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HOW TO PREACH AND TEACH HOLINESS

By Arthur L. Vess

To Which Are Added:
How To Live And Give Holiness
and
The Perils Of Preachers And Churches
By J. T. Crane

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INTRODUCTION

Holiness is the greatest theme of the Holy Scriptures, the greatest theme of the ages. Holiness is the foundation of the nature and character of God, and of saints and angels. It is the greatest attribute of God, which rules and controls all His other attributes. Without holiness, God would be unmerciful in His justice and unjust in His mercy; partial in His love, and dangerous in His power. There are only two great moral principles in the universe: holiness and sin. Sin, or anti-holiness is the cause of all our troubles, and holiness is the only cure. The only difference in earth and Heaven is sin and holiness. Never apologize for holiness, though you may apologize for the lack of holiness.

If we are to be holiness preachers, it is of first importance that we know how to preach holiness. There are as many ways to preach holiness as there are preachers, congregations and individuals, but there are certain definite, fundamental, principles which must be adhered to by all who preach "true holiness" -- or the gospel of Jesus Christ.

When we read such passages as, "Without holiness, no man shall see God," and "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God," and "Be ye holy for I, the Lord your God, am Holy," we are informed and mightily reminded that it is of supreme importance, not only to know what to preach, but how to preach holiness. No one can preach the Bible without preaching holiness. Holiness is the only remedy for sin, and the only road to Heaven. If you are God's preacher, you are both a holy, and a holiness preacher. If you belong to a holiness church, you are doubly bound to preach holiness, both because of your vow to God and to your church. Holiness begins in repentance and is imparted and experienced in regeneration and is perfected in sanctification and completed in glorification. You must preach holiness, regardless of the cost, if you would awaken sinners, bless the saints and stir compromised hypocrites. We cannot please a holy God without offending an unholy devil and his slaves.

Then, since holiness is the fountain head of all truth, you have a right and responsibility to ask, "HOW SHALL I PREACH HOLINESS?" We would make the following recommendations as to how you are to present this great theme of the Bible, and of the ages, in order to lead souls into holiness and eternal life, here and hereafter:

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01 -- WE MUST PREACH IT EXPERIENTIALLY

We must preach it experientially, not experimental, but as something proved by experience. [This distinction drawn between "experiential" and "experimental" here is not altogether well taken, for the word "experimental" can mean "that which is known by experience" as well as "that which involves an experiment or a test." While some may prefer the word "experiential" as

applied to spiritual knowledge, the word "experimental," used by many of the older writers, may also be used to denote the same thing. See the Oxford Dictionary -- DVM] It must be proved by spiritual science in the laboratory of your own heart. You cannot give to others something which you do not have yourself. If the early Disciples had to "tarry until they were endued with power from on high," we must do the same. You must KNOW that you have been and are still sanctified, or there will be a lameness in your own message like the one in your own soul. How long has it been since someone was sanctified under your own ministry? If it costs days, friends, positions, and shallow professions to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that you have been cleansed from carnality and filled with the Holy Ghost, "all the fullness of God." This will make your steps steady, and you can offer to others what you are more certain of and more conscious of than anything else in this world. This will save you from cowardice, weak knees, compromise and hypocrisy, and make you holy, valiant and fearless in the face of every foe. It will make you the most loved and hated person in all your community round about.

A. J. Gordon said, "My ministry was fruitless for 20 years, until I went into my study and shut the door, and told God that I would never come out until He baptized me with the Holy Ghost." The mighty baptism came, and revivals followed him around the world. At our Iowa camp some years ago, a leading minister who fell at the altar to be sanctified, said to the evangelist that "I had lost the blessing, and because of the inconsistencies of others, I had wondered if there was such a thing as sanctification, but when I heard you preach it, I felt that you had it, and that I could have it." About seven preachers got sanctified in that camp, and revivals spread all over the conference after the camp. "Lord, send a revival and let it begin in me." -- Moody

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02 -- PREACH HOLINESS SCRIPTURALLY

Preach Holiness scripturally. It is a Bible doctrine, and must be proven by the Bible. It has no other doctrinal proof.

Preach it from the promises, as a great privilege.

Preach it from the commandments as imperative.

Preach it from the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Preach it from the Types and Shadows, and as shining clear through.

Preach it from the moral law as its great fundamental foundation.

Preach it from the ceremonial law as pointing to a holy and "better sacrifice."

Preach it from the prophets as a divine and joyous fulfillment.

Preach holiness from the Holy of Holies as the most holy radiance.

Preach it from the manger and angelic messengers as "Peace on earth and good will to men."

Preach it from the life of Jesus, from the teachings of Jesus, from the mission of Jesus: "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and fire."

Preach it from the miracles of Jesus as the greatest miracle needed today.

Preach it from the parables of Jesus, as the "Pearl of Great Price," as the "oil in your vessels," as "the seed of the sower," and as the preparation of the "Bride for the Bridegroom," soon to appear.

Preach it from the mouth of John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and fire."

Preach it from the day of Pentecost and the message of Peter, "This is that," when the Holy Ghost fell before he preached, as at Samaria where He fell after he preached, and at Caesarea where the Holy Ghost fell as he PREACHED.

Preach it from the Apostle Paul who declared: "This is the will of God, even your sanctification," and "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly."

Preach it as the only way from hell, and the only way to heaven. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection."

Preach it in life, preach it in death, preach it as long as He lendeth you breath.

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03 -- PREACH IT LOGICALLY AND THEOLOGICALLY

Preach it logically and theologically, as the great center and culmination of Bible truth and doctrine. It is the most reasonable thing in the world. "Come now and let us reason together, Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow." Show how it is the climax of Calvary, the divine philosophy of the ages. Preach it in relation to all the other doctrines of the Scriptures. As the essence of all "Sound Doctrine." Show how that it is demanded by the fall and provided in the atonement, "Wherefore Jesus, also that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us therefore, go with him without the camp, bearing his reproach, for here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come."

