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EVANGELISM

#151

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GOSPEL PREACHING COMMANDED

A. W. Pink (1886-1952)

THERE are those who misrepresent the doctrine of election in this way: Here I am sitting down at my table tonight with my family to tea. It is a cold winter's night, and outside on the street are some hungry starving tramps and children, and they come and knock at my door and they say, "We are so hungry, Sir, Oh, we are so hungry and cold, and we are starving: won't you give us something to eat?" "Give you something to eat? No, you do not belong here, get off with you." Now people say that is what election means, that God has spread the gospel feast and some poor sinners conscious of their deep need come to the Lord and say, "Have mercy upon me," and the Lord says, "No, you are not among My elect." Now, my friends, that is not the teaching of this Book, nor anything like that. That is absolutely a false representation of God's truth. I do not believe anything like that, my friends, and I would not insult you by asking you to come here night by night and listen to anything like that.

1. COMPEL THEM TO COME IN. Now, then, here is the truth. God has spread the feast, but the fact is that nobody is hungry, and nobody wants to come to the feast, and everybody makes an excuse to keep away from the feast, and when they are bidden to come they say, "No, we do not want to," or "We are not ready yet." Now God knew that from the beginning, and if God had done nothing more than spread the feast, every seat at His table would have been vacant for all eternity! I have no hesitation in saying, there is not one man or woman in this church tonight but who made excuses time after time before you first came to Christ. You are just like the rest. You made excuses, so did I, and if God had done nothing more than just spread the feast, every chair would have been vacant; therefore, what do you read in that parable in Luke 14? Because the feast was not furnished with guests, God sent forth His "servants." Oh, put your glasses on. It does not say "servants," it says God sent forth His "servant" and told Him to "compel" them to come in that His feast might be furnished with guests. And there is not a man or a woman in this church tonight or in any other church that would ever sit down at the marriage-supper of the Lamb unless you had been compelled to come in, and compelled by God.

Well, you say, what do you mean by 'compelled?' I mean this, that God had to overcome the resistance of your WILL, God had to overcome the reluctance of your heart, God had to overcome your loving of pleasure more than loving of God, your love of the things of this world more than Christ. I mean that God had to put forth His power and draw you; and if any of you know anything of the Greek or have a Strong's Concordance, look up that Greek verb for "draw" in John 6:44, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." It means "use violence." It means to drag by force. There is not a Greek scholar on earth that can challenge that statement—I mean, and back it up with proof. It is the same Greek word that is used in John 21 when they drew the net to the land full of fishes. They had to pull with all their might, for it was full of fishes. They had to DRAG it. Yes, my friend, and that is how you were brought to Christ. You may not have been conscious of it, you may not have known inside yourself what was taking place, but every last one of us was a rebel against God, fighting against Christ, resisting His Holy Spirit, and God had to put forth almighty power and overcome that resistance and bring us to our knees; and if any of you object to that strong language, then I am here to tell you, you do not believe in the teaching of this Book on the absolute depravity of man.

Man is lost, and man is dead in trespasses and sin by nature. Listen, it is not simply that man is sick and needs a little medicine; it is not simply that man is ignorant and needs a little teaching; it is not simply that man is weak and needs a little hope: man is dead, dead in trespasses and sin, and only almighty power from heaven can ever resurrect him and bring him from death unto life. That is the gospel I believe in, and I do not preach the gospel because I believe the sinner has power in himself to respond to it. Well, you say, then what is the use of preaching the gospel if men are dead? What is the use of preaching it? I will tell you. Listen! Here was a man with a withered hand, paralyzed, and Christ says, "Stretch forth thine hand." It was the one thing that he could not do! Christ told him to do a thing that was impossible in himself. Well then, you say, why did Christ tell him to stretch forth his hand? Because divine power went with the very word that commanded him to do it! divine power enabled him to. The man could not do it of himself. If you think that he could, you are ready for the lunatic asylum, I do not care who you are. Any man or woman here who thinks that that man was able to stretch forth his paralyzed arm by an effort of his own will is ready for the lunatic asylum! How can paralysis move?

Well, I will give you something stronger than that. You need something strong today, you need something more than skim-milk; you need strong meat if ever you are going to be built up and grow and become strong in the Lord and the power of His might. Here is a man who is dead and buried, and his body has already begun to corrupt so that it stank. There he was in the grave, and Someone came to that graveside and said, "Lazarus, come forth." And if that someone had been anyone less than God Himself, manifest in flesh, he might have stood there till now calling, "Come forth." What on earth was the use of telling a dead man to come forth? None at all, unless the One Who spoke that word had the power to make that word good.

Now then my friends, I preach the gospel to sinners, not because I believe the sinner has any power at all in himself to respond to it: I do not believe that any sinner has any capacity in himself whatever. But Christ said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life," and by God's grace I go forth preaching this Word because it is a word of power, a word of spirit, a word of life. The power is not in the sinner, it is in the Word when God the Holy Spirit is pleased to use it. And, my friends, I say it in all reverence; if God told me in this Book to go out and preach to the trees, I would go! Yes sir. God once told one of His servants to go and preach to bones and he went. I wonder if you would have gone! Yes, that has a local application as well as a future interpretation prophetically.

2. PREACH THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE. Now the question arises again, why are we to preach the gospel to every creature, if God has only elected a certain number to be saved? The reason is, because God commands us to do so. Well, but, you say, it does not seem reasonable to me. That has nothing to do with it; your business is to obey God and not to argue with Him. God commands us to preach the gospel to every creature, and it means what it says—every creature—and it is a solemn thing. Every Christian in this room tonight has yet to answer to Christ why he has not done everything in his power to send that gospel to every creature! Yes, I believe in missions—probably stronger than most of you do, and if I preached to you on missions, perhaps I would hit you harder than you have been hit yet. The great majority of God's people who profess to believe in missions are just playing at them. I make so bold as to say of our evangelical denominations today that we are just playing at missions and that is all. Why my friends, there is almost half of the human race—think of it!—in this 20th century—travel so easy and cheap, Bibles printed in almost every language under heaven, —and as we sit here tonight, there is almost half of the human race that never yet heard of Christ, and we have to answer to Christ for that yet! You have and I have. Oh, yes, I believe in man's responsibility. I do not believe in man's "freedom," but I do in man's responsibility, and I believe in the Christian's responsibility in a double way; and everyone of us here tonight has yet to face Christ and look into those eyes as a flame of fire, and He is going to say to us, I entrusted to you My gospel. It was committed as a "trust" to you (See 1Th 2:4). It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.

Oh, my friends, we are playing at things. We have not begun to take religion seriously, any of us. We profess to believe in the coming of Christ, and we profess to believe that the one reason why Christ has not come back yet is because His Church, His Body, is not yet complete. We believe that when His Body is complete He will come back. And my friends, His "body" never, never, will be complete until the last of His elect people will be called out, and His elect people are called out under the preaching of the gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit; and if you are really anxious for Christ to come back soon, then you had better be more wide awake to your responsibility in connection with taking or sending the gospel to the heathen!

Christ's word, and it is Christ's Word to us, is "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel." He does not say "Send ye." He says "Go ye," and you have to answer to Christ yet because you have not gone! Well, you say, do you mean by that that every one of us here tonight ought to go out to the mission field? I have not said that. I am not any man's judge. Many of you here tonight have a good reason which will satisfy Christ why you have not gone. He gave you work to do here. He put you in a position here. He has given you responsibilities to discharge here, but every Christian who is free to go, and does not go, has to answer to Christ for it yet.

"Go ye into all the world." Well then, you say, Where am I to go? Oh, that is very easy. You say, easy? Yes, I mean it: it is very easy. There is nothing easier in the world than to know where you ought to begin missionary work. You have it in the first chapter of Acts and the eighth verse: "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem [that is the city in which they were] and in all Judea [that is the State in which their city was], and in Samaria [that is the adjoining State], and unto the uttermost part of the earth." If you want to begin missionary work, you have to begin it in your home-town; and my friends, if you are not interested in the salvation of the Chinese in Sydney, then you are not really

interested in the salvation of the Chinese in China, and you are only fooling yourselves if you think you are! Oh, I am calling a spade a spade tonight. If you are anxious about the souls of the Chinese in China, then you will be equally anxious about the souls of the Chinese here in Sydney; and I wonder how many in this building tonight have ever made any serious effort to reach the Chinese in Sydney with the gospel! I wonder? I wonder how many here tonight have been round to the Bible House in Sydney and have said to the Manager there, “Do you have any New Testaments in the Chinese language, or do you have any Gospels of John in the Chinese language? How much are they per hundred? or per dozen?” And I wonder how many of you have bought a thousand or a hundred, and then have gone round to the houses in the Chinese quarter and have said, “My friend, this is a little gift that will do your soul good if you will read it.”

