

"Is it worth the powder and shot?" If not, don't act; but be sure and keep on praying that the Lord's will be done on earth. The convention appointed three of us last August a committee on "Literature," and several delegates wondered what such a committee could possibly find to do in connection with our church-work.

Well, we will not find much if we do not look around; and conversely, if we do. The banns have to be published three times, and this is my third letter, while we have not got beyond our own Baptist families. It seems that another short article must come to show the duty and privilege of Baptists to enlarge their borders and put into paperless families neglected by other denominations, the blessed truths and general news that MESSENGER AND VISITOR is ready and anxious to carry 57 times into a thousand more homes before the end of 1904.

J. PARSONS.

Halifax, Nov. 18th, 1903.

Was Christ Houseless and Homeless?

BY HENRY G. WESTON, D. D.

The worst fault of many Bible readers is their habit of studying a text as an isolated statement and determining its meaning without any regard to the relation which the passage holds to its context, connection, speaker or purpose.

Christ's words as recorded in Matthew 8:20, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head," are as such persons supposed to assert that our Lord was houseless and homeless. If this be so his homeless condition could not have been of long standing. In John 1:38, 39, we read, "And Jesus turning, and beholding them following, says to them, What seek ye? They said to him, Rabbi, where dwellest thou? He says to them, Come and see. They came therefore and saw where he dwelt; and they abode with him that day." At that time he certainly had a dwelling to which he could invite, and in which he could entertain his guests.

In Matt. 4:12 we are told that "leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum." I have no doubt myself that the marginal reading in Mark 2:1, "It was heard that he was at home," is correct. Meyer says, "the house where Jesus dwelt is meant." The Greek demands this. So in Mark 3:19, "And he comes home."

Remember, please, that I am not arguing, that Jesus owned the house in which he lived. I do not own the house in which I live. A great many of the members of the church to which I belong do not own their dwellings. But to say that they are houseless and homeless would be a libel on them.

I heard not long since a young Baptist preacher, dilating on the poverty of Christ, say that "When Christ arose in the morning he did not know where he would get his breakfast." The good man imagined that he was honoring Christ. But I thought, suppose I had a son thirty years old, who had a good trade, had always been blessed with good health as a consequence of implicitly obeying God's laws, had had no public duties to call him from his vocation, and I should learn that every morning he knew not where to get his breakfast! And that son of mine had a mother and brothers and sisters! Would I be proud of such a son?

In what connection are the words of Christ which we are discussing found? They occur as a sequence following the first three of eight miracles performed by Christ after the Sermon on the Mount. Christ was proving that he could deliver men from sin and enable them to serve God in the perfect manner in which he had depicted in the Sermon on the Mount. Leprosy debarred it victims from the service of God. They could not enter the temple, they could make no offerings; they could not associate with the people of God. Naturally, then, the first miracle is the cleansing of the leper, and the first injunction is to go at once to the temple and be admitted to God's service. But sin has paralyzed the moral powers and unfitted the man for service; Christ healed the centurion's paralyzed servant, the fever of sin still riots in the veins and true service is impossible. Peter's wife's mother feels the healing touch of Christ and arises and ministers to them. Then naturally are declared the principles of service. A scribe comes anticipating the highest privilege of those nearest the throne, "Lord, I will follow thee wheresoever thou art going, Rev. 14:4. Christ's answer is, Do you know where I am going? I am going to die. God has mercifully made provision for the bees and the birds where they may hide from their pursuers, but the Son of Man must die." The first principle of service is that the servant must take up his cross and follow his Lord to his death. The second is that obligation to Christ is paramount to all other, even the highest claims. A third is added by Luke in this connection, the servant of Christ must say, "This one thing I do."

What is the significance here of the term "Son of Man" by which Christ designates himself? Heretofore in speaking of himself he had used the personal pronoun. Why does he here say "Son of Man?" Because this term always means the Servant of Humanity which Christ became, in which office he bore our sins in his own body on the cross. As the Son of Man he cannot escape death. He came to

earth to die, and we must die with Christ if we are to live with him.

