

Planning Sermon Topics

G. K. Wallace

What one is trying to do will determine the subjects used in a gospel meeting. The great commission authorizes a *teaching* program both to the world and to the church. A meeting is a school. The instructor is the teacher and the disciples make up the audience.

The meeting as a rule is designed to do a complete job so far as the series of meetings is concerned. A successful program should include the following:

1. *God and his word.* We should honor God as our Creator and Father. The person and power of Christ should be emphasized. The authority of the word of God should be clearly taught. When men realize that the word of God is their guide, one needs only to turn to the Book and point out what it says to lead them to Christ. If the Bible is not regarded as authoritative surely no one will follow it. The place of conscience should be studied. Most people set aside the word of God for a peculiar feeling. Their own conscience is respected over and above the word of the Lord. Too, sanctified common sense takes precedence over the will of Christ.

2. *In another part of a meeting time should be devoted to the right use of the word of God.* It is not enough to reverence and respect the word of Christ. One must use the word correctly. Paul said, "Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15.) The word of God must be handled properly. It is not right to take passages addressed to the children of God and apply them to an alien sinner. It is not right to take passages out of their setting and make them teach what the writer did not intend. Then, too, there are some who will deliberately twist the word of God to suit their own fancy. Peter said the "ignorant and unstedfast wrest" the scriptures "unto their own destruction." (2 Peter 3:16.) A lesson on the two covenants is always good if not the best way to get this lesson before an audience. Such lessons ought to be repeated every year. The rising generation, to say nothing of the outside, needs to learn this lesson. A right use of the word of God will keep men from making a misapplication of passages in the Book of God. It will prevent the twisting of the scriptures. It will, if one is honest, keep him from perverting the word of God. (Galatians 1:7.)

3. *The scheme of redemption.* This section should include lessons on the operation of the Holy Spirit. The church of our Lord should be set forth so clearly that all may realize the true body of Christ. The terms describing the church and when it started must be learned. It is not enough to know

what the true church is but one must learn how to locate it in the present world. No one should be left in doubt as to how to locate the true body of Christ. The law of induction, the new birth, must be clearly understood. No church is a true church that can be entered another way. Too, the work and worship of the church should be studied. The purity of the church is important. The church must be right in doctrine, work, worship and in the lives of her members. Surely anyone who is prepared to hold a meeting should be able to arrange sermons that drive home these great truths. The number of sermons used will depend on the amount of time devoted to the special series of meetings.

4. *The plan of salvation should be clearly pointed out.* There is no substitute for old-fashioned preaching on the conversions that are recorded in the book of Acts. These lessons should be repeated every generation. There will always be someone in a large audience who needs to know these simple stories. Gospel preaching will be confined to them. They were placed in the Bible to be preached. No amount of lectures on current affairs will take the place of the conversions recorded in the book of Acts. It is true that many in the audience have heard these lessons time and time again. However, a meeting to save the lost is not to entertain the saved.

5. *Then there should be lessons designed to cause the lost to decide to do right.* This might truly be the hour of decision. The study of Felix (Acts 24) and of Agrippa (Acts 26) make good sermons on the deadly danger of delay. Agrippa was almost persuaded but never obeyed the gospel. The lost may be reached when they are told of the love of God, the hope of heaven and the joy of a Christian life. We are never asked by our Lord to surrender anything that contributes to the real joys of life. The pleasure of sin is for a season. Any topic that will cause men to act on what they know to be right is in order after the lost have been properly taught.

6. *Certainly much time should be devoted during the meeting to teaching folks how to live so as to be pleasing to Christ.* A plan followed by some is to preach a mixed sermon. That is, they generally tell sinners in a few words how to be saved, even though they preach the main body of the sermon to the church. A meeting should cover the general program of Jehovah. The sermon topic one uses is not as important as the faithful deliverance of the word of God on the Bible topic selected. Many take a text and leave it. We should take a text and explain and illustrate it. The truth of God in the passage should be brought out.

The results of a meeting should not be measured by the number who respond. Of course we are anxious for men to accept the Gospel. However, our chief concern is to be sure that we have faithfully proclaimed Christ and his word. God will then give the increase.—203 Glendale Drive, Apt. A., Brandon, Florida 33511. ■

Planning the Sermons

John H. Banister

The local congregation cannot meet the challenges before it without a strong pulpit! It must have a strong preacher who is capable of proclaiming the gospel and willing to do so in season and out of season. A congregation may engage in many worthwhile activities, but none, in my opinion, compares in importance with the pulpit. Churches that are growing and prospering today are those which have sound and energetic evangelists whose pulpit preaching is their most important work. Bible school, personal work, cottage Bible classes, visitation programs, etc. are all important, and every congregation should engage in all these activities, but they do not take the place of a strong pulpit where the gospel is faithfully proclaimed at all times.

If a minister is to be effective in his pulpit work, he should prayerfully plan his sermons weeks and months ahead of the time of their delivery. In fact, it is deemed wise by many to plan at least a year's preaching. One need not prepare the sermons that far ahead, but one should plan ahead what he shall preach so far as subject matter, and sermon type, etc. are concerned. The preacher who does this will always know, well in advance, what his subject is to be. In his study he will be gathering material for the sermon. Too, he will eliminate the necessity of trying to decide what to preach on when he awakes each Monday morning.

MOTIVES IN PLANNING

The minister's motives in the advance planning of his sermons is very important.

1. In planning, he should strive to see that the needs of all the people are met. This is the first consideration in all sermon planning. "What do I have to preach on this Sunday?" should never be in the preacher's mind, but "What do these people really need?" In the average congregation, some need strong indoctrination; others need exhortation and encouragement; the weak need strengthening; the bereaved need comforting; the lukewarm need reproving; the sinful need rebuking; and all need their hearts lifted heaven-ward to God. By wise planning of his sermons, the preacher can (in time) meet all these diverse needs. No one particular sermon will do this, but lessons presented over a period of time will. His sermons may be diligently prepared, forcefully delivered, and thoroughly scriptural but they fail of their purpose if they do not meet the needs of those who hear them.

2. By proper sermon planning, the preacher will be motivated to declare "all the counsel of God" as did the Apostle Paul. (Acts 20: 27.) But what is "all the counsel of God"? It is all the truth which God has revealed on every subject. We preachers have often thought we had declared "all the counsel of God" when we delivered sermons on "What Must I Do to Be Saved?" "The New Testament Church," and "Christian Living and Duty." We may have

preached what God has said on the above, but what about the many other themes of the Bible that need just as much preaching? What about sermons on God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit? On Sin, its Cause, Curse, Nature, and Cure? On Man, his nature, needs, origin, duty, and destiny? On the nature and necessity of Atonement? On Grace, Mercy, and Love? On the Incarnation, Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus? On Righteousness by Faith? On Justification, Redemption, Reconciliation, Regeneration, Sanctification, and Holiness? On the Providence of God? On Security, Peace, Hope, Joy, and Trust? On Death and Immortality? On the glories of Heaven and the Awfulness of Hell? The Bible is full of sermon topics which the wise preacher will use regularly and which the people will appreciate hearing. They should be preached because they are a part of the whole counsel of God!

ADVANTAGES OF SERMON PLANNING

1. It adds variety to preaching. Nothing kills interest in our preaching more quickly than for the minister to preach on a few of his favorite themes, and that over and over again, while neglecting lessons on many other subjects just as important. If we preach on the same topics, week in and week out, we have but ourselves to blame if brethren do not listen with relish and delight. Variety is not only the spice of life but of preaching as well. Wise planning gives the minister a wide range of subject matter and the congregation a varied diet of spiritual food.

