

## A DREAM

By Brother Onesiphorous, alias W. E. Smith

I had a dream. It seems that I was in Thessalonica one day when I ran into Rev. P. Demas. "Hello, Brother Demas," I cried. "I thought you were in Rome standing by Brother Paul."

"O," he replied, "I left him a long time ago. I call Paul an old crank. Nobody can get along with him. Why when he was first converted he aroused all his own people against him. Then he separated from good old Barnabas and blew up Peter, and all over trivial matters. Look at the horrible letter he wrote to the Church at Corinth, and all on hearsay. He lashed them for their petty squabbles and assumed to give instruction in their most intimate marital relations. He gave the church at Galatia an awful calling down, simply because some of them had still a warm feeling towards the old Jewish Church they had left. He also called the High Priest a whited wall, and a good seeker Elymas a child of the devil. Why that old man has made trouble wherever he has gone. Few of the churches that he organized have any use for him. Some doubt that he is a true apostle. They laughed at his inferior physique and his contemptible speech. No wonder no man stood by him when he persists in writing and speaking such rough radical things. Why when on trial before the king, he ranted on temperance, righteousness and judgment till the king nearly fell to the floor in a nervous fit. I call Paul a sort of a religious bolshevist.

"And think! I was holding meetings in Rome. I wanted to look up-to-date so I purchased a splendid cutaway coat, striped trousers to match, patent leather shoes, a lovely cravat and stickpin. I had a beautiful gold chain across my chest and a real silk handkerchief in my breast pocket, and my hair crimped a little. Well, when I came and stood before Paul, would you believe it, he broke into uproarious laughter, and cried, "O Demas, you look fine enough to stand at the door of a movie theatre, and then suddenly he began to weep. He put his arm around my neck and sobbed, "O Demas, the devil of pride must be in your heart; won't you kneel right down here and have God take it out?"

"Well, that stirred me." I said, "If that is the way you feel about it, I am through with you. I can see plainly what has brought you to where you are. Goodby Paul." I left. That was three years ago and I came to Thessalonica.

But are you preaching, Demas, I asked. "Preaching! I am having the time of my life. I came to Thessalonica and saw a splendid vacant old temple and I rented it for a nominal sum, and placed over the entrance: "I am become all things to all men." Only a few came at first but I enrolled in the great Greek university in this city. You see I had only a degree from the little holiness college in Berea. At first the Greek and Roman student razzed me but when they found that I was a regular fellow, they took me in. They made me manager of their football team and I play on their golf course.

Soon the city was coming my way. O, I am building up a great church in this city. I have thirty of the most beautiful, shapely girls in my choir. I don't tell them that they should wear their skirts clear way down to their knees, and their sleeves half way to their elbows, and that they should not braid their hair. I have too big a work in preaching the gospel. I tell my girls to make themselves as

beautiful and as attractive as possible, and they do it. Only the impure in heart can see evil in a beautiful body. To the pure all things are pure. Forgive me for quoting old brother Paul. I at first thought fashions were rather raw in Thessalonica, but I have become used to them. It is all in becoming used to things. If our minds were pure enough we could go as Adam and Eve went at first and not be offended. And we are gradually getting back to Edenic conditions as to dress. See how the dear mothers are showing the beautiful forms and limbs of their adolescent daughters. Everybody likes it here in Thessalonica.

I tell you the Greek and Roman young men come into our services. They seem just to feast their eyes on those lovely choir girls. They are enough to pep up anyone. I mean in the right way.

"But if poor old Brother Paul were to come into my church I wouldn't dare let him preach. As like as not he would turn on those lovely girls and tell that they reminded him more of women of the street than saints of God. Only women on the street would not act so brazenly."

"Didn't old James call some of his members adulterers and adultresses simply because they fixed themselves up to look nice like the Greeks and the Romans do? And didn't Peter assume to tell his women how they ought to dress? And didn't old Brother John fairly shout, "if any man love the world, or the things of the world, the love of the Father is not in him?"

