

GOOD NEWS

A Collection of Sermons

by

Sam Jones and Sam Small

Copyright © 1836

SERMON FOUR

I THESSALONIANS 1:1, 2
(Afternoon Service)

The services were conducted by the Rev. Dr. Lorimer, of the Immanuel Baptist Church, in the absence of the Rev. Dr. Henson, the pastor of the First Baptist Church, who was in Minneapolis. The services were opened with the singing of a hymn by the audience and a prayer by the Rev. Dr. Williamson, who, after the singing of a hymn by the congregation, was followed with prayer by the Rev. Mr. Tracey, assistant rector of Christ Reformed Episcopal Church. Dr. Lorimer then called upon the audience to stand

AND SING A HYMN

But when the audience had got safely through the first verse Sam Jones got up and told the audience to get down and hunt for their pocket-books, for a collection was to be taken; that the services would not be orthodox without a collection; that a good collection would show good will and good intentions on the part of the audience. Dr. Lorimer made a few remarks, bidding Mr. Sam Jones a hearty welcome to the church, and soliciting the private prayers of the audience for the success of his services.

Mr. Sam Jones then rose and spoke as follows: It is our purpose to meet promptly at 3 o'clock every day and dismiss at 4 o'clock.

I was betrayed into being late this afternoon by a good Methodist preacher, who said it would only take about half an hour for me to come here, while we were forty-five minutes coming, and that was the reason I was delayed. Let us meet promptly every afternoon at 3 o'clock, and we will dismiss you at 4 o'clock. I want you to feel easy at these services. I don't want you to feel under any restraint, or have any restraint at all. I want you to feel at perfect ease. Any minute that you want to get out, get out. You can consider the benediction as pronounced, and get out. We won't miss you, at least I won't. We want all of us to feel

PERFECTLY FREE AND EASY

and whenever you get your little cup full, that is the time for you to leave. You can leave instantly and nobody will notice you. I will surely not.

I can laugh and pray just as easily without them, and you can if you have the sort of religion you ought to have.

I will call your prayerful attention this afternoon to the following verses from Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians:

“Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians, which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ, grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers.”

I will only read these two verses now, and we will take up some of the remaining verses at some future services in the afternoon. But these two verses will suggest more than we will be able to get over this afternoon.

“Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus unto the church, of the Thessalonians!”

I have studied these epistles of Paul and Peter and John to the church with much interest, and, I trust, to some profit, and I came deliberately to this conclusion: that whatever may be said of the church of the first century, we must admit that it had power with God and influence over man.

And then I studied the church of this century in the light of the church of these epistles, and I found that just in so far as we are like the church of the first century we still have power with God and

INFLUENCE WITH MEN

And that in just so far as we have lost that likeness with the church of the first century, just in so far have we lost power with God and influence with men.

Now, I believe in a progressive theology, but I do not believe in a progressive Christianity. I believe it is possible we may now know more of God.

I believe it is possible that we may reach further out from God than the past generations of men; but you can never improve upon those Ten Commandments and upon the Sermon on the Mountain. You cannot beat them. And when Bob Ingersoll said of the Bible, “I could write a better book myself,” a good sister said to him, “You had better get at it, then. There's money in it.”

And there is. If he can beat the Sermon on the Mount and the Ten Commandments, he could make a fortune in a day, and many a shrewd man would have got up that trick had it been possible. I say we can improve theology. Thank God, it is getting filtered from year to year, and the oftener you filter it the better it is, and I am in favor of filtering theology, because every time it is filtered the better and clearer and purer it gets.

I have the same use for theology in the moral sense that I have for a telescope in astronomical science. I want a telescope in studying astronomy, because I can not only see the stars through it, but because it brings them down to me where I can examine them and name them. And so I want theology as a moral telescope, so that I can see God more clearly through it, and because it brings God and the angels clearly in sight, and brings them to me.

That is the only use for theology that I have. It gives me a clearer view of my God and my duties.

