. The other responses were for various purposes, including membership, requests for prayer, and restorations.

"Before the close of 1951, we saw some attendance goals reached, including the Wednesday night prayer meeting goal of 50, which was not only reached, but broken two or three times, with a high of 58. Attendance at other services improved. We praise God for His blessings upon us in His work. It is our prayer that we shall be so Spirit filled, and so Spirit led, in 1952, and until Jesus comes, that He will be able to use us to accomplish greater things! We continue, by God's grace, to broadcast each Sunday morning over KSKY, 660 kc., 9:30 to 10:00. The Fair Park church of Christ (Frank M. Mullins, Minister) has 15 minutes on the same station just before us, and that gives added weight to whole counsel preaching in this area."—Robert B. Boyd.

Lexington, Ky.: "We had a most fruitful year in 1951. There were 28 additions all told, most of them baptisms."—H. N. Rutherford.

Frankfort, Ky.: "The church at Antioch is doing well. We have built some new Sunday school rooms, and have been using them the last three Sundays. There is more work to do on the basement. We had 103 in Sunday school yesterday."—Mrs. J. L. Allen.

Dallas, Texas: "The East Grand church is beginning the new year with a small increase in attendance over the past three Sundays. We have baptized a father, and also a daughter (no relation)."—J. E. Blansett.

In last Word and Work the scripture citation on page 16, line 25, should have been 1 John 4:6 rather than John 4:6.

In renewing for the Word and Work, Mrs. Norma L. Gray says, "Keep my 'Word and Work' coming to me. Who would care to for-

get to renew to a year of wonderful reading, especially as long as Brother Boll, Brother Chambers and Brother Jorgenson, whom the Lord has permitted me to meet and know—especially when such men write concerning our Lord."

Brandon, Fla.: "The first Lord's Day of 1952 was a great day in every way, except that hindrances kept some members away. The regular monthly get-together-eat-together period, after enjoyable worship and business session, was made the more what it is always purposed to be by visitors from Tampa (Central Church in particular), Lakeland, Mango, and from McMinnville, Tennessee. Then followed a song-fest which all considered well worth while.

"Thus from time to time there come 'seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.' We should know Whom to thank and to praise all our days."—Stanford Chambers.

Lexington, Ky.: "There were two more responses yesterday, four this month, three baptisms and one by statement. We are having house to house teaching and preaching weekly. Brother Frank Gill is a most useful co-worker."—H. N. Rutherford.

THE FERGUSON TRAGEDY

Chattanooga, Tenn.: "About three o'clock on the morning of the new year a fire raged in the home of a daughter of this family. She and her husband—Mr. and Mrs. A. C. Moore, were away from the city. Mr. and Mrs. W. P. Ferguson, her father and mother, and Mrs. Jean Rogers, her sister, and two children of Mrs. Rogers were in the home. Mr. and Mrs. Ferguson, ages 82 and 84, and the daughter died of suffocation, only slightly burned. Mrs. Rogers took her children, ages about seven and eight, out safely, then went back to assist her father and mother, but all three suffocated from the smoke.

Funeral services were conducted in the afternoon of Jan. 2 by Dr. William West and E. H. Hoover. The city was greatly moved by this tragic event, and of course their many friends and loved ones great-

ly grieved. I have been closely associated with this family in their home and in the church for nearly thirty-five years. Years ago I baptized Brother Ferguson, and the two daughters. Sister Ferguson was a charter member of the McCallie Ave. Church of Christ, this city. I found her Bible on the bed where she died. She loved that book and lived by it. She loved her Lord, and His church. She came to church worship when she was not well enough to come. She never failed to give words of encouragement to me and to all who were striving to serve the Lord. She played an important part in starting congregations in Cincinnati, in Knoxville, and in Chattanooga. In the death of the faithful child of God, we sorrow not as those who have no hope, for these are they who have come to the Lord, and have lived with the Lord, and have died in the Lord, and are to be raised from the dead in the glory of the Lord. May the God of all comfort keep and sustain all who remain of this sorrowing family."—E. H. Hoover.

