

The Key to Revival

by Paul S. Rees

We must see that history, all along, is a strange blend of God's sovereignty and man's liberty. God wins in the end, but whether we win with Him depends on our response to His purposes. Nehemiah, who was also among the exiles, saw this truth clearly. A prayer of his is recorded in the first chapter of the book which bears his name. It is a prayer of rare insight, humility and fervor. Let us listen to some of its strains:

"Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine ears open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant which I pray before thee now, night and day, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee; both I and my father's house have sinned," (v.6).

Look at this praying man, I beg of you! He is not fumbling, and he is not fooling. In his praying hands he holds the key to revival. That key is **confession and obedience**.

Then he goes on: "Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandest thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations; but if ye turn unto me and keep my commandments, and do them, though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost parts of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there," (vs. 9, 10).

With those words ringing fresh and strong in your ears, listen to the Psalmist in this praise-poem: "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream," (v.1). "The Lord turned!" Yes, but, as Nehemiah's prayer clearly shows, the Lord's turning was dependent upon Israel's turning. "If ye turn unto me!"

He that hath eyes to see, let him see! When God's people have lost their march and their song, they never recover either by a glittering display of worldly prosperity or an idle fondling of memories which they have inherited from a glorious past. Recovery is much more painful than that, for it comes through a resolute seeking of the face of God. It comes through a terrific honesty that confesses pride, and prayerlessness, and jealousy, and unforgiveness, and backbiting, and insincerity. It comes through uncompromising obedience to all the known will of God.

Consider, furthermore, the **cost** involved in the march of a revived church. It is not enough to get Zion on her feet and out of her bondage. We must see that venturing out with God is always an expensive enterprise. It is not for cheap souls, for God is not a cheap God, and His is not a cheap business.

For example: a marching church must pay the price of **separation**. Examine verse 6: "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Take the first clause: "He that goeth forth!" God is forever calling His people to new ventures that require separation — an Abraham and his family, to leave "thy father's house," and strike out for the Promised Land; a Gideon and his unconventional band to use methods which man would scorn, but which heaven would bless; an Elijah, to brave the wrath of the king by calling a **backslidden nation to return to an**

altar of pure faith and divine fire; an Apostle Paul, to lead his fellow Christians into a new channel of ministry in which the Gentiles, no **less than the men of Israel**, might have the Gospel proclaimed to them; a Francis of Assisi, to gather about him some friends of humble mind who would be willing to be Christ's "trekkers," carrying the light of a cleansed Christianity into the darkened corners of Thirteenth-Century Europe; a William Carey, to leave his **shoe cobbler shop in Northampton** and stir the Christians of Britain out of their visionless smugness into a foreign missionary offensive that has since touched every major area where pagan man may be found! Yes, and a thousand unknown adventurers in every generation, who have helped to save the Christian Church from being a society of squatters and have made it instead a community of crusaders — crusaders who have been distinguished by their willingness to separate themselves from worldly self-love and, if need be, from family and friends, in order to take Christ's Gospel where it is least known, and most needed! "He that goeth forth!" If the Church would march, it must reckon with the cost of separation. But this is not all.

To separation there is often added **sorrow** as the price of advance in the cause of Christ. "He that goeth forth and weepeth!" If you are looking for signs of spiritual dullness and dryness among today's Christians, I suggest that you consider the absence of tears. "Jesus wept." The record declares it plainly. The Apostle Paul referred to himself as "serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears," (Acts 20:19). St. Augustine prayed, "Lord, give me the grace of tears."

By contrast, we modern Christians are ashamed to weep. We neither weep over the sins of the church, nor over the sins of the world. Our Christianity has to be light-hearted and gay. The idea that living for Jesus Christ, while affording the deepest satisfaction of which the human spirit is capable, is at times terribly sweaty business; and **that is foreign to us**. The thought that having "the mind of Christ" in us means letting the **world's weary, wicked, muddy feet** tramp across the door-sill of our soul's sympathy until they crush and splinter and shred it—that thought is strangely unwelcome to us. Instead of praying with Augustine for the grace of tears, our prayer seems to be this: "Lord, save me from the disgrace of tears!"

Nevertheless, the tenderness of a Christlike compassion, the sensitiveness of a bleeding heart of love, is a part of the cost we must **pay down** if the Church is to march redemptively.

Have you ever heard the story of "Miss Toosey's Mission"? Miss Toosey, yonder in England, was a commonplace sort of Christian up to the time she was seventy. Then her life was revolutionized by a missionary sermon she heard preached by a bishop from the foreign field. So moved was she, that she went to her rector and offered herself as a missionary to Africa. Of course, there was a touch of childishness in what she did. But then, what are rectors for, if it is not to interpret these things wisely and handle them tactfully? He told her that her mission was to stay at home and be a prayer-partner of the younger, stronger ones

who went out to the field. He encouraged her, further, to give all she could to the financial support of missions.

In time, the whole town came to know of her exertions and her self-denials for the missionary cause. It was amazing how much she saved by skimping here and economizing there. In the village was a young man of wealth, a sporting fellow who loved his dogs and horses, and for purposes of decency, he had his name on the church roll. Many of the villagers laughed at Miss Toosey, thinking her a bit daft on religion, and especially on missions; but not John Rossiter — he paid visits to her, gave her money, and received her blessing. One night he heard that she was ill. Calling on her, he found her in tears. Self-pity? No! Physical pain? No! Between sobs she said:

"John, my money counts up only a few small shillings, and my influence is not anything for the people only laugh at me."

Her tears were not for herself, but for the kingdom of Christ, for which she felt she was doing so little. That night Miss Toosey died. The next day John Rossiter sat for hours in the little cottage where she had lived, most of the time with his face in his hands. Something in that noble, self-sacrificing life had pinned him, and would not let him go. To Miss Toosey's Christ he surrendered himself; and that night, twenty-four hours after her death, he wrote to the Missionary Society of the Church of England offering himself as a missionary to Africa!

A creative sorrow had been hers—the sorrow of fellowship with Jesus Christ in His **love for unredeemed mankind**. It was costly. It was also fruitful; and that is the way the Church was meant to march.

Think of the compensation which comes to a marching Church; "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

Please observe two things: (1) it is a **guaranteed** compensation, for he shall "doubtless come again * * * bringing his sheaves with him," and (2) it is a **gladsome** compensation, for he "shall come again with rejoicing."

The church that sows will reap. The church that ministers will prosper. The church that shares will be strong. The church that forgets itself will never be forgotten. The church that marches will win.

—The Pentecostal Herald.

Study not to be a fine preacher. Jerichos are blown down with rams' horns. Look simply unto Jesus for preaching food; and what is wanted will be given, and what is given will be blessed, whether it be a barley grain or a wheaten loaf, a crust or a crumb. Your mouth will be a flowing stream or a fountain sealed, according as your heart is. Avoid all controversy in preaching, talking or writing; preach nothing down but the devil, and nothing up but Jesus Christ.

—Berridge

Speak for eternity. Above all things, cultivate your own spirit. A word spoken by you when your conscience is clear and your heart full of God's Spirit is worth ten thousand words spoken in unbelief and sin. Remember that God, and not man, must have the glory. If the veil of the world's machinery were lifted off, how much we would find is done in answer to the prayers of God's children.—

—Robert Murray McCheyne