Show how that every system of doctrine must recognize it or be untrue to God and His Bible.

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04 -- PREACH IT BOLDLY AND FEARLESSLY WITHOUT COMPROMISE

Preach it boldly and fearlessly, without compromise or adulteration. Condemn everything unholy, and defend everything that is holy. Do not fear being charged as radical, fanatical, etc. "Perfect love casteth out fear." Let holy boldness be your motto and defense. Carnal boldness sacrifices God and others for self, but holy boldness sacrifices self for God and others. Cowards in the pulpits produce hypocrites in the pew.

"And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and spake the word of God with boldness." "And when they saw their boldness, they took knowledge." If you want your hearers to respect you, let them know that you love them, but are not afraid of them. It is God's word, and not your own, that you are to preach. "I charge thee, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead."

Preach the Word, be instant (constant) in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke and exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come (has come) when they will not endure (or tolerate) sound (holy) doctrine, but after their own lusts will heap to themselves teachers with "itching EARS" (for flattery and praise). And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, (holiness) and shall give heed unto fables," untruth, falsehoods, pious fraud, pretense, flattery, counterfeit, evasions, deception, etc. Only crooks do not like straight preaching. "But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of the ministry. For I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand. Preach every message as though it were your last one. "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you -- men -- more than unto God judge ye, for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

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05 -- PREACH IT TENDERLY

Preach it tenderly, with tears of compassion from Gethsemane, flowing from your hearts through your eyes and words, so that every place you go, saints and sinners will say, "He preaches so tenderly, and with such an humble spirit." The Pharisees and Saducees will both accuse and abuse you, but preach so that God will bless you, while others would stress you. You must melt the hearts before they can yield and repent. 'Your love for souls must melt your own heart and their hearts.

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06 -- PREACH IT PRACTICALLY

Preach it practically, and in a simple form, so that "the wayfaring man, though he be a fool may not err therein." Preach it for men, not angels. Put it down where all can understand and get it, but where none can trample it. A camp president said to a camp evangelist, "Your manners and language are so simple, but you had not spoken long until I saw that you had a trained mind." Great

preachers express great truths in simple words, but little preachers express little thoughts in big words. Never brag on your own knowledge, wisdom, experience, etc. Glorify God only!

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07 -- PREACH IT DEFINITELY AND SPECIFICALLY

Preach it definitely and specifically as a second definite work of grace, no more and no less. "Press the instantaneous blessing." Offer the experience on Bible terms and conditions. Stress eradication and death to the old man, and old woman too -- "knowing this that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth (from now on) we should not serve sin, for he that is dead (to sin) is freed from sin. We must meet the conditions, before God can meet our need. "Their hearts were purified by faith." There are two reasons why we must trust God to save and to sanctify us. Namely: First, because we cannot do it for ourselves; second, because God can and will do it for us. Faith is the switch which ties us on to God's great power house, storehouse and light house.

Call it by its clearest Scriptural names, so that the devil will recognize it and fight it, and so honest, hungry souls will recognize it and get it. Use definite terms, such as "sanctification," "Holy Ghost," "eradication," "carnality," "second blessing," "perfect love," etc.

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08 -- PREACH IT TO ALL CLASSES

Preach it to all classes, the rich and the poor, to the learned and unlearned. In the homes, stores, highways, workshops, and to all classes on their own level. Preach it with the tongue, with a holy life, with good books, tracts, periodicals, etc. Make it personal.

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09 -- PREACH IT SERIOUSLY

Preach it seriously, not as a joke, but as a serious eternal issue. There is too much chaff in our modern pulpits. Many try to tickle and amuse people rather than bless them. If we are blessed, we do not need to be amused and entertained. It is all right to be cheerful, but not chaffy. They said that Jesus often wept but never laughed. How could He? A young man was seriously affected by an evangelist's message, and went over to the parsonage after the service to inquire more about the truth; but the pastor and evangelist cracked jokes and cut up so much that the hungry soul went away grieved, disappointed and starved, wondering if there was anything to it after all. No one was ever saved or sanctified in a jocular mood. We must be sane and serious. There may be an occasional use of wit to embarrass the adversary, but holiness is not a joke. Some cowards in the pulpit crack a joke and explode their occasional denunciations of the world. Many, or most, of our modern once-holiness preachers vie with each other in keeping their hearers laughing and roaring with fun. Is this why the "glory has departed?" The world stresses amusement and entertainment, while the world is lost, and communism is rushing in on us. They want to forget their sins and

sorrows. They need deliverance from slavery of sin, and the impartation of a holy nature so that they can live a holy, happy life free from all sinful strife. Only miserable people have to be amused and entertained.

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10 -- PREACH HOLINESS WITH JOY AND GLADNESS

Preach Holiness with joy and gladness, not sorrow and sadness. "For the kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." While the world shouts over nothing, we should be able to preach so that people can shout over everything. So many of our preachers and teachers brand every spiritual manifestation as "emotionalism." When the fire of God burns in the soul, the waves of joy are sure to roll. The business world, and all sales are run by emotional appeals. Where there is life, there is feeling and movement. During the times of greatest persecution in the past centuries, God's saints have had the most joy and peace. If you are filled with the Holy Ghost, the Third Person of the Trinity, all the fullness of God, your divine victory should certainly manifest itself in mighty power and glory.

Most of our modern services are so dead and formal that God no longer comes on the scene. We are learning to repeat prayers, etc. while we stand to pray like the dead, formal churches. New York papers commented on stiff-kneed Methodist.

While we must condemn sin and worldliness on every hand, we must not preach holiness with the blue side of life all the time. If outsiders come in, they will wonder if there is anything to it after all. Even our radical holiness preaching should be filled with holy glory and unction, which rebukes sin and hypocrisy, and blesses and inspires the saints and convicts the sinners.

