

Western Recorder

"Earnestly Contend for the Faith Once for All Delivered to the Saints"—Jude 3.

VOL. 116

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, MAY 28, 1942

No. 22

"All Things Must Needs Be Fulfilled" (Luke 24:44)

Annual Convention Sermon, Southern Baptist Convention, San Antonio, Texas, May 16, 1942

AS WE TURN our hearts to this hour of worship, I pray that the Holy Spirit will give us a gripping awareness of the unparalleled dramatization of human depravity as it is now being displayed in human affairs.

May every discerning mind know at this moment that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Romans 11:18). Our contemporaries who would destroy all the freedoms of men and ignore all faith in the Gospel of redemption certainly give convincing proof that unregenerate men who have knowledge but refuse "to have God in their knowledge" God does give "over to a reprobate mind." In the vanity of their mind their work of construction leads unto destruction; in their darkness of understanding their proposed reformations provoke divine retribution; in their alienation from the life of God their way of life runs unto death; and in their destitution of feeling their zeal is not unto gains in righteousness but unto greediness in lasciviousness and uncleanness.

I

OUR DAY is testifying in monosyllables that the plethora of panaceas proposed by false messiahs and professional uplifters who make a living by lifting up are lacking in essential power to produce a world order "in which each will take according to his need and give according to his ability."

Our understanding must be darkened indeed if we fail now to see how utterly deceptive have been the false prophets who taught us that "Man creates his own God," that men are saved merely by "freeing the mind from complexes and repressions," that men should find the good way of life without religion, that Christianity is "wishful thinking" and fantasy.

The light within us must be darkness indeed if we fail to see now, in this harvest season for sin's ripened fruit, that sin is not merely a "religious imagination," not merely a "delusion of mortal mind," not merely a "maladjustment in the social order," not merely a "defect," a "gap," a "blank," a "minus quantity," or a "cultural lag," but that it is precisely what God in His only Omniscience knows it to be, namely, the focal point of infection in the blood stream of the race, the ailment which has thrown the whole world into a mad delirium, the destroying power which scoffs and laughs at all human efforts to cure it or to control it and yields only "to the power of God unto salvation."

Holden indeed are our eyes if we do not see now that Christianity is just another economic system of crass materialism when we dry up its blood stream and thereby change it from God's eternal Gospel unto redemption into man's ethics unto material abundance.

We must know now that science, hailed by many as the real messiah to lead the human race into the Kingdom of God, has but armed and equipped the nations to destroy one another. Because science did heal diseases, solve problems, multiply physical blessings, and did bring into existence countless luxuries, many, ever more than we realized, became disciples of the new messiah and "changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man." Our pagan self-sufficiency changed God from

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a supervisor of human affairs into a spectator of human activities. Louis Kinsberg, with rare imagination resorting to rare dramatics, puts this testimony of impotency upon the lips of this new messiah.

II

WITH our eyes beholding the chaos, the cruelty, the suffering, the despair, and the death incident to the utter collapse of spurious economic orders and superficial civilizations, shallow culture and inadequate education, all based upon "the wisdom of this world," I wonder if some came to this Convention wondering if Southern Baptists should propose some new thing to guide, to anchor, and to save the world in this present emergency. I trust not! I verily believe that the Master, if He should appear in person to speak to this Convention in response to our request that He come again to tell us what our message should be to the world today, would say exactly what he said to the trusting few on Olivet just before He ascended to the right hand of the Father to await in patience the subduing of all enemies:

"These are my words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their mind that they might understand the Scriptures; and he said unto them, Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. Ye are witnesses of those things. And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:44-49).

The fact that our Lord knew that this summary of truths was the last message that His human lips would ever deliver to the trusting few is enough to make us know that the four truths He gave them—truths for all times, truths immutable in their nature—are adequate to meet man's need and to achieve God's eternal purpose. Let me restate them:

It is true, eternally true, that "the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day" to provide a Gospel unto salvation for a lost world.

It is true, eternally true, that the lost world should repent at the preaching in Christ's name of this Gospel to receive remission of sins.

It is true, eternally true, that believers, and only believers should be the "witnesses of these things."

It is true, eternally true, that the Holy Spirit should clothe believers "with power from on high" to make them effective witnesses.

