

Morning Bible Study

Monday, May 31, 8:45 A. M.

BY MEADE MACGUIRE

I WILL read a verse from the eighth chapter of Jeremiah, the last verse:

"Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of My people recovered?"

It seems to me this verse should come home to us as a very practical appeal this morning. "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" This implies that the people of God are sick, and they are not recovering; and the pathetic question is asked, "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?"

I believe that it is a practical question, because many of the professed people of God are sick. I am going to read from two documents, just a few sentences to confirm this statement. First, from the spirit of prophecy, in an article from the REVIEW AND HERALD:

"The power of the Holy Spirit is needed to chase away our unbelief and unchristlike attributes. We must see our need of a physician. We are sick, and do not know it. May the Lord convert the hearts of His workmen. When there is a converted ministry, then look for results."

"We are sick, and do not know it." There is not one of us who does not deplore his lack of spiritual power, and his lack of success in winning a large number of souls to Christ. Probably there is not one of us who does not often long for power in dealing with individuals. We are baffled; we do not know what to do, because they seem to be in a condition which we are unable to remedy.

Again, in another article, dated Aug. 14, 1902, I read:

"Godliness is becoming more and more rare. Unless the divine leaven of renovation works in the church, little will be done to convert souls who will be not only consumers but producers. The church is now a vast hospital, filled with the spiritually sick."

That is certainly a very startling statement. I was thinking that if one of these dietitians gave a lecture to this congregation, he would not know whether or not any one here was sick. He could not tell, very likely, whether any one in this congregation was suffering and sick. I think it is possible for a minister to preach and preach and preach, and not understand or sense the spiritual condition of his hearers. They may be desperately sick, and he may not know it. There must be a contact outside of the pulpit, to find out whether the people are sick or well.

This statement says that our churches are "a vast hospital, filled with the spiritually sick." To use the physician again as an illustration: Many people might tell to a doctor their symptoms and needs without being able to describe them so accurately that the physician would not have to bring all his knowledge and skill to bear upon the case; yet I fancy that

occasionally, at least, a person is able to analyze his condition so clearly and so accurately that it is all the diagnosis that is necessary.

I find it so among people in spiritual things, and I am sure you do, that occasionally there is a person who diagnoses his own case very clearly and simply and accurately. I am going to read a letter which I think is one of the keenest diagnoses I ever heard:

"I have long wanted to talk to some one about my religious experience, some one whom I could tell exactly how I felt, and with the assurance that he would not look upon me with contempt ever after. You had a personal conference with me at one time, but I think you thought I was all right, perhaps a little careless. I did not tell you what was really on my mind, so if you will have patience with me, I will write you what I could not tell you.

"To begin with, you asked me if I was reared by Seventh-day Adventist parents. I was, and they were sincere Christians. I took most of my academic work in an academy, and have spent some time here at the college. I have no fault to find with either the academy or the college; both are very good and have many earnest young people; but sad to say, there are many who feel, at least in a measure, as I do.

"I attend vespers, Sabbath school, church, and prayer bands, and take an active part in each. I do not mean to be a hypocrite, but I feel as if I am in a trap. When I first went away to school, I decided that it was time for me to be a Christian, and though I did not feel religious, I felt it my duty to align myself with the religious activities of the school, thinking that if I did this, the real experience would come later. Do not think that I wished to make a big profession, for I did not, but I felt that was where I wished to stand.

"The experience did not come. I do not really enjoy the things that a Christian should enjoy. I go for weeks without personal prayer. I tried to have a time set apart for this and performed private devotions for a period, thinking I would learn to enjoy it, but I do not. It seems as if I am talking to myself. I read my Bible, and there are parts that I really enjoy, but when I stop to analyze, I find I enjoy it only from a literary standpoint.

"I have often had girls come to me to talk about their religious experience, and out of my blank personal experience have tried to answer them and introduce them to a Friend that I do not know personally, but just by hearsay. My testimonies in vespers express a desire rather than a victory. I think at times that I will never take part again, for it gives people a wrong impression of me. I think I might as well give it all up, and quit pretending, but I do believe the underlying principles of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.

