

BIBLE CONVICTION

By C. Leslie Smith

The First Great Revival Need.

No man can come to He, (Jesus) except the Father which hath sent Me draw Him" (John 6:44.)

"For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of" (2 Cor. 7:10).

"Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye search for me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13.)

"He saith, 'Awake thou that sleepest'" (Eph. 5:14.)

Today, good men everywhere mourn the lack of revival force and power. They mourn because so few seem to have grace to live up to their profession. Even among the dear holiness people the expression, "Saved and sanctified" has come to mean so little to the average professor.

Permit us to trace the cause of this spiritual destitution right to its source as shown in the title of this article. Shallow conviction of sin will produce shallow professors of grace. And there is a cause for shallow conviction.

Jehovah is the great Author of salvation and the way to heaven. He, Himself, has fully planned it and given the plan to us. can not invent any new plan or amend His and His plan is just as good and perfect today as it was 1900 years ago when given to the church. It works just as well, Hallelujah!

Jehovah, Himself, assumes the responsibility and authority to awaken dead souls to their awful condition and to their need of saving grace. And He should receive the honor and glory for doing this. Back in Eden where our parents first fell it was God who sought and called after them, "Where art thou" Jesus said that His work was to "seek and save that which was lost." Of course the work of the church is the same, but it is only in co-operation with God, in giving His inspiration and leadership full right of way, that the church may succeed in its mission.

Without Bible conviction producing genuine bed-rock repentance, no one has the deep sorrow for sin and hatred of sin that is needed to renounce it forever. Bible conviction also produces that inward separation from the world that will cause the outward life to measure up to the close radical standard as outlined in the Word regardless of ridicule or opposition.

Without Bible conviction a man will not seek God with all his heart. He will not seek earnestly, repent thoroughly, and confess heartily. He will fail to press through—to "strive (agonize) to enter in at the strait (narrow) gate."

The old-fashioned mourner's bench used to be a place of privilege and power where anxious souls could weep their way through to Bible salvation and victory. Too often, today, it has become a place for formal and lazy seeking—an instrument where souls are "talked" into a profession of grace. Sometimes the sacred altar becomes a convenient place for religious visiting and unprofitable discussions. It is sad to see at times the whole altar filled with shallow seekers through strong tests and other ingenious means invented by man; and then these souls are railroaded through to professions of great experiences without scarcely any evidence of

Divine power being shown. Such work produces discouragement and confusion among honest souls. It also tends to block the road to real satisfaction in the salvation of God. In this connection we all know and should say that religious noise and loud praying are not always a sure evidence of Divine power.

God has furnished us with three powerful Divine agencies to produce real Bible conviction, the beginning of revival force and power. It behooves man to get in line with these three Divine agencies. It may seem slow, old, and out of date; but it is safe, sane and sure, and the way of Divine blessing and power.

1. The first Divine agency is the quick, active, sharp and discerning Word of God. Read Heb. 4:12. The revival preacher is privileged and duty bound to use the powerful Word of God. But he must use it reverently, thankfully, and with deep lowliness of mind. He must also supply its truth and standards of living to the hearts and consciences of men. He should be able to diagnose the need, itemize the kinds of iniquity, and reveal the secret motions of sin that lie deeply hidden within the human soul. Through the Word, he will have the courage and power to probe to the quick and show up natural man as God sees him. Of course he must enjoy Divine grace himself and thus will be able to do this in the Spirit with the same love and patience the Master manifested to those around Him. Through the Spirit he must perseveringly use the Word.

In this connection it is well to say that the Word is the "Sword of the Spirit." Unless a preacher has and recognizes the Holy Spirit in his heart he will be unable properly to apply the truths of the Bible to the hearts of men" (I. Cor. 2:12-14). Preaching the Word is too serious to be trifled with by unspiritual men.

2. The cross of Christ is a powerful Divine agency to move the hearts and action of men. "And I," says Jesus, "if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me" (John 12:32). The cross is what manifests the goodness of God which leadeth to repentance (Rom. 2:4). Here is a fruitful field for the self-denying Spirit-endowed preacher who would have genuine heaven-sent revivals. The cross was the power and moving-principle that the Apostle Paul used to stir hearts God-ward (I. Cor. 2:2). The very same agency that to the world was foolishness is to those "being saved" the power of God (I. Cor. 1:18, R. V., margin).

Whether preacher or layman, every one who knows the power of the cross unto salvation in his own experience may witness powerfully to the same. And his confession of Christ or testimony will cause conviction and will bear fruit to the glory of God.

3. The third great agency of conviction is the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. "And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." Read John 16:7-11. Herein we discover one great reason why it was "expedient" for Jesus to go away so that the Comforter would come to His disciples and through them convince the world of sin.

We need the Spirit not only to apply properly the truths of the Law of God

concerning the cross of Christ; but we need His personal presence and power in our hearts and lives continually in order to impress and awaken a careless world.

The person and work of the Holy Spirit is greatly neglected these days. There are many Scriptural reasons why we must receive Him into our hearts, not only in revivals but in practical holy living in every-day life. Spirit-endowed men are minute-men who may be depended upon for sacrifice or service at any time.

1. Of course it will be seen that these three powerful Divine agencies work together in perfect harmony, and the glorious opportunity to use these three agencies mightily and victoriously is open to every heaven-sent evangelist and preacher.

2. As already implied, every honest preacher and lay worker should be forewarned against the short-cut methods and man-prepared formulas for seekers that predominate in so many modern revivals. Even some "holiness" revivals are tinctured with these modern inventions. These short-cuts often have a Scriptural seasoning, but the wise soul-winner will detect the sham and danger that lie around and in them. God's plan or way to a genuine revival is old and tried and will bring results such as were experienced in Bible times and by our later forefathers.

3. The world goes in for quantity; and the crowd runs after big things—big in numbers and popularity. But God's way is a way of quality rather than quantity. His way is the way of separation, reproach, and opposition along with the glory and power of Divine favor and blessing. It is sure that the offense of the cross has not ceased.

4. The man who would use these spiritual agencies must pray. His work is to pray, receive, believe, witness and pray more. He must be a real vessel of prayer—must live in the spirit of prayer all the time. Secret prayer especially must dominate his life, and the use of these three Divine agencies will help him to pray. On the other hand, their use without prayer will become a mere form as well as anything else. Let us pray for a deep genuine heaven-sent revival and continue to use the Divine means so graciously provided.

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ONLY A WORD.

'Twas only a word, a careless word,
But it smote the heart of one who heard

Like fierce, relentless blow;
The day seemed overcast with gloom,
The sweetest songs seemed out of tune;
The fires of hope burned low.

'Twas only a word, a loving word,
But a weary, sorrowing heart was stirred,
And life took brighter hue;
And faith, triumphant, plumed her wing,
Discouraged souls began to sing.
And hope revived anew.

Only a word, and yet what power
It holds to better or to mar
The lives of those who hear;
What power for good—for evil, too!
Oh, may our words be good and true,
And spoken in God's fear!

—Anna L. Dreyer..