I say that I believe in a progressive theology but not in a progressive Christianity. We have not improved in Christianity, whatever we may have done with theology. I even think that our Christianity loses instead of being made better and grander,

IN MANY SENSES

I think that the church reminds me of a schoolboy's copy-book. The teacher sets him a copy. The boy commences writing. The first line of his writing imitates his copy. Then the next time he tries it he imitates his own writing, and the next time he imitates his last. Did you see that the bottom line was the worst he wrote? And so Christianity, with its great pattern, Christ.

When you are copying it, without getting the original every time, you find that the bottom line, the last copying, is the worst on the page.

“Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men.”

I am afraid sometimes that that is not true, and yet I am not one of those who are going about declaring that the world is growing worse; that it is getting evil. No; I am looking forward towards a millennium, and, God helping me, I am going to work day and night to bring that about in our own country. God grant that the day may be near when I shall see it in the face of Christ, and see reflected in His countenance a redeemed world, and the lost sinner found and brought before Him.

That will be a grand time, brethren. And yet there are a great many Christians that ought to improve their copying, and in doing so one cannot do better than go to the fountain-head — to the headquarters — when we get our orders and instructions. Let us get them from headquarters. Now let us take up these verses

ABOUT PAUL AND SILVANUS

and Timotheus. At this time Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus were on their way on a missionary tour among the Gentiles that rejoiced in their belief; and after an absence of some months at Thessalonica, Paul writes these words, **“Unto the church of the Thessalonians, which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Now, the first fact that I notice is this: that the word of God is the home of His church, and that the word of His church is the home of God.

“In God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

You can run Confucianism without being Confucius; you can run Mormonism with Joe Smith dead and buried; but you cannot run Christianity without a living, personal, embodied Christ.

And it is not the Christ of history; not a Christ of 1800 years ago; not a Christ crucified, dead, and buried, so much, brethren, that we look to. We look to Him in a form more dear. We look at Him to-day as an underlying power in the soul of men. We look at Him as one that redeems not only from sin but from the life and condemnation of sin.

That is what we mean. We want that kind of Christianity. We want a Christianity in Christ Jesus, because, having Christ Jesus in you, you are

A NEW CREATURE

If any man be in Christ, he has a new character; and if you have Christ in you, you have Him in glory. If you are in Christ Jesus, Christ Jesus is in you. These are interchangeable terms.

“Behold, I will stand at the door, and I will knock. If you open to me, I will come in and sup.”

Oh, what a privilege it is to answer the knock of Christ at the door of the human heart and to invite Him in! I did. I was ashamed of the home I had to offer Him. I was ashamed of the table; I was ashamed of everything on it. But I ministered to Him the best I could. And now He says you shall be guests with Him, and He will be your host, and you shall sit down at His own table, and feed with Him on heaven’s breath and angels’ bread.

A personal and intimate acquaintance with Christ is what you need, and you will never gain much by an acquaintanceship unless it is intimate and personal. An intimate acquaintanceship with Christ will prevent me from going where I ought not to go, or prevent my having a desire to go to such places. I say to you this, that the gospel through Jesus Christ is not only one of the sweetest pleasures and the greatest joys and the greatest blessings, but it is nothing but a pleasure and a blessing and a joy. It is glad tidings of great joy, and there is really more enjoyment in

ONE HOLY GHOST MEETING

of a good Christian than in all the sinful pleasures of life to a man out of harmony with God.

“In Christ Jesus,” how a church partakes of the nature of each individual member of that church! Suppose we have got fifty good members in a church. I don’t suppose any church will average more than that. A church is in good luck that has got fifty members true to God and true to the right. I will tell any pastor that has that many, “You are the luckiest pastor I have ever seen in this country.”

I expect that if Brother Lorimer wanted to call a meeting of all his first-class members, he would call for it to meet in the parlors of the church. He would not think of calling it in the auditorium. If they should meet there, he would lose sight of them among the empty pews.

“Love their God with all their heart, and their neighbor as themselves.” What is Christianity in its noblest aspect? Love to God and love to man. If he has fifty who do this, he knows that he has got fifty good men and women. They are better than all the three hundred indifferent, tolerably good ones put together in a church. We have got a perfect gospel and a perfect Saviour, and all Jesus wants is to get an army. Surely the Captain may be depended upon. Let everyone say, “I will

STAND IN MY CHARACTER

like a man and do my duty.” “In **Christ Jesus.**”

That one then says, “I belong to the Baptist Church.” Another says, “I belong to the Presbyterian Church.” Now as to church membership. A man was asked what church he belonged to. He says, “I am a Baptist.” But what do Baptists do? He answers that he does not do much on that line. That is generally the way of a good many members of churches.