Christ named four responsibilities which were definitely placed before the hills were brought forth: the responsibility placed upon Christ to provide the Gospel, the responsibility placed upon sinners to repent, the responsibility placed upon Christians to testify the Gospel, and the responsibility placed upon the Holy Spirit to empower the witnesses to succeed.

III

TO MEN without hope and without God in the world how indescribably beautiful upon the eternal mountains adorned with the gray dawn of a new day were the bleeding feet of him who came with riven side, pierced hands, and

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"ALL THINGS MUST NEEDS BE FULFILLED"

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thorn-crowned brow to bring good tidings, to publish peace, to proclaim salvation, to provide deliverance through divine grace for the captives of sin. Men created in the image of God who "had been sold for nought" could now be "redeemed without money." The gospel of redeeming love was upon his lips,—the "gospel of the Kingdom," the "gospel of grace," the "gospel of good things," the "gospel of the glory of Christ," the "gospel of salvation," the "gospel of peace," the "gospel of God." This was the good tidings which blessed John on Patmos saw as an "eternal gospel to proclaim unto them that dwell on the earth, and unto every nation and tribe and tongue and people" (Rev. 14:6).

But the gospel had to be provided before it could be preached. It originated not in the lips of Christ. It was wrought out by two experiences of Christ, namely, his death on the cross and His resurrection from the grave. Oh, that death! Who can know its meaning? Who could frame his lips to speak it? When we behold him, who was in reality both God and man, nailed to a cross, our hearts sense far more than our eyes see.

Faith assigns that cross a place in the plan of God to accomplish his eternal purpose that human understanding cannot grasp. Place the cross at the center of the cosmos, make its law of sacrifice the underlying principle of life for all things, animate and inanimate, by which to preserve themselves unto perpetual usefulness; explain it by all the theories of interpretation wrought out by logical theologians; let us grasp the fulness of its meaning as a reconciliation, a propitiation, a ransom, a redemption, a price paid for man's deliverance; see Christ on the cross as a curse for sinners: still its full and ultimate meaning is God's secret.

It is the offensive braggadocio of men afflicted with an incurable superiority complex to claim to read its meaning clear. But faith looks out into the direction of God's infinitudes and sees in the voluntary dying of the unique hyphenated Person, Son of God and Son of Man, and knows that the cross is the symbol of inter experience of God and man in the sense that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself."

Since the cross is the place where God's wisdom meets and replaces man's ignorance, where God's power meets and replaces man's weakness, where God's love meets and replaces man's hostility, where God's holiness meets and replaces man's depravity, it cannot be something to be understood but must forever be the symbol of truth to be experienced. Therefore, the boastful voice of reason must remain silent while faith, which deals with facts not to be carried in the pail of reason, soars on unearthly wings to its unearthly perch and tells with poetic eloquence what it sees and knows, not to prove anything but to testify everything.

But "if Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain." True, indeed, because the resurrection is the supplementary truth to perfect the gospel. Not only must we say, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" but also "He hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures;" for the gospel is constituted by both facts. His death and his resurrection are hemispheres of truth which bleed themselves white unless they are cemented together as the sphere of complete truth.

Without the resurrection his crucifixion is the world's darkest tragedy—yea, its foulest premeditated murder. But with the resurrection his death was the falling into the ground of a seed to die to bring forth much fruit. When he cried, "It is finished. And bowed his head and gave up the spirit," history says despair hung like a pall of death over the earth.

But wait! A little later Mary Magdalene, while peering into the empty tomb with eyes flooded with tears—mixing her tears with the early morning dew—recognized Jesus by the tone of His voice when He said, "Mary." Instantly her doubts gave way to faith, her despondency to hope, and her grief to joy, for she knew her Lord was not dead but alive again.

Thus the first eternal imperative was realized. The gospel which "is the power of God unto salvation" is now ready!

IV

JESUS speaks again naming a second definitely fixed responsibility which must be accepted and discharged in executing the plan for realizing "God's eternal purpose": "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name until all nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

If Dr. John A. Broadus was correct in saying that repentance was the most grossly misunderstood word of the New Testament in his day, I declare that it is the most neglected truth of the New Testament in our day. To sidestep or sidetrack repentance is utterly disastrous. One might as well mutilate or ignore the gospel itself as to change or contradict repentance. If it was Christ's responsibility to provide the gospel, it is lost man's responsibility, according to the same plan, to repent. There is absolutely no other response he can make to the gospel to avail Himself of salvation through grace.