Ah, my friends, we are playing at missions, it is just a farce, that is all! “Go ye” is the first command. Go where? Those around me first. Go what with? The Gospel! Well, you say, “Why should I go?” Because God has commanded you to! Well, you say, “What is the use of doing it if He has just elected certain ones?” Because that gospel is the means that God uses to call out His own elect, that is why! You do not know, and I do not know, and nobody here on earth knows, who are God’s elect and who are not. They are scattered over the world, and therefore we are to preach the gospel to every creature, that it may reach the ones that God has marked out among those creatures.

From a sermon preached in Sydney during his Australian ministry in the 1920s.

A.W. Pink (1886-1952): Pastor, itinerate Bible teacher, voluminous author of *Studies in the Scriptures* and many books including his well-known *The Sovereignty of God*. Born in Great Britain, immigrated to the U.S., and later returned to his homeland in 1934.

“It is a great thing to be a Christian. The very name is a noble one, beyond all the noble names of earth. The thing itself is inconceivably blessed and glorious. Much, then, is expected of you. Do not disgrace the old family name. Do nothing unworthy of Him who represents you in heaven, and whom you represent on earth. He is faithful to you; be you so to Him. Let men know what a Lord and Master you serve. Be His witnesses; be His mirrors; be His living epistles. Let Him speak through you to the world. Let your life tell your fellow-men what He is, and what He is to you. Speak well of Him to men, as He speaks well of you to God. He has honoured you by giving you His name; He has blessed you by conferring on you sonship, and royalty, and an eternal heritage: see that you do justice to His love, and magnify His greatness.”

—*Horatius Bonar, Follow the Lamb, 1861.*

THE EVANGELIZATION OF THE WORLD

Alexander N. Somerville (1813-1889)

1. SOUL. Are we really willing to face the enterprise which Christ sets before us? Much depends on what I may call soul for this object. By that I mean the possession of an overmastering sense of obligation to fulfill Christ’s commission, confidence in the Lord’s promised presence in the discharge of it, an invincible assurance that the preaching of the Cross is the one instrumentality for the conversion of men, reliance on His providence to open doors of entrance into kingdoms, and, more than all, a burning love to Christ Himself, an unfaltering enthusiasm for the salvation of men, an inflexible determination to persevere, conquer, or die.

2. PRAYER. The greatest, the most responsible, the busiest, and most successful servants that Christ ever had divided their functions into two departments. ‘We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word.’ What would be thought of dividing the twelve hours of our day by giving six hours to prayer for the Gospel, and six to the ministry of the Word? Had all Christ’s servants acted thus, could any one estimate how mighty the results on the world would be today? What should be the tenor of our prayers? If the promises of God may be regarded as molds, our prayers should be like liquid metal poured into them, in dimension corresponding

with the capacity of the mold, and taking on all the lines, grooves, and figuring of the interior. If, then, we find such promises as these, “The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea,” a promise twice given in Scripture, and which has many corresponding with it, our prayers should be commensurate with the promise. We are not to pass by molds, even of extremely limited capacity, by all means let us match the great promises of God with great prayers. Doubtless this is pleasing to God. In what manner God may see fit to fulfill His promises is quite another consideration. But would it not be well could we train ourselves to take up all the countries of the world in detail, and make mention of them systematically before God? There are persons who have attempted to do this every day of their lives, while others divide the world into portions, and take these up on successive days. I mean a pocket atlas, which should be spread like Hezekiah’s letter before the Lord, and be gone over carefully from day to day, and from year to year, so that every kingdom, capital, island, and ocean shall be individually remembered. If this were done on an extensive scale among Christians, blessed issues would ensue.

If we find that individuals are employed to change the face of continents by exploration or personal effort, why may not individuals equally prevail when they, by prayer, lay hold of the arm of the Almighty? The answer to your prayers may come by God sending you as evangelists or settlers to the very lands for which you have prayed; or by enabling you to write a volume which may stir the missionary activity of hundreds, or to prepare hymns that may be sung in every land and tongue. God may enable you, by your addresses as ministers, professors, and laymen, to rouse congregations and entire synods to their duty to the heathen, as well as to call forth the Christian enthusiasm of young men in our colleges and universities; and mothers in Israel, like Hannah, Lois, and Eunice, may, through prayer, be the means of sending forth a Carey, a Henry Martyn, a Duff, or a William Burns. I believe that the Day will declare that solitary individuals have, simply by their prayers, prevailed to introduce the Gospel into vast and populous dominions.

The ancient Jewish Church was not directly evangelistic; yet, like David, who prepared the materials for the temple which another was to build, the Jewish Church provided an immense store of intercessions which became available a thousand years afterwards. If you search the Book of Psalms you will find that upwards of forty of them contain prayers for, or references to, the spreading of the gospel among the nations. These prayers were answered when the hour for the reconciling of the world arrived. The Gentiles can never discharge their obligation to the Jewish Church for its prayers in their behalf in these sacred songs.

3. ACTION. But prayer must be associated with ACTION. In view of the seemingly insoluble problem, how the multitudinous populations of the world are to be reached with the Gospel, and our readiness to faint at the thought of the impracticability of the effort, I would venture to ask—Was the condition of mankind, let us say, such as it is at this moment, actually present to the eye of Christ when He gave the imperative commission—‘Go and make disciples of all nations?’ Or, on the other hand, are we to suppose that the commission was only temporary, and that now, with millions today still waiting to be evangelized, He would say to us—The business is too weighty, the commission is accordingly suspended, and no longer in force? For my part, I cannot bring myself to believe that any change has taken place on the commission or in the obligation to fulfill it. In that case I must put myself in the position of those originally addressed by the Lord Jesus, and recognize that the command is binding on me in common with others to lay out my life in the execution of it. This consideration must sustain me in the face of all incredulity, and of the ridicule that may be launched against me. It may not be ours to convert the world, but our Commander’s orders are explicit, to carry the glad tidings to every soul.

May it not be that, instead of the commission waning in its terms, it is only now, when the world teems with billions of sinners, that the four “Alls” of Christ’s majestic utterance are starting into their full significance and brilliancy, like the four angular stars in the constellation of the Southern Cross?

*“All power is given unto me. All nations go ye and disciple.
All my commandments teach them to observe.
All the days till the end of the world I am with you.”*

4. SCOTLAND. ...Would that, like the veil destined to fall from Israel when they shall turn to the Lord, a similar veil might fall from our Scottish eyes, so as to disclose to us the unhappy condition of mankind, our responsibility with regard to them, and the privilege and opportunity granted to us today, which if neglected shall return never, never, never! The nations of the world seem standing with outstretched arms, and with wistful looks calling to us, ‘Come over and help us.’ Could we only see them and hear their plaintive cries our hearts would be

profoundly moved. For my own part, these soft voices of the nations, though in one sense unspeakably sad, have an intonation sweet and powerful as of a choir of angels, for in them I hear the voice of Jesus Himself. Let Scotland then open her ear, her sympathy, and her purse, and be ready to take the front, as in other circumstances she has done in days of old.

5. BRITISH CHURCHES. ...The time is surely come when the entire Christianity of the British Isles should be aroused to meet the ever-accumulating necessities of a dying world. Apart from the rampant materialism and supercilious agnosticism abroad in society, there is undoubtedly in the Churches a widespread indifference, a lurking skepticism, an ignoring of the saving doctrines of the gospel, the substitution of ritual observances in place of the new birth and spiritual life. Indeed, there is a strange blight resting even on those that are evangelical. And there is a pretty general complaint of an absence of power in the ministrations of the Church generally, that her services are uninteresting and even wearisome, while few conversions are said to be taking place under the ordinary ministry.

Could we conceive of any means more likely to lead to an extensive revival of vital religion in the Church at large than that she should be started into action—ministers and people alike—by the trumpet call to arise, go forth, and subdue the kingdoms for Christ! Were the Churches to realize that the function of their existence is to spread Christ's name in the earth, would not the result bear resemblance to what is promised to the Gentiles...—life from the dead? What! Shall the Churches in their supineness leave it to others...? Who should be the Salvation Army for the world if not the universal Church of Christ!

6. THE PAROUSIA. There seems an impression that, because the condition of the world is so deplorable after nineteen centuries of Christianity, the only hope for mankind lies in the second coming of Christ Himself. We hail the thought of the Lord's coming. And should He come while we are engaged fulfilling His orders, 'Blessed shall that servant be whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing.' If Christ comes soon, then the present is our one priceless opportunity before He appears to labor on behalf of His kingdom. Be it ours to take care lest our misapprehension of the blessed hope of His second coming should neutralize the influence of His first.

