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THE CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR TOPIC

By the Rev. Charles E. Schaeffer, D. D.

August 28th—Why Is Missionary Work Needed in a Christian Country? Isa. 55:1-7.

When one thinks of missionary work one is tob apt to lift his eyes and have a far off look. His horizon stretches to faraway heathen lands and he fails to see the need of such work nearer home. "Distance lends enchantment to the view" and there is a glory and halo about that which lies far beyond. Folks are so prone to overlook the situations which present themselves at their own front door. It is always well to have a world vision, but it must not be forgotten that the near is a part of the world as well as the far off. The work of Christianizing a so-called Christian country is called Home Missions. Someone has said that God had only one Son and He made a Missionary of Him. But it must always be remembered that Jesus was distinctly a Home Missionary. He declared that He was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel. Jesus knew how to concentrate and conserve His efforts. There were thousands of people, nations all around Him, but He confined His labors principally to His own people. He told His disciples to "begin at Jerusalem." The Church has always failed when it has departed from this program. Missions begin at home, but must not stay there. The field is the world, but our own as well as other countries belong to the world.

Strictly speaking there is no really Christian country. There are several countries which call themselves such, but they are so in name only. America, Great Britain, the Continent of Europe, Australia and possibly a few others lay claim to being Christian countries. The Christian church is indigenous, the principles of government are Christian in spirit. Lofty, ethical and moral ideals are generally pursued, and in many respects these countries are entitled to be called Christian. But they are not wholly so. They are such only in spots. There are vast areas of life which are not really Christian. In most of them there are large multitudes of people who are not identified with the Christian church and who sustain no active relation thereto. There are others who are only nominally connected with the church, but whose love and loyalty center elsewhere. There are many who are lukewarm and indifferent who need to be revitalized. Indeed the task of Christianizing Christendom is the present supreme task of the Christian church.

Let us look at a few of these conditions more closely. We need to do missionary work in Christian countries:

I. To win the multitudes outside the church. In America we have one hundred and seventeen million people. There are less than fifty millions inside the Christian church. The majority of our people do not belong to the church. In some countries where the citizen of the State must also be a member of the church such condition can not obtain, but in our country where church and State are separate, and where church membership is purely voluntary, there are too many who choose to stay outside the church, even though they enjoy some of the blessings and benefits of the church. The recruiting of the ranks of our church membership is one of our principal duties as Christians. We call it the work of Evangelism. Much remains to be done in this line, and every pastor and every congregation should be an evangelistic force in every community.

II. To hold those who have already been won. Recent statistics reveal the fact that the Protestant churches in America last year lost 500,000 members. At this rate it will not be very long before there must be a "break-up of Protestantism." In a given section of our own church during the last decade there were enough members dropped from the roll to have formed a self-supporting congregation of 400 members each year of the ten. To vitalize and stimulate the members of the church so that they become loyal and efficient in their membership is a very important work for the church to do. There are too many who are counted, but they do not count, too many bystanders who do not stand by, too many indifferent who should be different.

III. To Christianize areas of life which remain largely un-Christian. It is not enough to win and hold individuals for Christ in His church. Society is something more than so many individual units. It is a certain spirit, an atmosphere, an order of life. A group always represents something else and something more than the individuals who compose it. Our task of Christianizing a nation is not finished when we have won the last man and woman into the fellowship of the church. Then it has just begun. We must apply and incarnate the spirit of Christ into all human affairs and relationships so that we may have a Christian Society. There are areas of life in all of our Christian countries which are still largely pagan. Take the world of business. Most of the people are engaged in some form of business, most of the capital is invested in it, but most of it is conducted on selfish, worldly, carnal principles. Competition, instead of co-operation, selfishness instead of service, greed instead of gratitude seem to be the controlling motives in business. Or take the world of pleasure, recreation, amusement, leisure. How largely this realm is still controlled by worldly and selfish and sensual principles and methods! The spirit of commercialism has entered into the pleasures of the people, and we have a long road to travel before this area of life is brought under Christian influences. Or take the world of politics, how full of intrigue and diplomacy and selfishness it is! Our political, national and international standards are not on a level with those which we have set for the individual. Or take the realm of culture, of education. What do people read and think, what passes through their intellects, what engages their supreme interest? Now here is a stupendous missionary task to Christianize all these areas of life, and no nation can be truly and fully a Christian country as long as its business and pleasure and politics and its education are so largely carried forward on un-Christian principles and methods.