We must not harp on the blue side all the time, for this is not holiness. I used to say that I wanted to preach so that they could not shout unless they had it; now I want to preach so they can shout if they do have it -- holiness. If we do not shout in the church, we shout on the ball diamonds.

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11 -- PREACH HOLINESS CONSTANTLY

Preach Holiness constantly, not as a hobby, but as the great foundation and fountain of all truth. John Wesley said, "Preach holiness in every sermon." You cannot preach the truth without preaching holiness. Everything is holy or unholy. If you preach holiness with all its relations and applications, you can never exhaust it. Do not repeat for emptiness, but for emphasis. A lawyer once said that "if lawyers practiced law like you preachers preach the gospel, we'd never win a case. We find out the main points in our evidence and emphasize them over and over from every angle. But you preachers just hit one point one time and another the next time until we are convinced of nothing." The Holy Bible is full of holiness, and the unholy world is void of it and needs it more than all else. Use illustrations, persuasion, arguments, instruction, information, and inspiration. Preach it in regeneration, sanctification and glorification.

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12 -- PREACH IT PERSONALLY

Preach it personally in your daily life and conversation to individuals in their homes, at work, on the streets and every place where people need it. Holiness is not worth much if it dies at church. If you know how to preach to individuals, you can preach to the masses as individuals, and make everyone who needs it feel that the message is for them. The masses and congregations are all made up of individuals. Make them say, "That message was for me, just what I needed." Do it so that they will forget the preacher and the time, and all else, but God and the truth, as they need both. Like Isaiah who "saw the Lord, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple," which charged the atmosphere. "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory."

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13 -- PREACH HOLINESS NEGATIVELY AND POSITIVELY

Preach Holiness negatively and positively: The heart must be purged from sin, before the Holy Ghost can come in. Only negative preaching diagnoses the disease of sin, but offers no remedy. Only positive preaching ignores the nature, then the fact of sin. We first become modern, then modernistic. Preaching it negatively, with a positive emphasis, is better than preaching it positively with a negative emphasis. Compromise is the seed of modernism. You must expose carnality before people become conscious of it and plead for deliverance from it. Pride and vanity must go before humility can come. Before we can be filled with all the fullness of God, we must be emptied of all self and sin. Before the "Beauty of holiness can be seen in me" the foulness and filth of sin must go. We must not be conformed, but transformed. Before holiness can come in, sin must go out. The death route leads to life and peace. "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly." In regeneration we die to the life of sin; in sanctification, we die to the nature of sin; in glorification we die to the presence and effects of sin in our bodies. Humiliation produces holy humility. Lord make me meek and lowly, humble and holy. Death to sin produces the life of holiness. The church and the world, God and the devil, sin and holiness have nothing in common, and neither can tolerate or co-operate with the other.

So much of our modern holiness preaching is so shallow and neutral. Neutral means neither, and neither means nothing. Few preachers are willing to name and define sin, the world, the flesh or the devil. If you do not diagnose the case, the patient will not see the need of the remedy, and take it. When we get sin out, the Holy Ghost comes in. We do not have to beg or persuade God to save or sanctify us, but let Him do it, at His own right terms.

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14 -- PREACH HOLINESS EVANGELISTICALLY

Preach Holiness evangelistically. "True holiness" has always produced great revivals. Only holiness makes sinners conscious of the terror and awfulness of sin, and produces a longing

desire within to be delivered from sin and restored to holiness of heart in the sight of a holy God. Old-fashioned holiness preaching has produced more revivals and converted more sinners than all this modern or ancient compromise or sinning religion. "When Isaiah saw the Lord, high and lifted up," and heard the angels crying, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty, he saw himself and cried out, "Woe is me, for I am undone -- unholy. I am a man of unclean lips and dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." (This describes many of our modern churches.) A church without revivals is a church without God and holiness.

In His final message, Jesus Christ cried out, "All power is given unto me, both in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore unto all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Here we have a mighty missionary vision, or the Great Missionary Alls:

I. "All Power"

II. "All the world"

III. "All Creatures" or Individuals.

IV. All the Trinity, "Father, Son and Holy Ghost," to back our salvation campaign.

V. All Things, "Teaching them to observe all things."

VI. Always, "And lo I am with you always, even unto the ends of the world."

Every preacher and evangelist, and every member, a personal soul winner will spread revivals through our own town and around the world. See our recent booklet on "United Soul Winners." The mission of the Holy Ghost is to produce revivals, as was the purpose of Jesus Christ. "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

I. The Promise of Power. "Ye shall receive power."

II. The Person of Power, "The Holy Ghost."

III. The Purpose of Power, "Ye shall be witnesses."

IV. The Projection of Power. "From Jerusalem unto the uttermost, or outermost parts of the earth." From your home town to continents and islands around the world. If we were half as much interested in souls, as we are in statistics, revivals would break out all over our communities, conferences and denominations, and around the world. We all have to be careful, lest we get so wrapped up in material things until we forget the spiritual realities -- the only realities.

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15 -- PREACH HOLINESS BY EXAMPLE

Preach Holiness by example. Not only in your preaching, but in your daily life, manifest and prove your preaching. Live it and give it. Get it, live it and preach it. Live above reproach so that those who oppose your life and ministry will have to realize your holy life and power. If you cannot live it, you cannot give it to others. "True holiness will stand the test, and keep you pure and ever blessed," only this will stand the test, only this will keep me blessed. Give me holiness." Only this gives perfect rest. "Perfect love casteth out fear." In degeneration we have fear without love, in regeneration we have fear with love, in sanctification, we have love without fear, in glorification, we have love without anything to fear.

