

God Is Keeping the Score

This has been a wonderful week celebrating missions and the need for church-wide, personal, and evangelistic revival. We have enjoyed having the Winters, John Himes, and the Keens with us for the emphasis on world evangelism and our part we play in the greater scheme of things. Dr. Charles Keen is interested in setting up a mission headquarters in the country of Mongolia with the ability to have the Scriptures printed in the language of the inhabitants. One of our fine deacons, Robert Painter is personal friends with the Prime Minister and perhaps future president of Mongolia. With this in mind we had lunch last Friday with Robert and discussed the possibilities of Charles Keen obtaining a foothold into the Gospel needy country of Mongolia. I enjoy finding out seeing where our men work and entering their world for a brief visit. I must say I marvel at the hard working men of our church and the joy they find in their work.

Robert was so nice to take us on a tour of his workplace at Fulbright and Jarworski. I especially enjoyed the view out the window high above Houston. Where Robert has a birds-eye view of the Minute Maid Field where the Houston Astros play. He told us, from his window he can see the score below in the stadium. I have seen some great views, but I have to admit this view with accompanying statement, "I can see the score of the game from my window" impacted me. The Scripture says in Hebrews 12:1, *"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses..."* which reminds us that God and others who have gone before us to Heaven, see the game of life and know the score. The Bible also says in Hebrews 4:13, *"Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."* What a passage of holy inspiration! In other words everything we do is seen by God for what it is. He sees beyond all attempts of pretense, show, and surface service. God knows us for who we are. He knows what we are up to. Jesus said in Acts 1:8, *"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."*

I. God is keeping the score in Jerusalem.

Jerusalem speaks to us of our local area in which we live. We are responsible for the people who live around us. God knows the score; He sees from His high and holy heaven our attempts or lack of attempts to witness to those around us. We have certainly been blessed to have John Himes, the grandson of the late John R. Rice, often referred to in the ecclesiastical ranks with whom we fellowship as "the Captain of our Team." In our conversation of the past week we were discussing with John some of the life-changing books that Dr. Rice wrote. One of the books is entitled *The Soul-Winners Fire*. Dr. Rice relates a personal story in this blessed volume written in 1941:

Several years ago I lived in Ft. Worth on Seminary Hill, and made that my headquarters as an evangelist. In the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary located there, I had my training. Mrs. Rice and I often attended the Seminary Hill Baptist Church. Mrs. Rice attended a class for women taught by Mrs. Scarborough, a fine teacher, whose illustrious husband has been president of the Seminary for many years. He is a great soul-winner, an earnest man of God, and his wife a blessed, good Christian. In the class was an unsaved woman. My wife became concerned about her and said to me one day, "Will you go with me to see this lost woman and try to win her?" I agreed to go, but with a great deal of anxiety. The lost woman lived among preachers. Her next door neighbor on one side was a preacher, I think; on the other side lived a Christian educational worker. Three or four doors away lived the president of the Seminary. I lived not far away, and so did many other preachers. This unsaved woman had been attending the services. I felt that she must be gospel hardened. It seemed to me likely that she had been approached many, many times about her soul in that warm evangelistic atmosphere. With some dread we prepared to go visit her and try to win her to Christ. My wife engaged a woman to stay with the children a whole afternoon, and after prayer we went to call on the unsaved woman, prepared for a long hard battle to win her to Christ.

She met us at the door with a friendly smile. She seemed pleased that we came to see her. We are so often cowards when we come to speak about Christ, and that afternoon I looked about me to find some point of contact that I might come gradually to the question of salvation. On the table I saw a nice new Bible, and I commented upon it. She said, "Yes, my mother gave me that last Christmas." Then I said, "I understand you are not a Christian. Wouldn't it be wonderful if you were a Christian, so that you and your husband could read the Word of God together every night?" Her face was very grave as she answered, "We are not Christians, but we do read the Bible every night. Every night since last Christmas we have read a chapter in this new Bible."

I was somewhat taken back and nonplussed, so I started over again and said, "But if you were a Christian, when you read this Bible you and your husband could get down together and pray, and ask God to keep you safe through the night. Wouldn't it be fine to be a Christian and have family prayer?" Her lips trembled. Tears came into her eyes as she said, "I'm not a Christian, but we do pray. Every night my husband and I read a chapter in this Bible, and then get down on our knees and pray."

