

# The Wise and Proper Solution of a Problem

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I spent the week before last from Monday-to-Monday night in New York City preaching at the Gospel Tabernacle Church founded many years ago by Dr. A.B. Simpson. And I stayed over Monday and preached for the 149th anniversary of the New York Bible Society and 19 Jewish missions, their delegates. I wanted to tell you a little about it. Brother McAfee was there up until after Friday night, and he flew home and was here for Sunday.

But on the last Sunday the place was crowded out upstairs and downstairs and then the choir loft, out in the side and in the fellowship hall upstairs. And Brother Reidhead the pastor said this to me on Monday when he took me to the train and came clear up and sat until we almost pulled out of the station. He said now, I am taking Dr. Simpson's picture and name off of the masthead. He said, I said I would allow Dr. Simpson, I'd be co-pastor with Dr. Simpson though he's been dead since 1919, until we got as many people in here as he got. And then when we did, I'd become pastor. So, he is reverently taking the name of the founder off and he's going to be pastor in his own right.

Something happened there that I think that I'd like to tell you about. Last Sunday, a week, that would be two weeks, they baptized an officer in the Turkish army, a Turkish air force officer. Well, this young fellow, quite a wonderful looking young chap with big soulful, dark eyes and I rather loved him to look at him. Somebody won him to the Lord in a hospital. And he came and wanted to be baptized. So, they baptized him. Then came word the United States government was sending him home. They said that Friday morning is the last day you can stay. You must take a boat or plane or something and get out of here Friday morning.

Turkey being the kind of country it is, Christian's lives are just worth about that much in Turkey. A missionary to Turkey who interpreted for a lot of us, Brother McAfee, myself and the pastor and some others, gathered around this young man and we prayed. And it looked as if he was going back to his death. We prayed that God would do something and I felt my little part I had, I felt like praying that God would make the darkness light and break and cut asunder the bars of iron.

Well, he was to leave Friday morning for Turkey. Friday morning, he got a cable from his government saying, your orders have changed. You are now an attaché in the Turkish delegation in Washington, DC. So, our young officer is now in Washington DC serving there and will not have to go back to die or be persecuted to death. God answered prayer. I think that was evidence of the answer of God. It isn't often you see it happen so fast, but it had to happen fast there. God only

answers prayer fast when it has to happen fast. If there's time, He waits and lets you wait. Well, I thought you'd like to know God's working here and there over the earth.

And then, I want to fulfill a promise I made here when I said that I would finish talking about this thing here in the sixth of Acts. In those days when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there rose a murmuring of the Grecian Jews against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. Then the twelve called a multitude of the disciples unto them and said, it is not reason that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables.

Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word. The saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas: a proselyte of Antioch, the seven of them whom they set before the apostles. And when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them, and the Word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly. And a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Now, I talked about this, how the multiplying of numbers brought a multiplying of problems. And then I said that I would finish talking about this little thing the next time I preached, which is now.

Now I want you to note here how the apostles met the situation. There was trouble in that early church. You know, we as a rule seem to be very romantic. We're an incurably romantic people, and I wouldn't want God's people to be any other way. I don't like these metallic adding machine Christians, whose theology is based upon mathematics, and they're just as cold and lifeless. I like God's people to be romantic and emotional because that's what makes you love them. Their good, righteous lives make you respect them. But their emotional, happy, joyous love makes you love them.

And these people, were not what our romantic outlook make them out to be. We draw an unpleasant comparison between, say, the sixth of Acts and now. And we say we have not a saint left in all the earth. The prophets occasionally fell into that trap as the Psalmist did and Elijah himself certainly did on one occasion. Elijah even went so far as to say, I'm the only saint left. The Lord reminded him he had a few others.

But always remember, the grass is greener on the field a few generations ago. I smile when I hear people and when I hear myself romantically talking about the early Methodists, those early Methodists had their troubles, brother. If you read the story of the early Methodists, you'll find they had their problems. Wesley and his own brother didn't get on always. When Charlie wrote a hymn, John said, Charlie, you never should have sung that hymn in the public assembly. It's no good.

