

THE MILITANT CHRISTIAN

B. R. Parks
IN "Free Methodist"

The Bible is a Heroic Book written for heroic Christians. It bristles with military terms. We are exhorted "to endure hardness as a good soldier," to contend earnestly for the faith," "to fight the good fight of faith," and "to put on the whole armour of God."

The Christian life is no sham battle. Sin is real. Satanic forces are mighty; wickedness is well organized. Only those who, with the chief apostle, fight a good fight, finish the course, and keep the faith, will receive a crown of righteousness.

THE GOOD FIGHT

The fiercest battles of life are fought in the moral realm—in the domain of the mind and heart, where self, sin and Satan are overcome. Weaklings will not survive in this struggle. The solicitations of the world, the invitation to compromise, the pressure of opposition and persecution—these take their toll of many.

The church today suffers more from weakness within than foes without. To a great extent it has lost its militant spirit. This is a time to exhort one another, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

THE FINISHED COURSE

In stressing the importance of the militant spirit, Paul referred to the Christian life as a race. A race must have a starting point. Paul knew the day when life was made new for him. So must we. It must follow a well-marked course. It is never aimless. All weights which hinder successful running must be laid aside.

A race has a goal before it. Accepting the course, observing the rules, steadily, confidently looking to Christ, we must press on. It makes little difference where we die; whether anyone mourns our passing, or if a tombstone marks our resting place. But it does make a difference whether we can say we have been faithful and have finished our course with joy.

THE KEPT FAITH

Paul was never ashamed of the gospel of Christ. He constantly preached Christ crucified. For him this was more than a creed. It is the heart that makes a Christian.

Paul kept the faith by watching, by self-denial, by perseverance, by prayers, by tears night and day. He was steadfast when the crowds contradicted him with blasphemy. He kept the faith when he was imprisoned, and when he was dragged, wounded and bleeding, outside the city. Then when he faced life's last storm in the dismal dungeon at Rome, all was well.

THE CROWN LAID UP

A crown awaits the faithful Christian. Paul looked beyond the martyr's block and saw the crown of glory awaiting him. His life had been invested in eternal values. Eternity would bring them to fulfillment.

This world has its crowns: social, intellectual, political—crowns of fame and honor. But they soon fade away. Let us beware that we do not cherish them too dearly. But in the Christian warfare, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

"And let this feeble body fail,

And let it faint or die;

My soul will quit the mournful vale,

And soar to worlds on high;

Shall join the disembodied saints,
And find its long-sought rest—
That only bliss for which it pants,
In my Redeemer's breast."

TALKATIVENESS

By George D. Watson, D. D.

Talkativeness is utterly ruinous to deep spirituality. The very life of your spirit passes out in your speech. Hence, all superfluous talk is a waste of vital forces of the heart. In fruit-growing, it often happens that excessive blossoming prevents a good crop, and often prevents fruit altogether. So by much loquacity, the soul runs wild in word-blossom, and bears no fruit. I am not speaking of sinners, nor of legitimate testimony for Jesus, but of that incessant loquacity of spiritual persons, of the professors of purifying grace. It is one of the greatest hindrances to deep, solid union with God.

Notice how people will tell the same thing over and over, how insignificant trifles are magnified by a world of words, how things that should be buried are dragged out into gossip, how a worthless non-essential is argued and disputed; how the solemn deep things of the Holy Spirit are talked of in a light, rattling manner, until one who has the real baptism of divine silence in his heart, feels he must unceremoniously tear himself away to some lonely room, where one can gather up the fragments of his mind, and rest in God. Not only do we need cleansing from sin, but our natural human spirit needs a radical death to its noise and activity and wordiness. See the evil effects of so much talk.

Talkativeness dissipates spiritual power. The thought and feelings of the soul are like powder and steam—the more they are condensed the greater their power. The steam that, if properly compressed, would drive a train sixty miles an hour, if allowed too much expanse would not move it an inch; and so the true unction of the heart, if expressed in a few Holy Ghost selected words will sink into minds to remain for ever, but if dissipated in any rambling conversation, is likely to be of no profit.

Talkativeness is a waste of time. If the hours spent in useless conversation were spent in secret prayer, or deep reading, we would soon reach a region of soul-life and divine peace beyond our present dreams.

Talkativeness will inevitably lead to saying unwise or unprofitable things. In religious conversation we soon churn up all the cream our souls have in them, and the rest of our talk is pale, skim milk, till we get alone with God and feed on his green pasture until the cream rises again. The Holy Spirit warns us that "in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin." It is impossible for even the best of saints to talk beyond a certain point without saying something unkind, or severe, or foolish, or erroneous. We must settle this personally.

If others are noisy and gabby, I must determine to live in constant quietness and humility of heart; I must guard my speech as a sentinel does a fortress, and with all respect for others, I must many times cease from conversation or withdraw from company to enter into deep communion with my precious Lord.

The cure for loquacity must be from within, sometimes by an interior furnace of suffering that burns out the excessive effervescence of the mind, by an overmastering revelation to the soul of the awful majesty of God and eternity; which puts an everlasting hush upon the natural faculties. To walk in the Spirit we must avoid talking for talk sake or merely to entertain. To speak effectively, we must speak in God's appointed time, and in harmony with the indwelling Holy Spirit.