

ADVERTISING THE CHRIST

"But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter." Mark 1:45.

Few subjects receive greater attention today than the subject of advertising. We are accustomed, however, to employ the phrase almost entirely with reference to business interests. It is only in recent years that men have realized that advertising Christ and the Church are of vast importance. In the days of the disciples advertising the Christ was regarded as the very mission of the church. In fact, the last promise that Jesus made before ascending into the heavens looked definitely to the advertising of Christ. "Ye shall receive power upon the coming of the holy Ghost upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

Not every convert begins his Christian life with a proper sense of obligation and privilege, but in our text we have the model convert. His one mistake, if he made any, was an error of enthusiasm, the most desirable of all misdemeanors. The common mistake of many converts is exactly the opposite. It is both interesting and inspiring to study the man of our text.

I. He had a personal experience.

1. He had been afflicted with leprosy.

"There came a leper unto Him, beseeching Him, and kneeling down to Him, and saying unto Him; If Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean."

The Old Testament presents leprosy as the perfect symbol of sin. To this hour lepers are pitied people.

2. He had approached Christ with only a partial faith.

This leper believed in Christ's power, but he doubted His compassion. He said, "If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."

3. He had received from Christ a perfect blessing.

He received more than a tender care. He was made perfectly whole, for as soon as Christ had spoken "the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed." His healing was complete. Man can do much to brighten the lives of his afflicted fellows, but Christ can drive the last cloud from the sky, and flood the heart with light. No instrument could give forth such music as found expression in the depths of this grateful heart. It is questionable whether Christ has ever listened to any music rendered by the angels of heaven which sounded sweeter to Him than did the voice of the man healed at the Gate Beautiful, who went with the Apostles into the temple, "Walking and leaping, and praising God." The music of heaven will be made up of the spontaneous hymns of the healed -- the songs of the cleansed and saved.

Most of us are familiar with "The Psalm of Life" by Henry W. Longfellow. It was one of the poems written in 1839 and soon became one of the most popular in the English language. The story goes that when the great poet was in London, Queen Victoria sent for her to come and see him at the palace. He went and when the interview was concluded, he was climbing into the waiting coach when a man in working clothes approached him, hat in hand, and said, "Please, sir, your honor, are you Mr. Longfellow?" "I am" said the poet. "And did you write 'The Psalm of Life?'" And he replied, "I did." "And yer honor; would you be willing to take the hand of a plain working man?" Mr. Longfellow gave him a hearty handshake, and in referring to it later, said, "I counted it the greatest compliment of my life that the man

desired it." If we could only bring men to see that when they approach Jesus Christ for a blessing they pay to His power and compassion the compliment His infinite heart craves above all others, we believe that the suffering multitudes would not stay away so long from Him whose heart is blessed in blessing.

II. He published his experience abroad.

"But he went out and began to publish it much and to blaze abroad the matter."

1. He continuously advertised the saving power of Christ.

The churches today are in need of just such advertising agents. Business men contend that there is power in oft-repeated ads. Some say it is folly to waste money in advertising. They save their money and lose their trade. The repeated hearing or reading of a statement makes a permanent impression. Consequently great business enterprises pay out tens of thousands of dollars to say over today what they said yesterday. This principle obtains in the publishing of the Gospel truth. The convert to Christ mentioned in our text knew how to get the cause of his Master before the public.

2. He published His saving power extensively.

The text says, "He blazed abroad the matter." Inasmuch as Christ's life was not lived in a corner, neither is the Gospel to be confined to narrow limits. It is ours to blaze it abroad; to reach the multitude with it. There is nothing to prevent it except the lack of interest and concern on the part of Christians.

A careful study of successful pastors and churches of modern times will show that they appreciate and utilize the power of printer's ink. Charles Haddon Spurgeon was perhaps the best advertised man in England. He knew the power of the press and employed it, and often made mention of results from the same. In concluding an address one day, he said, "You will remember that one morning I mentioned the case of an infidel who had been a scorner and scoffer; but who, through reading one of my printed sermons, had been brought to God and to God's house. Let me now tell you the sequel of that. On last Christmas Day that same infidel gathered together all his books and went into a public place in Norwich and there made a public recantation of his infidelity and a statement of his acceptance of Christ, and burned them all in the sight of the people. I have praised God for such a wonder of grace as that!" That prodigal of power was turned from a malicious opposition of Christ to be a message-bearer for Him, by the printed page. If our Gospel has wrought for us what we say, it is our business to "publish it much, yea even to blaze it abroad."

III. He popularized the Christ.

He excited an interest in Christ. "Jesus was without in desert places and they came to Him from every quarter." Wherever you get needy men in a circle, Christ is in the midst of them, the former seeking blessing, and the latter conferring it.