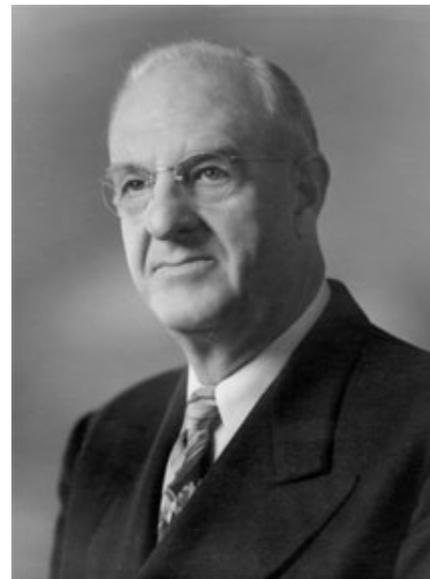


An Endurance Race to the End

Preached By Rev. Raymond Crawford on November 20, 1949



We cannot help but know that the Church Age is nearing its end and we know, too, that the Church Triumphant — the full overcomers, the victors — will play an important part in the next age. There is going to be a complete change in this world, one that will break the power that controls today's governing forces; a change that will unseat the throne of iniquity and set up the throne of righteousness.

The injustices, the graft, the treachery, the iniquity in this world today, from the lowest to the highest places, will be crushed and destroyed. Then there will be justice and equity and peace unto all men. We are looking for that day with longing and anticipation, crying out for it. I am sure that God will hear the cry of the righteous.

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

"Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.

"For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.

"For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.

"And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;

"But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Hebrews 3:1-6).

That little two-letter word "if" weighs with tremendous meaning in some of these places in the Book of God. We are not to sail serenely on, supposing that we are all right regardless of our attitude toward heavenly things or our conduct or conversation in this world. We know that the measure of our favorable standing in the sight of God depends upon whether "we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." Firm unto the end! Jesus said: "He that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 10:22).

A Race with a Purpose

This Christian race is an endurance race. It is not a hundred-yard dash. And he that endureth unto the end shall be saved. In that case it is necessary to check up on our lives and our experience with God to see if we are enduring, holding steadfast, keeping firm. The end is what is going to count.

So many dwell upon the past, think about the past, testify to the past and to what God has delivered them from 20, 30, 40 years ago; or even 5 or 6 years ago. That is wonderful, of course, and we must consider the pit from whence we were digged and keep in mind what God has done for *us*. But it is necessary to cast our vision ahead toward the end. People never know when the summons will come to meet their God.

**"Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice,
"Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in
the wilderness" (Hebrews 3:7, 8).**

Frequently we hear those words quoted as applicable to sinners only for a warning; but these words were spoken to the people of God: "To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Our hearts can become hardened to the voice of God. "He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Proverbs 29:1). It is dangerous to ignore the voice of God and become calloused to the warnings in God's Book.

Heart-searching messages are preached time after time, year in and year out, and yet many people are seemingly immune to the Word of God. They may claim to have a great religious experience and perhaps hold a high standard of Christian living. They can look back in their datebook and find the hour, — the day and the year — when God spoke peace to them. They can turn over a few pages, and perhaps find the date when He sanctified them. They can go oh and say, "Here is when God baptized me with the Holy Ghost and fire." But what have they been doing since?

A Purpose in View

The spiritual experiences God gives us are for a purpose. When God led the disciples out as far as Bethany, He taught them; He revealed the things of the Kingdom to them. He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Then He told them to return to Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father: "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). For what purpose? For effectual service that would leave its mark on this world. They left that mark because they obeyed.

They returned to Jerusalem and tarried. They were there praising and glorifying God continually until the power fell. When the Day of Pentecost was fully come, the promise was fulfilled. The power of God came upon them and they were baptized with the Holy Ghost. Why? Because they were all sanctified wholly and in one accord, and were ready for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. When a person in these days is prepared to receive the baptism, his day of Pentecost will "fully come," too. But when he is filled with the Spirit, progress does not stop. Service does not cease. Work for God only begins.

This Christian life, someone has said, is like riding a bicycle — when you stand still you fall over. That is what has happened to many souls who have ceased to go forward after having received the mighty power of God upon their lives.

The Christian life is a spiritual warfare and it entails intensive activity from start to finish. I have never forgotten the words of our precious Brother Jack Robbins as he neared the end of his pilgrimage. He said, "This is a battle from start to finish; and I'm not finished yet." He fought it to the finish. His faith in God was absolute; and his trust in the Almighty took him right across Jordan. I thank God for that.

Neither have I forgotten when Brother Bourcey passed out of this world many years ago. In the days of the founding of this Gospel work in

Portland he faithfully preached the Gospel in spite of much opposition. He was a fighter! He met the issues of life and fought for God straight through to the end. One day, a few hours after he had proclaimed the Word of God at the camp meeting, he was taken to his home and laid upon a couch. His shoes were not taken off until after his spirit had passed through the Portals. I was with him and wanted to remove his shoes to make him as comfortable as possible, but he said, "No, I want to die with my boots on." Glory to God! That is the spirit of a real soldier of Jesus Christ. We, too, want to fight this good fight of faith right through to the *end*.

"Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

"When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

"Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my Ways.

"So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Hebrews 3:8-12).

It means much to retain that faith. Paul says: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (II Timothy 4:7). What a monumental testimony of a man who had gone through some battles for the work and cause of Christ! Scourged, stoned, shipwrecked, imprisoned, and finally

martyred! But before the day of his execution he said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." In other words, withdrawing from the living God, standing back; following afar off; listening to the siren voice of the enemy of your soul who would like to see you tone down and temper your ardor for God. He would like to have you lose your enthusiasm for the truth and slacken up on your work for the Master. You will notice that the people who slack up and favor themselves lose the keen edge from their testimony and their spiritual experience.

