

Bryan Station Baptist Church

INDEPENDENT

MISSIONARY

THE PIONEER BAPTIST

ORGANIZED 1786

VOL. 14, NO. 2

NOVEMBER, 1982

"Preaching The Same Truth We Preached Before Kentucky Was A State"

ROMANCE OF MISSIONS



Claude D. Cole

"But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord" (Acts 11:20,21).

One of the most romantic books ever written is the books of Acts. The historical and missionary book of the New Testament. It is the book that deals with the experiences of the early christians. It gives us the mind and heart of primitive christianity. It reveals the prejudices, the faults, the failures, as well as the struggles and victories of the early christians.

Let us remember that the first church Jesus Christ was the church in Jerusalem and made up entirely of Jews. This church grew rapidly under a continual revival. At one service there were 3,000 converts, and I am sure there has never been another church as large in membership as the Jerusalem church.

The passage before us tells of the breaking up of that church and the extension of the gospel. God did not mean for the gospel to be confined to the Jews. Christ had given the commission to preach to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. But the members of the first church, apostles and all, were determined to keep it at home, or at least within the circle of the race. Let us get some lessons from the story before us:

1. When men's will clash with God's will and purpose; God's will triumphs. Suppose the Jerusalem church had had their way--we poor Gentiles would have never heard of Christ. There would be no churches of Christ today save those with Jewish members, and they would have been few and far between. But God's purpose cannot be thwarted by men. God works and no man can hinder. Let us see how God won in this issue:

a. The church was scattered through persecution. This tribulation raged around Stephen and resulted in his death.

b. The scattered church meant the scattered seed of the gospel. Some of the scattered members traveled as far as Phenice, Cyprus and Antioch speaking about Jesus to Jews. Wherever saved people go they carry the gospel. They were not preachers or apostles; they did not preach in the usual understanding of the term. They simply talked about Jesus.

2. The 20th verse gives us the new departure. Some of the scattered members were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, and when they reached Antioch, they spake to the Greeks, preaching the Lord Jesus. There are three Greek words which tell of three methods of extending the gospel. Two of those words are used in this passage. The first one is a word that means to talk in an ordinary conversation. This is used in the 19th verse where the scattered members are said to have preached the word to the Jews only. The second is used in the 20th verse of the men of Cyprus and Cyrene preaching the Lord Jesus. This is the word for evangelize. As they talked with the Greeks they evangelized, that is they told them of the good news about Christ. The 3rd word is an

altogether different word and is the word for official preaching as when a man stands in the pulpit and proclaims the gospel.

a. Now these men of Cyprus and Cyrene were not officials of the church. They were not preachers in the accepted sense of the term. But they could evangelize as every christian can and should.

b. The names of these men are not given. This means that the Spirit of God is not tied to officialism or ecclesiasticism. They had no orders from men and no special commission from God to preach. They were doing the natural thing for men to do who have been saved by Jesus Christ., that is to tell others about Him. They were pioneers.

c. The city where this innovation of preaching to Gentiles was Antioch, the third city of the then world in size and importance--Rome, Alexandria and Antioch. Here heathenish appeared in its most debasing form.

3. The extension of the gospel beyond the limits of Judaism took three distinct routes. One was the work of Peter preaching to Cornelius, the Centurian, who was a Gentile. The second was the work of Philip who preached to the Samaritans and the Ethiopian eunuch and the third was these unnamed pioneers who preached to the Gentiles of Antioch. This effort of this handful of unnamed men was the word that grew. We have no account of any church starting with Peter preaching at the home of Cornelius. The work of Philip did not seem to result in any great strides in the gospel, but this work of these obscure and unnamed men resulted in the first real missionary church. This was the church that Paul and Barnabas left for the foreign mission field.

4. The mighty helper who prospered their work. "The hand of the Lord was with them so that many believed and turned unto the Lord." The name of these workers is not given but the name of Him who made it effective is given.

a. Soul winning is humanly impossible. We can not of ourselves convert a person to Christ. We can tell him the gospel but we can't make him appreciate it and understand and appropriate it.

THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL

C. D. Cole

b. There is no inherent power in the gospel to convert anybody. The gospel to the natural man is repulsive and not attractive. "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:23,24). "In whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Corinthians 4:4). "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14). The gospel is a fit instrument for conversion but it must be in the hand of the Spirit. A sword is a mighty instrument of death, but it must be in the soldier's hand. Swords lying on the floor do not cut anybody.



THE PASTOR IN HIS STUDY

"When the pastor enters his study, he must dismiss all thought and feeling of hurry. His first minutes should be spent in prayer. And it is not an unusual thing for the Lord's man to feel too rushed for the quiet hour with Him. He buckles down to work at once, or dashes into the presence of the Most High as if to say, 'Whatever you propose doing for me and with me today, do it quickly. I'm in an awful hurry.'

There is no profitable reading without a feeling of leisure. Nervous haste must be ended. The brevity of time must be forgotten. The multitude of books must be ignored. A deaf ear must be turned to that insistent clamor of a thousand duties. The pastor must overcome that urge to get up and go somewhere to do something for somebody. Just now he must read as if there were only one book in the world, and as if he had a lifetime in which to read it."

--L. O. Dawson

Introduction: Both law and gospel have their origin in God. If there is no God, then there is no law, for the law may be defined as His eternal and unchangeable rule in moral government. If there is no God, there can be no gospel, for the gospel is good news from God. The law and the gospel appear to be at variance with each other and indeed would be, were it not for one person and His word that brings them together. Jesus Christ is not only the mediator between God and man; He is also the mediator between the attributes of God. Do away with Jesus Christ and then tell me how mercy and truth can meet together and how righteousness and peace can kiss each other?

A. What is the law? The law is God's rule of action for moral beings. It is God's commanding will for our lives. Sometimes expressed in ten commandments; summarized by Christ in two commandments; and compressed by Paul in one commandment--to love, for love is the fulfilling of the law. It is eternal--it will never be repealed; unchangeable--never need revising; holy, just and good--can be no reason for not keeping it. We are all lawbreakers without any alibi. Let's go over the ten commandments.

1. Have no other gods besides me.
2. Make no god to fall down and worship.
3. Do not take His name in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy.
5. Honor parents.
6. Do not kill.

7. Do not commit adultery.

8. Do not steal.

9. Do not bear false witness.

10. Do not covet.

Who is under the Law? All who are not believers.

Why people cannot keep the law? Depraved.

B. What is the gospel? Good news--good news from God--good news from God to sinful men. What is the good news? It is the report of how Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose again.

The gospel is objective--something outside of us. What Christ did on the cross and in his resurrection.

The law tells the sinner what to do: the gospel tells him what Christ did.

The law promises life (the principle of doing: the gospel offers life on the principle of believing.

The law condemns the best man: gospel saves worst men.

The law curses: the gospel blesses.

The law puts men at a guilty distance from God: gospel brings us nigh to God.

The law is the voice of justice: gospel is the voice of love.



"...remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth" (Deut 8:18).

LAPSE OF LOVE

C. D. COLE

"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" (Revelation 2:4).

The passage before us reveals the earthly objects of heaven's concern. Heaven is not so much concerned with the world's financial or political or educational centers, but with the churches of Christ. Heaven's concern is for spiritual rather than material interests on this earth.

We have heaven's judgment of the condition of Christ's churches. This series of messages revealing the condition of the churches of Christ in the first century show us that heaven's judgment alone can be trusted. Human judgment no doubt, would give a different answer. To be practical, and know, what heaven's judgment is of the churches today, we must compare present conditions with the conditions in the first century and wherein our faults are like theirs we must take warning, and wherein our virtues are like theirs we can find comfort in Christ's commendation. In getting this message to our hearts we will consider Christ, the church at Ephesus, its condition, its correction, and its rewards.

The Christ.