In closing, here is the great vision of God, wrapped up in the Golden Text of the Bible, John 3:16, "For God so loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world, to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." Here is the substance of God's great salvation:

I. A great love; "For God so loved the world," or loved the world so much --

II. A great scope: "The World." "The field is the world." "The world is my parish" Wesley -- or pastorate.

III. A great faith: "That whosoever believeth in Him."

IV. A great deliverance: "Should not perish," -- be lost in hell.

V. A great life: "But have everlasting life: "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." How many of us are more interested in eternal life than we are in this present, fleeting life? Which do we talk, act and think most about? In which do we invest the most time and money?

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection."

Possessing, preaching and living holiness is the sum total of the Christian life and character -- here and hereafter. Let us all go back home to live, preach and testify to holiness.

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16 -- HOW TO LIVE AND GIVE HOLINESS

You must live a holy life in order to keep the Holy Ghost, and exert a holy influence, without which all else is vain hypocrisy. "Be thou an example of believers, in word, in conversation (and conduct), in charity (love) in spirit, in faith, in purity." Let us labor therefore, to enter into the rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." It is one thing to profess and preach holiness, but may be quite another to live holiness. "In all things, showing thyself a

pattern of good works: in doctrine, showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity." "Take my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction and of patience." For even, Brethren, here unto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us. Leaving us an example that we should follow in His steps." The great, saintly apostle Paul said, "Follow me as I follow Christ." As goes the pastor, so goes the church, and as goes the church, so goes the world, to heaven or to hell. How many churches have been sold out by a compromise pastor? As goes the pastor, so goes the people. It has been estimated that a man runs a 50 per cent greater risk of losing his soul by becoming a minister. Local churches, conferences and denominations are led astray by their leaders. "If the blind lead the blind, they shall both fall into the ditch," -- Blind leaders and blind followers. "Capture the generals and captains, and you have captured the army," -- God's army. Every church dies at the head first. As goes the head, so goes the whole body. The head directs the body.

From the above, and other scriptures, we have many admonitions and instructions as to how to live a holy life, and exert a holy influence. Our influence is more important than our own soul, for it determines the destiny of many souls, but both go together.

First, let us be an example in our conversation. Our words express our character and influence, the choices and character of others. Our words weigh, and one word may decide the destiny of many souls. "Let your conversation be as cometh the gospel of Christ." We preach in our daily conversation. "Let him show out of a good conversation his wisdom with meekness and fear." Let us read and practice James, three. "Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient (or desirable): but rather (instead) the giving of thanks." Foolish talking here comes from two Greek words: Moros and Logos, "talking like a moron," or an idiot. Preachers, how are our people impressed and influenced by our daily conversations.

Our own discipline states, "Be diligent. Be serious. Let your motto be "Holiness unto the Lord." Avoid all lightness, jesting and foolish talking. Speak evil of no man: because your word especially, would eat as doth a canker (or cancer). Keep your thoughts in your own breast until you come to the person involved." Preachers, how are others influenced by our daily conversations?

A shocking thing in our modern people is the way that they either carry on so much joking and silly talking, then turn to backbiting and unkind words. Is this not a sign of compromise and backsliding, both of which are the same? Our tongues express our whole personality and character.

Second, let us be an example in our devotional life. It is one thing to preach on prayer in the pulpit, and quite another to practice it in the secret chamber. If we do not practice what we preach here, our church will not follow our ministry, but our example. Our secret contact with God determines the unction, power and influence of our ministry in the pulpit and in the community. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." If we want to "dwell," we must first "abide," tarry. "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy father which seeth in secret shall himself reward thee openly -" in all thy life and ministry. Praying preachers are the hope of the church and world. It takes supernatural power, contact and fellowship to face our drifting congregations, and dare to declare unto them, the whole council of God. We are not to amuse and entertain our hearers, but **PREACH THE WORD**: be instant (constant) in season and

out of season: Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine, or the time will (has) come when they will not endure sound doctrine. "They once enjoyed and endorsed it, but after (because of) their own lusts, shall heap to themselves teachers and preachers having itching ears" for praise and promotion, recalls, etc.

It takes a holy, dead to self preacher to proclaim the "Sound doctrine," so much neglected and so much needed in our days. We only get and keep this holy boldness in the secret chamber. Only one class does not like and endorse straight preaching, that's crooks. Which crowd do you belong to? O, my preacher Brethren, are we ready to meet our ministry at the coming of Jesus Christ, when all earthly interests have fled away forever? We must keep in contact with God if our contact with men is to mean anything good here and hereafter.

Third, let us be an example in our business relations and dealings. Let us not seek and boast about "bargains" at the other fellows expense, then complain when they get a bargain off of us. If you cannot pay your debts and preach the gospel, pay your debts first. Do not leave old debts for the next pastor or evangelist to face and pay. Souls are our greatest "bargains." One is worth more than all the world. Do not sell out your ministry for a bigger salary or larger church. And do not build such big and expensive churches that you will have to crowd out God and his old-fashioned saints. My church history teacher said, "When church steeples go up, spirituality goes down." It is nice to have nice churches, but only such as become holiness and despised and persecuted people. Live simple, godly lives, rather than sell out for the latest styles in your clothes, furniture and automobiles. We cannot take these to Heaven with us. 'Having food and raiment, therewith be content."

Fourth, be an example in your relations to the opposite sex. There was never a time when there was so much looseness and laxness between the sexes. Everything from the billboards to the TV advertising business are based on the low sex appeal. "They were eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage until the flood came and took them all away; so also shall the coming of the Son of man be." We all say that He is soon coming, but how many of us feel like it, act like it, talk like it, and preach like it? "Watch therefore, for you know not what hour your Lord doth come."

Pastors, watch your relations to the women in your visiting, and in your church councils. Be especially careful about those wives who have ungodly, abusive husbands. Watch your handshaking, do not grip too tight nor hold on too long. "As for the pure, his word is right." "Keep thyself pure" if you want your ministry to endure. "Unto the pure, all things are pure, but unto the defiled (impure) and unbelieving, is nothing pure, but even their minds and consciences are defiled," murdered. When your mind and conscience is defiled, you can justify yourself and others in all kinds of compromise and sins.