Now, they were saints, but they weren't wax saints. They were just saints. They were just plain human beings who loved God and were redeemed, plucked out of the burning. But they hadn't got yet all the glory that will be theirs when the Lord returns. So, let's remember that. Let's not think down our present generation too much. And specially, let's not think up another generation. Politicians are always talking about Alexander Hamilton and Benjamin Franklin and George Washington, and everybody knows George Washington would drink whiskey. And everybody knows those men were just like other men.

So, let's remember that when you read the book of Acts, you read it on a slant. You see the green, but you don't see it straight down; you don't see the weeds. There were some weeds in the book of Acts too. The Holy Ghost admits that. And here we have one of them. We have a little problem here. There was a sort of an old folk's home where the widows were taken care of by the church. And the church mainly was made up of Jews. But there were two kinds of Jews. There were the Grecian Jews and the Hellenists there, otherwise called. They were the Jews who spoke other languages than Hebrew or Aramaic. Then there were the Palestinian Jews who were Hebrews of the Hebrews as they thought. And of course, they looked and raised their eyebrows at each other. The race problem is not a new thing. Don't forget that my brother. Don't forget it. The race problem is not a new thing.

And then they find a bit of difficulty integrating here, these Grecian Jews with the Hebrew Jews. And they said, some old Hebrew lady, Rebecca or Sarah. She looked at her plate, and then she looked across at the plate of a Grecian lady and she said, why, you got a bigger helping than I got. You know, that's the second time that's happened, and then the trouble was on, and they had no superintendent to send for, so they had to do the best they could. And perhaps they had to look to God about it.

And they went to the apostles, and the apostles said, men and brethren, don't come bothering us about serving tables and dividing portions between two kinds of widows, because we have to preach the Word of God. But I'll tell you what you do. And this was the beautiful thing that I love to hear about these apostles. They knew how to meet this situation. They knew how to meet it.

Now we have no such problem in our church, so don't think that I'm slyly trying to cure a breach someplace. There's no breach I know about. Either there isn't any or I'm blissfully naive. I don't know that there is, anybody. Somebody might criticize, but human beings do that, and it gets healed over in 24 hours. But there's no problem, so I'm not preaching to a problem. I'm preaching to a principle that can happen anywhere in any church at any time. It can happen in a Sunday school or even in a choir or in a lady's prayer band or anyplace as long as human beings are human beings.

Well, here's how the apostles met the crisis. They knew two things. You got to know certain things if you're going to carry on the work of God. They knew this. They knew that sin can always find a religious heart in which to lodge. Sin goes about, a kind of disembodied malignancy, looking for a place to lodge. And we think that this sin, this disembodied iniquity goes about and hovers over halfway houses and saloons. Well, I suppose it does. But there's one little thing we forget. And that is, it also hovers over churches, waiting for somebody, a soul to get into, even the twelve that Jesus had around Him.

So, Satan entered in. There was a disembodied malignancy, waiting for a soul that was open that they could crawl into. So, he crawled into Judas, and he became the son of perdition. So, sin will always find a heart somewhere to lodge in. If it was in the Kremlin, we'd expect it. If it was at the racetrack or the den of iniquity, we'd say, well, that's to be expected. But I say sin can always find a religious heart to get into. This deadly malignancy that floats about can find a religious heart.

And the second thing they knew was, that such a heart will mingle with the true Christian in churches. Did you ever think sometimes when you read a piece in the newspaper, did you ever stop to think maybe you rode on the bus beside a gangster? Do you ever think about that? Maybe the man on the subway next to you reading the paper had a gun under his arm out to kill somebody? I don't know. I've never seen a gangster that I recognized as such. But I suppose, riding around as much as I have in public transportation in the last 30 years, I have ridden alongside of the gangster very likely, a man whose hands were crimson red with the blood of his fellow man. Did you ever think that it's possible for us to be sitting beside someone into whom Satan may enter, even among the children of God?

When Jesus said, one of you will betray me, there wasn't one of the eleven that knew who it was. Each one said, Lord is it I? And I have always been glad they didn't say, Lord, it must be Peter, or Lord, it must be Andrew. They said, Lord, is it I? They were humble enough and self-effacing enough and lacked confidence in themselves enough that they said, Lord, is it I? You never know who you may be riding with, and you never know who you may be sitting beside. On the other hand, you may be sitting beside a saint, somebody who is marked high up on the Book of God, someone who, when rewards are passed out, will receive citation after citation for faithfulness beyond the call of duty. Don't forget it. And don't look at their clothing because sometimes those who will receive the highest citations may be dressed in very common clothes. So, they knew these things. And they knew there wouldn't be any use looking for a church.

