

## The Back Rows

By Oswald J. Smith, D.D.

in "Free Methodist"

DO YOU REMEMBER when the Lord Jesus Christ fed the five thousand? Do you recall how He had them sit down, row upon row, on the green grass? Then do you remember how He took the loaves and fishes, blessed them, broke them, and gave them to His disciples? And do you remember how the disciples started at one end of the front row and went right along that front row, giving everyone a helping? Then do you recall how they turned right around and started back along that front row again, asking everyone to take a second helping? Do you remember?

No!—a thousand times—no! Had they done that, those in the back rows would have been rising up and protesting most vigorously. "Here," they would have been saying, "come back here. Give us a helping. We have not had any yet. We are starving; it isn't right; it isn't fair. Why should those people in the front row have a second helping before we have had a first?"

And they would have been right. We talk about the second blessing. They haven't had the first blessing yet. We talk about the second coming of Christ. They haven't heard about the first coming yet. It just isn't fair. "Why should anyone hear the gospel twice before everyone has heard it once?" You know as well as I do that not one individual in that entire company of five thousand men, besides women and children, got a second helping until everyone had had a first helping.

I have never known a minister to have any trouble with the back rows. All his trouble comes from the front rows. Those in the front rows are over-fed, and they develop spiritual indigestion. They tell him how much to feed them; when to feed them; when to stop feeding them; how long to feed them; what kind of food to give them, etc., etc., and if he doesn't do it, they complain and find fault. If a minister had any sense, he would leave the front rows for a while and let them get hungry for once in their lives, and go to the back rows, and then when he returned they would be ready to accept his ministry, and there would be no murmuring or complaining.

My friend, I have been with the back rows. I have seen the countless millions in those back rows famishing for the Bread of Life. Is it right? Should we be concentrating on the front rows? Ought we not rather to be training the front rows to share what they have with the back rows, and thus reach them with the gospel—those for whom nothing has been prepared?

Dr. Alexander Duff, that great veteran missionary to India, returned to Scotland to die, and as he stood before the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church he made his appeal, but there was no response. In the midst of his appeal he fainted and was carried off the platform. The doctor bent over him and examined his heart. Presently he opened his eyes.

"Where am I?" he cried. "Where am I?"

"Lie still," said the doctor. "You have had a heart attack."

"But," exclaimed the old warrior, "I must finish my appeal. Take me back. Take me back. I haven't finished my appeal yet."

"Lie still," said the doctor again, "you are too weak to go back."

But the aged missionary struggled to his feet, his determination overcoming his weakness; and with the doctor on one side and the moderator on the other side, the old white-haired warrior was led again to the platform, and, as he mounted the pulpit steps, the entire assembly rose to do him honor. Then he continued his appeal.

"When Queen Victoria calls for volunteers for India," he exclaimed, "hundreds of young men respond; but when

## GUEST EDITORIAL

### OVERFLOW NOT OVERWORK

By Oliver G. Wilson, D. D., Editor, "Wesleyan Methodist"

A young pastor with perplexity in his voice, declared: "I am not a shepherd, I am a slave. A slave to inconsequential details. It seems that I have missed it. I am driven all the day until I feel as if I would drop from exhaustion. I have had no time for communion with God or improvement of self. I am compelled to ask, Where is the well that the Master said should flow from our lives?"

I have a deep persuasion that if that young pastor would overflow more he would not be so sadly overworked.

It is machinery that is operated without oil that generates heat and is soon useless. The life that endeavors to do God's work without the oil of the Spirit will soon discover that mere human strength is insufficient for doing soul winning work.

Some of the prerequisites of the overflow life may be pointed out with the sincere hope that some troubled soul will find the "rest that remains," the "peace that abides," and "joy unspeakable" that springs from the very heart of God.

The first prerequisite is purity of heart. Any selfishness, unholy ambition, personal resentment against another soul will stop the joy of God's presence and will cause a blight to settle over the soul.

If you would overflow you must be indwelt by the living Christ. Again and again many have tried to serve the Master by some native power within and not by His power and presence.

If you want the overflow life you must separate yourself from persons, places and things that in the slightest manner shut Him out, weaken the touch of His hand upon your life and loosen your grasp upon Him.

A second prerequisite of the overflow life is a full and utter confidence in the power and authority of God's Word. God wants us to trust and not to rely upon feelings, fancies or appearances. He would save us from the peril of testing our victory or testing His indwelling by any preconceived notion of ours as to how His presence shall be felt or manifested.

A third prerequisite to the overflow life is to live independent of the opinions of others. Jesus Christ on earth lived a victorious stainless life. However, the leaders of religion in His day were so blind they failed to see the victorious life in Him.

He who lives for the good opinion of others will never know the glories of the overflow life.

To live the overflow life ever keep in mind that the work to be done is His work. The harvest to be gathered is His harvest. The church to be builded is His church.

He is the power, He is the glory, He is the victory, and He will start the wells flowing, and multitudes will be refreshed by the overflow.

King Jesus calls, no one goes." Then he paused. Again he spoke. "Is it true," he asked, "that Scotland has no more sons to give for India?" Again he paused. "Very well," he concluded, "if Scotland has no more young men to send to India, then, old and decrepit though I am, I will go back, and even though I cannot preach, I can lie down on the banks of the Ganges and die, in order to let the peoples of India know that there is at least one man in Scotland who cares enough for their souls to give his life for them."

In a moment young men all over the assembly sprang to their feet, crying out, "I'll go! I'll go!" And after the famous missionary had passed on, many of those same

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