Summing it all up in Bible language, here it is, "Finally, my brethren, whatsoever things are honest; whatsoever things are just (fair), whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there is any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things." Our thought life controls all our outer lives and conduct.

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17 -- THE PERILS OF PREACHERS AND CHURCHES

By J. T. Crane, With Bracketed comments by A. L. Vess

[Note -- The following is a condensed revision of a chapter in "Methodism and Its Methods," written by Rev. J. T. Crane, in 1875. Dr. Crane's many years of travel, study and intimate observations of current and past church history gave him a vision and insight into his own great Methodist church at that time. His prophetic fears have already been sadly fulfilled in his own great church, and are being repeated in the present day holiness movement, the last remains of true and early Methodism. May this great discussion of a great man in his generation be used of God to warn and awaken the fainting gleams of true Methodism among our own holiness ranks, whatever the organization or denominational constitution. Here is the message of Dr. Crane whose body lies in some cemetery while his great spirit lives on today!]

"This know also, that in the last days, perilous times shall come." II Timothy 3:1

The dangers of which Paul warns his son in the gospel are not those of the sword and flame of martyrdom. Great persecutions were indeed drawing nigh, and torture and death were drawing nigh to those of whom this world was not worthy. The days of burning and slaughter soon came. Ten times pagan Rome reached forth her iron hand and crushed the infant church; the blood of saints flowed like water; and yet, through three centuries of fiery trial, the church triumphed and grew in the face of the great persecutions; if not because of the great persecution.

Saints are made in the furnace of affliction. Great times of trials provide a chance to prove and demonstrate the supernatural! Many of the heathen who witnessed the joy with which the Christians died for the Master's sake, turned from the scenes convinced that the religion of Jesus Christ was of God, and repented, believed in Jesus of Nazareth and in their own turn, laid down their lives for truth and righteousness. Perhaps the martyr methods would produce a revival in our day and age.

Paul's warning did not refer to this of suffering and martyrdom, but it did and does refer to the modern perils within the church produced by spiritual weakness, self-seeking, pride, ambition, the love of the world, "lovers of pleasure," among those who denied the power of godliness, while they are careful to maintain the "form without the power." In short, he warns the church against itself.

History shows that Paul sounded no false alarm. Three centuries of great persecution passed over the church, and left it pure, true and stronger than ever. Should we not say that the fierce persecution made and kept it pure and strong? Wallowing in the lap of the world is like wallowing in the lap of Delilah.

At the close of these three centuries of great persecution, Christianity proved its power over heathenism, and the Roman emperor turned to worship the church instead of the head of the church Jesus Christ. Christianity became the Roman religion, and decayed in the arms that once struck it with awful persecution. Persecution drives the church from the world, but friendship with the world smothers out its purity and power. Then the church rose to the highest pitch of worldly

honor and prestige, but lost its divine nature and power, while every crafty schemer who covered royal favor pretended to embrace the Christian religion. Christianity at once became popular.

Christianity thrives under persecution, but dies under worldly popularity. Great, magnificent churches were erected, worship was made a splendid show; gold began to pour into the ecclesiastical coffers; and with the gold came the indolent and the mercenary, seeking places of honor and profit. The ministry attained prominence and public consideration. The church was organized more and more after the model of the world; bishops and archbishops and patriarchs arose, with palaces, revenue and power; with robes and miters and crosiers, and at last, a pope ascended his ecclesiastical throne, crowded out Jesus Christ, and claimed the homage and worship of a prostrate world, and a backslidden church. And thus, the early church which conquered the world in persecution, was conquered by the world in compromise and humiliated surrender.

To consolidate and perpetuate all this usurped power, and grandeur required audacity and craft on the part of the ministry, which was ever present. Falsehood after falsehood was invented, and put forth in the name of God, with awful curses added, consigning all to eternal perdition who refused to believe or obey them. The entire machinery of the church was directed to the enslavement of the minds and souls of men, till popery stood in all its might, a vast, stupendous imposture, founded on stupendous crime, flowing forth in filthy slime.

But the errors of Romanism, though they be many, have a common origin, and wear a common form in most of our modern churches and denominations, in varying degrees and destruction of spirituality. Their aim and effect are to increase the power of the church over the reason, the conscience, the purse and of the person; to nail the ears of men to the doorposts of the priest, and consign them to complete and perpetual bondage to men, rather than loyalty to God and truth. Do we see anything like this about us today?

A passing glance at "the commandments of men" will prove the statements just made above. They proclaimed the Bible as the word of God to increase its respect, but they declared that only the priest had the right and power to interpret and apply the truth. The Bread and wine [they claimed] became the actual body and blood of Jesus, but only the priest could work the marvelous transition and offer it to the people. Matrimony, and all other sacred sacraments, could only be administered by the priest, or they were vain and blighting! Everything bound the people to the priests instead of to God. No room was left for the intelligence and conscience of the individual.

The climax in this ecclesiastical corruption was the claim of infallibility and indispensability by the pope, before whom all must bow and worship. Every feature of the papal scheme was a plot for the exaltation of the ministry, and enslavement of the people. Episcopal forms of church government drift farther and quicker away from God and truth than the extreme congregational forms.

To further enslave and confuse the people, they spoke only in Latin which the listeners could not understand.

But the great glory of the early church, followed by the awful decay and corruption under the pope, is only one form of putting men in the place of God. Over and over through the centuries, great men have gone forth in the face of a corrupt church and a mocking world, to declare the whole council of God and His power to save men, but always in the face of great opposition and persecution, over which God gave them the victory in life and death. Great revivals and harvests of souls filled the land with great rejoicing in God.