"The things I am writing you are not the result of a day's thought, but that of months. I wish you could help me in some way. Miss — told me to read 'Steps to Christ.' I have read it, and that more than once, but it is like the other things. Elder — told us in worship not long ago that when he felt himself slipping, there were

three things he did: He prayed, he read his Bible, and he tried to help some one else. That is very good, but I have tried it, and it is all formal. Perhaps the Spirit of God has left me. I am past the adolescent age, so do not think that would account for my feeling as I do. If you have time to write and can help me, I should really appreciate it. Next week is our Week of Prayer, and I wish it might be different from other such occasions."

Dear fellow workers, this is a remarkable analysis of the condition of hundreds and hundreds of our young people, and of many of our older people. There is so much today that is artificial, so much that is superficial, so much that is theoretical, that there is coming into the hearts of those who are sincere, a great cry after reality, a great longing for a real experience. Theory does not satisfy, and the knowledge of the truth, however precious that truth may be, does not give them personal victory.

I am convinced, so far as I am concerned, that the value of my ministry may be judged very largely by my ability, through the blessing of God, to make Christianity real to people, to lift them out of the merely theoretical and abstract into the actual experience that makes the Bible the most fascinating book, because they find Jesus in it; that makes prayer the most fascinating exercise, because it means fellowship and communion with Him; and that makes service the only thing worth living for, because in it they have fellowship with Jesus.

I have long been impressed with the fact that the remedy is very simple, and I am sure that in my early ministry I missed a great deal because I did not know how simple the remedy is. I did not understand as I do now what Jesus meant when He said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It didn't seem possible that it could be as simple as that.

Perhaps it can be summed up in those two brief expressions from "Steps to Christ," "Giving all, and taking all."

We may surrender by just laying down our arms, just stopping resistance, stopping rebellion; but that is not going far enough to bring reality into the Christian life. Thousands of people have surrendered that way. When I have talked to congregations about giving all, and then we have a social meeting, and people get up and say, "I surrender all to the Lord today," I have had to say, "Brother, you are not talking about what I have been talking about at all. You are talking about surrender; I am talking about something away beyond surrender."

Let me read three or four scriptures that have made much more real to me this matter of a relation to Christ which goes away beyond mere surrender to Him. The first is Philip-pians 1: 20, where Paul says:

"According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body."

It is my earnest expectation and my hope that Christ shall be magnified in my body. I like to call attention

to that word "magnify," so that you will think of a magnifying glass, through which many things are made visible which we do not see at all with the naked eye. Paul says, "It is my earnest expectation that people shall look at me and see Jesus"—people who never saw Him before, or would not see Him otherwise, save by looking at me. Christ is magnified, enlarged, made visible, in my body.

The next scripture is 1 Corinthians 6: 20:

"Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body."

Make God glorious in your body. When studying this in the schools, very often some young person has arisen and said, "This brings a new idea to me. I have long tried to serve God with my heart, but I thought I could do about as I pleased with my body."

Paul says, "It is my earnest expectation and hope to magnify Jesus in my body." He says, "Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body."

The next text is 2 Corinthians 4: 10.

"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."

It seems too bad to pass that verse, for there is enough for an hour's study in each of those expressions. Brethren and sisters, is that first expression real to us, "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus"? What do you know about that as a real, personal experience? for the last part of the verse cannot precede that. We must bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus before the life of Jesus can be made manifest in our body. I am sure that the greatest ambition or aspiration any of us has is that the life of Jesus may be manifest in our body; but it cannot be unless we are always bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus. Let us pray that God may make us understand what that means, and may we enter into the experience.