2. It keeps our preaching fresh and vital! By continuous repetition of the same truths (though with a different title and text perhaps) the people know beforehand what we shall say and how we will say it. If variety is added to the preaching, the audience will wonder "what the preacher will say today." This arouses curiosity and develops interest. If the sermons are planned well, and delivered forcefully, the people will be pleasantly surprised to hear both new and old truths presented with originality, freshness, and vitality!

3. It keeps the preacher out of a rut. We are prone to preach on our own favorite themes and neglect to speak on others that are needed and desired. Wise planning ahead of time will prevent this. The preacher should also plan to use different "types" of sermons, as well as a wide range of subject matter. Some ministers preach topical (subject) sermons exclusively and this is a great mistake! Others use only "textual" sermons. Others present "expository" lessons almost all the time. Why not mix them up and use all from time to time? There are many different types of sermons. The textual, topical, expository, biographical, life situation, chapter, word, idea, thematic, book and other types. By a wise use of these many methods of preaching, our lessons will be more varied and interesting and the people will receive them with more relish. Of the many types listed above, the expository is, perhaps, the most important and yet one of the most neglected by the average preacher. This is the method of preaching used

most often by Christ and the apostles as they "opened [explained] the Scriptures" unto people. This is a most fruitful and satisfying type of preaching both for the preacher and members of the congregation.

4. It gives the preacher an opportunity for a true appraisal of his preaching. Let the preacher check back over his topics preached the last four, five, or six years. Has he given a balanced diet to the people? Has he preached from the Old Testament as well as the New? Has he indoctrinated? Has he re-proved and rebuked? Has he exhorted and encouraged? Has he preached on the "hard" duties which Christ calls on us to perform? Has he given lessons on the "devotional" side of life designed to develop deeper spirituality and encourage brethren to lay up treasures in heaven? Has he warned of the danger of riches, wealth, materialism, secularism, and all the other ills which are a part of our affluent society? Has he encouraged people to develop compassion for the poor and needy? Has he exposed worldliness, and rebuked sin in high and low places? Has he taught God's truth on marriage, divorce, and remarriage and sought to bring people to a knowledge of these truths? Has he given lessons that make heaven more real and desirable and hell more to be shunned? Has he warned of God's impending judgment and the awfulness of being eternally lost? Has he encouraged brethren to faithfulness, loyalty, and love? There are so many things people need to hear from the pulpit, and so many Biblical truths to proclaim that our sermons, if well planned, will be constantly fresh, vital, and effective!

Making the Worship Service Meaningful

V. P. Black

When I was a young gospel preacher, about twenty years old, I visited the service of one of the Episcopal churches in the little town where I was preaching. Their service was so different from the service of the church where I preached. This was and is so difficult for me to understand. I do not speak of the candle burning and of the many traditions of men they were observing. I knew very well that these things were wrong and thought of what Jesus said in Matt. 15: 9. "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

The thing I could not understand was the great amount of reverence that they manifested in their worship service. I had never seen this much reverence in the church of Christ at that time and few times have I seen it since. In that service there was no one jumping up and running out, no one chewing gum, no young girls primping, no one writing notes, no one twisting his head to a hundred and eighty degree angle to look at the clock. They made the impression on one that their intention was to worship God.

Some of the places where I go to preach in gospel

meetings, I am shocked at the lack of reverence among Christian people when they assemble to worship. If you were to blind-fold a man and bring him into some of our buildings just two minutes before the worship service begins and ask him to guess, "What is going to take place in the next two minutes?" he would be more apt to guess that a bull fight, ball game or a wrestling match is to take place instead of a worship service.

There should be more reverence in our worship service and for us to manifest the proper attitude in our worship services, we must know why we have come together. There are some things that we can do that will make our worship services more meaningful.

1. When one enters into the church building he should ask himself three questions.

First, Why am I here? If my motives are pure and my heart is right, I go to worship because I feel a deep need of God. In Luke 18 we read about the Pharisee and publican going up to the temple to worship. The Publican went away blessed, happy and stronger because he was filled with the fullness of God. His worship meant so much to him because he fully realized why he was going up to the temple. We can have a full meaning of the worship service only when we realize why we have assembled. The reason the Pharisee went away as empty as he had come was because he felt no need of God. His worship was just an empty form or ritual. He just could not forget how righteous he was even while he was praying. The act of worship on the part of the Pharisee was just a form. Sometimes we hear the remark, "I just don't get anything out of the worship service." When one walks up the steps as if he owned the entire church plant, walks down the aisle looking for a conspicuous place to be seated, falls asleep during the song service or immediately after the preacher starts, complains about the service being too long—to him the worship is no more than the sounding of brass or tinkling of a cymbal.

Secondly. What did I leave behind? (Matt. 5: 23-24.) "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Before our worship can be meaningful we must leave those ugly sins, such as hate, malice, envy, and jealousy behind. The person who comes to worship with evil in his heart, is doing a most dangerous thing. If the worship service does not mean much to you, then your hands may not be clean nor your heart pure. In this case the worship service would be meaningless. But the man who can say as he is going to worship, "My hands are clean, my heart is pure" Oh, what the worship service means to this person. The person that really gets a joy and a blessing out of worshipping God is the man in tune with God, and his fellowman.

If man had a set screw on his brain, we could have someone standing in the door of the building at each service and mechanically adjust the screw so all

Gospel Advocate

Published weekly at 110 Seventh
Avenue, North, Nashville, Tenn.

ESTABLISHED 1855

Entered at post office at Nashville, Tenn., as second-class matter.

VOLUME XCII, No. 12

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE, MARCH 23, 1950

\$2.00 PER YEAR, IN ADVANCE

Much Emphasis Needed

GUY N. WOODS

The sacred writers were constantly possessed of a sense of need for continued reiteration. They were fully aware of the fact that only thus could the saints be protected from indifference and evil. Peter, for example, in his Second Epistle, declared: "Wherefore I shall be ready always to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the truth which is with you. And I think it right, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that the putting off my tabernacle cometh swiftly, even as our Lord Jesus Christ signified unto me. Yea, I will give diligence that at every time ye may be able after my decease to call these things to remembrance." (2 Pet. 1: 12-15.)

Of similar import is an admonition in the chapter following: "This is now, beloved, the second epistle that I write unto you; and in both of them I stir up your sincere mind by putting you in remembrance; that ye should remember the words which were spoken." (2 Pet. 3: 1, 2.)

To the same end Paul penned these words to the Philippians: "To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not irksome, but for you it is safe." (Phil. 3: 1.) Far from regarding his duty as a burdensome thing, Paul rejoiced to be able to warn his beloved Philippians of dangers which threatened, recognizing that it was for their good. Both Peter and Paul refer to the fact that instruction had been formerly given in the matters alluded to, and in each instance attention is directed to the fact that the repetition was for the sake of continued emphasis on vital and fundamental principles. Human nature is so constituted as to need such all along life's way. The scholarly Doctor Johnson of English literature fame, once said: "It is not sufficiently considered that men more frequently need to be reminded than instructed." Another English writer, the quaint John Trapp said: "Men are dull to conceive, hard to believe, apt to forget, and slow to practice heavenly truths, and had, therefore, great need to have them much pressed and often inculcated."