Now, they could have gone to these people and had an evangelistic campaign and brought in a real stinger of a preacher who could have skinned them alive and said, you're a lot of carnal people who are not worthy to be called by the name of Christ. What do you mean here with your divisions? They knew they would have only fanned the fire, so they did this. They went to the root of their problem and took away the occasion.

And I am just asking you, if you're looking for a church with no murmurers in it. If you are, I can recommend one. I know where there's a church with no murmurers in it. It is the Church of the Firstborn. It is over yonder, and they have already washed their robes and made them clean. And they have passed through death and are over there waiting. But as long as they're down here, there will be a murmurer some time. And we might expect it. You are just like you are looking for a country without any crime. It's like looking for a city without any disease to look for the perfect church. They don't exist. All you can hope for is to keep it to a minimum and pray and trust God to be merciful to our faults.

So, here's what they did. They went the second mile. You remember, Jesus had said, if anybody takes away your coat, give him your vest too. And they remembered that. So, they went the second mile and turned the other cheek and showed themselves to be men of peace and goodwill. And so, they said to the Christian assembly, well, now here, look, it isn't right that you Christians should be fussing. It isn't right. And furthermore, we apostles don't know whether there's anything to your charges or not. If we ask the Hebrew Christians, they would say, no. And if we asked the Grecian Christians, they'd say, yes. And so, we'd have one person's word against another, and it wouldn't be good. So here, here's what we'll do. You'll get together, all of you and vote and pick some men and bring them to us and we will lay our hands on them and make deacons out of them and let them administer that work.

Well, you know what they did. They chose seven men. The apostles didn't choose them. If the apostles had chosen them, they would have been charged with partiality. But the apostles didn't choose them, they throw it back in their lap and said, choose you some umpires, somebody that you can trust. And you know what those Hebrew Christians did? They were so spiritual and kind and charitable, that they allowed the Grecians to choose all seven of them. And there wasn't a single Hebrew Christian among the seven. There was Philip and Prochorus and Nicanor and Timon and Parmenas and Nicolas of Antioch. And they were all of the Hellenists, that is the Grecian Jews. They were not Palestinian Jews.

Now, I think that was just delightful myself, because you see it cut the ground out from under these complainers. I suppose that some of those complainers suffered over that, because when you take the occasion for complaining away from a man who has given the complaints, it's like taking away a rattle from a baby. They don't know what to do with themselves for a while till they get accustomed to not having anything to complain about. So, they had nothing to complain about here, because they took away the complaint. They said, every man chosen, bring him here. And when they looked at them, they smiled and said, well, there's not a single Palestinian Jew and the Palestinian Jews said that okay, we're satisfied.

So, they couldn't get rid of their complaints, but they got rid of the occasion that had roused their complaints. Now here isn't perfection, but here is spirituality, brethren. Here isn't perfection. Here's spirituality; and it's the kind of spirituality that I believe God loves. It's trying to see things from God's standpoint. But I'd like to have you see the kind of men they chose.

Now, if I was looking for a fellow to ladle out soup for an old folk's home. If I were looking for somebody to act as a waiter, it seems to me that in thinking the way I do, I wouldn't give too much attention to it. I'd say, can you be here and are loyal to the church? And that would be about the end of it. And I think most people would. But you know, when they picked these men, they said, they've got to have three qualifications, to have a good reputation, to be full of the Holy Ghost, and full of wisdom.

It's a strange thing, my brethren, that we ordain men now to the ministry, and make them evangelists and pastors of churches, when we're not even sure that they're full of the Holy Ghost. They wouldn't even put men to serving tables until they knew that they were full of the Holy Ghost. There's quite a difference in their way of looking at things. They had to be full of the Holy Ghost. And then they had to have a good reputation. That didn't mean that these men were perfect and there were no flaws in them. But it did mean they weren't religious racketeers. Nobody had any axe to grind. There was no ulterior motive here. They were men of good reputation.