1. As author of this message. This message is from Him who is the faithful and true witness. It is the faithful testimony of the One who knows the truth about the churches.

2. As the inspector and judge of the churches. He shows what is wrong with the churches and what is needed. Whatever He sees worthy of commendation He commends, and whatever He sees to condemn He does not fail to condemn. In infinite wisdom He judges the motives as well as the outward conduct. He reads the heart and mind - He knows the spirit in which all is done. "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord" (1 Corinthians 4: 3,4).

3. As present with the churches. He is seen holding the angels in His right hand and walking among the churches. He is no distant spectator - He is not telling what He has heard - He is not repeating rumor - He is not spreading gossip about the churches. He has intimate first hand knowledge of the churches He describes.

The Church.

He is writing to a particular church. He is not describing kingdom conditions but the state of a particular church. He is

not describing things in general but He is very particular.

1. The church in Ephesus. Ephesus was one of the great cities of that day. It had one of the seven wonders of the world--the temple of Diana. It was saturated with pagan religion.

2. The church. It had a great history, and its present condition was in striking contrast with its past.

(1) Its past. It had been a church of earnest people and faithful preachers. It had enjoyed the labors of the apostle Paul, the eloquent Apollos, the faithful Timothy, and the beloved John.

(2) Its present. Its present was not as good as its past. It was not wholly bad. There are things to commend and there is one thing to condemn.

(a) The commendation. The church is commended for three things:

(aa) Its works. "I know thy works, and thy labors, and thy patience." It was not a dead church in the sense of inactivity. Many such today--doing nothing, not even disturbing the devil. Too dead to be persecuted. The Ephesians were toilsome and tireless workers. They toiled at their works and endured in their toil. They did not give up. They kept going. Their works were done for Christ's sake. They had not forgotten Him.

(bb) Its discipline. It was strict. "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars" (Revelation 2:2). "They would not put up with unclean living" (C.H.S.). They opposed evil among prominent members. Those who claimed to be apostles were tried and discovered to be deceivers. They hated the deeds of the Nicolaitanes.

(cc) Its persecution. It was persecuted. "An hast borned, and hast patience." They suffered in patience.

(b) The condemnation. "Thou hast left thy first love." The church was still busy but its love for Christ had waned. It was still zealous in discipline but its love for Christ had cooled. It was still unpopular with the world but its love for Christ had lapsed. This shows what a church may be and have and yet not love Christ as it ought. Works done from a sense of duty to Christ but not out of love for Christ. Not a glad service.

III. The Correction.

1. Remember. "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove

thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Revelation 2:5). Their lapse of love is called a fall. Memory plays an important part in the affairs of the heart. Let your mind go back to the days soon after your conversion. Remember the joy when you first found the Lord, or were found of Him. Remember the joy you had in the Bible - in prayer - in church worship.

You did not know much but you loved much. There can be knowledge without love. In some, the more they know the less they love. "Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth" (1 Corinthians 8:1).

2. Repent. Churches need to repent as well as lost sinners. Saints need to repent. It is not a question of salvation. Saints need to change their minds and put more love into their works. They were working for and serving Christ without love. Let us beware that we do not lapse in our love for Christ.

I have read of a wife from whose life the husband's love has gone. "Her hair is gray and face pale, her eyes have lost their luster through scalding tears. She has everything a husband can give but love. That is gone and home is a hell. Her eyes blaze as she says to her husband: What do I care about your silks and diamonds and silver and mansion? I would go back to the cottage where you found me and put on the calico I used to wear, I would walk the bare floors like a queen, if I could only have back the love you gave me which made earth a heaven to my soul." All is hollow mockery without love.

Help Me

How can I mold a child, Lord,
so that his goals will be fixed
high on You?

How can I show him what's im-
portant and what work You
would have him to do?

Can I show Him Your love and
Your mercies,

And willingness to guide in his life?

Lord, help me to show him I love
You and in You do I place my
trust.

Each child is so very special each
one in his own little way;

Help me to love and to teach
him in You he should trust
and obey.