

EULOGY FOR DR. HENRY H. NESS

Dr. Henry H. Ness was born on the 6th day of August, 1894, in the city of Oslo, Norway. He was born of deeply religious parents, who believed that the eldest son should be given to the Lord for His service, and to this purpose they dedicated him. At the tender age of 16, Henry Ness left the warmth and security of his parents and home and made his way to the land of adventure and opportunity, the United States of America.

He chose to settle in the city of Chicago where he lived with his uncle, Jens Wilsberg, for approximately seven years. During this time, he studied pharmacy and became a druggist. During World War I, he enlisted in the U.S. Army where he served until the end of the war. He then moved to Minneapolis where he and his partner purchased the Economy Drug Company, which proved to be a very thriving and successful business. Being dissatisfied with the lack of challenge in this business, after three years, he sold out and took a position with the Standard Oil Company. In a comparatively short time he became a District Manager. It was during this time that he met and married Miss Anna Molgaard, who for these many years has been his faithful and devoted wife and co-worker.

It was also here in Minneapolis within the quietness and seclusion of his own home that he was led to the Lord and accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour. This was the beginning of a great work of God in the life of Henry Ness; for with his consecration to Christ, there came the call of God to enter the ministry. In the year 1924, he and his family moved to Brainerd, Minnesota, where they took their first pastorate in a small, unpretentious church building. Because of his dedication to the call of God, he was more than willing to exchange his beautiful home and lucrative salary to live in a church basement and receive a pastor's salary of \$10.00 per week. Needless, to say, the Lord blessed his efforts in this little pastorate, and as a result of forceful preaching and much prayer, God sent revival and the church experienced a phenomenal growth. Then, in the year 1925, Brother Ness was ordained a minister in the Assemblies of God.

In 1926 Brother Ness received an invitation from a small group of people in Fargo, North Dakota, to come to that part of the country and start a church. A few believers had received the Pentecostal testimony and desired spiritual leadership. With this handful of people, Brother Ness pioneered the work, and again revival ensued. A great number of people were saved and filled with the Holy Spirit. Brother Ness and his young people went out to many neighboring communities preaching in buildings, schoolhouses, or wherever the doors would open to present the gospel of Jesus Christ. As a result of these efforts, several churches in the Mid-West were established. From this young people's group, 35 followed the Lord in full-time gospel service.

Brother Ness was also very active in district work of the Assemblies of God, serving as Assistant District Superintendent and Secretary along with his pastoral duties. He was instrumental in helping to start the Lake Geneva Camp, as well as North Central Bible College in Minneapolis.

In 1933, he received the call to become the pastor of Hollywood Temple (now Calvary Temple). During the 15 years of his leadership, the church grew from a membership of 75 to become the largest Assembly of God Church in the Northwest District. The building expanded, plans were laid, and money was raised for the present structure in which we worship today.

After Brother Ness had been in Seattle for a few months, God gave him a vision, a vision of a Bible School where young people could be trained in the Word of God and prepared for the ministry. As a result of this vision, in the fall of 1934, in the midst of the depression, without any financial backing, but with a firm and unquenching faith in God, Brother Ness opened the doors of Northwest Bible Institute. From the very first day, the blessing of God was evident. In time, young people came from all over the United States, as well as from foreign countries to study God's Word and equip themselves for His service. As a result, literally hundreds were called into the ministry, and today graduates are serving the Lord around the world.

In 1946, Brother Ness made his first trip to Europe where he ministered to many people, from kings to peasants. God miraculously opened the way for him to go to Italy and minister to the Pentecostal believers there. His ministry was so well received that he was invited to return to Italy in 1947 and again in 1948. He was directly responsible for the formation of the Assemblies of God of Italy. In 1949, he was invited back to Rome for the fourth time where he had the honor of dedicating the new Assembly of God Church. During these trips, he also ministered in several other countries in Europe.

On his European trips, Brother Ness met, testified to, or prayed with many heads of state and important political leaders. Among these were King Haakon of Norway, King Olav of Norway, Prince Bernadotte of Sweden, King Umberto of Italy, the late King Carol of Roumania, Pope Pius XII, and Archbishop Damascinos of Greece.

In 1950, Brother Ness became Chairman of the Washington State Board of Prison Terms and Paroles and served in this capacity for six years, but while doing so, he continued his ministry of preaching to inmates, associates, and to whomever he might contact. His Bible was always in plain view on his desk, and he was quick to seize any opportunity to witness for his Lord and Saviour.

He served as Chaplain of King County Jail for 15 years. He was among those who started the Mayor's Breakfast Group, the Christian Business Men's Committee, and Youth for Christ in Seattle. He was also one of the instigators of International Christian Leadership. Always interested in the community where he lived, he was active in civic affairs, helping in whatever capacity he could.

Then, in 1950 Brother Ness suffered a stroke and underwent a very serious brain operation which left a very deep emotional and physical scar upon his life. There was a time when the physicians despaired for his life, but because of his determination and will to live and the prayers of many people, he recovered. The doctors told him that he should not return to work for at least six months or longer, but very typical of Brother Ness, in six weeks he was back on the job. However, from time to time, he suffered

severe headaches which ultimately grew worse as time went on. As a result of severed face nerves, facial neuralgia developed and he experienced a tightening of the jaw muscles which made it very difficult for him to continue preaching.

