

WHY NOT MORE REVIVALS?

By the Associate Editor

"Is there not a cause?" I. Sam. 17:29.

These words which we are using for our text you will recognize as a question asked by David at a time when God's ancient people were at war with the Philistines, and the giant Goliath, whom David afterwards killed, challenged the host of Israel. For forty days he dared them to send a man to fight with him, and among all the strong, courageous soldiers in King Saul's army, there was not found a man who would accept the challenge, until David came on the field. My readers know what David did and how God's people won the victory over the Philistines.

Judging from what we read in religious papers and from our conversation with religious workers, we are convinced that many people are perplexed and grieved, as well as disappointed because of the small results in the salvation of souls which we seem to have to show for the special evangelistic efforts we put on, and the hundreds of dollars our churches pay out for evangelists and singers and extra running expenses of the church; not to mention all the work and effort and expense involved in supporting pastors all the year and keeping church services and Sunday Schools, etc., running.

This writer feels free to confess that he is often perplexed over this question, and often wonders who is to blame for the apparent indifference on the part of the unsaved masses to the needs of their immortal, eternity-bound souls. Some one who believes in being very optimistic says, "Oh well, if one soul gets saved, that is worth more than this world . . ."

No doubt that is true, and if that one soul belongs to your family, or mine, we are only too glad that we made the effort we did to get him saved. But we cannot help thinking of those other nine hundred and ninety-nine souls just as precious in the sight of God who should have been but did not get saved.

Some evangelists will tell us that the professing Christians, and church-members are to blame for the lack of conviction on the unsaved, because they pray so little, and have so little soul-burden for them: They will quote to us Isa. 66:8: "As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." Others tell us that the days of revivals are past for God is withdrawing His Spirit from this civilized, Gospel-enlightened land, and is turning to the heathen who have not had the Gospel, like Paul turned from the Jews to the gentiles with the Gospel message because the Jews rejected it. So it seems a little difficult to determine just how much the church is to blame, or how much of the blame, in God's sight, rests upon the unsaved themselves.

One thing, however, is certain: God has not lost interest in the salvation of souls. He still loves them, and the Word says He would have "all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth," and "He willeth not the death of any but that all should come to repentance."

So that question of David's comes to us again and again: "Is there not a cause?" If some man would come forward and be able to name, or put his finger on the real cause of the lack of revivals in these days, so that people would believe him, and really lay it to heart, he might be doing a great service to the cause of Christ.

There may be various reasons why we are not seeing revivals like we had in many of the churches of several denominations thirty,

forty or fifty years ago, and some reasons may apply in one place, and others in another, for the hindrances may not be the same in all churches. However, there seems to be some general underlying cause which is responsible in all localities for the indifference on the part of men to God's claims upon them. We can remember when the winter months would be times for revival meetings in Baptist, Primitive Baptist, Reformed Baptist, Methodist and Christian Adventist Churches, and the towns and country places where the services were held would be stirred for miles around. Automobiles, especially for winter use, were unheard of, but the crowds came in horse-drawn sleighs, big sleds and on foot, many of them unsaved, and the churches were filled with interested people and many seekers found God every night for several weeks in succession. The spirit of revival conviction seemed to grip the whole community and Christians went from house to house, prayed, sang, shouted and worshipped God together.

The preaching, as we remember it in those days, done by local men of ordinary gifts, consisted of such simple Gospel messages, that a child could easily understand them. No emphasis was put upon special singing as a means of drawing people to the services: such a thing was not needed, but everybody joined in the singing of the old hymns; those who could not sing as well as others making a joyful noise unto the Lord. The churches fully expected to see souls saved in their midst and God seemed to honor the faith of His humble followers, and He surely came on the scene in answer to their believing prayers; and such times of weeping, confessing of sins, and confessing of faults one to another, making restitutions, and rejoicing when souls found victory, are better imagined than told. They were truly seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

Then we heard of great revivals being held in far off places by great preachers and singers such as Crosley and Hunter, Hatch and Gaile, Tory and Alexander, etc., and some one said, "Why don't we send away and get some of those big men to come and hold revival meetings for us I'd like to hear those big preachers and singers and I am sure they would draw the crowds and we would have a great meeting." Of course we'd have to rent a big place in the town somewhere for none of the churches would hold the crowds. So we did as suggested, and in due time the big preachers and singers came, and we held our meeting in the big rink or opera house. We remember on one occasion there were five of those big outstanding religious workers present holding services in an opera house in town. The singing by those trained musicians was surely inspiring; the preaching was of high order, and scriptural; the crowds came sure enough, at the beginning of the services, then the interest seemed to wane in spite of much advertising. After about four weeks of services, with much preaching, singing, exhorting, etc., the end came without a single soul professing to get saved. Was there not a cause? We have seen similar big meetings held in other towns. Some of these were quite well attended, the interest seemed to be quite good, and sometimes quite a large number would stand for prayers or sign cards and become identified with some of the churches. but all through the services there seemed to be some thing, or perhaps we should say, Some One missing. That Presence that characterized other meetings, that drew peo-

ple in, and made strong men weep, and repent of their sins and cry to God for mercy, was not there. Was there not a cause?

(To be continued in next issue)

DON'T BE A JONAH

R. Barclay Warren

Some names, as that of Captain Boycott and Vidkun Quisling of Norway, have gained a place and meaning in our language because of the actions of the persons in question. So "Judas" stands for the one who is a secret betrayer, and "Jonah" for one who runs from his God-appointed task.

There is always a reason for our failure, and it is usually a form of selfishness. Jonah did not wish to share his knowledge of God with the wicked people of Nineveh, for that city was the capital of the Assyrian Empire, whose strength was a threat to Israel. Jonah feared Nineveh would turn to God and He who is gracious, "and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness" would forgive them. (4:2) So Jonah fled from the presence of the Lord.

When one fails to carry out God's will, it brings trouble to others. Jonah, with his hardened conscience, might sleep; but others were frightened in the storm. Finally Jonah, on his own suggestion—for he must now have felt himself to be a miserable wretch—was thrown overboard. But God had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah.

The next three days were uncomfortable ones. Jonah began to pray. Finally he asserted, "I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed." "And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land." Jesus referred to this incident as a sign of His own death and resurrection. (Matt. 12:40).

Jonah was glad to take up the cross where he had laid it down. He went to Nineveh. The people of Nineveh believed God and repented of their sins, and the doom which Jonah had pronounced was forestalled.

Poor Jonah! Though he had become willing to obey, he still did not understand the reasonableness of foreign missions. But God was patient and taught him. These foreigners were God's created ones. Should not He spare them, when they turned from sin to Him?

THE REVIVAL THAT STARTED WRONG

Its converts do not look happy.

There were no children among its converts.

The one which made none more generous with their means.

The one that filled the church with unconverted people.

Left the prayer-meeting with no more attendants than at the start.

Did not give the people a greater love for the study of the Bible.

Closed with no one concerned about the sinner's salvation.

Made more ado over the human talent than over the grace of God.

Did not get those who are at "outs" reconciled with each other.

Did not get some of the leaders nearer the front than the back seats.

Never stopped those who attended the services from continuing to visit the places of worldly amusement.

Left hungry souls wondering what they must do to be saved.—Sel.