

The King's Highway

AN ADVOCATE OF SCRIPTURAL HOLINESS

VOL. XXXVIII

MONCTON, N. B., OCTOBER 15, 1959

No. 472

TROUBLES ARE ASSETS

By Gerald Bates

"... in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37).

Resignation had a back seat in Paul's life. He believed in living aggressively the Christ-way and emerging victorious from the tunnels of life "through him." The natural sequence for him was to follow the catalogue of "tribulation, distress, persecution," etc., with "more than conquerors."

But Paul had learned more than victory over troubles; he had also discovered that they may be turned to certain benefits: "... tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope." Much lies in patient experience. Troubles are great purgers. They give perspective to self-assessment and enable us to see what is superfluous and what is necessary. They are often the most convincing inducement to put off extra weights.

Troubles are not always assets; never if they are terminals. But if they are gone through to a solution or a victory, then they become aids to strength and confidence to meet more and greater ones—in this respect they are the birthplace of hope.

Victory may mean solution, deliverance, or endurance. We must not prematurely cease to strive and too easily settle upon God's will for us or others as endurance when it may be solution by godly commonsense or deliverance by divine intervention. Elton Trueblood quotes some lines warning against too readily preaching resignation to others:

"The toad beneath the harrow knows
Exactly where each tooth-point goes;
The butterfly upon the road
Preaches contentment to the toad."

We must keep in balance our faith in a delivering God.

Note the key phrase, "through him." Troubles may be terminals for non-Christians. They have no "through him" guarantee to add to their lives. Paul includes this all-important plus to show why Christians need never stay defeated by trouble. Compare Omar Khayyam's

"Drink! for you know not whence you came, nor why;
Drink! for you know not why you go nor where."

with Evangelist Gypsy Smith's humble testimony: "I have been troubled but never distressed; often perplexed but never in despair; often cast down but never destroyed."

Where does this leave us in relation to our world? It means Christians should stand out in troublous times as bastions of hope. Emerson said, "If the crisis (were) fit for heroes, we should be great also." Moderns live in a constant atmosphere of crisis. Christians must be Christian heroes. These days should challenge the best in our faith, cleanse it of its excess accumulations, and present it readied to meet unfolding trials. For the world the crucial

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CHARACTER BEFORE WEALTH

By F. Lincicome

There are three great sovereign life verbs that form the life blood of Christianity; namely, the verb to have, the verb to do, and the verb to be, but the greatest of these is the verb to be.

The verb to be comes before the verb to do in the grammar of Heaven. What you have is important, what you do is more important, but what you are is of most importance. The world's big word is do, but God's big word is be. God cares more for what we are than for what we do. Earth may ask, "What have you?" Heaven may ask, "What did you?" But God will ask, "What are you?" Christ said to Nicodemus, "Ye must be . . .", and to the rich young ruler, "If thou wilt be . . ." God said to Abraham, "Walk thou before me and be . . ."

"Character before wealth," was the motto of Amos Lawrence, who had inscribed upon his pocketbook, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" It was Horace Greeley who said, "Fame is a vapor, popularity is an accident, riches take wings and fly away, those who bless you today may curse you tomorrow. There is only one thing that endures, and that is character. For character is based upon conscience, conscience is based upon Christianity." In the words of Daniel Webster, "You can work upon marble, but it will perish. You can work upon brass but time will efface it. Rear your temples, and they will crumble in the dust. But if you build a character, you build something that will stand and brighten through all eternity."

When we die we take with us all that we are and we leave behind us all we have. Since that is true, why spend our energies getting another farm or city property that we must leave at the grave? Why not spend more time in building character, the one and only thing we can take with us?

Whether you are endowed with ten talents or one talent, the business of life is service. By your fruits you are to be known. The world's hurts are not healed by our theories. It was the acts of the apostles that changed the world, not their dogmas. Christianity makes its most potent appeal when it is practiced. The good Samaritan was putting Christianity into practice when he got off his beast, wrapped up the wounds of another, took him to the hotel, and paid the bills.

Christianity is more than a message to be heard; it is a life to be lived. It is more than a matter of believing and escaping. Christianity is not only something to be received; it is something to be reflected. It is not, "Let your lips so speak," but, "Let your light so shine" that others may see. It is what the world sees that settles their attitude toward Christ, the church and your religion. "Man looketh on the outward appearance." His vision stops with the surface of our lives. The world cannot see our love, but it can see our loving. It cannot see our motives, but it can see our methods. It cannot see our character, but

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