

MISSIONARY CORRESPONDENCE

Altona Mission

June 5th, 1941

Dear Highway:

Since last reporting I have had some real adventure that one usually connects with the life of missionaries. These of mine have a modern touch to them.

A few weeks ago I started for home by car from our Hartland Mission Station. It was late afternoon when I left Paulpietersburg, where I was having broken springs replaced. Quite a thunder and lightning storm passed over Paulpietersburg but it did not seem as though it had rained heavy enough to cause the rivers and brooks to get swollen with water.

Soon after I crossed the Pongola Bridge I had to decide whether I would go around by Moolman or whether I would take a short cut and ford the Vitrafer stream and save ten or more miles. I decided to follow the latter course.

By the time I got to the Vitrafer stream, which is usually about 20 or 30 feet wide and 1 foot deep, it was evening and dark. It appeared that I would have no trouble in crossing.

My car no more than got well into the water before the engine stopped. It would not start up again. I later discovered that my front wheel got caught between some large stones and the distributor cap cracked, causing a short circuit. There I was caught in the stream after dark, all alone, and without a flash-light.

Realizing there was nothing I could do for the car that night, I got out, waded to the shore with my club-bag and prepared to walk back along the road I had come several miles to where I had noticed a house near the road. Just before leaving I remembered groceries and account books in the back seat. I waded back to recover them or put them up high enough so that water might not hurt them. Imagine my surprise when I found the water had risen above the floor boards. I made another round trip and this time found the water as high as the top of the seat with water pouring in the car windows. It did not take me long to make for shore as I was having all I could do to wade ashore and stand upright as the water was well above my waist and getting swifter all the time. I changed my clothes and trudged off into the darkness to find a shelter for the night. The only light I had was intermittent flashes of lightning. It wasn't long before it started to rain so my dry clothes were again soaked. After what seemed hours of slipping and stumbling along in the darkness I arrived at the house I had seen. The place seemed deserted. I wandered around several buildings but could not find the house until my feet felt a path and after going some distance I came to it I knocked and shouted, and finally a young man opened the door and let me in. He knew little English and I little Dutch, but he finally gave me a bed. He said he had no cooked food or hot water to make tea so I had to go to bed hungry (I had not really eaten since breakfast).

After a rather restless night I got up, ate some porridge and drank some black coffee, then set off with my Dutch friend to see whether or not my car had been washed away and, if not, if we could not get it out.

The car was safe. The rocks had held it from going down with the water.

We could not get over on that side of the river to pull the car out so I waded across and followed the road on the other side. I found a farmer with oxen about a mile and a half away. He kindly hitched up his oxen, pulled the car out of the river, and hauled it up to his house. He also took me and my water soaked and mud covered groceries home to Altona (about twenty miles away) in his car. He later was very kind in helping me getting my car cleaned and started. This job took me several days as almost every working part had to be taken apart and drained of water and cleared of mud. I was very fortunate in finding good Samaritans who only charged me an amount equal to the gasoline they used in taking me home, and in taking me up again to discover the broken distributor cap, etc.

We thank the Lord for His mercies to us in saving us from any ill-effects of our soaking, for keeping the car from being washed away, and for providing us with such helpful friends in time of trouble.

Yours in Him,
EUGENE A. M. KIERSTEAD

CHARLES G. FINNEY'S RULES FOR THE SOUL-WINNER

Rev. Charles G. Finney, the noted evangelist of a century ago, proposed the following rules by which his students in training for the ministry in Oberlin College might make their way into useful careers as soul-winners. He said:

See that you have a heart-call, and not merely a head-call, to undertake the preaching of the gospel. By this I mean, be heartily and most intensely inclined to seek the salvation of souls as the great work of life, and do not undertake what you have no heart to.

Being called of God to the work, make your calling your constant argument with God for all that you need for the accomplishment of the work.

Believe the assertion of Christ that He is with you in this work always and everywhere, to give you all the help you need.

Make the Bible your Book of books. Study it much upon your knees, waiting for divine right.

Beware of leaning on commentaries. Consult them when convenient; but judge for yourself in the light of the Holy Ghost.

Give your most intense thought to the study of ways and means by which you may save men. Make this the great and intense study of your life.

Beware of the error that there are no means of regeneration, and consequently no connection of means and ends in the regeneration of souls.

See that you have the special endowment of power from on high, by the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

See that you personally know and daily live upon Jesus Christ.

Spend much time every day and night in prayer and direct communion with God. This will make you a power for salvation. No amount of learning and study can compensate for the loss of this communion. If you fail to maintain communion with God, you are "weak as another man."

Watch for souls as one who must give account to God.

Be diligent and laborious, "in season, out of season," 2 Tim. 4:2.

Contemplate much the guilt and danger of sinners, that your zeal for their salvation may be intensified.

THE THORN THAT REMAINED

Many ideas are advanced by Bible students in seeking to identify Paul's thorn in the flesh, of which he wrote in the twelfth chapter of second Corinthians. Some, remembering that Paul seemed to have trouble with his eyes, advance the idea that weakness of vision, or even partial blindness was the thorn. Others remembering that he was stoned and left for dead at Lystra describe his countenance as being terribly disfigured, which would be his thorn, and a most grievous one it would be. Others remembering that critics said that his physical appearance was weak believe that the thorn was some kind of malformed or broken state of his body. Friends who are greatly devoted to universal healing for all in affliction make Paul's thorn to be the false or misguided brethren who followed him and worked against his leadership among his converts. Doubtless there is some reason for all these opinions, and we do not know of any one view that is so fully proved by the Scriptures as to exclude others entirely. But the significant thing that we have now in mind is that the thorn remained. Is there not some lesson in this thought for the soul hard pressed by life's difficulties?

This thorn was said to be "in the flesh." That would seem to make it a personal matter, something that stabbed the good man like a piercing thorn; some weakness, some ailment, some affliction, some cause of shame and disappointment and anxiety and unending care. Surely the good Lord would relieve His servant, since the Lord can do such things so easily, yet the thorn remained.

This thorn was said to be a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him. Think of it! Here was a man fully consecrated and filled with the Spirit of God, yet a messenger of Satan was permitted by divine providence to get so near to him as to work on his flesh and buffet him, and this troublesome thing was permitted to remain.

We observe also that Paul, the mighty man of prayer, made this condition a subject of persevering prayer, and when he obtained the answer from God the answer was not the removal of the thorn, so far as we know, but the sending of added grace that he might be able to bear it. Here is the statement of the case as Paul tells it. "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given unto me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me, and He said unto me, 'My grace is sufficient unto thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.'" (2 Cor. 12:7-9).

Have you observed how sensitive Paul was to dangers of spiritual pride? In fact all the New Testament writers were careful on this point. Why then do so many of us live in this pride of self and of position and advancement? Over against the danger of becoming "exalted above measure" Paul took the thorn cheerfully, and found a way to live victoriously with it. It were better to get to heaven with the thorn than to land in hell without it, he could see, and so should we.

In the North Baptist church of Indianapolis they discontinued the passing of the collection plates. Instead, four wooden boxes were placed at strategic positions in the auditorium and the people were urged to tithe and "thoughtfully and prayerfully" place their offerings in these boxes. The weekly income has trebled and all budgets are being met.—Religious Telescope.