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**A NEW ERA  
IN  
WORLD EVANGELISM**

A NEW ERA  
IN  
WORLD EVANGELISM

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ACU  
1982

# **A New Era in World Evangelism**

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**Abilene Christian University**

**Annual Bible Lectures**

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## **PREFACE**

We have traditionally used the word "missionary" to refer to some specialized ministry a great distance from a person's home. This is an unbiblical approach to the work. Biblically, every Christian is a minister, and every minister is a missionary. We are all on a mission for our Father in His World.

This year's Lectureship, focusing on the theme of "A New Era in World Evangelism," is not intended to be a series of lectures for a highly specialized group of Christians. It is intended to be a program for every Christian.

The commission of Jesus, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel . . ." still rings in our ears, and every serious, committed Christian must feel his own responsibility. With masses marching into eternity without Christ, with babies being born faster than mothers can be reached, with multitudes daily joining the ranks of unsaved humanity, the church cannot tarry with the message of salvation without eternal consequences. It is the prayer of the Lectureship Committee that this year's Lectureship will stimulate our thinking and will motivate us to be about our Father's business as the primary work of our lives.

The lectures contained in this volume are those which were given at the 64th annual Bible Lectureship at Abilene Christian University. The volume is dedicated to every Christian who feels a sense of urgent respon-

sibility to share the message of Jesus with a lost world. It is sent forth with the prayer that increasing numbers of Christians will feel the responsibility to share the message of salvation with those about them.

**CARL BRECHEEN**  
Lectureship Director

## **Main Speeches**



# Persuading Men to Receive Jesus

**Jimmy Allen**



**Address:** Harding University, Station A, Searcy, Arkansas 72143.

**Family:** Wife: the former Marilyn McCluggage. They have three children, Cindy, Jimmy, and Mike.

**Education:** Harding College, Searcy (B.A. 1952), Harding Graduate School of Religion, Memphis (M.R.E. 1959), Oklahoma Christian College (Doctor of Humanities, Hh.D. 1971).

**Work:** Currently Associate Professor at Harding University (since 1971); was Assistant Professor 1959-1971.

Received Outstanding Educator Award in 1973, and Distinguished Teacher Award in 1968.

**Ministry:** Has preached in approximately 50 area-wide campaigns. Preached in over half the States, plus Australia, Greece, Lebanon, North Ireland, and Japan. Speaker on college lectureships and campuses (both Christian and state universities). Served as elder for two years at the College Church, Searcy, Arkansas.

**Other Fields of Special Interest:** Author of eight books, including *The Need for Revival*, *Survey of Romans*, *Survey of I Corinthians*, *Survey of Hebrews*, *Persuading Men to Receive Jesus*, and *The Foolishness of God*.

Travels include a five-week study tour of the Middle East in 1964; spoke at the World's Fair Singer Bowl meeting in 1965; preached in Brisbane, Australia campaign in 1965, and Belfast, Northern Ireland meeting in 1969; made a three-week study tour of Greece, Turkey, and Iran in 1969; and spoke on Far East Fellowship in Tokyo in 1971.

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How are the lost to be reached with the gospel of salvation? That question has borne heavily on the hearts of concerned Christians across the years. The answer given in this preparation may not fit every individual situation but it should prove effective in the majority of cases. It has worked well for me in personal evangelism, congregational meetings and cooperative campaigns. The approach to be recommended was not taken from a book on preaching. Rather, the conclusions were drawn from the New Testament and experience. What I call "The Four Cees of Evangelism" did not emerge until I had worked in more than a hundred revival meetings. Those four Cees are conviction, Christ, conversion and compulsion. If men are redeemed they must first be *convicted* of their sin. Second, they must truly believe that *Christ* can save them. Third, they must learn about New Testament *conversion* so they can do what is necessary to receive the Savior. Fourth, they must be *compelled* to obey the will of God.

### Conviction

Conviction is the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said when the Spirit came he would convince or convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8). The apostles received the miraculous measure of the Spirit on Pentecost Day and then preached the word of God (Acts 2:1-4,14). As a result of their Spirit-inspired preaching, the Jews were pricked in their hearts or convicted of their sin (Acts 2:37). Conviction was wrought



by the Spirit through the instrumentality of the gospel of Christ. We can correctly say that in conviction and conversion of an alien sinner, the Spirit operates only through the word. This need not be argued for it can be demonstrated—where the word of God has not gone, there are no Christians!

