

Session to Session

... promoting the strengthening and
growth of Biblical Presbyterianism
in America ...

December-January 1991, Vol. 4, No. 6

The Day the Sun Stood Still

by O. Palmer Robertson

It's easy to be lazy. Especially as a minister, it's easy to be lazy. You've heard of the microwave minister. On Saturday night he pulls out an old sermon, pops it in the microwave, and is ready to go the next morning. The message for the day may be a little cold in the center or overheated around the edges for its lack of relevance. But he's done his duty for another week.

But Jesus Christ calls you to more. He calls you to be expendable for him. He calls you to lay down your life, to have a zeal that consumes you daily for the sake of his church. Hurl yourself into the cause of Jesus Christ. Surrender every personal aspiration. Energize your life so that you daily are doing everything you can to serve your Savior.

Sometimes God has to send a shock into the hearts of his people to arouse their zeal for his service. Just as an electrical shock machine may be necessary to recover a lost heartbeat, so the Lord may find it necessary to shock his people into service.

A coalition of five kings served as the shocker in Joshua's day. Israel had been making great progress in the conquest of the land. Jericho's walls fell outward by miracle. Ai was taken by stratagem. The inhabitants of the mighty city of Gibeon came with old clothes, stale bread, and surrendered.

But after all these sterling victories, Israel returns to the camp of Gilgal and lazes in. Like students at the end of exams, they loll on the grass. They've put in a few days of concentrated effort. Now they will enjoy their leisure.

The evangelical cause in America has had a period of great success and prosperity. Everybody knows about being "born again." We even had a president who declared he was "born-again." Billy Graham has appeared every year for the past decade among the top contenders for the man most admired in America.

Among biblical presbyterianism, steady church growth along with the development of seminaries committed to the scriptures is phenomenal. We may not have caught up with our Korean brethren and their ten thousand graduates every year. But we are moving in that direction.

Success of this sort can only aggravate the enemies of the Lord. Already the backlash is beginning. If you read any of Chuck Colson's editorials in *Christianity Today*, you know that the opponents of the Lord will not be slow to respond.

Don't be surprised at an attack directed personally against you. From without or from within your own congregation, and simultaneously as a problem develops within your own family, the insidious accusations will come. Prepare for an assault on several fronts, for God's enemies know how to make war.

In the case of Joshua, the coalition was led by a man named Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem. This man had a name and a pedigree of nobility, but he was an ignoble man. Adoni-zedek means "my Lord is righteous." The name has essentially the same significance as Malchi-zedek, which translates as "my king is righteous." You've heard of Melchizedek. He was the king of Jerusalem just as was Adoni-zedek. Very possibly Adoni-zedek was a direct descendant of Melchizedek. But this later king of Jerusalem did not walk in the steps of his pious father.

Often wrong is promoted in the name of right. You would think it obviously wrong for a U.S. Congressman to house a homosexual prostitute. Yet this very phenomenon created what has been called a "dilemma" for a congressional ethics committee. What is the dilemma? Well, the rights of privacy must be protected. A wrong cause was thus promoted in the name of right.

As a minister of the gospel you may not have long to speak publicly against homosexuality without paying the price. You may find yourself in the same kind of peril as those ministers of the gospel in South America whose lives are threatened every

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Our Global Debt: Five Million

by "Peg the Aged"

"... debtor to the Greeks and the barbarians ..."

—Romans 1:14

For years, that statement of Paul concerning his indebtedness to people who, so far as I could see, had neither loaned nor given anything to the Apostle, puzzled me. Had it been possible for me to talk with him, I would have asked, "How come, Paul? Why do you say that?" Well, obviously, such an opportunity never came my way, so I asked God instead. And He gave me a satisfactory answer.

Here, analogically, is an answer. As old age approached, my mother opened an agency account with a bank, which meant turning over to the bank the corpus of her estate. This involved two certain things and one possible thing: 1) the

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from his hand.

But when God's people win a victory, it's almost always as they exert themselves. When God's people respond to the challenge and take the initiative, then the Lord intervenes on their behalf.

At the end of World War II General Douglas MacArthur pled with the Christian church. He wanted something like a thousand missionaries to replace his troops in the Orient. Could the church have done it? Of course the church could have done it. Did the church do it? No, the church did not do it. The church was not prepared for the challenge.

Before the iron curtain crumbled, a required course on communism was taught in the high schools of Czechoslovakia. But they have no interest in the subject anymore. So the principal of a local high school has asked a Christian pastor to come and teach a course of God and Christianity. The father of this young pastor had been imprisoned and banished from various parts of the country because of his effectiveness in preaching the gospel. He had his teeth knocked out. Now the son is in the schools, in the streets, and on television proclaiming the gospel.

This brother, whose church has descended from John Hus the reformer, says to us today, Come and help us. We need a printing press desperately. We need to multiply our Christian literature. We need training in discipleship and evangelism. Will you come and help us?

Will you?

God gave Joshua and his men a great victory. He scattered their enemies with hail from heaven.