In these appeals by the inspired writers there is more involved than a logical deduction of facts leading to a conclusion. In addition to convincing the judgment, they labored to influence the will and to change the life. To this end appeals were made through the use of incentives embracing a wide range of motives. Among

them may be discerned: (a) a desire for salvation; (b) the search for relief, release, and rest; (c) a life on the plane of high ideals; (d) noble service; (e) gratitude; (f) duty; (g) submissiveness, and many others.

Our Lord's method of teaching was: (1) *natural*, not formal; (2) *popular*, not highly systematic; (3) *picturesque*, not always literal; and (4) *clear*, not hidden, or difficult. While logical propositions were sometimes deduced, his teaching for the most part was of the type most calculated to appeal to the unlearned and common masses. Little effort was made to rules of the schoolmen of his time.

There is a tendency on our part to attach too much significance to logical reasoning in our efforts to lead people into the truth. Propositions which to us appear irresistible often leave such individuals unmoved, much to our disappointment and astonishment. It is not unusual for such people to brush aside with no apparent difficulty matters which to us appear to be unanswerable. It is not possible to transform men by syllogisms. The impact of such on the untrained mind is oftentimes nil. These things are the mechanics of speech; they are difficult to follow, and almost always convey a sense of artificiality. The deepest things in life are not determined by argument alone. The denominations have capitalized on this, and through appeals of an emotional nature have been able, in large measure to keep the masses away from the truth. Because they have utilized them so effectively in the service of error there is much prejudice against them in the church today. Properly used they may be turned to the service of the truth, and should be. There is more room for *feeling* than the average one among us allows today.

Those who are ignorant of logical thought processes, and who are unable to follow through to conclusions drawn, usually feel that if clever enough they might find a flaw in the argument presented. There is a vague feeling discernible among such that if they were shrewd enough they could answer the argument; that their failure to do so is not due to their position, but to their lack of knowledge. Such people have the feeling that one cannot believe everything that one may not be able to answer readily. Further, logic divides a subject into its parts, dissects its different phases, and deals with them separately. The whole, with its various relations, is never before the eyes at the same time. Analysis—with the average man at least—is not the method by which people

are stirred to great decisions. Though the judgment is convinced, it remains for the will to be influenced that the life may be altered. It is in this realm that incentives may be found which lead to major changes in one's life.

Those who serve the cause of Christ most effectively are people capable of intensive and strong emotional feeling. Paul, for example, was a man of powerful emotional appeal. While his writings abound with logical propositions, he did not overlook the usual incentives which prompt men to alter their lives. In his letter to the Philippians he penned a statement of warning to the saints and mentioned that as he wrote *he was weeping!* "The Tears of Paul" constitute a revealing and moving lesson. He often was thus powerfully moved. So, too, of all other great characters who have influenced the course of history.

We shall labor more effectually in the future if we remember that, in addition to *proving truth* (which is, of course, our first duty), we must lead on to its espousal; and that this may be done in many instances only through appeals to incentives embedded in the emotional nature. Paul admonishes Timothy to reprove, rebuke, and exhort; and he himself set the pattern by not only *reasoning* with men, but also *persuading* them.

He Overcomes Who Knows How to Pray

He overcomes the anxiety of the day who in the morning places his faith in God.

He overcomes the impatience of the hour who puts his trust in the God of the years.

He overcomes his small horizon who sees with the larger vision of God.

He overcomes his fears and worries who findeth the God that dwelleth within.

He overcomes the troubled spirit who rests in the peace of the everlasting arms.

He overcomes the importance of self who bows before God with a heart of humility.

He overcomes self-centered living who in the name of Christ goes about doing good.

He overcomes the coldness of heart who heals others' wounds with the ointment of love.

He overcomes his love for worldly gain who gives more for others; who wants less for self.

He overcomes the frustration of the times whose plans and purposes belong to God.

He overcomes his lonely days who walks with Christ, who walks with man.—*John Howard Blough.*

How Do You Get Your Sermons?

H. H. ADAMSON

Only last week a teacher in our city schools asked me, "How do you get your sermons?" A short time before another asked, "Do you really like to preach, or do you just preach to make a living?" My reply to the last question was on this order: Yes, I like to preach when the sermon preaches itself; but when I have to preach the sermon, I'm not especially fond of my job. With me preaching is like writing. If I am really full of my subject and just have to hustle to keep up with the subject I have in hand, then I surely like to write; but if I have to word hunt and thought hunt and Scripture hunt and scratch my head and pull my hair and clear my throat to get an idea across—well, it is then that I do not like to write. So far as preaching to make a living is concerned, I think I may safely say that I live to preach and preach to live. I find myself working a little on both sides of that proposition.

GETTING OUT SERMONS

We now revert to the first question and think a little on sermon building. Sir Walter Scott wrote: "Get ideas, and the words will come." I have found it very difficult to say something when I had nothing to say. I have listened to men with a voice like a guinea and others like a bear; but if they had anything to say, the voice was not heard. Moses E. Lard advised all public speakers to make such careful preparation that the ideas of the address would stand out before them as clearly as you would see lambs gamboling on the lawn. We all can forgive almost anything about a preacher—his awkwardness, his gestures, his voice, or his mannerism—but we cannot forgive him for taking our time and shattering our nerves in trying to talk when he has nothing to say. One of the first requisites in sermon building is *subject matter* that is worth while.

PAUL'S TRUMPET

In 1 Cor. 14: 8 we read: "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" The trumpet must give a distinction of sounds, for the soldiers advanced or retreated, fought or fled as the variations of the trumpet indicated. A man that would blow a horn just to be blowing would be regarded a nuisance in any community. First, have something to say. Second, say it. Say it clearly, kindly, positively. These rules will apply to all Bible teachers in "Sunday school" or elsewhere. Some one has said that if a preacher wants to be popular he should "aim at nothing and hit it." It is to be taken for granted that if there is no clarity in the mind there can be none in the utterance. The preacher must know that even though he be an earthen vessel, yet he is speaking in the name of God. The more valuable the treasure the more carefully it should be handled. What can be more valuable than the "gospel of our salvation"?

THE BEST STYLE

Voltaire was possibly not thinking of preachers when he wrote: "Every style is permissible except the dull style." (Quoting from memory.) But I am not ready to concede that the dull style is the only thing that puts folks to sleep; however, if you fail to get the attention of your congregation, you would just as well put that big sermon on cold storage and save it for some other time. I recall hearing the lamented E. A. Elam make this remark: "Brethren, would you sit there and sleep and just let a man preach his head off?" (Many never stirred.) A certain man, in giving a lecture on the feet as an index of character, made this remark: "When a man's toes line with his nose, you can count on it that he is going somewhere." As nearly as possible, the emphasis, the voice,

the gestures should "line" with the subject. Brevity and simplicity have more seasoning qualities than almost anything you can put into a sermon. Do not be afraid of the commonplace and familiar subjects, but say them so they will retain their sweetness and freshness.

THE OBJECT IN PREACHING

"Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel." Paul had an inward urge—he felt Spirit-bound—he simply had it to do. But what object did he have in preaching? Simply this: "that I might save some." We must preach for results and look for them. Every sermon may not have the same objective, and yet every sermon should have one objective above all others, and that is to *save souls*. As early as possible in every sermon a "soul affinity" should be established between speaker and audience. There must be no "gulf fixed" between the speaker and listener. I cannot name the author, but some one said that every sermon should provoke a crisis and win a verdict. To be sure, we will not forget that the saints must be edified and the unruly admonished, for "he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." (James 5: 20.) Some men preach with such power that their hearers are charmed and impressed with their ability—and seemingly that is the object some have in preaching. Others hide so completely behind the cross that the hearers see "Christ, the hope of glory." The apostles preached with such earnestness and directness that men cried out: "What must we do to be saved?" May God help us all to so preach.