Now in order that I may truly magnify Christ in my body and glorify God in my body and manifest the life of Christ in my body, it is necessary for me to do one thing, which is presented in Romans 12: 1:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

That verse goes beyond the word "surrender" as we ordinarily use it. "Present your bodies." "Surrender" may be merely passive; this presentation is very active. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice." If you have never tried this, I believe what I am suggesting will bring to you a distinct experience, something different, as it does to me day by day. When I present my body to the Lord with the desire and the great hope and expectation that Christ shall be magnified in it and God shall be glorified in it and the life of Jesus shall be manifest in it, I understand that consecration to include every organ of my body—my hands, my feet, my lips, my every sense; and I say it brings a distinct experience to me in the morning, or

at any time during the day, to look down at my hands and say, "Lord Jesus, these are your hands. I have no claim upon them at all. I have given them to you. These feet are your feet, and I want you to treat them and use them today as fully as if no one else had any claim upon them whatever but yourself."

That brought a distinct, wonderful experience to me. Then I said, "Jesus, my voice is Thine. Communicate to me Thy will moment by moment, and by Thy grace I will co-operate in using this voice of Thine whenever Thou dost say, and keeping it still when Thou dost want me to." It is all summed up in one expression in that self-dedication of Jonathan Edwards, where he says, "I have given myself clear away, and have not retained anything as my own."

The more I try to cultivate day by day the reality of that consecration, the more I say to my Saviour, "Jesus, I now again this moment give myself clear away, and I want you to treat me this next hour as if I belonged entirely to you, and no one else had any claim to any part of me," it helps me, and the experience becomes more and more real.

I often say to young people who come to me begging that in some way Christ may be made real, "My child, Jesus will never be real to you until you treat Him as if He were real. When you begin to act as if He were real, He will be with you, and you can talk to Him as a real person. But when you ask Him in the morning to be with you all day, and then never think to pray again until you go to bed at night, you are not treating Jesus as a real person. You would not treat your mother that way, or any friend; because your mother is real to you, and your friend is real to you. Jesus will be real to you when you begin to treat Him as a real person.

I have been talking about giving all. Now a word about taking all. The verse that always comes to our minds first is John 1: 12: "As many as received Him, to them gave He power." I like to stop there. We need more power. The young people say, "I cannot be victorious; I do not seem to have power." But the Scripture says, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power." We must teach the young people that when they receive Jesus, power comes; power comes with Him, in Him. It is not a theory; the power is in the Person. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power."

Now, coming back to that question of surrender: How do you receive Him?—Not by surrendering. Surrendering is not receiving, asking is not receiving. It does not say that as many as asked for Him, or as many as surrendered to Him; but "as many as received Him, to them gave He power." I think that is where the confusion comes with many. They surrender, and then they ask, but they do not receive; so they are conscious all the time of weakness and helplessness, failure and defeat. Receiving Him is a definite act of faith. It is by definite, determined co-operation with God, accepting, claiming, appropriating the things that He promises, that makes it a reality to us.

When Jesus ascended, we are told, He asked His Father for the greatest gift it was in the power of God to give for the exaltation of His people,—that is the gift of the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Deity, came down as Christ's personal representative and successor; and He is here now. I understand that when a young man down here comes and gives all to Christ, and accepts all, or appropriates all, Jesus says to the Spirit, who is here, "This young man has given himself to Me; will you go to Him and take possession of My property?" To me that is a most blessed thought. Jesus says to the Spirit, who is here as His representative, "You go now and take entire possession of My property; that young man belongs to Me henceforth. Take possession of his hands, his feet, his eyes, his ears, his voice, his whole being, and just possess the man and use him for Me."

Don't you see, brethren and sisters, that if the young man can be given that vision, that understanding of how completely God appropriates the gift and takes possession, there will not be this terrible failure and defeat, this feeling all the time, "I cannot do it; it is too great. The standard is too high; I cannot reach it. The temptations are too great." All that is immediately forgotten in the realization that now I am possessed by a divine Being who is almighty; I just yield myself to Him. The young man can have the consciousness of that constant passiveness in the hands of the Holy Spirit, who is to make Christ a reality.