"Now those old fogies, I believe, meant to be good men. Paul means to be and tries to be a good man, but O he is so tactless and radical! He will blurt things right out in meeting and spill the beans. Yes, he has a great mind and has written some pretty good things, but there is such a strange mixture in his writings that the good is spoiled by the unwise sayings; he interjects. O he might have been such a useful man if he were not so erratic. I attribute it to a neurotic condition. But he has queered himself when he might have been a great man. But the truth is he is a burnt out star. He once prayed the Philippian jail open, but now he lies in prison in Rome. Why doesn't he pray himself out of there? He whistles to keep his courage up and complains that all they of Asia have forsaken him. Onesiphorous, if he had the good sense that I have he wouldn't have gotten into prison. And he would be a great man in the movement if he had not become so radical and have spoken and written so many hard and harsh things.

"Onesiphorous, my church is growing fast. I am called popular in Thessalonica. I speak at the Rotary Club and they call me great as an after-dinner speaker. My young people use the gymnasium in the Greek temple. We shall have one of our own soon. You ought to see those young ladies of mine in their athletic uniforms. They are good for sore eyes.

And my Sunday school is a hummer. We have just closed a contest with the church at Laodicea. That was the church you remember John blasted as having a name to live and are dead. Well we found them very much alive. But we nosed them out in the contest. And what a time we had at the banquet! It was wit and banter. Wife said I made the wittiest speech she ever heard.

"And I must tell you about our lovely young people's conventions. We don't call them holiness conventions, that would scare the Greeks and the Romans. We have lovely professors

teach the lovely young people. I tell you we would not have such radicals as Peter, James, John and Paul. These men have forgotten that the procession has gone by and has left them sitting beside the road. Progress is our motto. If those old fellows were to come around we would ignore them. I doubt if even we would ask them to pray for they would want to get down in the dirt. We stand up and show the Lord that we are men and women that are going places. You see we study cultural and religious subjects in the morning; in the afternoon we play games and go in for entertainment—joy rides, base ball, tug of war, etc., that delight the dear young people. In the evening we have a light service and then gather round the camp fire and sing some religious and love songs, crack jokes, and award a prize to the one who can spring the most original joke or give the best riddle. Then we have a nice little prayer and retire. O, those conventions are lovely; they develop the entire personality, body, mind and spirit. We are down on all wild religious spells, and those who are addicted to them never come. They say we are gone with the world.

"Yes, Onesiphorous, I have talked a good deal about the wonderful work I and God are doing in Thessalonica.

"You see we use the contest and the quiz methods in our devotional services and they do arouse interest. Our Sunday school papers are full of romance and adventure and some historical and scientific facts. We don't believe in making young people sick of religion. I like to come home after a hard Sunday's work and take a great novel as "Gone with the wind," "The Yearling" or "The Nazarene" and read till midnight. It lets down my nerves. I believe in keeping abreast of the times.

"I tell you our episcopos is delighted with my church. He tells everybody that I have done the finest piece of work of any man in his area in sending in the most money and the largest list of new members received. In our church organ my church is at the top. And I whisper this to you, some of my friends are boosting me for the episcopacy. Now poor old Paul would call me a log-roller and a backscratcher, but if you don't play the game you are not in it. If Paul had had better sense and not been so radical, he might have had a great church in Rome and been loved and respected by all the Greeks and Romans as I am at Thessalonica. Poor man, he had no judgment or sense. He ought to have been married to a woman like I have; she would have taught him something.

"You may see brother Onesiphorous, that I am too big a man to fuss about dress, lodges or marital relations. I preach the Gospel, and I am sitting pretty. My salary has been boosted to \$70.00 a week. They have made me a present of an eight-cylinder car, and my wife a present of a lovely frigidaire, and on top of all this, they give me two months vacation with full pay. Now can you blame me for having left poor old fault-finding Paul down there in Rome in prison, and coming up here to Thessalonica? I believe in entire sanctification as much as he does, but it is that which sanctifies everything one can lay his hands on, and stands up to pray.

Just then my wife gave me a poke and cried, "Onesiphorous, wake up! You are groaning in your sleep." I woke crying, "God bless good Paul! God have mercy on Demas. Paul will get his crown at the hands of Jesus; Demas gets his at the hands of the world. Where, preacher, are you looking for your crown?"