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THE CRUCIFIXION OF PHILIP STRONG.

By REV. CHARLES M. SHELDON,
Author of "In His Steps: What Would Jesus Do?" "Malcolm Kirk," "Robert Hardy's Seven Days," Etc.

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ingmen's houses. The tenement district was becoming familiar territory to him now. He had settled finally what his own action ought to be. In that action his wife fully concurred. And the members of Calvary church, coming in that Sunday morning, were astonished at the message of their pastor as he spoke to them from the standpoint of modern Christ.

"I said a month ago that the age in which we live demands a simpler, less extravagant style of living. I did not mean by that to condemn the beauties of art or the marvels of science or the products of civilization. I merely emphasized what I believe is a mighty but neglected truth in our modern civilization—that if we would win men to Christ we must adopt more of his spirit of simple and consecrated self-denial. I wish to be distinctly understood as I go on that I do not condemn any man simply because he is rich or lives in a luxurious house, enjoying every comfort of modern civilization, every delicacy of the season and all physical desires. What I do wish distinctly understood is the belief, which has been burned deep into me ever since coming to this town, that if the members of this church wish to honor the Head of the church and bring men to believe him and save them in this life and the next they must be willing to do far more than they have yet done to make use of the physical comforts and luxuries of their homes for the blessing and Christianizing of this community. In this particular I have myself failed to set you an example. The fact that I have so failed is my only reason for making this matter public this morning.

"The situation in Milton today is exceedingly serious. I do not need to prove it to you by figures. If any business man will go through the tenements, he will acknowledge my statements. If any woman will contrast those dens with her own home, she will, if Christ is a power in her heart, stand in horror before such a travesty on the sacred thought of honor. The destitution of the neighborhood is alarming. The number of men out of work is dangerous. The complete removal of all sympathy between the church up here on this street and the tenement district is sadder than death. Oh, my beloved"—Philip stretched out his arms and uttered a cry that rang in the ears of those who heard it and remained with some of them a memory for years—"these things ought not so to be! Where is the Christ spirit with us? Have we not sat in our comfortable houses and eaten our pleasant food and dressed in the finest clothing and gone to amusements and entertainments without number while God's poor have shivered on the streets and his sinful ones have sneered at Christianity as they have walked by our church doors?"

"It is true we have given money to charitable causes, it is true the town council has organized a bureau for the care and maintenance of those in want, it is true members of Calvary church, with other churches at this time, have done something to relieve the immediate distress of the town, but how much have we given of ourselves to those in need? Do we reflect that to reach souls and win them, to bring back humanity to God and the Christ, the Christian must do something different from the giving of money now and then? He must give a part of himself. That was my reason for urging you to move this church building away from this street into the tenement district, that we might give ourselves to the people there. The idea is the same in what I now propose. But you will pardon me if first of all I announce my own action, which, I believe, is demanded by the times and would be approved by our Lord."

Philip stepped up nearer the front of the platform and spoke with an added earnestness and power which thrilled every hearer. A part of the great conflict through which he had gone that past month shone out in his pale face and found partial utterance in his impassioned speech, especially as he drew near the end. The very abruptness of his proposition smote the people into breathless attention.

"The parsonage in which I am living is a large, even a luxurious, dwelling. It has nine large rooms. You are familiar with its furnishings. The salary this church pays me is \$2,000 a year, a sum which more than provides for my necessary wants. What I have decided to do is this: I wish this church to reduce this salary one-half and take the other thousand dollars to the fitting up the parsonage for a refuge for homeless children or for some such purpose which will commend itself to your best judgment. There is money enough in this church alone to maintain such an institution handsomely and not a single member of Calvary suffers any hardship whatever. I will move into a house nearer the lower part of the town, where I can more easily reach after the people and live more among them. That is what I propose for myself. It is not because I believe the rich and the educated do not need the gospel or the church. The rich and the poor both need the life more abundantly. But I am firmly convinced that as matters now are the church membership through pulpit

and few must give itself more than in the later ages of the world it has done for the sake of winning men. The form of self-denial must take a definite, physical, genuinely sacrificing shape. The church must get back to the apostolic times in some particulars and an adaptation of community of goods and a sharing of certain aspects of civilization must mark the church membership of the coming twentieth century. An object lesson in self-denial large enough for men to see, a self-denial that actually gives up luxuries, money and even pleasures—this is the only kind that will make much impression on the people. I believe if Christ was on earth he would again call for this expression of loyalty to him. He would again say, 'So likewise whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.'

"All this is what I call on the members of this church to do. Do I say that you ought to abandon your own houses and live somewhere else? No. I can decide only for myself in a matter of that kind. But this much I do say: Give yourselves in some genuine way to save this town from its evil wretchedness. It is not so much your money as your own soul that the sickness of the world needs. This plan has occurred to me: Why could not every family in this church become a savior to some other family, interest itself in the other, know the extent of its wants as far as possible, go to it in person, let the Christian home come into actual touch with the un-Christian—in short, become a natural savior to one family? There are dozens of families in this church that could do that. It would take money. It would take time. It would mean real self-denial. It would call for all your Christian grace and courage, but what does all this church membership and church life mean if not just such sacrifice? We cannot give anything to this age of more value than our own selves. The world of sin and want and despair and disbelief is not hungering for money or mission schools or charity balls or state institutions for the relief of distress, but for live, pulsing, loving Christian men and women who reach out live, warm hands, who are willing to go and give themselves, who will abandon if necessary, if Christ calls for it, the luxuries they have these many years enjoyed in order that the bewildered, disheartened, discontented, unhappy, sinful creatures of earth may actually learn of the love of God through the love of man. And that is the only way the world ever has learned of the love of God. Humanity brought that love to the heart of the race, and it will continue so to do until this earth's tragedy is all played and the last light put out. Members of Calvary church, I call on you in Christ's name this day to do something for your Master that will really show the world that you are what you say you are when you claim to be a disciple of that one who, although he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, giving up all heaven's glory in exchange for all earth's misery, the end of which was a cruel and bloody crucifixion. Are we Christ's disciples unless we are willing to follow him in this particular? We are not our own. We are bought with a price."

When that Sunday service closed, Calvary church was stirred to its depths. There were more excited people talking together all over the church than Philip had ever seen before. He greeted several strangers as usual and was talking with one of them, when one of the trustees came up and said the board would like to meet him, if convenient for him, as soon as he was at liberty.

Philip accordingly waited in one of the Sunday school classrooms with the trustees, who had met immediately after the sermon and decided to have an instant conference with the pastor.

CHAPTER XIII.

The door of the classroom was closed, and Philip and the trustees were together. There was a moment of embarrassing silence, and then the spokesman for the board, a nervous little man, said:

"Mr. Strong, we hardly know just what to say to this proposition of yours this morning about going out of the parsonage and turning it into an orphan asylum. But it is certainly a very remarkable proposition, and we felt as if we ought to meet you at once and talk it over."

"It's simply impossible," spoke up one of the trustees. "In the first place, it is impracticable as a business proposition."

"Do you think so?" asked Philip quietly.

"It is out of the question!" said the first speaker excitedly. "The church will never listen to it in the world. For my part, if Brother Strong wishes to—"

At that moment the sexton knocked at the door and said a man was outside very anxious to see the minister and have him come down to his house. There had been an accident or a fight or something. Some one was dying and wanted Mr. Strong at once. So Philip hastily excused himself and went out, leaving the trustees together. The door was hardly shut again when the speaker who had been inter-

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