

If God Is in It!

As Barbara and I were sitting in a service in Murphreesboro, Tennessee last week, Dr. Bobby Roberson was preaching. In a nostalgic moment, Dr. Roberson, famed pastor of Gospel Light Baptist in Walkertown, NC for over half a century, began to reminisce about older preachers now in heaven. He began to tell about some of the grand old times with Dr. Harold B. Sightler of South Carolina, a man to whom many men of God looked up. In one of the stories, our former pastor, Dr. Jack Hyles was mentioned. This certainly piqued our interest. The story goes that Dr. Hyles had resigned the extremely successful church outside Dallas, Texas to take a troubled church just outside Chicago, Illinois. At a large pastor's conference in North Carolina, pastors were discussing the move Dr. Hyles was making. It was the consensus of most of the pastors that Brother Hyles was making a mistake. One preacher said, "He's a southerner; he's not going to like it up there – he won't make it." Finally one of the preacher's looked at the senior pastor and asked, "What do you think, Dr. Sightler, is Dr. Hyles going to make it?" There was a pause, then the spiritual "E. F. Hutton" answered, and "He will if God is in it!" A simple, yet profound answer. I am reminded of the comfort Jonathan gave his worried armorbearer when they were facing some insurmountable odds, *"And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few"* (I Samuel 14:6). To save by many or by few was not the question; the determining factor was if the Lord is in it. And if He is, there is no restraint to His workings!

1. If God is in the church, she will overcome.

I remember Dr. Hyles telling us stories about First Baptist of Hammond in his early days of the pastorate. Our pastor was a strong separatist. Located in the Indiana suburbs of Chicago, this church sponsored dances in the basement before he arrived. Pastor Hyles turned that "apple cart" upside down and forbade anymore church sponsored dances. He received some flak, but kept going. There was a presence so strong against him that one of my friends, now a preacher just older than myself, John Vaprezan, remembers a youth activity in which all the teens (of which he was one) went over to the pastor's house and sang a song in the fashion of Christmas caroling, popular at that time, entitled, Hit The Road, Jack (and don't you come back no more). Dr. Hyles emerged from his house to the cheers of the youth, laughing with them at their joke. The heartbreak soon came when the church split over moral issues. The church began to grow again, only to experience a church fire that destroyed the oldest and most beautiful portion of the old church. There were continued testings and tears, but the church kept being blessed. One of the most outstanding moments in my youthful ministry came in 1972, while in college. We witnessed Dr. Elmer Towns award Pastor Hyles with a plaque and national recognition as the largest Sunday School in the world.

Jesus said, "...upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). Yes, Dr. Sightler was right when asked if Dr. Hyles was going to make it. "He will if God is in it!"

2. If God is in the boy, he will overcome.

Dr. Hyles was no stranger to immense opposition. When he surrendered to preach, his own pastor questioned, "Jack, are you sure?" He was the least likely to succeed. He was reared in a poor home. One of the main reasons they were poor was because his father was a drunk. His father was a rough man with a reputation in boxing and living wild. The pastor's dad hated church and preachers especially. One evening when Jack Hyles was a boy, he surrendered to preach. When he told his father, he was immediately struck to the ground and kicked by his own father several times. In a drunken state his father began to stagger away, turned around and said, "Well, if you're going to be (and he added some

expletives here) one of those preachers, why don't you build the biggest church in the world.”

Brother Hyles wanted so badly to make peace with his father and above all know that his Dad had made peace with God. Over his father's grave he prayed for the mighty power of God and if you ever heard him preach, most would agree there was a power there beyond human explanation. You could have heard a pin drop when Dr. Hyles lifted the plaque commemorating his accomplishments in 1972 and with tears dripping from his eyes, he said, “Dad, wherever you are - I did it!” “Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zechariah 4:6).

3. If God is in the plans, we will overcome.

“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (I John 4:4). As my wife, Barbara and I were sitting in the auditorium last week listening to Dr. Roberson tell of Dr. Sightler pointing out that if God was in Pastor Hyles' plans, he would be blessed, I was blessed beyond measure. If Dr. Hyles had never gone up to Indiana, Barbara, who was a six year old child of newly converted parents, would never have gone to First Baptist of Hammond. I would have never finished my college career in Indiana and we would have never met. As I look back over the blessings of my life, I account many of my personal blessings because I married the right girl. Brother Hyles' obedience affected Barbara's parents' life and some of my life-changing decisions. “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5,6).

- Pastor Pope -

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