

THE CROSS AS A PROCLAMATION

~Other Speakers G-L: Jessie Penn Lewis:

"T HE word of the Cross is the dunamis of God," said the Apostle Paul. Dr. Mabie points out that the Greek word here is Logos, or Word-not preaching, as in the A.V. It is the same used of Christ Himself in John I: 1. "In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God." The Greek Lexicon gives the meaning of Logos as (1) The Word by which the inward thought is expressed, and (2) the inward thought itself. Christ the Son of God in Himself is God's 'Word' to the world-His 'Inward thought' expressed (Hebrews 1: 3); and He is God's inward thought itself clothed in terms of humanity. The 'Logos' of the Cross is also God's 'inward thought expressed' of the only way in which He could save fallen man, and re-create him in the image of Christ. The Logos of the Cross therefore contains in itself the power of God. It is dynamic-and through it the Holy Spirit manifests the energizing ability of God to save. It is not the 'preaching' of the Cross which is the power, but the Word of the Cross, and it is this 'Word of the Cross' which is to be proclaimed to a fallen and lost world, as a message from God, announced as a herald ANNOUNCES A PROCLAMATION by an earthly king.

This can be traced out in the epistles of Paul. "I proclaimed to you" (I Thessalonians 2: 9) he said, "the message which I bore". Conybeare's footnote says, "The original word involves the idea of a herald proclaiming a message". Again in Titus 1: 3, "He made known His word in due season, in the message (lit. proclamation) committed to my trust by the command of God our Saviour". And Galatians 1: 16: "When it pleased Him ... to reveal His Son in me, that I might proclaim His Glad Tidings".

A 'proclamation' requires a 'herald', so the Apostle writes to Timothy, "The glad tidings, whereunto I was appointed herald" (2 Timothy I: 11). "Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself a ransom for all men, to be testified to in due time. And of this testimony I was appointed herald" (I Timothy 2: 6, 7). All these passages show the 'herald' nature of Paul's preaching of the Cross.

Now as to the terms of the proclamation. It is (1) the 'Word' Of THE CROSS. "The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks demand philosophy; but we proclaim a Messiah crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks a folly . . ." (I Corinthians 1: 22, 23); and (2) the Word of the Cross, with its twin-part of the resurrection. "Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, is raised from the dead, according to the Glad Tidings which I proclaim" (2 Timothy 2: 8). Here we have the two-fold message of the Cross stated as the terms of the proclamation. (1) A Messiah crucified, and (2) a Messiah raised from the dead. Calvary and the Resurrection. Not one without the other. A real physical death and a real physical resurrection.

Then (3) as to the responsibility of the 'Herald' to 'proclaim' the message. We find this in I Corinthians 9: 15, where Paul writes about himself, "Although I proclaim the glad tidings, this gives me no ground of boasting; for I am compelled to do so by order of my Master. Yes, woe is me if I proclaim it not. For were my service of my own free choice, I might claim wages to reward my labour; but since I serve by compulsion, I am a slave, entrusted with a stewardship". This is strong language, but Paul uses it to show the Corinthians the Divine compulsion upon him, and how solemn the trust committed to him. They understood in those days how absolutely a slave had to obey his master. Although the Apostle served of his own free will, yet as concerned his message, the constraint upon him put him in the same place as a slave. He felt that he might not even do his work primarily for 'wages'! He had to fulfil his trust whether he had 'wages' or not. Oh that the same sense of being constrained by God to 'herald' His message, might take hold of each of His redeemed ones, producing that white-heat fire within, which makes them reckless about themselves, so long as they fulfil their stewardship. God will see to it that you get your 'wages'. "No man goeth a warfare at his own charges." God is a poor master, and a strange 'King' if He sends out His heralds without being able to provide for them. But God is a King, sending out a 'proclamation' to the world, and He sees to the supplies of those He truly sends. It often looks like madness to believe this, but the madness of really trusting God is the highest wisdom. "I proclaim" because "I am compelled" said the Apostle.