Then their prosperity becomes a snare; the ministry is exalted to a high social position; honored, influential, liberally supported; then they lose their fervor and divine power and favor; then the zeal, burning love for souls and the self-negation and persecution which marked them at first, they lose and sit down to enjoy dignified ease, the fruits of their earlier toil and sacrifice; thus, the people sink into spiritual lethargy and repose, if not apathy, and the church's career of victory is ended. Listen, when numbers, wealth, and popularity come, purity, holiness, zeal and aggressive power decline.

It is not too soon [1875] for the Methodist church to look about her and inquire whether her perilous times are approaching. [Then the author shows how that the Methodist church increased from 15,000 in 1784 to 1,563,521, ninety years later.] But as the great Methodist church grew in numbers and popularity, she waned in spiritual power and influence. How long will it take us to understand the statement of Jesus Christ when He said, "My kingdom is not of this world." Federation with this world means separation from God.

The wealth of our Methodist people has grown and increased far more rapidly than our membership. Whether it be a matter of congratulation or of humiliation, the Methodist Episcopal church has grown to be a great and powerful body, commanding more and more of that kind of respect which the world pays to numbers, wealth and social influence. After the early church degenerated into the Roman Catholic machine, the pope once boasted that it was no longer necessary for her to say, "Silver and gold have I none." One replied, "Neither can she say, "Rise up and walk." Her supernatural, miraculous power was gone, because her contact with God had been severed. Let all modern churches take warning.

The peculiar warmth of our fellowship may have decreased as the forces of persecution from without had increased, to compel us to unite for self defense. The diminished attendance at class meetings has also tended to lessen it, by lessening our friendly, spiritual associations among our people. The future of the Methodist church, therefore seems to foreshadow enlarged numbers, increased ecclesiastical and personal wealth, a thoroughly organized, closely compacted body, which shall carry into the coming years something, at least, of the same energy, courage, and enthusiasm which has made its history bright with achievement.

But let us not deceive ourselves. There is ground for fear, as well as hope, and more fear than hope. New possibilities of sudden disaster or slow decay lie in our path. Prosperity may undermine our strength. Men are sometimes crushed by the caving in of gold mines, and perish by the weight of their own riches. Listen! When a church whose career has been in obscurity, poverty, and weakness; and whose every step upward has been made in the face of persecution and difficulties, has won its way to a place among the foremost Christian bodies of the land, it does not find it easy in the day of triumph to retain the self denial, the simplicity, the purity of doctrine and

of life, the joyous loyalty to God and the right, which were the godly weapons by which the victory was originally gained.

The attitude of the Methodist church before the world is now very different to what it was a century ago; nor is it unreasonable for us to fear that in its new position, the church itself may undergo a change, both as an exponent of the religion of Christ, and as an instrument for the evangelization of the world. A very difficult problem is to be solved: How shall the stream widen without losing its depth? How shall we learn to use the new tools wisely, and not forget how to handle the old ones with which so much good has been done? How shall a church beginning with nothing but God and truth, gather in almighty host, and become strong in wealth, intelligence, and public favor; and at the same time, remain sound in faith, pure in life, spiritual, humble, self denying, having no confidence in the flesh?

Only the most faith and loyalty to God's word and the most firm, fearless resistance to all attempts, open or secret to lower the standard of moral conduct, or weaken the discipline of the church, either in the letter or the administration, can save it from decline and decay. Now is the time for us to lay aside all self-deception and self-flattery and exercise the keenest vigilance. A false alarm, though not pleasant, will do less injury than false confidence. When a church falls asleep in false security, all alarms are branded as false, and all alarm as wild criticism and fanaticism. Let us then be honest with ourselves and with God, and consider in what ways our prosperity of our church will affect unfavorably our spiritual life.

1. People less convinced of their spiritual need will more readily enter our fold or ranks. There was a time when Methodism, like their master in the days of humiliation, was "despised and rejected of men." The older churches pronounced our doctrines as heresy, our organization without authority, our ministers ignorant and our experience false, wild come-out-ism and fanaticism! The world declared our usages and practices unreasonable and burdensome and our morals fanatically severe. The older churches and the world unite their voices in a noisy chorus of condemnation, branding Methodism as a thing to be despised, abhorred and shunned.

Then it was indeed a thing of "a cross" to identify one's self with the Methodist. It dug a gulf wide and deep between the child of God and the children of the world, severing friendships, breaking up old associations, and compelling a reconstruction of social life. It severed at once and forever, the ties which bind one to another, the victims of vice, and the votaries of frivolous pleasures. It sometimes even drove sons and daughters from the parental roofs, and cut them off from their inheritance. A spiritual church shouts at church in spiritual power and glory. A backslidden church shouts outside at ball games, etc.

This state of things would naturally exert a powerful influence upon the rising society. In those days of censure, and persecution, the converts who cast their lot with the Methodist Episcopal church were thoroughly convinced that they were in earnest, ready to do or suffer all things, that they might throw off the burden of sin and find pardon and peace. They felt like Bunyan's Pilgrim when he put his fingers to his ears and fled from the city of destruction crying, "Life, life, eternal life."

This pungent conviction, this thorough earnestness, prompted a complete self-surrender and gave intensity to the entire experience, and solid strength to the whole Christian life. "Solid joys and lasting pleasures, none but Zion's children know." There was no motive for insincere profession; no place for compromise; no border land, where a man of feeble purpose or experience could pitch his tent and live in peace and friendship with his neighbors, both on the right and the left. He was content to "Come out from among them and be separate and touch not the unclean thing."

Thus the dishonor which rested upon the early Methodist church was like the cold bath which the Spartans ministered to their new-born infants; it secured general vigor among the people, because none but the vigorous, living souls had the power to survive it. [Does this sound like modern Methodism?]

But things have changed. "The offense of the cross has not ceased," but it is not what it once was. Membership in the Methodist church is no longer a discredit. As a result it requires less of self-negation; less of self-sacrifice to bear the name of Methodist. Hear it. To enter the fold, therefore, does not require the pungent convictions, the force of conscience, which it once demanded. The conclusion seems inevitable that as the church becomes rich, powerful, and what the world calls respectful, men will be willing, or even eager, to enter it whose feeble religious experience and life would never have survived the Spartan bath of ridicule, contempt, and social separation of former days.