Those who see in our verse only a declaration that Christ had no property miss its infinitely deeper meaning and purpose. They miss also that look into the heart of Christ which would reveal his infinite love for us and the awful sorrow which that love involved.—The Commonwealth.

The Prayer Meeting.

The pulse of the church beats strongest in the prayer meeting. There one feels the vital throbs; the glow and impulse of the best life of the congregation are there. The prayer meeting is the power house, from which the divergent lines of activity draw their force, and a dead prayer meeting would mean a dead church. Providentially no prayer meeting is ever dead, though its current may move sluggishly and its life be faint and its breath a mere gasp. Dead it cannot be, while a thought of God brings two or three people together, to ask for God's presence and help. Yet it may be dull, almost useless to those who attend it, and abortive in its efforts, dragging along at a "poor dying rate," instead of springing up into fresh growth and doing aggressive work for Christ, because of the apathy and inertia of Christians.

We are too much in the habit of throwing the entire burden of responsibility for the prayer meeting on the leader. If the pastor be magnetic, resourceful, able to persuade people to come out and take part, we fancy that the meeting will be a success. If, on the contrary, the minister is a little deficient in tact, a little slow in kindling enthusiasm, a little opposed to introducing novelties, we calmly ascribe embarrassing pauses and very platitudinal speeches and thinly attended meetings to him. It is far too often the fashion in these days to shift every load to the shoulder of the minister and make him accountable for every lack, and almost every loss.

The truth is, the minister or the leader, is no more responsible for a hearty, helpful prayer meeting that gives courage and cheer and awakens loyalty and renews love, than the church members are. It is they who stab the prayer meeting by their indifference and their dislike. They seldom confess the latter or admit the former feeling yet both are evident, else why do trifling causes keep them from its doors? The threatening cloud, the slight rain, the sharp wind, even the scurry of snow and sleet on a winter's night do not deplete a concert hall, or deprive a poor lecturer of his audience. When people regard a thing as worth while, they rally to its support. The good man who hugs the fire and gives the prayer meeting up for the evening, the good woman who accepts a social invitation for a prayer meeting night, when she should have pleaded a prior engagement, are foes to the meeting, and underminers of their pastor and their church. It is they who wound the Master in the house of his friends.

One of the easiest duties incumbent on Christians is to be in the right place at the right time: simply to be in your accustomed seat when a meeting begins is to be a reinforcement to the meeting. A crowded meeting is sure to be a bright, spontaneous and cheerful one. When every church member who has no valid excuse to offer for absence, is regularly in attendance at the mid-week meeting, the church may expect a revival. Perhaps you cannot pray in public, perhaps nothing would induce you to rise and speak, perhaps you cannot sing very well, but your presence, your sympathetic interest, your personality count for more than you know. Away from the meeting you are hiding the Lord's talent in the earth; attending to it you are putting it where it may bring in some fruit as an investment for him. Who knows how often the blessing comes to the prayer meeting from some silent, meek, retiring saint, who sits in a corner, and never says a word that her friends can hear, but who does commune in secret with her Saviour!

One who never forsakes the prayer meeting will invite others to accompany him when he goes. Why should not the family attend as a whole? If there be a little planning, the older boys and girls can spare that hour from their studies, and parents will be happy in having the children with them, and the song will be gladder for the element of youth, and the prayers will go winged to the throne, full of aspiration and desire. Every prayer meeting should be a family meeting. Every prayer meeting should be the family worship of the church.

The crisp cool days of autumn invites us to greater activity in the Lord's service; to a renewed campaign with Jesus Christ in the war against Satan and sin. Let us begin right by being often in united prayer.—Christian Intelligencer.

The Burned Root.

Far up the heights of the northern Lebanon is a solitary grove of the cedars of Lebanon. The twelve giant trees that remain there are called by the people the twelve apostles. They are the sole representatives of the vast forest of cedars that grew in those heights. I am told that they would grow again if only the peasants would restrain their goats from feeding on the green shoots. Now the hills are terraced and covered with vines and all sorts of vegetable and garden produce but how noble must have

been the aspect of the country when it was covered by cedars which the Lord had planted!