Dallas, Texas: "Brother Jesse L. Wood, one of Mt. Auburn's elders, and a former minister of Mt. Auburn, continues preaching regularly at Denton, Texas. Lately, another preaching opportunity has opened up in that area. Dr. Eugene V. Wood's health has been better of late, and he has been increasingly active, having filled some preaching appointments at least on two occasions. We took our young people's chorus with him on one occasion. Dr. Horace E. Wood and Dr. Cecil E. Brooks recently preached for Brother Jesse Wood at Denton. We need to do more toward preaching the Gospel in this entire area, so pray with us to this end, and for the blessings of God upon the above mentioned openings."—R. B. Boyd.

Brother Burks reports a record Sunday school attendance at South Louisville on the last Sunday in January, and increased interest generally.

New Orleans, La.: "Port Sulphur meetings were fairly well attended. Brother Holdeman preached good sermons. No converts were made, no church was established, but we

trust that the Lord will bless the seed sown in order that someday a harvest may be reaped."—Richard Ramsey.

Frankfort, Ky.: "On December 31, 1951, we closed eight years of labor with the Antioch church, which have been very pleasant on the whole. The Lord has been very gracious to us. We have here a fine group of Christians with which to work, who love the Lord and want to see His kingdom increase. We have the utmost freedom to preach the gospel in its fulness.

"The year 1951 was a record year for the church. Twenty were added to the membership, sixteen by baptism, making a total of 111 during our eight years. Some of these have passed on to their reward, some have been lost to the world, some have moved away, but many are still faithful. Several are in the service of their country.

"During 1947 the Lord enabled us to build a parsonage, consisting of six rooms and a basement. We are now completing an addition to our church building, consisting of six rooms for Bible classes and which can be opened into the auditorium for large gatherings.

"In these eight years we have never failed one month of helping someone on the mission field.

"On the last Sunday of 1951 a large congregation was on hands, and at the close of the message the entire congregation came forward and rededicated their lives to the Lord and His service. Services this year have shown marked increase in interest and attendance. To God be all the praise."—Asa Baber.

BOUND VOLUME FOR 1951

The bound volume of the Word and Work for 1951 is at the bindery and delivery is promised in February. It contains the twelve Word and Works the four quarterlies for the year, and is fully indexed. Beautifully bound in maroon. Price, \$2.00. Send for your copy now. We have also volumes for the years 1947, 1948, 1950.

Current Quarterlies on Hand

We have on hand an extra supply of first quarter, 1952, Word and Work quarterlies. Churches that need extras may have them for 10¢ each. The regular price is 15¢.

PROPHECY IN GOSPEL PREACHING

R. H. B.

Has prophecy any place in the message of salvation and in the preaching of the gospel? Some, not a few perhaps, may answer this with a blunt "No." There are those who are afraid of prophecy. It causes trouble, they say. It confuses the minds of simple hearers. It is hard to understand; even able Bible students cannot agree on prophetic teaching. It is apt to cause differences and division among brethren. And after all it is not essential to salvation. People can be saved without it. Let us be content to preach Christ and Him crucified (they say), and the way of salvation, and the practical things about Christian life and worship. That is enough.

These are arguments which one often hears against the study and teaching of the prophetic portions of the Word of God. And it must be admitted that such an attitude is not complimentary to the wisdom of the great Author of the Bible. About one-third of the Book, roughly speaking, is of prophetic nature; and the rest is more or less permeated by prophetic teaching. Did God make a mistake when He put so much of prophecy into His Word? Or did He put it there to be shunned as a snare and a pitfall? Did God overload the good old Bible with superfluous material which really is not only useless but dangerous? Have brethren who argue so ever thought into this matter? Or at the bottom, may it be that they are afraid and just unwilling to be disturbed out of the comfortable rut of accepted beliefs? Really there is not a truth of God's revelation against which just such or such like arguments have not been brought at one time or another. Yet, the whole Bible has once and again been marked as perilous reading for average folk, since it has lead to no end of differences of views, and (*horribile dictu*) has even caused people to break away from the thraldoms of spiritual overlordship.