But what is repentance? Briefly, it is "a change of mind," but more fully defined it is "the change of mind of those who have begun to abhor their errors and misdeeds and have determined to enter upon a better course of life, so that it embraces both a recognition of sin and sorrow for it and hearty amendment, the tokens and effects of which are good deeds."

That is God's immutable formula for sinful men to get into the true way of life both for this world and the next. It is such an obvious necessity and so obviously simple that Jesus began and concluded His ministry crying, "Repent ye." The burden of His message throughout His earthly ministry was, "Except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish." He concluded His ministry by saying, "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all nations, beginning from Jerusalem." Think not of repentance as mere credal jargon, but as a liberating power, a power with which even the vanquished win and without which even the victors must continue to live in the slime and the slush and the muck and the mire of their own guilt.

V

WOE BETIDE our own blessed nation in this hour of crisis if we as individuals heed not God's call, "Repent ye therefore, and turn again that your sins may be blotted out." But do we have any sins? May the deep darkness and daring arrogance of the sins of our enemies not blind us to our own! Is there any connection between the sufferings which await us and the sins which we have committed? If we repent of our sins is it a fact that "An east wind shall come, the breath of Jehovah coming up from the wilderness" to dry up the springs and fountains of the enemy? May our minds be opened to understand that man's repentance obtains God's remission and that remission from God brings actual relief for men.

Therefore, when I think of the countless thousands of our young men who will be blasted out of the air at dizzy altitudes, who will fail in death or mortally wounded in tropical jungles and on scorching desert sands, who will forsake their torpedoed boats like rats only to drown in merciless waters, there stand accusingly before me our legalized nefarious liquor traffic paying taxes to a nation whose homes it is destroying and whose citizens it is corrupting, our annual crime bill of sixteen billion dollars, our desecration of the Lord's Day, our empty churches and crowded theatres on Sunday night, our godless homes equipped with bars but not with family altars, our selfish pressure groups seeking to outwit one another for material advantage, our racial prejudice, our penury toward God and our prodigality toward lustful pursuits, our prostitution of marriage, and our worship of mass efficiency, saying "to the work of our hands, ye are our gods; for in THEE the fatherless findeth mercy."

Oh, yes, I see these evils and others and know that unless we repent God will not be as the dew unto us, causing us to blossom as a lily and to cast forth our roots as Lebanon. Oh, beloved nation, our America, hear Jehovah, for he is saying, "Turn thou to thy God: keep kindness and justice, and wait for thy God continually."

Repentance is the fixed immutable responsibility of all men everywhere, but how can they repent unless the gospel be preached to them in Christ's name? We cannot fail to see the tragedy of sending pilots at unspeakable cost to drop bombs upon people's heads to whom we failed to send preachers to put Bible into their hands. It is still our responsibility to make disciples of all the nations.

VI

NOW hear the Master speak again, "Ye are the witnesses of these things!" Christians are! They are the only ones who can witness, for they are the only ones who have something to tell.

Christians should witness by becoming life cells in Christ's body, the church, in which organism each member becomes the complement of all other members. Christians belong in the church just as Christ belonged on the cross. Both are just different parts of the same plan. If Christ loved the church and gave his life for it, surely every Christian should love the church and give his life through it. Yet in every city there are enough professing Christians unaffiliated with any church to constitute one church which would be numerically stronger than the combined memberships of several of the largest churches in that city. As soldiers of the cross they incriminate themselves before God by being "absent without leave."

Christ's witnesses must tell the good news, tell it with their tongues. Oh, the sickening silence of Christ's witnesses! "Go tell" is Christ's command to every witness in every age. How our hearts should condemn us every Lord's Day unless there are many to repent when the gospel is preached in Christ's name. We would add to our churches daily those who are being saved if our members would testify the gospel of saving grace to the people, especially in those cities in which two-thirds of the citizens have "no hope and are without God in the world."

The tithe of every Christian witness has a thousand tongues to testify the gospel. The single tithe of Christ's witnesses given into their respective churches to support a world-enveloping program to build the Kingdom of God in human hearts would have obviated the present necessity of putting four tithes into taxes to support a world-enveloping war to destroy the kingdoms of men. "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments," says Jesus. Not until we do love Him, will we become hilarious givers to testify the gospel into the ends of the earth.

