

The Testimony of Jesus (Part 12)

Let's pray:

Lord, we are thankful that You are the worthy One. Lord, as we have considered You this morning, we see that there is only one worthy One, and we are so blessed to be those who can call You our Brother. We are thankful that You have not left us alone; we have an elder Brother who walks with us, who keeps us, and who is that very present help. And Lord, we are looking for Your very presence as we come to Your Word this morning. We want to continue to look at the history of the testimony of Jesus. Lord, it is about You, and we want to continue to be those who are learning more and more of You, considering the fulness of the great work that You have done throughout the centuries, and considering the call that You have upon our lives in these last days. We are thankful that we can offer ourselves to You that You could be working within each of our hearts and lives that Your testimony would shine forth through us to Your glory and honor. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

Ephesians 3:17-19 really speaks of the 19th century which we will be considering this time and the next.

“So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that You, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to all the fullness of God.”

During this 19th century that we will be considering, you can really see the love of God manifested in its fulness in so many wonderful ways. You see the height of it because there is the revelation of where ones begin to gather, this glimpse of what is the church, the true unity that we have been called into in Christ, and the heavenly nature of the church. There is a height that we are brought up to.

Also during the 19th century there is a depth of God's love that we are brought into through movements like Keswick and other movements that teach this matter of the inner life, the deeper life, the exchanged life that we have with Christ—Christ in us, us in Christ. There is a depth there that goes on during this century.

There is also a width that we see in the love of Christ being expressed in which all believers are embracing one another in a marvelous way. There is a standing and a gathering with one another who are really seeing the love of Christ made manifest to one another.

Also there is a length of the love of Christ that goes as we see the spread of the Gospel throughout the world, the length that it goes to in Europe where it had once been and spread throughout China and India. Throughout many places we see the length of God's love expressed to what was called in those days the heathen, and we are thankful for it.

As we look at the 19th century we want to get a glimpse of what was going on during that time, some of the significant world events, and I am going to group these. We see the consolidation of some powers. The U.S. was growing, Napoleon's zenith of power was growing,

Queen Victoria, through the British Empire, was being strengthened. And also after Napoleon's death there was a period of general peace throughout the world until World War I. The turmoil that existed at the latter part of the 18th century, except obviously the Civil War in this country, was now in a general peace and prosperity.

Also Freud was during this time with his writings. There was Darwin with the "Origin of the Species," Karl Marx with his "Communist Manifesto," Friedrich Nietzsche with his "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," Superman is introduced, "man is not of any use anymore; there is going to be a Superman to take over."

So we see that even though God is working, there is also this counter work that is going on. We see from those four men—Freud, Darwin, Marx, and Nietzsche—who were used of the enemy and the impact it would have upon mankind. We are still suffering from that in this day and time, and believers are having to stand against it. So there is a lot going on during this century.

Significant 19th Century World Events

Also from an expansion point of view, the world began to grow a little closer together. We have the first telegraph cable all the way across the Atlantic which meant that Europe and the U.S. could communicate with one another. It was a tremendous revolution.

Also in the U.S. there was the completion of the intercontinental railroad, the Golden Spike was nailed at that point, and also the Suez Canal made transportation so much easier. Many prophetic messages were coming out during this time because people were able to go back and forth so much easier than in the past, and they literally thought the Lord's return was near. This was because in Daniel 12:4, speaking of the end times, it says, "Many will go to and fro, and knowledge will increase." When the intercontinental railroad was finished and that Golden Spike was nailed, it was a great prophetic moment, and everybody said, "People can go to and fro across the United States now. The Lord is coming soon." We see how all of these movements are really awakening people to what God is doing, and what He is continuing to do. So that is the situation of the world in a very broad general way, but we are more interested in what is going on among God's people.

Significant Church Events in the 19th Century

There are many significant events that took place in the 19th century. We are just going to look at the first two this morning. There was an increased burden in worldwide missions, and also these "Independent Groups" were birthed in the U.S., in Europe and Britain. Probably next time we will look at the Oxford Movement, which was a liberal movement, Christianity in Russia, also the Fulton Street prayer meeting which had begun, the Keswick Convention, and many great preachers, whom we benefit from today, were ministering during this time. So there is a lot that goes on during this century, and we see what God is doing in a wonderful way to express the height, the depth, the length and breadth of His love for all mankind.

Worldwide Missionary Movement

First, we will start with the Worldwide Missionary Movement. There were many saints involved in this movement, so it is hard just to pick a few. We will look at a few of them, but there are many others that we could have looked at.

