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MACEDONIAN CALL

"Come Over Into Macedonia and Help Us." (Acts 16: 10.)

INDIANAPOLIS, IND., OCTOBER, 1926.

MISSIONARY LETTER--No. 2.

"At Ease in Zion."

Dear Brethren in Christ:--

In my first Missionary Letter, I called your attention to the indifference among us respecting the spread of the gospel in new and weak places. Have you been thinking much on that subject since then? Here I come again to remind you that our Savior said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." This shows the spreading nature of the Kingdom of Christ. We must take the gospel to others. Jesus came to "seek and save that which was lost", and his disciples are to carry on his great work.

But as we ponder on the lack of missionary zeal in the "Church of Christ", we ask ourselves the cause. There are many contributing factors, no doubt, but the one which we shall notice at this time is--the "Ease-in-Zion" spirit. Let the reader here turn to Amos 6th chapter and read it carefully. God's people in the 8th century before Christ were not wholly different from them today.

"Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria . . . but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph." (Vs. 1, 6.) "Zion" was a hill in Jerusalem, and stood for the entire Kingdom of Judah; while "Samaria" was the capital city of the Kingdom of Israel, and represented that Kingdom. "Joseph" simply represents the people of God. The Lord's people at this time were in a deplorable condition. Enemies were harassing them; poverty and distress had visited many of them; injustice by the judges was meted out to them; and they were afflicted in many ways. But what did the wealthy and nobles care, when they were having a good time themselves?

It is much the same today. The Church is being pressed hard by the strength and arts of the enemy, and there seem to be very few who care. Small bands of disciples need help, but those able to help do not heed their call. Isolated Christians send forth the cry to "Come over into Macedonia and help us", and they cry into deaf ears. Smaller churches close their doors, sometimes, within driving distance of larger churches, and the larger ones rejoice, thinking it may help them. I know very few disciples or churches in the brotherhood, which have considerable means, who are taking much interest in helping weak churches or in establishing new ones. The "Ease-in-Zion" spirit has come over them. But down through the ages comes the voice of Jehovah through his prophet, "WOE unto them that are at ease in Zion . . . but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph."

God describes further that feeling of security which they had, when he said, "Ye that put far away the evil day." Why should they worry? They were in the fortress of Samaria or on the fortified hill of Zion? The enemy could get to them only last. The day of calamities or destruction was a long ways off for them. Why should they bother themselves? "On with the dance"--In spiritual Zion, the same spirit is manifested. Why should we be concerned for the struggling bands here and there, or the isolated disciples who have no place to worship? We have nice homes, a nice congregation, and a fine meeting house. We can hire the best preachers in the brotherhood, and be entertained a good part of the time by them. These little churches ought to disband anyway, and put their strength with the stronger churches, so that we can make a better showing before the world. Besides, the world is not as bad as some cranky preachers say it is, and the time of the apostasy of the Church and the downfall

of our civilization is not at hand. And yet the Lord says, "Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion . . . that put far away the evil day."

The prophet describes in particular their personal luxuries when he says, "They shall lie upon beds of ivory and stretch themselves upon their couches." Ivory had been brought from distant lands and in-laid into their beds, giving them a beautiful and luxurious appearance; and their owners took the time to lounge upon their couches. But they had no time nor money to help their poor brethren. --Today we have our fine homes, our fine beds, our fine carpets, and other fine furniture, and we spend much time using them to our pleasure. We have no time to run out to a small church near by to help them on Lord's day afternoon or some night through the week, though we have plenty of time for joy riding. We have no money to help some distant struggling church or to help some faithful brethren establish one. We must have the finest and best for ourselves, in an earthly way, and we will stop our ears to the cries of afflicted Joseph. But sometime, somewhere, we will not stop our ears to the cry of "WOE" of the Lord!

Moreover, those selfish ones would "eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall", and would give no heed to the cry of their afflicted countrymen. It was not sheep, but lambs, which they ate; not old cows, but calves kept up and fed. The very best must be theirs, whether any one else in the nation had anything to eat or not. --Often have I sat down with the brethren at their tables where the very best things to eat were found, and where they evidently took delight in their "spread"; and yet if I asked them to help in a missionary meeting in a new place, they were "not fixed" so they could help "then"?! Hundreds of dollars for luxuries for self, but not one dollar for the physical and spiritual need of others!

