

WHEN GOD SAYS 'NO'

And Other Radio Addresses

by
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CHAPTER THREE

BRING . . . THE BOOKS

YESTERDAY, we followed the sheriff, Saul, down the beautiful Corinthian-columned highway - the street Straight - leading into Damascus. We heard the creak and groan of wooden wheeled ox carts, the rattle of the harness and of the caparisoned saddles on camels, the rustle of the tasseled mantles; we smelled the mingled odors of sweating men and animals. We felt the terrific heat of the thirsty sun pouring down upon the head of the blind young man - the missionary in the making; the man who had been converted in a lightning flash of time by the supernatural power of a Living CHRIST; the fiery young sheriff whose bitter hatred had clashed head-on with the love of CHRIST and he had fallen, subdued and broken and yet made whole . . .

Today, we visit a moment with the same - and yet not the same - man, now at the end of his journey, now about to be executed, to be killed for CHRIST's sake, as he, many years previous, had authorized the death of others, blindly thinking in those days that in so persecuting believers in CHRIST, he was doing GOD service . . .

And now, we are sitting beside him in an old Roman prison, thinking his thoughts with him as he writes a final farewell letter to Timothy, one of his young converts . . .

His letter was nearly finished. It was destined to be the last letter he would ever write. Soon the executioner's sword would strike the blow, or blows, necessary to sever the grizzled old head from the body that already bore in it the marks of the Lord JESUS.

Laboriously, the sixty-seven year old hand of the veteran soldier who was only thirty-seven years old in CHRIST, traced the large letters across the parchment.

"The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight" and if I could but live, I would keep fighting, on and on in His name - "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me."

I will see His nail-scarred hand, receive from that hand the crown. Precious hand!

A shiver ran through the tired old body. It was cold in this Roman prison. Winter would soon be here.

The reed pen scratched on: "**The cloak (Timothy) that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring**" (II Timothy 4:13).

After his death he would not need the cloak. He would present it as a gift to Luke, the only one of his former friends who was with him now. At his first defense no one had taken his part. They had all forsaken him, as the Lord's disciples had forsaken Him at His trial.

"I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge!" At the cross, the Lord JESUS CHRIST had said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

The cloak to Luke?

The pen moved on, " . . . **and the books, Timothy! . . . Bring . . . the books.**"

Never again would he be able to preach the gospel by word of mouth, never again tell men of the heavenly vision. Ah! but soon he would be in the presence of Him whom he had glimpsed that sweltering noonday on the Damascus road. Only one glimpse had won his allegiance forever.

Some disposition should be made of his little library of books and parchments, which along with the cloak, had been left with Carpus.

Leave them in the prison here for other prisoners to read? Give them to Luke, the beloved physician? Lend them to Pudens, the servant of Claudius? Pudens was a believer. He could. He could influence the whole royal court. The books must not lie idle after his departure.

"Timothy bring the cloak . . . and the books . . . especially the parchments."

Books! What treasures! The old goatskin parchments with the Word of GOD written upon them!

Goatskins! How many times had he labored with the skins of goats, soaking them in lime to remove the hair, then shaving them, washing, drying, stretching, smoothing. Tents, too, were made of goatskins. Ah! those were happy days, those tentmaking days with Priscilla and Aquila. Saints, indeed, they were, and how their lives and teachers had helped the mighty gospel orator, Apollos!

Paul planted, and Apollos watered. But it was Priscilla and Aquila who first watered Apollos.

Again the old reed pen moved on, "**Salute Priscilla and Aquila.**"

Come before winter, Timothy. If I live longer than I think I shall need the cloak.

Roman citizens condemned to die were executed on the Astian Way, beheaded with a sword. On the Damascus Way he had died long ago, died and risen again in experience.

"Nevertheless, I live" (Galatians 2:20). "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for for me."

"The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you."

Paul, the aged, laid aside the cumbersome old pen, set the cap upon the inkhorn.

The letter was finished, as was also the course of his life.

"Henceforth . . . "

~ end of chapter 3 ~

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