A testimony of "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" is not very edifying, but one with a heart that has been drenched with the love of God, sanctified, and baptized with the Spirit of God, and living in the atmosphere of prayer, has a testimony and a life that resounds and echoes forth to the glory of God down the corridors of time. You can say of such people, as it was said of the men of old, they have been with Jesus and have learned of Him.

"But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

"Hardened through the deceitfulness of sin!" Sin's deceitfulness hardens! You see that every day of the world. Some advertisements emblazoned on the billboards today would never have been tolerated twenty Or more years ago. But how enticingly they depict sin! How luring they become! The deceitfulness of sin hardens the heart, dulls the conscience, and leads men down to destruction, almost unwittingly.

Warning

The spirit of this world can exert its influence upon believers, too, and sin will creep into their hearts unless they watch and pray. It is time to raise our voice against things that are evil. It is time to cry aloud and spare not, but lift our voice like a trumpet. We are not to fold our arms placidly and say that the world is going down to destruction and that there is nothing we can do about it. Some can yet **be** saved; some can be rescued from the pit of destruction if we hold up the light of the Truth,

"For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end."

Here is that little word "if" again.

"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness" (II Peter 3:17.)

In the face of these truths where is there any foundation for this seductive modern idea of unconditional eternal security? We, individuals, are responsible before God. We are responsible for getting the love of God into our hearts, and then we are more responsible for retaining it.

If there were no danger' of falling from grace, why all these warnings? Why all these examples which we find in the Word of God? Following "afar off" paves the way to backsliding, and if unrepented of, to final apostasy. Don't forget! It is easy to let down a little here and a little there, and to temporize a little here and there, and say there is no use in being so strict and straitlaced, so dogmatic and arbitrary about these issues. Is that so! The Word of God tells us that this is all-important, all-essential.

We are living in an age of so-called toleration and understanding, a condition contrary to the principles and standards of Christianity. Toleration of sin is sending this world to destruction. "Intolerable" is a hard word; it is a harsh word. But it means the difference between salvation and damnation. We must take our stand for God's principles uncompromisingly, or be lost.

The question comes to each individual: What will I do about it? I would say, take a stand against yourself; swear to your own hurt; look into your own life and see what you have been doing since God put the joy of salvation into your heart, since He sanctified you, and gave you the fullness of His Spirit and power. What have you been doing? You may be placid and sweet and kind and gentle and tolerant, but if

you are not progressing and doing something for God, you are not using the spiritual equipment God has given you, and you have lost what you had.

If God gives you a spirit of grace, a portion of His love, a manifestation of His power, and you fail to use what He gives you, He will take it away and give it to someone else who will use it for the glory of God, for the salvation of mankind, for the snatching of brands from the burning. That was God's purpose in giving you the spiritual equipment. God manifested His love and grace upon your life that you might be instrumental in bringing someone else to the point of full surrender, that he might be saved too.

Some years ago there was a terrible fire in a warehouse in Denver, Colorado. It burned out the warehouse completely. The editor of the newspaper who reported it said that a potential fire-destroying element was in that building but could not operate because it was absolutely frozen. Tons of ice were stored in the building. That is the trouble with a lot of churches today. People who have good intentions, good morals, and possibly good influence, are frozen spiritually.

Prayer Greater Than Atom Bombs

If this world is ever set on fire for God, and hearts of men reached for Him, it will be because the children of God are melted down in openheartedness, prayer, supplication and intercession before God. Prayer can move mountains out of the way in shorter time than atom bombs can.

If men and women of God will be faithful in prayer, hold on, prevail before God upon their knees, a spiritual conflagration for God can be started and spread as they continue in prayer. It will sweep like a prairie fire over this old world.

Who has a desire to start that fire here and now? Let it begin right in our own midst. Let us consecrate and rededicate ourselves to God in intercessory prayer. Let us pray that we may go forward and get all that God has for us, with the purpose of using it for the salvation of souls. God will answer our prayers.

Think of the hundreds of requests for prayer which are coming into our office constantly. We get letters from all over the world; and perhaps 90% of them are requesting prayer for sick bodies and for the salvation of souls. Let us pray for the spread of the Gospel, that we might launch out on new frontiers. That is my heart's desire. We did not start out in this Gospel work to set any stakes or limitations as to where we would go or what we would do in the Lord's work. Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." We have new frontiers within a "stone's throw" that have not been reached yet with the Gospel.

"I can't go," you say. Possibly you can't, but you can pray. You can put everything you have into your prayers as though you were going. You can say, "By the grace of God, I will hold up the hands of those who do go," as Aaron and Hur held up the hands of Moses on the mountain, when the children of Israel were fighting for their -lives. We are fighting for the souls of men and women. We are fighting for the salvation of the lost. We want to see men brought to Jesus before it is too late.

You say, "I have so much to do — so many things to attend to. I am so busy!" Yes, Mary and Martha were both busy. But Mary chose the better part. In her busy activities she found time to sit at the feet of Jesus. Martha was so occupied with her business that she could not do so.

Let us dedicate ourselves afresh, renew our vows, and say Yes to God concerning the things on which we have drawn back. I challenge every Christian to do what the Book says to do, and see what God will do — just see what will happen!

How many are willing to consecrate themselves afresh to God this very day, to search their heart, examine themselves whether they be in the faith? Find out for yourself whether you are paying the price, meeting your obligations to God, stepping up in the Light and walking in it with all your heart and soul. Why not turn your heart inside out, so to speak, and say with David of old: "Examine me, **O LORD**, and prove me; try my reins and my heart" (Psalm 26:2). Walk in the light of God's Truth, be true and faithful unto the end, and you will receive the crown of eternal life.