One of the pleasures of Israel's revellers was to "chant to the sound of the viol and invent to themselves instruments of music like David." As David invented instruments to praise God, so they invented instruments to serve their god, Pleasure. Let the harpers harp, and the pipers pipe, and let them drown the cries of distressed Joseph! --We Christians must have much today to "brighten our homes" Our phonographs cost a hundred; our radio, one or two hundred; and our piano, four or five hundred. We fill our children with the ever-present rag-time and the demoralizing jazz; and we spend our evenings "tuning-in" on the world's conglomeration. But a frown meets the Macedonian who cries unto us for help.

The "anointing themselves with the chief ointments" corresponds to the perfumes and such luxuries today. The gospel preacher is saddened today as he looks down from the pulpit upon printed faces and rouged lips and perfumed clothing and decorated bodies of the "saints" of God, and wonders at the unconscious departures which so many have made from the modesty taught by inspired men. Many women spend more money for cosmetics, to say nothing of other luxuries, than they give to the Lord; and if the men would send all their tobacco money to missionary workers we would have dozens of them in the field all the time, sounding out the Word of God.

God gives his estimate of their fine things when he says, "I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces." Their wonderful palaces, their beautiful beds, and their other fine things, God hated, abhorred. He had told his people to look after the poor and afflicted, and these banqueters had not done it. --But were they any worse than masses in the Church of Christ today? How much better are we than they? We have our fine homes, fine furniture, and fine automobiles, spending twice as much for our big car as we would have to pay for a smaller one which would answer all purposes in a good way. Many spend twice as much, (some, many times as much) for gas for joy-riding as they spend for soul-saving. Some churches may go down, others may apostatize, and some which could be built with our help are not built--but what care we? We are having a good time. The affliction of Joseph does not worry us. We are not interested. But God is interested, God cares, and he says, "Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion."

Do you wish to know why there is no more of an interest in the mission workers in the new and weak fields? I believe that Amos is telling us why. We are living in an age of moral and spiritual decay, and age of luxury and selfishness, and much of the religion which we have is simply formal. When men and women are really converted, they are trying to do all they can for the Lord instead of as little. In the state of Indiana alone the members of the Church of Christ will represent millions of dollars in their business and homes, and yet I have not been able to discover a single new church which we established last year by our preachers and churches. The prosperous ones are neglecting the cry of afflicted Joseph. If we are not living at ease in Zion, then I have missed the meaning of God's Word. Other states are doing about as little. Brethren, I believe many in the Church of Christ who think they are going to be saved, are going to be lost. We must arouse ourselves before it is too late.

The sad part to this whole matter is--the fate of these Ease-in-Zion Christians. Here is what God said about their types in the Old Testament, "Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed. . . Therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein." The ones who felt so secure would be the first to be taken captive, (and so it was); and their luxuries would be taken away. How sad we are when we read of the captivities of both Israel and Judah!--And just as sure as the word of God will the Ease-in-Zion ones in the Church come to grief--possibly in this world, and for sure in the world to come. The rich people as a whole who are in the Church are today rapidly losing their religion and going more and more into worldliness. The same is true of the larger and more influential churches. I know churches which have hundreds of dollars in the bank and which are doing practically nothing to help weak and new places. The rich brethren are seldom the ones who help spread the gospel. The greatest spirituality and devotion which I have found in the brotherhood are among the poor and the small and poor churches. I have received much encouragement, (much more than I expected), in these Missionary Letters, but it has come nearly altogether from the very poor people and poor and small churches. It makes one think of the Savior's day when the poor accepted the gospel. I believe that these Ease-in-Zion Christians and churches are going to be the first to go into captivity to Worldliness, where they may realize, when too late, how far they have drifted from God.

"Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion . . . but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph."

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WHAT AN INDIANA PREACHER THINKS OF THE PLAN OF
THE "MACEDONIAN CALL".

