

IT'S EVERYONE'S BUSINESS!

Oliver G. Wilson

A bent old woman silently passed me in the gray of a short winter evening. She was small, not five feet tall, slight of build and showing the marks of a life of deprivation and want. Hanging over her shoulder was a cloth bag which came but a few inches from the sidewalk. The street was full of cars and buses; the sidewalk was crowded with homeward-bound workers, but the little old woman was no one's problem and no one's concern. It seemed she was one of those strange creatures of the city who make a meager living by collecting rags, begging and depending on charity.

The bus for which I was waiting came, and I was able to find standing room while being taken toward my comfortable home where warmth and cheer and love would greet me. But I could not dismiss the forlorn, shabbily-dressed, little old woman from my mind.

I reasoned with myself, "It is none of my business—she may be a professional beggar who is wealthy." But such a condition did not seem to square with my ideals. Am I to blame that such a condition should exist? Has the Church failed in some way?

Perhaps these questions cannot be answered fully, but it has occurred to me that most of us have a one-track mind; primarily we believe in a "personal religious experience," or "a social gospel." We act as though these two were opposed the one to the other. The Bible comprehends both principles. Jesus not only forgave men's sins, He bettered their social conditions. The story of the prodigal son is the gospel of personal forgiveness, while the story of the good Samaritan is one of the social gospel.

The New Testament church preached forgiveness for such as the Philippian jailer and appointed deacons to care for the widows who were charges of the church.

We conclude, therefore, that every church should preach a gospel that regenerates the slaves of sin and, at the same time, seeks to improve the social order everywhere.

When conditions endangering the lives of the workmen exist in a coal mine, Christians should seek to help correct that condition and support the men who are laboring to that end. When children are compelled to play in the streets for lack of playground, or when youth crowd into vulgar places of amusement because no wholesome place is provided, then the church should spearhead a movement to improve those conditions.

Christianity is more than singing psalms on Sunday and being religious during revival. It is a dynamic force that can change men and customs. It will work for the regeneration of the individual and constantly search for a system which will better convey justice, brotherhood, and love. It exalts service to humanity as a primary expression of a genuine personal experience of grace.

KEEP THE FIRE BURNING

Keep the altar of private prayer burning. This is the very life of all piety. The sanctuary and family altars borrow their fires here, therefore let this burn well. Secret devotion is the very essence, evidence, and barometer of vital and experimental religion.

Burn here the fat of your sacrifices. Let your closet-seasons be, if possible, regular, frequent, and undisturbed. Effectual prayer availeth much.

Let us examine ourselves on this important matter. Do we engage with lukewarmness in private devotion? Is the fire of devotion burning dimly in our hearts? Do the chariot wheels drag heavily? If so, let us be alarmed at this sign of decay. Let us go with weeping, and ask for the Spirit of grace and of supplication.—Spurgeon.

For Boys and Girls

by Marguerite Estaver

A squirrel sat on the branch of a tree snapping his tail indignantly, and looking very alert and cross. He chattered and scolded, turned around backwards and scolded some more.

A small boy below him on the ground was hunting chestnuts. He was delighted when he found some forty nuts in one place, and "a hundred or more" in another.

The squirrel said, "Why don't you go home?"

The boy said, "Am I lucky!"

The squirrel said, "Those are mine! I found them! And I put them there!"

The boy said, "I wonder how they all came to drop in one place."

The squirrel said, "If you don't step this I am going to be hungry next winter".

The boy said, "Won't these taste good roasted!"

The squirrel said, "You're a thief! Get out! Get out! Get out!"

The boy said, "I guess I'd better go. My bag is nearly full, and Mom will want to see these".

The squirrel said, "Its about time! Oh, My! O My!" he mourned. "Now how can I make this up?"

As the boy sauntered home he exulted, "Won't Mom be surprised!"

When he got home he excitedly told his mother about his lucky finds.

"Don't you realize, dear, that that was some squirrel's store of food for next winter?" she asked sadly.

"Is that why that squirrel was making such a fuss?"

"Yes, dear. And if he had been as big as you are he would have killed you!"

Almost in tears he exclaimed, "Why can't we all speak English?" I didn't know what was the matter with him! I thought he was just being spunky and mad and dumb!"

"Mad perhaps, and spunky. But not dumb, and probably very much worried.

That same thing happens to people, too. Even though we all speak English we still don't always speak the same language and don't understand each other".

"I don't see why," broodingly.

"You wait a little while and you will. But when it happens don't just sit and scold like the squirrel. Try to understand."

FOUR REQUISITES FOR GREAT PREACHING

First, there must be something vital inside the preacher. It may be the "I know" of Paul or the "I must" of Jesus. We cannot "feed the sheep" without having something in us deeper than words. Truth becomes aglow only when it is incarnated.

Second, self-discipline is the path to powerful preaching. The second essential to great preaching is work, work, work. Learn the rules and follow them. Stop the discipline of hard work only when you stop preaching.

Third, great preaching will be life-centered instead of theory-centered. The sermon comes out of the congregation quite as much as out of the preacher. When we lose a sympathetic, intelligent understanding of the problems of the people to whom we minister, we lose the power to preach.

Fourth, the minister must never forget who he is, but he must never allow this to form a chasm between him and his people. To outthink and outlive his people in the field of the spirit and at the same time be their comrade is a fine art. That lays the foundation for great preaching.

—Gospel Messenger