The first three, William Carey, Robert Morrison and David Livingstone were really pioneers in the areas of India, China and Africa. If you measure them by the fruit of their labors, none of them were very 'successful.' But what they did was to go in and lay a foundation. They broke the ice, we could say, for others to follow and come in. We measure success in one way, and God measures it another way. These were the pioneers who went in. Not only did they face opposition from the heathen whom they went to, but the attitude within much of the church at that time was reflected in William Carey's interview when he was getting ready to go, and he expressed his desire and his burden to go out to India. He was expressing his burden to those in leadership where he gathered, but he was abruptly interrupted and told, "Young man, sit down. You are an Enthusiast. When God pleases to convert the heathen, He will do it without consulting you or me, and He can do it without your help." What a word of encouragement to go forth! In the sovereignty of God, it is a true statement, but in the Spirit of God it is what He desires among His people. But praise God, that did not impact William Carey.

He still went forth to northern India. The Moravians had been in southern India back in the previous century and had a wonderful testimony there, but he was more in northern India. One of the things that he was doing was translating the Bible into many languages and dialects in India, he was used there.

One of the quotes that really touched my heart from Carey, and I think it is so applicable for us wherever we are in our life. As he went out he said, "I am not afraid of failure; I am afraid of succeeding at things that don't matter."

This speaks of our careers, our sports, our hobbies, and all of this stuff. I am afraid of succeeding at things that don't matter. What a convicting thing of really putting the Lord in His rightful place and allowing Him to have that preeminence in our lives.

Carey went in and opened the door in India, allowing others to come in afterwards, and we are very thankful for him.

Robert Morrison

Then we come to Robert Morrison who went to China. He was in the Canton region, and at that point they were restricted. They could not go into inland China; they had to stay right along the coast. It is amazing how these ones went through. I appreciated him as he was sailing on the boat over to China, and the captain said, "Mr. Morrison, do you really expect to make an impression on the idolatry of the great Chinese Empire?" And he answered, "No sir, but I expect God will." Praise God! He had the right perspective, a right attitude. That is encouraging for us. Maybe for some of the ones still in school or at work, do you really think that you are going to

have an impression on those in your school? Are you going to have an impression on those at work? No, but God will. We are going to let Him work through us for His testimony and for His sake. That is what it is about. That is the attitude of these dear ones.

While Morrison was in China, one of the things he was involved in was Britain and China's discussions over opium. It was a big thing, and Morrison was trying to negotiate a settlement between Britain and China. However, he ended up dying and they had the first opium war which is beyond our history here. But he did translate into Chinese the New Testament and the Old Testament. And during his time there he only saw ten Chinese baptized. But through all of his efforts in his years there, he was laying a groundwork for others. And we are thankful for that.

David Livingstone

One brother who went into Africa was David Livingstone, and he was both an explorer and a missionary. His goal, besides the Gospel, was to find the source of the Nile River. He wanted to know where the Nile started. When he went there, he was mainly in the region that modern day time calls Zambia. He married the daughter of Robert Moffat who was another missionary, and they were married seventeen years, but she died of malaria which was a big thing back then. After her death he returned to Africa again and was exploring and meeting many different ones there, but he suffered from pneumonia and malaria. When you read about some of these ones and the illnesses that they went through, most of them served in a weakened condition. There were not many of these early day missionaries that were full of physical strength. Because of the conditions they were in through pneumonia, malaria or some other things, it had really weakened them physically. But it is a testimony of the grace of God keeping them in spite of their physical conditions; they were able to draw from it.

Probably one of the things the world knows about Livingstone is when Stanley came and met him. He had been looking for him because everybody wanted to hear about Livingstone. One of the stories that is told is that Stanley greeted him and said, "Dr. Livingstone I presume." He was the only white guy in Africa. Nobody is quite sure whether that story is real or not because Stanley put it in his diary and then he deleted it later. So we do not know. But Livingstone ended his life there and died of malaria, an internal bleeding due to dysentery. Those of you with a tender stomach close your ears for a minute. He was so honored there that when he died, they cut his heart out and buried it in Zambia, and there is still a marker there. They embalmed his body and took it back and buried the rest of him in Westminster Abbey.

I appreciated Livingstone and these quotes of different ones which show the value they placed on their service to the Lord. He said, "I will place no value on anything I have or may possess except in relation to the kingdom of Christ."

As he looked at his call to go to Africa, he said: "If a commission by an earthly king is considered an honor, how can a commission by a Heavenly King be considered a sacrifice? People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. It is emphatically no sacrifice, but rather it is a privilege."

We talk about what we might have to give up to serve the Lord, but for these ones there was a life laid down. They had a heavenly vision of what the Lord had called them into for their lives.

They saw Christ, they considered Him, and He was a living reality to them. You do not go through some of these things just with a concept, but there is a knowing Him in a very special way, and we are thankful for them.

Hudson Taylor

One whom we are a little more familiar with is Hudson Taylor. He was able to get into China even more than the ones before him. When he was born, his father prayed: "Lord, grant that he may work for You in China." He came from a very godly family, and his family really committed him to the Lord even from birth. At the age of twenty-one he sailed for China and arrived at one of the treaty ports in Nanking. Because of the Chinese's relationship with the western world, they had certain ports along the coast that foreigners could come to. Basically, it was for commerce, and they had good trade. There were five ports called 'treaty ports,' but you were not able to get into the rest of China, only by one of those ports.

