

The Gospel and the Pocketbook

Joe Slater

If you want someone's attention, hit him in the pocketbook!

During his second missionary journey, Paul preached Christ in Philippi, a Macedonian city. There he encountered a slave girl who was afflicted with a demon. Her masters made much profit from the ability the demon gave her to tell fortunes.

When Paul cast the evil spirit out of the girl, how do you suppose her masters reacted? Were they glad the poor girl was no longer demonized? No, indeed! Their only concern was that *"their hope of profit was gone"* (Acts 16:19).

In retaliation, they hauled Paul and Silas before the local authorities on charges of disturbing the peace and anti-Roman teaching (16:20, 21). Paul and Silas endured an excruciatingly painful beating with rods, followed by many hours of confinement in the dungeon with their feet in stocks.

In Ephesus on his third journey (Acts 19), Paul once again saw first-hand the power of men's love of money. Demetrius and his fellow silversmiths made and sold shrines of the goddess Diana, whose temple was in Ephesus. They had a ready-made market, for Diana devotees from all over came to Ephesus to worship. Paul's preaching, however, was leading so many people out of idolatry that the market for silver shrines was drying up!

When Demetrius called a meeting of his fellow silversmiths and the less-skilled workers they employed, what was his primary concern? Money! *"Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade"* (Acts 19:25).

Yes, ye also mentioned that their goddess was losing respect, but that was secondary. They stirred up a

mob that screamed for two solid hours, *"Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"*

What if we were so busy leading people to Jesus that the porn-peddlers, drug pushers, liquor stores, and casinos saw their profits drying up? The gospel still has the power. Do we have the courage and dedication?

x x x x x x x

The Unused Cup

Early one Sunday morning a group of party leaders came by the White House to see President James A. Garfield about a bill they thought Congress should pass. They were surprised when he said he had a very important appointment and would speak with them that afternoon. "But Mr. President," one man asked, "What could be more important than this?" Garfield arose and walked to the door, turned to the party leaders and said, "Gentlemen, **I have an appointment at the Lord's Table!**" He then left with Mrs. Garfield and went to Sunday morning worship.

Consider the declarations of an "unused cup" . . . "I am an unused cup for communion, left last Sunday, giving testimony to an appointment unkept, a trust broken. I was filled in anticipation that some Christian would drink of my contents and be reminded of the price of his redemption.

"Here I sit – unused – yet I bear witness of a love extended, a fellowship desired, and a grace made available. *'This is the NEW covenant in My blood,'* Jesus said.

"There is a cup for you each Lord's day." Yes, there is an appointment to be kept for the child of God at the Lord's table, and there is also a seat reserved for you!

The Lord's Table is set. Will you keep the appointment?

--David A. Sargent (adapted)

A PREGNANT MAN

The 1994 movie "Junior" drew a million laughs. Arnold Schwarzenegger played a scientist who carried a pregnancy in order to test the fertility drug he helped to create.

David knew a pregnant man 3000 years ago. *"Behold, the wicked man conceives evil and is pregnant with mischief and gives birth to lies. He makes a pit, digging it out, and false into the hole he has made. His mischief returns upon his own head, and on his own skill his violence descends"* (Psalm 7:14-17, ESV). No laughing matter was this pregnancy.

Dogged by a slanderous enemy, David agonized over the abuse, but trusted God to do right (Psalm 7:9-13). David's unrepentant nemesis would get his just deserts. David sang, *"I will give to the Lord the thanks due to His righteousness, and I will sing praises to the name of the Lord, the Most High"* (Psalm 7:7).

This psalm became integral to the Feast of Purim that originated with the escape of the Jewish people from the massacre in Persia. Queen Esther bravely foiled the plot of wicked Haman who intended to exterminate the Jews. He constructed a gallows to hang righteous Mordecai. In the end, Haman himself was hanged there. The Jews saw in Haman the prototypical conceiving, pregnancy, and birthing evil man. His evil fell on his own head.

We can trust God, as they did, to handle the offense of those who sin against us.

Psalm 7:12-16 highlights the fertility and futility of evil. Its conception in a person's heart is momentous. Its growth is prodigious. Its birth is disastrous. Its punishment is certain and grievous.

Don't get pregnant with sin. If you are already heavy with that child, repent. It's not funny.

--Danny Boggs (Neosho, MO) via *Old Paths*