Now just a few brief statements as to what further the Holy Spirit does when He is given entire possession. He gives a new comprehension of spiritual things. Many of the young people today, it must be admitted, have a very materialistic mold of mind. They are not naturally inclined to spiritual things, and they must be made to understand simply and clearly that when they make this presentation to God and He takes possession of the faculties of the mind and heart, the Holy Spirit, by a definite act of divine power, recreates those spiritual faculties and powers so as to awaken a new comprehension and apprehension of spiritual things. The person is now capable of enjoying what before was dry and tasteless to him.

And the Holy Spirit gives victory over sin—personal victory. You know how strikingly that is brought out in the seventh and eighth chapters of Romans. In the seventh chapter there is pictured that heroic struggle of an earnest, conscientious man who is crying out after victory, and struggling and praying and working; the apostle uses the personal pronouns "I" and "me" and "mine" forty-five times. But he says nothing about the Spirit, and so the key-word to the chapter is, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

But in the eighth chapter the key-word is, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us," and the reason is that the Holy Spirit is mentioned nineteen times and "I" only twice. It is the Holy Spirit that gives victory.

I think, brethren and sisters, that we must in some way reach an acquaintance with the Holy Spirit that we have not had. It is through His power, His visitation upon us, that we are to finish the work. I do not mean that we need to study merely the theory about the Spirit, but to know more of the fellowship of the Spirit and the indwelling of the Spirit, for the Holy Spirit makes real the presence of Jesus. He makes real the deliverance from the power and dominion of sin. He makes real in us the love of God to the brethren and to the lost, and He brings to us the joy of service for Christ.

"Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of My people recovered?" Why is it, brethren and sisters, when God has made such abundant and full provision for a victorious people clothed with the righteousness of Jesus, why is it that we are so slow? May God help us to seek after Him in such a way that He will become real to us. The fault is ours. It is not God's. It seems to me that God will be greatly disappointed if we go away from this General Conference without having entered into a fellowship and relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit far more deep and full and complete than we have known in the past.

The Testimony Meeting

D. H. KRESS: I have been very much impressed with the subject this morning. Somehow I feel in meetings of this kind that I am really sitting at the feet of Jesus and learning of Him. I was especially impressed with the thought of making this matter of bringing souls to Christ simple. My mind went back many years to the work which I helped to start in the city of Chicago thirty-three years ago. I remember very well a man coming to me, a man under the influence of drink, one of the most unpromising subjects you could think of. I took him down, of course, as we did at that time, and cleaned him up, burned up the clothing which he had on, covered with filth, and bound up his wounds, for he was a mass of corruption from a terrible and incurable disease.

After doing so, I sat down with him and read to him a few verses from the Bible, and knelt and prayed with him. It was remarkable, the change which took place in that man's life. He gave up drink. I have not time to dwell upon it.

I said nothing to him about the use of tobacco. I thought it would be leading him a little too fast to attempt that; but some time later he said to me, "You don't smoke."

I said, "No," and he wanted to know why I didn't smoke. I told him my body was God's temple, that Christ in me would not smoke. He handed me his pipe and tobacco, and said he wouldn't smoke any more.

I said to him, "You will have a hard time to give it up."

He said, "No, that Book you gave me said that where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound."

He never mentioned tobacco to me again. That was evidence to my mind that that man had received Christ.

The reception of the word is declared to be the reception of Christ. It is by feeding upon the word that unconsciously our lives are changed. We are feeding upon Christ Himself. We cannot explain it, but there is a great simplicity about it. We are in danger of "darkening counsel by words without knowledge," of making it difficult for people to understand how they can approach Christ.

G. B. STARR: Just an illustration of the relationship between the human and the divine in this matter. The miner can dig the ore, he can wash off the earth from it, but he is powerless to separate the gold from the dross. The fire must do that. And the fire must be hot enough to melt it and separate it.

So the Holy Spirit of God must take us after we surrender, and as we surrender, and by its mighty power separate sin from the very smallest fiber of our being; from the heart and mind and affections, until we are fully separated from sin. Christ gave Himself for our sins, that He might redeem us from this evil world unto Himself, and make us separate; and He only can do that.

