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→ SERMONS ←

CHRIST'S EXAMPLE OF COURAGE AND STEADFASTNESS.*

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And it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up, He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.—LUKE ix., 51.

THESE words record the invincible firmness and determination of the perfect Man. They reveal strength as well as purity of purpose—a steadfastness in which true manhood is conditioned.

Jesus, when there was everything to bind Him back, and nothing but duty and the impulses of unselfish and wondrous devotion to draw Him onward, faltered not in His work. With the scenes of home and most tender associations behind Him, and of deep humiliation and bitter agony before Him and clearly foreseen, His resolution was taken. Conscious of His mission and determined to complete it, "He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."

How inspiring is His example! How deserving of your earnest consideration, young gentlemen, as you pass up from your retirement and studies and comparative ease into those more active engagements and stirring scenes which mark the field of life's toils, struggles, victories or defeats! In the mission before you your courage will be tested, and your success will be determined as much by the steadiness as by the nobility of your aims.

* Preached in Christ Church, Gettysburg, Pa., as a baccalaureate sermon to the class of '89, June 2d, 1889.

should Paul have taken the trouble to write such a passage as the thirteenth chapter of I. Corinthians ?

3. Because Christ commands it. "How shall they hear without a preacher?" and "How shall they preach except they be sent?" These questions are arguments, made by one of the closest of all reasoners, and based upon the assumption that the spread of the Gospel is a part of the Gospel; that the good news must be circulated.

The life of Christ, as given by the

evangelists, was really a missionary tour. The Acts of the Apostles is a missionary magazine, containing little but missionary intelligence. The epistles are mostly letters written by missionaries to the mission churches they had founded. The Apocalypse ("Revelation") is full of instruction and warning to mission churches. The whole New Testament is a mission document. Can you be an intelligent, conscientious Christian and not help missions?—*Watchman.*

PRAYER MEETING SERVICE

Curing Dull Prayer-Meetings.

BY T. L. CUYLER, D.D., BROOKLYN.

Every intelligent pastor recognizes the vitally important place which the prayer-meeting holds in the spiritual life of a Church. And every pastor also sees the difficulties in maintaining it at a high point of interest and effectiveness. In the large towns the meeting encounters many rivals in the shape of social entertainments and lectures, concerts, etc. An eminent New York pastor once told me that forty years ago his church was down-town, and many of his members lived over their stores in a very plain, unostentatious style. Then they had no difficulty in keeping up a crowded weekly lecture and a crowded prayer-meeting. After he moved up-town, his members lived in finer style; but such was the pressure of dinner-parties and various social attractions that it was difficult to keep up on a single evening a devotional service. Outside competitors—legitimate and illegitimate—thin prayer-meetings sadly. Revival-seasons that fill up and fire up the meeting, are more infrequent than formerly. A generation is growing up in our large cities who know almost nothing about such scenes of powerful awakening as were enjoyed in 1857 and 1858.

If outside competitors thin the prayer-meeting, there is a difficulty within doors that is equally serious—and that is the difficulty of imparting interest and variety

and life to the exercises. Usually a small minority of the male members of the Church take part. In some congregations the same dozen voices are heard throughout the year; and unless they are remarkably gifted in prayer or in address the repetitions are apt to become monotonous and wearisome. "I don't attend the prayer-meeting any more," says Mr. A—; "I have heard the same things from Elder B— and Deacon C— and Capt. D—, until I am tired of them." Yet Mr. A— is a member of the church, professes to be a servant of Jesus Christ, and is under a solemn covenant to let his light shine before men, and to bear his part in maintaining the spiritual life of the Church. He is in good health, and goes to his business in all weathers. He can talk glibly enough behind the counter or in his warehouse. In a political caucus, he can speak to the point. He is eloquent in selling goods, or in making bargains or in securing votes. In the prayer meeting, he is as silent as an Egyptian mummy. He only recovers his organs of speech when he gets home, and begins to denounce the dulness of the meeting.

For the monotony and dulness of that service, brother A— and the rest of the alphabet who are like him, are chiefly responsible. His and their cowardly silence throws upon a faithful few the whole brunt of maintaining the service. Those who engaged in the service have got the

benefit and the blessing; the silent critics and cowards went empty away. Having done their utmost to kill the meeting, they are fluent at the coroner's inquest which they hold over it afterwards. If our average prayer services suffer from the indiscretions or tediousness of one or two incessant speakers, they suffer tenfold more from the indifference and the silence of those who shirk their duty. Four-fifths at least of all the persons who attend our devotional meetings, *could take part* if they would only set about it. Timidity would soon be overcome. It is the first step that costs. Good old Gen. Casey used to say to me, "I can face a battery on a battle field, but I can't face a prayer-meeting." He *tried* it one evening, and ever after that he spoke freely and frequently.

Even natural impediments can be overcome by the divine help. In my little church at Burlington was a goodly old man who stuttered terribly in ordinary conversation. When he prayed, his voice flowed smoothly along without obstruction! We who listened to his impassioned fervor at the mercy-seat, always believed that the Holy Spirit helped his utterance. Another man who had been mute, and said "he *could not* speak," was so moved by seeing his daughter rise for prayer in our meeting, that he arose himself, and broke forth in a fervent prayer that melted all hearts. He had broken the ice, and had no difficulty afterwards. Difficult things are not always impossible. It is perfectly possible for at least four-fifths of all who attend devotional and social services, to take part in them if they will do just two things.

First, let them bring something to the meeting; and secondly, let them ask God to help them *out with it!* It will come, and they and others will be the better for it. I do not pretend that all can be equally fluent, or equally interesting and edifying, but almost all men or women who have tongues in their heads, and any love of Christ in their hearts, can bear an honest though humble part in the family gatherings of Christ's flock. Our meetings ought to be less formal, cut and dried speeches are not needed; brief, simple, honest prayers are better than

long and stereotyped repetitions. Paul's first recorded prayer, Peter's prayer when sinking in the stormy sea, the publican's prayer, were each *only one sentence*. Have something to say, and then say it. If the vast majority of all our church members, male and female, would go to the family gatherings of the church with this simple determination, there would soon be an end of all dull prayer-meetings. The Holy Spirit helps those who help themselves. It is a sin and a shame for God's people to play truant and to play coward, and then excuse themselves by saying that they "need an outpouring of the Holy Spirit." *The Holy Ghost needs them;* and when they do their duty, the blessing comes.—*North Western Presbyterian.*

Prayer for Missions.

Twenty or twenty-five years ago the Christian women of the churches of this country as well as of Great Britain were moved by the Spirit of God to undertake the work of enlightening and reclaiming the benighted women of heathen lands. The Woman's Boards bore the work of missions to the mercy seat. Many of their committee rooms became Bethels. The great work was taken to their homes and their closets. There was coupled with the prayer not only the consecration of their means but of their children. The work of missions to the children became a household word. They were organized into missionary bands and furnished with tracts, maps and catechetical exercises, until in a few years they really possessed greater knowledge of the mission fields and of the mission work than many adults had possessed before.

The Church of Christ proceeds upon the assumption that the whole work must be divinely guided and inspired. On this principle it ought not to be thought strange, after twenty years of prayer, that multitudes of the young are rising up and saying, "Here are we, send us." It is the very thing that should have been looked for with earnest expectation, and if now the blessing has come, there is reason to ask that God will enlarge the faith of His people in another direction—in one word, that the wealth, as well as the children of the Church, may be consecrated to missions.—*Missionary Review of the World.*