

TRAGEDY OF TRAGEDIES

Prior to the Communist Revolution the gospel was being preached throughout Russia and many embraced the back to the Bible plea. When they came to power, the Communists proceeded to crush every vestige of Christianity that refused to become collaborators with their evil system. Many years ago Bro. Epi Bilak, himself a Ukrainian Christian, related the words of a brother who was languishing in a Communist prison. The prisoner for Christ wrote,

“Sad, sad to die in chains; but worse; far worse, to sleep, sleep, sleep.”

Those prophetic words are today most applicable for thousands of preachers, elders and members of the church of Christ here in America. If these were the early days of Christianity, when the cruel hand of Judaism and the iron fist of Rome made war on the servants of Jesus, many of us no doubt would be rotting in dungeons and multitudes would have perished. Others would have been driven from their homes, forced to flee or be exterminated. We would be hated and hunted like evil felons because we followed Jesus. You can read about the sufferings of those brethren in **Foxe’s Book of Christian Martyrs**. If these were the early days of the Protestant revolt against Rome, the same would be our fate. It was truly sad that so many innocent saints suffered and died in chains for their faith in the Prince of Peace.

But ours is the land of religious liberty. Freedom of speech and assembly is guaranteed to us and the strong arm of our government will protect us in exercising these rights. We are free to evangelize and proselyte others to the Cause we love. Ours is a day of prosperity, easy travel and instant communication. We have access to radio, television, the Internet and the print media. We have a large and prosperous base of congregations here in America. We have schools, an endless array of gospel literature, hymnals and other assets to use for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ.

Yet with all the above mentioned advantages, the average Christian, preacher and elder sleeps. Satan is working 24/7. While brethren sleep he is corrupting the faith of their flocks. He is sowing seeds of discord. He is priming the explosion that will rip the brotherhood of churches of Christ in to shreds. And still those whose responsibility it is to watch for the flock sleep (Acts 20:31). It is truly amazing and appalling how many leaders have no awareness of what is transpiring within the body of Christ, and no interest in learning about the situation, no intention of helping. Some are actually offended when the problem is brought to their attention. They labor under the false illusion that the church here in American is invincible, that God won’t allow anything bad to happen to her. They forget that just a century ago a similar change movement swept away a full 85 percent of our people and congregations, virtually every school and mission outpost. It not only can happen, it will happen again if those whose job is to be watchmen sleep, sleep, sleep (Is. 56:10).

What a terrible tragedy it will be when what was once the largest indigenous religious body on this continent is again tore by division; they who just 50 years ago were the fastest growing church in America are reduced to a scattered remnant. Think of the souls that will be swept away in error, the discouraged brethren who will lose their hope and turn back to sin, the sinners who will not have a preacher or missionary to teach them the saving gospel. If such were to happen because we were persecuted and our leaders cast into prison, it would be sad. But how much worse it will be because we slept, slept, slept! Are you dear reader asleep to the danger we face? “Awake, thou that sleepest and arise from the dead and Christ will shine upon thee” (Eph. 5:14).