Success involves dangers which did not exist in the days of unpopularity. The church need not necessarily decline in spiritual power as it increases in numbers and wealth, but we must recognize and do all we can to prevent the peril and avert the evil. Unless recognized and resisted, evil will surely come. There will be action and reaction. The larger the proportion of the half-hearted, easy going members already in the church, the lower will be the conditions or standards of entrance and the less the religious obligations assumed in uniting with the church.

Falling bodies descend with a velocity which every moment increases, because the force which draws them downward gives them every moment a new impulse, and the farther, the faster, the church rushes downward and back to the world. History does not lack for examples of churches which began spiritual and scriptural in doctrine and discipline and pure in life, for a time, like the Heavenly city shines with the glory of God, but not guarding it against the insidious influences of prosperity, they ceased to be holy and true and began to decline, finally falling so low that they became a hissing and a by-word among skeptics and scoffers.

So is Methodism today and her remaining holiness ranks are rapidly drifting in the same direction, until it has become a great reproach to refuse to drift with them. The more our fervor grows for worldly recognition, the lower we place our standards for membership and Christian living.

Our numbers may be rapidly increasing, but let us not be infected with the mania for numbers, regardless of their character or influence on us. We must not put numbers before the life and experience of those who join us. Now is the time when special care is needed in the guarding of the doors of the church and inoculating the doctrines and precepts of the gospel upon those

already within, so that while the timid, and self-distrustful and the tempted may receive a cordial welcome, yet men of tainted reputations and unworthy lives may have no place among us. If for sake of numbers and the financial strength which numbers bring, we sacrifice the purity, the spiritual beauty and moral power of the church. We sell the Master over again for "pieces of silver."

2. The growing prosperity will tend more and more to effect the true character of the ministry.

During many years of history, the call to the ministry was a fearful thing to hear. To enter the traveling ministry required much of which in itself, is not only morally right, but valuable and naturally to be desired. It involved a surrender of other plans for life, in themselves, right and worthy, a yielding up of cherished purposes, a fading out of bright hopes; in short, a mental and moral process akin to that which comes to other men on their death-beds.

He who obeyed the call divine, left his native place and home, to become a life-long wanderer. While other young men whom he knew were winning their way to prosperity and comfort, he must be content to expect, at the best, a bare support, so long as he was able to toil in arduous work, while fancy painted in the dim distance an old age of poverty and want. The thought of marriage came to him as well as to others, but it came clouded with doubt; the fear that a family would prove an impediment in his ministry, and the certainty that it would be a poor home, scanty in its comforts, and very lonely to those who should live and wait there, while he was on his long journeys around the circuit. [The circuits were long and involved the travel through wilderness and over swollen rivers, in darkness of night, among wild animals and Indians. The preacher nor his family was ever sure that he would return home again well, or even alive. What about our modern preachers who court comfort and sell the truth for office and prestige? God help us!]

Nor did the praise of men supply the place of substantial reward. The world frowned and jeered, pronouncing him sometimes a fanatic, sometimes a hypocrite, sometimes a fool. The clergy of other denominations too often treated him with pretended pity and real contempt, vinegar mixed with gall, as one who ran when God had not sent, and who babbled of things he knew not. This they did, partly because they believed the charges which they uttered and partly to keep their flocks from straying away, and their personal interests from being damaged. Whatever the motive of their wicked warnings, many believed it, and thought to insult a Methodist was to do the service of God. "The time will come when they will turn you out of the synagogue, and he that killeth you think that he doeth God's service," do or doeth God a favor. Oh, if we had preachers like that today, we would not have to complain that revivals have passed!

No wonder that when the first whisper of the dreaded duty came, many a young man wept and prayed that the burden might not be laid upon him, and yielded only when the "woe is me if I preach not the gospel of Christ." The weight of the ministerial burden of those early days is attested, not only by the recorded experiences of preachers, the months of mental agony which they endured before they consented, but by the sad and significant fact, that during the first fifty years of our history, one held of those who entered upon the work, located, after having traveled an average of about seven years. The average Methodist preacher of those days died at the age of forty years. But what are we doing with the fruits of their sacrifice today? Their lives and influence far

outweighed the many years of the average minister of today who lives in luxury and ease, and preaches to please, rather than to bless and help his congregation.

The woe which Paul dreaded still remains for those who realize the serious responsibilities involved. There are still calls for the ministry, voices that fall upon the ear, which are as truly from God as any that ever sent prophets and apostles on their holy errands, but they are not feared as they once were. When the ministry becomes a famous profession, rather than a sacred calling, God is grieved and souls lost. Though the call to the ministry does not face the serious trials of earlier days, yet the Lord of the harvest demands the same deep searchings of the heart, the same serious weighings of the eternal interests involved the same intense solicitude to settle the principle on the right principle, honestly, wisely, in the fear of God and the light of eternity.

And there may still be cases where those who are truly called are reluctant to obey, and yield only when they dare no longer to delay. When God calls a man, he lets him feel the weight of the responsibility, lest he enter the work lightly, and later fails because of the great responsibility. When God called the Apostle Paul he said, "I will show him what great things he must suffer for me." Later Paul himself testified, "In every town and city bonds and afflictions await me." The battle with the devil who controls this wicked old world is no easy task, when we enter it in earnest and without compromise, with men or devils. The time is on us when those who seriously enter the ministry, determined to be true to God in the face of every foe, may feel more of the seriousness of the call, as did the early apostles and Methodist preachers.

