

A WARNING TO MINISTERS

By Rev. F. Lincicome

1. Beware lest ye do too much denouncing. It is possible to be too bold; excessive boldness is recklessness, and recklessness will wreck a church.

Some preachers are so afraid of being cowards that they are always on the warpath. Denunciation is their forte. To scalp a hoary-headed sinner or sinner is the aim of every sermon.

"The human heart cannot live on anathemas. Spunk is good, but the servant of the Lord is to be more than a fightingcock."

Evils cannot be battered into the dust by the ceaseless lashing of a vociferous tongue.

"A leader of men must be patient. A congregation is a flock of sheep. Some sheep can walk slowly; some lambs have to be carried; occasionally an old ram must be handled with discretion.

We are living in a driving age, but it is possible for a minister to drive too fast. "A minister of the gospel is not a sheep-driver. He is a sheep-feeder."

A little less shearing and more feeding, a little less beating and more feeding, would give you less trouble.

2. Beware lest ye lose the zeal, passion, unction and soul burden which you had in the beginning of your ministry.

As a minister I am amazed how easily I become insensitive to the world's needs.

Passion is necessary to make our preaching effective. Without the drive of passion our preaching can very easily degenerate into mere talk. Without this heart passion my sermons will raise no heat in those who hear it. I can only fire as I am fired. With all of our baptizing, systematizing and sermonizing, our greatest need is fire-baptizing.

Many of our sermons could be likened to a fine winter day: short, clear, and cold. Brevity is good, clearness is better, but coldness is fatal. Moonlight preaching ripens no harvest.

A minister's preparation is twofold—head and heart. We go to the "study" to prepare our head; to the "closet" to prepare our heart. It is a popular notion that a minister's most important task is the preparing of his heart.

The emphasis today is on the head preparation, so everywhere we find ministers cramming their heads and starving their hearts. Perhaps we should go fifty-fifty with heart and head.

A ministry that is college trained and not "Spirit-filled" works no miracles. The indictment against us is that we are losing our soul-saving tendency; and when we lose our soul burden as ministers, we have lost our pungent, penetrating, heart-breaking force.

If we are passionless, it is because we are prayerless, for passion cannot live apart from prayer.

3. Beware lest ye try to eliminate hard work from success. Every winner has been a worker. Edison said, "Genius is two per cent inspiration and ninety-eight per cent perspiration."

Success never comes anywhere of its own accord. It has to be fetched, and you usually have to bring it in by the nape of the neck. So if you have thought of waiting for success, I would advise you to sit down while you wait; but you never heard of anybody leaving his footprints on the shores of time sitting down.

Life is a cafeteria. There are no waiters to bring you success—you have to help yourself.

It is all right to take our hats off to the past, but we will have to take our coats off to the future.

It is all right to strike while the iron is hot, but it is better to make the iron hot by striking it.

Everything preaches to me of the sheer impossibility of getting something for nothing. The desire to get something for nothing is fundamentally wrong. It belongs to the psychology of crime.

If you have in your system any germs of mental sloth you will need to watch and pray, for no other man in the town has a better opportunity to take life easy than a preacher.

There is not another job which affords a greater temptation to laziness than that of a preacher.

Most men go to work under bosses who hold the watch in their hands. If the workman does not appear on time, he is reprimanded and docked.

A prophet of the Lord cannot be lazy without forfeiting his power. Yes, it is work and more work. Work by your watch, work with your head, work with your feet, work with your pen, work with your spirit.

The best qualification for work is a disposition to work. Many a preacher has failed, not because he was lacking in ability, but lacking in a disposition to get down to good, hard work.—Selected.