One of the hardest things I have to bear as a Christian is having to inquire about a man to see if he's all right. When somebody comes and wants to speak at the church or wants me to do something for him or wants me to write a little recommendation for a book he is writing or something, you have to check on the man to see whether you dare recommend him. That's terribly bad. They wouldn't have men of uncertain reputation. They said they have got to be men of good report. Men that are known to be completely candid and frank and honest, nobody hiding anything, and full of the Holy Ghost.

And then the third thing was, they had to have a baptism of wisdom. They didn't dare simply be reckless fellows. I have from here and there throughout my travels, I have met Christians who are all ablaze, all ablaze, but after you got to know them for three months, your confidence in them diminished more and more and more and more, to finally it was burning down to there was barely a tiny little flicker because they proved by their lives that all they had was zeal. They had no wisdom at all. They never knew how to approach a situation, but always ready to rush out in all directions.

Well, it says you can't use men like that. I've often said in private conversation with men; I've said how sad it is to know that there's much talent being wasted in the churches. Some men who are talented men and brilliant men without doubt, but some character trait prevents them from being used in the church. They just can't be used, not only in any organized church but in God's church,

because they haven't got the wisdom here. In all thy getting, get wisdom. If ever there was anything we need to pray for it is a baptism of discernment in an hour like this.

You don't know when a man comes down the street carrying a five-pound Bible, whether he's up to help here or out to rook, you. You don't know, so we need wisdom. We need to be wise in God to be able to look quite through the deeds of men as Cassius said. They said about Cassius, looks quite through the deeds of men. And we need to have this. We need to have it in our pulpits. We need to have it everywhere. Superintendents of Sunday school need it to see quite through the deeds of men.

Now, it's a dangerous thing. And if you have perception enough to see quite through the deeds of men, you'll be tempted immediately to become a self-appointed critic of other men's deeds. It is dangerous. But you've got to have it or else you're in worse danger. It's a question of being blind. And of course, that's dangerous to walk down the street blind. It's also dangerous to be able to have an x-ray vision so that you're not taken in, because he's likely to make a critic out of you, and you'll be worse than if you had no eyes. So we're caught in the middle. We've got to watch it.

Now. I just like to end by pointing out that these murmurers, I said the last time I talked in the early part of this chapter, I said that these murmurers were actually doing good. They actually were. They didn't know it, but they were doing good. Just as Satan who tempted Christ was doing good. He was doing good, devilishly bad, but he was doing good, nevertheless. And just as the three men who rode poor, old, suffering Job, and skinned him with sarcasm and bitterness, just as those three men were doing good. At the same time, they were doing evil, God was using their evil for Job's good. Just as the eleven sons of Jacob when they sold Joseph into Egypt, did good while they were trying to do evil. Joseph said, God meant it for good unto me, and He used it for good.

So, it's possible to do good and at the same time be trying to do evil. And God will use your evil to bless His people. But he will judge you for the evil, nevertheless. He judged the three comforters of Job severely. And He judged Israel and He judged every time God's people were punished. God used the punishment to bless them, but He judged those who punished. So, remember, as I have said before, God uses the rejected to perfect the accepted. And when a man has been the rejected of God, he may yet remain in the circle of fellowship and God uses him there as an abrasive to perfect and polish the saints, to polish the saints.

I am a weakling by nature, and I am really not a fighter. And I never like to meet a man that's against me on anything. I would much rather be somewhere else. But you have to do it, because you see, the Lord has to polish off some things off of you. So, He lets the rejected hang around to perfect the accepted. Even Jesus Christ had to learn obedience by the things that He suffered. And when the Pharisees and the rest of them were chewing Him to pieces with words and threatening

His life, He was learning obedience. Even the Son of God had to learn obedience by the things that He suffered. So, you and I too must.

What do we do in the meantime? What should men and women of goodwill do? What should they do? Well, quietly prepare and brace yourself and expect to suffer, because you will, either of two ways. There are two ways to take a blow. One is to brace yourself and catch it. And the other is to take it when it's not expected. So, you will have your detractors of course and there will be difficulties. But the man of goodwill, and you know, we should never be any other way but of goodwill. We should always want things to be right and good. And we should have goodwill toward men.