Next, as to the place of the 'proclamation' in relation to other truth. "Christ sent me forth as His Apostle, not to baptize, but to publish the glad tidings" (I Corinthians I : 17). The external ordinances were secondary in importance to the proclamation of the Message. In the mission field, therefore, the primary work of the missionaries is not to get so many heathen 'baptized' and entered on a church roll, but to publish the glad tidings.

And as to the language and the way in which the proclamation is to be given. "Not with wisdom of word, lest thereby the Cross of Christ shall be made void." The proclamation does not need the adornment of beautiful words, and oratorical display of language. It has only to be proclaimed in its bare simplicity, for it is the 'Word' of the Cross which is the power of God, not words about it. Here is stated also the solemn fact that the message

which contains the mighty power of God, can be rendered 'void', or powerless, by the preacher. The words which the human 'wisdom' of the natural man thinks necessary to make the message acceptable, have actually the contrary result, in making void the power of the Cross itself. This explains why to-day there is so little result even when the Gospel is preached. So few really believe that the 'I Word' itself, simply stated, has in it the 'power of God'. They are not willing to be simple transmitters of the written Word. They want to preach 'sermons' about the Cross-rather than simply PROCLAIM it!

How did Paul fulfil his commission, as a 'herald' with a 'proclamation?' "When I came among you, and declared to you the testimony of God, I came not with surpassing skill of speech, or wisdom. For no knowledge did I purpose to display among you, but the knowledge of Jesus Christ alone, and Him crucified" (I Corinthians 2: 4). And then he adds, "In my intercourse with you, I was filled with weakness". Oh Paul, have you not mistaken the word? Did you not mean that you were filled with power? No. "I was filled with weakness, and fear and much trembling." Conybeare's footnote points out that this peculiarly Pauline expression means a 'trembling anxiety to perform a duty'. The 'anxious conscientiousness' of a 'slave'.

When the solemnity of the trust and the vital character of the Message of the Cross is realized by anyone, it is bound to produce that 'trembling anxiety' lest he should fail God, or become unfitted for the Holy Ghost to use him with the message. "And when I proclaimed my message," the Apostle continues, "I did use not persuasive words of human wisdom, but shewed forth the working of God's Spirit and power, that your faith might have its foundation not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." Here it is again. Paul deliberately avoiding using 'persuasive words'. Human influence and 'persuasion' is not needed in addition to the 'power of God'. The herald simply has to be carefully exact in transmitting the proclamation. Then the responsibility is with God, and those who hear it. Is it not strange to be using words all about the things of earth to draw men to God, instead of simply heralding forth God's proclamation?

What about the urgency of the proclamation? How Paul laboured to prepare Timothy to carry on the work when he knew that his departure was at hand. Listen to his last solemn words to him. "I adjure thee before God and Jesus Christ ... Proclaim the tidings, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, exhort, with all forbearance and perseverance in teaching. For a time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine, but according to their own inclinations, they will heap up for themselves teachers upon teachers to please their itching ears. And they will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside to fables." So the aged Paul was under no misconception as to the attitude of many to the truth of the Gospel after he had gone-especially in the latter days in which we are now living. Nevertheless, "I adjure thee ... PROCLAIM" is written to us as well as to Timothy.

The passion of his message was in Paul to the very end. The one thing he cared about was his stewardship. When he looks back upon his sufferings, all is swallowed up in the fact that he had accomplished his ministry. "When I was first heard in my defence, no man stood by me, but all forsook me; (I pray that it may not be laid to their charge). Nevertheless, the Lord Jesus stood by me, and strengthened my heart, that by me the proclamation of the glad tidings might be accomplished in full measure, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the lion's mouth" (2 Timothy 4: 16, 17) he writes.

