

Watch and Pray

We need to watch for our prayers, as well as for the answers to them. It requires as much wisdom to pray rightly as it does divine faith to receive the answers.

I met a friend the other day who had been in years of darkness because God did not answer certain prayers in the affirmative, and the result had been a state of bordering on infidelity for my friend.

A very few moments were sufficient to convince this friend that these petitions had been entirely unauthorized and that God had never promised to answer such prayers; and that the prayers were for things which this friend should have accomplished in the exercise of ordinary wisdom, and which would have rendered such petitions unnecessary.

The result was deliverance from a cloud of unbelief which was almost wrecking a Christian life.

There are some things about which we do not need to pray, as much as to take the light which God has already given. Many people are asking God to give them peculiar signs, tokens, and supernatural intimations of His will. Now God has not promised to give special light of this kind when already we have sufficient light from His Word, or from other sources. Our business is to use the light which He has given, and then He will give us whatever else we need.

If I were a Christian young lady, and were asked to marry an ungodly man, I should have no right to go to God and ask for some special sign by which I might know whether it were His will that I marry this man; for He has given the clearest light in His Word forbidding such a step; and if I asked for such a sign, I would probably receive something that would mislead me.

We should be very careful, also, not to ask other people for counsel, after God has spoken.—Exchange.

PRACTICAL HOLINESS

By Horatius Bonar, D. D.

A holy life is made up of a multitude of small things. It is the little things of the hour, and not the great things of the age, that fill up a life like that of Paul and John, like that of Rutherford, or Brainerd, or Martyn. Little words, not eloquent speeches or sermons; little deeds, not miracles or battles, nor one great heroic effort or martyrdom, that maketh the true Christian life. The little constant sunbeam, not the lightning; the waters of Siloam "that go softly" in their meek mission of refreshment, not "the waters of the rivers great and many," rushing down in torrent noise and force; are the true symbols of a holy life. The avoidance of the little evils, the little sins, little inconsistencies, little weaknesses, little follies, little indiscretions and imprudences, little foibles, little indulgences of self and of the flesh, little acts of indolence or indecision, or slovenliness or cowardice, little equivocations or aberrations from high integrity, little bits of covetousness or penuriousness, little exhibitions of worldliness or gaiety, little indifferences to the feelings or wishes of others, little outbreaks of temper, or crossness, or selfishness or vanity—the avoidance of such little things as these goes far to make up at least the negative beauty of a holy life.—"Bright Words."

YOU CAN'T DO BUSINESS FROM AN EMPTY WAGON

Do you remember the versatile old peddler who used to call at our doors to sell merchandise? The arrival of the peddler with his wagon packed with everything from coal scuttles to alpaca, bright colored calico, and cambric needles, was the signal for all farm life to stand still.

Father would leave his plow and mother her baking, while the children gathered around all agog to gaze in wonderment upon the many articles for sale from the peddler's wagon. The size of the stock and the variety of goods was the secret of the peddler's success. He could not do business from an empty wagon.

This picture and its slogan stirred a new thought: the preacher cannot do business from an empty wagon—an empty heart, an empty head, or an empty pew.

You can't do business from an empty heart. One has said that Stephen, the martyr, was great because he was "full of the Holy Ghost." There is nothing more tragic than a preacher trying to preach from an empty heart.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the religion of the heart. A preacher can be effective in his preaching only when his messages come from the heart to the hearts of the congregation. The secret is a heart full of love for God and sinful man. The preacher is a partaker of Christ's love for a lost world. He cannot put himself and his desires first.

If we would save others, we cannot save ourselves. No sacrifice will be too great, no burden too heavy, and no time too long, if our hearts are full of the love of Christ. No, preacher, you can't do business from an empty heart.

You can't do business from an empty head. It costs money, time, and energy; but there is no excuse for a preacher's entering his pulpit without having something worthwhile to say. There are good books available. Buy them with discrimination. Read them voraciously. Retain from them only that which is useful.

You may not have had the privilege of college training, but some of the greatest men who have lived—men who have left a lasting impression upon the world—were men who never had the privilege of a college education. The average listener does not give two cents whether you have a B. A., an M. A., or a D. D., if you can deliver the goods.

This is no excuse, however, for one's not availing himself of the very best schooling possible. Almost any able-bodied person can go to school if he wants to badly enough. Too much cannot be said of the importance of preparation for the ministry. Be a student. Study men; study books; and above all, be a student of The Book. You can't do business from an empty head.

A full heart and a full head are not enough to insure success. A preacher must have someone to preach to. A full pew is also a requirement. We must find a way to fill our pews. We should use every reasonable means at our disposal to attract people to the house of God.

The bulletin, the newspaper, the radio are all good; but the most effective means at our disposal is the personal contact, personal invitation, personal persuasion. Go again and again "into the highways and hedges and compel them to come." If you're turned down, go again.

"Too Busy to Live"

"The driving is like the driving of Jehu, for he driveth furiously." (II Kings 9:20).

The watchman on the tower of ancient Jezreel was straining to identify the driver of the swiftly approaching chariot in the distance. The head-long pace which set Jehu apart from his contemporaries would hardly distinguish him from others if it were today. We are probably the hardest driven, most hurried and harried generation this world has ever known.

For years we have been conscious of our increasing tempo. Surely, there is need for wisdom in these days because of the overcrowded lives of the religious people. To keep life in its proper place has always been difficult, but now more so than ever. Most people are not succeeding too well. The Christian people have joined in with the world and have entered the rush and are being carried away in a whirl with this forward generation in whom there is little faith and hope.

Men and women are looking tense and worn, faces are drawn and they have such a worried, distressed look. The world's problems can never be solved by people who have such tired bodies and minds.

How many are losing out with God and spirituality just because they have gone beyond what is right? Very few have overcrowded themselves with spiritual things, but they're overcrowded with everything of the world and with natural affairs for their own selfish benefit. These excess things will dull the brightest minds. Overloading of the natural things may ruin the loveliest disposition, setting your nerves at variance with your soul. It crowds out the blessing of God and takes away the joy and happiness which every Christian must have.

What can the Christian do about it? "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden," says Jesus, "and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28.

Excuses for not doing God's will will never stand in the day of judgment. People are making too many excuses but they are no good. The same people are up and going if there are a few dollars in it and they can take part in any worldly thing that goes on. May God help people to realize where they are living.

Don't be a Saul. Be at your post of duty, ready and willing, each Lord's Day, but don't be as Saul who was "hidden among the stuff" (I Samuel 10:22) at the hour of His intended coronation.—"Faith in God"

The advent of our blessed Lord is a great promise to stand on, and a magnificent hope to live by, in the midst of sorrows and in the face of difficulties and animosities. One day He will come, and all true hearts waiting for Him will welcome Him, satisfied with an everlasting satisfaction. His name is Jesus! Winsome and Wonderful. Gordon B. Watt.

The wise pastor will train his people in this important work. True, he must be an example in the matter himself, but he can touch only a fraction of those who may be reached. There are many who draw into their shells at the approach of a preacher, but who will be open and frank with another layman.

May we with prayer and vision, together with good sense, be able to reach the masses for Christ and His Church. You can't do business from an empty wagon!

—Roy F. Smee, in Gospel Banner