That passage where the angels sang, peace on earth goodwill to men. Every version that I know of corrects that and says it's peace on earth to men of goodwill. The man that has not goodwill, God cannot save him. The lowest, deepest, darkest sinner, if he turns to be a man of goodwill, good intention, God will save him out of his wallow. But the most righteous Pharisee, if he's not a man of goodwill, God can't help him.

So, men and women of goodwill, and there are a lot of them in the churches, a lot of them everywhere, a lot of good people yet, they're here and there and they have goodwill. They only want to help people, that's all. They want to be true to the Lord and help people. Sometimes I think they're a little timid. But they are there, men and women of goodwill. What should we do? Well, we should keep our hearts tender and charitable, because you're going to have yourself tender. One of these days you're going to need tenderness and charity for yourself.

So keep your heart tender and charitable. You say, you are tender and charitable toward so and so because he's such a dear man. He's not the man that needs your tenderness and your charity, my dear friends. He's not the man at all. It's that old complaining Grecian widow that needs your tenderness and your charity. It's that lady who says I didn't get as big a helping as the other lady did. It's that person that's complaining. They need our charity. And just as a sick person needs our tender understanding, so a person who is carnal does.

And then be peacemakers wherever you can. My experience with being a peacemaker has never been too happy. Usually, I get caught in the middle. I told you here some weeks ago, that I had tried a couple of times to be a marriage counselor on two different occasions. Some couples came to see me. And when they left, the woman roared mad at me, and they never did get together. I don't know why. But I am not too much of a peacemaker like that. Because I tried to stop a man from fighting with his wife and then they both get after me. But if you can, try to be peacemaker and keep out of trouble all you can and leave the judgment to God.



A man wrote me as I told you, and he said, leave the judgment to God. And I wrote him and said, thank you, my brother, I needed that. I needed it. I'm not that humble. But then when it comes from Vietnam, and takes two weeks to get here, and then I keep it around two weeks before I answer it. In four weeks, I'm able to say that. So, I said, thank you for that letter, brother. It did me good because it came when I needed it.

So, let's leave judgment to God. I wouldn't know whom to reward and I wouldn't know whom to punish. But our Heavenly Father does. In the meantime, we can learn from these disciples. We can learn from the apostles. Go the second mile, turn the other cheek, show yourself a man of goodwill, and give the advantage to the other person. Give the advantage to the other person. Always, God will bless the man who is ready to give the other fellow the advantage. If you seek advantage, God will frown. If you give the advantage to the other man, God will smile. For that was the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. That we always ought to put the advantage in the other man's hand. But you say if I don't defend myself, who will? I'll give you three guesses.

If you're God's child and you don't defend yourself, who will? Answer me, who will? God will. And I'd rather be defended by God than all the lawyers in Washington. I'd rather have God come over on my side and take my part against the enemy than all the lawyers in the world. Because God can make what He says stick, and lawyers can't always do it. The best defense is God. I've always had a little speech I have wanted to make if anybody ever attacked me in public, but nobody ever did.

And I have had this around with me for quite a while. It's a little speech I was going to make. But it's like the stuttering fellow that learned to say, Swedish people like pumpnickel, but he said he couldn't find the place to use. And I can't find any place to use my speech. I always wanted to be able to get up when I was under attack someplace and say, the Lord is my defense. Mr. Chairman, the defense rests. I thought that would be a good speech, but I have never been able to use it, because up to now it's just lying around, because nobody's attacked me. But if anybody ever does, that will be my speech. Instead of getting up and fighting, I'm going to say, God in my defense, the defense rests and sit down. I think that will confuse the enemy. But I don't know yet because I haven't had opportunity to find out.

But anyhow, let's leave our defense with God. God will take care of you, my dear sister and my dear brother. God will take care of you, well, provided you give the other fellow the advantage and leave your defense to God. But if you insist on taking the advantage and defending yourself, God will quietly lift His hand and let you take a few blows for your own instruction.

Humble yourself therefore under the mighty hand of God and He will exalt you in due time. Very soon, Sunday mornings, I'm going to begin a book of the Bible and preach sermons on a book. Perhaps by next Sunday, I may be able to announce it. But anyhow, this finishes up the little word I wanted to bring about the way the apostles got out of a tight squeak by doing the humble thing.