VII

BUT there is another eternal imperative. The Holy Ghost must clothe the witnesses "with power from on high." That is his definitely fixed responsibility. The original witnesses our Lord commanded to tarry in the city, literally to sit down, not to attempt anything in his name, until they received the promise of the Father. Their efforts would be worse than futile should they attempt their task as witnesses before they received the enabling power which the Holy Spirit would give them.

Present-day witnesses for Christ need to appraise properly this informative word, priceless in its value, of the Master to prepare the trusting few for his return to the Father until they finish the task assigned them:

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send Him unto you. And He, when He is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness because I go to the Father, and ye behold me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all the truth: for He shall not speak from Himself; but what things soever He shall hear, these shall He speak: and He shall declare unto you the things that are to come" (John 16:7-13).

At pentecost the promise of the Father was fulfilled, and "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit." The results of

this endowment with spiritual power were immediate: they had a keener insight into the meaning of the Scriptures, they did "many wonders and signs," they had joy and courage under persecution, they practiced New Testament stewardship, the unsaved believed and the church grew.

We are witnessing for Christ—witnessing in our churches, witnessing in all forms of organized denominational activity, witnessing over the radio, and witnessing much in personal soul-winning. It is not that we are failing to preach Christ and Him crucified. Can it be, my friends in Christ, that we are making the cross of Christ void by preaching the gospel "in persuasive words of wisdom" and not "in demonstration of the Spirit of power?" Are we leary of the Holy Spirit? Do we ignore Him because some have become fanatical in their interpretation of Him and His work for men, in men, and through men? Hear me! The gospel, repentance, witnesses, spiritual power are eternal necessities! It is just as necessary for the Holy Spirit to endue the witnesses with power as it was for the Christ to provide the gospel for them to preach. Witnesses can no more preach the gospel without power from heaven than sinners can accept it without repentance. The efficient plans of men fail without the effectual power of God's Spirit.

Then, my fellow believers, with the eternal gospel, which is the very embodiment of God's holiness, wisdom, and grace, the gospel which does "not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God," is there the slightest question as to what our message should be in this day and in all other days, even "until the end of this current age?" With "an all-pervasive element in the nature of unregenerate mankind," as William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury, says, "Of which nature this unparalleled holocaust of war is the latest, most violent manifestation," is there even a taint of doubt that "repentance and remission of sins" should be preached in Christ's name "unto all the nations?"

With witnesses, who have experienced the saving power of the gospel, like M. Theron Rankin and countless others, building "a kingdom that cannot be shaken" while "the rulers of this world are coming to nought," is there even a faint tremor in our conviction that Christ's witnesses, at home and abroad, are the true heralds of glad tidings? With the Holy Spirit, who "shall not speak from himself" but out of the wisdom of the Godhead, ever present to "convict this world" and to guide Christ's witnesses "into all the truth," is there any doubt that they shall be "more than conquerors?"

Oh, my comrades in Christ, let us keep to our task, knowing that only God's plan will create in this world a society of redeemed men and women who will accept and honor "the King of kings" as actual Lord in all areas of life—school, state, home, and church; knowing, too, that only God's plan will recreate for the world to come a holy family unto the Eternal Father—a family of men and women who shall be "conformed to the image of his Son," a family of redeemed men and women who shall be perfect in knowledge, holy in character, and clothed with resurrection bodies—to live "forever with the Lord."

EIGHT BAPTIST MEN OF KENTUCKY BEGIN TRAINING AT GREAT LAKES

GREAT LAKES, ILL., MAY 20—Eight more men of Baptist faith have enlisted in the U. S. Naval Reserve, and are now undergoing a period of recruit training here at the U. S. Naval Training Station.

These men are afforded the opportunities of religious worship they enjoyed in civilian life. Church services are held regularly in chapels on the station.

These men are: Elmer P. Hoffer, 1008 Highland Avenue, Louisville; Franklin C. Hite, 2623 West Jefferson Street, Louisville; Carl L. Brown, 1624 Beech Street, Louisville; Ernest L. Morton, 1320 Rufer Avenue, Louisville; Clarence K. Hughes, Jr., 2311 Portland Avenue, Louisville; Pelham O. Houchin, Rural Route No. 2, Lawrenceburg; Cecil C. Gilbert, 721 Euclid Avenue, Lexington; Robert R. DeVore, 1251 Magnolia Avenue, Bowling Green.