We are Methodists, but we don’t look after it much, but I am as good as any man north of Mason and Dixon’s line. That saying is not a true one. Every man should belong to his church, so that he can say, “Every drop of my blood, every faculty of my soul belongs to it. I go nowhere without the permission of my pastor and my church.”

How many of the people of your church live on that line? Many of you say that you belong to a church, but you act as if the church belonged to you. There is a good deal of that sort of acting in this world. “Our church”? Well, you may run the church, but I have found long ago that the church has no ownership over you; and that whenever you own the church, God does not come within

A MILE OF YOU

Have you not run many a prayer-meeting without the Lord? Have you not run many a service without Him? A man and woman who belong to God from head to foot, through and through, all over, are every day in the work. That is Christianity. Just as God lives in the heart of the church, and the church dwells in the heart of God, just in that proportion will we appear in the eyes of God and in the eyes of our fellow-men. I said in a sermon — I believe it was at Nashville, and it provoked a good deal of criticism on the part of churches and preachers — I said then, “I look at this whole world steeped in wickedness; at people drifting hell-ward.

Whose fault is it?” And every man ought to ask himself this question, “Is the gospel of Jesus Christ adequate to reach the depths of human depravity?”

And if you say “yes,” then I have got you.

The gospel, if we live it, would save man as sure as the sun shines. Is the gospel inadequate to reach the depths of human depravity? Nobody will take that position. Then if the gospel is equal to reaching the depths of human depravity and to saving the world, what is the matter? We don’t live as we preach the gospel; and it is as necessary that you live the truth as it is that

YOU SHOULD PREACH IT

Take the weight off the driving wheel of an engine, and it cannot roll itself along, much less a train; and every good Christian is a weight on the driving wheel of truth to enable it to pull souls after it.

I am ashamed of this generation of men. I look back a few years and see Whitefield up early in the morning before daylight, and I see 40,000 people gathered around him, and in one hour's time George Whitefield has had 2000 penitents and 1000 born to God. What is the matter with us?

Eighteen hundred years ago Paul preached a plain sermon. There is not a preacher in Chicago that cannot preach a better one, without any disrespect to Paul, and yet Paul had three thousand saved. It would take about three thousand such sermons to save one convert now to Christ. The tub is turned upside down, and you cannot get out anything from a tub bottom side up. I want to see a gospel of power in Chicago, a gospel that men cannot resist. I have seen several tall, stalwart men fall before the power of the gospel, and big men pray for them. That is what we want in Chicago. Let us pray for that. I will tell you how to get it. I will tell you that if you Christians of Chicago will put your weight

INTO THE FIGHT

You can win it. The enemy will back. We will stampede this town from center to circumference. We will do it if you will get the weight, if you will get your whole crowd on the engine, the movement.

God goes by weight. And the most disgusting sight in the world is to see a great 200-pound Baptist, a 210-pound Methodist, a big, old, fat, flabby Methodist, put on God's scales, and he don't weigh an ounce. You see men putting all their weight upon themselves, upon a scaffolding that is to be taken down in a few days, and forgetting the scaffolding on which they are to climb to heaven. The Lord God help us now to begin and weigh for Him, lest we be found wanting when it is too late. I tell you that there is but one church that the infidel will grin at, and that is the soul that is embittered by the unfaithful lives of the members of that church.

I have a great deal of respect for sensible infidels, but a fellow who never thinks, but who goes about putting on airs, and thinks that he has got to be a little skeptic, I despise. You will break into an asylum some of these days. That will be the end of you. I have got some respect for John Stuart Mill and his sort, for sensible men who are infidels, and I believe that God

RESPECTS A SENSIBLE MAN

when he has lost his bearings in the search after truth; but these little fellows that never think, never thought consecutively in their lives for ten minutes together, and who say, "I don't know what is the matter with me lately, I am growing sort of skeptical" — God have mercy on the poor little fellows.