One of the revolutionary things that Hudson Taylor did when he got there was to observe how some of the other western missionaries were still dressed in their suits and ties and were living separate from the Chinese. They were trying to westernize the Chinese, but he felt from the Lord that the way to reach them with the Gospel was to live among them. So he started dressing like a Chinese, even growing one of the little pigtailed, and he learned to speak Chinese. He did not separate himself from them, but he identified with them. He wanted them to know that Christ identified with them, and therefore he was going to identify with them and share the love of Christ with them. He started one mission work in Ningpo, but that did not last very long.

He got married to Maria who also had a wonderful passion for China. When they first got married, they really had such a heart for the Chinese people that they burned out in two or three years and had to return to England for a period of rest. But when he was in England, he again had this burden for China, and this is when he formed the "China Inland Mission" which we are familiar with today. A year later he sailed for England with his family and sixteen China Inland Missionaries whom he had gathered together to go. And one of the principles that he set for the China Inland Mission was that missionaries could come from any denomination. As long as they knew the Lord, he wanted them. They did not have to have certain doctrinal beliefs. They did not have to be Baptists or Methodist or whatever. He said, "If you are a believer, you are welcome to come." They were paid no salary, but they were to trust the Lord for His provision. Also, they were to have no debt, just trusting the Lord. You could make no appeals for funds. In other words, they could not have any fund raisers or things like that. You were really to look to Him as Jehovah-Jireh. And praise God, throughout the history of Taylor and the China Inland Mission the Lord honored that.

He also wanted the China Inland Mission's work to be overseen in China and not by some foreign home office. Oftentimes, some of the mission work was monitored and controlled by a home office back in England or the U. S., and they had no idea what was going on with the work on the ground there. So he saw the necessity of it being in China.

They also wanted to press on into the interior of China. A huge percentage of the population lived right along the coast in Shanghai and various other cities along the coast. However, there

was a huge country inland where there were not as many people, but most of the missionaries at that time were right along the coast. But he had a burden for those in the interior parts of China, which were the more difficult areas. So that is what he wanted to do.

He also said that when they were with them, they would not only speak Chinese but they would continue to wear Chinese clothing and worship in Chinese style buildings. Some people would go over into China and build a church building that had been in London, and then they would rebuild it in China. And he said, "No, we are in China, and we need to be as the Chinese. Whatever country you were in, they had a certain style of architecture that you would do, not import something from another country.

There was also something else that was very dramatic during that time. Single women were fully capable of serving as missionaries, but the people did not believe that. Nevertheless, he saw the value of how single women could go and serve just like anybody else, and many of them were greatly used by the Lord in a wonderful way to spread the Gospel.

In 1869 Hudson Taylor experienced what he called the 'Exchanged Life.' Through all of his service he never entered into rest because he always felt like he had to prove himself to the Lord. He was struggling to find faith. He wanted to be faithful, and he was really exerting himself and striving to please God, to be at rest with Him, to be at peace with Him. But he never could find this place of rest, and it was really exhausting to him. Finally, he found the 'exchanged life.' It is summarized by him from a letter to his sister: "When my agony of soul was at its height, seeking that rest, seeking that assurance of what he was doing in serving the Lord, a sentence in a letter from dear McCarthy, who was another China Inland Missionary, was used to remove the scales from my eyes. The Spirit of God revealed the truth of our oneness with Jesus as I had never known it before." Praise God, he saw the oneness, he saw how he was in Christ and Christ was in him, and there was a liberating affect that came.

He said, "McCarthy had been much exercised by the same sense of failure but saw the light before I did, and he wrote: 'How to get faith strengthened? Not by striving after faith, but by resting on the faithful One.'" He came into a rest; he entered into resting in Him, not striving to strengthen his faith and being like that little engine, "I know I can, I know I can, I have to have more faith." But he entered into a rest when he saw the fulness of who the Lord was and what He had done.

He continues, "As I read I saw it all. If we believe not, He abideth faithful. I looked to Jesus and saw and when I saw, oh how joy flowed, that He had said, 'I will never leave you.' Ah, there is rest. I thought I have striven in vain to rest in Him; I will strive no more for has He not promised to abide with me, never to leave me, never to fail me, and dearie, He never will!" That was his little sister. Praise God for the rest that he entered into.

Through what the Lord had shown him, he wrote a little booklet entitled, "The Exchanged Life." Many believers' lives have been transformed through this exchanged life, the transaction that he had, the life that Hudson Taylor experienced through entering into resting in Christ, of abiding in Christ. In spite of all the difficulties and the challenges of life, it is a tremendous ministry

that he had, and we are obviously deeply indebted for what the Lord showed him and how he was able to share it.