Others not quite so radical admit that prophetic teachings have a place in the gospel proclamation, but only a very limited place—not constituting any real part of the body and substance of the Christian faith, but as a mere incidental, like trimmings or accessories, or the little side dishes of a dinner-meal. If preached at all it should be rarely, and then not to babes but only to advanced and mature Christians.

Such are some of the views and attitudes taken toward the teaching of prophecy. Turning now from the views and opinions of men concerning this question, let us go directly to the inspired record, and see for ourselves just what place, if any, the Holy Spirit gave to prophecy in the original proclamation of the gospel.

Let us examine the facts. The great cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith are five:

(1) THE INCARNATION:—the fact that the Word was made flesh; which involves the doctrine of the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ.

(2) THE ATONEMENT:—the fact that Christ died for our sins, and that He bore our sins in His own body on the tree.

(3) THE RESURRECTION:—that the Christ who was crucified and buried, rose from the dead.

(4) THE EXALTATION:— that He ascended into heaven and sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High, all authority in heaven and on earth having been given unto Him.

(5) HIS RETURN FROM HEAVEN:— that Jesus is coming again.

Each of these fundamental truths has its witness and testimony in the Word of Prophecy, which told before of the One who was to come centuries before Christ came. The first four come under the head of fulfilled prophecy; the fifth, with all that is revealed as pertaining to it, is the theme of prophecy as yet unfulfilled. We see at once that the whole scope of gospel-teaching is essentially connected with the prophetic word.

The gospel-story in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, in each case opens with reference to prophecy (Matt. 1; Mark 1:1-4; Luke 1, 2; John 1). And all along throughout the record of Christ's ministry and death and resurrection there is a constant appeal to the prophetic word. The apostles' preaching and teaching also is marked by constant reference to prophecy, fulfilled and unfulfilled. Thus, Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) begins with a lengthy quotation from the prophetic book of Joel, explaining the strange phenomena of the Holy Spirit's descent on that day, and pointing forward to the events preceding and including the great and terrible Day of the Lord, which is yet to come. In the body of his sermon, he quotes at length from the 16th Psalm in proof that the Christ was to rise from the dead; and from the 110th Psalm, the prophecy of Christ's exaltation to the right hand of God. In his second recorded sermon Peter shows that the rejection of Christ was foretold by the prophets, and calls on Israel to repent, "that your sins may be blotted out, that there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus; whom the heaven must receive until the times of the restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets that have been from of old." (Acts 3:18-21.) He concludes with a reference to Moses' prophecy concerning the great Prophet who was to come. In his later preaching, and in his epistles, Peter makes frequent reference to fulfilled and unfulfilled prophecy (Acts 10:42, 43; I Peter 1:5-12; 2:6-8, 22-25; 4:7; 5:4, 10; II Peter 1:19-21, and chapter 3).

Paul's preaching is especially rich in prophetic doctrine. His epistle to the Thessalonians, the Philippians, the Corinthians are not only full of prophetic reference to Christ's return and "eschatological" teaching (i.e. doctrine of the "last things") but they bear plain evidence of what his preaching among the Gentiles must have been—how much of Prophecy was in his gospel message. If the idolaters of Thessalonica "turned unto God from idols to serve the true and living God, and to wait for his Son from heaven whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come" (I Thess. 1:9, 10)—what a wealth of prophetic teaching is implied in this simple statement alone! Clearly Paul, during his short sojourn at Thessalonica had taught those Thessalonians about the true God and of Jesus Christ His Son; of Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven; and emphatically of His promised

return — for “they turned to God . . . to wait for His Son from heaven.” He had told them of the coming Day of Wrath also, and that Christ, returning, would deliver His own from that “wrath to come;” also (as we learn later) he had even told them that the Man of sin must come before that Day of the Lord. (II Thess. 2:5.) Both the Thessalonian epistles are replete with prophetic teaching.

In Corinth Paul had preached “the gospel” (I Cor. 15:1-4) with special emphasis on “the word of the cross.” (I Cor. 1:17-22.) But that did not exclude, but it included, the teaching of Christ’s return and the hope connected with it (1:7, 8); the solemn accounting as to the Christian’s works (3:12-14; 4:5); the knowledge also that they were destined to judge the world and angels (6:2, 3). All of I Cor. 15 is devoted to the great future events that are to take place at Christ’s coming.