The woe still remains, but conditions of the times have changed the call to another point of moral danger, more serious in eternity than that which faced our early ministers. The woe was once for those who failed to obey the call; it is now for those who do not wait for the divine call, or obey the divine instructions after they are called. The terror once stood before those who dared to obey in the face of every foe; but it is now the woe for those who are ready to prophesy for friend or foe, provided their wages of mammon are duly paid. It is far better to suffer want and reproach now, than to suffer loss "when the chief Shepherd shall appear to award the crown of glory that fadeth not away," to all his under-shepherds.

It is fortunate that our modern ministers do not have to suffer the privations and persecutions which they once suffered, if they do not sell out for comfort and worldly pleasure and ease. It is never fair nor just for wealthy and prosperous laymen to allow their faithful ministers to suffer for their support, and the "servant is worthy of his hire," but both need to beware lest they both sell out for the meat that perisheth, rather than "laying up treasures in Heaven." The support and respect of the community should be held by the minister, but he must not allow such to destroy his piety, nor rob his people of the truth.

Is it safe then to assume, that in the future history of our churches, the ministerial office will be found to possess attractions not only for those who are called of God, as was Aaron; but also for the ambitious and self-seeking, and that it will tend to draw into the ministry some whose convictions are not strong, and whose motives for entering the ministry are not worthy of the sacred responsibilities of the call. How may the door be guarded so that none but those who are divinely called and commissioned may enter? This has been the problem and defeat of every spiritual church which becomes strong and great in the eyes of men.

But the peril does not lag about the door only. Many who enter the ministry "with an eye single to the glory of God," and with a burning love for souls, may almost unconsciously fall from the higher to the lower motives, unworthy of the true minister. Popularity gained by honest effort and sincere motives may lead the minister away from his higher calling to seek the praise and honor of men. "Verily I say unto you, they have their reward." The preacher and his family may fall to lower plains of the masses, instead of lifting others up to the higher plains of holy and unselfish living. It is easier for many to pull a few down, than it is for a few to lift many up, unless they maintain that power from on high, which makes men conquerors on every field of endeavor. It is the legitimate things of life which become attractive and dangerous. It seems to be the universal opinion of men that every man, except the preacher, ought to have the necessities and even the luxuries of life; when in fact, the layman has no more right to the good things of this life than the minister; but both must beware lest they sell out eternity for time, Heaven for earth, and Heaven for hell.

Why accuse the pastor if he becomes worldly minded and mercenary like the members, so long as they justify themselves in these things? But neither is justified but condemned. The command to bring all the tithes into the storehouse and prove me therewith, that I shall open the windows of Heaven and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it," refers to the spiritual blessings poured out through the ministry of the world, and the members supporting their pastor.

If those who affirm that they are called to the ministry refuse to enter the field until they are assured that the church will maintain them in a position which the world calls elegant, there is reason to fear that they have not rightly obeyed the call which they claim to have received. In the palmiest days of the true church of God, there will still be a place for toil and sacrifice of many things one might humanly hold dear, especially the good will and appreciation of the parishioners which all of us hold more dear than money.

We are still called on to "go forth and sow in tears that we may reap in joy." As Christ gave himself a ransom for men, while He owned the universe, as the apostles counted not their lives dear unto themselves, so that they might finish their course with joy," and the "ministry which they had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God, so to the very end, the cause must advance by sacrifice and suffering. In poverty and shame, in tears and hunger, thirst, and weariness, their friends few and feeble, and their enemies many and strong, the first preachers of the gospel took their lives into their own hands, declared the whole council of the gospel, whether others wanted any or all the truth. When duty calls, no successor of the apostles will shrink from the following in their footsteps.

As strange and shocking as it may seem, few preachers of the gospel face more heartaches and greater danger of compromise and selling their own souls and those who hear them, than those who minister to rich and popular congregations, who dare their ministers to condemn and expose their sins and cry out against their luxury and ease. They worship the gods of gold and silver and will not tolerate interference. Their preacher must be a traitor to the "man of sorrows" or be abused and cast out with Him. It is the moral and spiritual battles that try men's souls, especially that of the minister who dares to represent God in the face of great odds. One who is popular with

such luxurious people cannot be right with God. He who seeks a life of pleasure and ease must not enter the ministry unless he chooses to sell his soul and those who hear his words.

If we look at the entire history of the Christian church, and contrast the ages of progress with those of stagnation and decay, we find that self-denial and self-sacrifice in the ministry characterize the times of progress, while worldliness and self-seeking mark the days of weakness and failure. Hear it: When the church affairs are conducted on the principle that the ministry exists for the sake of the church and the world, there is victory. When it is assumed that the church exists for the sake of the ministry, there is defeat. When walls are built about the churches and conferences to protect and care for the ministers, selfishness rides out over love for others. "The Son of man came not to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" -- others. Ministers must follow His example if souls are to be saved.

If those who have entered the ministry begin to heed the whispers of the world and self, and to struggle for the world and self, they are losing the spirit of God. "The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."

We knew of a strong church in a certain conference which was open for a new pastor, and thirteen other pastors felt especially called of God to that pastorate? "Thirteen" was certainly an "unlucky number" there. He is like a hireling who is busy calculating the weight of the fleece and anxiously inquiring in regards to the state of the market, the size and kind of parsonage, etc.

However, there is none so criminal as the congregation which possess all the wealth and advantages of the community and yet, allows their pastor and his family to suffer want. "If we love not our brother whom we now see, how can we love God whom we have not seen?" "We are to bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." The church should provide for the home of the pastor, so that he may give his time and strength to the souls of his people. If he ministers to them spiritual things, they should take care of his material needs.

Neither the pastor nor the church should live for self, nor sell out their soul for the praise and support of the other. In these closing days of time, let us all live for God and others. Let us put God first, then others next. Those who live for self, live for only one, while those who live for others live for many. Then let us all love God with all our soul, mind and strength and then love our neighbors as ourselves, and all will turn out right, here and in Heaven. Eternal life is far more important than a few short years on earth.

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THE END