Conviction can also be defined as the awareness or realization that one is in sin and in need of God's saving grace. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter could have discussed a number of topics. He could have talked about Israel's glorious history or her hoary traditions. He might even have emphasized the change from the Jewish to the Christian Era (likely, he did touch on that topic in the apocalyptic section at Acts 2:19-20). Frequency of the Lord's Supper, structure of the local church, work of elders or singing as the only music authorized in the worship of God might have occupied his attention. Obviously, there is a time and place for the study of these important themes. However, the crying need of that day was conviction. Hence, Peter dealt with the fact that the people were guilty of heinous sin. They had murdered the innocent and spotless Son of God! By the power of the Spirit, Peter said, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it" (Acts 2:22-24). It was that kind of talk which led the Jews to be cut to the heart, humble themselves before God and ask what to do.

Felix, the ungodly Roman governor at Caesarea, sent

for Paul with the view of learning "the faith in Christ." Suppose you had been Paul, what would you have said? The great apostle, who knew exactly what Felix needed to hear, spoke of "righteousness, temperance and judgment to come" (Acts 24:25). The governor heard about righteousness because he was an unrighteous rascal who desperately needed to stand in a right relationship with God by the death and resurrection of Jesus. He was informed about temperance because he had never practiced self-control. He was pointed to the judgment since he was unprepared to stand before God and answer for the deeds done in the body. That approach produced conviction in the heart of Felix. One of the few times in life, he saw himself for what he really was—a poor, helpless, lost and undone sinner! He was made to tremble with fear by such preaching. He never became a Christian but the failure was his rather than the method employed by Paul.

Romans is the nearest thing to a theological treatise written by Paul. It contains all the fundamentals of the gospel. In my judgment, it is the most logical, reasoned and systematic epistle in the New Testament. The structure, particularly in the early part of the book, possibly sets forth Paul's philosophy of preaching. After having dealt with some introductory matters and the theme of the letter, the author launched into a discussion of man's sin and need for righteousness. At 1:18-32, he showed that the Gentiles were in sin, under the wrath of God and without defense or excuse. From 2:1 to 3:20, he proceeded in a similar fashion to prove the utter bankruptcy of the Jews. They too were in sin, under the wrath of God and without defense or excuse. In other words, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Immediately following the section which teaches that both Jews and Gentiles are sin-

ners and in need of righteousness, Paul wrote that beautiful passage at 3:21-31 concerning the death of Christ as a propitiation for sin. Please notice the order. First, he spoke of man's sin and that theme produces conviction among those alienated from God. Second, he held up Jesus Christ as the answer to the sin problem. As far as the first two Cees are concerned, it seems we have the support of the apostle Paul.

Having given the Biblical base for conviction, it should be shown why this is a sound method for the age in which we live. First, this approach is proper because teachers are commanded to reprove sin. "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:1-2). "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5:11). There are times to "cry aloud and spare not." Circumstances sometimes exist which demand that altars of Baal be torn to the ground before altars to the Almighty can be erected. As a gospel preacher in a revival, it is my duty before God to heighten one's sense of guilt to the point where he must respond to the demands of Christ.

As every action creates its opposite and equal reaction, a strong denunciation of evil will be strongly denounced. We are told that this kind of preaching will cause emotionally unstable people to answer the invitation who need therapy rather than condemnation. In spite of that possibility, I offer the following in defense. First, the same criticism could have been made of the preaching of the Hebrew prophets. They were attempting to turn a godless nation from its pernicious course. Why, in the interest of the emotionally unstable among