DISTRESS OF NATIONS, WITH PERPLEXITY

Rev. C. F. Wimberley

Our Master was giving his disciples some prophetic talks touching the last days. It would not be pressing matters to use a caption from Rev. 11:18, "And the nations were angry." The long vista was opened in the apocalyptic seance of the Third Woe. "The nations were angry," declared the four and twenty elders, as they worshipped before the throne of God. The prophecy is being literally fulfilled today. It cannot refer to great conflicts in the past when nations were in deadly conflict, but a wrathful state of mind among the nations, worldwide in its scope. Great nations are gripping each other's throats with fingers of steel. Some of them may be loud in their clamor, justifying their action, even making God a partner to the horrors and butchery. Those on the sideline, painfully observing the cataclysm, can see most vividly what is spoken in the Scriptures: "They are angry."

We can use this caption with a realism that is overwhelming and convincing. "Distress of nations with perplexity." The last clause is most significant. This part of the prophecy is often overlooked, and certainly misunderstood. It is more than confusion of mind, nonplused as to what course to take. It is en aporia, meaning literally, marooned on an island; yonder is the mainland, but we have no bridge, and no ferry; the water is too deep to ford. This is our world situation. Before hostilities are over, we are quarrelling over postwar policies. One of the biggest problems, after Germany and Japan are brought to an unconditional surrender, is what will be done with them, also many smaller nations that have been crushed and outraged by the oppressors, must be dealt with and satisfied. Yes, where do we go from here? No bridge, no ferry, and waters too deep to wade.

There is something in us that craves the

gospel of optimism; it never fails to evoke rapturous applause. Optimism is refreshing. It brings the highest market price in the pulpit and on the platform. Nothing will insure promotion more quickly. A sick man with mortification already in the extremities—feeling no pain—will be glad to hear the doctor tell him how well he is getting along, and will be up in a few days—"every day in every way, getting better and better." A soldier shot and bleeding, internally, and burning up with fever and thirst, would rejoice to hear the surgeon say that this wound is not serious.

The whole world is in distress, whether in actual conflict or not. An inventory of the present world holocaust reminds us of the cartoon of the world as a great bomb, with the fuse sputtering and burning toward the entrance. It looks as if all the great countries will soon be a vast graveyard, with mourning widows, weeping, hungry orphans everywhere. When we remember the poverty and suffering which are the inevitable concomitants of war, the brain reels, and the heart grows faint. Yes, "men's hearts failing them for fear, for looking for those things that are coming upon the earth." If the signs of the times teach us any lesson, fully ninety per cent of the peoples of the world are facing a gloomy future. We are dealing with futures, and the future cannot be eliminated when dealing with a situation so alarming. We are limited in farm labor and equipment, and more of our boys will go to the service. America will be the breadbasket, and how can we meet the demands of starving Chinese, starving Russians, starving millions in all the conquered countries? More people have starved during the past two decades, than in any 500 years of human history.

Whether we are willing to acknowledge it, we believe these days are "the beginning of sorrows." The worst is yet to come. Do not these days fulfil all the specifications of the times to try men's souls: "Distress of nations with perplexity." Deep-seated fear lurks in more hearts than will acknowledge it. Millions of homes sit in dread of what the ringing of the phone might reveal.

We must not close this somber picture without a beam. It is possible to be on the beam—as we hear it today. Thank God, for the beam of light. There is not a single feature about all this that should surprise or alarm the men and women who are believing students of the Word. Our Master told us such days would come. The whole world is angry. Our own land is angry with righteous indignation at inhuman atrocities. Once the hounds of hate are unleashed they will know no bounds, and will show no mercy. They are harping about building a better world, and establishing a "human brotherhood," and a "Fatherhood of God." It can mean about the same as in 1922 when over fifty nations sat at a "peace table" and flooded the world with "warless literature." Thus say the rainbow prophets and sunshine apostles at modernistic youth conventions. All such will perish with the using. There is but one thing to do: all who fear God and believe his word, be calm, sober, trustful, expectant. There is a "sound of a going in the mulberry trees." The angel army is mobilizing. It means the "Blessed hope" of his glorious appearing, which should keep our minds and hearts steadfast and unmoveable.