Let us finally take a glimpse into the inner life of the Apostle so that the spirit of it may get into us, and urge us forward to 'proclaim' the Word of the Cross with new perception of its urgency and its power. The Apostle's words to the elders at Miletus show us vividly the spirit of his labours. "Brethren, ye know yourselves ... after what manner I have been with you throughout the time; serving the Lord Jesus with all lowliness of mind, and with many tears and trials which befell me through the plotting of the Jews. And how I kept back none of those things which are profitable to you.... And now, as for me, behold I go to Jerusalem, in spirit foredoomed to chains; yet I know not the things which shall befall me there, save that in every city the Holy Spirit gives the same testimony, that bonds and afflictions abide in me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus to testify the Glad-tidings" (Acts 20: 18-24)

In 2 Corinthians 6: 4-10, we have a glimpse into his service as a herald. "I commend myself as one who ministers to God's service; in steadfast endurance, in afflictions, in necessities, in stripes, in imprisonments ... as ever dying, yet behold I live; as chastened by suffering, yet not destroyed; as sorrowful, yet ever filled with joy; as poor, yet making many rich." Then in 2 Corinthians 4 we see how he handled the Word of God. He said, "I have renounced the secret dealings of shame, I walk not in the paths of cunning, I adulterate not the Word of God: but openly setting forth the truth, as in the sight of God, I commend myself to the conscience of all men". Keen as Paul was to win souls to Christ, he used no cunning schemes to reach them. Oh the dishonourable things that are done to get hold of converts, or 'members' for a church! Many are disguised under the idea of

lawful 'guile' or 'wisdom' for the reaching of the people. But Paul boldly depended upon an open, straightforward proclamation of the Word of the Cross, believing it to be the 'power of God'. He 'openly set forth the truth' in such a way that the consciences of men were reached, both by the plain honest statement of his message, and the transparent clearness of his life,

All that is of God can be openly proclaimed to all. There are no degrees of 'initiation' in the Church of God. There are different stages of growth in knowledge, but no 'secret truths' which cannot be proclaimed to the whole world. Oh for this bold, straightforward, open declaration of the Word of God, relying upon it as the power of God. May we all be saved from cunning scheming under the guise of 'making known the truth'. There should be no 'sheep-stealing', no 'proselytizing' and no 'planning' to get hold of this one and that one. Let us openly proclaim God's message in the simple terms of the Scriptures, assured of the co-working of God.

The apostasy of the visible church can alone be countered by the proclamation of the Word of the Cross, with the spirit of, and in the way Paul proclaimed it. Is the 'apostasy' amongst the people in the pews, or is it in the pulpits? Will God condemn the 'sheep' or the 'shepherds' charged with feeding the flock? Those who have to face the people who sit under the apostasy of the pulpit, and afresh lift up the banner of the Cross, need to get a new faith and a fresh vision from God. Then consider the way in which the Gospel of the Cross should be proclaimed. Let us ask why there is so much apparent preaching of the Gospel which has so little result? Is there something wrong about the way in which it is presented? Some time ago when I was pondering over this, a leaflet came into my hands in which the writer said that the great need today was that souls should be invited to 'come to the Risen Lord'. And then I saw the weakness in this way of preaching the Gospel. Let me put it as a question to those who are preachers and teachers. Is the Gospel of the Cross to be proclaimed thus: The Lord Christ died instead of sinners on Calvary, and having completed the work of redemption, He went back to heaven, and now His messengers, on the ground of what He did at Calvary, are to call sinners to the Risen Christ? Or is it an absolute necessity that the Holy Ghost should make Christ's death at Calvary so real to each sinner who needs salvation, that they realize first His death for them, and then come to Him as a Living Saviour?

The first method practically eliminates the Cross. For thousands of people 'come to Christ' who do not realize at all the fact of His death for them. The result is that many of these souls give little evidence of regeneration—they are not radically changed, and made new creatures in Christ. There is a subtle and strange omission of the preaching of the Cross because of this emphasis upon the Risen Lord. He is the Living Saviour, but - we do not come to Him only through His merits, and even on the ground of His work at Calvary, but that death on Calvary must be made real to us by the Holy Spirit, so that we see our part in it, and know that we are born into a new life through His death as our Substitute.

