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One of the clearest memories which I have of early boyhood days centers around the annual New Year's eve services in my home church. I can recall very vividly the dire tones in which our pastor spoke of the new year into which we were entering. He made us feel that very few of us would survive the year, and if we did we would be sorry that we had. At that time I thought his methods were rather unnecessary and even now I cannot agree with everything he said, but it is easy for me to see how he became pessimistic in his outlook on the world.

We need to recognize that there are undesirable features about today's world which make life very uncertain, not necessarily in terms of duration, but in terms of the experiences which come to us. And so we have come to the conclusion that it is most important to adopt some kind of philosophy which will help us meet life as it comes to us and be prepared for all that it brings.

One of the most outstanding verses of the Scripture in this connection is the well-known Romans 8:28, which declares, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." As we look at that statement of Paul addressed to the Roman Church, there are two or three observations which are immediately clear.

The first is that Paul seemingly is implying that there are things about life which are not always the most desirable. He makes that inference by saying "all things," trying to bolster the faith of the Romans to believe that all experiences will work out advantageously. Now, we ought to recognize that life is not always going to be characterized by the sweet and by the desirable but there are bound to be those unfavorable experiences which come. And for that reason, we ought to be adult enough to recognize them and be prepared for them. So many people are bowled off their feet when anything undesirable comes because they did not expect such experiences out of life. Paul says that we need to be prepared for those experiences. As we go into the New Year one of the most helpful attitudes is that we should expect there will come some of the undesirable as well as the favorable.

Another implication out of Paul's writings to the Romans is that we should be very certain of our spiritual moorings. In essence, Paul is declaring that things are not always going to be the most desirable but with a foundation of spiritual values we can face anything that life will bring to us.

Several years ago before our wedding day occurred, I was making a trip from Michigan to Illinois for that great occasion. It was during the war and automobiles were very hard to get and repairs were even more difficult to get, so I was frankly dubious about the ability of my vehicle to get me there. I remember even yet I made a very careful inspection of every part and made every possible precaution in anticipation of any trouble that might occur. Fortunately, nothing did occur to keep me from that very happy event, but there was a comfort in knowing that I was prepared. The Christian ought to be in a similar position. We do not know what the year ahead of us holds but we can be prepared for any circumstances by being very, very certain that we are in love with God, being certain that our loyalty is true to Him, and being certain

The King's Highway

that He stands with us in every experience regardless of what it may be.

A third implication which comes out of Paul's verse is that even in the most undesirable of experiences we ought to expect that which is good and favorable to come. Now, to expect that good will come out of everything that life brings is a very great venture of faith indeed. Yes, we can take the enjoyable things and we can benefit from them and enjoy them but when it comes to the most difficult, trying experiences of life, that is when faith needs to take hold. But can we not say that when we get into these trying experiences, "God, I don't understand how I got here and I am not sure that I understand all of the purposes of the test through which I am going. But help me thoroughly to learn the lesson which thou dost have in mind, that it will not be necessary for me to come this way again."

Sometimes in driving we have the unfavorable experience of getting on the wrong road. When our next route is determined, we make certain that another mistake will not occur. Often God deals with us in such a manner.

And so, we launch out into a new year, one which is entirely unknown to us. While we cannot predict what lies ahead, we can be sure of the God Who leads us safely in it. Let us expect those difficulties that will come, be sure that we have God on our side in facing those difficulties, and then expect God's best to be worked out of them.—Heart and Life.

BEGINNING AT HOME

"He first findeth his own brother Simon" (John 1:41).

This case is an excellent pattern of all cases where spiritual life is vigorous. As soon as a man has found Christ he begins to find others. I will not believe that you have tasted of the honey of the Gospel if you eat it all yourself.

True grace puts an end to all spiritual monopoly. Andrew first found his own brother, and then others. Relationship has a very strong demand upon our first individual efforts. I doubt whether there are not some Christians giving away tracts at other people's houses who would do well to give away a tract at their own—whether there are not some engaged in works of usefulness abroad, who are neglecting their special sphere of usefulness at home.

You may or may not be called to evangelize the people in any particular community, but certainly you are called to see after your own kinsfolk and acquaintances. Let your religion begin at home. Many tradesmen export their best commodities—the Christian should not. He should have his conversation everywhere of the best savour; but let him have a care to put forth the sweetest fruit of spiritual life and testimony in his own family.

When Andrew went to find his brother, he little imagined how eminent Peter would become. Simon Peter was worth ten Andrews, so far as we can gather from sacred history, and yet Andrew brought him to Jesus.

You may be very deficient in talent yourself, and yet you may be the means of drawing to Christ one who shall become eminent in grace and service. Andrew brought Peter to Christ. Go thou and do likewise!—Spurgeon.

"Nothing will so test and stimulate the Christian life as the honest attempts to be an intercessor."

"O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM"

Beryl Wood in The Gospel Herald

Slowly walking along the streets of Bethlehem, a young pastor was thrilled beyond words with the beauty and grandeur of the small town which he had been privileged to visit through unusual circumstances. He was spending Christmas Eve, 1865, in the town of Jesus Christ's birth. His eyes passed from one scene to another, taking in all he possibly could, so he could report to his home church in America every detail of his visit to the Holy Land.

He visited the spot where it is said Jesus was born. He remained there hour after hour, thinking of the wonderful events of that Christmas night so long ago. It was all so wonderful to this young pastor. Soon he left the town and climbed one of the surrounding hills and looked over the little town of Bethlehem, where it lay beneath the silent stars.

Months later he returned to his home church, and the next Christmas season brought the beautiful scenes he had seen that night in Bethlehem back to him. Reliving the hours, he sat down and wrote the beautiful words of "O Little Town of Bethlehem." This young pastor, who wrote these familiar lines, was Phillips Brooks, "the most famous preacher and the most widely-loved clergyman of his time."

Phillips Brooks wrote the words of "O Little Town of Bethlehem" for the Christmas Sunday school program at the church where he was pastor. He desired that the words be set to music for the Sunday school program, so he handed them over to Lewis Redner, organist of the church, asking that it be ready for use the following Sunday, which was Christmas. The week was a busy one, and Lewis Redner did not think of the request again. Saturday night, Christmas Eve, he went to bed with a troubled mind, conscious that there was something left undone, but he could not think what it was. During the night he was roused from sleep hearing an angel strain whispering in his ear. He seized some music paper, and hurriedly wrote down the tune. In the morning he filled in the harmony before he left for church. That Christmas morning hearts were warmed as the beautiful words and music of "O Little Town of Bethlehem" filled the church, and still today hearts are warmed as that familiar and favourite Christmas carol softly wends its way through the air.

Yes, the tune is beautiful; the words are familiar; but how many think of the Christ the hymn mentions? How many have said:

"O holy Child of Bethlehem,
Descend to us we pray;
Cast out our sin and enter in;
Be born in us today."

"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

Beware that you are not one of the many who have allowed the singing of familiar Christmas carols to become an absent-minded form. God means business; His Name is exalted in many carols. Let us think of the words which we sing, and let us honestly sing them.

"How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still,
The dear Christ enters in."