7. NOTHING SHALL BE IMPOSSIBLE. Let us then as one man arise, and without presuming to say in what manner God's purposes or the world are to be accomplished, or pronouncing in any way as to the time and season of our Lord's return, but ever lovingly waiting for His appearing, let us not be ashamed to say that the business immediately laid to our hand is to face the heathenism of millions of our fellow-creatures who have never yet heard the gospel. What! Shall experts tell us there are 160 million who at this hour bear the name of 'Reformed', and shall the enterprise be considered extravagant? Rather let us sound the trumpet throughout Christendom, and summon these millions to the rescue. Did not Jesus love us, seek us in our misery, and die for us? Has His eye ceased to rest on us one day since He went to Heaven? And shall His last request fall on unbelieving and reluctant ears? The Lord forbid. Let our compassionate eye then rest on the nations whom as His inheritance He has entrusted to us, lying in ignorance, weltering in sin, and crushed under the bondage of man's great adversary, and hasten to have our place among those of whom it is said "How beautiful ...are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" (Isa 52:7). "...If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove, AND NOTHING SHALL BE IMPOSSIBLE UNTO YOU" (Mat 17:20).

EVANGELISM—WHAT IS IT?

Ernest C. Reisinger (1919-2004)

EVANGELISM is the communication of a divinely inspired message that we call the gospel. It is a message that is definable in words, but must be communicated in word and power. "For our gospel came not unto you in

word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance..." (1Th 1:5). That message begins with information and includes explanation, application and invitation.

The information is how God, our Creator and Judge, in mercy, made His Son a perfect, able and willing Savior of sinners. The invitation is God's summons to mankind to come to that Savior in faith and repentance, and find forgiveness, life and peace.

"And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment" (1Jo 3:23). "Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (Joh 6:29).

The definition of evangelize is as follows: "To present Jesus Christ to sinful men, in order that they may come to put their trust in God, through Him to receive Him as their Saviour and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His church." You will notice that this definition is more than "winning souls," or saving people from hell, or saving them from their personal problems, or from life's casualties, and you will notice that the definition includes serving Christ in His church. Much present-day evangelism would not fit this definition.

Evangelism Is a Good Work

We want to consider evangelism as a good work, and we must ask, "What determines a good work?" There are three things that determine when a work is a good work.

First, a good work must be done by a right rule, and in the case of evangelism, that rule is the Word of God. We must examine all we do and say in evangelism by the Word of God. That is going to be shocking and revealing, but, this will be our only appeal—the Word of God. The question is not going to be, "Does it work?" but, "Is it true?" "Is it biblical?" The Jehovah's Witnesses' system works because they get converts, but is it true?

Second, a good work must have a right end in view. What is that end? The glory of God! God's grace, mercy, and power will be glorified in the salvation of souls, or, His righteousness, holiness, and justice will be glorified in the damnation of ungodly rejectors of His revelation. Therefore, our job is to be true to the message of evangelism, regardless of the results.

When a preacher of a church tries to effect that which only God can effect, it has shifted from God-centered evangelism to man-centered evangelism. Therefore, the end we must have in view in God-centered evangelism must be first and foremost, the glory of God. If our end is only man, then our evangelism will soon become man-centered, which represents most modern evangelism.

Third, a good work must have a right motive. What is the right motive in God-centered evangelism? There are two proper motives:

1. Love to God and concern for His Glory.
2. Love to man and concern for his good.

Both of these motives spring from the Ten Commandments. Let me explain what I mean. When Jesus was asked by the lawyer, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said unto him, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Mat 22:36-40). Here our Lord gave a summary of the Ten Commandments.

Now, I said our motive for the good work of God centered evangelism must be: (1) love to God and concern for His glory, and (2) love to man and concern for his good. Well, how do we glorify God?

We glorify God by doing His will—and it is His will that we spread His name and His message of His salvation. Jesus said He glorified the Father by finishing the work that the Father gave Him to do: "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (Joh 17:4).

He has given us the work of taking His message to all the world, thus our first motive must be love to God and concern for His glory. This is expressed in obedience to His revealed will. Therefore, if we are obedient to

spreading God’s message, He will be glorified regardless of the results. The results are past our reach, past our ability, and, thank God, past our responsibility.

Our second motive—love to man and concern for his good—again springs from our Lord’s summary of the commandments, “...the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Mat 22:39). If we really love our neighbor, we will want to share with him the message of salvation. I must add a personal note. The greatest good that has ever been done to me, or for me, in this world was done by the man who brought me the message of salvation, the message we call the gospel. He loved me; he was concerned for my good in this world and in the world to come. The Christ of this message changed my life, my home, and thank God, my destination.

In God-centered evangelism our motive is important. Evangelism is a good work; therefore, it must be done:

1. by a right rule—the Word of God.
2. with a right end in view—the glory of God.
3. with a right motive—love to God and love to man.

I am convinced that many of our churches would not be in the spiritual condition they are in if our past evangelism had been done by a God-centered rule, with a God-centered end in view, and by God-centered motives.

Evangelism is a good work and, like all our work, will be tried as to what sort it is. “Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is” (1Co 3:13).

From *Today’s Evangelism*, P&R Publishing Co.

Ernest Reisinger (1919-2004): pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Cape Coral, Florida for many years, conference speaker, and the guiding light for the creation of Founders Ministries, which has upheld the return to the faith of the founders of the Southern Baptist Convention.

“The Spirit of God does not work by sleepy men! He loves to have us alive, ourselves, and then He will make others alive by us. See to this, dear Brothers.”
—*C.H. Spurgeon, 1892, Sermon 2246 (dates are year of publication)*

“There are some things we must always pray for with submission as to whether it is the will of God to bestow them upon us—but for the salvation of men and women we may ask without fear. God delights to save and to bless, and when the faith is given to us to expect an immediate answer to such a prayer, thrice happy we are! Seek such faith even now, I beseech you, ‘even now’” (Joh 11:22).
—*C.H. Spurgeon, 1892, Sermon 2249*

“It is well to preach as I do, with my lips. But you can *all* preach with your feet and by your lives, and that is the most effective preaching! The preaching of holy lives is living preaching! The most effective ministry from a pulpit is that which is supported by godliness from the pew! God help you to do this!”
—*C.H. Spurgeon, 1895, Sermon 2432*

MAINTAINING PRAYER FOR THE WORLD-WIDE OUTREACH OF THE GOSPEL

S. M. Houghton (1899-1987)

THE ‘ordinary’ believer who has no ‘call’ to the work of Christ overseas may still have an important part in missionary enterprise. It has been said that there are three kinds of missionaries—the go-missionaries (who respond to a divine call), the co-missionaries (who stay at home and help by prayerful interest and, where possible, practical aid), and the o-missionaries (who lack interest in the work of mission). We take up the case of the co-missionaries in one of its aspects, and here the writer draws upon his experience of the ‘missionary prayer

meeting' covering some forty years. It has never been his lot to belong to one of the larger evangelical churches from which (in all probability) missionaries have gone overseas. Doubtless where this is the case the home church has a distinct responsibility for maintaining a close practical and prayerful interest in such workers. But, in the providence of God, he has been in fellowship with small local gatherings where interest in missionary work has been otherwise maintained. At the outset of his Christian career he belonged to a church in which, unhappily, missionary enterprise was 'taboo'. Indeed it was all but regarded as dangerous, Arminian and unthinkable. Even so, individual members of the church were able to admire records of past historic missionary enterprise, but for the church and denomination as a whole all such activities in the present were scarcely to be mentioned, 'as becometh saints'. They were certainly discouraged, if not completely banned, despite the commandments of the New Testament.

Shortly, however, a better day dawned and the special monthly missionary prayer meeting became an established feature of church life. It continues so to this day. What pattern does it follow? One of the utmost simplicity. The hymns selected for the gathering will obviously bear upon the missionary theme {e.g. 'O Spirit of the living God', etc.}; the Scripture readings (usually with very brief comment, and as far as possible consecutive from month to month) are chosen from portions of the Word (Gospels, Acts, Epistles) which are missionary-slanted; and then, before prayer, readings follow from current missionary literature. Interest is preferentially concentrated upon individual missionaries known personally to members of the fellowship, or known by reputation, and from time to time their circular letters (where issued) are received and read. The monthly, bi-monthly or quarterly magazines of several doctrinally sound Missionary Societies are received, and carefully selected extracts, in variety, are read aloud to the meeting. It may be of interest to some if precise information is given at this point. Be it said, therefore, that the literature in question mainly comprises the magazines of the European Missionary Fellowship, the Hebrew Christian Testimony to Israel, the North Africa Mission, the Central Asian Mission, the Overseas Missionary Fellowship, the Strict Baptist Mission, and the French Village workers. Be it specially mentioned that the work of the Trinitarian Bible Society is also kept in close view, for it is regarded as rendering one of the most desirable and essential of services to the missionary cause at large; likewise the Scripture Gift Mission.

A large world map is always displayed on these occasions so that friends can have their attention directed to the exact localities involved. This serves to pin-point the interest of the eye, especially where the geographical 'bump' is relatively undeveloped. Thus, if say Nepal or Ghana are in view, a finger will indicate to the ignorant where these countries are located. As opportunity offers, a missionary on furlough or the representative of a Society attends to give a first-hand account of work in hand. Periodically the collections of a Lord's Day are devoted to a worker or society, as may be upon the hearts of the church.

