

“PAY-DAY—SOME DAY”

With Other Sketches From Life and Messages From The Word

by

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE CHURCH OF TOMORROW

In the two previous chapters we have dealt with the first church—the plan, the type and the power. That it was God’s plan that the early church continue in power under the guidance of the Holy Spirit is evidenced by the *Thessalonian church*. The Apostle Paul writes in the first chapter of the “**work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ**”; then continues by telling how their “**faith God-ward is spread abroad.**” Truly a model church!

Then we made mention of the fact that the church became cold and in this state opened its doors for unscriptural programs and carnal leadership, and that this “**mixed multitude**” has hindered the onward march of God’s people.

Now we shall deal with the most important question of how to get back to power and blessing in order to function effectively for God and according to His plan. In other words: The remedy.

“Church” means “*a called out company.*” God’s people Israel were “*called out.*” God called them out of Egypt and commanded them to go forward and possess the land. God wants to lead on to great victories, and many of God’s true-hearted saints are sighing for deliverance from church bondage, whatever it may be. When we sing,

“Send it this way, Lord, send it this way
A mighty revival, send it this way.
Remove every hindrance, our spirit set free,”

there is a peculiar response from hungry hearts that long for a manifestation of the old-time power. But the hindrances will have to be removed. Jesus did not raise Lazarus from the dead until the “**stone had been taken away.**”

In Exodus 40:34 we read, “**And the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.**” When? When everything was put in its rightful place. When we put first things first and set aside unbiblical organizations that usurp time, power and interest, which are like a fungus growth on a tree, then we shall see God’s glory. I have seen vines—and they were even beautiful—that entwined themselves around a healthy tree and slowly and gradually choked the very life out of the tree.

The only hope for the tree was to set it free from its enemy, which meant cutting away the unnatural growth. This procedure will not suit a carnal leadership in a church even though it means opening the door to another healthy change, that of replacing worldly power with Holy Ghost power and unbiblical leadership with spiritual leadership. The natural consequence will be to bring back the prayer and testimony meetings to their rightful place in the church so that instead of “toiling” for social gatherings and man-made programs, the church will get a new inspiration and godly zeal for soul-saving efforts and building up of the church into a real soul-saving station.

It is needless to add that under such conditions people will be hungry for manna from heaven and will not be satisfied with book-taught lectures. They will demand messages from the Word of God and will not tolerate human wisdom clothed in beautiful oratory. When a church **“takes away the stones”** that hinder, it is on “promise ground”; there is absolutely no doubt about it. The meetings will become too hot for the worldly members and they will either be saved or leave. There will be a unity in purpose. Believers will study and know God’s Word and will not be driven about by every wind that blows.

God’s Word makes plain that the believers should not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers (II Corinthians 6:14) and further commands, **“Come out from among them . . . and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you.”**

This can also be applied to the church. A church should divorce itself from all worldly entanglements and have no fellowship with the unsaved. Let us keep in mind that a **“mixed multitude”** kept the people from entering the Promised Land.

I firmly believe that God’s message to the church today is: **“Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ will give thee light”** (Ephesians 5:14).

The church is not dead but is asleep among the dead. Thank God for the many churches that are awake in these times of declension, but a large majority of churches that one time were on fire for God have fallen asleep on the job and God’s command is that they awake, arise, and shine. Having in mind the backslidden condition of the church and the remedy, I fail to find a more telling picture than the abovementioned Bible verse. It is strange language, but a sad reality. In everyday language it is like telling a man: “Wake up, you’re sleeping in a cemetery, among the dead. Get out of here and live and move where there is life and action and let the sun shine on you.” It is indeed sad enough to have fallen asleep, but worse still to be among those that are **“dead in trespasses and sins”** (Ephesians 2). But in this dark picture there is also a glorious promise that stands out as a beautiful sunbeam. “Arise and throw off thy shackles—and if you do, Christ will give thee light.”

In Romans 13:11-12 we read: **“It is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armour of light.”** This truly can be applied to a group of believers that at one time banded together for the glory of God as a New Testament church, but have slipped back. Surely we have reason to ask with Paul: **“You did run well, who did hinder you?”** (Galatians 5:7)

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A backslidden church must come back to power and blessing the same as a backslider, or a believer who has disobeyed God. Repent, confess, restore. But not many are willing to pay the price of complete obedience to God's plan. In II Chronicles 7:14 we have this significant verse: **"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways: then will I hear from heaven and forgive their sin and heal their land."**

This, of course, refers to God's chosen people Israel, but can be applied Scripturally to God's people of today in the same manner. If God's people today will humble themselves, and pray and seek His will, and turn from unbiblical and worldly methods, and become a spiritual assembly, then God will open the windows of heaven.

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I am very well aware of the fact that we are now approaching a difficult part of this study. All keen observers of church conditions heartily agree that to go on in the same rut is to march backward; that with all our machinery and methods we are getting nowhere; that it is a losing battle. But not many are willing to obey the heavenly vision. Not many will pay the price. It costs too much.

This reminds me of the man who had a beautiful summer home that he rented to a friend. During the latter part of the summer his well ran dry. Upon inquiring whether His summer guest wanted the homestead again next summer he was told, "Only on the condition that you dig a deeper well which will assure us of cool and clear well-water throughout the summer."

The owner promised to take care of it and the next spring the tenant inquired about the well and the owner answered that he had had bids on the work and had come to the conclusion that "It costs too much to dig so deep."