Sadly after this his dear wife Maria died in 1871, and he married again to another sister, Jennie Faulding who was a missionary there. And by then the China Inland Mission had grown to about fifty-two missionaries and it continued spreading inward. He had mapped out China as he saw all the different provinces, and he wanted certain missionaries to go to each area.

In 1885 this group called “The Cambridge Seven” went to China. The most famous one was C. T. Studd. One of the Cambridge Seven ends up leading CIM after Hudson’s retirement. But the Cambridge Seven was seven young men. They had just finished the University at Cambridge; they were all from aristocratic, elite families. They were either medical doctors or lawyers; they were very high up in society. The Lord touched their lives through Hudson Taylor’s ministry. They gave up everything that they had and moved to China to serve the Lord. Before they left they would go throughout England and the British Isles, and they attracted huge crowds. It says, “Perhaps some of this went to their heads because on the long boat ride to China they refused to study, and they prayed to receive the Chinese language supernaturally. They were so confident in the Lord. “Lord, we do not have to study this Chinese because You are going to give us the Chinese tongue.” Well, the Lord didn’t. They got there, and they studied. But you can appreciate their zeal, their faith in Him. Maybe their heads did get a little puffed up, but the Lord had a way of humbling them and using them.

Tragically, later in about 1900 the Boxer rebellion occurred, and this was a terrible rebellion, and it was against foreigners. It was anti-foreign, anti-Christian, and anti-imperialists. This was a Chinese group of people from a certain area, and they were nicknamed the Boxers. They just went around slaughtering the Westerners. It says, fifty-eight of the China Inland missionaries were killed, and the total missionaries who were killed was about 136 plus Roman Catholic priests and nuns. Thirty thousand Chinese Catholics were killed and about 2,000 Chinese Protestants. We do not know who knew the Lord, but it was a massive slaughter. It was a reaction against the westernization that was coming into China and they said, “No.” But gratefully Hudson Taylor was able to make it through this. He ended up dying and he is buried in China in the Hunan Province. He is one man at a young age who had a great vision, and he sought the Lord and He honored him. I appreciate some of his quotes.

He said, “God is not looking for men of great faith; He is looking for common men to trust His great faithfulness.” It is His faithfulness.

“There are three stages in the work of God: the impossible, the difficult, and the done.” It starts with the impossible, then it moves to only being difficult, then it is done. The work of God, praise God for that!

His impression for his own-self, he said, “It is not so much the greatness of our troubles, as the littleness of our spirit which makes us complain.”

In the country he was in and the difficult situations there were plenty of opportunities for complaint. He had reasons for complaint, but he saw that it was not the situation, it was the

littleness of his spirit, littleness of how much he was really entering into the Lord. It was really changing his attitude.

Also, "Let us never forget that what we are is more important than what we do." Christ in us, what we are is far more important. In the prophet Haggai we learned that the message was in the messenger. That is the key. And the Lord is wanting His life formed in us. He is far more interested in that than what we are doing. Sometimes we place the service, the doing above anything else.

Mary Slessor

Mary Slessor's hero in life was David Livingstone. He was her whole inspiration, and she went to Nigeria (Calabar). She ended up with such a wonderful reputation that she was called the White Queen of Calabar.

She grew up in a very difficult situation. Her father was an alcoholic and she was forced to work in a factory so she was not able to get an education. At the age of twenty-eight she sailed to Nigeria on her own as a missionary and teacher. She was there for the rest of her life except for some trips back home when she got sick. She set up various stations, and ended up gaining the respect of the tribal chiefs in Africa.

One of the things that she was able to accomplish because she had gained their respect was to stop the infanticide of twins. Their superstition in Nigeria when twins were born was that they thought they were cursed. They thought one of the fathers was of the devil, and they could not tell which one of the twins was of the devil so they just killed them both. She found one evening these little twins wrapped in a blanket outside of a city in a tribal area. They would abandon them out in the woods, and the animals would eat them. When she found about this she rescued this pair. Now she was a little lady, but she would actually go to these tribal chiefs and get in their face: "Why are you doing this?" And they respected her. She would actually at times go to the tribal meetings, and all the chiefs from the surrounding tribes would be there, and she was included in the meetings. She was there to express her opinion on what they should be doing and not doing. When you think about this little lady and what she did, it can only be through the power of God.

One of the other things that she was able to stop in Nigeria was the practice of drinking poison to prove one's innocence. It came from a poisonous plant, and if they were trying somebody or testing somebody, they did not know whether they were guilty or not. Then they would say, "Okay, drink this poison, and if you are innocent you will be okay." Well, if it was poison, you were dead. She was finally able to get them to stop that.