Thus it is that, in a small local fellowship an interest in the world-wide Gospel enterprise is maintained and fostered from month to month and from year to year. There is nothing spectacular to be recorded but in our measure we become linked with those who go forth bearing precious seed. Missionary labours are not recorded in Britain's newspapers; they furnish no head-lines; but in the eyes of the Lord of the harvest—and His eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, beholding the evil and the good—they are of vast importance, and stay-at-homes may reckon it one of their choicest Christian and church privileges to belong to the company of the Lord's remembrancers, giving Him no rest until His elect are gathered in from one end of heaven to the other.

*Baptise the nations, far and wide The triumphs of the cross record,
The Name of Jesus glorify, Till every kindred call Him Lord.*

COMPASSION FOR THE LOST

Charles Bridges (1794-1869)

“Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.”
—Psalms 119:136

IF the Lord teaches us the privileges of his statutes, he will teach us compassion for those who keep them not. This was the mind of Jesus. His life exhibited one, whose “heart was made of tenderness.” But there were some occasions, when the display of his compassion was peculiarly sinking. Near the close of his life, it is recorded, that, “when he was come near, and beheld the city”—“beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth” (Psa 48:2)—but now given up to its own ways, and “wrath coming upon it to the uttermost,” he “wept over it” (Luk 19:41; Comp. Mat 23:37, also Mar 3:5). It was then a moment of triumph. The air was rent with hosannahs. The road was strewed with branches from the trees, and all was joy and praise (Comp. Luk 19:36–40). Amid all this exultation, the Saviour alone seemed to have no voice for the triumph—no heart for joy. His omniscient mind embraced all the spiritual desolation of this sad case; and he could only weep in the midst of a solemn triumph. Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.

Now a Christian, in this as in every other feature, will be conformed to the image of his Lord. His heart will therefore be touched with a tender concern for the honour of his God, and pitying concern for those wretched sinners, that keep not his law, and are perishing in their own transgressions. Thus was “just Lot” in Sodom “vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked” (2Pe 2:7-8). Thus did Moses “fall down before the Lord, as at the first, forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread nor drink water; because of all their sins which they had sinned, in doing wickedly in the sight of the Lord to provoke him to anger” (Deu 9:18-19). Thus also Samuel, in the anticipation of the Lord’s judgments upon Saul, “grieved himself and cried unto the Lord all night” (1Sa 15:11, 35). Ezra, on a similar occasion, in the deepest prostration of sorrow, “rent his garment and his mantle, and plucked off the hair of his head and of his beard, and sat down astonished until the evening sacrifice” (Ezr 9:3-4). And if David was now suffering from the oppression of man (Psa 119:134), yet his own injuries never drew from him such expressions of overwhelming sorrow as did the sight of the despised law of his God.

Need we advert to this tender spirit, as a special characteristic of “the ministers of the Lord”? Can they fail in this day of abounding wickedness—even within the bounds of their own sphere—to hear the call to “weep between the porch and the altar” (Joe 2:17)? How instructive is the posture of the ancient prophet—first pleading openly with the rebellion of the people—then “his soul weeping in secret places for their pride” (Jer 13:17)! Not less instructive is the great apostle—his “conscience bearing witness in the Holy Ghost to his great heaviness and continued sorrow in his heart for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh” (Rom 9:1–3). In reproofing transgressors, he could only write to them, “Out of much affliction and anguish of heart with many tears” (2Co 2:4), and in speaking of them to others, with the same tenderness of spirit, he adds: “Of whom I tell you even weeping” (Phi 3:18; Comp. Act 20:19). Tears were these of Christian eloquence no less than of Christian compassion.

Thus uniformly is the character of God’s people represented—not merely as those that are free from, but as “those that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst of the land.” They—they alone—are marked out for mercy in the midst of impending, universal ruin (Eze 9:4). The want of this spirit is ever a feature of hardness and pride—a painful blot upon the profession of the gospel (1Co 5:2). How wide the sphere presenting itself on every side for the unrestrained exercise of this yearning compassion! The appalling spectacle of a world apostatized from God, of multitudes sporting with everlasting destruction—as if the God of heaven were “a man that he should lie” (Num 23:19), is surely enough to force rivers of waters from the hearts of those who are concerned for his honour. What a mass of sin ascends as a cloud before the Lord, from a single heart! Add the aggregate of a village—a town—a country—a world! Every day—every hour—every moment—well might the rivers of waters rise to an overflowing tide, ready to burst its barriers. We speak not of outward sensibility (in which some may be constitutionally deficient, and the exuberance of which may be no sign of real spiritual affection), but we ask—Do we lay to heart the perishing condition of our fellow-sinners? Could we witness a house on fire, without speedy and practical evidence of our compassion for the inhabitants? And yet, alas, how often do

we witness souls on the brink of destruction—unconscious of danger, or bidding defiance to it—with comparative indifference! How are we Christians, if we believe not the Scripture warnings of their danger; or if, believing them, we do not bestir ourselves to their help? What hypocrisy is it to pray for their conversion, while we are making no effort to promote it! Oh! let it be our daily supplication, that this indifference concerning their everlasting state may give place to a spirit of weeping tenderness; that he may not be living as if this world were really, what it appears to be, a world without souls; that we may never see the sabbaths of God profaned, his laws trampled under foot, the ungodly “breaking their bands asunder, and casting away their cords from them” (Psa 2:3), without a more determined resolution ourselves to keep these laws of our God, and to plead for their honour with these obstinate transgressors. Have we no near and dear relatives, yet lying in wickedness—dead in trespasses and sins? To what blessed family, reader, do you belong, where there are no such objects of pity? Be it so—it is well. Yet are you silent? Have you no ungodly, ignorant neighbours around you? And are they unwarned, as well as unconverted? Do we visit them in the way of courtesy or kindness, yet give them no word of affectionate entreaty on the concerns of eternity? Let our families indeed possess, as they ought to possess, the first claim to our compassionate regard. Then let our parishes, our neighbourhood, our country, the world, find a place in our affectionate, prayerful, and earnest consideration.

Nor let it be supposed, that the doctrine of sovereign and effectual grace has any tendency to paralyze exertion. So far from it, the most powerful supports to perseverance are derived from this source. Left to himself—with only the invitations of the Gospel—not a sinner could ever have been saved. Added to these—there must be the Almighty energy of God—the seal of his secret purpose—working upon the sinner’s will, and winning the heart to God. Not that this sovereign work prevents any from being saved. But it prevents the salvation from being in vain to all, by securing its application to some. The invitations manifest the pardoning love of God; but they change not the rebel heart of man. They show his enmity; yet they slay it not. They leave him without excuse; yet at the same time—they may be applied without salvation. The moment of life in the history of the saved sinner is, when he is “made willing in the day of the Lord’s power” (Psa 110:3)—when he comes—he looks—he lives. It is this dispensation alone that gives the Christian labourer the spring of energy and hope. The palpable and awful proofs on every side, of the “enmity of the carnal mind against God,” rejecting alike both his law and his Gospel, threaten to sink him in despondency. And nothing sustains his tender and compassionate interest, but the assurance of the power of God to remove the resisting medium, and of his purpose to accomplish the subjugation of natural corruption in a countless multitude of his redeemed people.

The same yearning sympathy forms the life, the pulse, and the strength of missionary exertion, and has ever distinguished those honoured servants of God who have devoted their time, their health, their talent, their all, to the blessed work of “saving souls from death, and covering a multitude of sins.” (Jam 5:20.) Can we conceive a missionary living in the spirit of his work—surrounded with thousands of mad idolaters, hearing their shouts, and witnessing their abominations, without a weeping spirit? Indignant grief for the dishonour done to God—amazement at the affecting spectacle of human blindness—detestation of human impiety—compassionate yearnings over human wretchedness and ruin—all combine to force tears of the deepest sorrow from a heart enlightened and constrained by the influence of a Saviour’s love.

*My God! I feel the mournful scene; My bowels yearn o’er dying men;
And fain my pity would reclaim, And snatch the fire-brands from the flame,*

This, as we have seen, was our Master’s spirit. And let none presume themselves to be Christians, if they are destitute of “this mind that was in Christ Jesus” (See Phi 2:4–8); if they know nothing of his melting compassion for a lost world, or of his burning zeal for his heavenly Father’s glory.

Oh, for that deep realizing sense of the preciousness of immortal souls, that would make us look at every sinner we meet as a soul to be “pulled out of the fire,” and to be drawn to Christ—which would render us willing to endure suffering, reproach, and the loss of all, so that we might win one soul to God, and raise one monument to his everlasting praise! Happy mourner in Zion, whose tears over the guilt and wretchedness of a perishing world are the outward indications of thy secret pleadings with God, and the effusion of a heart solemnly dedicated to the salvation of thy fellow-sinners!