But there was more. After the scattering came the pursuing. The Israelites pursued their enemies upward to Beth-horon. If you remember your childhood, you know it's a lot more fun to chase someone downhill rather than uphill. So long as you're going downward on a nice green hill, it doesn't matter even if you stumble. You just keep tumbling, rolling, and laughing as you go. But when you try to chase someone uphill, it's a different story. Especially when you reach middle age, it's tough going. You huff and puff and strain at every step. But that's what Israel did. They pursued the enemy uphill to Beth-horon.

That's your challenge today. Just because you're middle-aged, don't expect the work for Christ to get easier. Give over the whole of your life to the pursuit of Christ's enemies.

The climax of the narrative is reached with one of the greatest miracles in the Bible. Scripture says the sun stood still.

Amazing are the names of scholars who have tried to explain away this miracle. None less than the great Robert Dick Wilson of the old Princeton school says he was relieved to find a naturalistic explanation for this apparent miracle.

Unquestionably it's a massive miracle. The world spins on its axis at a thousand miles an hour. If the world suddenly should stop spinning, every article on the face of the earth still would be travelling at a thousand miles an hour. It would be quite a miracle to keep everything intact. But God did it. He made the sun stand still.

But why? Why should God perform such a spectacular miracle? He performs this miracle because of one man's zeal to serve the Lord. Joshua prays that the Lord will extend the time for the struggle. He will not be content until all God's enemies are de-

feated.

Joshua's prayer put great demands on Israel. Already they had marched all night. Already they had fought from dawn until mid-day. But still he wants more time. He is determined to make an even greater effort for the cause of Christ's kingdom.

Hey, you lazies! Are you praying for a greater struggle? Do you desire a longer day? Or are you praying for rest? After all, a rest still remains for the people of God, does it not?

There never has been a day like it before or since. God hearkened to the voice of a man. His zealous prayer for the Lord's house was answered.

There was one other similar day. It was a day not lengthened but shortened because of the zeal of God's servant. It was a day in which three hours of light were taken from the middle of the day. Jesus Christ, the servant of the Lord, had been up all night struggling in prayer. He was assaulted by his enemies early in the morning. He carried his own cross until he was utterly exhausted. He endured the agony of crucifixion. Yet he persisted in his suffering. He would not seek rest until he could exclaim, "It is finished."

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Our Global Debt, continued from page 1
bank was charged to guard the principal; 2) the bank was to disburse to her the income in stated amounts through stated intervals; and (if possible) 3) the bank was to add to the corpus through wise investment, thus increasing the principal amount over a period of time.

In accepting this responsibility, you see, the bank became her "debtor," and this despite the fact that it did not initiate the relationship, it loaned her nothing, it gave her nothing; and yet it was her "debtor!"

The first two points in the analogy illustrate reasonably well why Paul considered himself a "debtor," but at the third point, namely, adding to the corpus of the estate, while it applied to him as one inspired of God the Holy Spirit, it is not applicable to anyone not so inspired.

In point of fact, quite the reverse is true. The Book of the Revelation solemnly warns against either addition or subtraction where Scripture is concerned. "I warn everyone who hears the words of prophecy of this book: if anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in the book. And, if anyone takes words away from this prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book" (Rev. 22:18,19).

Parenthetically, let me say here that in my judgment we are seeing far too much tampering with God's holy book, the Bible. Alterations of masculine nouns and pronouns, for example, to please the radical feminists of today; too much "clarification" by means of over-simplification and, thereby, deleting passages which might be offensive to modern man, man now being - in his eyes - the measure of all things.

Dear friend, we have been put in trust with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in trust to guard and to proclaim it. The Great Commission makes this amply clear. God willing, we shall

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Because he persisted you can persist. This whole era in which you live may be seen as one long day, extended by the Lord. It is the day of the Lord, prolonged by God's grace so that you can die daily for Jesus Christ as you seek to spread the gospel. While the sun stands still, God's people should be filled with zeal to advance the kingdom of Christ.

What about you? Are you expendable for Christ? Until all God's enemies have been defeated, God's people should not expect to rest.

May God give to this church and to all its ministers and elders a readiness to be expendable for Christ. Ω

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Our Global Debt, continued from page 5

look at this in the next of our mini-series on missions; for we are indeed debtors to some five billion souls among whom are numbered who knows how many of the elect.

*We've a story to tell to the nations
That shall turn their hearts to the right,
A story of truth and mercy
A story of peace and light.*

*For the darkness shall turn to dawning,
And the dawning to noonday bright,
And Christ's great kingdom shall come to earth,
The kingdom of love and light.*

the task!

Ω

This is the second in a series of pieces by Peg McLester.

Session to Session is dedicated to promoting the strengthening and growth of Biblical Presbyterianism in America. It is published bimonthly by the Session of Wallace Memorial Presbyterian Church, located in the Washington, D.C. suburb of Hyattsville, Maryland. Individual subscriptions are available for \$10.00 per year. Church Sessions donating \$100 per year will receive subscriptions for all elders. Send all inquiries to Session to Session, Wallace Memorial Presbyterian Church, 7201 Sixteenth Place, Hyattsville, MD 20783-4399.

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