

## Ministering with Confidence

By F. A. Dunlop

"Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Phil. I:6.

The inspiration in which Paul performed his ministry is little short of a miracle in itself. He speaks in the most confident manner concerning those he was instrumental in bringing to Christ. This attitude is more astounding when we consider the circumstances under which Paul laboured. Most of his converts were won from the cultured ways of Grecian philosophy or hewn from the rough quarries of pagan superstitions. Either way of life had little in common with the Christian Faith, and yet Paul beheld in every sinner he led to Jesus a potential saint, and bore witness to the fact.

How much we have lost of the romance of soul-saving! Our methods or our materialism have robbed us of our enthusiasm and necessary confidence. We believe in our religious programs today in so far as they operate in things; but when we attempt the high calling of the Church with the promise of anything beyond the adding of another member to the church register, we become sceptical.

The favorite questions being asked everywhere and by so many regarding the Billy Graham revivals are: "Does his work last?" "Do his converts stick?" We had better be asking, How harmful is our scepticism and how contagious? It should be no surprise to Christian leaders anywhere that a ministry as Christ-centered as Billy Graham's would produce lasting results. Surely our ministry to be effective must be a ministry of faith, else we shall spread the contagion of doubt everywhere. Anyhow, we have two things in our favor: God has not changed, neither has man. In these, we are as advantaged as was the apostle Paul.

Paul's confidence rested in a redeeming God and a convincing Gospel. "He that hath begun a good work in you will finish it", was his boast. The work of salvation was a work of God manifested in changed lives. He speaks of "their fellowship in the Gospel." They not only shared in its benefits but they stood with Paul in its defence and confirmation. Paul was no popular evangelist, moving on the crest of a religious wave; these converts knew him best as a "prisoner". It was in this role he had wrought his mightiest victories. Under these circumstances the jailer was converted; under these circumstances his influence had reached even to Caesar's household. Under these circumstances these saints in Phillippi were saved, and Paul beholding the mighty work of God in their hearts, accepted it as an "earnest" of a perfected work that would be revealed in the day of Christ. Hence, their hope from the Divine level, which was by far the greatest factor in their salvation, was secure.

There was another factor of no little importance—their own spirit and obedience. Paul had seen converts falter and fail. Not all starting under his ministry had persevered. Some even who had shared with him in the proclamation of the Gospel had turned back and made shipwreck. We hear him praying for an entire church, and praying in great agony of soul, that "Christ might be formed in them again".

There is nothing strange about these saints in Phillippi. One might call up pastors from anywhere who could speak of like experiences. You all know those for whom you have solid faith. From the first hour of their public stand for Christ they have been full of promise. They refuse to live "back of light". Ready for any service that will promote the Cause, they exercise themselves unto godliness. Afraid of dangerous "trends" they lean over backwards to main-

tain a spiritual program. And they never need to be shooed away from unsavory company, nor censored for sponsoring unholy conspiracies—you can trust them all the way. The admonition of the apostle would not be wasted on them: "Only let your conversation (living) be as it becometh the gospel of Christ, that whether I come and see you or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel." Bring this spirit and service to the grace of God and any pastor may say, "being confident of this very thing that He which hath begun a good work in you will finish it."

So there is a romance in this glorious calling. Paul didn't see the end of it, and please God, may we not either. May we ever minister with sufficient enthusiasm and confidence to be rewarded with that wondrous experience of seeing the light of Heaven shine upon the face of penitent sinners while the peace of God which passeth all understanding floods the soul.

## WE ALL NEED A HEART-WARMING! WE NEED A FRESH MEETING WITH GOD!

By Vance Havner

I have no fancy name for it but the one thing needful is a brand-new experience of God among His people. I do not care what your favorite name for it may be. We have named it aplenty, but most of us have never known it. The filling of the Spirit, full surrender, consecration, the victorious life, perfect love, revival—whatever you call it—most of us don't have it!

Too much of our orthodoxy is correct and sound but it is like words without tune, statues without songs. It does not stir the wells of the heart. It has lost its hallelujah, it is too much like a catechism, not enough like a camp meeting. We may smile at our spiritual forbears, call some of them primitive and antiquated, but they had a vividness and vitality, a fervor and fire, that makes us look like fireflies beside their flaming torches.

We all need a heart-warming like Wesley knew that evening on Aldersgate Street. We need to find what Fletcher reached when, after wearying all hours of the night seeking peace, his eyes fell upon the verse of Scripture reading, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord." (Psa. 55:22). We may have it in a motto on the wall but the Word hung up in the house is one thing and the Word hidden in the heart is another.

We need to learn with Frances Ridley Havergal, worn out with heart-searching and wrestling with sin, that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin" (I John 1:7) is the key that unlocks the gate of bondage and sets the spirit free.

I do not mean that we are to copy their experiences. For one it may be as cyclonic and tempestuous as Finney's dramatic meeting with the Lord. For another it may be as serene as an autumn sunset, as with A. B. Earle when a sweet heavenly peace filled his soul, and a calm, childlike trust took possession of his whole being.

We may rise from our knees singing "Onward, Christian Soldiers" like a camp-meeting Methodist; or we may feel so subdued that we can only whisper "Abide With Me." But—whatever form it takes—we all need a fresh meeting with God!

For one it may mean nights of prayer, not because God is slow but because we are stubborn. It may mean tears of repentance, for our spiritual eye-sight is bad these days and we see better after our eyes are cleared by the saltiness of godly sorrow. It may mean giving up something that displeases God, or undertaking something that pleases God.