

Wanted—An Ethical Revival.

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II. Let us now mention more specifically some of the things which an ethical revival would mean.

(1.) It would mean, for one thing, a fresh realization of Christian responsibility. Our sense of Christian responsibility is yet sleeping, or is in a sleepy condition. Paul realized that he was a debtor, that is, he owed something, "both to the Greeks and to the barbarians; both to the wise and to the unwise." He saw his obligation in the vision of God in Christ Jesus. That vision was the inspirer of the sense of responsibility, and the apostle saw, that by virtue of the gospel of Christ he was involved in special relations with all men, and answerable to Christ for the faithful discharge of his duty towards all men. No man can get up from the prayerful reading of the New Testament without feeling this sense of responsibility afresh. Think what it would mean, if there were an ethical revival of sufficient power to make us realize our responsibility respecting our brother as it is set forth in the great law of neighborly love. Think how this responsibility is emphasized in the principle of self-sacrifice which is the basis of Christian discipleship. It isn't a question of whether we will, or not, just as we may choose; for we are under obligation to the Lord of our lives. We must think, too, of the responsibility that is involved in the correct apprehension of the spirit and purpose of the Great Commission. Think how an ethical revival, or the fuller application of the teachings of Jesus to life would send home to all our hearts the burden of the empty treasuries of the Lord, especially for missionary work, both at home and abroad.

And so on. This sense of responsibility for the work which our Lord and Saviour has committed to us is one in which we are all sadly lacking. We need a revival that will stir up this sense of obligation to Christ to fulfil all his commands. We claim that we have taken the New Testament for our guide in life. If we have, why are we so indifferent to the fact that there are lost men and women around us, possibly in our own homes? If we have, why does it take so much urging to get from us a mere pittance for the perishing heathen, while we manage to find plenty of money to spend freely on our own pleasures? If we have, why can we rest content while rum curses the land and fills it with its desolations and abominations? If we have, why are we so anxious to lay up treasure on the earth, and so forgetful of the treasure which should be stored up in heaven? If an ethical revival would quicken our sense of responsibility for the work which Christ has placed in our hands, if it would make us more obedient to his word and will, and we believe that it would do so, then we should pray with all our heart for such a revival, pray that it might come right speedily, and let it come in our own life first of all.

(2.) Again. An ethical revival would mean a fresh canvass of moral distinctions and clearer moral definition. Is there need of such a revival to-day? To answer this question, we have but to think of the comparatively low ethical standards of the commercial world. If we measure those standards by the Golden Rule, there can hardly be any question about the result. The application of the Golden Rule to the commercial life of our day would mean nothing short of a revolution of present standards and methods. Suppose we apply this same rule to our household talks and the so-called friendly conferences which we have one with another. Would anything that we have said have to be cut out? We spoke of Mr. So-and-So; was it that which was "good for edifying as the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear?" There are Christians who would never be guilty of robbing any man of a dollar, yet by reporting half truths—which frequently are far worse than absolute falsehoods—they rob him of that which is dearer to him than life itself. He "who steals my purse steals trash," but the man who in the garb of friendship repeats gossip about me has done me far greater injury than the thief who took my money. We lock up the highway robber, but the robber in the spiritual highway lives and moves and has his being in the midst of us as freely as ever.

I hold in my hand—or let me suppose that I do—a twenty-dollar gold piece. It is mine. I earned it. In honest sweat and blood I toiled for it. Over yonder is a pond of water. Have I any moral right to throw that piece of gold into that pond, and so lose it? One man says, "Certainly!" But what would we gather from the teaching of the New Testament concerning such a question? Is it not this? I should be even more blameworthy than the man who hid his Lord's money in a napkin. That piece of money represents myself, to lose it, is, in some real sense, to lose myself. The ethics of Jesus teach us, that though I have earned that piece of money, yet it comes from God's bounty and must be used for God's glory. Accordingly, to throw it away would not be for God's glory, but would be a practical denial of our responsibility for the use of it, and also for the use of the life which earned it. Then how much less is it to the glory of God, and how much more is it a denial of obligation, to spend our money for that which is not

bread! If the man who hid his Lord's money in a napkin was guilty of wrong-doing, how much more guilty and culpable is the man who uses his money for selfish, sinful indulgences!