IV. To be a force in Christianizing other countries. Most Christian countries through organized Christianity are interested in Christianizing other countries. But in America we shall not make much progress in Christianizing others while we have such vast un-Christian areas here. Non-Christian peoples will say to us: "Heal thyself." Indeed we may become a stumbling block to other nations by our shortcomings. Our contacts with other countries, our impact upon their civilization should cause us to make America the first and finest Christian nation in the world. Hither also come students and visitors from other countries and they become the bearers of the life they find here back to their own lands. What kind of Christianity do we have here that we may export to other nations which will be of real spiritual value to them? The task of Christianizing so-called Christian countries is an unceasing one. It will never be fully and finally completed. It is perennial. To it let us apply ourselves anew with a deeper love and consecration actuated by the two highest and noblest impulses of the soul, viz., partriotism and religion, our country and our church.

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Sunday School Lesson

(By REV. P. B. FITZWATER, D.D., Dean Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.)
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Lesson for August 28

NATHAN LEADS DAVID TO REPENTANCE

LESSON TEXT—II Sam. 11: 1; 12:23.

GOLDEN TEXT—A broken and contrite heart, O God, thou will not despise.

PRIMARY TOPIC—God Shows David His Sin.

JUNIOR TOPIC—Nathan Calls David to Repentance.

INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC—Confessing and Forsaking Sin.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC—Repentance: What It Is, and What It Does.

I. David's Crimes (II Sam. 11).

1. Adultery (vv. 4, 5).

He by his kingly authority brought Bathsheba, the beautiful wife of Uriah, one of his brave soldiers, into his harem.

2. Murder (vv. 14-18).

David sought to cover up his shameful act of adultery with Bathsheba by calling Uriah from the field of battle and giving him a furlough at home with his wife. (He first gave him honorable recognition by sending a portion of meat from the royal table—v. 8.) Uriah's high sense of military duty and propriety would not allow him to do this.

Failing in this, David corrupted him by making him drunk, with the expectation that Uriah would thus go home. When these schemes would not work he resorted to the terrible crime of exposing Uriah to the most dangerous place in the battle where he would surely be killed.

II. Contributing Factors in David's Fall.

1. Idleness (11:1).

It was the king's responsibility to go forth with his army to battle. David tarried at Jerusalem because of indolence or self-indulgence.

2. He looked upon a beautiful woman (11:2).

As he was lounging in idleness, this temptation was too great for him. He yielded to his lustful impulse and sent his servants to bring the woman to him. This action on the part of David is absolutely inexcusable. David had the power to turn from this sin and thus escape temptation.

III. David Rebuked by Nathan, the Prophet (12:1-12).

What David had done displeased the Lord (11:27). What he had done gratified his own carnal lust, but the serious thing is that it displeased the Lord. Because David was God's own. God could not let the matter rest. He therefore sent Nathan, His prophet, to him.

1. The parable of the ewe lamb (vv. 1-6).

Among the Jews it was customary to have pet lambs which were brought up with the children of the family and therefore regarded with tender affection. Nathan pictures before David a poor man whose sole possession consisted of one such lamb, and a rich neighbor when entertaining a guest had appropriated unto himself this lamb instead of drawing upon his numerous flock. This so aroused David's anger that he declared that the rich man should restore fourfold, and in addition forfeit his life. Nathan declared: "Thou art the man." In spite of David's awful sin, he had burning indignation against the wrongdoer.

2. Sentence of judgment (vv. 7-12).

Perhaps no history records an indictment so terrible as this one.

(1) He recounted unto David God's peculiar favor (vv. 7, 8).

God had taken him from the sheepcote and lifted him to the throne, made him king over all Israel. He had delivered him from Saul's murderous plots and he had inherited Saul's royal possessions.

(2) David's shameful treatment of God's law (v. 9).

He pointed out that he had violated both tables of the law by worshiping the God of passion and had practiced covetousness, robbery, lying and murder.

(3) The awful judgment pronounced (vv. 10-12).

The prophet declared that the sword should never depart from David's house. He had used the sword to slay Uriah. God in His retributive justice permitted the sword to remain in David's house.

IV. David's Confession (vv. 13-23).

The confession of sin was so real to David that he declared that it had been committed against God (I's. 51:4). He now was made fully conscious of his broken condition. He realized what it meant to be without innocence. Though he confessed his sin, as recorded in Psalm 32, and God forgave him, he had to suffer its consequence. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

The Coward

To die in order to avoid the pains of poverty, love, or anything that is disagreeable is not the role of a brave man, but of a coward. For it is cowardice to shun the misfortunes and trials of life, not undergoing death because it is honorable, but to escape evil.—Aristotle.

Prayer, a Golden Key

Prayer is a golden key which should open the morning and lock up the evening.—Bishop Hopkins.

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