At her death she was so well known there was a great joining of a British and Nigeria State funeral. I appreciated her spirit also because many people would say, "You are a single lady out there." She said, "Why should I fear? I am on a Royal Mission. I am in the service of the King of kings." Some would point out her power as a woman, and she said, "When you think of the woman's power, you forget the power of the woman's God. I shall go on." She was not there as a woman libber; she was there to represent the Lord. She said, "Prayer is the greatest power God

has put into our hands for service. Praying is harder than doing, at least I find it so, but the dynamic lies that way to advance the kingdom of God.”

Praise God! Sometimes we can be so busy and it can be easier to do than to pray. We need to be those who are stopping and praying.

C. T. Studd

Also we have C. T. Studd who was a famous English cricketer. He was challenged in the Lord by D. L. Moody through his father. He was one of the Cambridge Seven that we spoke of. When his father died and he gained all of his father’s inheritance of millions and millions, he gave it all away to the Lord. He married Priscilla who was in China. He went to China first and then India, and in 1910 he traveled to Africa. At that point it was called the Belgian Congo, now it is just the Democratic Republic of Congo. He served there until his death. We talk about him being a famous English cricketer, and that does not mean much to us, but it is kind of like a Tom Brady or somebody like that giving it all up and walking away. That is what it was at that time.

I appreciated his zeal for the lost. He said, “Some wish to live within the sound of church and the chapel bell. I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell.” He was there to rescue them.

He was pretty blunt. He said, “Christ does not nt Nibblers of the possible but Grabbers of the impossible.” In his fighting spirit, he said, “I pray that when I die, all hell will have a party to celebrate the fact that I am no longer in the fight.” He was a fighter. And he said, “I want to fight so much that hell would even celebrate when I die.”

“True Christianity is like the smallpox. If you get it, you give it to others and it spreads.” That is the Gospel going forth.

Amy Carmichael

Then we are introduced to Amy Carmichael, and many are familiar with her and her writings. At a young age she decided to follow Jesus, and she established at the age of eighteen “The Welcome” in Belfast for the “shawlies.” These girls wore shawls around their dress because they could not afford coats, and they were the girls who worked in the mills. They were really enslaved in those mills. Then they asked her to move to Manchester, England to serve there. She had a great Gospel outreach, and she heard Hudson Taylor share at Keswick on the missionary life. So she made her first missionary journey to Japan. She became ill and returned to England, and in 1895 she moved to India to serve. She stayed with a family called the Walkers in southern India and they taught her the language.

In 1901 she began the Dohnavur Fellowship to rescue young girls. At that point in time in India, young girls were put into the temples to serve as prostitutes for the temple. There was one young girl named Preena who was in the temple. By then Amy Carmichael was becoming aware of the activities going on with these young girls, and Preena escaped and went to Amy Carmichael who hid her. This was before the work had begun. She knew that she could not just turn her back in, so she opened up her home, and this was the beginning of Dohnavur for the protection of these young girls. It was a tremendous work, and it was really going against the culture at that

time because with the old cast society in India many of the younger girls were either sold or just abandoned, and they would go into the temples as prostitutes for the priests for the purpose of making money for the gods that they worshipped there. This was really tragic, and later on she added a home for young boys.

Sadly, in 1931 there was a tragic accident. She was surveying an area where she was thinking about buying this building, and there was a ditch there. It was supposed to be filled in but it wasn't. She fell and she broke her leg and her ankle and also damaged her hip and back quite severely. She was bedridden the rest of her life, but out of that came books like "Rose From Brier," many precious books to encourage ones. She was bedridden but she did not stop her ministry. She continued to minister in what would appear to be a helpless state. Finally, she passed away in Dohnavur in 1951. She started off when she was young caring for different ones. When she got a little bit older, she was called 'Ama 'which basically is 'Mama, Mother, tender loving mother.'

Her quotes: She said, "You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving."

I like this one. She said, "Satan is so much more in earnest than we are; he buys up the opportunity while we are still wondering how much it will cost."

Then this is her testing here of the love of the Lord: "If the praise of others elates me and their blame depresses me, if I cannot rest under misunderstanding without defending myself, if I love to be loved more than to love, to be served more than to serve, then I know nothing of Calvary love."

She said she would rather 'burn out' than 'rust out'. She wanted to keep burning for the Lord.

She wrote a little poem: "Give me the love that leads the way, the faith that nothing can dismay, the hope no disappointments tire, the passion that will burn like fire. Let me not sink to be a clod, make me Thy fuel, Flame of God." She wanted to stay burning and on fire for the Lord in a very precious way.

As we have seen these various ones, we see the length that the Lord went to in the love of God, and how He captured their hearts in a wonderful way.

Independent Assemblies in U.S, Britain, Europe

Also during this time the Lord was moving throughout the world in many wonderful ways to raise up various independent assemblies. There were several factors that contributed to this rise. As a result of the Great Awakening that we have seen throughout the U. S. and Britain, ones had really come to the Lord, and also there was a greater access to Bibles and the literacy rate was increasing. People could read, they could have a Bible in their language and also read it. So ones were beginning to see what God's heart and purpose was for gathering together, and many were gathering together. They did not have to gather in a certain name or a certain form, but they could gather in the simplicity of Christ.

