

RACHEL WEeping FOR HER CHILDREN

When the kingdom of Judah was overrun by Babylon's army and her population was swept away to captivity, Jeremiah wrote "a voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children...because they are not" (Jer. 31:15). When Herod ordered the deaths of all the male infants of Bethlehem Matthew wrote that the mourning of the grieving parents was like that of mother Rachel weeping for her children (Matt.2:18).

If you listen carefully with a sympathetic ear, today you can hear the lamentation and bitter mourning of godly saints of days past, who a century ago fought apostasy and salvaged a remnant of God's people. At great personal sacrifice they struggled to rebuild the shattered brotherhood that was ravaged by those who determined to change the church of the late 19th century into a denomination. The progressives of their day wanted instruments of music in their worship, human organizations to do the work of the church and the approval and fellowship of their denominational neighbors.

Our brethren were driven from the meeting places they had built and paid for. They were accused of radicalism and fanaticism by those who wanted to impose their new ways on the church. They saw their schools and mission outposts captured one by one. They saw families alienated and divided over the innovations. They were publicly ridiculed and scorned by the progressives. Yet in spite of their losses and disadvantages those courageous souls worked with sacrificial dedication and zeal. They preached in homes, under tents, in store fronts and in rented halls. They went back to communities lost to progressives and went door to door sowing the good seed of the kingdom. The results were astounding. God blessed their labors and new congregations sprang up and flourish in hundreds of communities. After 50 years, old saints with white hair could look back with joy, holy pride and satisfaction at the success God had given them.

When their time to depart came, they bequeathed the church to our hands. Now another half century has passed and what do we have to bequeath to our children in the faith? We see a church once again ravaged by men from our own ranks who speak perverse things (Acts 20:30). The issues are virtually the same as a century past. Unless God intervenes the consequences will be as devastating as before.

Me thinks I can hear those mothers and fathers in the faith as they look down from their place in Abraham's bosom, weeping as they see being replayed the tragedy they faced and overcame. They weep for their prodigal children who have left the father's house for the pleasant fields of denominationalism. They weep for their faithful children once again being driven from their congregations because of the innovations forced on them by the agents of change. They weep because the church they labored for is being ravaged by thoughtless, unfaithful men who should know better. They weep at the souls that will be lost as precious energy and resources that should be used to teach them about Christ must be expended to defend the church from those who now despise her. They weep for the further shame that will be heaped upon Christ's wounded and divided church.

Not only do those now gone weep, every faithful child of God should be deeply touched by these tragic events. Our tears should flow for Zion. The difference is we are yet able to wipe the tears from our eyes, take up the sword of the Spirit and do something about the situation. Are you so touched? Are you willing to help in her defense?

JHW