To the Philippians Paul had evidently borne the same testimony. In his letter to them he reminded them of the fact that their citizenship was in heaven, and that from thence they were to wait for the Savior who would fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory. (Phil. 3:20, 21.) The Colossians who had heard of the hope of the gospel through Epaphras, held the same hope and teaching. God had made them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Paul tells them; and “when Christ, who is our life shall be manifested, then shall ye also be manifested with him in glory.” (Col. 1:12; 3:5.) To the Romans he writes of the surpassing glory that shall be revealed to usward, and that all creation is waiting for the revealing of the sons of God, which for creation, as for us, will bring on the promised day of deliverance. “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together even until now; and not only so but we ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body . . .” (Rom. 8:18-25.) Thus future salvation (he tells them) was then nearer to them than when they first believed. It was high time to awake out of sleep. The night was far spent, the day was at hand. (Rom. 13:11-14.) To the Ephesians he speaks of the day when the Lord will present the church to Himself, perfect, and complete, without spot or wrinkle, to be joined to Him in eternal wedlock (Eph. 5:27; comp. Rev. 19:6-8), and so on. But time and space would fail to mention in particular all the prophetic teaching in other epistles, as in First and Second Timothy, Titus, Hebrews; in James also, and in I John, and Jude. All this shows what a vast place prophetic teaching had in the original proclamation of the gospel; and that it constituted a vital part of the teaching, not of mature Christians only, but to babes, yea, and outsiders as well.

The great prophetic book of the New Testament, the Book of Revelation is specifically addressed to “the seven churches that are in Asia” (1:11) and to all the churches (22:16) and to every individual Christian, and to whoever may have ears to hear. (1:7, 11, 17, etc.) It is urged upon the attention of Christians everywhere as is no other

above His love to all the world, (and that was a love so great that He gave up His only begotten Son, John 3:16)—yet with a greater love God loved those persons in Rome to whom Paul writes. These were “saints” by the call of God—not those legendary marvellous characters, but plain, common, ordinary Christians, sore troubled with trials and temptation as we are, set apart (= *sanctified*, become *saints*) by faith in Jesus Christ.

To them Paul sends these words: “*Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*” In all his salutations Paul uses these words, differing slightly in two of the epistles. This was not just a common formula, or merely a pious wish: it was a real prayer, meaningful and earnest. Grace first—then peace: that is the order. For only through grace can peace be. It is by grace that we are “justified freely” (as Paul presently tells us, Rom. 3:24); and “being justified by faith we have peace” (Rom. 5:1). This grace and peace comes to us from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, jointly, thus vindicating the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

After this Paul has a few personal words to the brethren in Rome (Verses 8-15). He thanks God that their faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world. Rome was the capital of the whole known world; and thither from near and far, even from the ends of the earth, came travellers and visitors; and (for travel was slow and burdensome and not lightly undertaken) they would not give the city just a hasty glance. In seeing and investigating everything they would come in contact with that strange people—the Christians (for a city set on a hill can not be hid) and would carry back to their countries a report (whether favorable or otherwise) of their faith, and, indeed, also of their manner of life, so different from that of the world round about them. For this Paul thanked God. He also tells the brethren in Rome how unceasingly he had prayed for an opportunity to come to them in person—had purposed often to do so, but was always hindered. He longed to see them, he says, “that I may impart some spiritual gift” (comp. 2 Tim. 1:6) that might strengthen and establish them: and that he from them, as well as they from him, might receive comfort by their mutual love and faith.

And Paul would want to have “some fruit”—i. e. make converts in Rome as well as in other Gentile cities. “I am debtor,” he says, “both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and foolish. So as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome.”