Let us turn this illustration in another way. I have in my possession some force, or faculty, or ability, let me say. It is mine: at least in the sense that it is not in the possession of any other. Self says that I can use that possession as I may please; but Christ says that I must use it for him, in his service. Self thus denies moral obligation, and any moral authority apart from itself: Christ stands for the clearest recognition of moral obligation to God in the use of all his gifts. Christ's ethics teach—and the teaching comes to us with all the force of his example—that the only way to use that possession of mine is to give it out for the life and benefit of others: and that thus given out it will come back to me freighted with my real self and with fulness of joy for my own heart.

An ethical revival, would, I am positive, help us to clearer moral distinctions touching our relations one with another, and touching the gifts, both material and spiritual, which God has given to us.

(3.) Then thirdly, a deeper sense of Christian responsibility, a clearer definition of moral obligation, would surely mean an increase of Christian activity, and an enlargement of the sphere of Christ's dominion in human life and affairs.

It is here that an ethical revival would manifest itself chiefly. And there is room for a much larger application of the Spirit and teachings of Jesus to our lives. Jesus Christ is King: he is the King. His dominion in our hearts and affairs is not to be confined to any one section thereof, but extends to every section. Every expression of heart mind, life should be under the direct and controlling influence of Jesus Christ as Lord, until we can say, and it can be said of us, it is no longer we who live but Christ lives in us.

III. We are now ready to ask the question which is implied in the title of this paper, viz., Is there any need of an ethical revival in the sense in which we are using that expression? It is difficult to believe that there can be two minds on this question; for there does not seem to be in ready any question. There is great need of such a revival. It is this need which lies behind the books which the Rev. Charles Sheldon has been giving to the public; and the Christian public has acknowledged this need in its eagerness to read these books, to talk about them; and these books certainly have been an inspiration to larger Christian activities. It is this need which is leading to so much criticism of the positions of the church, as a church, in reference to many of the reform movements of our day. The churches are criticized without mercy, and the best answer that they can give to all criticisms, friendly or unfriendly, is in a larger practice of Christianity. The churches of Christ have made much progress within the past century towards the Christian goal, but the ideal is still far beyond, and there is yet great sacrifice and work to be done before this ideal may be attained.

We need an ethical revival among our young people in order that they may see clearly that certain activities, on the one hand, are inconsistent with a profession of faith in Christ, and on the other hand, that certain other activities are pre-eminently consistent with and demanded by their confession of Christ. We need an ethical revival among the more mature members of our churches which will furnish them with a new insight into the application of the principles of Jesus in all the business of their lives—at home, in the shop, on the street, at work or at rest. I believe that there ought to be a more clear line of demarcation between the church and the world. The world has its standard: Christ has his. They are not the same. They cannot be made the same. No one is deceived when a man tries to live according to the two standards. An ethical revival would make this line of demarcation between the church and the world much clearer than it is at present. It was Emerson, I think, who said, "How can I hear what you say when what you do roars so in my ears." The world neither can, nor will, hear what we say concerning the beauty and the power of Christ, when what we do is no different nor better than what they themselves do. The ethics of the church of Christ are infinitely higher and better than the ethics of the world. It is for Christians to make this plain to the world by their life in the world. It was a sad reflection on the practice of Christianity amongst us, which one of the prominent men in our denomination made recently when he declared that a letter of recommendation from a church means no more concerning the moral character of the man recommended, than a similar letter from some commercial organization, or from any other association of men. If that is so, and possibly many of us are inclined to believe it, then that simple fact is proof positive that we need, and the need is exceedingly great, a revival of applied Christianity among our churches. We need, too, an ethical revival among the ministry itself. We ourselves must practice what we preach and we must preach the whole range of the ethics of Jesus. Many utterances from both American and British pulpits within the past two years con-

cerning war have led many to cry out against a gospel which can make sword and rifle the harbinger of the Prince of Peace. Christ, we believe, did not so preach; nor would he, were he amongst us to-day.

The teachings of our Lord set before us the Kingdom of God and his righteousness as the one all-absorbing interest for our earthly life. To gain this righteousness to establish the Kingdom, the followers of Jesus should be willing to sacrifice prejudices, money, comforts of life, self, and even life.

