

Communications.

Church Finance.

(Concluded.)

Jesus said the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. Who are the children of light? evidently Christians. Eph. v. 8, 1 Thess. v. 5. What are children of the world wiser in than those of light? It can't be a knowledge of the only true and living God, as the plan of life and salvation; but Jesus was talking of an actual business transaction. Then its in relation to business, or financial matters, that the children of this world, are wiser in, than the church is in her business or financial matters, and I verily believe observations through life justify the conclusion. But, says one, does the church have actual business matters of a financial nature, to attend to? I say, yes sir, and if she attends to her business or financial matters poorly, or loosely, she makes just such a character, and her spirituality will be according. If your school district should wish to build a school house, how would the children of the world go about it? would they do as many of the children of light are want to do, and say, just lay by in store, as the Lord has prospered you, and very soon we'll have a house. No, sir, you don't say it, because you know you would not get a house that way, because those perhaps the most able, are never prospered in that way. They almost always say, I am in debt, I've bought another piece of land, to raise a little more wheat, &c., and so it goes. But common sense teaches, as well as revelation, that there shall be equality, that one shall not be burdened, and another eased.

Common sense would say, in a worldly matter like building a school house, what are our wants? If a \$1,000 house, then in accordance with law, the clerk makes an equalization on the district, the money is collected, and the house built. Just so our court houses, and public buildings are made. Just so I look upon the proclamation of the Gospel to the world. First decide as a business matter, as the children of the world do on business matters, what you desire to accomplish this year, if on due notice the congregation say they can afford to pay \$500 this year for the spread of the Gospel, then let the deacons, or some judicious committee, make the equalization. But, some one says, I am better able to judge of my ability. But I beg to differ. While man is all wrapped about with the mantle of selfishness, its very hard for him to judge of his prosperity. I would prefer a judicious committee.

But says one, if that's your plan, lets have it *advalorem*. To that I object, because the spirit of the Gospel is, that we should not have something for nothing, and taking the minors, sisters, and the indebtedness of many out of the assessment, a very few pay all expense of the church, and, perhaps often, families paying no tax, are all members, and receive the ministrations of the word, and those paying most heavily, are few in number. I say let all from the least to greatest, pay something, if ever so little, let them realize the fact that if they are a stone in the building, they are of importance. Yes, I learn some things from the affairs of State, that are useful in the business departments of the church. Yes, I say in accordance with the action of the church, (as we are commanded to be subject one to another), let the proper committee make an equalization to raise the required amount. A system of this kind in one congregation in the United States, does more missionary work both foreign and home, every year, than you would see in a lifetime by the "lay by in store" plan. But, I imagine I hear some one say, where is your book? "I speak where the Bible speaks, and am silent where it is silent."

This I dispute, you may think so, but there a hundred things we speak of where the Bible is as silent as the tomb, but in matters of minor importance. As to the positive institutions and ordinances of the Scriptures, vary not a hairs breadth.

Jesus did many other things which are not written in this Book, but these are written that ye might believe, and if all were written the world would not contain the Books; so I say if all the matters pertaining to the carrying forward the work Jesus gave into the hands of men had to be written, and in detail, he being such a dolt as not to have judgment enough to decide these matters of minor importance without every minucia being written, the world would hardly contain the books for his guidance. A church decided they would not use the Christian Hymnal because the Book was silent about using hymn books with notes. And so it is silent about building meeting houses, having Sunday schools, how many elders and deacons, how much we shall pay an evangelist, and a hundred other things. Jesus supposed man had sense enough to carry forward the work, as the church was to be not only the ground, but the support of the truth. No brother, you do speak in many things where the Bible is as silent, as death itself.

The best plan is to agree upon some plan and work well up to that plan, and not be discussing plans always and do nothing.

The importance of a healthy finance in the church is of vast importance; in fact, there is more depending upon finance than any other one item connected with the Christian system.

Put the proper amount of money in the hands of competent preachers, and I assure you in one year our State might be virtually revolutionized. But how stands the case. All branches of business human organizations, and institutions, mining stocks and such have a prosperous tendency, while if the Lord's cause moves at all in this State, it certainly slides back a little, judging of the fields being vacated by our preachers who are leaving the State. I pray that we may wake up to duty.

A. W. L.

Our Troubles.

NUMBER V.

Having spoken of our colleges, our paper, our editors, and our contributors, we will next look in the direction of

OUR PREACHERS.

In speaking of that class of men in the church, with whom I have been numbered for more than a half century, some of whom, have in the past and may in the future, cause us much trouble; I hope I will not wound the feelings of any good brother preacher, though I intend to hew to the line, should I fall among the slain. What I say, I will say in all kindness.