them, did they not draw in their horns and cease their attacks? Why did that thought fail to enter the Lord's mind as he scathingly denounced the Pharisees (were there no emotionally immature Pharisees)? Second, in speaking out against ungodliness, no sensible person is seeking to further hurt the emotionally crippled. Third, men must not allow their teaching technique to be determined by the few who may be too sick mentally to stand it. We must think in terms of the masses of people, especially in pulpit preaching. Fourth, why is there so much neurosis in modern society? R. O. Ferm answered as follows: "It is no doubt true that the current trend to the psychiatric treatment of neurosis is reaching its proportions because the church has failed to provide a genuine evangelical crisis, in which the individual becomes savingly related to God through a vital and personal faith" (*The Psychology of Christian Conversion*, p. 73). According to that quotation, much of society's sickness is due to the church's failure to knock people off dead center where a decision must be made for the Lord! Men, women, boys and girls are left in the limbo of no decision. They continue to be torn to bits emotionally because they have not been pushed to the crisis point where Jesus is received as Lord. Fifth, even the emotionally inept may be helped by a response to Christ. We are not simply condemning sin; we are also offering the love, power, compassion, forgiveness and healing of the Savior. Anyone who only condemns the wrong without offering hope to the unsaved should be excluded from every pulpit in the land.

Others among us (surprisingly, they are in both the extreme left and right wings of the church) criticize strong preaching against moral evil because they think it leads many church members to make public confessions of wrong which are not really needed. First, it should be



admitted that there are probably some unnecessary responses from brethren. Answering the invitation at church services is no substitute for dealing with a personal issue face to face with another member of the family of God. Second, surely, no one among us wants to move the finest Christians to make public confessions needlessly. Third, if one weakens his condemnation of evil because tender-hearted brethren might unnecessarily respond, he will never reach the hardened, calloused, insensitive persons he was aiming at in the first place. Fourth, it might be interesting to hear the critics tell us how they *know* that certain of those who respond are mistaken about their need. It is possible that those asking for the prayers of the church are in a better position to know their shortcomings than those who say otherwise. Fifth, James said, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed" (James 5:16). That is a command from God! Where is it to be obeyed? Two individuals can confess their faults to one another. One might confess his wrongs in a small group meeting. However, a brother or sister could obey this command by confessing faults at a regular church meeting. Since one confessing error is striving to obey the Lord, it seems that the rest of us should at least be hesitant in describing him as engaging in the unnecessary.

In the second place, it is wise to preach for conviction because people must see that they are lost before they can be saved. Following his sinful affair with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, David was severely rebuked by Nathan the prophet. Only then did David say, "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Samuel 12:13). On the basis of that conviction, he prayed, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender

mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. . . . Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. . . . Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities" (Psalms 51:1-3,7,9). When David recognized he had been dirtied and contaminated by the foul touch of sin, he found forgiveness. In one of his parables, Jesus told of a Publican who was justified because he saw his plight and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:9-14). The Publicans and harlots of the Master's day eventually entered the kingdom of God before the chief priests and the elders because they repented due to the preaching of John (Matthew 21:31-32). In other words, they saw themselves as sinners, repented and were cleansed. Israel's religious leaders did not repent because they felt they had done no wrong. They "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others" (Luke 18:9). Peter recognized his true condition before the Savior and said, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8). Of course, Jesus did not depart from him. He called the fisherman first to be a friend, second to be a disciple and third to be an apostle. Peter became one of the most powerful men in the early church because he initially experienced conviction and forgiveness. It was after the prodigal son said, "I have sinned against heaven," that he returned to his father (Luke 15:11-21). Had there been no conviction, there would have been no return. Jesus said, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. . . . I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (Matthew 9:11-12). As the ill seek the services of a doctor those convicted of sin seek the help of the Great Physician

who has the balm to heal sin-sick souls.

Have you ever wondered why God gave the law of Moses? All of us understand that the law could not save. Why, then, did God give it? Did the Lord waste 1400 years working with the Jews under the law? Of course not. The Hebrews were given law that they might see the impossibility of becoming righteous by a legal system. In failing to measure up to the demands of law perfectly, people were led to see their guilt and condemnation before God (Romans 3:19). Those who were sensitive to God's purposes came to understand their need for a Savior. Why were the Gentiles from Sinai to Christ left to their own devices? That they might become aware of the impossibility of human wisdom to save. "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21). The Jews were unable to keep law; the Gentiles could not devise a scheme by which they could gain a berth in heaven. Hence, the world was bankrupt and on its knees before God. Many were convicted of their sinfulness and recognized the need for one who could deliver them from guilt.

