

The Presbyterian

GUARDIAN

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JESUS was gradually preparing twelve men for the glorious task of bearing witness unto him in the world. He was planning to give unto them his Spirit. That Spirit was to lead them into the truth. Guided by that Spirit they were officially, in the name of Christ, to tell men who he was and what he had come to do in the world.

Ere long, after the resurrection, one of the twelve would stand fearlessly before the priests, the captain of the temple and the Sadducees, and say: "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:11-12).

Whence this boldness? Was it now safe to bear witness to the name of Jesus? Certainly not! Imprisonment and a martyr's death—they knew it all too well—likely awaited them.

What was the secret then? They now knew, with a knowledge of absolute conviction, that Jesus was the Son of God. "But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye" (Acts 4:19).

In the light of this conviction their three years of training with Jesus took on new meaning. The things that they had seen and heard were now to them the deeds and words of the Son of God. The world *must* hear of what he had said and done. "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

Prayer for Bold Speaking

When forbidden to speak they poured out their hearts to God the Father. "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done" (Acts 4:27-28).

"And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31). Then men took note of them that they had been with Jesus.

To speak the word of God with boldness, that will also be your task.

A Ministry Without Anxiety

By C. VAN TIL

To proclaim the name of Jesus as the only name under heaven given among men, whereby they must be saved, that is also your assignment.

Does the magnitude of this task overwhelm you? Does it seem utterly unlikely that, in the midst of the clamor of a secularized culture and the false faith of an apostate church, your voice should be heard at all? Then note how the Apostles too were overwhelmed, and hear what Jesus said unto them.

"And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith" (Luke 17:5). Note the agony that comes to expression in these few words.

Increase Our Faith

Only gradually had it begun to dawn upon them that they were to be official interpreters and witness-bearers of all that they had seen and heard. They were not to be the merely passive recipients, with many others, of a great future for their nation. The kingdom of heaven of which they had heard Jesus speak was not to be a kingdom of external and national proportions only. Judas thought it would be that and finally committed suicide. He saw not who the king of this kingdom was till it was too late.

But on the others there came the gradual dawning of the light. When the paralytic borne of four was healed by Jesus they exclaimed: "We have seen strange things today." They heard him read in the synagogue at Nazareth from the prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" and then, after closing the book heard him say: "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:18-19; 21). What did he mean by saying this, they asked themselves.

When John the Baptist sent unto Jesus and asked: "Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?" (Luke 7:20) did they realize what Jesus meant in his reply to John?

"Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, who-soever shall not be offended in me" (Luke 7:22-23).

Things Seen and Heard

These strange things that they had seen and heard were done and said by this strange, this different man, their Master. "Master, Master, we perish!" they cried in the storm on the lake. "Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm" (Luke 8:24). On that occasion their Master said to them, "Where is your faith?" And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, "What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him" (Luke 8:24-25).

Oh yes, they believed! But how they doubted still. The strange things they saw and heard took on new significance for them now as they were seen to proceed from him who was Lord of life and of death, who drove even the demons from the hearts of men.

And what marvel this? Jesus "gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick" (Luke 9:1-2). Not mere passive recipients of the Master's favor, but positive, authoritative ambassadors for him, for his name, for his power to drive Satan and all his works from the hearts of men, such was to be their task.

Humble and Forgiving

How carefully and prayerfully did the Master prepare them for this task. Would they boast in their authority to drive forth demons from the hearts of men, to tread on serpents and scorpions, in their power "over all the power of the enemy"? (Luke 10:19). Then the Saviour tells them: "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20).

Would they deal harshly with the little lambs of the flock? Then Jesus tells them that it were better that a mill-stone be hanged about their necks and that they be cast into the sea than that they should offend one of his little ones.

Will they be proud of their office and thus become unforgiving toward their fellow-believers in Christ? Then Jesus tells them to forgive their brethren again and again. All this accounts for the great urgency of their prayer to increase their faith. The disciples begin to realize that the coming of the kingdom is bound up with their Master as the King. They have seen how the Scribes and Pharisees have tried to reduce their Master to the level of a fanatic who must be put out of the way. Will they dare to stand up for him at all costs?

Is it wonder that they cry out: "Lord, increase our faith?" How will they be able to lead the multitude, stand up to an apostate church, defy the demons and control their own unholy passions? Only if they have a *great* faith, they think.