It is said we now have in California at least forty preachers, out of this number there are about ten preaching, the remaining thirty are idle, so far as work in the Lord's vineyard is concerned. I cannot pray the Lord of the harvest to send us any more laborers now, for we are over supplied. After this over supply gets work I will then ask the good Lord of the harvest to send us some little ones who will not aspire above the labor in the vineyard.

But the great question now is, with me, how can we get these thirty laborers into the field? When the Great Teacher wished to impress upon our minds some important principle or inspire our hearts with heavenly emotions, so we might be prepared the better to reverence and adore him, he did not as we are want to do now-a-days, enter into a lengthy *exegesis*, to enlighten our minds and soften our hearts, but would give us an exemplification. Hear him, when

he wished to present to the people the benign principle of meekness, he would say, Look at my servant Moses. When he wished to teach long suffering and patience, you hear him say, See my servant Job; and when he wished to inspire us with implicit faith and unwavering confidence, he would say, Behold my servant Abraham; and thus the great lessons of meekness, patience and fidelity were most forcibly taught to the waiting multitudes, nor did they ever forget these most wholesome lessons.

Now I will adopt the Savior's style of instruction, and speak to these thirty idle preachers; it may be that work could be found for them inside the vineyard of the Lord, and that it is not an absolute necessity that they should go to the practice of medicine or law.

In preaching, our exemplification sermon to these thirty idle preachers we will not take them back forty or fifty years, and place them on the heights of the Alleghany mountains, and ask them to look over the great valley of the Mississippi, but we will carry them back some eighteen or twenty years and set them on the summit of the Sierra Nevada, and ask them to look upon the valleys below, and behold a Thompson, a Lawson, a Rose, a Pendegast, a Burnett, a De Witt, a McCorkle, and other servants of God at work, in his field. Do you see a notice in the news papers or pasted upon a tree from either of these working men, stating that they had just arrived from the States and wished to find a church which was both able and willing to support them, so they could officiate as their pastor, and if they could not get work they would return to the States or go to the practice of law or medicine.

If such had been the course of these preachers, how many brethren, how many sisters, or how many churches would we now have in the State of California?

Now, I ask did these faithful men ever suffer for want of food, or raiment, or any of the necessities of life?

I have been young, and now I am old, and can testify to the truth of the declaration made by David, I have never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread, nor have I ever seen the time when the laborer was not worthy of his hire, though he may not have received it.

But I have so much to say about preachers, I must take a recess, and try again, as I wish what I write to be read, and I am convinced that not one in ten read the long articles, while all read the short ones. I therefore must be short.

Fraternally,

HENRY THOMAS.

San Jose, Cal., Nov. 28, 1877.

Do You Feel Your Sins Forgiven?

Ed. Messenger:

Allow me to insert the following from the *Australasian*, a secular paper published in Melbourne. I ask this for three reasons. First It is sound and (that big word) orthodox. Second. This and similar articles are published in the above named newspaper under the head of "Notices," and paid for as advertisements out of what is called the "Sermon Fund," sustained by contributions from the liberal-spirited in the various denominations of Australia. This is a part of their missionary and seems a grand enterprise. Third. Coming from this source, it shows the happy tendency of the religious world, to move back from fanaticism and dream land, to the apostles' way, and build again upon the sure foundation. Let us take courage.

WOLVERTON.

Monmouth, Dec. 10, 1877.

OUR ASSURANCE.

Do you feel that your sins are all forgiven?

"Indeed I do not; but I know they are."

"Now, I cannot understand that. How can any one know it?"

"If you had wronged me, and I told you that I forgave you, would you not know it?"

"Most certainly; but how can you say that God ever told you that He forgave you? Did you just feel at a certain time something that you thought was God's voice, inwardly, telling you that your sins were pardoned?"

"I certainly did not."

"Then how can it be? I have tried to get converted as hard as any man could; I have prayed for grace, for strength, for the pardon of my sins, and for the Holy Spirit, and I do not yet feel any difference, and I never could feel as I have heard some men say they felt."

"I quite understand you; I was for years in the same condition."

"Then how did you get out of it? I know all about the plan of salvation, about the work of Christ, and the necessity of the Spirit; that we must be justified by grace through faith alone without the works of the law; that the promises are all most certainly secure to them that are in Christ; but how am I ever to know whether I am in Him or not?"

