

HIS TOUCH HAS STILL ITS ANCIENT POWER

by

THOMAS B. REES

Printed @ August 1945

CHAPTER TWO - GOD'S WAR WEAPONS

"How often would I . . . and ye would not" (Matthew 23:37)

IT is quite clear to every Christian that this old world needs the cleansing, life-giving touch of CHRIST perhaps more to-day than ever before. Moreover, it is equally clear that the SAVIOUR, moved with compassion, is desperately anxious to bless the needy folk round about us.

It is no wonder that thoughtful Christian people often ask:

"If GOD is willing to work and the world needs Him to work, why do we see so little evidence of His working amongst the countless congregations who listen to the thousands of sermons which are preached every Sunday up and down this land of ours?" This is a great question, but I want to suggest that a possible answer is to be found in the following significant sentence: **"And He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief"** (Matthew 13:58).

The simple fact is just this, for some wise reason, the Lord very largely limits Himself to working through His believing people. Why this should be so I do not know, but from my New Testament and experience in Christian work I am convinced that it is so.

The British Forces lost everything at Dunkirk; weapons and equipment were all abandoned, only the soldiers themselves reached the shores of England. But no sooner had the men set foot on land than they were asking to be sent back to France at once to face the foe. But such a thing was utterly impossible. Why! Didn't the enemy need to be defeated! Indeed he did! Were not our men anxious to go back and fight! They certainly were! Then why were they not sent! The answer is obvious - they had no war weapons!

Yet in that dark hour these brave helpless men cried: "Give us the tools and we will finish the job." And for nearly four long years they waited.

Yes, GOD is willing to work, the world needs Him to work, and what is more, many are praying that He will work, yet little seems to happen!

Can I hear GOD saying to you and me, **"Thou art my battle axe and weapons of war; for with thee I will break in pieces the nations, and with thee I will destroy kingdoms . . . with thee I will break in pieces old and young"** (Jeremiah 51:20-22)! My fellow-Christians, our GOD is still a mighty Man of War, but have we forgotten that we are His war weapons?

There is a tendency to-day among many professing Christians to roll this heavy spiritual responsibility on to the shoulders of the minister or evangelist. Undoubtedly the man in the pulpit should be so completely yielded to GOD as was that Old Testament evangelist Isaiah, who said: "**He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand hath He hid me**" (Isaiah 49:2). But important as this yieldedness is for the preacher, it is every bit as important in the Christian in the congregation.

When a Spirit-filled Christian sits listening sympathetically and prayerfully as the Word of Life is preached, out from his innermost being there flow rivers of living water to the thirsty hearts of those in the pews round about him. Yes, and this can happen in spite of the preacher!

But when not only the individual, but the local church as a whole starts to live, pray, and witness as it should, the supernatural will soon be effective, not only in the churches but also in the factory, office, shop, and street; insomuch that men will be amazed, and glorify GOD saying: "**We never saw it on this fashion.**"

Not long ago I wrote to a minister asking his help in an evangelistic campaign. His reply ran something like this: "May GOD bless your work. I am sorry I cannot help. I am intensely interested in real spiritual awakening, but believe that such evangelistic missions only hinder the working of the HOLY SPIRIT. Revival is the work of the HOLY GHOST alone and cannot be brought about by men's efforts."

Yes, I agree that "revival cannot be brought about by man's efforts". But at the same time I do not agree with my friend that evangelistic missions only hinder the working of the HOLY SPIRIT. Surely there is a distinct difference between revival, which is the sovereign act of GOD the HOLY SPIRIT and evangelism, which is the normal work of the Church. "Revival is the work of the HOLY SPIRIT alone and cannot be brought about by men's efforts." Yes, I am inclined to agree again with this, but on the other hand I do feel very strongly that unbelief, prayerlessness, and sin in the lives of GOD's people often hinder the SPIRIT's working.

Before the becalmed sailor prays for wind, let him first set his sails. Yes, and let the Church of GOD unfurl her sails of holiness, prayer, faith, witnessing, and evangelism. Has not her Lord commanded her, "**Grieve not the Spirit**" and "**walk in the Spirit**"? But, having done and said all by way of preparation let her be sure of this, that she is still utterly dependent upon the gracious SPIRIT to come from the four winds with life-giving energy.

Here is another point that should not be overlooked. More than once in the history of the Church the coming of revival (local or widespread) has synchronized with the preaching of the Cross.

I do not fear contradiction when I say that the only thing that can deal effectively with the desperate spiritual situation that exists to-day is a nation-wide, Heaven-sent revival. For such an awakening let every Christian pray and prepare. But in the meanwhile, it needs to be pointed out that there is no spiritual authority whatever for the Church of GOD to discontinue her normal programme of Spirit-guided evangelism. On the contrary, the New Testament is clear: "**Preach the Word: be instant in season, out of season**" (II Timothy 4:2). "**The Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him**" (Acts 5:32).