PERSONAL THOUGHTS

“Called”—“called to be Jesus Christ’s,” “called to be saints.” They became “saints” and Jesus Christ’s own people—a people for His own possession (Tit. 2:14) by the call of God. By a Divine call they were separated unto God, and came into Christ’s ownership. The call came to them through the gospel (2 Thess 2:13, 14). The initiative is always from God’s side—“who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal.” (2 Tim. 1:9)

For His Name’s sake. The apostles had received grace and apostleship, so that through their work men of all nations might render the

obedience of faith. It was "for his Name's sake" that God did this wondrous thing. Whenever God does anything for His Name's sake He acts in grace—that is, not because men deserved it, but because He is what He is. (Note the re-current expression, He "wrought for his Name's sake" in Ezekiel 20.) The whole gospel-dispensation is by God's grace.

"Among all the nations"—Not "of all the nations." Never at any time did any nation as a whole accept the gospel. The church is an election. God is visiting the nations to **take out of them a people for His Name** (Acts 15:14). Those who, having heard the gospel received it by the obedience of faith, are God's elect. Paul became all things to all men—not that by some means he might save all, but that by all means he might save some. (1 Cor. 9:22.)

"I am Debtor"—How freely and undeservedly did Paul's conversion and salvation come to him. And that put him under infinite obligation, both toward Christ, on the one hand, and to all sinners on the other. And you and I—how did the gospel reach us? How did we receive our salvation? Was it by our desert and merit—or was it God's free gift? (Eph. 2:8, 9.) Then we too are debtors. We must evermore freely give out what we so freely received.

Greeks and Barbarians, wise or foolish: the gospel is adapted to all races, all classes, all kinds of people; and to all sorts we must give it out. And to those who believe among them it becomes "the power of God unto salvation."

LESSONS ON THE BOOK OF ACTS

J. Edward Boyd

Acts 19

PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY, (Continued)

AN OPEN DOOR AND MANY ADVERSARIES. "By the space of three years" Paul continued his ministry at Ephesus (Acts 20:31). Most of it was evidently in the past when he wrote to the church at Corinth: "But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost; for a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." (1 Cor. 16:8, 9.) How often are open doors and fierce opposition found together! At Athens the opposition had assumed the forms of contempt, ridicule, and indifference, and the apostle soon left for Corinth; but here at Ephesus, where his experience was comparable to fighting with beasts (1 Cor. 15:32), he tarried longer than at any other place. There were trials which befell him "by the plots of the Jews" (Acts 20:19); and such was the effectiveness of his preaching in turning men and women from their idolatries and superstitions that his life was at last endangered by the howling mob of Diana devotees.

But there were forces arrayed against Paul and his gospel which were more powerful than human antagonists. Is it not significant that it was to the church at Ephesus that he later wrote: "For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places?" (Ephesians 6:12.) Everywhere this was true, no doubt; but it seems that nowhere else was this spiritual hostility so apparent as it was in the province of Asia. (Was this because Satan's throne was at Pergamum? (Revelation 2:12, 13). Dr. Farrar says of Ephesus that "the vicinity . . . reeked with the congregated pollutions of

Asia." The worship at their great temple of Diana has been described as "unutterably vile." Evil men and impostors of various kinds, including Jewish exorcists, preyed upon the ignorance and superstitions of the people! demonism, witchcraft, sorcery, and magic flourished. It is too much the fashion nowadays to look upon such things, including spiritism and various kinds of fortune-telling, with indifference and tolerance; but in Scripture they are regarded as deadly evils.

PAUL'S MINISTRY AT EPHESUS. Such was the situation when the apostle came to Ephesus. How did he deal with it? What methods did he use in wrestling with these evil forces? He had the same weapons which he some years later recommended to the Ephesian Christians. "Wherefore take up the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: with all prayer and supplication praying at all times in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints." (Eph. 6:13-18.) He came not depending upon his own wisdom and ability, but relying upon the power of God. He used no weapon of the flesh, but the sword of the Spirit. He proclaimed the truth not only by word of mouth, but also by the example of a life of sacrificial devotion to the Lord Jesus.