Here we have the answer to this perplexing problem. We want the blessing of God. We want our church, our group, our assembly to function effectively for God. We are honest in this and we will pray night and day if necessary, but if it means to take away the barriers, remove the hindrances, roll away the stones, to "break down every idol, cast out every foe," then we hesitate. It costs too much to dig so deep.

In business the owners become alarmed when things begin slipping, and if they are wide-awake will earnestly, yes frantically, seek a remedy for financial ruin. If they do not the sheriff will come and padlock the doors and put on a sign: "Bankrupt—gone out of business." Why? Because they did not function in a business-like manner. There are groups and churches here and there that have long ago become shaky because they have departed from God's specifications and have ceased being a house of prayer and a soul-saving station. They are spiritually bankrupt; they have gone out of business even if they are not aware of it. The Holy Spirit has long since departed.

Oh, if God's people today, who love to do business for God, would quit arguing about this or that, admit their weakness and failure, forget their expensive rusty machinery, and plans that in too many cases are selfish, and let God have full sway and control, they would experience a newness of joy and gladness as the heavenly breezes again fill their sails and drive them on to new victories for Christ!

Before I close this chapter let me bring to your mind the well-known story of the miraculous draught of fishes in Luke five.

Simon answered Jesus and said, "Master, don't ask us to go and try fishing again. Why, we have been at it all night and we have caught nothing." But evidently Jesus urged him and he answered: "All right, we'll try it again, at Thy word." And then we have the result: they got more fish than they could handle so they told the occupants of the other boats to come and help themselves. My friends, isn't that a picture that fits our day? Work? Yes, plenty! Toiling, toiling, toiling, but having nothing. And Jesus is right at our side and tells us: "Let me show you how to catch fish."

And we are just like Simon. "What's the use, we know just as much about fishing as You do." And we hesitate to turn the business over to Him. But what happened when Jesus became the director? Nets full. The nets break, they didn't care to lose any of the fish so they told the others to come and help themselves.

Oh, my friends, what a lesson! Blessings always follow when Jesus is at the head. If Simon had been like many of our leaders, pastors, and evangelists today, he would have said: "Nothing doing, if my people want blessing they will have to get it my way. You're not going to take my organization out of my hands. If you do I (the big I) won't get any credit. If the people are going to be saved they will have to come my way and through me, or men who have my denominational training or schooling; otherwise not."

Listen, my friend, don't you outline any specifications for Jesus. You just turn over your little (or big) boat to Him and let Him take full control and direct its course. "**And the nets break . . .**" I was just about to shout "Hallelujah!" Oh, for a blessing today that will break that which men have made, so that they gladly beckon to the other boats to come and enjoy the blessing.

I imagine the other brethren thought when they came near with their boats—"Oh, it is Simon and his crowd. I wonder what has happened to him; he always was so dogmatic and harsh and often we have felt the sting from his bitter tongue if we came a bit too close to his territory."

"Simon, what has taken place?" I can hear one of them inquire with a note of surprise. "Oh," he answered, "I've turned over my fishing business to Jesus, I have quit fretting since He became the boss; I've got my boat full and now I want you to get all you can take to land with you. And listen, you fellows, take a tip from an old-timer like myself; next time you go fishing take Jesus with you and you won't come home empty-handed. I tell you, brethren, I've learned my lesson. Think how I have toiled and worked and planned all these years and with so little success. In fact, many times I have been a total failure.

“You men know that I have studied this business; in fact, I take special pride in knowing how, but Jesus has full control from now on. From now we work together, my Lord and I.”

May God bring the truth of this to every church whose members read this. While the application is for the individual it is also for the church. I have come to local churches where this “toiling” business has sapped what little strength the church possessed. Each night some “doings” with some branch or organization, well-meaning, no doubt, but at the end of the year they have “caught nothing.” During the Weeks we were together all interest was centered on a soul-saving effort, although it was clearly noted how difficult it was for some to get away from the general routine. However, when the Holy Spirit through the Word of God made plain our purpose and the ministry of the church, it seemed the spirit of our effort gripped every one and it became a joy to the old as well as the young to get into a real business for God. The church caught the vision, the pastor received a new desire to go on, because of reinforcements, and Christ had a chance to draw many unto Himself.

The joy of salvation was heard in the meetings and songs burst forth from redeemed hearts made glad by the old-time Gospel power. In other words, the church saw something that became dearer to them than a few petty little “circles” or “hoods” and “aids.” The ladies quit “playing with dolls”; the men threw away their marbles; the church parlor was filled at the weekly (not weakly) praise and testimony meeting; a new inspiration gripped the Bible Study nights and they had time for prayer. With such a program you need not wonder that there was a continuation of the spirit of revival and souls were saved.

One pastor wrote me a few months later that though he had been pastor there for seven years he really felt that he had a new church and, strange as it may seem, the church felt it had a new pastor. “And,” he added, “since those meetings we have doubled our missionary quota and paid the church debt.” And happily he closed, “I think I’ll stay here because it goes so smoothly.”

If God’s people today will re-dig the old wells of our fathers they will find again refreshing water springing up (Genesis 26:18-19) and if they will restore the broken down altars God will again answer from heaven (II Kings 18 -30) and if they will come back to God’s blueprint and put first things first, the glory of the Lord will again fill the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34).

~ end of chapter 14 ~

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