In fact, in 1818 there was a group in New York City, and they sent a letter out, and published it in a lot of newspapers to find ones who were meeting like them. Within a couple of years they received over forty responses from U. S., Britain and Europe of groups that were meeting like them in the simplicity of gathering around the Lord's table, the simplicity of being in the Word, and being a testimony unto Him. Various ones were used throughout Scotland, Wales, Britain and Europe to put forth the word. We are thankful that there was a clarity of the testimony at first that they had, and they were faithful generally during most of the time for about a generation. Sadly, many of these ended up becoming denominations later on. The work in Scotland that ones had started was independent, but after a while it became the Free Church of Scotland as opposed to the official church. Even in the U. S. some that started off just on their own, ended up becoming disciples of Christ, the Church of Christ, various things. But God was moving in the hearts and lives of men. Probably the best known one to us that we have heard of is the Brethren Movement.

The Brethren Movement

I am going to use the term Brethren Movement even though they did not call themselves that at first. They referred to themselves only as brothers, so people called them The Brethren. All throughout there was a growing awareness of the need for the demonstration of true fellowship in localities based on the Lord and not church membership. Some of these dear brothers would go and visit different churches, but found that unless they became a member of the church they were not welcome. They could not participate because of what they saw in the Scriptures.

In 1825 Edward Cronin and Wilson broke bread together in Cronin's house. At the same time in another part of Dublin there was Parnell with various ones meeting there. Bellett and Groves, Cronin and Wilson moved to the home of Hutchinson. The work was going on, and these two groups in Dublin in 1827 became aware of each other, and they started meeting together. These ones had all types of background. Some were doctors, some lawyers, some were just regular old folks, but they just referred to each other as brother. They did not go by their names or titles.

Also during this time there were prophetic conferences going on. First at Albury where Henry Drummond had a prophetic conference, and then at Powerscourt Castle. Now the Powerscourt Castle was owned by Lady Powerscourt, and she was similar to Lady Huntington of the previous century. She was a very rich widow and really had a heart for the Lord and was totally given to the Lord. She had been stirred by Drummond's prophetic teachings, and she also became acquainted with the Brethren. So she would host conferences at her estate, and you can still go to it now. The Brethren would meet there and she was very supportive of the Brethren; she was a really powerful lady. She almost married Darby. The stories kind of vary about whether they were officially engaged or not, but many of the brethren recommended that Darby not marry her because of the call God had upon his life, so he broke off the relationship. That makes ones think that maybe she died of a broken heart because she died at the age of thirty-six. Of course, we do not know that. But we see how the Lord used her in a powerful way to help the Brethren at that time.

Then in 1828 Darby began to meet with them in Dublin, and he wrote at that time one of the clearest pamphlets and testimonies about the church. It is called "Consideration on the Nature and Unity of the Church of Christ." It shows our oneness in Christ and the true heavenly calling of the church. Darby's writings are not always so easy to understand, but it is a clarity of his summarizing and capturing the call that God had shown. All throughout England and Ireland there were other similar meetings that were begun.

In 1829 Groves left for Baghdad and India. He felt the Lord had called, and there was a witness there. He really suffered greatly. He lost his wife and youngest child who died in the plague in Baghdad, but he pressed on to India. Groves is called the "Father of Faith Missions" because he did not ask for any money, he did not let his needs be known. He just pressed on and knew that God would provide, and He did.

In 1832 Darby moved to Plymouth, and this became the most famous assembly. This is why they are often called the Plymouth Brethren in a sense of referring to all of them. Also at that time Muller and Craik began their work in Bethesda Chapel in Bristol, and they opened their first orphan home soon after that. Chapman then moved to Barnstable to minister.

Darby was accepting more and more invitations to spend time in Europe and Switzerland. After seven years he returned to the meeting in Plymouth, and he accused Newton that some of what he was preaching was heresy. After six months Darby announced that he was quitting the meeting. Robert Chapman later told him that when Darby told him that he waited six months, Chapman said, "You should have waited six years." Chapman is the apostle of love.

Soon after he left that meeting they started another meeting in Plymouth with some other Brethren.

By 1847 within a couple of years Newton had been confronted with the error of his ways. Newton was not a very clear speaker. He was very obtrusive which means that you are not very clear in the way you speak. So if you like Newton you would take what he said one way. If you did not like him you could take it another way. As these things were pointed out to him, he wrote publicly, "A Statement and Acknowledgment Respecting Certain Doctrinal Errors" that he had committed. But sadly even after he repented and humbled himself he was still rejected by his accusers. To me this is one of the most tragic things in history. He was trying to repent and ones did not accept his repentance. That is a slippery slope, brothers and sisters. Sadly, throughout history there have been many times when ones have repented, but others have not accepted that repentance. And brothers and sisters, when we start evaluating and judging the genuineness of someone's repentance, it is a slippery slope; it is tragic. Love covers a multitude of sins, and love suffers long. What is true will come out in the Lord's timing. I wish Darby had waited a little bit longer. Maybe they could have had some more fellowship. I do not know all the details of the circumstances. The only thing I know is that there was a way through in the Lord for this. It did not have to go this way. Would we find the Lord's way in this and be able to keep pressing on.