For all known details of the apostle's ministry at Ephesus we must consult both Luke's account in Acts 19 and his own speech at Miletus, Acts 20:18-35. All together, they make up a picture of arduous toil, dauntless courage, and unselfish sacrifice such as has seldom been equaled. After he withdrew with his disciples from the synagogue, he reasoned daily in the school, or lecture hall, of Tyrannus. There is an ancient manuscript which says that this was each day "from the fifth to the tenth hour"—from eleven o'clock in the forenoon until four o'clock in the afternoon. We have no additional information concerning this Tyrannus or his school; but for two years it afforded Paul an opportunity to speak to all who came to hear the word. We are glad to believe that these "lectures" were well attended; for the result was that "all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks." Besides this daily public ministry, there was also teaching from house to house. Then there was the problem of support for himself and for those who were with him. In a community where religion was so generally used as a way of gain, it would obviously have been unwise to have asked support from his converts, even if he had been otherwise disposed to do so. Rather than cause any hindrance to the gospel of Christ, Paul would gladly waive his right to such support (1 Cor. 9:12). So, in addition to all his other labors in Ephesus, he worked with his hands to supply his own needs and also the needs of his companions.

The chief characteristics of Paul as a preacher of the Word are clearly revealed in these passages. He proclaimed it faithfully and

fully. He shrank not from declaring anything that was profitable—from declaring the whole counsel of God. We do not read of his making any distinction between truths essential to salvation and those that are not, and withholding the latter because they might offend some of the brethren! And he regarded all scripture as “inspired of God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Yet he was tender and compassionate, admonishing “every one night and day with tears.” In his preaching he emphasized “repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” The Greek word for repentance signifies “a change of mind.” It was a repentance—a change of mind—toward God that he preached. To the worshippers of Diana and other heathen deities it involved (as in the case of the Thessalonians—1 Thess. 1:9) a turning away from their idols “to serve a living and true God.” But this was his message to Jews also, and to all. And “faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” It was no mere “social gospel” that he preached, nor a recognition of Jesus as a great teacher only; it was a reliance upon Him as the Messiah of prophecy, Who was clothed with all authority in heaven and on earth.

Unusual circumstances sometimes call for special methods. The people of Ephesus were evidently accustomed to manifestations of the powers of the spirit world. A miracle is not of itself a proof of the intervention of God. For Satan has been permitted, on certain occasions, to work miracles; and he will again do so. (2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:13-15.) No doubt at Ephesus, perhaps to an unusual extent, he was using his human agents to astound the people with their uncanny demonstrations. Even so the Lord “wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul.” Nowhere else do we read of handkerchiefs and aprons being used for such a purpose. But diseases were cured and evil spirits cast out. Evidently the name of Jesus was used; and the sons of Sceva thought they could use it to advantage in their incantations. The result was a painful humiliation to themselves and a revelation to all the people. News of this failure spread throughout Ephesus. It created a profound impression upon everybody. It was clear that the name of Jesus was no mere charm, which could be used with impunity by anyone who so desired. “And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.” Many believers made confession, “declaring their deeds.” They made a complete break with these evil practices. There was a public bonfire, in which many books of magic were burned. Their value has been estimated at about eight thousand dollars. They would not sell them; they now considered them fit only for destruction. (We need many such bonfires today!) Such was the effect of the gospel. “So mightily grew the Word of the Lord and prevailed.”

THE RIOT AT EPHEBUS. One month of each year (corresponding roughly to our month of May) was devoted to festivities in honor of the goddess Diana. Since those who attended would like to take home images of their goddess and of the shrine where they worshipped, a lucrative business of making and selling these things had grown up.

But this business was threatened. Demetrius, a silversmith, was alarmed. He called a meeting of his fellow-craftsmen and pointed out the danger. What a tribute he paid to the success of the apostle's ministry: "This Paul has persuaded and turned away much people, saying that there are no gods that are made with hands." Incidentally, his statement is also a revelation of Paul's method: by persuasion, rather than by fierce denunciation, he was leading men and women away from the false to the true God. It is quite probable that Demetrius gave little heed to the apostle or to his teaching until threatened with financial loss. Then he and his fellow-craftsmen became greatly concerned for the honor and prestige of their goddess!