THE TEXTBOOK

What would we do about it if we could not find the word "sermon" in the Bible? And then suppose we could not find the word "Bible" in the Bible? Some of "our folks" have raised a fuss about almost everything else, and I wonder why they have not excommunicated about tenths of the members because they use words that cannot be found in the Bible—"in so many words." Selah! But the Bible (Jude 2: 1 (?)) is full of sermons (Jude 2: 1 (?)). The Bible is a very human kind of a book, and it is the most common-sense kind of book in the world. In giving us this book God has wisely arranged for his feeble servants that he would, through all the coming years, depend upon to announce his righteous will and purpose to mankind. So, in reality, God has been kind enough to "get up all our sermons" for us. This blessed old book is full and running over with sermons on history, poetry, geography, lineage, earth, sky, seas, trees, rivers, cities, nations, sin, danger, death, hell, heaven, salvation, Christ, God, and a "thousand and one" other subjects. Let every teacher and preacher who loves God and loves to tell the old, old story "hide the word in his heart." Let him feast upon it and fill his mind and heart with its divine treasures. Then let him arrange, classify, and in public pronouncement clarify the lesson he desires to get to his audience. I have resolved—in the time that God may give me here—to spend very little time in "getting up sermons," but to spend much time in actually "searching the scriptures" that I may know how to "rightly divide the word of truth" and "not be ashamed."

Knowing the exact truth and not being "ignorant of Satan's devices," with faithfulness in following instructions, will enable any soldier in Christ's army—any member of the church—to win an "incorruptible crown." Cowards and those ignorant of duty will fail.—*Annual Lesson Commentary.*

MUTUAL EDIFICATION



"Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace and things wherewith one may edify another."

By S. H. HALL

SPOILING THE EFFECTS OF GREAT SERMONS.

By C. D. PLUM.

Possibly we cannot spoil great sermons, but we can, and no doubt oftentimes do, spoil the effect of them. I repeat that a message that rings true to the grand old Book cannot be spoiled by what men do, but the effect of that message is quite often spoiled by what they do. Sometimes we are made to wonder who spoils the effect of most great sermons, Satan or men.

SATAN'S TACTICS.

It is a fact known by all that Satan spoils the effect of many great sermons by playing the part of a thief. It is much like putting wholesome food in reach of a starving child so that it may eat it and preserve physical life and at the same time satisfy the awful pangs of hunger, and when the child is in the act of consuming the food a miserable wretch takes the food away. So it is with Satan. He is not able to hinder the sermon from reaching the heart, but after it gets there he steals it away. In this awful act of stealing, Jesus describes Satan in these words: "Those by the wayside are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved." (Luke 8: 12.)

But as horrible as this may seem, yet men and women—yes, Christian men and women, even including preachers—oftentimes, through mere thoughtlessness, do more toward spoiling the effect of great sermons than Satan. How do they do this?

PREACHERS.

All true gospel preachers are under the same charge as was Timothy—"Preach the word." (2 Tim. 4: 2.) The effect of God's word that they preach is oftentimes spoiled by displaying too much levity (lack of seriousness) while they are preaching. The "preaching business" is a serious business. God's eyes are upon the preacher. His word is before him, the special message is in the preacher's heart ready to be spoken, and the audience is waiting for the everlasting gospel. How, before God, can a preacher be anything else but serious at a time like this? No, I do not mean that a preacher or any other Christian needs to wear a long face and never smile. Far from this. But I do mean that too much levity manifested by the preacher while preaching has a tendency to kill the effect of the message. Read Christ's sermon on the mount, Peter's discourse on Pentecost, Stephen's great message, Paul's defense before the angry mob, his defense before Felix and Festus and King Agrippa, and read any or all of the "epistolary writings," and how much levity do you find? How many jokes and funny stories do you find? I would to God that all sermons we preachers preach today were as full of thought and seriousness as these! And, brethren, when we consider that the above sermons were delivered according to the wish of God, we know what kind of sermons please him.

Then, too, preachers often spoil the effects of sermons by not presenting them in earnestness. Preachers should

really believe what they are preaching. With conviction preachers should preach every Scripture from the standpoint of "it is true." Jesus did. Jesus said to God: "Thy word is truth." (John 17: 17.) We should not speak of any part of inspiration by saying "if" it is true; for, brethren, it is true. No part of inspiration is "dispensable;" it is indispensable. It is a sin to practice that which is not of faith. (Rom. 14: 23.) If it is "of faith," we are not privileged to do it or not do it as per our choice or the choice of some of our dear friends.

OTHERS.

Neither is it a fact that Satan and preachers are the only ones in this "spoiling business." Many good-meaning and God-loving Christian people oftentimes spoil the effect of a great sermon. As the preaching business is a serious business, so the "hearing business" is a serious business. "Take heed how ye hear" is as serious as the command, "Preach the word." (Luke 8: 18.) As the preaching is to be given in seriousness and earnestness, so the listeners should listen with the same reverence for divine truth. I have known the effect of some great sermons to be killed by brethren laughing out loud at some remark of the preacher while he was preaching. No, the preacher was not necessarily trying to be funny. He was trying to show up the falsity of Catholicism, Protestantism, creeds, and human confessions of faith, and he was doing it, too, when some dear brethren would burst forth in "explosive laughter." Some one may say: "Well, Brother Plum, what of it?" Just this: the effect of that message was lost. That great message was going forward and was sinking deep into the hearts of lost souls, many of whom belonged to unscriptural denominations; but the laughter made them think the church was not serious at all, but just wanted to "rub it in." Let us be serious.

Inattention on the part of the hearers will also spoil the effect of sermons. When the gospel is being preached, it is the Lord speaking. The earth at one time was called upon to "give ear," "for the Lord hath spoken." (Isa. 1: 2.) Certainly people should be attentive when the gospel is being preached, for the Lord is speaking.

Then, too, the effect of a sermon is often killed by selecting an invitation song that is not suitable for the occasion, or possibly a song that is good, but one which only a few can sing. This is not always the fault of the song leader, for sometimes certain songs are called for. To overcome this, let all the singers sing as never before, "with the spirit" and "with the understanding."

THE SIMPLE LIFE OF PRAYER.

(Matt. 6: 19-34; Luke 12: 22-31.)

By W. S. LONG.

Prayer is one of the greatest powers for good, both upon the individual life and by its influence for good upon others. Men and women who have moved the throne of God and changed the course of nations were praying men and women. The laws of the Medo-Persian kingdom (which had never been known to change) were changed by the prayers of Queen Esther and her uncle, Mordecai.

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MUTUAL EDIFICATION



"Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."

S. H. HALL

SEEING THE SERMON.

BATSELL BAXTER.

Some evangelists, especially in the church of Christ, have a custom of putting a good deal of their sermons on a chart or board up in front of the audience where everybody can see it. This has a tendency to make the sermon plain to some who would not otherwise get the salient facts and truths presented. The public schools have caught the idea. "Visual instruction" occupies an increasingly large place in the school system of instruction each year. Instructors and school officials have found that to keep something up before the listener helps to keep the mind from wandering away from the subject, and it illustrates the point that is being made. One man expressed it this way: "When I can see your sermon, I can understand it better."