Prevalent Falsehood

How will *you* be able to proclaim the only name under heaven given among men by which men must be saved? The rulers of the church of our day, no less than those of Jesus' day, will seek to reduce your Christ to an instance of a class. There was Buddha. There was Socrates. There was Mohammed. And there was Jesus. Do they not all illustrate, you will be told, the principle, that is a law, by which pioneers in religion appear upon the scene of history? Surely Jesus must have honorable mention in the list of pioneers of religion that have appeared, but his is not the *only* name by which men must be saved, they allege.

And from what do these pioneers of religion save the common run of men? Not from sin. There is no sin; there is only libido. There is no wrath of God to come; there is only a sense of guilt, a left-over from man's animal ancestry. There is no God who rules over all; there is only the idea of a 'God' developed in the course of human evolution. Therefore Jesus Christ is not the Son of God; he did not cast out demons. He did not forgive sins. And if he did anything for any man he did it for all men from all eternity so that none of them

Dr. Van Til, Professor of Apologetics in Westminster Theological Seminary, gave this address to the 1959 graduates at the commencement exercises in May. It has a message of far wider application, however.

ever were lost or could be lost. The modern 'Christ' has no *little ones* who must not be offended. And to forgive one another means only to recognize that no one has ever done anything wrong in the first place! Thus many teach today.

Surely you who have spent three years with Jesus here, at this school, not merely so as to see and hear the great things that he did and said, but to prepare yourself for the task of proclaiming his name unto men, will you not today cry out in agony of soul: "Lord, increase our faith."

Hear then the all-sufficing answer of the Saviour. "And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you." The Lord does not question the genuineness of the faith of his disciples. He assures them that the faith that he has given them is enough for their seemingly impossible task.

The Saviour knows that for them the task is impossible. It is as impossible spiritually as the transplanting of a large, deep-rooted tree would be physically. Do you not think your task to be impossible? Would you be able to lift any of the large rocks that even a twenty-five ton crane cannot handle? Yet, do not be discouraged. Do not rush for a large mallet in order with great violence to crush those rocks. Your whole lifetime might be spent and you yourself be exhausted before you had done more than break off a few chips.

Ambassadors for Christ

It is faith in *your Christ* that will do with utmost ease what for you is utterly impossible. Faith, that is, in the Christ of the Apostles. Not faith in the modern Christ. The modern Christ is as powerless as you find yourself to be. But the Christ of the Apostles is the Creator of all, and Lord of all. He has defeated Satan. He has redeemed his people from the wrath to come. He will make all things work together for good for those who love him, who are the

called according to his purpose.

Faith in *this* Christ enables you to be ever-forgiving. Faith in him will make you ever solicitous for his little ones. Faith in him will enable you to stand fearlessly before those who have usurped rule in the church and yet would depose the head of the church. Faith, as a grain of mustard seed, will enable you to defy the hosts of hell.

What is impossible with men is possible with God. He who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. After his resurrection, the Apostles could not but speak the things they had seen and heard. Their fearlessness in doing so amazed the religious leaders of the day. Their boldness in proclaiming the name of Christ, built up the little ones for whom Christ died. Their boldness gave them a true humility and a forgiving spirit.

May you undertake your task in your day with such faith in Christ, the all-conquering, the all-victorious Christ, to the amazement of unbelief, to the establishment of his church and to the praise of the Father.

La Habra Reception

On Sunday afternoon, May 17th, at a special service attended by over one hundred Orthodox Presbyterians of the Los Angeles area, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of La Habra was publicly received as the twentieth congregation of the Presbytery of California. It was an inspiring occasion, another milestone for the group which began meeting three years ago under the leadership of the Rev. Robert E. Nicholas, then a home missionary of the Presbytery.

Meeting first in a Boy Scout building and currently in the Townsend Hall, the group of worshippers has grown from a grandmother and her grandchildren to an average of fifty. Of this group, seventeen adults petitioned the Presbytery of California to be constituted a particular congregation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, with Mr. Robert Essig as elder-elect, and Messrs. Sidney Cram and Charles Chrisman and Dr. Terry Spencer as deacons-elect. Presbytery granted this request, and asked that the session of the Beverly Orthodox Presbyterian Church serve as the session of the new congregation until its