

children had to remain at Hartland, while we enjoyed the good meetings and interesting Christmas celebrations at Altona. Brother Kierstead had to go back to be with his dear wife. He was able to attend the Quarterly part of one day, then had to return again to Vryheid. We had a special service of prayer, with some fasting, on behalf of our three members who are not well, Gladys, George and Paul Nkosi.

Paul Nkosi is back home again and yesterday he attended a service at Lujojwane, some six or eight miles from home. He came and returned by horseback. God has answered prayer in the improvement in the health of George and Paul. Their return to us has encouraged our faith. George has had to return to the hospital in Johannesburg for further treatment. We trust and pray that his broken leg will mend so that he will be able to return to the work of the Lord in a few months time.

We are glad to know that there are hundreds of good Christians in the homeland who are joining with us in prayer for these Gospel messengers of the Lord.

We have the plan for the work of the outpost in Natal for 1949: It is rather a heavy programme. Instead of about twenty-three meetings we have about thirty-three on the programme, and this with only half the number of elders that we started off with in 1948. So you will easily see that this will be a much heavier programme than last year. These special meetings are besides the other regular services. But, friends, the results will not be according to the human effort spent: the results will be according to the co-operation of human effort with the plan of the Holy Spirit. One day of the working of the Holy Spirit is of greater effect than a whole lifetime of human effort. His presence and power are the only life-giving force that we have. His life-giving power is abundantly sufficient even for these degraded heathen people.

Yours glad to be in the Master's service.

C. D. M. SANDERS

### SOUL TRAVAIL

By H. S. Dow

"For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." "Shall I bring to the birth and not cause to bring forth." Isa. 66:8-9.

The caption of this article is not a very popular one in religious circles these days, because of what it implies, which is severe pain, and suffering. The writers of both the Old and New Testaments often use natural laws, and customs, the common things of life, to illustrate spiritual truths. Our Lord Himself in His teaching often drew lessons from common, everyday things.

In the foregoing scripture which we use for our text, the Lord, by His servant Isaiah, speaking in figurative language, uses a very delicate figure, which only woman-kind can appreciate, viz., the experience of bearing children, when there is much suffering involved.

Other inspired writers use the same figure in trying to impress upon the minds and hearts of the church, God's people, the need of soul travail, or prevailing, intercessory prayer, which is necessary on the part of the people of God, if we would see many souls born again in great revivals in our churches.

Our Lord evidently had the same figure in mind when he said to Nicodemus: "Ye must be born again," and Nicodemus thought he

was referring to a natural birth, hence his question: "How can man be born when he is old."

The apostle Paul also, in writing to the Galatians, uses the same symbol where he addresses them as "My little children of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." The text says, "When Zion travailed she brought forth her children." Do you see the truth in that symbol? There was prevailing prayer, a passion of soul to the point of suffering and pain on the part of Zion, God's people, then children were born. That is the Divine order of revivals.

Sometimes the pastor and some of the church members like to see souls saved. They want a revival, they talk about a revival, pray some about it, and make their plans. An evangelist is engaged who has been recommended as a great preacher (and perhaps he is, for we have many good preachers of the Word these days). We call some good singers also to come with their music, and help to attract the people to the meetings, and sometimes we get chalk-artists to draw pictures to help bring folks in. When we think we have done all that is necessary to have a revival, we begin and carry out our programme. The meetings are over, and we are somewhat disappointed, but we try to be optimistic and say, "Well, we had a good meeting, but of course we did not see all that we hoped to."

Perhaps we count heads and report so many seekers at the altar, and they were there, and will be there again in our next revival meetings.

But listen! What am I listening for? The cries of newborn babes. We don't count much on babes unless we hear from them very soon after they are born, and when they are normal babes, we will hear from them, which is true also in the spiritual realm, and as they "desire the sincere milk of the Word," they will grow thereby to become strong men and women for God. But if they are not born-again Christians, then what? Well, we will get them to join the church or the Young People's Society, and we will have to do just what worldly societies do to hold their joiners—entertain them, with clean entertainment of course, such as socials, sports, suppers, parties, banquets, all of which they surely enjoy, but are not conducive to spirituality, growth in grace or a knowledge of the deeper, richer things in Christian experience, but produce a shallowness in religious life which amounts to little more than morality and a weak profession.

The result is we have many members who care very little about the prayer-meeting where people meet to worship God, pray and prevail with Him for the salvation of souls. They have no spirit of self-denial or sacrifice which characterized many followers of Jesus in by-gone days.

They are not going to suffer much for Jesus' sake; they are luke-warm, easy-going, self-indulgent professors. This dispensation was ushered in with great sacrifice and suffering on the part of Jesus and His early church, and His work will be promoted by the same spirit.

Millions were martyred for their faith and testimony for Jesus, but the more men suffered for the cause, the more the gospel spread, and His followers increased, until the saying went abroad: "The blood of martyrs is the seed of truth."

And the New Testament writers remind us that those who come out from the world to follow Jesus must be prepared to suffer.

Christ said: "If any man come after me let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me." Peter wrote: "If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him." Paul wrote: "All that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

The natural or carnal heart takes the path of least resistance to avoid suffering and sacrifice. It shrinks from the way of crucifixion of the old self life. Paul wrote: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Now to return again to the cause of no revival, after we had made so many arrangements for one. We lack one thing: Soul-travail on the part of the church. Without that, no spiritual babes will be born. Note also verse 9 which reads: "Shall I bring to the birth and not cause to bring forth?" Suggesting that there may come much conviction upon the unsaved because of the preaching of the Word, but there won't be strength enough on the part of the mother church to bring souls through into clear victorious, born-again liberty, unless she prevails with God in intercessory prayer, until a real agony of soul travail comes on some folks at least.

Furthermore, let us say that God has very little use for people in His work who have no soul passion for the lost. Please open your Bible to Ezekiel and read his vision of God's attitude toward his ancient people who had no concern for the lost and sinful, and see how God dealt with them. "He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, cause them that have the charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand. And behold six men came from the way of the higher gate which lieth toward the north and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand, and one man among them was clothed with linen with a writer's inkhorn by his side; and they went in and stood beside the brazen altar, and the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, with the writer's inkhorn by his side, and the Lord said unto him, go through the midst of the city of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said, go ye after him, through the city and smite, let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity. Slay utterly old and young, both maids and women; but come not near any man upon whom is the mark, and begin at my sanctuary."

Let us note in closing that God told the destroying angel to begin at his sanctuary, the place of worship. His people who evidently were most responsible for the godless condition in Jerusalem at that time. I am wondering if the church is not largely responsible for conditions in the world today. What was their sin? What had they done? Nothing. It was what they were not doing! They were not sighing nor crying. No passion or soul burden, just like very many professing Christians today. It was those who sighed and cried that were spared and they were those who had the angel's mark upon their foreheads.

Note also that the young people suffered the same fate as the older ones, because they had not the preserving mark, and did not sigh and cry over the lost. They might have had their social life, parties, banquets, etc. Note also that the glory of the God of

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