



Helps to Holiness

### Chapter 13 – THE CHAINED AMBASSADOR

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds" (Eph. vi. 18-2D).

My soul was stirred within me the other morning by Paul's appeal for the prayers of the Church, in which he declares himself to be "an ambassador in bonds," or, as the margin reads, "in a chain."

You know what an ambassador is – a man who represents one government to another. The person of such a man is considered sacred. His word is with power. The dignity and authority of his country and government are behind him. Any injury or indignity to him is an injury and indignity to the country he represents.

Now Paul was an ambassador of Heaven, representing the Lord Jesus Christ to the people of this world. But instead of being respected and honored, he was thrust into prison and chained between two ignorant, and probably brutal, Roman soldiers.

What stirred me were the quenchless zeal of the man and the work he did in the circumstances. Most Christians would have considered their work done, or, at least, broken off till they were free again. But not so with Paul. From his prison and chains, he sent forth a few letters that have blessed the world, and will bless it to the end of time; and he also taught us that there is a ministry of prayer, as well as of more active work. We live in an age of restless work and rush and excitement, and we need to learn this lesson.

Paul was the most active of all the Apostles – "in labours more abundant" – and it seemed as if



he could ill be spared from the oversight of the converts and the new corps which he had so recently opened, and which were in such desperate circumstances and surrounded by implacable enemies. But as he was set to be the chief exponent of the doctrines of the Gospel of Christ, so he was set to be the chief exponent of its saving and sanctifying power under the most trying conditions.

It is difficult – if not quite impossible – to conceive of a trial to which Paul was not subjected, from being worshipped as a god to being whipped and stoned as the vilest slave. But he declared that none of these things moved him. He had learned in whatsoever state he was to be content (Phil. iv. 11), and he triumphantly wrote at the end of his life: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. iv. 7). He did not backslide. He did not even murmur, but kept on his way, trusting in the love of Jesus, and, through faith in Him, coming off more than conqueror.

Many Salvationists have fairly well learned the lessons of activity taught us by Paul; but it will be well for us to be prepared to learn the lessons taught us by his imprisonment. Doubly important is it for sick and resting officers to learn these lessons. They get impatient of waiting, are tempted to murmur and repine, and imagine that they can do nothing. But the fact is, God may possibly use them more widely in prayer and praise, if they will believe and rejoice and watch and pray in the Holy Ghost, than He used them at the head of a battalion of soldiers. They should watch unto prayer for those who are at work and for those in need of the salvation of God. I write from experience.

For eighteen months I was laid aside with a broken head. God put His chain on me, and I had to learn the lessons of a passive ministry of prayer and praise and patience, or backslide altogether. It seemed as if I should never be able to work any more. But I did not backslide. He helped me to nestle down into His will, and, like David, to behave and quiet myself, as a child weaned of his mother, until my soul was even as a weaned child (Ps. cxxxi. 2). Yet my heart longed for the glory of God and the salvation of nations, and I prayed, and watched reports of the salvation war,



and studied the needs of some parts of the world, and prayed on until I knew God heard and answered me, and my heart was made as glad as though I had been in the thick of the fight.

During that time I read of a great country, and my heart ached and burned and longed for God to send salvation there. In secret and in family prayer I poured out my heart to God, and I knew He heard and would yet do great things for that dark, sad country. Shortly after this, I learned of dreadful persecutions and the banishment of many simple, earnest Christians to this country; and while I was greatly grieved at their sufferings, yet I thanked God that He was taking this way to get the light of His glorious salvation into that loveless, needy land.

The fact is, sick and resting officers and saints of God can move Him to bless the Army and the world, if they have faith and will storm Heaven with continuous prayers.

There are more ways to chain God's ambassadors than between Roman soldiers in Roman dungeons. If you are hopelessly sick, you are chained. If you are shut in by family cares and claims, you are chained. But remember Paul's chain, and take courage.

I sometimes hear ex-officers, who have deserted their posts and become so entangled that it is impossible for them to get back into Salvation Army work, lamenting their sad fate, and declaring they can do nothing. Let them bow beneath the judgment of God, kiss the hand that smites them, no longer chafe under the chain that binds them, but cheerfully, patiently begin to exercise themselves in the ministry of prayer. If they are faithful, God may yet unloose their chain, and let them out into the happier ministry of work. Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, and missed the mighty blessing he should have had; still he got a blessing (Gen. xxvii. 38-40).

If a man really longs to see God's glory and souls saved rather than to have a good time himself, why should he not content himself to lie on a sick-bed, or stand by a loom and pray, as well as to stand on a platform and preach, if God will bless one as much as the other?

The platform man can see much of his work and its fruit. The praying man can only feel his. But



the certainty that he is in touch with God and being used by Him may be as great or greater than that of the man who sees with his eyes. Many a revival has had its secret source in the closet of some poor washerwoman or blacksmith who prayed in the Holy Ghost, but who was chained to a life of desperate daily toil. The platform man gets his glory on earth, but the neglected, unknown or despised chained ambassador who prayed will share largely in the general triumph, and, it may be, will march by the King's side, while the platform man comes on behind.

God sees not as man sees. He looks at the heart, and regards His children's cry, and marks for future glory and renown and boundless reward all those who cry and sigh for His honor and the salvation of men.

God could have loosed Paul, but He did not choose to do so. But Paul did not grumble, or get sulky, or fall into despair, or lose his joy and peace and faith and power. He prayed and rejoiced and believed and thought about the poor little struggling corps and the weak converts he had left behind him, and he wrote to them, and bore them on his heart, and wept over them, and prayed for them night and day, and in so doing he saved his own soul, and moved God to bless ten thousand times ten thousand folks whom he never saw and of whom he never even dreamed.

But let no one called of God to the work imagine that this lesson of the chained ambassador is for those who are free to go. It is not. It is only for those who are in chains.