Ah, yes! we need an ethical revival which shall be wide-spread and full of power. But such a revival will come only as the vision of the Christ in our hearts enlarges and unfolds to us the will of the Father for our life. Such a vision comes of faith in our Lord. Let us pray that we may have a revival of faith in Jesus first, and then if the faith be worthy the name, the practice of Christianity must come. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Looking Forward in Foreign Missions.

And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.—Dan. 12: 3.

As I lay musing in a midnight hour there passed before my mind in panorama, a history, in real life in which if it were possible I would gladly be the character. I will speak of him as Mr. H. Mr. H. had been permitted to accumulate wealth. He meant to be true to Jesus. Weighed in the scales of worldly Christians he was benevolent, though the number of dollars given to preach Christ to the heathen were few. In due time he accepted Christ's last command "Go ye" as applying to him with equal force, as though he were a preacher. He acted promptly on his convictions and speedily the Lord had ready two men to go for him to the Telugus. He nobly assumed the whole expense of salary, outfit, Mission Compound, native preacher, etc. We saw that he was permitted to support them for twenty years. As the ground had been well prepared previous to their entering upon the work they were permitted to gather into churches during this time over one thousand converts. About this time Mr. H. passed to his reward, but before doing so he arranged with the Foreign Mission Board an endowment fund, by which his two missionaries should receive their salaries indefinitely. His abundant entrance into glory ineffable, no tongue can portray. Here he found a continuation and enlargement of all his best aspirations while upon earth. The seeing of Christ as he is, the hearing from his lips the "Well done," who on earth can appreciate? But who are these in bright array coming to meet Mr. H.? There is no need that his angel guide shall introduce Mr. H. to them, for are they not Telugus from his own mission station in India. Have they not seen the picture of their benefactor on the walls of their Sabbath School rooms on earth? He listened as each in turn told the story of their rescue from the mire of sin through the missionaries and their helpers. Together they sang the song of redeeming love and rejoiced with joy unspeakable. It staggers human thought or language to comprehend or describe the never-ending, ever-increasing joy and bliss experienced as the decades of earth rolled away, bringing thousands of Telugus from his own mission field home to glory. Most thrillingly wonderful was it that through Divine means, of which our telephone is a faint suggestion, did he constantly receive news from his mission field. The baptismal scenes were occasions of especial joy. Among the thousands of the redeemed Telugus that came from his own field he was loved as a prince and a leader. How often he thought of that Sabbath School hour. The lesson was "The Unjust Steward." The Saviour's application of the parable to Christians was "Make to yourselves friends with the Mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fall they may receive you into everlasting habitations." Well he remembered the simple paraphrase of its meaning—"as stewards of God's bounty so use your money in giving the gospel to the lost, that perchance many shall be brought home to glory, that when you die they shall welcome you to heaven." It came to him with all the force of positive command, from him who had given him all he possessed. If his love was genuine he ought to be constrained to immediate obedience. The habit of laying up a large portion of his annual income was not easily broken. Then came the Saviour's second lesson or message to him, "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches." Again the teacher paraphrased as follows: "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the use of your money to give the gospel to the heathen, God himself will not commit to your trust the true riches. He that cannot use even money aright to make the world better, how can he be trusted with the care of souls and the gift of the Holy Spirit to qualify him for work." We have seen what momentous issues hung upon his decision. Instead of continuing to hoard his money, he chose to spend it to save the lost, and thus made it possible to secure for himself the true riches. Jesus spoke of—spiritual power with God and men, the fruits of which he now reaps through endless ages. A thousand times he magnified that grace that led him to cease laying up treasure upon earth, and adopt God's plan for our laying up treasure in heaven. He noticed, too, that some members of the church who continued piling up treasure upon earth and who ignored Christ's last command "Go ye," did not arrive in heaven at their death. Others of like habits of disobedience arrived at heaven, but were saved yet so as by fire, suffering loss, in eternal dishonor, all of which reminds me of Spurgeon's answer to the question, "Will the heathen who never hear the gospel be saved?" he answered, "I have more anxiety lest we shall not be saved who neglect to send to them the gospel."

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