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HINDRANCES TO THE GOSPEL

I Cor. 9:12, "We suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ."

INTRODUCTION

~~where~~ I grew up in ~~Alabama~~ ~~where~~ there were many old covered bridges across streams, and flour mills along the creeks. I will never forget how I was riding under one of the covered bridges and grabbed the rafter over our wagonload of hay, and I held on too long and let the wagon go out from under me, and I dropped to the floor of the bridge and broke my arm.

I'll never forget, either, how we used to enjoy playing in and around the ~~grist mill~~ ^{colony, grain and} on Sunday afternoons when they weren't running.

The millers had an expression which I heard about but didn't understand at first: "Backwater on the wheel." Do you know what it signifies? When the waterwheel is so submerged that the motive power has to overcome the resistance of that which hinders its movement. There is plenty of power in the water current to drive the wheel, but the weight of the wheel itself resists it and tends to interrupt its progress.

Sometimes we as individual Christians and as congregations are so loaded with sin and ^{worry} care and ill feelings, that our lives become worse than backwater on the wheel; it is more like mud on the wheel. Then we have to use half the spiritual force of our lives in overcoming hindrances, so that only a small part of our spiritual potential is available to do God's work.

I. There are many things which cannot hinder the gospel.

A. Job 9:12 and 11:10 ask the question, "Who can hinder him?"

From the Book of Job we learn that ultimately SATAN can not hinder God's will. He may with God's permission test God's people, but Satan can not hinder the final working of God's will in the life of the faithful believer or in the world at large.

church or the

(see I John 2:15-17)

B. Neither can the WORLD hinder God's church, unless we let the world into the church.

The strongest force among the nations today is not the caprice of kings or rulers, the decisions of parliaments or legislatures, the votes of free citizens, or violent revolutions of radicals; but it is the God-called and divinely empowered man of God and the free New Testament church of Jesus Christ proclaiming and practicing the message of the gospel of redemption.

The following lines of poetry express it well:
"I paused last eve beside the blacksmith's door,
And heard the anvil ring, the vesper's chime,
And looking in I saw upon the floor
Old hammers, worn with beating years of time.
"How many anvils have you had?" said I
To wear and batter all these hammers so?"
"Just one," he answered; Then with twinkling eye:
"The anvil wears the hammers out, you know."
And so, I thought, the anvil of God's Word
For ages ~~S~~keptics' blows have beat upon,
But though the noise of falling blows was heard
The anvil is unchanged; the hammers gone."

More than a hundred years ago Voltaire predicted that there would not be a copy of the Bible on the earth in a hundred years.
Voltaire has been dead a long time, and I understand that today the Geneva Bible Society is using the very printing press on which his infidel prophecy was issued. The anvil of God's Word is unchanged and unhindered, but the infidel hammers continue to be worn out pounding relentlessly and vainly against the divine hammer.

C. The FLESH can hinder God's working in the Christian only when the Christian voluntarily surrenders to the power and lust of the flesh. Mentally sick and morally weak persons typically try to avoid personal responsibility for the power of the flesh over them, but I do not believe we can normally accept their excuses in these matters.

unlawful
physical
gratification

II. There are some things that we can do to avoid hindrances to the gospel:

A. Keep the Church independent from the State. Religious liberty and separation of church and state are key Baptist and American principles.

(statement by James M. Dunn)

B. Keep the Gospel Message Free from Human Perversion (Galatians 1:6-9, 11).

1. We don't need another or a "different" gospel, *or creed or Confession of Faith.*

The one we have in the New Testament is quite sufficient, *Thank you!*

2. Even if a few copyists errors or translators' imperfect translations are discovered sometime, this will not destroy my faith in the trustworthiness of the Holy Scriptures. Even if the best Hebrew text available today is obscure in places, this does not shake my faith in the Bible as the Word of God, for to me the essential point is whether the Bible is God's truth in revealing to us the way of salvation and His will for our faith and life as believers.

C. Keep the Christian Community Free from Internal Obstacles and Stumbling-blocks, I Cor 9:12, 19-27.

D. It is quite true then that Christians can indeed hinder God's will and working in our own lives, in our families, in our churches, and in the world around us, when we are unfaithful to Him and disobey Him in our lives and refuse to love and serve Him.

E. Let us never forget that the central Word of this gospel is that of the mystery of the Cross whereby the rebel may be made nigh again, and the chaos may give place to order, and all weariness and wounding and woe may give place to rest and healing and happiness. Where this cross is lifted high, and the Savior on it is preeminent the gospel cannot be hindered.

Where the Christian witness is true to this Kingdom and to this interpretation, the result is always that the witness is unhindered; in spite of emperors, dictators, prisons, and chains, the Word of God is not bound.

Whatever may be the massed forces against its testimony, it is THEY which must crumble, pass away, and perish, as did Rome and Nero, and all the oppressive empires of history.

CONCLUSION

It is our privilege to be true to that gospel testimony in life and speech, to the glory of his name.

Perhaps there are some things in your life which have been a hindrance to your effective witness as a Christian, and you need to confess them to God and lay them on the altar. Only when everything is laid on the altar of sacrifice can your life be a channel of blessing rather than a stumbling block.

Make this dedication as we sing our invitation hymn; (number 262). Come as we stand and sing.

1-4-87 - Pasadena B.C.; D# 47: "UNHINDER"
12-4-90 - Lake Maggiore B.C.
2-26-92 - Sunset Point B.C. Clutter.