Dear Bro:--

I just received your communication, concerning the "Macedonian" Call, for help in weak places, as well as places where there is no congregation at all. I like your way, to say the least. Indeed something must be done for the congregations in Indiana, anyway. First: I like the idea of sending out men who are able to contend for the faith, instead of letting younger men get out and find somewhere to hold a meeting, and not being experienced enough to hold out against more experienced foes. The strong congregations are able to support them, and so many put them on the back to get their work. I recently told one of these strong (?) places that they made me think of a very fat boy, who had much weight and almost no action. Of course they thought I was not very refined, . . . and they wished a more polished one after that. But I am one who will not seek such places to be employed, when I must cater to them for bread. If men would have the nerve to tell them their duty, they could have a man in the field all the time that a tent could be used, and then not make the sacrifice many others are making. Not long since, I was with a strong (financially) congregation who thought it should be quite an accommodation to even get to labor for (with) them, and while a very wealthy older would lay a dime on the table, when he easily could have laid a "ten spot", a town near by repeatedly asked them to let me come and hold a meeting in town.

but it simply went over their consideration. Soon a Christian (?) Church man went into the town and easily started a strong congregation. Of course, the brethren told them they were wrong in going into such an organization, but were told that they had opportunity to come, and were begged to do so; but would not. It would be quite a task to get this before the brethren, but it should be done. Indeed I have serious apprehensions for these congregations who have money in the bank, and boast of it, when so many are going to hell that might be saved.

Go on with this if you can. Here, and when I can help tell me, for I am sure it is needed. While I (as you expect) am not well "healed" financially, and can do little in that way, yet I can "lift up" my voice and make known the gospel in "my weak way and manner." Again, I was with a congregation, and a town in the neighborhood had some members of the church, and several times asked them to send me to hold a meeting there. When I was planning to go anyway, they sent me away before I had time to do so. So many brethren are simply afraid that something will get started which ~~that~~ will cost them a penny. I am getting tired of this, and while I am sure many congregations need much strengthening, there are many who could have all they need and then do enough to establish at least one congregation in a new place each year. Of course, if we mention it to them, they send you away as soon as they can, without suspicion. I am with you in stirring this up and thus pleasing the Lord, and at the same time aggravating the devil. If the (soft) sound men who are looking for a good support, and will compromise to get it, would come to the front and "cry loud and long" we could do more. But self is in the way. "

THINGS TO CONSIDER

The plan for stirring brethren on mission work through the "Macedonian Call" is to send it out about once in two months with a circular letter. Business men use "follow up" letters, which is our plan. An envelope with a stamp may cause people to consider. We must stir the people to such work through tracts, the Review, books-- anyway. There is no monopoly. Choose your own way--but do it. I wish I could print all the letters of commendation I have received of this plan. Who else will help us? No, I was sent to about 1600 people. Send me the names and addresses of all in your congregation or elsewhere that might become interested. If you endorse this plan, let us know; and if possible, help us carry it through by regular contributions.---In No. 1, I mentioned the mission meeting in the old dilapidated meeting house, where a nice little church is now firmly established, we believe, with the help of sister churches. Also this summer I held a mission meeting in an old mill at Greenwood, W. Va., where hundreds heard the Word who never heard it before. There are many such places, and we must walk in at the open door.--- Help those mission workers that you are acquainted with and know are worthy.---Any places wishing a church started in your community, write some mission worker, or me, and we will see what can be done.--- I should be glad if preachers would write me of their work in new fields, or weak places.---Let mission workers send for FREE copies (as many as you can use) of Back-to-Bible Helpers, a good tract to circulate in your meetings.---The song-book "Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs" has 118 of the standard songs which have stirred millions. Send to me direct for as many copies as you wish at 15 cents each. It has good invitation songs.---If mission workers will send me names and addresses of all they think they might interest in mission work, we will send FREE this literature, and it may help their support.---"Your 'Macedonian Call' is the finest I have seen. It carries the greatest pull for missionary work, and if handled in accordance with your outline will most certainly bring pleasing results."---"I will remember this work in my prayer to the throne of grace."---"I endorse and will help support all I can."---"I believe the plan is worth trying."---"Am sure much good could be accomplished for the Lord by the plan."---"I am pleased with your zeal, and will help what I can."---"I am impressed with your efforts to spread the gospel in new fields."---"Sure like it fine, and think much good can be done by putting out literature of this kind."---"I see no reason why such a plan would fail to bring about desired results. Let's go!"---Yes, brethren, LET'S GO!

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