

## IT COSTS TO REDEEM

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most learned men, he is one of the world's tenderest men. Why did he leave the comforts, not to say the honors, of Europe, where he had already, at an early age, achieved distinction in philosophy, music, and medicine, to go to the heart of Africa as a missionary doctor? Let him answer for himself: "Believing it as I do, to be my life's task to fight on behalf of the sick under far-off stars, I appeal to the sympathy which Jesus and religion generally call for."

He then adds some words that burn and blister: "Ever since the world's far-off lands were discovered, what has been the conduct of the white people to the colored ones? What is the meaning of the simple fact that this and that people has died out, that others are dying out, and that the condition of others is getting worse and worse as a result of their discovery by men who professed to be followers of Jesus? Who can measure the misery produced by fiery drinks and the hideous diseases that we have taken to them?"

### "Mark of Pain"

And now come words from Schweitzer that throb with the spirit of our text: "We and our civilization are burdened with a great debt. We are not free to confer benefits on these men or not, as we please, it is our duty. Anything we give them is not benevolence but atonement. . . . The fellowship of those that bear the Mark of Pain—we are members of this Fellowship. Those who have learned by experience what physical pain and bodily anguish mean belong together the world over; they are united by a secret bond."

There you have the authentic language of Christian sympathy—the capacity to put yourself, under the bonds of Christ, in another person's place. It hurts. But—there is no redeeming men without it.

### II.

Again, consider our Lord's suffering in the area of supplication. His prayer-life was frequently touched with pain. I know of no clearer description of it than we have in Hebrews 5:7, where we are told that Jesus, "in the days of his flesh . . . offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared."

You can be very sure that Jesus did not always pray like that. Full many a time He prayed and His quiet communion with the Father had nothing of agony in it, only serenity.

### "Inner Poise"

We need this quiet and quieting side of prayer. But do you ever get disturbed over the fact that this is the only side of prayer that seems to be emphasized or exercised just now? Everybody—including the preachers—is talking about "peace of mind" through prayer, "relaxation" through prayer, "inner poise" through prayer, "emotional health" through prayer.

Let us not be misunderstood. Prayer does yield these much-needed results. But may I assure you that there will never be any real maturity about your Christian experience if you never get beyond the forms and disciplines of prayer that yield comfort and quiet for your own soul's satisfaction.

There is a phase of prayer that has precisely the opposite effect: it gives you not a peaceful mind but a disturbed mind. It is not the dropping of a blessing; it is the generation of a burden. Alone with your Lord, it may be, or in close association with some other similarly

concerned souls, you enter, by prayer, into conflict with the powers of darkness. You take upon you the tragedy of other lives enslaved and broken by sin. You enter into partnership with the praying Saviour in rebuking and binding the demonic and deadly forces which are destroying men and women in the community of which we are a part, in the very block in which we live. You ask God to help you be the instrument of His love to set them free, to win them to new life in Christ Jesus, to rescue them from the thrall of this world and the bondage of Satan.

This suffering side of prayer should extend likewise to our fellow-Christians, especially to those who are immature, weak, struggling, distressed, perhaps defeated. What a superb example Paul sets for us in this epistle from which our text is taken! In chapter 1 he gives the assurance to these friends in Colossae: "We do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will" (v. 9). At the beginning of chapter 2 he opens his heart wider and tells them how ardently he prays for them: "I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you," or, as one version has it, "I would have you know how greatly I agonize for you."

### "A Foreign Tongue"

My friends, we are far removed from that sort of prayer—most of us. The master-word in modern American church-life is organize; "agonize" is something taken from a foreign tongue to most of us.

The history of the American church in its early years never produced a more passionate soul than that of David Brainerd, brave young minister and missionary who swayed whole tribes of Indians under the spell of the gospel he proclaimed. Yet if you read his Journal, you find that his power in public declaration was matched by his passion in private devotion. The flame that leaped in his preaching was one with the fire that burned in his praying. Take this from his diary: "I think my soul was never so drawn out in intercession for others as it has been this night; I hardly ever so longed to live to God, and to be altogether devoted to Him; I wanted to wear out my life for Him . . . I wrestled for the ingathering of souls, for multitudes of poor souls, personally, in many different places. I was in such an agony, from sun half-hour high, till near dark, that I was wet all over with sweat; but O, my dear Lord did sweat blood for such poor souls, I longed for more compassion."

Ah, yes, it costs to redeem! The winner of souls must at times feel the woe of sin or his prayers will be bloodless and useless. Put it to yourself, Christian: Has there been any pain in my prayers for others lately? Have I really tasted the fellowship of my Lord's suffering in supplication? Have I done any filling up of that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ?

### III.

And then, finally, there is the sphere of Christ's suffering in service. We have already reminded ourselves of the Matthew passage in which we see Jesus "moved with compassion" on the restless, unshepherded, weary crowds of men. But that same passage assures us that He did not stop with sympathy, however genuine and heartfelt it was. He laid Himself out to do something for them. He acted to meet their need. He ministered to their necessities. "He went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people" (Matt. 9:35).

Was that easy? Was it "sweetness and light?" Did it make no expensive draft on His mental powers, His physical energies, His spiritual sensitiveness? When one

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