ILLUSTRATING THE SERMON.

Evangelists and teachers have found that an apt illustration helps to make the lesson plain and to hold it in the memory. Jesus, the Master Teacher, often illustrated the truths concerning the kingdom of heaven. The sowing of seed, the sweeping of a house, the hunting a lost sheep, the wayward boy, and many, many other happenings of daily life were woven into his sermons to illustrate them. Best of all, the Savior illustrated his sermons with a life that no man could gainsay. He threw down the challenge to the objector: "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" (John 8: 46.) No critic has ever been able to answer that challenge. Christianity lighted all the world with a steadfast light in the first century because of the truth of its claims, because of the perfect life of its great Leader, and because of the godly lives of his followers.

SEEING THE SERMON.

Some one has written a poem the first line of which says: "I had rather see a sermon than hear one any day." That expresses the attitude characteristic of most of us. A strange preacher is sometimes to be preferred to one known in the community. Often he can "hold a better meeting." Sometimes this is due to that restlessness in the human mind that is constantly grasping at something new; sometimes it is due to the fact that the old preacher's manner and expressions have worn stale with the people; sometimes, sad to say, it is due to the fact that the people know too much about the life of the old preacher. They see the sermon that he preaches with his life. That gets in front of his chart so that they cannot well see the sermon outlined there. What he does speaks louder than what he says in the pulpit. Some one very strikingly said: "The noise of what you say is drowned by the thunder of what you are." Many times the lives of some professed Christians act toward the proclamation of the gospel much as static does to the message on the radio. Where there is much static, we just shut off the radio and give up trying to get the message or the music. Where there is much static (ungodly living) among the church members, the man of the world shuts off the message in disgust and turns his attention to something else. Where the preacher lives as he ought, and the members live their claims, it is expected that the church of the Lord will be in a good, healthy condition and will have the respect of even the enemies of Christ.

A FAIR TEST.

The world puts the claims of Christianity to a searching test. The man of the world expects the Christian to live up to the claims of his faith. He has a contempt for the Christian who does not measure up to the standard. Especially is this his estimate of the Christian who is manifestly lacking in the principles of Christian living. This is a severe test, but it is a fair test. Jesus laid down this standard: "By their fruits ye shall know them." He was speaking of men who made claims to righteousness. Then, in applying such a standard to the professed Christian, the man of the world is simply using the yardstick of Jesus. Most men of the world realize that all Christians fall short of the perfect standard. Some of this they excuse. But the man of the world condemns severely and uncharitably the professed Christian who falls far short of the standard. Such a church member becomes a stumblingblock in the way of sinners. He hinders the truth in unrighteousness. Some people will fail to see around or beyond him to the perfect Christ. They take him as a sample of what Christianity is; and, disgusted with him, they refuse to accept Christianity.

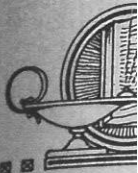
AN UNFAIR TEST.

While the Savior has told us that we shall be known by our fruits, men sometimes go beyond this and judge too harshly. They add by suspicion to what they actually know. In that way sometimes professed Christians who lack a good deal are made worse than they really are. This is unfair. It is also unfair to judge the whole church by the misconduct of a few members. But, unfair as it is, many people will do these very things. Churches in some places suffer much because evil men are allowed to roam at will in the congregation. Sometimes these men have even shaped places of leadership. In some instances the members of the church realize the condition and are anxious to remedy it, but feel unable to do so because of the power and authority which the evildoer has gathered to himself. Their unwillingness to deal with the situation brings about as much reproach upon the church as if they also were guilty of the same sins as these leaders. Thus the church is done a serious injustice and the salvation of souls is hindered.

THE BOOK THEY READ.

Christians are "living epistles," known and read of all men. The man of the world does not read the Bible much. He would be much better off if he did. But he reads the lives of professed Christians. In these he sees what he supposes is the reflection of the principles of Christianity. Just as the moon sheds the reflected light of the sun upon the earth, so the Christian sheds the reflected light of Christ to the men of the world. Wherever there are spots of sin, the light is dimmed and the principles of Christianity are distorted. To the extent that this is so Christ is misrepresented. The progress of the gospel and its effectiveness in reaching the hearts of men and turning them to Christ depends partly upon God's children. Here is a great responsibility. Christians are the light of the world. How effectively are we letting our light shine? What kind of a sermon are we presenting to the world by our lives? These are serious questions!

"What advantage then hath the Jew? or what is the profit of circumcision? Much every way: first of all, that they were intrusted with the oracles of God." (Rom. 3: 1, 2.) This being true, there is no place for the Mormons to make claim that God gave revelations—committed his word—to Joseph Smith; nor can the Adventists find place for the teaching that Mrs. White was intrusted with revelations from Jehovah. Joe Smith and Mrs. White were not Jews.—C. R. Nichols



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The MIND of the BRETHREN

"Men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on."

JESUS UNTIED SATAN'S KNOT.

BY F. L. PAISLEY.

For eighteen long years a poor woman had been bound down by great body affliction from Satan. It seems that her body was bent double at the waist, and "she could in no wise lift herself up." Jesus said Satan had done it. Therefore, Satan is the author of physical ailments. Since all maladies of the human body are caused by sin, directly or indirectly, and Satan is the author of sin, it follows that he causes all diseases. This fact recognized, it should not be difficult to understand such announcements made by the Lord on earth as, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," "Thy faith hath made thee whole," etc.—in each case a physical disease being healed. Jesus had power on earth to forgive sins—to heal the physical results of sin; but sins of the soul were not pardoned till after Jesus made offering of his blood in the holy of holies. (Heb. 9: 22 and chapter 10.) This fact removes every sectarian objection to baptism being for remission of sins, on the ground that Jesus forgave "sins" before he commanded baptism.

This afflicted woman met Jesus in a public place of worship. Let us ask, What was she doing there? Why not be at home complaining that she was not able to worship God? She was a "daughter of Abraham" and had a good degree of his faith. Many Christians would not be at the house of worship if so afflicted. Why the difference? This strong faith of this woman is what Jesus saw. Hence her healing.

Jesus said: "Thou art loosed from thine infirmities." Then after a season of performances she was a little better! Not so. He laid his hands on her, and she immediately was wholly healed. Why should Jesus take such a hard case? Why not take one with a mere pain or other invisible ailment? Rather, let us ask why the modern pretenders do not take such cases as he and the apostles sought—those afflictions known to all men to be untouchable by human skill? For years this writer has had a standing offer. If any man or woman to whom God has given power to heal any sick by such methods as they claim—if any one of them or all of them will take such case as Jesus here had and heal it in ten days or ten months without human skill, I will raise any dead immediately. If the Scriptures authorize their practice, the same verses sustain mine. (Matt. 10: 8.) Is raising the dead any harder for God than healing diseases? Do the healers obey Matt. 10: 8? Not one ever tries to do it.

This act of Jesus against Satan's throne was on the day of the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week. It occurred in one of the synagogues. Such places had rulers not always friendly to Jesus. This ruler became very angry. He could not deny the healing, nor could he consistently object to the act. Yet he must oppose Jesus some way. He saw the great sin (?) of doing the good on the Sabbath. He did not say a word to Jesus. He warned the people not to be healed on the Sabbath, since there were six other days for such work! Good logic!