*But feeble my compassion proves, And can but weep, where most it loves;
Thine own all-saving arm employ, And turn these drops of grief to joy.¶*

Charles Bridges (1794-1869): one of the leaders of the Evangelical party in the Church of England in the mid-1800s. He was vicar of Old Newton, Suffolk, from 1823 to 1849, and later of Weymouth and Hinton Martell in Dorset. Although *The Christian Ministry* is Bridges' best-known literary work, his expositions are highly valued, which include *Ecclesiastes* and *Psalm 119* as well as *Proverbs*.

EVERY CHRISTIAN A PUBLISHER

Ernest C. Reisinger (1919-2004)

I would like to speak to you today about the importance of the use of literature in the church, for evangelism, for instruction in Christian truth, for devotion, and for its role in planting churches.

The Need for Truth

Protestants, in particular, are very weak in the proper use of literature to spread God's truth. We still do not remember the words of Daniel Webster who said:

'If religious books are not widely circulated among the masses in this country, I do not know what is going to become of us as a nation. If truth be not diffused, error will be; if God and His Word are not known and received, the devil and his works will gain the ascendancy; if the evangelical volume does not reach every hamlet, the pages of a corrupt and licentious literature will; if the power of the Gospel is not felt throughout the length and breadth of the land, anarchy and misrule, degradation and misery, corruption and darkness, will reign without mitigation or end.'

In Isaiah 1:3, we read, 'Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.' Then, chapter after chapter in that prophecy we have a terrible picture of the life and practice of a people who were the professed people of God. Surely their sin and wickedness was the result of not 'knowing,' and they did not know because they did not consider.

Books are to be used to dispel darkness and ignorance. If men do not know, then they must acquaint themselves with facts by reading and studying. We need to use books to fight ignorance—the ignorance of Christian truth and doctrine that is so prevalent in our churches today.

It is appalling to meet people who have been communicant church members for years and who cannot find a place in the Bible, who do not have even a vague idea of the great doctrines of the Bible, and who cannot attach any true meaning to such basic terms as justification, sanctification, regeneration, election and predestination.

Have we forgotten that Christianity is primarily a religion of facts—historical facts? The Bible is a body of divine information; and to be ignorant of the information is to be ignorant of Christianity and to be ignorant of God.

Surely one of the reasons for the deadness and weakness of our churches is ignorance. We will not have churches that are strong and fruitful in experience until we have Christians who are strong in biblical doctrine. Christian experience is nothing less than truth and its evidence revealed and applied by the Spirit to our minds, to our affections and to our wills. Those who 'do not the truth' are those 'in darkness' (1Jo 1:6).

The Power of the Press

The ministry of books can be used to evangelize, teach, train and expel ignorance as it has done in the past. A cursory glance at history should convince us that God has used books and literature to enlighten blinded peoples and nations.

How was it that in places where the voices of Luther and Calvin were never heard, their doctrines were embraced, and many of the countries of Europe threw off the yoke of Rome and turned Protestant? It was because books and tracts became, in the hands of God, a mighty reforming and regenerating power.

In reference to the printing press, Sir Thomas More, defender of the Roman Church, complained bitterly that the Reformers had become its master: 'These diabolical people print their books at great expense, notwithstanding the great danger; not looking for any gain, they give them away to everybody, and even scatter them abroad by night.' 'The Pope,' rejoiced John Foxe, (the martyrologist), 'must abolish printing or he must seek a new world to reign over; for by this printing the doctrine of the Gospel soundeth to all nations and countries under heaven.' Thus was the power of the printed page acknowledged.

A book by Richard Sibbes, one of the choicest of the Puritan writers, was read by Richard Baxter, who was greatly blessed by it. Baxter then wrote his *Call To The Unconverted* which deeply influenced Philip Doddridge, who in turn wrote *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*. This brought the young William Wilberforce, subsequent English statesman and foe of slavery, to serious thoughts of eternity. Wilberforce wrote his *Practical Book of Christianity* which fired the soul of Leigh Richmond. Richmond, in turn, wrote *The Dairyman's Daughter*, a book that brought thousands to the Lord, helping Thomas Chalmers the great preacher, among others.

What an eye-opener it was for me to read that the Watch Tower building in New York City puts out 12,000,000 pieces of Jehovah Witness literature a month, fifty percent of which is shipped overseas. They have large three-story buildings in which they do nothing but turn out their doctrines and heresies. They use one carload of paper per day and have the world's largest religious bindery in which it is said that they are able to turn out 30,000 books per day. Still more disturbing is the fact that young men and women, between the ages of twenty and twenty-five, give their lives to this cause, with no remuneration apart from their lodging and food. Oh, that the day would come when more young men and women would give their lives to the cause of spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ with such dedication as this!

The Russians, a few years ago, published 29,301,400 books in 701 titles. An even greater volume was produced by 700 Communist publishers in 58 countries. Yet at that time the Communists were aiming at a 300% increase in the circulation of the printed page.

In the past the pen has been the hammer to break the errors of centuries. But now the enemies of the truth have learned the value of books and with word processors and printing presses they have left those who love the biblical Christianity far behind.

Practical Suggestions

You may say you are convinced that books have been, and can be, used to evangelize, to teach, and to train, but, you ask, 'How do I do it?' Here are a few suggestions:

A minister can lead his people to see the importance of the use of good literature just as he leads them in other truths.

I know a minister who led his people to give good books with their Christmas gifts, wedding presents, hospital visits, and to their friends and neighbours. Believe me, it will help you build a strong church.

I know a minister who went to a church and there was not one copy of Pilgrim's Progress in any home, in fact, when he first mentioned Bunyan many in his congregation thought he meant Paul Bunyan, the fellow who chopped down trees! Well, in three years there was a copy of Pilgrim's Progress in 90% of the homes and many had read it.

I know a case where a church introduced a little book table. A lawyer's wife took charge of it and in one year sold \$10,000 worth of Christian books (wholesale).

I know a church where they sell \$1,000 worth of books at Christmas time to be used with gifts—mostly for evangelistic purposes. And in every case this ministry can be traced to the pulpit where a minister caught the vision and had a burden to use this means to evangelize and build up Christians.

Charles H. Spurgeon tells how, when he was a child, his mother would often read a piece of Alleine's *Alarm To The Unconverted* to the family as they sat round the fire on a Sunday evening and, when brought under conviction of sin, it was to this old book that he turned.

'I remember,' he writes, 'when I used to awake in the morning, the first thing I took up was Alleine's *Alarm*, or Baxter's *Call To The Unconverted*. Oh those books, those books! I read and devoured them...'

Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress

I want to mention one book specially today that has been mightily used in the history of Christianity, that is my favourite book, *Pilgrim's Progress*. Without doubt, next to the Bible, *Pilgrim's Progress* has been used to bless more people than any other single book, and you should not rest until every family in your church has a copy. Use it in your sermons!

William Chalmers Burns, the first Presbyterian missionary to go to China, translated *Pilgrim's Progress* as a means of evangelizing—a different kind of evangelism than we have today. Later, when he worked farther back into the interior of that nation, he translated it into the local dialects.

I want to tell you a few facts about this immortal volume, *Pilgrim's Progress*, hoping to make you anxious to read it—yes, and study it, and have some family discussions about it.

- (1) It has some excellent preaching material. Spurgeon read it one hundred times, and it permeated his sermons.
- (2) *Pilgrim's Progress* is the biblical message of salvation by grace.
- (3) It is pregnant with Bible truth. Spurgeon said, 'You can prick John Bunyan anywhere for all his blood is "bibline."'
- (4) It is not fiction—it bathes and swims in Scripture. The more you know the Bible and the theology of the Bible the better you will understand and appreciate this useful volume.
- (5) It is the life of the Christian travelling between two worlds. Hear it in Bunyan's words:

*'And thus it was I, writing of the Way And the race of saints in this our gospel day,
Fell suddenly into an allegory About their journey, and the way to Glory.'*

- (6) It is the great doctrines of the Bible, set forth in an experimental and illustrative manner.
- (7) It is as relevant today as the day it was written (between 1675 and 1684).

Like the Bible, it is always relevant because it is about God—Man—Sin—Christ—Salvation—Life—Death—Heaven and Hell.

The poet Browning said, 'Tis my belief that God spake; no tinker has such power.'

James Montgomery said, 'God gave a great gift to His church when He converted John Bunyan to write *Pilgrim's Progress*.'

No amount of literary study in itself could ever produce *Pilgrim's Progress*. It took not only the natural gifts and graces of John Bunyan, but also his deep spiritual experiences and insights into the Word of God, and a biblical interpretation of those experiences. Bunyan travelled so close to the Master's steps that he gives a marvellously accurate picture of the road to the Celestial City and of the difficulties we shall find on the way.

Today *Pilgrim's Progress* stands next to the Bible in sales and translations (198 languages). There are indeed so many editions that it is virtually impossible to compute them. There are 50 editions in Africa alone. Where the Bible goes, we may say, *The Pilgrim's Progress* will follow!

