

ADVANCING WITH CHRIST AS LORD

(Digest of the sermon prepared for the opening session of the Southern Baptist Convention in St. Louis, Missouri, by Dr. Slater Murphy, Pastor of Highland Heights Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee, June 3, 1954.)

Our program committee selected the general theme, "Forward in Christ Jesus," and I have taken for our meditation a kindred thought, "Advancing with Christ."

Dr. J. W. Phillips said, "Only dead things and dead people stay where they are put; every living this is on the move."

Dr. Talmadge said, "Is it not sadly strange that the world makes no advance except through the sacrifice of human life."

Dr. Truett said, "... I do know that the key word of Christianity is expansion or advancement."

Dr. Cauthen said only recently, "Our advance will be along lines laid down by Dr. Rankin." He was referring to Foreign Mission.

Dr. Barnes, in his history, used the word, advance, in his first chapter. In the last chapter he said, "These forces of advance have been stirring among Southern Baptists since our Foreign Mission Board launched its program of advance, but it is becoming evident that we have advanced only to the door where we are seeing the world in a new way."

Won for Christ

Dr. Porter Routh speaks thus: "It is of tremendous importance, then, as we plan an advance that we enlist more people in Bible study," Right you are, Brother Routh—"A Million More in '54 Enrolled in Sunday School"—and these won to Christ and taught how to live Christ.

In 1 Samuel 12:6, we read: "And Samuel said unto the people, it is the Lord that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt." Yes, IT IS THE LORD. It was then and it is now.

Paul wrote, as found in Philippians 1:12, "I want you to know brethren, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel." (R.S.V.) Let us remember, the gospel that Paul preached was Christ. He preached His virgin birth, His sinless life, His sacrificial service, His vicarious suffering and death, His glorious resurrection, His ascension and His Promised return. There can be no advancement apart from him.

Now you are ready to hear our text, Luke 24:46-49: "And he said unto them, thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead on the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." (R.S.V.)

We read, also, from Matthew 28:18-20: "And He said unto them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given unto me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." (R.S.V.)

I bring you three thoughts from our text: The Person We follow in our Advance; the Purpose We Achieve in Our Advance, and The Plan We Use in Our Advance.

Person We follow

First, let us think on the Person we follow in our advance.

"And He said unto them..."; "It behooved Christ to suffer...";

Preached in His name ..."; "Lo, I am with you."

He is the one for whom we advance, through whom we advance and with whom we advance.

He is the greatest of all men of all times. The world has had its so called great men in every century. But, Samuel Stennett said concerning Christ Jesus:

"No mortal can with him compare,
Among the sons of men;
Fairer is He than all the fair Who fill
the heavenly train."

Note the context of our text: "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Christ Jesus is the center and circumference of the word of God.

Christ Excels

In message, mission, might and mercy, the Master excels all others.

The world has had its great artists, but no man ever painted such mental pictures as did Jesus. Think of the gospels.

The world has had its great teachers, but a look at His parables prove He was the one sent from God.

The world has had its great orators, but no man ever spake as did this man."

The world has had its great preachers, but a careful study of Matthew five, six and seven will convince all that He stood out far above all others.

The world has had its great conquerors, but their dominions and kingdoms have waned and wasted. He actually conquered men by getting

on the inside of them. Hear God's word: "They left all and followed Him." Again, "They loved not their own lives unto death."

He is our Lord and Master and has said, "Follow me, and as the Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Again, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. " If we follow Him and do His bidding, victory is ours, for He knows no defeat. All power is His in heaven and on earth.

Purpose of Advance

Let us look in on our second thought: The Purpose we achieve in our advance.

"Make disciples." Go therefore and make disciples!

God expects of every church and every real Christian three things, namely: for for missions, produce missionaries, and pay for missions. They come in this order, and no church is worthy of bearing the name, missionary, unless it does all three. It begins in Jerusalem and it reaches out to the ends of the earth. There are many inconsistencies in the churches. We need to restudy Christ's Commission and then study our local churches to see if we please Him in this respect.

What does it mean to be a disciples of Christ? The term "disciples" marks an individual relationship existing between Christ and each single soul. The word signifies a a taught or trained one. To establish such relationship, the great teacher leads each person to face, feel and forsake sin.

When the sin problem has been settled by faith in Christ, a disciple has a living, breathing, throbbing, pulsating experience of Christ in the heart; then he must study at His feet, abide in Him and go on growing in grace and knowledge of Him.

The command to make disciples is universal in its scope. It must begin

at home, Jerusalem, but it goes out to Judea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the world.

Jesus' purpose or mission for coming to earth was to seek and to save the lost. His great purpose in saving us is that in turn we are to bring souls into the right relationship with God.

Winning Others

We must bring lost souls to repentance and forgiveness of sin. All men are lost who have not been born the second time, anew or from above, that is all who have reached the age of accountability, which comes quite young.

"There is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." "The wages of sin is death." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." But—

"Jesus paid it all, All to Him I

owe;

Sin had left a crimson stain, He

washed it white as snow."

To accomplish our purposes, yea the purpose of God, we must present Christ Jesus as: the Suffering-Servant, the Successful-Sacrifice, and the Satisfying Saviour.

Suffering Servant

As I think of the Suffering-Servant, my words are inadequate to describe His sufferings. O, how He suffered in Gethsemane for your sins and mine, as He shed blood. He suffered during those illegal night trials for your sins and mine, as He shed blood. He suffered during as He went down under the weight of the cross on His way to Golgotha for your sins and mine. He suffered as the mob spiked Him to the old rugged cross for your sins and mine.