Brethren, we sometimes make the wrong approach in attempting to bring one to Christ. In talking to an unsaved person, it is not unusual for one of us to say, "Joe, you are a good man and the church really needs you. Why don't you become one of us?" Why are some who live without Jesus characterized by high moral standards? Lying, cheating, stealing, drinking and committing adultery do not appeal to them. There is something standing between them and their God. They are as much in rebellion against heaven as moral reprobates. They, too, are sinners and like the immoral, they must be convicted for having sinned, if they are



ever brought to the Lord Jesus. Suppose you get a fellow to the water by telling him how good he is? He will simply go into the water dry and come out wet! There will be no conversion! When he recognizes himself as an unclean sinner desperate for the mercy of a holy God, only then will he be saved and transformed. Fellow Christians, it is not a matter of God or the church needing the unredeemed; rather, the unsaved need the Lord and the salvation he offers. We pray, seek and long for sinners to be saved not because of the church's need but due to the sinner's need. I do not intend to pamper a man's ego or inflate his vanity by suggesting that the church will sink without him. Instead of telling aliens and backsliders they are needed in God's kingdom in the kindest and politest way possible, we must tell them they are rebels against God and doomed to a Devil's hell unless they surrender to the demands of the gospel.

It is my judgment that much of our preaching has been exceptionally weak in the realm of conviction. We ought to take a strong stand for those things that make us religiously unique; however, we are not going to produce conviction in the average heart by dealing only with religious issues. Those who allow their evangelistic preaching to be dominated by refutations of premillennialism, instrumental music in worship and the sins of denominationalism must think that most of our converts come from those who already have strong religious and moral backgrounds. Frankly, I cannot accept that conclusion. The masses of people in America are living in paganism. Billy Graham has many responses to his presentation because he strongly denounces moral evil. He emphasizes that men are in sin and that Jesus is the Savior. I think the majority of responses I have had in more than twenty-five years of preaching were



motivated by a consciousness of personal sin rather than by condemnation of religious error. This does not mean I am opposed to preaching against sectarianism. Such must be done if we would be true to the Lord's word; however, loyalty to the message of Christ also necessitates the denunciation of immorality and ungodliness. There are many lost people who hear us with a degree of regularity who never feel the cutting edge of God's word because we fail to deal with topics that truly convict.

Third, the viewpoint of preaching sermons that convict is seen to be sound if we understand that America is full of unchurched people. Actually, I touched on this earlier but a little more should be added. In a broadcast several years ago, Paul Harvey said there are 37,000,000 American school children who do not attend any church. Keep in mind that most of our converts are made between the ages of twelve and twenty. If they are reached, I am certain that the majority of these youngsters will be moved by preaching which seeks to convict them for having violated moral law. To Paul Harvey's number, millions more can be added who are members of some church but in name only. In your personal work, I know you have had the following experience. You ask, "Mr. Smith, of what church are you a member?" he replies, "I'm a Methodist." You say, "Well, how long has it been since you attended a meeting of the Methodist church?" He answers, "We left Mississippi in 1947 and we had attended fairly regularly until then." It has been thirty years since he practiced a semblance of Christianity. Obviously, he is a Methodist but in name only. The kind of preaching I am discussing will appeal to him. If anything will work, this approach will touch his heart and motivate him to seek forgiveness by obedience to the gospel. Of course, he

should be taught the peculiarity of the restoration plea but that can come later unless he must be convinced that denominationalism is wrong before he will be baptized.

Fourth, preaching for conviction is wise because of the good impression made on our denominational friends who may be present. Some of them think, rightly or wrongly, that we preach very little other than the necessity of water baptism and the sinfulness of instrumental music in worship. When they realize that we are also strongly opposed to iniquity they might look at us a second time. Some time ago, I was preaching in a campaign at Charleston, West Virginia. The city auditorium which would seat about 2300 was packed. One night I preached my sermon entitled "Immorality, U.S.A." I had talked for about an hour and ten minutes. I had denounced every kind of moral wickedness from immodest apparel to homosexuality and was about finished. As I said, "and in conclusion," a lady in the audience shouted, "Don't quit now!" She wanted more! Her statement to me was like saying "Sic 'em" to a bull dog so I preached a little longer. Finally, I had to quit. Surely, you see the point—the woman had been impressed with a condemnation of ungodliness. After the service, I met that lady who was then past seventy. She had simply walked into the auditorium from the street. No one had invited her to come. I went to her apartment and studied with her until midnight. The next morning, I returned. She confessed her faith in Jesus and was baptized into Christ. She had a religious background before attending our campaign but was sick of the pabulum being doled out from a sectarian pulpit. I recently learned she had since died in Christ. In light of our country's condition, we must deal with moral issues. If we seriously consider America's moral crisis, we cannot hold an eight-day meeting without preaching

on purity and faithfulness to one's family. That is relevant preaching! It deals with the real world and our hearers know it. I have sometimes thought we might win the battle doctrinally and lose it morally. People who argue for the gospel way of salvation and live like animals are no nearer heaven than the unregenerate.