Bunyan and his book have no appeal, at first, to the men and women of this world as I have often noticed. The men and women who are too wrapped up in this world either do not understand it, or see no great depth of

spiritual truth in it. Others do not care for it. I recall the words of one, a professional man who had to stop reading it because, as he told me, 'It upsets me too much—spiritually and emotionally.' I am afraid he saw himself too plainly!

Pilgrim's Progress is better than any book on anthropology or psychology. Why do I say that? Because most books on these subjects study man without God or the Bible. Now, you can learn a lot about man without God or the Bible, but you can never get to his real problems, and therefore you cannot come up with the correct answers. Bunyan will give you a real insight into yourself and all other sinners as no other book but the Bible.

Lessons for Today

Vanity-Fair has not changed. There is a Vanity-Fair every day. Madam Bubble still seeks to draw away pilgrims. Madam Wanton walks on every street. Mrs Bats-Eye still thinks everyone is blind. Men with muckrakes are all around us who will not give up their muckrake for the crown offered by the One above. They will not turn their eyes upward. Are there any of you here today who are so busy with straws, small sticks and dust on the floor, that you have not looked up? Is all your time and energy spent without looking up?

The Church is full of Talkatives, the son of Say-Well of Prating Row. Does this not tell you volumes about this type in just a sentence? Ready at a moment's notice for what you will, this man can, with equal facility and equal emptiness, 'talk of things heavenly or things earthly; things moral or things evangelical; things sacred or things profane; things past or things to come; things foreign or things at home; and the only condition that the wretched windbag stipulates is that all be done to spiritual profit.'

Surely you have met By-Ends of Fair-Speech. 'A subtle knave' whose grandfather was a waterman, looking one way and rowing another and whose distinguishing characteristics are that, in religion, he makes it a point to 'never to go against wind and tide, and to be the best friend of religion when she goes in silver slippers, walking in the sunshine and is applauded of the people.'

What infinite skill Bunyan had to draw such a character picture in just a few sentences!

Who has not been the prisoner of Giant Despair and suffered in Doubting Castle, and then experienced that wonderful release by the Key of Promise? A beautiful picture and very relevant. Christians and their problems do not change with the calendar. Despair, doubt, fear, and death are still with us.

I hope you have been to Interpreter's House where you see things rare, things profitable, things pleasant, and awesome things to make one stable.

Real lessons can be learned about receiving people into the church at Palace Beautiful from that grave and beautiful damsel named Discretion.

A Practical Lesson

All of us need to be cheered by the help of Great-Heart, Stand-Fast, and Valiant-for-the-truth, and good old Honest. Some of us have been in Doubting Castle. Some in The Slough of Despond. Some have experienced the temptations at Vanity-Fair. All of us have to climb The Hill Difficulty, all of us need to be instructed by the Interpreter in The House Beautiful. All of us bear the same burdens. All of us need the same armour in our fight with Apollyon. All of us have to pass through The Wicket-Gate. All of us must pass through The Dark River. And for all true Christians there awaits The Shining Ones at the gates of The Celestial City, 'which, when we see, we wish ourselves amongst them.'

Twenty-Six Soldiers

I hope I have encouraged you to use good sound literature in your ministry. There is power in those twenty-six soldiers—the letters of our alphabet upon the printed page.

Francis Bacon said, 'If I might control the literature of the household, I would guarantee the wellbeing of the church and state.'

Martin Luther said, 'We must throw the printer's inkpot at the devil.'

Robert Murray M'Cheyne said, 'The smallest tract may be the stone in David's sling. In the hands of Christ it may bring down a giant's soul.'

John Trapp said, 'Be careful what books you read, for as water tastes of the soil it runs through, so does the soul taste of the authors that a man reads.'

Samuel Zwemmer said, 'No other agency can penetrate so deeply, witness so daringly, abide so persistently and influence so irresistibly as the printed page.'

The printed page never flinches, it never shows cowardice; it is never tempted to compromise. The printed page never gets tired; it never gets disheartened. The printed page travels cheaply—you can be a missionary for the price of a stamp. It requires no buildings in which to operate. The printed page works while you sleep. It never loses its temper in discussion. And it works when you are gone from the scene. The printed page is a visitor that gets inside the home and stays there. It always catches a man in the right mood, it speaks to him only when he is reading it. It never answers back and it sticks to the point.

There are some principles in using literature in your ministry that will be helpful:

- (1) Know the books you give to others.
- (2) Know the person, his needs and capacity, to whom you intend to give a book.
- (3) Know the most serious areas of ignorance and the errors of our day. (The doctor does not give green pills to everyone, and he does not give medicine that is not relevant to what he believes to be the problem.)
- (4) Do not be afraid to invest some money in your own missionary project.
- (5) Follow through with other books and with discussion on subjects in the books you use.
- (6) Aim to have a book-table in your church and see that its appearance is varied from week to week.
- (7) Be sure to use books and literature that are consistent with the teaching of the Bible.
- (8) Soak all the books you distribute in fervent prayer.

This article is available in tract form from Chapel Library.

PRAYING FOR THE WORLD

Richard Baxter (1615-1691)

MY soul is much more afflicted with the thoughts of the miserable world, and more drawn out in desire of their conversion than heretofore. I was wont to look but little further than England in my prayers, as not considering the state of the rest of the world; or if I prayed for the conversion of the Jews, that was almost all. But now as I better understand the case of the world, and the method of the Lord's Prayer, so there is nothing in the world that lies so heavy upon my heart as the thought of the miserable nations of the earth. It is the most astonishing part of all God's providence to me, that he so far forsakes almost all the world and confines his special favour to so few; that so small a part of the world has the profession of Christianity, in comparison of heathens, mahometans and other infidels! And that among professed Christians there are so few that are saved from gross delusions, and have but any competent knowledge: and that among those there are so few that are seriously religious, and truly set their hearts on heaven. I cannot be affected so much with the calamities of my own relations or the land of my nativity, as with the case of the heathen, mahometan, and ignorant nations of the earth. No part of my prayers are so deeply serious, as that for the conversion of the infidel and ungodly world, that God's name may be sanctified, and his kingdom come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven; Nor was I ever before so sensible what a plague the division of languages was which hinders our speaking to them for their conversion; nor what a great sin tyranny is which keeps out the Gospel from most of the nations of the world. Could

we but go among Tartarians, Turks, and Heathens, and speak their language I should be but little troubled for the silencing of eighteen hundred Ministers at once in England, nor for all the rest that were cast out here, and in Scotland and Ireland. There being no employment in the world so desirable in my eyes, as to labour for the winning of such miserable souls: which maketh me greatly honour Mr. John Eliot, the Apostle of the Indians in New England and whoever else have laboured in such work.

Richard Baxter (1615-1691): Puritan preacher and theologian in the Church of England; his ministry at Kidderminster was marked by a dramatic transformation of the whole community. Well-known author of *The Saint's Everlasting Rest*, *The Reformed Pastor*, *A Christian Directory*, *A Call to the Unconverted*, and others. Born in Rowton, Shropshire, England.

GOD'S WAY: VISION, COMPASSION, AND PRAYER

Paul Bassett

ONE of the greatest needs of the church today is to see the world as God sees it, through God's eyes and not our own. As long as we view it only through our naked eyes we will only see it naturally and not spiritually, and our solution to the world's plight will accordingly be merely human. The church should have a different solution to man's plight, because it has a different view of man. Vision is an essential requirement for the man of God, for as the proverb reminds us, "Without a vision the people perish." Where a world is perishing without the knowledge of God it is evidence of a short-sighted, if not blinded, church.

Restored Vision

The church has always required restored vision, and that vision has always come from the Redeemer Himself. We need to stand where Christ stood with His disciples long ago and see the mass of lost humanity through His eyes. It is recorded of Him: "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion..." (Mat 9:36). We live in a statistically crazy world—a world which for years has numbered its soldiers rather than named them, and now reduces man to a number in the latest computer. The mass media also seek constantly, sincerely but ineffectively to convey the hunger of the world through impersonal sets of statistics. We have not only lost sight of the individual in the crowd, but he has been filed away out of sight as an impersonal fact or nonentity. We live in a world where matter is more important than a man and things more than people. In our age of the concrete jungle, and the high-rise block, we have, at best, a dehumanized man and at worst a soulless man whom one cannot grasp, let alone see or feel. I may perhaps be urged to care for his perishing body, but never, it would seem, for his immortal soul.

Though Christ's disciples viewed the same mass of lost and perishing humanity side-by-side with their Saviour it is recorded of him alone: 'When he saw the multitudes he was moved with compassion.' He clearly saw deeper than the physical. Spiritual eyes see beneath the surface and beyond the obvious. Spiritual vision sees beyond the seen. It also sees the many, but not at the cost of the one.