A couple years later, two brothers from Plymouth visited the Bethesda Chapel where Muller and Craik were. Darby heard about this, and he wrote to Bethesda and said, "Since ones had come from the Plymouth meeting where, in his opinion, there was heresy, Bethesda should

exclude them from fellowship.” And Bethesda did not respond at first, so Darby wrote again. And Bethesda responded: “We are a separate locality and will not judge what goes on in other places. If ones bring heresy to us, we will judge it.” And because of this Darby disagreed with that conclusion and excommunicated the Bethesda assembly. He said, “Ones cannot go to the Bethesda assembly like this.” That brought about a great division within the Brethren Movement. It is just tragic how within twenty years what began so wonderfully ended as being one of the shortest lived testimonies in history. The enemy came in like a flood, but flesh and blood opened the door. There was flesh and blood between Darby and Newton. Whatever their personality differences were, flesh and blood opened the door, and the enemy just took advantage of it. How tragic it is! So that division led to what is now called the Open Brethren with Mueller and the ones agreeing with him, and the Exclusive Brethren agreeing with Darby. And it continues to this day.

The sad thing with the Open Brethren is that among certain ones who were with them they became more and more open to anything. You become so open that you lose the testimony. On the part of the Exclusive Brethren they became more and more exclusive to the place that they excluded different ones. There are various testimonies of ones in the Exclusive Brethren of how at the end of their lives they would just be together as a brother, husband and wife. They could not fellowship with anybody else because nobody stood up to their criteria. Once you draw the line here, then something else occurs and you draw another line, and the line just keeps going. It is one of the great tragic things that has occurred.

You know, we have been influenced by the Brethren here in this assembly. That is probably why we are more familiar with it. There is a great lesson here that we need to learn because within this room we have all varied opinions, different thoughts and personalities. There are plenty of opportunities in this room for division, but the one reason we are together is Christ, that Table, that is why we are here. We are not here because we believe in this or that. People have different interpretations about the Lord’s coming, the way an assembly should be structured, how music should be handled, how children should be taught, and what books you should read. Everybody has these various things, but we need to see that our oneness is in Christ. We have to fight for that. There is a unity we have in Christ that is under attack in this day and time. We have to be fighting violently for that or else we will just continue with one or two picked off here, one or two picked off there. We are for each other, but there is a great battle. We are not perfect by far. What are we here? We are a roomful of sinners saved by grace. That’s it! All of our knowledge about this and that is of little value when it comes down to the reality of maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace that we have in Christ. That is the issue, brothers and sisters, and that is what we have to strive for and maintain so that these ones who are a little bit younger, if the Lord delays, will have something to enter into. They can enter into the goodness of the Lord.

As you read the history of the Brethren, one of the challenges that you face is whether you are reading a Brethren history book by the Open Brethren or a history book by the Exclusive Brethren. The Open Brethren paint Darby as a devil; the Exclusive Brethren paint Darby as a saint. And who was Darby? Darby was just like each one of us. We are saints but we are sinners. He was a great man of God with great faults. Watchman Nee, Sparks, whoever you want to name

are great men of God but with great faults. We are all sinners saved by grace. May we learn some lessons here.

George Muller

Many are familiar with George Muller and the great work that he did with orphanages. I am just going to touch on it. Muller was born in Russia, educated in Halle, and that is where Zinzendorf was educated. When he went to London, he got sick, and then he was introduced to a brother named Henry Craik who introduced him to the Brethren. Muller married Mary who was Anthony Norris Groves' sister, and they moved to Bristol to serve with the Bethesda Chapel. When they got there, the people who had served there before had a salary, but they gave up their salary.

In 1836 they opened the first children's home for thirty children. By 1870 there was housing to accommodate 2,000 children and 200 staff. During his time they cared for, fed and educated over 10,000 children. Praise God! Never once did they ask for funds or make their needs known or do any fund raising. They did not do it even in a subtle way.

There is a story of an old preacher who never asked for a raise. He would lead the congregation in prayer on his knees up at the front of the pulpit. He would be facing the front and people could see the holes in his shoes. No subtle hints or anything like that.

There are wonderful testimonies of His provision for these orphans. The first building was on Wilson Street and ended up with a complex of orphan homes. And you can still visit that today.

One of Muller's quotes: "My eye is not on the density of the fog, but on the living God who controls every circumstance of my life."