What I want to say is that we want a gospel that will make men; a gospel that we could get if we consecrated our lives to the word of God.

Every faithful man should be a praying man. The best preacher, the most efficient preacher, is the preacher who prays the most. I tell you when a preacher goes down on his knees, when he does get up he has something to say to you. Whenever a preacher has been listening to the Lord in his closet, he says something when he gets up. Your prayer should be, "Send us a preacher that is popular with Almighty God. We want a preacher who knows God."

It takes two things to get up a good sermon, a preacher and a hearer. People should pray for the pastor, should pray for themselves before they go to church, and should pray that God will bless them both. How many of you came from prayer? About a dozen; and I thank you heartily for praying for me. Those who don't pray before they come we don't want. You can stay away and growl and bark as much as you please.

GOD PITY YOU

And no prayer? Don't you do that anymore while I am here to preach. If you cannot get time to pray, stay away altogether. Some have prayed on their knees. Some can pray all day long. And some have exculpated themselves.

[Dr. Sculder here got up and said: "I would like to say a word. I don't think that it is necessary for a man to get on his knees to pray. I don't think it is necessary for a man to get on his knees to pray for a blessing for this meeting].

Mr. Jones then went on as follows: I will say that when I said exculpatory statement, I meant to say " explanation."

But I have reached my object in bringing up this question to you. Let us come from our closets to the church. And I think it is done completely, too. I think that question is settled. I don't think we will have to raise it again at all. It was only to impress upon you the duty of praying — if not with bent knees, then with bent hearts. It is the spirit of prayer that is dear, and if you have that you can walk the streets and pray. You can pray anywhere and everywhere. And I trust the good Lord will teach to us the spirit of prayer, and that He will teach us to pray God's spirit to be poured down on these services. And I simply wanted to make the point strongly, so as to get you to prayer; nothing more, nothing less. Now pray that God will bring us that strength we need.

In Huntsville, Ala., when a meeting was being held there, and had been going on for four or five days, and where a brother of mine was at the same house, and another preacher

WAS IN THE ROOM

I was disturbed at night by the snoring of some brethren, I said to one of them, Luke Brown, "You must help me into the parlor with my bed. I cannot get to sleep. I have to work tomorrow," And about 12 o'clock they helped me into the parlor with my bed.

We found my brother in the parlor in the dark, on his knees, wrestling with God for the power of salvation to be granted to the morrow's meeting.

When Brother John rose I looked my father in the face and said: "My brother, listen. God Almighty is going to move this town to-day as it was never moved before. When God's people pray so, you are going to see the gates of heaven open."

And that is the point I want to open to you. Let us get into the spirit of prayer.

This story is related of Dr. Storey. He is in the eighteenth year of his ministry. God has blessed him every year with a gracious revival. I did not understand him, and so I spoke to him; and he said the other day, "I never understood why God would bless such a preacher as I was, until a good old man said to me, 'I have never been able to give you much money for your work, but I have spent half of Saturday night praying that God might bless you and your work.'

Never had I thought that there was one man in the church who would spend half of Saturday night praying for God to rest upon my congregation." No wonder that he was

SUCCESSFUL IN HIS REVIVALS

Our preachers cannot preach with the power they ought to preach, when they are not prayed for.

Dr. Finney related this incident. He said: "When I went to the church one night and left Brother Nash in the room to pray, all at once the Holy Ghost came down upon us, and every soul was converted, and every Christian blessed." And he said, "I never saw such visible presence of God in my life before."

And he was told that Brother Nash all the time had had a big time with the Lord. He had been praying for the blessing of heaven on the meeting. He had commenced walking the room and shouting, and he had shouted so long as he could, until he fell flat on his back. God help us that we may pray for the power of heaven upon this congregation.

Now, in conclusion, let us take the lesson of this hour to God and get some good out of it. The turn that things have taken in every direction will prove good to everyone, and those that don't want to get out of it may find something to criticize and something to talk about; but I say this with love and sympathy to everyone. I point out the means of bring the herd with us in our work. It has proved so in other cities, and I pray that the truth may be grander in its victory in this city than it has been in other cities. Pray that God may be with us, and may God come with you in such power as you never had in your services before.

~ end of sermon 4 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