Galatians 3: 1 emphasizes this in a very vivid way. "Oh senseless Galatians, who has bewitched you?" writes the Apostle, "You, before whose eyes was held up the picture of Jesus Christ upon the Cross". This is the literal sense, says Conybeare, and Lightfoot uses the word 'placarded'. This was the way Paul preached. He 'proclaimed' the 'Word of the Cross as the power of God' and he 'placarded' Jesus Christ upon His Cross before the Galatians, so that, as it were, they saw the crucifixion with their very eyes. This is the message to be proclaimed, just as if you went out as a herald, saying "A proclamation from heaven—He was lifted up on the Cross for you. BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD !"

Then lastly, a 'herald' does not proclaim his message in a feeble voice, or in a timid self-conscious way! Let us not fear to lift up the voice like a trumpet. The trumpet that God uses now is the voice of one who will be a herald, and messenger, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which I beareth away the sin of the world".

The Cross of Calvary

Note: The following summary of texts showing the difference between the experimental application of the 'Cross' and the 'Blood' to the believer, is given to make clear that when the Word speaks of one it does not mean the other.

1. The Place of Sin-bearing by the Substitute.

I. He "bare our sins . . . on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness. . . ." (I Peter 2: 24)

2. The Place of Reconciliation "Reconciled by His death. . . ." (Romans 5: 10)

II. The Place of the 'sinner' crucified.

I. Our "old man crucified with Him . . . that henceforth ... not serve " sin" (Romans 6: 6)

2. "I ... crucified with Christ ... not I but Christ liveth in me. . . ." (Galatians 2: 20)

3. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh..." (Galatians 5: 24)

4. "The world ... crucified to me. . . ." (Galatians 6: 14)

III. The Place of Unity between believers.

"Reconcile both ... by the Cross having slain the enmity thereby. . . ." (Ephesians 2: 16)

IV. The Place of the Overthrow of Satan.

"Principalities and powers, He made a shew of... triumphing over them .[i.e., through the cross] (Colossians 2: 15) (See John 12: 3 1 ; 16: 1 1)

V. The Death of the Cross applied to the believer.

"We who died. . . ." (Romans 6: 2, R.V.) "Discharged ... having died." (Romans 7: 6, R.V.) "Ye died with Christ. (Colossians 2: 20, R.V.) "For ye died. (Colossians 3: 3, R.V.m.) "For if we died with Him, we shall also live. .(2 Timothy 2: 1 1, R.V.)

VI. The death of the 'Substitute' the death of the sinner.

"One died for all, therefore all died. . . ." (2 Corinthians 5: 14, R.V.)

VII. The Continuity of the 'Cross' for every believer as well as the continued application of the Blood.

"Always delivered unto death ... that the life also of Jesus manifested might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but LIFE in you...." (2 Corinthians 4: 10- 12; 1 Peter I : 19)

The Precious Blood of Christ

I. The Outpoured Blood.

I . As Propitiation (Romans 3: 25)

2. As Redemption (I Peter I: 19; Ephesians 1: 7)

3. As a 'Purchase' Price (Acts 20: 28)

4. As the ground of peace (Colossians I: 20)

5. As the ground of Justification,' i.e., the sinner declared guiltless (Romans 5: 9)

II. The Blood within the veil.

I. Christ entered through the Blood (Hebrews 9: 12) (See Hebrews 9: 7; 9: 22)

2. Believers have access by the Blood (Hebrews 10: 19)

3. Believers are "made nigh by the Blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2: 13)

III. The Blood applied to the believer.

i. The type of 'sprinkling' for remission of sin (Hebrews 9: 18-23) (See also Hebrews 12: 22-24)

2. The Blood to the conscience (Hebrews 9: 14) (See also Hebrews 10: 22)

3. The Blood 'sanctifying' or setting apart for God (Hebrews 13:12)

THE CROSS AS A PROCLAMATION

4. The Blood of the covenant the ground of God's work in the soul (Hebrews 13: 20, 21)

5. Loosed us from our sins in His Blood . . ." (Revelation 1: 5, R.V.m.)

IV. The condition for the perpetual application of the Blood

"If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the Blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin . . ." (1 John 1: 7)

V. The Blood of the Lamb applied by the Spirit of God, the weapon of victory over Satan.

"They overcame him by the Blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death . . ." (Revelation 12: 11).