"Thou hypocrite," retorted the Lord. Rather sharp words; but Jesus was not acquainted with "smooth words and fair speeches" in denouncing such sin. Nor does it always require their use to be a follower of Christ. A person who can never open his mouth to oppose sin in certain and definite terms is not the kind of preacher or

servant the Lord can use. True, we cannot look into the heart, as could Jesus; but in this case the heart was shown, as any one can see. The inconsistency was shown in that they readily approved the work required to give drink to stock on the Sabbath day; they freely did such work without supposing it broke the Sabbath law. But to loose a bond of eighteen years' duration, this done on the day of legal rest, was more than this ruler could bear!

Like deceivers advise sinners not to expect pardon of sin in obedience to God, lest such act become a "work of righteousness." But they will have the same sinner (used to, but rejecting it now) to agonize long and work hard to "come through." The same act they object to as a condition of salvation, they advise as a door into the church. Were Jesus here in person, he would use words we think too harsh.

Satan still binds physically, as then. Jesus loosed then to prove his divinity and authority over the Sabbath law. Such now is abundantly proved; hence, such loosing is not now done or needed. But Satan binds the minds of men and women. They are fettered to think only as the doctrines of men dictate. Jesus depends upon his servants to unbind such bonds with persistent attacks with the sword of the Spirit. Woe unto the servant who does not seriously try to unbind poor, lost souls!

Jesus' adversaries were ashamed after his rebuke. The servant of Satan trembles under exposure of his hypocrisy. The loosed woman glorified God. So will the liberated soul whom Satan has bound many years. Read the story in Luke 13: 10-17. Read our duty as opposers of Satan in the whole New Testament.

"BOIL IT DOWN, BROTHER."

BY C. D. PLUM.

Such is the advice that our religious papers have been giving us lately. I presume they mean, don't write two pages not on your subject and one page that is. Furthermore, if you must write the two wandering pages, just submit the one page that is to the point. Not bad advice.

Why wouldn't this same plan be a good idea in preaching? Why preach around your subject two or three times without getting on it? And why stay on your subject until you have people worn out? Do you say that if they were interested in the Lord's work they could listen to you preach for an hour, an hour and a quarter, or an hour and a half? But, my brother, many good Christians do not object to long sermons because they are not interested in the gospel and in you. They are convinced even as I am that more good is accomplished when the preacher preaches from thirty to forty-five minutes than from forty-five minutes and much longer. You will hold the sinner's attention better and edify the church more if you *boil your sermon down*. Wonder if Jesus had that same thought in mind when he preached on the mount? This sermon is recorded in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of Matthew. It takes just about fifteen minutes to read the entire sermon. It takes less time to read the sermon preached by Peter in the second chapter of Acts and the one by Stephen in the seventh chapter of Acts. Where will you find greater sermons than these? No sermon should be an underdose, but why give an overdose and waste the effort and effect?

Many good preachers, of sterling worth and character, find their calls falling off, not because they cannot preach, not because they do not preach the truth, but because congregations know that the interest in the meeting will not be good, since they like to preach longer than the people like to hear them. Let us do, by God's help, the most good we can as long as we do not sacrifice gospel truth. The latter would never do. (Gal. 1: 6-9.)

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the institution. If have served as well thing in the cup there is my blood, etc.!

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4. How Did Our the Disciples? Did each disciple and vessel, or did he p vessel into each dis drink? Of course knows that Jesus disciple and told his know any such thin that it was done tl assurance and ven do the same thing i ruin his cocksurene making his assumpt all to obey it. He

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are clearly different can give any force to the objection that colleges are established to do the work of the church. If congregations did their work one hundred per cent, it still would do no harm nor violate any Bible truth for students in college to spend some extra time in Bible study. Without some kind of official organization to control congregations it is not possible for Bible schools to usurp any congregational rights.

Many individual efforts may be unwise, impractical, or failures, but that does not cancel the liberty to make them. The history of many of our religious papers shows that they were failures. The same has been true of the schools and books that have been written; yet we concede the right to publish papers and write books, and we keep doing both. Why not concede the same right concerning schools in which the Bible is taught?

When individual efforts are made with proper respect for the rights of others, the independence of the local congregation, and are controlled by practical common sense, there is little danger of doing the church serious harm; at least, there is no more danger of harm than in publishing papers. Keep the congregations independent, free from any kind of entangling organizations, and individuals may be safely left to take care of their own private efforts. While this is true, it will be found in the practical working of religious affairs that most of the work done for the church will be done through the congregation. This, of course, is as it should be.

The College and the Boll Movement

F. B. SRYGLEY

While it is generally agreed that the schools and colleges, known as Bible schools or Bible colleges, are individual enterprises and not church schools, still I feel that we have the right to advise them as to their teaching, as we would any other brother or brethren. I note with pleasure that L. L. Brigrance comes out in the open and says that Freed-Hardeman College stands with all of its influence against "Boll-shevism in the church or state. All of its Bible teachers—Hall, Roland, Brigrance, and Harde-man—are of one heart and one soul in these things." This is clear, and no one can be mistaken about it. This is as it should be. Those who patronize any of these schools have the right to know how the school stands on such questions as these.

Brother Brigrance goes farther and says: "Yes, Brother Wallace, some of us preachers and at least one of 'our schools' will join in fighting every departure from the faith and anything that threatens the unity of the faith." This is a manly statement, and it is no more than right that it should be made. Those who patronize this school will know from this statement what to expect on this question from that college. Brother Brigrance adds: "This is not a fight against Brother Boll and others personally. The writer does not even know them personally. It is a fight against their unfounded theories, speculations, and opinions, which are causing trouble in the churches. We are waiting to see what other preachers and schools will say."

I have no doubt but that many patrons of these schools would be glad to know how each school stands on these speculative theories. There is no doubt about how Boll's school in Louisville stands on these questions. It stands for them, and those who patronize it know it. This is right. Any school can stand for these things if it wants to, and it should be outspoken in doing so. The same rule will hold for religious papers. No one should want to deceive any one. These brethren had the opportunity to hold those speculative theories to themselves, and they were advised by good brethren and their friends to do so; but they refused, and the only thing that can be done is to oppose their false interpretations of the prophecies.

It will injure, and has injured, the church in many places, and the evil will continue to grow if it is not vigorously opposed. Leaders in the churches should study their Bibles and prepare themselves to meet these false theories. It is not a personal matter, but it is one of importance. This doctrine is not only false within itself, but it leads to many other errors. I think Brother Brigrance's request for all the schools to express themselves is entirely proper, and I can see no reason for any one to refuse to do so, unless he is under the influence of this erroneous doctrine.

How Shall We Meet the Lord?

F. B. SRYGLEY

I have just read a leaflet in which a brother makes an effort to prove that another brother made a false statement, and that the writer had not falsified the facts. I do not think it necessary to circulate such leaflets. If anything is too personal to be printed in the papers, it is doubtful whether it ought to be printed at all. Some one has said that if we do not live more peaceably among ourselves, instead of meeting the Lord in peace we may have to meet him in pieces.

Clearness

R. L. WHITESIDE

No human composition is perfect; the most careful speakers and writers make mistakes. But the best speaker or writer from a linguistic standpoint is the one who makes his ideas stand out so clear that you are not conscious of his language. When the air is perfectly clear you can see a distant object without being conscious of the condition of the air. Look through a pane of glass at an outside object; the more defects there are in the windowpane the more conscious you are that it is between you and the object which you wish to see. Language is somewhat like that. If a speaker or writer expresses himself clearly, you are scarcely conscious of his words. There is something wrong with a speaker or writer who wants you to be conscious of his language. I cannot get interested in a man who wants to impress me with his language rather than with his thoughts.