He suffered as He sensed keenly the Father's absence and cried,

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He was abandoned by the Father or else He was untruthful in death. Seneca said, "We have some who will sing for us, play for us, and pray for us; but where is one that will go to hell for us?" Jesus did, sir, for being forsaken by God is the deepest agony of the damned. He died a spiritual as well as a physical death when He made His soul an offering for sin. The tortures of the doomed and damned were upon His sinless soul when forsaken.

Paul said in Philippians 2:5-9: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

His exaltation was by means of humiliation and death. If you do not accept His salvation, listen to God: "Ye shall die in your sins," but if you accept His blood as your substitute for sin, you may sing of a truth:

"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus" name.

On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand,
All other ground is sinking sand."

Successful Sacrifice

We must present Christ as the Successful-Sacrifice. Hear our text: "And to rise from the dead on the third day." He said He would rise again, and His disciples bore witness that He came forth on the third day. They saw him, heard Him, ate with Him, walked with Him, prayed with Him, saw Him ascend to the Father, and they went forth with a message demons could not silence: "He is alive and hath appeared!"

We must present Christ as the All-Sufficient Saviour. Matthew 1:21: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins." In Acts 4:12, we find: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." He saves unto the uttermost all who come unto God by him.

Penalty of Sin

Jesus saves from the guilt of sin. "There is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God;" but "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). God dealt with Him as the great criminal of the universe as Jesus took our sins upon himself.

Jesus saves from the penalty of sin. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "The wages of sin is death," but "He died for the ungodly." "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities ... and with His stripes we are healed."

Jesus saves from the curse of sin, for He became a curse for us. "For it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth upon a tree."

Jesus saves from the power of sin. Sin had laid its mighty hands upon the hearts of men and enslaved them, but Paul said to believers, "Sin shall no longer have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace." He knew salvation was by the grace and mercy of a loving God.

Jesus said repentance was a necessity. By repentance He means "about face," or turning from sin to the Saviour, Jesus Christ. Forgiveness of sin means regeneration. It is experienced by coming to Christ, sin and all. Christ then imparts the new birth as He is received by faith.

The early disciples presented Christ Jesus on this wise, and they achieved much. Hear the word: "And a great number believed and turned to the Lord." "These that have turned the world upside down have hither also." This thought is repeated often in the Acts of the Christians.

Plan for Advance

It must be Christ's plan to get results, and it is. Christ's plan is extensive enough to reach all races, intensive enough to enlist all true disciples, militant enough to challenge all who follow Him, and spiritual enough to bless all who are touched by His glorious gospel.

His first followers did what He said do, and they went forth conquering and to conquer, marching under the banner of the cross. Let us look in on the churches of the first century who took Christ seriously and followed His plan; especially Jerusalem, Antioch and Ephesus. We learn four lessons, namely; They waited, went, witnessed, and won.

First, they waited. Jesus had told them not to depart from Jerusalem, wait for the promise of the Father. Hear Him: "But tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye are endued with power from on high." Again, "Ye shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and ye shall be my witnesses, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Peter said, at Pentecost: "This promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

They waited in prayer until they were all together—as one. They waited until God had set their souls on fire with deep compassion for lost men everywhere. They waited until the Holy Spirit had taken full possession of them.

After waiting, they went. Their Lord had said, "Go ye therefore."

"They went everywhere preaching the word." Listen to what was said of the church at Ephesus: "All who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." They went to the homes, out into the streets and alleys of the cities, out into the highways and hedges, and over into other nations as the Spirit led. Paul answered the Macedonian call, and the same God is calling today from nations around the world. "Come over and help us"--in Asia, Africa, Europe and all nations. If Baptists were as zealous and persistent as those who call themselves Jehovah's Witness, Adventist, Mormon, and others, we would win multitudes to Christ.

Christ's Witnesses

They witnessed Jesus said, "Ye shall be my witnesses."

Every Christian had an experience of Salvation and told it. Paul gladly told what happened to him on the Damascus road. If you and I really know the Lord and tell it, God will use our testimony to the salvation of lost souls. We do not have to know a lot of Scripture; but we must know the Lord Jesus Christ.

They witnessed of Christ's sinless life, His victorious death, His glorious resurrection, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the promised return of the Lord Jesus. God used it, and men were pricked in their hearts (convicted) and cried out: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

One time I marvelled at 3,000 souls being saved when Brother Peter preached, but when I turned to the Acts and read, "Every man heard them speak," I understood. Yes, every man heard them, then every man heard him, Peter. The one hundred twenty had been witnessing much before Peter stood up to preach, and that explains the reason for many who responded to the invitation.

Any church clothed with power, going forth witnessing with compassion, can win many souls to Christ, even without one sermon

from a pulpit. I am not minimizing preaching, for the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, but the greatest sermons to reach souls are delivered face to face, in the home or market place. Why is it some good preachers win few to a decision in revivals and others win hundreds? I can explain it. Those who get results, inspire, inform, instruct and God breathes on the Sunday school teachers, officers and others. They go out and win many. Decisions have been made before the sermon is preached in God's house.

Victory in Christ

My last word is—They won. Listen: "A great number believed and turned to the Lord; the Lord added to them that day about 3,000 souls." "Many more believed on Him."

Jesus promised results to those who do His bidding. He promised to be with them always. He has all power. He is saying today, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." Jesus goes forth conquering and to conquer. We must follow Him and make known His glorious gospel. Then millions will turn to Him and find forgiveness of sin.

Someone has said: "Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads, I'll follow where He goes. Hinder me not, shall be my cry, though earth and hell oppose."

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