

MEDITATION ON THE STATE OF AFFAIRS

We had a disturbing discussion last evening in our ladies Bible study. We were studying David's loving attitude toward his enemies as we read in Psalm 35 how he prayed passionately for them, clothed in sackcloth, and fasted, as he interceded before God for them, in spite of their hateful and vicious personal attacks toward him. Our discussion began with a comment expressing our inability to be as compassionate and caring for our enemies as was David.

The next verses we studied were from Psalm 119. From the position we take that David was also the writer of this Psalm, we see the same compassionate character in verse 53 as he is suddenly seized with "horror" at a glimpse of the fate of the wicked. Sadly, once again, we were disturbed at the discovery that we ourselves did not share the same intensity of feeling even though we all understand the "horrors" of hell. We know the importance of witnessing and we take every opportunity afforded to us, but are we, as a representative sample of the people of God, becoming cold and heartless? If so, does the fault lie totally within us, or are there other factors to be considered?

As the Holy Spirit directed our discussion, we began to ponder the great revivals of the past, when the church was on fire and many souls were being saved. There was a zeal then, and a sense of urgency. As we read excerpts from the famous sermon by Jonathan Edwards, "Sinners in the Hands of An Angry God," we commented that none of us had ever heard a sermon preached on the gruesome, awful realities of hell. Could that be because of the unpleasantness of the topic itself, or is it possible that the Bible version issue comes into play here? The new versions have weakened the doctrine and the substance of hell by substituting such ambiguous words as, 'death,' 'grave,' 'sheol,' 'hades' and 'the depths.' Is the church failing in its mission to snatch the wicked from their slide into this place of everlasting torment?

The conclusion is obvious. The church is failing, not only in this area, but in others as well. The definition of the word church (Gr. ekklesia) is "a called out assembly." Believers are to be "called out" from the world; living "in it" but not a part "of it," and separated unto God, which is the other half of the equation. In our culture today we see neither, as there is no more "church." Our light has gone out, and even more deplorable is the fact that the Holy Spirit no longer has a network of consecrated, yielded believers able to perform the mission. As has been the case in every dispensation previously, we too have failed.

The most distressing factor in all of this is that we have grieved the Holy Spirit of God. It is He who accomplished the impossible task of showing us our own ugly sin when we were yet unbelievers. As a result, we were led into Christ, through faith, and have received innumerable blessings. How dare we grieve our indwelling Comforter so much that His power is constrained? How can we, through our own insensitivity, prevent other sinners from partaking of our incredible feast? Our Saviour was indeed prophetic when he asked the probing question, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Lk 18:8)