Some months ago a man whom I do not know sent me a book through the mails. I suppose I should be thankful to the author for sending it to me at his own expense. I do appreciate his unselfishness in his effort to do me a favor. But his style is too heavy and cumbersome for me to take any interest in reading him. I have an idea that I could understand everything he says if I were to work at it hard enough. I like to study a man's thoughts, but I do not like to put in a lot of hard study on his words in an effort to see what his thoughts are. I have no time for that sort of thing. Make your sentences so clear that the hearer or reader sees your thoughts without being aware of your language. I like to read thoughts, but I do not care anything about reading words.

The average reader does not like to run up on unusual words. It is an easy matter for a speaker or writer to search in the dictionary and find words not in common use. When I find a speaker or writer of that sort, I think of an incident of a negro meeting. The preacher told his brethren that they ought not to *purloin*. One of the brethren spoke out and said: "Now, Brudder Johnsing, dat word *purloin*—what dat mean?" "What do *purloin* mean? It means to *sequester*."

God's commands are often displeasing because of some fleshly inclination or worldly desire, but divine wisdom will never require anything but that which is best for us. God will supply our every need, not our every want.—Annual Lesson Commentary.



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HUDSON

N PREACHED.

Brother Hardeman, than ore prominent preacher in ration, reached a climax in e preached in the Ryman years 1922, 1923, and 1924. possible, to say which one of iding group, for there was t this reviewer here add, ehed to the contrary, that nse in a decline. He poses: "His natural strength ot dimmed." With regard olume I., covering the first annot now be obtained. It ies, which is a large sale any a notable volume has t writers—for example, D. novels have not reached

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umber twenty-three. They Restoration Movement in a are seven sermons on the So that is the predominant ity, unity, work, worship,

ompany, publishers of the ese volumes. Order from dollar fifty cents

THE LIFE WORK OF MRS. CHARLOTTE FANNING.

Sister Emma Page Larimore, widow of the late T. B. Larimore, and his biographer in the continued series of volumes of the life and letters of T. B. Larimore after F. D. Srygley's death, wrote a number of years ago a biographical study of Sister Charlotte Fanning, wife of the illustrious Tolbert Fanning. Brother Fanning was a great man, and had a fine partner. Sister Fanning, while a very modest woman, was a great assistant to her husband throughout his career. Like her husband, she was an educator primarily. She knew boys and girls as only the lifelong teacher of youth can know them.

Sister Fanning, it seems, was often moved to write, but always in a modest way, her views of matters of training. Her articles were published over a period of fifty years in the Gospel Advocate and the Religious Historian, the latter of which was edited by her great companion.

Sister Fanning was of an illustrious family herself. Her brother, Philip S. Fall, was one of the most notable preachers of the time. She was of English descent, emigrating to America when young. At the time of her marriage she was on the faculty of the Nashville Female Academy, which was a prominent educational institution of the day.

Franklin College, which became the leading school of the South for the churches of Christ, was founded by Tolbert Fanning and his wife shortly after their marriage, and flourished until the Civil War broke out, which virtually abolished educational institutions in the South for the period that it continued. But at the close of the war they bought Minerva College, which was a school for girls, and founded Hope Institute. The Fannings did a great work in this institution until Tolbert Fanning died in 1874. Sister Fanning was so prostrated with grief that she closed the school, but continued to live in the buildings. Some ten years after her husband's death the Fanning Orphan Home was founded upon the estate comprising one hundred and sixty acres of beautiful land, near Nashville, Tenn. This orphan home for girls is still in operation, and time alone can tell the good that was done in life, and that lives on in countless lives after her decease. Brother and Sister Fanning were childless; but they had an ardent and lasting love for boys and girls, and spent their lives in training them. The peerless peer among men, the sainted T. B. Larimore, passed under the training of this fine couple. What a record to have left "upon the sands of time!"

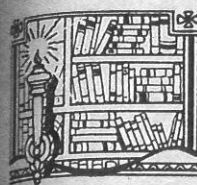
Sister Fanning wrote upon the problems of girls and boys, husbands and wives, and other such practical themes. Her papers in many instances are contained in this book. Certainly her philosophy is here.

The book was published by the McQuiddy Printing Company, publishers of the Gospel Advocate, Nashville, Tenn. This should prove a very helpful book for women and girls. The price is one dollar.

10-26-33

BALE THE HAY.

One day I was riding along a country highway, when I met a farmer with a load of hay so big that it took up the whole roadway. To get around it we almost upset in the ditch. That event furnished me with a valuable homiletic lesson. I said to myself: If that hay were baled, it would not take a quarter as much space, and there would be just as much hay. Many sermons are like that load of hay. They need baling. There will be just as much hay, just as much food for your people. Loose hay has thrown many a church attendant into the ditch, and he has never returned to be treated to another such prolix experience. For length, remember that you will have other chances to preach; for fervor, preach as if this were your last chance.—Watchman-Examiner.



Young People's PROGRESS

"Give heed to reading, to exhortation, to teaching. . . . Be these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy progress may be manifest unto all."

C. A. NORRIS

SECOND YEAR.

FIRST QUARTER.

L.

(October 29, 1933.)

LESSON TOPIC: A NATION OF PRIESTS

—, Presiding. —, Song Two Songs, Reading (Ex. 19: 5, 6), and Prayer Address, "Things Which Did Not Explain God of Israel," —.

(a) Not chosen for strength. (Deut. 7: 6, order that this truth may be perceived speaker make comparison of the nation Hebrews with the nations of the Babylonians, Egyptians, Romans, etc.)

(b) Not chosen for goodness. (Deut. 9: 5; speaker would do well here to give attention to Rom. 2: 17-29. It should be that the Jews are said to have become proud to the name of God among the nations. The student would do well to review the lessons disclosed in Israel's history. On the way to Canaan and freedom, they constantly complained against the service the Lord placed upon them. (Ex. 16: 2; 14: 11; etc.) They manifested, under circumstances favorable to knowledge of God, a most amazing ingratitude. (Ex. 32: 1-6.) In Canaan they rejected his order of government. (1 Sam. 8: 10: 17-24.) Although prepared by five hundred years' influence of the law of Moses to be given to lead to Christ, they murdered the Son of God when he came. (John 1: 11) Address, "Called to a Priesthood," —.

(a) A priest defined. The term priest is defined Thayer as meaning "one who offers sacrifice and in general is busied with sacred rites." (b) Israel called to the priesthood of God. (Ex. 19: 5, 6.)

1. Call conditioned upon obedience. (Ex. 19: 5.)

2. Acceptance by the people. (Ex. 19: 7.)

3. Law governing priestly service given. (a) The Ten Commandments. (Ex. 20: 1-7.)

(b) Further law given in Moses' sermon. (Ex. 20: 18 to 23: 33.)

(c) Pattern of sanctuary and tabernacle law. (Ex. 24: 15 to 31: 17.)

(d) Law from tent of meeting. (Ex. 25: 1-40.)

General Discussion. Business. Song and Prayer

NOTES.

The careful student of history discerns that each nation in history has made some specific contribution to civilization. Greece, for instance, is remembered for her intellectual contributions to the world. Rome will be generally thought of as having given the world the conceptions of justice, law, and order. The contribution made by the Hebrews was distinctly religious in character. They were a nation of priests.