"I know that you may have heard some Christians say they feel they are pardoned, they feel they are saved; but this only tends to mislead. It did mislead me, and I have no doubt it is misleading you. These Christians may mean a right thing, but they state it wrongly. I feel happy because I know my sins are pardoned; and I will show you how I know that by and bye, but I do not feel that my sins are pardoned. Let us suppose a case. A poor widow has no money to pay her debts. The creditor comes demanding his righteous due. A friend steps in, and says to the creditor, 'I'll pay you the widow's debt,' he puts down the money, and the creditor hands him a slip of paper on which is written, 'Received from Widow Blank the sum due, settled, with the creditor's signature affixed. The receipt is handed to the widow, and she feels very happy because she knows that her debt is paid. If you were to call that day, and say to the widow, 'Do you feel that your debt is paid? what would she say?'

"Feel it! What do you mean? There is the receipted account. I don't feel that it's paid, but I feel very happy because it is paid."

"Now, do you not see the difference? The feeling is all right, but I do not feel my sin pardoned. I know it, and hence feel happy."

"But does it not say somewhere in Scripture that the Spirit beareth witness with our spirits?"

"Now, from the very fact that you speak so vaguely about 'somewhere in Scripture,' I fear that you do not know well what Scripture is. The Bible is not a number of texts strung together at random; it is a perfectly arranged whole. Truth in a wrong connexion is the worst kind of error. You find in Romans viii. 16, this most blessed and wondrous revelation from God, that 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God.' Mark carefully, this is not given as a ground by which to know that our sins are forgiven, but comes after the whole revelation of the truth concerning what we have done and what we are, and how our responsibilities are met. It comes after the triumphant assertion of Romans v. 1, 'Being justified by faith we have peace with God,' and that crowning triumph after every question has been settled against us, 'There is no condemnation' (Rom. viii. 1). At peace with God, and no condemnation, we now advance into our peculiar place among the creatures of God. Angels are at peace with God and have no condemnation, but they have not the standing that we have. Here is something additional, 'We are the children of God, and if

children then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.' Angels are called sons in Job i. 6; and other Scriptures. They are the highest unfallen creatures, and man was made a little lower than they, but is now made higher than they in virtue of redemption. (Heb. i.) They are kept by God's power. God alone is without variableness or shadow of turning. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. We are fellow-heirs with Him, created anew in Christ Jesus our responsible Head, and this is our security.

"Being taken from the swine-troughs, and getting food and raiment, we would therewith be content, glad that we were in the house at all, even among the servants. But higher than servants are we become, even heirs. We may well pause, and say, is this presumption? Dare I say that all things are mine? that I am a child, a son, an heir of God? Yes I indeed we may; the Spirit has been sent to dwell with us and to be in us, as coming from the throne revealing to our spirit (which can now discern spiritual things) that, without presumption, we may lay claim to the title, the relationship, of son of God, heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ. That Spirit is within every believer, and seals only saved ones. He quickens the unsaved. God has sent forth this testimony, and he that is a believer has the 'testimony in himself' (1 John v. 10). The important point I wish you to see is this, that the Holy Ghost is never said to bear witness to us, by any internal feeling, that we are at peace with God. It is after a man knows he is a saved man that then there is a further step shown him—namely, that he is a son and heir in Christ. He is not only out of prison; he is set at the table of the King whom he calls 'Abba,' that is, 'Father.'

"I quite understand the distinction, but I never saw it before; but if I could know that I was at peace with God I would be quite satisfied."

"Yes, but God would not; however, this is the first point for you to know—being justified by faith we have peace with God, not by the feeling of faith."

"But don't some people feel it, while others do not?"

"Not at all. What I am contending for is that the forgiveness of sins is a thing that can be felt by no one; and, unless the knowledge of it is founded on the Word of God, and that alone, for every one, individually, it will be sinking sand for a deathbed. Scores of anxious people have been deluded into the idea that they knew the Gospel when some pleasing emotion passed through their minds. When Satan sees people awakened, and that he cannot keep them quiet, he takes his stand beside the preacher of the Gospel, and while he is inviting them to the rock, Satan pushes out planks of feeling. A drowning man will catch at a straw, and the poor troubled one finds a little relief in resting on some plank of quietness of conscience, till storms rage, and then he finds himself with nothing beneath him. I am therefore suspicious when a person tells me he is 'a little better.' If he does not believe the Gospel, he has no right to be any better, and if he has taken the good news to himself, he is entitled to be at perfect peace."

"Then you don't allow of any feeling?"

"Most certainly I do; but what am I warranted in feeling? If I could tell you that you were saved, and you believed it, would you not feel happy?"

"Of course I would."

"This is what I feel—whenever I say to myself, 'I'm saved,' don't I feel happy? And the more I realize that my knowledge of salvation depends only on God's word, the more happy I become."

"Is there nothing about this 'feeling saved' in the Bible?"

"Indeed there is not. You can easily