Fifth, preaching which seeks to convict is good because people are attracted by a bold stand against wickedness. Paul asked the Ephesians to pray for him that he might open his mouth "boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel" (Ephesians 6:19). The Jerusalem saints prayed that they might with all boldness speak the word. Immediately, their prayer was answered "and they spake the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:29-31). Pouring syrup may win friends and influence some people but it does not convert men to Christ. We need to be as bold as lions and as strong as horse radish when we cry out against today's immorality. The people of our nation have gone sin crazy and pleasure mad. The multitudes are characterized by spiritual insanity. They need to be stopped in their helter-skelter dash for destruction. I believe the approach being recommended will do just that. Those who hear us know it is right. They also know they are not hearing it elsewhere and many of them will come back for more.

Some of those professing to be simply Christians may be temporarily unhappy with this kind of preaching. It takes me a few nights to get rolling in a gospel meeting. Brother W. A. Bradfield, bless his sainted memory, could stand and introduce himself and have ten responses to the invitation. I am a slow starter. In an eight-day California campaign, I preached four or five

nights with very few responses. The last three or four nights of that endeavor we really went into the baptizing business. Following the concluding service, an elderly brother walked up to me and said, "I am glad I attended all of this meeting. I heard you the first couple of nights and thought you were a liberal." He did not understand the meaning of liberalism for in the first two services I had striven to denounce every type of ungodliness under the sun (something which a real liberal would not do). Any sin I failed to criticize was an oversight on my part. Incidentally, many years ago, I began an Arkansas meeting in a similar way. I dealt with almost everything that was sinful or questionable. After the meeting, an old timer said he was glad I smoked since that was the only thing not mentioned! I apologized for the oversight and started on smoking the next night. Meanwhile, back in California, I explained to the brother that the plan of salvation had not been strongly emphasized the first two evenings since something else had to be taught first. I told him I was trying to convict people of sin so that they would want to be baptized for remission of sins. All along I had intended to prove the essentiality of baptism but I felt the soil first needed to be prepared. I do not intend to be unkind to anyone but I think some Christians have water on the brain. Had they been in Peter's shoes, they would have started his Pentecost sermon with Acts 2:38 and the other material would have followed. However, Peter, inspired by God's Spirit, placed Acts 2:38 *after* the Jews were convicted of transgression. I believe in the necessity of baptism but something else must be emphasized prior to baptism. When one can say with Paul, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24), he can then be pointed to Jesus who saves by obedience to the gospel.



## Christ

Jesus is the answer to the sinner's problem. After declaring the sinner's wretchedness, Paul added, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 7:25). In apostolic times, the major emphasis of Christian preaching was placed on the Son of God. He was preached in Jerusalem, Samaria, Caesarea, Damascus, Antioch, Thessalonica, Corinth, Ephesus and Rome. In like manner, he is to be preached throughout today's world. He is not to be set forth simply as a great teacher. He was the Master Teacher, about that there can be no doubt. Insofar as his great teaching ability is concerned, Jews, Muslims and Hindus would agree with us. They also understand that he far overshadowed any other teachers of his time. However, sins are not forgiven by the Lord's teaching ability. Furthermore, Christ is not to be preached just as a good example. Of course, he is our example. According to inspiration, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21). Charles Sheldon's book, *In His Steps*, is one of the most inspirational I have ever read (although it has some social gospel implications). Nevertheless, it must be added that example preaching is for those who are already Christians. The Lord's power to save is not found in his exemplary life (had he not lived the sinless life, he would not be the Savior). Jesus is not to be preached simply as a worker of miracles. Anyone who accepts the Biblical record knows he worked miracles. They were done to prove he was the Son of God (John 20:30-31). When dealing with modernism, we cannot overlook this important facet of his life. However, sins are not forgiven by the miracles he performed.