The cry, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," was raised; and soon the city was in an uproar. The opposition against Paul erupted with great fury. The people rushed into the theater, where public gatherings of various kinds were held. It is said that this theater would seat more than twenty thousand. Gaius and Aristarchus were seized; but Paul escaped. He would have gone in among the people anyway, but the disciples would not permit him to do so. A message came from friendly Asiarchs urging him not to venture into the theater. These were men of wealth and influence, selected by the cities round about, who were in charge of the public games and other events. They well understood the peril in the situation. We do not know where the apostle remained during the tempest of human madness; but this may have been the occasion to which he made reference in Romans 16:3, 4 written some months later: "Salute Prisca and Aquila my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus, who for my life laid down their own necks; unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles." Perhaps it was at this time that they risked their lives by giving him a refuge in their home. That at some time during his stay in Asia his life was threatened, even unto despair, is indicated in 2 Corinthians 1:8-10.

In the theater there was great confusion, some shouting one thing, some another. Most of them did not know what it all meant. Then a Jew by the name of Alexander appeared and made a jesture indicating that he wished to speak. Since the Jews would naturally expect to be blamed for the disturbance, it is probable that he was put forward to disclaim any such responsibility. But Alexander was promptly shouted down. This representative of the religion that acknowledged only Jehovah as God was greeted with a shout from that vast multitude, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." For the space of two hours they kept it up, until they were at last quieted by the town clerk. The position of Ephesus as the temple-keeper of the great Diana (he implied) was well-known and fully assured; they had no good reason to be disturbed about the! And these men (he pointed out) were neither "robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess." Then there were the regular courts for settling of disputes, such as Demetrius and his fellow-craftsmen may have had with these men. Finally, he reminded them that such a riot was a serious matter, since they would not be able to give satisfactory account to their superiors for it. "And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly."

“FAITH OF OUR FATHERS”

E. L. J.

The following address was delivered at Louisville Bible Conference on September 7, 1951. We thank the author for permission to publish this thoughtful essay in this department. It will be concluded next month.

CAUSES OF DIVISION

By H. L. Olmstead

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
For brethren to dwell together in unity!
It is like the precious oil upon the head,
That ran down upon the beard,
Even Aaron’s beard;
That came down upon the skirt of his garments;
Like the dew of Hermon,
That cometh down upon the mountains of Zion:
For there Jehovah commanded the blessing,
Even life for evermore.”—Ps. 133.

This is described as a song of “Ascents”—somewhat like the modern processional, and was sung as the temple choir were taking their places to begin the service in the great congregation where the brethren of Israel had gathered to worship together the God of their fathers.

For brethren to dwell together in unity is both “good and pleasant” (Ps. 133). To dwell together in disunity and strife is evil and unpleasant and must sooner or later result in their ceasing to dwell together at all, and then we have *division*.

I am asked to point out “Causes of Division.” I realize that the task is no small one and I realize better than any one else does my own limitations in handling this great subject.

It is not my aim to discuss the wide field of division and interminable strife of the religious world at large. Under some circumstances that would be practical, but for this meeting and our purpose here, it shall be my aim to confine my address to the causes of division among those who have preached the possibility and practicability of Christian Unity and yet find themselves practicing division. To do this it will first be necessary for us to state, or rather to restate, some of the principles of the religious movement in which we ourselves were reared. In its earlier history those who espoused the great cause spoke of it as *the Reformation*, because, while giving due credit to all the great Reformers preceding them—Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Knox, Wesley and others—they did not feel that the true Reformation had come until the great principles they saw fit to speak of as the Restoration Movement had been announced and accepted.

THE PRINCIPLES STATED NEGATIVELY

To fully understand the meaning of the movement we will first consider the things they opposed. First, they opposed all human

creeds of every form as being provocative of division among Christians, rather than unity. By no means did they deny or oppose every statement made in the various creeds of Christendom, but they strove to make faith in Christ—personal faith in Christ as the Son of God, and the Savior of the World—central rather than intellectual conformity to creed. Hence the one and only good Confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God" was all that was required. They labored to make the movement Christocentric rather than Credocentric.