This quote came about because one time as he was sailing across the Atlantic he was headed for a speaking engagement in Quebec. He was off the coast of Newfoundland, and a great fog came in, encapsulating the boat. The captain could not see, so he told them that they could not move and go any further. Muller had talked with the captain and knew that he was a believer, so he said, "Let's go up to your cabin and pray." The captain said, "Well, this fog is pretty bad, but we can go pray anyway." So Muller prays a very simple prayer: "Lord, part the way, open the way." Then the captain starts to pray, and Muller stops him and says, "Don't pray, you do not believe it anyway." He did not believe that God could do it. They walked outside, and the fog had lifted. They sailed on, and he made it to Quebec for his speaking engagement.

Muller was a great man of faith and a great man of prayer, and he said, "Faith does not operate in the realm of the possible. There is no glory for God in what is humanly possible. Faith begins where man's power ends."

Muller, being a good German, kept good records, very detailed, and in his journals over the time he was there with the orphanage he had recorded over 50,000 answered prayers in his journal. And he writes, "30,000 of them were answered within one day or one hour of when they were prayed. One example was when they had about 300 children in the orphanage and they were waiting for breakfast. They did not have any food in the kitchen. He brought all the children

in and they sat down ready for breakfast, but there was no food there at all. And he prayed, “Lord, provide breakfast.” There was a knock on the door, and a baker was there. The Lord had wakened the baker early and he was told to make some extra bread and take it to Muller. And he did. As soon as the baker left, there was a knock on the door again. It was the local milkman. His cart had broken down right in front of the orphanage, and he said, “Look, if I leave my cart here and go back to get the part to fix it everybody will steal my milk. Here, you take all the milk.” So the Lord provided breakfast of milk and bread. That is just one simple little example of the way the Lord continued to provide for them in great ways.

Robert Chapman

There were other brethren, and we mentioned Chapman, and Mackintosh, and his books on the “Pentateuch” and “Treasury,” George Cutting wrote a Gospel tract: “Safety, Certainty and Enjoyment” and that Gospel tract is still used today, and it is probably one of the most popular Gospel tracts in the history of Christianity. James Deck was the hymn writer of the Brethren. We have about fifteen of his hymns in “Christ in Song” that we sing.

Chapman was known as the apostle of love. And he was continuing to show love in such a wonderful way that his reputation was such that everybody in England knew of him. There was a letter sent from Australia to him that said, “Robert Chapman, Apostle of love, England.” And the post office got it to him because they knew him. It was such a precious testimony.

He spoke of the desire in his life, and he said, “There are many who preach, but not so many who live Christ. My aim shall be to live Christ.”

When he moved to Barnstable he bought a home big enough to serve as a hospitality place, a place of refuge for missionaries or servants of the Lord who were tired and needed a place to come and rest. So his home was always open for ones to come and stay there. And he had this practice of whenever someone stayed in his home, he would have them put their shoes outside their door at night. He would clean them for them so they would be clean in the morning. When ones rejected that and said they would not do it, he would not relent. His little comment was, “It is not the custom in our day to wash one another’s feet. That which most nearly corresponds to this command of the Lord is to clean each other’s boots.” So if you stayed at his house you would have a clean pair of boots, and boots got really dirty in those days. It was a wonderful precious way of how he did.

In spite of the weakness of the Brethren after twenty years, there were a lot of precious things that they did recover. We are able to see them in Darby’s writings: “The heavenly calling of the church, the unity of the church; the unity of the body of Christ.” They actually practiced the universal priesthood of all believers. It was not just a concept; it was practiced. There was a recovering of the awareness of the Lord’s second coming and many other end time prophetic truths.

As we look at this century, we see the love of God manifested in many different ways—the height, the depth, the length, and the breadth. And it is so that we would “know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge and to be filled with the fulness of Him.” That is the purpose of the

love of God. The love of God is to draw us to Himself, to fill us so that we can know more and more of Him. And we are thankful how the Lord had vessels that He could use, both in the spreading of the Gospel throughout many heathen lands, through the coming together of various ones throughout the world through these precious testimonies unto Him, these various assemblies that were gathering in the simplicity of Christ. And we can be encouraged to press on also. So may our hearts be captured in a fresh way and be rooted and grounded in the love of God, that He can accomplish in us what He is desiring to do also.

Let's pray:

Lord, we do come this day with worshipful hearts. It is always amazing how You can take a vessel and use them and equip them for the Master's use. Most of these had no idea of how their lives would go. All they did was to fall in love with You and then made themselves available to You, and You used them as You desired. Lord, that is what we want to do. We want that love to grow deeper within our hearts. We would fall in love with You over and over again, that we could be those who are available to You, that You could use us as You desire in the days we are living in. Lord, defend us from ourselves, defend us from the enemies, help us to be wise in knowing that long-suffering love of God, that we would be those who are strengthening Your testimony and not weakening it in anyway. In Thy name we pray. Amen.