If the lost are to be saved, Jesus must be preached as the crucified and risen Savior. When Philip met the

Ethiopian, he “opened his mouth. . . and preached unto him Jesus” (Acts 8:35). Some of the later translations say he preached to him “the good news about Jesus.” Philip’s remarks were based on the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah which the Eunuch had been reading. That passage, written 750 years before the Lord was born, predicted the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus. It is one of the greatest foundations in the Old Testament for preaching that Christ died for our sins according to the scripture. Obviously, Philip told the nobleman about the events of Calvary and the garden tomb.

When Paul went into first century Corinth, it was a community of more than a half million people. It was almost totally devoted to idolatry, iniquity and ungodliness. Paul was the only Christian in town. He feared for his life, so much that he trembled. It appears that he was about ready to leave Corinth for a less dangerous place to labor. “Then spoke the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city” (Acts 18:9-10). Paul remained there for eighteen months. Later, he referred to this experience by writing, “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Corinthians 2:1-5). Apparently, Paul was frightened within an inch of his life but he stayed and preached the crucified Christ. In

the name of common sense, why did he do it? That man could be saved and anchored in the power of God! Friends, the power of God is in the cross! If one's faith is in the fluency of a preacher, large numbers of disciples, the beauty of a church building or in the devotion of his parents, he is powerless indeed. However, if his faith is in the crucified and risen Lord, he is connected to the power of God. If all the fires of hell come against him, he will be able to stand. Let us, like the peerless apostle Paul, preach of first importance "that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he arose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). He was indicating the way he would die. Taking some liberty of the language, I submit that if we lift the crucified Christ before lost men and women today, they will be drawn to him for redemption and direction. The love of God as revealed in the cross is the greatest appeal of our message. In reality, it is our message! A backwoods, Arkansas preacher was being joked about having only one sermon. In response, he said, "That's right, I have but one sermon—Jesus Christ and him crucified." As far as I am concerned, he came out the better in the exchange.

Christ must also be preached as Lord. I had been reading the New Testament for some time before I saw this all-important truth. Kenneth Reed, who works with the Christian student center at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, was the first one to indelibly impress this on my mind. He has written a book on lordship entitled *What Controls Your Life?* which every child of God ought to read. Many lives could be changed by its message. The apostles preached that Christ was

Lord before they commanded their hearers to be baptized. Listen to Peter at Pentecost. "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Two verses later, they were told to be baptized in Christ's name. In his sermon to the household of Cornelius, Peter said, "The world which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ (he is *Lord* of all), that word I say, ye know" (Acts 10:36-37). Eleven verses later, he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Before the jailor was immersed, he was told to "believe on the *Lord* Jesus Christ" (Acts 16:31). Paul set forth his view on the matter in these words: "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the *Lord*; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Corinthians 4:5).

Apparently, there are plenty of people who would like to have Jesus as Savior but not as Lord. They would be delighted to receive forgiveness of sins but they are unwilling to submit to his authority and rule. However, if one intends to have his sins forgiven, he must also surrender to the will of the Master. In so many instances, we have to first argue to get a fellow to be baptized. After his baptism, we have to do the same to get him to attend church services regularly, to lead him to give as he has prospered and to do all of the other things God expects of his people. If we could really get across the right view of lordship, the whole concept of obedience would be resolved in one thrust. Surely, if a person is truly submitted to Jesus, he will not be disposed to argue about anything the Master has commanded. His attitude will be "Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth. Command and I will obey." Of course, the key to lordship is repentance. At that point, one yields his stubborn and rebellious will to the Lord. He is then dead to his



own aspirations and ambitions and alive to Christ's authority. With Paul, he can say, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20). If we intend to preach Christ, let us hold him up as Savior and Lord.

If we are to be true to the message of the New Testament, we must preach Jesus as judge. In his presentation to the Athenian philosophers on Mars Hill, Paul said, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31). In speaking to Felix, that same apostle "reasoned of . . . judgment to come" (Acts 24:25). In one of his epistles, he added that "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). Our generation must understand that Jesus is not only a loving Savior but also a just Judge. Those who reject his mercy will receive the full measure of his condemnation. There is a heaven to be gained. There is also a hell to be shunned.