2. They opposed all *Authoritarian groups* in the church beyond that of a local congregation of duly organized disciples of Christ. How often we find the expression in the writings of Campbell and others, "The kingdom of the clergy." Kings were not in good repute in the early days of our country—we had just had a "brush" with one of them through which we had gained our independence as a nation, so the fathers of the movement played up to the popular feeling of the time and spoke of the Authoritarian religious groups as the "kingdom of the clergy." They were the men who sought to regiment the thinking, the faith and practice of Christians by making the various creeds and imposing them upon their fellow Christians as being the final standard of faith and fellowship within the group.

THE PRINCIPLES STATED POSITIVELY

1. This movement exalted Christ and His supreme authority, not just above that of the creeds, but they demanded His complete re-enthronement, and that all other gods be torn down from the Pantheon and He alone be supreme. The creeds must go as the final and binding statements of authority in religion. The best that could be said of creeds was that they were honest human attempts to discover and state divine truth and in that sense might be helpful but, being what they were—only human attempts—they should not be made final and authoritative for faith and fellowship.

2. All this also resulted in a personal exaltation of the whole Word of God. Creeds produced group religion. These principles would produce personal faith in Christ and personal responsibility of each Christian to the Word of God, in its entirety. This, it was believed, would make for unity, for it meant the recognition of all who have active faith in Christ and a free and untrammelled study of God's word by each individual. Together they might pool their knowledge of God's word and by that which "every joint supplieth" grow into an holy temple in the Lord (Eph. 4). The original apostles and prophets who gave us the truth, together with pastors, teachers, and evangelists, would work together that "Unity of the faith unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." It would keep us from being children "tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine," and at the same time find us "longsuffering," forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Creedal religion makes bonds of fellowship other than faith in Christ and a willingness to adhere to His Word. Creedal religion makes somebody else's explanations the bond of fellowship.

THE CAUSE OF DIVISION—OFF-CENTER

The real cause of division among us is clear. We have failed to abide by our own espoused principles. Honesty would demand that we return to them or repudiate them. We cannot go on preaching one set of principles and practicing another. If the Church of Christ has a human creed, honesty demands that it shall be fully stated so that the public will know what kind of a group of people they are asked to be identified with. If orthodoxy among us has become "Credocentric," let us by all means announce it. If theological and philosophical contentions are replacing simple faith in the person of Jesus Christ our Lord, then we *are* a denomination pure and simple and have renounced our plea. If, as one says, "we are more concerned about things that are merely incidental to our personal confidence in Christ as Lord and Savior, then what becomes of our boasted freedom in Christ? It has come to be that what a man believes about cups, colleges, Sunday school, method of work, order of services, singing in the assembly, etc., are tests of loyalty and orthodoxy and have neutralized the intent of the whole unity movement. Around these things as center our thoughts revolve, our doctrines are stated, our creeds have formed. We have moved far off-center and find ourselves under the stress of mere things and incidentals, each group contending its particular order, method, system, position, is the only true one. Could it be that the word "Restoration" to us has come to mean more than was intended or more than should be included in a "Restoration"? In other words, are we trying to restore something that never existed? Who, for example, knows *how* the Churches "appointed the man to travel with Paul on a fund-raising campaign? How many churches were represented? (2 Cor. 8:18). When they spoke one to another in Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs," was it congregational, or one speaking at a time or was it antiphonal? What songs did they sing? Who wrote them? Did they have song books? A paid leader? Did he hold their time together by using a baton, or by some other human means? When they remembered the Lord's death, did they sit, stand, kneel or recline? Did they use one little nibble of bread, or sip of wine, or did they eat and drink at a table? When the Church at Philippi sent one and again to Paul's necessities (Phil. 4:15, 16) did they take up a special collection, take it out of the treasury, get those who wished to give to "subscribe," or how? When the collection for the saints was taken at Corinth on "the first day of the week" (1 Cor. 16:1, 2) did they pass a plate, basket, leave it at the door in a box as they did in the temple, or how? Do any of these things make any difference at all? A Methodist Bishop is quoted as saying that Alexander Campbell all but united the Protestant world and might have done so if his followers had not included so many incidentals in the "plea for Restoration."

(To be continued)

If God places a Joseph in Egypt, a Daniel in Babylon, saints in Caesar's household, He will be with them there. But if a Lot deliberately chooses Sodom, God may have to burn him out.—*Sel.*