

SCRAPS OF HISTORY

In this article we want to call your attention to some preachers, their work, problems, and issues of the past in this section of the country. I hope this will make us more appreciative of our blessings today.

WILLIAM BEHEL

In the November 24, 1910 issue of the *GOSPEL ADVOCATE* brother Behel writes: *"My work since July 9, 1910, has resulted in about seventy-five additions, all told. Three of my meetings were at mission points, where I hope to see working congregations at an early date. I hope to visit these places during the winter and 'see how they do'. I am now in a meeting at St. Joseph." (Tenn.)*

In the November 24, 1921 *GOSPEL ADVOCATE* he writes: *"At the request of the elders, I preached a few nights at North Carolina, in Lauderdale County, Ala. Bad weather hindered, but one was restored. My field of labor this year, for the major part, has been but little more than self-sustaining. After traveling expenses are deducted, I find that financially, I am loser, due largely, I presume, to the fact that my work was scattered over a large territory and mostly at mission points. I am thankful to God for these opportunities for doing good."*

Brother Behel did much in his day to build up the cause of Christ in Lauderdale county. He rode a mule to many of his preaching appointments which made it necessary for him to get up very early on Sunday morning in order to make it to his appointment. He labored where the Cause was weak and the pay was small. In this article in 1921 you can see that he "went in the hole" from the financial standpoint. However, he did not complain or say, "I am going to quit because preachers are paid so little.", but rather he said, "I am thankful to God for these opportunities for doing good." My eyes swell with tears as I write these lines about this great man of God, and I say, "Lord, send us more men like brother Will Behel to Lauderdale county."

Also, I would like to say to preachers today, "When you take that salary check each week that covers your expenses and feeds you and your family well, think of brother Will Behel (and other men like him) who went without that you might have!" I mean by that, that there would be no large congregations to preach to and pay good salaries if there had not been men like brother Will Behel who were willing to make a crop in the summer and ride a mule in the heat and cold that the gospel of Christ might be preached in this section of the country!

The following is the death notice of brother William Behel which appeared in the January 12, 1939 issue of the *GOSPEL ADVOCATE* and was written by brother J. M. Gainer of Florence: *"William M. Behel was born September 10, 1872; departed this life December 26, 1938. Brother Behel was baptized about the year 1888, at Mars Hill, Ala., by T. B. Larimore. Brother Behel had been a minister of the gospel about thirty-nine years. He was married to Martha Jane Clemmons, February 21, 1892. To this union were born nine children, six now living and three dead. Brother Behel has also five brothers living and one dead, and one sister living and one dead. He has also twenty-two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. The funeral was held at Lone Cedar Church, where he had preached so much, and near his home, on December 27. He had planned the entire service, having selected his undertaker, and some years ago planned to have his lifelong friend, M. E. Gibbs, conduct the service. The song service was conducted by Brother Quillen and his sons, singing the songs that Brother Behel had already selected for the occasion. Also, brother Quillen read a poem that Brother Behel had been saving for the occasion. The prayer was led by J.*

M. Gainer, a close friend of Brother Behel's. Interment was at Mount Zion Cemetery, where A. D. Behel, a nephew, led the closing prayer. The great floral tribute was touching as a manifestation of the esteem in which Brother Behel was held by many friends. The great throng of people both at the funeral service and at the interment showed how much the entire section had appreciated his labors throughout the many years. Brother Behel's labors covered almost the entire northern part of Alabama, some sections of Mississippi, parts of Florida, and Giles, Wayne, and Lawrence Counties, Tennessee. Brother Behel unhesitatingly went to any section where he found an opening for preaching the gospel, much of it done in destitute places. His preaching was fearless, positive, and true to the book, yet with all kindness, meekness and love. His condemnation of sin was plain, yet no sinner could feel that he was not interested in his soul and that all his teaching was for the purpose of leading him to Christ. He was a constant student of the Bible. His memory was most excellent, and he was always careful to be giving the exact teaching of God's word without any opinions of his mixed in. He was faithful friend to all preachers, especially young ones, encouraging them in every way, making appointments for them in such places as would develop them, and often giving up work that he had started so that he might get someone else farther along. He did much to stop false teaching in various communities, opposing it in kindness, yet definitely with the Bible; and if he felt that some other brother could do more than he could, off he went for that man to come and take up the labor. He rejoiced in the victories for the truth, regardless of who did the work."

ISAAC C. HOSKINS

This bit of information is found in the April 25, 1912 issue of the *GOSPEL ADVOCATE* concerning brother Hoskin's work in Florence: "*Brother Isaac C. Hoskins is conducting a series of Bible studies each Tuesday evening at Florence, Ala. Of the church there he writes: "Audiences are growing and we are hopeful because the outlook is brighter."* Then in the June 27, 1918 *GOSPEL ADVOCATE* brother Hoskins says, "*Please kindly state in your valuable paper that the church of Christ in Florence meets in a large, red, brick house with a spire, at the corner of Tombigbee and Poplar Streets. I mention this because the Central Christian church; a digressive organization is but two blocks away from us. Many visitors are coming here.*" **(Editor's note: Digression from the truth in Florence, Ala. is not a new thing! It was going on in 1918, and faithful preachers of the gospel were warning people about it just as some of us are having to do it today! dt)**

C. E. HOLT

Brother C. E. Holt, a beloved preacher here in Lauderdale county in years gone by said in the *GOSPEL ADVOCATE* of Dec. 18, 1919: "*There are large sections in Alabama that are as destitute as East Tennessee or any other state in the Union. There is practically no interest among churches in Tennessee and Alabama to evangelize these large areas in which are unknown as to what we really teach and practice.*" . . . "*Employing preachers at from one hundred to one hundred and fifty dollars a year to labor with local congregations that are able and willing to pay such liberal (?) salaries will never get beyond Jerusalem.*"

"I presume that it is all right to "locate" a preacher with a local congregation at a living salary (and if he is "located", he should be well paid), but we should not forget that the commission reads "go ye into all the world." . . . "Really, it seems to me that the word "go" has come to mean "stay" -- that is, stay as long as the "pot boils strong". That means never "go" unless the "good of the cause demands it." Ah, my friends, we are simply making a farce of the great work of evangelizing the world. We are "long on theory", but

wonderfully "short on practice" . . . "An apostolic church - a loyal church - is one that preaches the gospel to the poor as well as to the rich."

Bro. Holt pointed out that the churches in this section lacked interest in spreading the gospel - even in their own "back door", and also the poor support that churches paid their preachers. I hope that by reading these scraps of history you will be more appreciative of men who worked in the past that New Testament Christianity might be spread in this section of the country.

Donald Townsley

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