

HEZEKIAH ... who made the dust fly
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(2 CHRONICLES 29:3-5)

The temple was closed; its only occupants were spiders, mosquitos, and probably a few cockroaches. They were having a field day! King Ahaz had ". . . shut up the doors of the house of the Lord, and made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem" (2 Chron. 28:24). The faithful saints in Israel either worshipped at home or in some secluded place in the mountains. And then Hezekiah came to the throne.

Spring-Cleaning in the House of God-2 Chronicles 29:5

" And Hezekiah said unto the priests, Here me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify now the house of the Lord God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place. For our fathers have trespassed. . . ." Within a matter of hours from the time of the king's edict, the spiders were running for their lives, and cobwebs were being destroyed by the score. Neglect had given birth to dirt, and since God would never dwell in a filthy shrine, it became necessary for Hezekiah to cleanse the sacred house. Finally the cleaners said, " Moreover all the vessels, which King Ahaz in his reign did cast away in his transgression, have we prepared and sanctified, and, behold, they are before the altar of the Lord." It is worthy of consideration that in this ancient cleansing of the temple, certain things had to be removed, whilst others had to be reclaimed. Defilement had to be banished; holiness had to be restored. Many years later Paul declared, " Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? . . . the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are " (I Cor. 3:16, 17). When a man begins to backslide, the sacred things of the Spirit begin to disappear from his life. Restoration can never be complete until all these priceless jewels are restored to their place before the altar of God.

Sacrificing in the House of God-2 Chronicles 29:20-24

" And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the Lord, to cleanse it, and brought out all the uncleanness which they found in the temple of the Lord into the court of the house of the Lord. And the Levites took it, to carry it out abroad into the brook Kidron " (v. 16). They dropped their rubbish into the brook, and the waters bore it away. Many years later, another Priest stood near the banks of the same little stream. He carried filthiness which He had gathered in many temples; but by the time His plans were completed, the entire burden-the sin of the whole world-was swept into oblivion (John 18: 1; I John 2: 2). "Then Hezekiah the king rose early All true saints are anxious to proceed with the task; procrastination is abhorred. First, the blood of the sin offering for penitence; then the blood of the burnt-offering for praise was placed upon the altar, and the way was open for God to visit His people. And although many centuries have since elapsed, these basic principles remain unchanged. God is anxious to fill us with His Holy Spirit; but alas, we do not rise early to go into the temple. We only enter when our eyes are too tired, and the light is too dim to see the spiders!

Singing in the House of God-2 Chronicles 29: 27-30

" And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt-offering upon the altar. And when the burnt-offering began, the song of the Lord began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments

HEZEKIAH ... who made the dust fly ordained by David King of Israel. And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded . . . and the king and all that were present with him, bowed themselves and worshipped . . . and they sang praises with gladness." Three vital facts sum up the story. (i) A sincere repentance. These people recognized that they had sinned against God. Blessed by the ministry of the law and the prophets, they had nevertheless strayed from the path of righteousness. Their temple was filthy; their relationships with God strained. They confessed their sin, and brought offerings. (ii) A sincere re-dedication. They earnestly desired to regain their lost communion, and to walk again in the paths of blessedness. They bowed humbly before the altar, and were accepted. (iii) A triumphant rejoicing. Soon the temple was crowded with devout worshippers; the hearts and homes of Israel became radiant, and the nation began to lift up its head. The recurring songs of Zion broadcast the fact that "The Lord, he is God."

Cleanse me from my sin, Lord,
Put Thy power within, Lord;
Take me as I am, Lord,
And make me all Thine own:
Keep me day by day, Lord,
Underneath Thy sway, Lord;
Make my heart Thy palace,
And Thy royal throne.

"I Stole your Pig"

One of the most stirring chapters in the history of overseas missions is now being written in the Central Highlands of New Guinea. The threat of enemy invasion made it necessary for the Australian Government to send troops to offset this threat, and it was this expeditionary force which took the Australian Baptist chaplains, for the first time, into "the land that time forgot." Hidden among the towering hills of this strange land, tribes of natives were found who were not known even to exist. They were primitive Stone Age people, who still fought with bows and poisoned arrows. When the padres returned to their homeland they carried the new challenge, and as a result of their indomitable efforts the Baptist Church in Australia established a new mission field.

The work was exceedingly difficult; the language presented problems of considerable magnitude. Yet the work advanced from the simplest of beginnings, and eventually the base station and a few out-stations were proclaiming the glad news of the Gospel. Sometimes it was difficult to assess the real progress of the endeavor, for without adequate knowledge of that particular native tongue it was difficult to ascertain whether or not the people understood. The first requests for baptism were deliberately side-stepped, lest a too premature confession of faith from former heathen should react unfavorably on the work. However, there came a time when the baptismal service could no longer be postponed, and arrangements were made for seven to confess their faith in Christ. By the time the awaited day arrived, this number had increased to forty-seven; and before that day was over, amazing things had taken place within the Baiyer River Valley.

The native people spontaneously met in a holy assembly, for many of them felt compelled to reveal hidden sins. They had not been instructed to do this; but as their desire to become Christians deepened, their consciousness of sin similarly increased. When they met together, one man confessed

HEZEKIAH ... who made the dust fly he had secretly stolen a pig from a neighbor; he paid his debt by returning another pig. Others confessed they had defrauded people in one way or another, and the debt was paid in cash or kind. And as the power of God fell upon that dusky assembly, tears commenced to roll on many faces. Obviously the deepest heart-searching ever to reach the tribes was producing phenomenal effects. The missionaries calmly watched and thanked God. Then came the request from the people, that others not yet prepared for baptism should be permitted to form a procession and walk to the baptismal pool, in order to confess to the thousands of onlookers that they also wished to become Christians. This permission was granted, but even the missionaries were amazed when one thousand men and women lined up to march solemnly to the riverside. It was wonderful; it was thrilling; it was the work of God.

During the months which followed the memorable day, the work increased in strength; and eventually native churches were formed, and native pastors appointed. The initial vision of the wartime padres had become a reality; Christ had come to the Baiyer River districts, and the light of the glorious Gospel was shining brightly where once the darkness of heathenism had prevailed. Yet as in retrospect the Baptists of Australia review the entire project, it is manifest that the turning point from hard struggle to glorious achievement came, when on their own initiative, men and women turned from their evil ways, to clean their lives, and transform their souls into sanctuaries. The work in New Guinea has grown almost beyond recognition, and today people who not so very long ago were still cannibals, are turning toward the Christian faith. In the most unlikely places on earth, churches are being established, and the fair Name of the Saviour is being glorified.

Is it too much to believe that similar things could happen in the Western world if our church followed the pattern of the native peoples of New Guinea? Is there a danger that our modern sophistication has filled us with a false pride; that to weep over our sin would be detrimental to our social standing; that to confess our coldness of heart might undermine our influence in high circles of society? Jesus said, " If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink . . . and out of his inner man shall flow rivers of living water." Every Christian could be a channel, to carry the life-giving flow to needy people. Alas, so often, and so easily, the channels are blocked by sin. We all pray for revival; but the key to its coming rests, not with God, but with the people God is waiting to use.

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