

Sisters All!

Dear Martha,

It was wonderful to see you here at Beulah last weekend, short though it was. We are looking forward to that visit with you later in the summer.

There is something about such services as we've been having that compels one to take inventory of one's whole spiritual life. I have found myself thinking of a night years ago, when a small eight-year-old girl in a cottage here on the grounds crept out of bed and knelt down to add a postscript to her prayers: "And dear Lord, please save me and help me to be a good girl." Uncomplicated though it was, it was an experience that I could testify to forever afterward.

Within a few years, I became intrigued with the whole idea of sanctification. What was it? What did it do? How did one get it? Without understanding much about it I finally sought it anyway, simply because older folk talked about it as a meaningful experience. When my faith balked at assenting to what I could not comprehend, my mother came forward with a suggestion that she knew would reach through to me. "You love to swim," she said. "God's power is like the ocean. Just dive right in. It will hold you up." It did and still does. Later, as I grew a little older, I realized that the experience had been essentially a change of taste: those things that I had formerly done merely because I ought I now did by free and conscious choice.

In recent years, I read a statement by the theologian and teacher, Dr. Nels Ferre, confessing that he had had to undergo three "conversions": the first time, from sin; the second time, from self; and the third time, to Truth. The last, he asserted, comes some time on the threshold of adulthood.

Call it what you will, I know that there have been crisis times in my life when I had to get down to the bedrock of truth itself. At such times, I found it imperative to let go, consciously and specifically, of every preconceived idea I had and begin with what I knew. Sometimes it was as stark and elementary as the fact that I exist, and God exists. I knew that, because I had met Him before. From there, I could build my faith, brick by brick, on a foundation of complete and unfeigned honesty.

My religion has thus become a very simple, basic thing. Essentially, it is this: I know what I want more, and increasingly more, love and truth in my life, and I believe Christ to be the one real source of them both. Therefore, I seek His guidance and power to lead me into a growing love and concern for others and a more intense involvement with truth. I must see people as they are, and seeing them so, I must understand and forgive. I must also see things as they are, and work always to promote the good and valuable, and discard the false and destructive. And I must ever seek to see God as He is, for therein is the source of my strength.

This is my faith, that God will be as real to me as I will let Him be. I find that I want more and more of His kind of reality.

It has been a good camp meeting, as always. I am grateful to have been able to come again and share its blessings. Now it's time to go home, and work, and try to live every day the wonderful truth we have in our hearts. And may another year see us right back here on old Beulah Camp Ground!

Your loving sister, Mary

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It is no great thing to be humble when you are brought low; but to be humble when you are praised is a great and rare attainment.—St. Bernard.

A GOOD WORD FOR PREACHING

by Vance Hayner

"We don't want sermons," say the chairmen of many religious meetings today, as well as many editors of religious periodicals, and leaders of youth meetings. Sermons are no longer a drawing card. "Put on a picture, or have a celebrity in the pulpit to pack the house." Then maybe the preacher can give a Gospel message. But plain, old-fashioned preaching cannot stand on its own, to hear some people tell it. It must have a crutch to get along.

My Bible does not say, "How shall they hear without a brass band?" It says, "How shall they hear without a preacher?" If preachers won't do God's work nothing else will. . . . We have fallen upon all sorts of carnal devices to pack the house with the argument, the end justifies the means. It is an admission that we have failed to follow the New Testament pattern.

God's method is to use a Spirit-filled church. Rather than pay the price of being Spirit-filled we substitute false fire and worldly expedients.

It is not the duty of the preacher to fill the house; it is his business to fill the pulpit. The church members should fill the house by being there themselves and bringing others.

Lacking a Spirit-filled membership, fervent soul winning and a separated testimony, we are hard put to it to devise other means to secure the desired ends. Of course, the preacher may also be at fault in the state of his heart or the content of his message, and he may need to build a fire under the pulpit in order to warm up the church. But preaching is still the appointed means, and although we are in a day when men will not endure sound doctrine but have "ear-itch" instead of heartburn, let us not forget that the command in that very connection is "Preach the word!" and that God manifests His word and His will through preaching. Let us hope and pray that the people of God will grow weary of stones and seek bread. We do not better ourselves by aspersions cast on great preaching or by low-rating giants of a past generation: we could use a few today.

GEORGE MULLER DIED

"There was a day when I died, utterly died," and as he spoke he bent lower until he almost touched the floor, "died to George Muller, his opinions, preferences, tastes, and will; died to the world, its approval and censure; died to the approval or blame of my brethren and friends, and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God."

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. 2:20).

A STRONG CHURCH

"Is it a strong congregation?" asked a man respecting a body of worshippers. "Yes," was the reply. "How many members are there?" "Seventy-six." "Seventy-six! Are they so very wealthy?" "No, they are poor." "How, then do you say it is a strong church?" "Because," said the gentleman, "they are earnest, devoted, at peace, loving each other, and striving together to do the Master's work. Such a congregation is strong, whether composed of a dozen or five hundred members!" And he spoke the truth.

—Selected.

CLEAR CASE

"Medically and socially, the case against alcohol is just as clear as the case against opium."—Richard Cabot, M.D.

"If Christ is the Way, we waste time traveling any other."