With the passing of the years, the pain from the neuralgia became increasingly greater. Strong medication was the only thing that would bring even temporary relief. This, of course, affected and upset the whole nervous system. But in spite of this tremendous suffering and speech difficulty, he continued to preach the gospel wherever there was an opening. In 1956, Brother Ness went to Oakland, California, where he pastored the First Assembly of God, and here again the Lord blessed his ministry and the church grew. When he could no longer continue an active ministry, he gave himself to writing. He has written a volume of booklets and articles which have been a great blessing to many people. His latest book DUNAMIS AND THE CHURCH was published in 1968.

Brother Ness received three honorary degrees: D.D., STD, and LLD in recognition of his accomplishments. His name has appeared in WHO'S WHO IN THE WEST since 1953.

Time does not permit us to give all the accomplishments of this great pioneer in the Faith, which only eternity can reveal. But I would like to say, that from the time of Brother Ness' dedication to Christ in 1924, he lived for one ultimate purpose, to promote the Kingdom of God. He loved the Pentecostal way, the old-time power, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. He constantly admonished that there was no substitute for the Holy Spirit.

Estelle Crittenden, his secretary for many years, writes the following: "As a pastor and teacher, he was unequalled. Many of us can still remember the sermons he preached, the Bible studies he gave, the doctrines he proclaimed, and the Bible truths he made so plain. His sermons were practical and down to earth. We always felt that we had received a good spiritual meal when he had concluded a message. He was always extremely conscientious about the preparation of his messages. He felt a great responsibility before God and the people each time he preached.

"One of his favorite subjects was prophecy, and in this connection, Israel in particular. This was the subject of his last sermon which he preached just two weeks ago. He rejoiced to see the prophecies about which he had preached so long come to pass in this present day. He had an unusual love for and interest in the Jewish people.

"As a college president and teacher, he set an example. He inspired students to go out and establish pioneer works for God and taught them how to do so. But he did not teach them something he had not experienced himself. They were taught to sacrifice and dedicate, not by word, but by example.

"As an administrator, Brother Ness was unusual. He had a way of making people enjoy working under his supervision. He knew how to challenge others to do their best.

"Brother Ness was a man of many gifts, but one in particular was wisdom. His words of counsel and advice were always practical, spiritual, and for the good of the individual.

"He was a man of great courage. He faced many difficulties and looked at the hard places as a challenge. He did not complain or fuss, even during these many years in which he has suffered so much physical pain. Few people knew how intensely he suffered, but in spite of this, he was always positive, optimistic, and looking on the bright side.

"He seemed to have a great understanding of human nature. He was aware of the human frailty of man and had sympathy for him. Like Jesus, he condemned the sin, but had compassion for the sinner.

"He spoke to the many and to the individual. No audience was too small for him, if he could be a spiritual blessing and benediction. He was a man of great vision. He could see the possibilities of extending the Kingdom of God, always looking beyond the circumstances to the God who is able."

Amos Millard, Registrar and Professor at Northwest College makes the following observation: "The thing that distinguishes great men of God is their faith. There is something dynamic about the faith ascribed to such stalwarts as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It has been the privilege of this generation to witness such faith in action, in and through the life of Dr. Ness."

Paraphrasing Hebrews 11, he writes: "By faith Dr. Ness was inspired of the Holy Spirit to 'found a Bible College'. By faith he approached the Northwest District, which at the time was searching for a place and resources with which to establish a Bible School, and he presented his plan and extended the offer of Hollywood Temple for the use of its facilities to start the school. By faith, he assumed the leadership of the newly founded school, recruited a faculty and staff, and opened the doors of Northwest Bible Institute on October 1, 1934. By faith, he gave continued leadership to an institute which showed signal evidences of having the blessing of God upon it, and began to grow and produce a working force for the Lord's harvest. By faith, he inspired young men and women with the challenge of winning souls to Jesus Christ. By faith, he saw students and graduates of Northwest Colleg going into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature. By faith, after 16 years of ministry in the church and college, he felt lead of God to other fields of labor, which led him to public service. By faith, he was led and enabled by the Holy Spirit to author a number of publications and books - the most of which give the secret of God's use of his life - the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit he experienced. By faith, his conversation and thinking centered on one topic during his concluding days of life, the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ. By faith, he walked with God....Amen."

A great man of wisdom once wrote in the book of Proverbs: "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings." This we can certainly say of this man whose memory we honor today. He was diligent in the Lord's business. He invested his life in the kingdom of God, and he stood before kings in this life. However, today this man is not standing before earthly potentates, but he stands in the presence of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords receiving his reward.

Thank God, there are no more aches and pains, no more long sleepless nights of intense suffering and frustration. There is no need to take medication any longer.

I think his plight is beautifully described in the writings of John, the Revelator: "He shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on him nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne shall feed him and shall lead him unto the Living Fountain of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from his eyes."

Given by Rev. Ben P. Birkeland at the funeral service for Dr. Henry H. Ness at Calvary Temple, Seattle, Washington, on February 2, 1970.