

Radio Talk

Rom. 10:12-13. "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him. For, every one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved."

A few years ago a midnight cloudburst struck a mountainous area in Korea in the region where I am at work. Torrents rushed down the mountainsides, roaring through a small irrigation lake, bursting the dam, and inundating a village in its path. 85 lives were snuffed out. When we arrived to survey the damage and render such aid as we could, bodies were being removed from silt piled up to roof level of such houses as were still standing. Although rain had pounded for more than a hour before the disaster, and high ground was near by, no one sounded an alarm, and these unfortunates perished.

On the other side of the mountain was a similar situation. In a somewhat larger village, the mayor and police chief sensed the danger, ran to the houses along the river, and woke their occupants. Those who were reluctant they beat with sticks and forced them to leave. The next morning only a yawning chasm was left where 30 houses had stood. Yet not one person was killed or injured. The same flood and the same people and the same situation, yet in one village there was death and in the other life. "What was the difference? Only that someone sounded the alarm and people were led to higher ground and to the place of salvation.

Every Christian witness, both in this city and abroad in such lands as Korea, bears the same responsibility towards those whose danger takes on eternal proportions. "The gospel is the power of God for salvation to every one that believes." Away from the stability and security of the United States, one senses about him the swirling flood-tides of history, and knows that the only hope of the world is in the Lord Jesus Christ. As Paul says in the passage we just read, "Every one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved."

God's Word is very plain in asserting that the only way of ^{eternal} salvation is through faith in His Son Jesus Christ, and through none other. Jesus Himself declared, "I am the way, and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me." This eliminates the possibility of salvation through Buddha or Mohammed, through any good works representing the best efforts of man himself, or through any ethics or philosophy apart from Christ. In the Gospel, John tells us that "He who believes in him (that is, in Jesus Christ) is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God." (Jn. 3:18). He is equally plain in one of his letters: "He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son has not life."

In Korea, it is quite evident that man's best efforts have failed to bring either peace in this life or hope for the next world apart from Christ. Two revolutions in the past 4 years, and the threat of others, finds Korea still longing for democracy as a cherished goal not yet achieved. Break-down of respect for law and order, lack of expert leadership, communist infiltration from the north, economic difficulties, inflation, over-population unemployment...these are just some of her troubles. A terrible war brought neither real peace nor unity to the divided nation. A decade of uneasy armistice has passed. But it is only an armistice, and while UN and Red representatives angrily insult each other at the truce table, patrols of both sides continue probing, shots are fired, men and women are wounded and killed.

The old religion of Korea have not brought salvation. Buddha is worshipped in the park-like surroundings of mountain temples and honored in various rituals. But he has little to offer in daily strength and only the vaguest and most uncertain hope for any future after death. Worship of ancestors, the most deeply and universally imbedded religion of old Korea, has lost its hold on many young people whose education has lead them away from ancient superstitions. It is not strange that many thousands, including multitudes of teen-agers in Korea, have accepted Christ and find joy and happiness and hope in the Christian faith. They have learned with the apostle Peter that "There is sálvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12);

Missionaries are privileged to carry this message of a glorious salvation by many means. One of the most effective has always been through medical missions. The three major medical institutions of the Southern Presbyterian Church have won many headlines of achievement and brought the ministry of healing to thousands of patients who pass through their doors. They are used to train scores of Christian doctors and nurses who move out across the land to work and witness in the tradition of the Great Physician Himself. Lately our missionary doctors have begun to lead nation-wide campaigns to eliminate major medical scourges of the land such as tuberculosis, leprosy and intestinal parasites. You say, "What does this have with witnessing to Jesus Christ?" It has much to do with it. As men's bodíes are healed by those ministering in the name of Christ, men and women without hope for their souls find that hope through the love of Christ. And Christians whose bodies have been healed of these same diseases are able to witness to the power and love of God with more zeal and physical vigor.

About a year ago a visiting American doctor who toured these hospitals in Korea was asked, "Now that you have seen this medical work in our mission, what do you think? Is it worth the money and effort of the American church?" He replied, "Not only worth it, but if our church people could see it they would redouble their efforts. But it isn't worth a nickle unless it continues with a strong evangelistic witness!" He is right, and I am happy to be able to enthusiastically endorse the evangelistic work carried on in our mission hospitals and in our educational institutions as well. So far as I am concerned, the Christian Church has no right anywhere to conduct institutional work unless the primary purpose is to make Christ known, and this is indeed the case in Korea today.

There is a world of difference between the life inside and outside of Christ, and the attitude of the Christian towards life and towards eternal life in comparison to that of the non-Christian. A year or so ago, as I drove home from a country church in Korea one Sunday afternoon, I saw in the woods by the roadside perhaps the most tragic of all sights. There was a young woman, obviously demented, hair unkept, such clothes as there were ragged, and torn, dirty and filthy. Glancing at her feet, I saw that they were securely bound to two great blocks of wood so she could barely move about. As she screamed at passers-by, some of whom laughed and taunted her, we knew she was cast out to die by a society who knew not what to do for her, and apparently did not care.

A few days later, touring the mission hospital in Kwangju, we saw a premature baby, not much bigger than my fist. Looking at that tiny bit of flickering life, apparently receiving as much or more care as any first class patient, I asked the Christian doctor: "Is there any hope for such a wee life?" "Not much" he replied, "but we are doing our best." How great the difference when there are people who care for one another, because they know that God cared enough to give His Son for us! The Gospel brings not only tender concern for physical life, but the path to eternal life through the transforming power of Christ.