During the past fourteen years I have been able to devote my life to proclaiming the unsearchable riches of CHRIST, and on a number of occasions it has been my privilege to witness, with wondering eyes, the HOLY SPIRIT working in reviving, quickening power throughout whole districts. Again and again I am amazed that GOD is able to bless my feeble ministry. I know only one way of accounting for it, namely, that I am able to impress upon my fellow-Christians that which is my profound personal conviction - GOD is anxious to bless, and if they, His children, will fulfil His simple conditions, He will bless.

May I conclude this chapter by telling of a notable miracle that took place on one of these occasions?

He was a policeman, a giant of a man, a one-time boxing champion who had fought many times in the Royal Albert Hall, London. In this town where I was leading a United Church mission P.C. Watson was not only well known for his fine physique and athletic successes, but also for his uncontrollable temper and unbridled tongue. What the town as a whole did not know was that he had become a secret drinker. Every day as he came off duty he went straight to the private entrance of the "Hen and Chickens." This habit was steadily gaining a grip on him, although no one had seen him "incapable" -yet.

A Christian colleague invited him to one of the mission services. His reply was unprintable, but, being interpreted briefly, was that he hadn't been to church since his mother's funeral, over seventeen years ago - and he - well, he wasn't coming now.

There is only one explanation of what happened next - the Spirit of GOD was working in that town.

One night P. C. Watson went off duty, and made his way as usual towards the "Hen and Chickens." Now to reach this public house he had to pass the church where the mission was being held. To his great surprise, when he got outside the church, he walked straight into the service, instead of going on to the "Hen and Chickens."

The church was packed. I was conducting community singing when I saw a steward showing a "small boy's nightmare" of a policeman into one of the few empty seats right at the front. I preached the grand old Gospel of how CHRIST can break the power of cancelled sin and set the prisoner free. At the end I gave an invitation for any who had accepted CHRIST during the meeting to come forward to make a public confession of their faith in Him. Watson was one of the first to grip my hand (and what a grip!), his great form shaking with emotion. It is a grand thing to see a strong man's tears as a result of the convicting power of the HOLY SPIRIT. Such "Holy Water" is all too scarce.

The news spread throughout the town like wildfire! "P. C. Watson has been converted; can you believe it!"

The following night he was on beat, in the centre of the town, and therefore unable to come to the mission. A band of local youths loitered at the corner. As Watson walked by one of them tittered, and said in an undertone: "Got 'converted' last night. Huh!"

Quick as lightning Watson swung round, "What did you say?"

"N-Nothing," said the ringleader.

"What did you say?" repeated the constable.

Thoroughly afraid now of rousing the notorious temper, the lad said sheepishly, "I only said you were converted last night. You were, weren't YOU?"

"Yes, I was converted last night, but listen to me, you lads. Because I am converted, it doesn't mean that I'm not going to do my duty any more. Many a time I've had to turn you off this corner for making a nuisance of yourselves, so to-night, you're all going to the mission, every one of you; come along now." He marched them down to the church, and instructed a steward to show them to the front. So they came to hear me preach under police orders, and at least one of them trusted CHRIST as a result.

A day or so later Watson was making his little boy a toy out of an old box. While hammering, he hit the wrong nail! Now, if there is one thing that will make a swearing man swear, it is hitting his thumb nail. This time Watson bit his lip and went on hitting the right nail. His little boy waited apprehensively, and after a pause looked up at his father and said: "But, Daddy, aren't you going to say anything?"

A district inspector was on a visit to the police station, and said to Watson, "I have a class of recruits in there. Go in and tell them how you would take a statement from a dying man, whom you have found injured by the roadside."

"Certainly, sir," said Watson, "but do you want me to tell the recruits what I would have said before I was converted - or now?"

The inspector - a Roman Catholic - stared in amazement, then said, "I don't know: tell them what you like."

Watson went in, and the inspector listened to his instructions. "Men," said Watson, "If you find a man at the roadside dying, ask him first of all if he's made his peace with GOD. If he hasn't, tell him that CHRIST died for him, and that he can have peace through faith in His shed blood. Then when you're really satisfied that he is right with his Maker - and if he is still conscious - question him concerning what he remembers of the accident."

When Watson returned to the inspector, the latter seemed very thoughtful. "Watson," he said, "many a time in the past months I have had to walk out of this room in disgust at the language you have used. I don't agree with all this conversion business, but never in my experience have I seen a man so transformed. Whatever you've got, it's the right thing. Stick to it man, stick to it."

Watson did, and to-day he is a pillar of his church.

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