### **Conversion**

The third Cee in this approach is conversion. Here, it is absolutely necessary to teach that part of the New Testament which substantiates our uniqueness. If we cannot prove that our distinctive claim in reference to the way of salvation is Biblically sound, we have forfeited our right to exist as a religious group. How do you feel about "first-principles" preaching? Frankly, I do not want to hear it fifty-two Sundays in a year but there is a time and a place for it. Surely, we must have

that kind of preaching in a gospel meeting. It seems there are some among us who are so "spiritual" they think first principles is a dirty expression. Apparently, they feel this kind of teaching is below them. I am not a prophet nor the son of a prophet. However, after uttering that disclaimer, let me set forth a small prediction. I see two groups emerging among New Testament Christians. One group can be identified as evangelical; the other can be called liturgical. The liturgicals will emphasize meaningful worship, good singing and self-inventory. Because of a failure to teach the first principles, they will not have an evangelistic outreach. Unless they broaden their perspective to include saving the lost, they will die in one generation. The group under discussion will be composed primarily of the best educated people in the Restoration Movement. I am not opposed to education. I have spent several years in college as a student, hold three degrees and have taught at Harding College for the past eighteen years. There is not one thing wrong with higher education if a person can get it and keep his feet on the ground. Education is like money, fame or a thousand and one other things. Some can take it and some cannot. One man loses his balance because of a love of money; another loses his because of much learning. The ideal would be to unite the emphasis of the liturgicals with that given by the evangelicals. In that event, the church will glorify God and save the lost.

If people are to be saved, we must spend some time with the fundamentals of the gospel. Some time ago, I flew to Dallas for a preaching appointment at Mesquite, Texas. Sunday evening, the plane I intended to fly back to Little Rock was filled to capacity and I was unable to get aboard. A seventy-eight year old gentleman and I were told we could catch another plane two hours later. Since he was a stranger to the Dallas airport, I spent

some time showing him the place. We had a snack together and I studied the word of God with him. In all of his life, he had never heard a clear presentation of what to do to be saved. If any here think everyone knows how to become a disciple of Christ, I suggest that you try sharing the good news with others. There are very few people who have seen the significance of Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38. If you think everyone in your home congregation can tell others what to do to be saved and support his remarks with scripture, why not take a survey to find out? In a standardized Bible test given to some enrolling Freshmen at Harding, we found that 92 per cent of them did not know in which gospel the story about the new birth is recorded! Almost all of them were Christians. While an undergraduate student at Harding, I worked with a small church about fifty miles from the school. I was able to get 45 of the 180 who attended there Sunday morning to take a brief test. I asked them to name the New Testament book in which the conversions are recorded. Fifteen or one-third missed it. They were also asked to give the gospel plan of salvation with chapter and verse if possible. Only two answered it correctly. One was an elder; the other was his wife. They were not in collusion as they sat on opposite sides of the group. The age of the participants or how long they had been in the church played no important role in their answers.

Speaking in a general way, I am ready to deny that we have had too much preaching on first principles over the past twenty years. Even if all of our people, including the youngsters, knew the first principles well, it would still be necessary to preach them for the benefit of outsiders. One night in a Fort Worth meeting, I presented a chalk board sermon on the great commission. The passages studied were Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16



and Luke 24:46-47. From those verses, I emphasized that the lost must believe, repent and be immersed to be saved. A big 240 pound Methodist gentleman responded to the invitation. In that presentation, he was convinced that his sprinkling was not Bible baptism. Following the service, in talking to the elders, I said, "Brethren, you have just seen a man with a denominational background make the good confession and be baptized. For the benefit of people like him, please urge your flock to support the kind of preaching done here tonight." I have no intention of apologizing for declaring the primary facts of gospel obedience and I think those who are interested in motivating sinners to turn to Christ occupy a similar position. When a man can speak for eight or ten nights in a revival without being identified religiously, he has not preached the pure gospel of Christ.