I hardly knew what to say. Here was a woman whom I had supposed was gospel hardened. I supposed that many, many times she had turned down the Savior. Living in the midst of Christians and special workers, I thought that surely she must have been urged many times to trust in Christ. But instead of being hardened, she and her husband were daily reading the Bible and praying. And even then she was in tears! So I left off all devices and plainly asked the question, "Then why is it that you have turned down Jesus? Why is it you are not a Christian?" Breaking out into sobbing she said, "I want to be a Christian, but I don't know how!"

In a few minutes Dr. and Mrs. Rice witnessed this lady joyously coming to Christ! The point Dr., Rice was making was that there are people nearby who are willing to receive Christ, if we simply take the initiative. Every one of us, to some degree, should be missionaries! Jesus said, "*Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest*" (John 4:35).

II. God is keeping the score in Judea and Samaria.

Judea is the land surrounding Jerusalem; Samaria is the next country over. If we could translate the message to us today, it would be as though Jesus tells us, "Ye shall be witnesses to me in Houston (our Jerusalem), Texas (our Judea), the United States (our Samaria). God sees our efforts expended in the areas around us. Some take the philosophy, that when we reach our Jerusalem, then we can go on to reach the areas beyond. Yet the Bible says, "...and ye shall be witnesses unto me **both** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.. The task of fulfilling the Great Commission is a mission involving a witness "both" here and there. We are fulfilling this when we sponsor home missions. As a matter of fact, whenever I speak somewhere else in the United States it is in fulfillment of the Judea and Samaria requirement.

When I was a little boy I remember my dad taking me to hear Dr. Bob Gray, Dr. Jack Hyles, Lester Roloff, and Dr. John R. Rice. At that time Dr. Gray pastored the Trinity Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida; Dr. Hyles, The First Baptist Church of Hammond, Indiana; Brother Roloff pastored The People's Church; and earlier in Dr. Rice's ministry he pastored Gethsemane Baptist in Dallas, Texas. I am sure glad these men had freedom to obey the Lord and go beyond their Jerusalem. Let us get beyond the "just us four and no more" mentality! There is so much more on the other side of our door! I have been very thankful for the attitude of our church members when God allows me to take the gospel and His Word to regions beyond. The family of God is big and requires attending to. To stifle our witness to Judea and Samaria would not be right. In our twenty-four years of ministering, only a few have complained about our ministries inclusion of Judea and Samaria. To say our pastorate in Houston is hindered because of ministry to other places is like saying, "one cannot be a good father and a good

husband; make your choice. Will you be a dad or a husband, which will it be?" We know this would be ridiculous, because a good husband is a better dad and a good dad is a better husband." Ministry is not in competition. When I go out and preach in our Samaria, I am a missionary from Christchurch and the freedom we have in sharing is part and parcel of the same package of blessing! *"...we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand. But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord"* (II Corinthians 10:15-17). If I may use a baseball parallel, I don't want the Lord, Who is keeping the score, to desire me to take second and third and observe that my fear has frozen me on first!

III. God is keeping score in the uttermost part of the earth.

What a thrill to hear and see Bob Winters showing us a place where he has now preached the Gospel, i.e. on an island called Rapa, which is laterally in the uttermost part of the earth from Jerusalem! Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a part in ministry with the Winters in the islands of the Pacific, or with Brother Keen in Mongolia, or John Himes in Japan? If God blessed us in proportion to our reach, how great would the blessing be? Christchurch is a great church. As far as I'm concerned, there is none better. Jesus said, *"... For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required..."*(Luke 12:48). God has given us much, let us give in return.

We are having to transfer approximately 2,500 dollars per month out of our general operating expenses to keep faithful in our mission commitments. Let us not take the attitude of cutting back on missions, rather let us lift our mission giving to meet, if not exceed the mission expenditure and return to the method God blessed us with years ago, called faith promise mission giving. Look how the Macedonians gave: *"How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves"* (II Corinthians 8:2, 3). They were able to give beyond their ability because; by faith they were committed to go above and beyond the norms and naturals. Selfishness limits our giving. A lack of giving limits our growth, and a limited growth limits our reach for the whole world. The world for which Christ died.

Yes, God is keeping the score. It matters not what man says from his point of view. God sees the whole picture clearly and has given us a command accordingly. Thank you, Missionaries, for coming to Christchurch and helping us with our worldview!

- Pastor Pope -

[Back to Pastor's Word](#)