But although the disciples saw the same people as Christ, evidently they did not see the same plight that Christ saw. They had no sight of the soul condition of the people. It is not recorded of one of the disciples that he was moved with compassion. Until we see the world through Christ's eyes, we will never feel for it through Christ's heart.

Spiritual Blindness

From the disciples' spiritual blindness we learn that it is possible to be a minister of the gospel, an evangelist, a church officer, or worker in the church for year after year, and yet to have no vision of souls perishing in a world without Christ. So it is fearfully possible for our so-called evangelical churches to be going on with their business

while the world just outside the door of the church goes unnoticed to hell. May God give us before it is too late the same vision He gave to His disciples when He commanded them, “Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold...lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest” (Joh 4:35). Some members of the farming community say that when the corn is white it should have already been harvested. It is overripe! We have a world which is perishing in its sin because it is overripe for salvation. At the time of Christ’s imperative command to evangelize, the church, as represented by His disciples, was standing back from evangelism because it believed the time was inappropriate. The time had not come!

It is good to recall the situation which prompted this God-given vision and command to “put in the sickle” and evangelize. At the end of a long day Christ had wearily sat down on a well and sent away His disciples to buy food. In their absence Christ fell into conversation with a woman who had come to draw her water supply. Christ’s eyes looked beyond the earthen waterpot she carried to her empty soul. Yet, remembering His thirst, He courteously asked her for a drink of water. Contact was made. Sympathy crossed the cultural barrier between Samaritan and Jew, man and woman. Christ did not debate the rights or wrongs of the centuries-old feud existing between their nations. Spiritual vision sees beyond nationalistic and cultural differences to the plight and need of a lost soul. It looks beyond the apparent need of an immoral woman to the true need of her soul, above all else to the solution—the living water of the Holy Spirit. A Man of such vision and such sympathy opened the sinner’s eyes to Himself, to a Man more than a Jew, to more than a prophet, to the Messiah Himself. Leaving her empty vessel behind her she carried away a life which was no longer empty. Natural thirst had to wait because spiritual thirst had been met. She, too, now had spiritual vision. Rushing back to her village this formerly immoral woman wanted everyone to meet her new-found Saviour. Her invitation was fervent and personal: “Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” (Joh 4:29).

The Word of God explicitly tells us that Christ had always had an eternal vision of lost humanity. In that tremendous eighth chapter of Proverbs we see Christ, who is the wisdom of God, represented by Wisdom and declaring in beautiful poetical language, “When he appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.” Then follow these amazing words: “Rejoicing in the habitable parts of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men” (Pro 8:29,30). Incredible though it may seem, His vision was not of the rolling Atlantic, nor the glory of the Grand Canyon, nor the undulating desert of Arabia, but of those apparently insignificant specks which are lost mankind. However, to Christ, they were the most significant sight in the whole world. In His estimation, man is the only wonder worth His eternal vision and eternal care. It is for this reason alone that He came down the stairs of heaven and became “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” This same vision must become the vision of the twentieth-century church even as it had to become that of the first-century church.

God-given Compassion

The Heart of God

Compassion, like vision, is something you cannot create. You cannot work it up. You have to go to the heart of God and to His Word and begin to see man through the eyes of God. A vision of the lost is the prerequisite for compassion for the lost. Compassion is born out of vision, and both must proceed from God. Christ is the exemplar of both, for of Him we read, “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them” (Mat 9:36). The background to this moment of deep pathos is Christ moving through every city and village preaching the gospel. No place escaped His visitation. No one escaped His message. His strategy was not the result of some cold calculating plan for world evangelization, but of the movement of God’s mercy for man. Here is nothing less than the heart of God moving towards lost man.

The word “compassion” in the original means that Christ was moved to the depth of His being. It is the same Greek word as that used by Paul when speaking of Onesimus, the slave who had run away from his master Philemon—only to run straight into the arms of Paul in Rome! Paul, having had the joy of leading him to Christ, sends him back to Philemon with a view to his being received as a new person and in a new way. He therefore describes what he now feels for his new convert. Paul tells Philemon that he is “mine own bowels” (Phm 12), that is, as dear and as cherished as himself. To have compassion is to love sinners as much as you love yourself.

The same word is used again by the apostle Paul when he is writing to the church at Philippi. Even though he is now “Paul the aged” he will never forget the day when, in response to that vision in the night, the Macedonian call for mercy, he moved from Asia to Europe. Eventually he caught sight of the riverside, and of that group of godly women who asked him to preach, just as the seller of purple walked in—the first convert. Then there was that young woman caught up in the occult, and the jailor who nearly committed suicide in the jail at the time of the earthquake, because he thought all the prisoners had escaped. What a sight of pitiful trembling humanity he looked as he sprang into the cell pleading to know the way of salvation! No doubt as he wrote his Epistle from prison, Paul looked back on these things and thought, “I never could have done it without being sent to Macedonia on that mission of mercy and being constrained by Christ-given compassion.” He paused for a moment to receive from God the right word to express the depth of feeling he still possessed for those believers in Philippi, now formed into a church. There could only be one word to describe his feelings: the same word which took him to Philippi in the first place—compassion! God knew he was neither lying nor exaggerating. So his pen hovered no longer over the parchment and he wrote, “God is my record [my witness], how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ” (Phi 1:8). What a man! He can even call upon God Almighty to witness the depth of his love for these Christians! Yet in the last analysis it was not Paul’s love to which God was called to bear witness, but God’s own love through Paul. Indeed it was not Paul’s natural love, for he takes us back to the source of his compassion, “the bowels of Jesus Christ.” Christ’s heart must capture our hearts before we will ever be characterized by compassion for a lost world.

The Plight of Man

We will, however, only begin to experience such Christ-like compassion when we see the multitude and mass of lost humanity as He did. As vision is to see man through God’s eyes, so compassion is to love the world with God’s heart. Alas! How often we have made the mistake of trying to love the unlovely world with our own loveless hearts! Christ, as we have seen earlier, saw beyond the obvious and beneath the surface. Compassion sees the threefold cause of man’s plight, yearns over it and moves to remedy it. Christ saw and felt something which the disciples failed to recognize.

Firstly, the multitude were “fainting.” No doubt this was in a sense true physically, but even more essentially, spiritually. Sin has weakened men’s very constitution. It has eaten away and eroded both his moral and spiritual fibre. Another word which describes the condition of mankind without God is “prayerlessness.” We are reminded of Christ’s maxim for man: “Men ought always to pray and not to faint.” In His estimation the opposite to praying is not simply not praying, but fainting. For prayer is dependence upon God, prayerlessness is independence. A fainting world or a fainting individual is only a picture of a spiritually independent world weakened by sin.

Secondly, sin has also scattered mankind, not only from God, but also from one another. How incredible that a man, made in the likeness and image of God, should have been reduced to a mere animal—and a pathetic sheep at that: “scattered abroad as sheep”! How has such a state of affairs come about? To discover its cause we need to go back to a great evangelical preacher living some seven hundred and fifty years before Christ. He describes the reason for man’s being scattered. It is that “all we like sheep have gone astray” (Isa 53:6). “But why?” we ask. We are left in no doubt of the answer: our wilfulness. “We have turned every one to his own way.” We have stubbornly refused to go God’s way. We have chosen to carve out our own destiny. We have become, to use another picture, a world of scattered islands on the sea of sin. As God views us through eyes of compassion, He does not see us as we see ourselves. He sees us, not as a homogeneous whole, not as related to one another, but cut off and alienated from one another and, above all, from Himself. It is only after we have become Christians that we realize that in God’s sight we “in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God.” The reason, the secret, is this: then we “had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy” (1Pe 2:10).

Thirdly, Christ saw that the people were shepherdless. A shepherdless flock will always wander. This was the supreme reason why Christ came into this world—for a shepherdless world and a shepherdless church. Only a man who can truly say, “The Lord is my Shepherd” will ever go on to see, “I shall not want.” The tragedy of our world is that it does not know it has lost its Shepherd or that the Good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep. It is also a fact that no New Testament church lacked an under-shepherd, a God-given minister. We are categorically told that the apostles appointed elders in every church (Act 14:23), and the risen Christ’s gift to the church is a pastor and teacher (Eph 4:11). A pastorless and shepherdless church was an unknown entity in the New Testament. Let

us realize God's heart is moved to the depths over shepherd-less congregations. May the same be true of our hearts! In fact it is wonderfully moving to recognize that the gift of the pastor or shepherd to each local church is a gift from the heart of God. What a promise to us in our day: "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding"! (Jer 3: 15).