F. C. GILBERT: I am certainly glad for the message that has come to us this morning; and, brethren, my heart responds to it. I know that God has help for His people today, and I think Brother MacGuire has brought great light to us this morning when he told us that one reason why we do not receive more help is because Christ is not real to us.

I believe there is a Physician who will give us help if we are only in an attitude to receive it. Christ, I believe, is willing to do for His people today what He did nineteen hundred years ago,—what He did through His disciples, and what He did in His own person while here on earth.

I believe there is balm in Gilead. I believe the Lord Jesus Christ wants to give this help to us, and desires that we shall receive it. I believe we must receive it in God's way. The great longing of my heart is that God will help me so to yield my life to Him that I may receive this help and this balm, and, under God, be able to encourage others, that they, too, may receive it.

R. A. UNDERWOOD: Fourteen years ago, while in Ohio, I rented a little cottage. I was paying only \$5 a month. At the beginning of each month I paid in advance, sending the lady a check.

Two years ago I was in Ohio, at my old home, and a neighbor said, "My sister wants to see you, Mr. Underwood."

"All right, I will drop in."

So I went to see Mrs. Wilcox, and had a pleasant little talk with her. When I was getting ready to leave, she said, "Hold on, Mr. Underwood, I want to show you something."

She stepped to her bookcase and took out a check that I had given her twelve years before. I looked at it; saw it carried my signature, and that her name was on the back of it.

I said, "My lady, haven't you drawn this check?"

"No."

I said, "Why, it ought to be good, your name is on it."

"Well," she replied, "when I got that check, I put it in my drawer; it was covered with some leaflets, and it was nine years before I found it. I had forgotten all about it."

She sent it to the bank, but I had nothing there then, and it was returned to her, with the explanation that Mr. Underwood did have some money when that check was given, but that he hadn't any there now.

Her brother, a justice of the peace, told her that the check was outlawed, and wasn't worth anything, so she hadn't written to me.

I said, "What do you want me to do? pay you this with interest?"

"No," she said, "if you will give me its principal, I will be satisfied." She continued, "I thought perhaps it was outlawed, and you wouldn't pay it."

I said to the lady, "R. A. Underwood's name is never outlawed."

And, dear friends, when God signs a check or a promise, it never becomes null or void.

W. S. HYATT: Before this meeting closes I want to bear my testimony to the wonderful truths we have been listening to in this meeting, and also in the ministers' meeting, of "Christ in you, the hope of glory." I rejoice this morning in this blessed Jesus and what He has been doing for me. It is a wonderful privilege to be at this Conference—my first since 1905. And when one has been off in the dark regions of Africa and other parts of the world for years, it is a wonderful privilege.

I rejoice this morning in this great message that God has given us, that can save souls from the darkness of heathenism, and that is gathering out jewels to shine in His kingdom. I rejoice that He ever found me; and if Christ can save those poor souls, I know that He can save me. I have been trying, brethren, for a long time to make this thing very personal each morning, to settle this question with God, that I am His, that Christ saves me today; and when I close the day, that Christ has saved me from my sins that day.

As Brother MacGuire brought out the thought that when I rise in the morning my body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, that God is dwelling in me, I thought, "It is wonderful." Then when I close the day, the last thoughts are, "My body is the temple of the Holy Ghost." I cannot understand it, but, brethren, I do rejoice in this blessed truth this morning.

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THAT which above all other considerations should lead us to prize the Bible, is that in it is revealed to men the will of God. Here we learn the object of our creation, and the means by which that object may be attained. We learn how to improve wisely the present life, and how to secure the future life. No other book can satisfy the questionings of the mind or the cravings of the heart. By obtaining a knowledge of God's Word and giving heed thereto, men may rise from the lowest depths of degradation to become the sons of God, the associates of sinless angels.—"Counsels to Teachers," pp. 53, 54.