Near these cedars is a huge tree, one limb of which extends from the trunk some thirty feet from the ground, and against it another smaller tree seems to lean. But on closer inspection it appears that this smaller tree has been burned off near the ground, so that its upper part is altogether separate from its root, and yet the top of it is rich with green foliage. At first it seems impossible to understand how the tree is able to display so goodly a head of green whilst the root and it are severed.

On closer inspection, however, it appears that this smaller tree, in the process of long years, by closely pressing the larger limb, has rubbed off its own bark and the bark of the limb, so that the sap of the limb has been able to pour into the smaller tree, giving it its own life. Evidently this union between the two had taken place before there had been any severance of the tree in question from its root. When, however, that severance did come, the tree was able to draw its life from the fountain of sap higher up, and therefore needed no root of its own; and the limb became the means of conveying to it all that wealth of living sap by which life may be maintained.

Is it not thus in our life, which becomes dead so that we begin to derive our life and strength and grace from Another, who was raised from the dead?

It seems to me the essence of Christianity. By nature we are all content to rest upon our own root, and to derive as best we may the resources of our life from books, and men, and things around us; but as the spirit of God teaches us and reveals to us the mystery of the divine life, we become glad to turn from earth to heaven, from the transient to the eternal, from the creature to the Creator and to derive from Jesus Christ that life which is stored in Him for us all.—Rev. F. B. Meyer.

One Negro's Conscience.

Some years ago, when visiting a little town in western Ohio, I found a colored man who made an impression upon me which I shall never forget. This man's name was Matthews. When I saw him he was about sixty years of age. In early life he had been a slave in Virginia.

As a slave Matthews had learned the trade of a carpenter, and his master, seeing that his slave could earn more money for him by taking contracts in various parts of the country in which he lived, permitted him to go about to do so. Matthews, however, soon began to reason, and naturally reached the conclusion that if he could earn money for his master, he could earn it for himself.

So, in 1858, or about that time, he proposed to his master that he would pay \$1,500 for himself, a certain amount to be paid in cash and the remainder in yearly instalments. Such a bargain as this was not uncommon in Virginia then. The master, having implicit confidence in the slave, permitted him, after this contract was made, to seek work wherever he could secure the most pay. The result was that Matthews secured a contract for the erection of a building in the State of Ohio.

While the colored man was at work in Ohio the Union armies were declared victorious; the Civil War ended and freedom came to him, as it did to 4,000,000 other slaves.

When he was declared a free man by Abraham Lincoln's proclamation, Matthews still owed his former master, according to his ante-bellum contract, \$300. As Mr. Matthews told the story to me, he said that he was perfectly well aware that by Lincoln's proclamation he was released from all legal obligations, and that in the eyes of nine-tenths of the world he was released from all moral obligations to pay his former master a single cent of the unpaid balance. But he said that he wanted to begin his life of freedom with a clean conscience. In order to do this, he walked from his home in Ohio, a distance of three hundred miles, much of the way over the mountains, and placed in his former master's hand every cent of the money that he had promised years before to pay him for his freedom.—Booker T. Washington, in The Century.

There has come even into our churches the idea that our services ought to be made a means of diversion. You are aware, as well as I am, how frequently men have had to utter protests against the engraving upon religious life and work of the element of amusement, and I for one agree very heartily with Dr. Horton in an address delivered a year or two ago, in which he said that religious services ought to be so thoroughly religious that people should have time to think. The present tendency is to run off short, sharp, snappy, scintillating things that will prevent people from thinking at all. The religious life, therefore, becomes more shallow, and, as it becomes shallower in the church, it declines in the community. If we are to reverse the figures of the census in London and Liverpool, and if we are to see an advance in religion in New York and in other cities, the church must take herself more seriously.—Lorimer.

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