

LOCATING OUR FOES

By H. S. Dow

"And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." Matt. 10:36.

The foregoing are the words of our Lord, when he had called His twelve disciples, and gave them power over diseases and unclean spirits, and sent them out to preach His gospel. He tells them at this time that He is sending them forth as sheep in the midst of wolves and admonishes them: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword." He would have them understand that His primary purpose in coming to this poor sin-cursed, war-ridden world, was not to establish peace, because that would necessitate a compromise with evil. . . . But he did come to establish and promote righteousness, without which there can be no permanent peace. As the old saying goes: "Nothing is settled until it is settled right."

Furthermore, He informs His disciples that the preaching of His gospel, and confessing Him before men, will stir up many adversaries who will persecute and say all manner of evil against them, and kill them. But, said he, "the disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord."

He not only warns His disciples that they may expect enemies, but in the words of our text He locates their foes. They doubtless were surprised when he told them, "A man's foes shall be they of his own house-hold." In the place where they would expect love, sympathy and comfort, they might find their greatest foes. I think the word household in this place comprehends more than the home, or domicile, or a man's place of abode. I think the word will bear a much wider, more general application than that, one which is supported by the scriptures, and that is, our greatest foes are internal foes. Writers of both Old and New Testaments emphasize that fact. Someone has said that every nation or country and every organization or society, or church, is hindered more in its progress toward success, by its professed friends, or those on the inside, than they are by their enemies.

History also witnesses to that fact. Nations and peoples that were one time world powers gradually became decadent because of their sins and grew weaker year by year until they could no longer defend themselves against their outward foes, or other nations, that made war upon them, hence they suffered defeat, collapsed, and lost their standing as world powers. God's ancient people, Israel, is an example. In the days of Solomon, Israel was strong, wealthy and invulnerable, but through her disobedience to God, and because of her internal sins, she forfeited this favor, and fell. Ancient Rome, Spain, and more modern Germany, are also examples of what strong nations can come to when they turn their backs on God, and forget Him.

In these days of modern means of warfare, the great bomber plans, and the atomic bomb, no nation or city or country can feel safe without faith in God for protection. But those destructive things are external foes. America has foes in its own household that are more to be feared and dreaded, for they are so subtle that they are carrying on their destructive work continuously, and not many seem to take any notice of them.

Dr. Harry Rimmer, writing in the Christian Digest, says: "We are on the way to becoming

a nation of drug addicts, and drunkards, and the strangest blindness which can affect politicians, economists and national leaders, has so robbed us of vision we are not even aware of the mortal danger in which we stand! The statistics for 1947 show that \$9,640,000,000 was spent for liquor, the largest sum squandered for drink in all history, and in addition to this, more than three billion dollars was spent for cigarettes."

If this enormous sum of twelve billion dollars which men and women, boys and girls drink up and burn up was only wasted, while so many millions of people are starving, and suffering for the necessities of life, which that would buy, that indeed would be bad. But when we think of the terrible effects of strong drink and drugs upon the bodies and souls of people, it is too awful for words. To quote Rimmer again: "Our institutions for the mentally ill are overcrowded shamefully with human wreckage caused by alcohol. Our jails and institutions of correction are hopelessly swamped by the avalanche of new inmates. The ruined lives, pauperized citizens, wrecked homes, heartbroken women and destitute children are all the result of an enemy at work in our own household."

Doubtless the greatest foe of the Christian religion is operating within the pale of the so-called church. We hear and read much about Communism being a dangerous foe to Christian civilization, and, if what we read about the Communists is true, we must believe that they are out to destroy everything of a religious nature. But the greatest menace to the Christian religion today is not Communism. Our trouble is nearer home. To name it in a few words, it is "Religion without God."

I have a chance to see and meet great numbers of people who call themselves church-members. Many of them I am quite well acquainted with, and sometimes discuss the subject of religion with them. They go to church regularly, which thing all people should do. They give of their money to support their church, which is also a good practice (when the church is worth supporting), and they do many other things which their church requires, such as observing certain days and times and seasons, all of which goes to prove that they are religious. But with all that, they are downright sinners, for both men and women blaspheme, lie, drink and smoke. These things I see and hear prove to me that while they are religious, they are absolutely godless, and enemies of the Cross of Christ. We told one of these fellows very recently that if a man's religion did not make a good man of him, but allowed him to continue in sin and wickedness, his religion was no good.

There are many grades and shades in religion, from very good to very bad people. Some are fervent in spirit and zealous for the cause of Christ, and some backslidden in heart but still professing to be Christians. Others are merely lukewarm moralists, who perhaps are church-members, but never have had a change of heart, and are not born again Christians.

We need to remember the words of Jesus in Matt. 12:30: "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." That puts all people into one of two classes. We are either helpers, or we are hinderers in the work of God, in getting men saved. There is no such thing as being neutral in religion. We are either friends

or foes of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, if we are professing to be Christians, and have not the Spirit of Christ (which is characterized by self-sacrifice and an intense love to God and His cause) we are none of His, saith the Apostle Paul.

Again, the text is very often literally true. When those in our own homes, those whom we love, come between us and our duty to God, or hinder us from doing His will, they will become our greatest enemies. It takes more courage for us to go against our loved ones' wishes to do God's will, than it does to displease some one whom we care less for.

And last, but not least, perhaps, the words of our text have an individual application.

We oftentimes are our own greatest enemy. I have read that Martin Luther once said: "I am more afraid of the pope of self than I am of the pope of Rome." The apostle Paul said: "The carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, are not sanctified wholly." So, if we are not sanctified wholly, if our old man has not been crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, we still have our greatest foe in the heart, and will be greatly hindered in our service toward God and finally damned eternally if we are not delivered from this inner foe.

Thus saith the Lord, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."—Heb. 12:14.

I am wondering if we have located our foe. We have made some progress toward victory when we have done that. I remember reading that when World War I was in progress, the Italian Army which had joined the Allies against Germany, suffered defeats in several battles because the Germans seemed to know their plans, but they eventually found their foes were internal foes in the persons of some of their chaplains who were in league with the enemy, and giving away their secrets of war. When those foes in the household were tried and had to face a firing squad, the Italian Army was more successful.

If we are suffering defeats in Christian life and have not located our foe, I think we might get help if we prayed the prayer of David in Psalm 139:23-24: "Search me oh God and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Let us pray.

OTHERS

Lord, help me live from day to day
In such a self-forgetful way
That even when I kneel to pray
My prayers shall be for Others.

Help me in all the work I do
To ever be sincere and true,
And know that all I'd do for you
Must needs be done for Others.

Let self be crucified and slain,
And buried deep; and all in vain
My efforts be to rise again,
Unless to live for Others.

And when my work on earth is done,
And my new work in heaven's begun,
May I forget the crown I've won
While thinking still of Others.

Others, Lord, yes, Others,
Let this my motto be,
Help me live for Others,
That I may live like Thee.—Selected.