In order that this nation might endure first and foremost the extended service embraced within the promises of God, the Lord gave the Hebrews a law to govern them in all the departments of life. This made the nation a theocracy, a nation governed by divine law. This was given out of a variety of circumstances.

It might be well to observe in this connection that the law is rather common in some quarters to speak of the law, the ceremonial law, the judicial law, etc., in reference to the

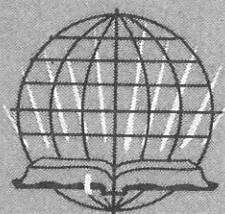
The Responsibility of Speaker and Hearer

Which is the rarer, a gifted speaker or a gifted hearer? "The former," someone answers; and, perhaps, rightly so. But this does not mean that we have an unusually large number of the latter.

The Bible has not failed to emphasize the great importance of being a good hearer. Every scripture which stresses the function of preaching magnifies the importance of hearing. "It was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe." (1 Cor. 1: 21.) Preaching alone will not save. If it would, our problems would be much simpler. The gospel message must be believed, accepted, by those who hear before it brings salvation. No one can be saved without faith. (Mark 16: 16.) This faith comes by hearing the word of God. (Rom. 10: 17.) It is not difficult to understand why God has so often admonished men to hear. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord." (Deut. 6: 4.) Jesus said: "If any man hath ears to hear, let him hear. And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear." (Mark 4: 23, 24.) Again he said, "Take heed therefore how ye hear." (Luke 8: 18.) It is necessary, therefore, that one take heed *how* he hears *what* he hears.

All speaking entails a twofold responsibility—that of the speaker and that of the hearer. This is particularly true if the preaching vitally concerns the salvation of souls. It is the heaven-enjoined duty of the preacher to declare the whole counsel of God in the spirit of the gospel, and not in the spirit of revenge and of abuse. Woe is unto him if he preach not the gospel. In preaching the gospel he will give offense, but he should be sure that it is the message and not the manner of his presenting it that gives the offense. He must deliver it in the most effective manner possible. Of Paul and Barnabas it was said: "And it came to pass in Iconium that they entered together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake that a great multitude both of Jews and of Greeks believed." (Acts 14: 1.) If they had spoken in such a manner that no one had believed, in this case at least, their manner would have been a very important matter. Will anyone deny that they could have so spoken? On this occasion a difference in manner could have involved the difference between belief and disbelief. Suppose they had spoken without conviction and without making clear the difference between truth and error, between paganism and Judaism on the one hand and Christianity on the other, would they have succeeded in converting any of them? We think not. Again, suppose that Paul and Barnabas had lashed out at their audience with scathing denunciation and withering ridicule in tones of Pharisaic self-righteousness along with a full measure of inquisitorial severity, what would have been the result? They preached the word boldly and in the spirit of Christ. If it was necessary to denounce an Elymas, it was done thoroughly, but not in the spirit of personal retaliation. Yes, Paul and Barnabas "so spake that a great multitude both of Jews and of Greeks believed." But it should be remembered that this "great multitude" might have so heard as not to have believed. Some in Iconium that were "disobedient stirred up the souls of the Gentiles, and made them evil affected against the brethren." These might have been made believers if they had been the right kind of hearers. The responsibility for their lack of faith attaches to them, not to Paul and Barnabas. They failed to receive the word in "an honest and good heart." They should have been like the Thessalonians to whom Paul wrote: "When ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe." (1 Thess. 2: 13.)

(Continued on page 681)



Conducted for a Half Century by
D. Lipscomb, E. G. Sewell,
F. D. Srygley, and J. C. McQuiddy
B. C. GOODPASTURE, Editor
and President of Gospel Advocate Co.

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which was a blessing can become an abomination. When this is true, it is our responsibility in spite of its age or former service, to break it to pieces, and say "Nehushtan."

One of the many modern parallels is denominationalism. Without question, Western civilization is in great debt to a mighty group of men labeled Reformers. In the sixteenth century many were growing restless under the yoke of an absolute ecclesiasticism with its many resulting evils. It is a thrilling experience to meet Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin, Martin Luther, and many others who, laboring under difficult conditions, had the spiritual and mental vigor to point out the errors of their day. They have made many contributions to society, and not the least was giving men the Bible again. Adlai Stevenson says that our fathers built this country with three tools—an ax, a plow, and a book. That book was the Bible. The heroic reformers were responsible for taking the Bible out of monasteries and dead languages, and placing it in the hands and minds of the people. In their day they performed a noble, monumental task.

ORIGINAL PURPOSE DEBASED

Many instead of going back to the Bible as the only source of authority, began to look to the writings and pronouncements of the reformers as the standard. In most instances it was not the intention of the reformers to build churches, but their wishes were disregarded or forgotten in the zeal of their followers. Little by little in the passing of time various religious groups came into being. High walls were erected to isolate them from all other religious groups. Party names and slogans were adopted, human creeds

written and accepted, worship and social practices were acquired to insure their permanence. In the name of religion, God and his revelation were almost shut out of human life.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

As an individual I have the responsibility to say "Nehushtan" against denominationalism in any form. It is encouraging to note many are no longer apologizing for religious division, but are seriously concerned about it. The form and spirit are in opposition to Christ and his church. (Matt. 16: 18; John 17: 20, 21; Eph. 4: 3, 4.) Because of the entrenched power of denominations, there is little which can be accomplished by mass destruction. There is no God-appointed Hezekiah to break them to pieces. I do have a responsibility to keep myself free of the party spirit, and to say to those who have been caught up in their folds, "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be to you a Father, and ye shall be to me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. 6: 17, 18.)

The Responsibility of . . .

(Concluded from page 674)

There should be cooperation and sympathy between preacher and hearer. This is necessary if anything worth while is to be accomplished. The preacher is due his hearers a clear, earnest, convincing presentation of the truth. The hearers should be attentive, responsive, receiving the word of God with all readiness of mind, "searching the scriptures" whether the things are so.

An Individual Obligation

Alan E. Highers

There are certain things that we are expected to do as individuals in the body of Christ. In these things, we must act for ourselves; for no one else can act for us.

We sometimes see a godly mother who has a worthless son. She is prayerful, humble, and earnest. It is a pity for his sake that she cannot impute some of her goodness to him, but that is impossible. He must develop his own character in the sight of God.

There are members of the church who would gladly obey the gospel for others if they could. Many wives wish they could take the step that would make their husbands children of God. Friends would happily render obedience for others if they could, but such cannot be.

The Latter Day Saints (Mormons) believe that one person can be baptized for another. If an individual dies without baptism, they think that a living person can be baptized in his place. It is foolish, however, to think that the action of a living person can alter the state of one who is dead. He will be

judged "according to that *he* hath done" (2 Cor. 5: 10), not according to what someone else has done.

We will all be judged individually and not according to what our section of the country may have done, or the church may have done where we were members. The Lord "will render to every man according to his deeds." (Rom. 2: 6.) We are sure that the judgment of God is "according to the truth." (Rom. 2: 2.) It is therefore called "the righteous judgment of God." (Rom. 2: 5.)

Members of the church must study for themselves. (2 Tim. 2: 15.) The work of the Bible teacher will not suffice for them. They can receive help in studying the Scriptures, but they cannot turn their studying over to someone else to do. C. R. Nichol recently passed away, and a few years ago G. C. Brewer died. Would it not have been wonderful if these men could have left their vast knowledge of the word of God to some younger men to carry on in their place? But the only way that younger men will gain such knowledge is to study for it themselves in the same manner these older brethren did.