

CHAPTER IV

Begin at my Sanctuary

"And He called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side; and the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." Ezekiel 9: 3—4.

Who is this mysterious seventh Person with the inkhorn, clothed with the linen garments of the High Priest? It is none other than the Lord of glory. He sighs over the abominations of the people whom He has redeemed by His precious blood. He sighs over their barren spiritual condition.

He sighs because He cannot deny His holiness and shut His eyes to their sins. "Son of man, these men have set their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them?" (Ezekiel 14, 3). God cannot answer their prayers; they are an abomination unto Him. The mighty arm of Jehovah is paralysed in the midst of such awful conditions (Isaiah 59, 1—2.)

We are living in a day when iniquity abounds and "the love of many shall wax cold." Compromise and collousness are among the crying evils of the present age. The Son of God is looking for Gethsemene companions. Does He find one in you? As He has gone through your assembly, how many has He marked? Has He marked your forehead with His sacred sign of fellowship and identification? Does He find you among the godly remnant in these last dark days of a dying

dispensation of grace, sighing for the abominations and sins of the Church? Are you among the believers to whom God has become a "little sanctuary"? (Ezekiel 11, 16.)

The "Marked" ones are those who have claimed their "Magna Charta" of liberty from Romans 8, and have a heart free to enter into fellowship with Christ for others. Alas! Many Christians have to spend their time sighing and crying over their own sins and failures, so that they have no power to exercise the authority of their priestly function for others.

True intercession is the costliest of all Christian service. It is no mere lip service. It is the heart-agony of the Father expressed through us by the Holy Spirit, as He makes intercession through us (Romans 8, 26). We never really pray until our hearts and minds become the praying-ground of the Spirit.

What does this mark involve? In Ezekiel's case this mark meant intercession of the highest order — fullest identification with the sufferings of God for His backslidden people; identifying himself with the people in their idolatry.

In the plans and purposes of God we are to be the instruments of the Spirit's intercession. When we seek the gifts and graces of this high and holy ministry, and allow our great High Priest and Saviour Jesus Christ to put His secret sign upon our forehead, we bear the burden in true identification for the condition of the Church and the world.

The moment we give ourselves to the Lord to be marked with the secret sign, that moment we must lay all on the altar of sacrifice and ourselves become "living" sacrifices (Romans 12, 1).

It is imperative for God's ministers and people to recognize that revival begins when the abominations are cleansed from within the inner temple of God, in the hearts of His saints. Revival is not a matter of believers going down the street beating big drums, but of saints, with broken hearts, sobbing their way to Calvary. Revival is not so much the drunkard

being saved as God's people being delivered from their abominations.

"Begin at My sanctuary" (Ezekiel 9, 6) says the Holy One to all that seek revival and renewal. "Begin at My sanctuary" is the first lesson in the School of God concerning the theme of revival. The Church and the world are sleeping. Where shall we blow the trumpet? The answer is always the same: "Begin at My sanctuary!" "Blow the trumpet in Zion" (Joel 2, 15). "Judgment must begin at the house of God . . . And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Peter 4, 17—18.)

This Sanctuary lesson is a hard one for the Church to learn, as so many of the leaders have given a new rendering of II Chronicles 7, 14: "If the people of the devil, who are called by his name, shall humble themselves and pray and seek God's face and turn from their wicked ways, then we will have a glorious revival!" God's revival challenge is still: "If MY PEOPLE . . ." The "IF" of revival rests upon the obedience of the saints.

"And I will sanctify My great name which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes" (Ezek. 36, 23). When will God do these great and mighty things in revival? When He is sanctified in the saints! "Begin at My sanctuary!"

There has always been the godly remnant which has kept the spirit of purity and power in the Church throughout the ages. "Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah" (Isaiah 1, 9). In the "Midnight" epistles of the risen Lord to the seven Churches, we see this little band of overcomers standing true for God amidst the compromise and abominations around them. (Rev. 2 and 3).

It has been men and women like Tersteegen, Hans Hauge, Thomas Boston, F. B. Meyer, J. N. Darby, Phoebe Palmer and Catherine Booth, in their "watchtowers", with deep spiritual perception, that has helped to keep the Church burning bright and pure for God (Hab. 2, 1). Oh for a host of men and women to sigh and groan over these things that grieve the heart of our blessed Lord, and hinder the preparations of the Bride for His coming! (Ephes. 5, 27).

Are you among the number who are weeping and are broken down before God because of the spiritual adultery and coldness of the saints? Says William Bramwell in his diary, "I have seen nearly twenty believers set at liberty. I believe I should have seen many more, but I cannot yet find one pleading man. There are many good people, but I have found no wrestlers with God."

How comforting to know that the very same eye of God that saw the secret sins of His people, also saw the secret groanings of His separated ones! How few there are who have the sign-marks in their foreheads, because of their holy concern for the deplorable condition of Zion! If "the effectual fervent prayer" of one righteous man availed much with God, how much more the united prayers of your entire church! (James 5, 16.)

"If one sigh of a true Christian", says an old divine, "wafts the bark to the desired haven, or stirreth Zion's ship, how much more a gale of sighs, breathed by hundreds of believers! If one trumpet sounds so loud in the ears of God, how much more the concert of all the silver trumpets in Zion sounding together! Where so many hands are lifted up, how many blessings may they not pull down from heaven!"

Oh! that all Christians may be candidates for the sign-mark of holy, agonizing intercession in this critical hour of the Church's history!

"BEGIN AT MY SANCTUARY" (Ezekiel 9, 6).

*Not many lives, but only one have we —
One, only one;
How sacred should that one life ever be —
That narrow span!
Day after day filled up with blessed toil,
Hour after hour still bringing in new spoil.*

HORATIUS BONAR