Compassion is needed in dealing with all sinners, but the Scripture warrants our saying that it will be needed more and more by the individual Christian, minister and church of God, as we draw nearer to the end of the world. Jude reminds us of Christ's words: "There should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts" (Jud 18). In this coming sensual age he enforces on all believers the need to build themselves up, in the sense of fortifying themselves against such pressures, by praying more than ever and keeping their lives in the love of God. Clearly no monastic exclusive separatist movement is called for. To those who have gone astray, compassion is to be the hallmark of a church in a sensuous and increasingly ungodly society. Compassionate evangelism is to be the order of the day: "And of some have compassion, making a difference" (Jud 22). Compassion will make a difference in that it distinguishes the particular sin and need of different individuals in society. Compassion not only feels for the ungodly, but fears the sins of the ungodly, as a fireman rescues the man from the burning house pulling him out as quickly as possible in case he is burnt. Our fear is of the fire of sin, so we are not only concerned to be "pulling them out of the fire" motivated by Christ-given compassion, but at the same time "hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."

Compassion is seeking to save the sinner, and beholding his plight, but never at the cost of fearing the power and contagion of sin.

Finally, a compassionate man is a man who has God-given vision and compassion for the lost. To be such a man he needs to be so close to Christ in his life that he becomes one with Him in compassion. No greater example can be found of a man whose life, belief and conscience were controlled by Christ's compassion than the apostle Paul. He can declare, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed [separated] from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom 9:1-3). He reminds us of Moses' degree of burden for lost Israel when he was willing to have his name taken out of the book of life that their names might be written there in his place (Exo 32:32). So likewise Paul, who formerly hated these Jewish Christians and persecuted them unto death, has known the compassion of Christ replace the hatred of sin. He, too, is willing to be separated from Christ and accursed for ever if it will gain their salvation. Paul shows us the complete Christian, seemingly a paradox—rejoicing and sorrowing in the same heart at the same time. He, who could "rejoice in the Lord always," could equally say, "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart" over his lost people. God give us a like heart! Then it will be written: "When they saw the multitude, they were moved with compassion."

God-given Prayer

*"Then saith he unto his disciples, the harvest truly is plenteous,
but the labourers are few"—Matthew 9:37.*

Prayer for workers

Firstly, we need a God-given burden of prayer for workers. We are so moved by Christ's description of lost humanity perishing before our once blinded eyes that, as we open them to see the fields white already to harvest, we feel the next step is obvious: it is to go and preach the gospel immediately and recruit others to join us. Such is the inspiration of Christ's vision of, and compassion for, the lost, that we wait in eager expectation for the command to go and preach. Yet the command never comes. Not, that is, the command to preach to the lost, but the command to pray: "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers..." The reason for prayer is because the number of souls waiting to be harvested far outnumbers the labourers. For in Christ's estimation, "the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few." How pathetic, and yet how challenging, that the needy souls waiting to be saved in our world far outnumber the preachers and workers of the gospel! Yet prayer is needed also because Christ alone has lordship over the harvest of lost souls. What an encouragement to know that Christ is Lord not only of the church, but also of the lost! He is Lord of the harvest. For that reason alone we

must pray to Him. We have seen His lordship of vision and His lordship of compassion, but we need also to see His lordship of labour.

We are called to pray to the Lord for a very special person, for a very special work: for someone who possesses the Lord's vision and the Lord's compassion, who realizes at the outset of the work of evangelism that he is overwhelmingly outnumbered by the lost. The numerical statistics of the perishing world demand that a man appreciate that the magnitude of the task is such that, without Christ, it is beyond him. How can the few reach, let alone save, the many? Particularly when we realize that they are scattered by sin across the face of the earth and are fainting in their sins without a shepherd to help them. Did not Milton cry out, "The hungry sheep look up and are not fed"? Are they not like the man by the Pool of Bethesda who for years on end had sat unnoticed, unloved and unreached? Christ was amazed he had not been saved before. The man's answer to Christ was a condemnation of the compassionless church: "Sir, I have no man..." (Joh 5:7).

What Christ is saying is that we must pray that such a state of affairs may never exist again, when the lost are waiting for years on end to be saved, and no man has the time to bother about them.

It is interesting that Christ did not say the Christians are few, but the labourers are few. Often the Christians in our churches are many, but the labourers are few. We need not only to pray for more labourers, but surely that Christians will be changed by Christ into labourers among the lost. We are praying for a rare man, one who is a gift of God to the church. For, if the church could produce such men, Christ would not command us to pray for them. If Christ has promised them in answer to prayer, they will come. Yet only if we pray will evangelists and church members be sent to evangelize among the lost, young and old, of our villages, towns and cities. We need to pray for a new generation of pioneers. Is it not a case of "Ye have not because ye ask not"? But, as vision comes before compassion, so prayer follows both. A visionless and compassionless church will not be praying for labourers. However, when we begin to pray, the grace of God will lay hold upon men who will do the work of ten men or more. Such was the testimony of Paul when he surveyed his labour for lost souls. He could trace the change the grace of God made not only in his life but in his work for God and man. For he wrote, "I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1Co 15:9-10). In a sense his labours exceeded those of the rest of the disciples put together! He laboured across different continents for God, not merely in preaching and in prayer, but labouring from "house to house" night and day.

Is there not a danger today that in our churches we are praying for part-time missionaries, ministers and workers on short-term service? When did we last hear a prayer for a labourer? Dare we pray, "Send us another Paul, another Carey, another Studd"? I am frequently challenged by the picture on my study wall of an old bald-headed man in a bush jacket. He is no longer handsome, young or strong. He is "burnt out for God." His immortal words written beside his worn-out mortal body challenge me: "If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him." Such was the maxim of C. T. Studd.

Such men when they come from God will labour with Pauline zeal and like a woman giving birth. So Paul again can challenge us: "But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Gal 4:18-19).

It seems abundantly plain that a prayerless church will not have labourers given it by God. God will trust only a prayerful church with labourers, because they will still require the prayers of the church even when God has given them back to the church. Surely we will never see a new generation of effective labourers until we see a new generation of men and women who pray effectively. We need those who, like Epaphras, will be "always labouring fervently for you in prayers" (Col 4:12). Then again in evangelism we need labourers like Epaphroditus, who was Paul's "companion in labour" and at the same time the "messenger" of the church at Philippi (Phi 2:25). Supremely we have the example of Christ Himself, who did not appoint the apostles to evangelize the world until He had spent a whole night praying for labourers. For we read of Him, "And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." We are left in no doubt of the purpose of His all-night prayer vigil for "when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles" (Luk 6:12-13). These were special men: they were "the prayed-for ones of God";

they were disciples, “the taught ones of God,” who became the apostles, “the sent ones of God.” We, too, need to pray before we send men in God’s name.

Returning to Christ’s command to the church to pray the Lord of the harvest for labourers, we must add one final cautionary word. If we would pray personally for labourers it is implied that we must be willing to be one of those labourers if God so chooses us. For Matthew 10 commences, “And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples....” Clearly, if we call upon God for labourers, we must be willing to be called by God to be a labourer for the Lord of the harvest.

Why is it, we may well ask, that we give so little time to prayer in proportion to other work we do for the Lord? Is it not, in the last analysis, that in fact we do not equate prayer with work? That great missionary, James Gilmour, who laboured for God in Mongolia, came to this same conclusion: “There is a great feeling that when a man is praying he is doing nothing, and this feeling makes us give undue importance to work, sometimes even to the hurrying over or even to the neglect of prayer.” Another great missionary labourer for God, Edward Payson, said it all when he declared, “If we would do much for God we must ask much of God.”

Before leaving this graphic picture of the harvest field of the world, we need to see that God revealed first the field of labour and then called for prayer for workers. We need to ask the Lord to show us, in our churches, where He wants us to labour for God. How easy it is to draw up plans of operation and areas of outreach, without first asking the Lord to show us His work! Perhaps there is no greater prayer in this context than this one: “Let thy work appear unto thy servants” (Psa 90:16). There follow four further precious pithy petitions concerning that God-given field of service: “and thy glory unto their children”; then, “and let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us”; and, in conclusion, a repeated petition, “and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.”

What wonderful condescension of our God! When we, His labourers, pray to Him He not only shows us the field of work for Him, and allows His beauty to rest upon us, but He puts His work into our hands. His work becomes our work. Yet we must never labour independently of God, for in answer to prayer He alone will grant us success by establishing “the work of our hands.”

Prayer for the glory of God

If the burden of this book has been to remind us of the God-given provision for the evangelization of our lost world before it is too late, let us realize above all else that the final purpose of all our prayers and preaching is not the salvation of immortal souls, nor even the establishing of local evangelical churches, but rather the glory of God. To glorify God in evangelism is to finish the work which God has given us to do. That great evangelist to the New Hebrides, John Paton, realized that he was immortal until his work was done.

Let our last picture be of the One who combines in His glorious person both the message of the gospel and the office of the evangelist. We are privileged to enter into His prayer life at the end of His ministry, as He looks up into heaven and into His Father’s face and declares, “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (Joh 17:4). How often we merely use the word “glory” as a full stop at the end of our prayers! Let us rather realize that we shall never glorify God until we finish the work God has given us to do for Him in this world, and that includes the work of evangelism.

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