

Grace Notes

Moody Blues

2.1.12



“...but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.”

Romans 5:20

It was the summer of 1872, after an all-night prayer meeting, that English butcher & lay preacher, Henry Varley, remarked to a 35 year old American preacher, *“The world has yet to see what God will do with a man fully consecrated [fully committed] to Him.”* Christ used this statement to rock the world of the America preacher and, ultimately, change the course of his life.

The name of that preacher was Dwight Lyman (“D.L.”) Moody. Moody, today, is known as the Billy Graham of his generation. Sometimes referred to by historians as *“the father of the American evangelism movement,”* scholars tend to believe that, without Moody, the reaching of souls worldwide would likely have occurred decades later than it did. Having had the opportunity to finish a biography about Moody recently, I found his story to be inspiring. Granted, thousands of people would eventually come to faith in Christ as a result of Moody’s simple, forthright, “common-man” preaching style. (Moody had little formal education.) But, early on in his preaching ministry, Moody actually preached something quite sad & completely unbiblical: that God hated not only sin, but hated the sinner as well.

How on earth could D.L. Moody have preached something so contrary to the Gospel? The answer to that question is fairly simple. Being bi-vocational, Moody, a very successful business man, had little time to study his Bible. Enter the Holy Spirit through an Irish converted-pickpocket-turned-preacher named Harry Moorhouse. Moody pastored a church in Chicago but had to travel often. Through a series of humorous events (that only God could have orchestrated), Moorhouse was invited to preach in Moody’s place while Moody was in St. Louis. When Moody returned his wife, Emma, described Moorhouse’s preaching. From biographer, John Pollock’s, *Moody*:

“They liked him very much,” Emma replied. “He preaches a little different from you. He preaches that God *loves* sinners....I think you’ll agree with him when you hear him because he backs up everything he says with the Bible.” The following Sunday morning Moody noticed his congregation *all carrying their Bibles*. He had never told them that persons in the pew should bring their Bibles. “It was something strange to see the people coming in with their Bibles, and listen to the flutter of the pages,” Moody would later say. Moorhouse preached from John 3:16 and, recalls Moody, “went from Genesis to Revelation giving proof that God loves the sinner.” Moody’s former understanding of the Bible lay shattered at his feet. He said, “I never knew up to that time that God loved us so much. This heart of mine began to thaw out; I could not keep back the tears.” Early on, Moody was curiously ignorant of much that the Bible taught. Moorhouse told him he didn’t know his Bible, and taught him how to trace the unfolding themes of Scripture. From that time forth, Moody came to be known as an apostle of the love of God.

The love of God in Christ turned Moody’s blues into Moody’s joy. Christian author, Brennan Manning, knows a little about God’s love. A recovering alcoholic, Manning marvels at the fact that God loves him. In his classic, *Ruthless Trust*, he writes, *“We can no more catch a hurricane in a shrimp net or Niagara Falls in a coffee cup than we can grasp the reality of God’s love for us.”*



Soli Deo Gloria, Nick