In setting forth the conditions of salvation, sermons on faith, repentance, baptism, the new birth, what to do to be saved, gospel obedience and the conversions recorded in the book of Acts must be preached. These lessons, like all pulpit deliveries, must be taught in plain, simple, down-to-earth language so the uninformed can understand. The Jews said to Jesus, "If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly" (John 10:24). Paul wrote: "Seeing we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech" (2 Corinthians 3:12). The late N. B. Hardeman said, "Put the hay down where the calves can get it and the cows will take care of themselves." In our teaching, we need to write the message (so to speak) so plainly that he who runs may read it (Habbakkuk 2:2).

### **Compulsion**

The last of the four Cees is compulsion. In the parable of the great supper, Jesus depicted a master as saying to his servants, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house

may be filled" (Luke 14:23). To compel means "to force to yield; to overpower." "Compel them to come in" appears in the versions of Goodspeed and Montgomery as "make them come in." Naturally, the compelling, forcing or overpowering is to be done by persuasion. To persuade means to plead, induce, urge or beg. Persuasion seems to be a lost art among many preachers. Paul believed in persuasion and practiced it. He said, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Corinthians 5:11). Because he could feel the very breath of hell on the back of his neck, he preached with persuasive power. In another place, he asked rhetorically, "For do I now persuade men or God?" (Galatians 1:10). According to the King James Version, King Agrippa heard Paul and said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28). Father Abraham in the hades world understood the importance of persuasion. The rich man on the other side of an impassable gulf asked him to send Lazarus back to the land of the living to warn his five brothers lest they die unsaved. "Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." The rich man said, "Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." Abraham replied, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:29-31).

The difference between preaching and ordinary speech-making is the persuasive element. The purpose of preaching is to change lives. One evening, I went to hear a brother preach. Near the end of his good sermon, he said, "I don't intend to beg any of you to do the Lord's will." Sometimes one may say something he has not thought about as fully as he should. Perhaps that is what the preacher did on that occasion. However, if he

meant what he said, his attitude is contrary to the one Paul had. He persuaded men! With little difficulty, I can imagine hot tears coursing down his cheeks as he pleaded with people to flee from the wrath to come. Would you beg your mother, father, sister, brother, husband, wife or child to obey the Savior? When the souls of our loved ones are at stake, we are ready and willing to persuade. Friends, God almighty loves everyone more than we love our families. That being true, if it is proper to beg those near and dear to us to obey the gospel, it is also fitting that we beg others to become followers of Christ. My adult life has been spent begging sinners to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, backsliders to return to their first love and Christians to give of their means for the support of good works. From this perspective, a gospel preacher is a beggar. When he dies, a fitting epitaph would be "And it came to pass, that the beggar died" (Luke 16:22).

How do we compel or persuade the lost to change their lives? It will not be done simply by giving directions. Direction-giving is important, and I tried to make that clear under the heading of conversion, but more must be done. Open up a place of business and do nothing more in your advertising than tell people how to get to your location. What will be the outcome? The business will fail and you will go to the poorhouse. If your business is to succeed, you must tell people what you have to offer in the way of goods, sales and services. In our preaching, it will not be enough to declare only the steps the sinner must take to be saved. The lost must be motivated. But, how is that done? Give some serious thought to the matter. What moved you to do the Master's will? The approach which led you to Christ might also work with others. Motivation comes through the promise of reward. A sinner has the right to ask,

“What’s in it for me?” In response to that question, often unstated, we should speak of forgiveness, purpose, peace, joy, fellowship, hope, heaven and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

God’s love for fallen humanity has great potential as motivational power. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:6-8). At a theological meeting, Karl Barth, one of the world’s greatest scholars, was asked to speak about the most profound Biblical truth he had ever studied. He stood and said, “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” Countless hearts have been broken by reading or hearing of the love of God. Millions have been constrained or controlled by the love of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:14). The fact that God loves me is my greatest incentive for living as I should. No doubt, you can say the same. In moving people by God’s love, we must tell them of the sacrificial death of Jesus, the Lord’s amazing grace and his multitude of mercies.

Fear may also be used as a legitimate means of motivation. It was employed by Jonah in preaching to the people of Ninevah. He said, “Yet forty days and Ninevah shall be overthrown” (Jonah 3:3). John the Baptist appealed to the element of fear when he told the citizens of Judah that “the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth

good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matthew 3:10). In the following verses, he made it clear that he was discussing the unquenchable fire of hell (Matthew 3:12; Mark 9:48-49). Repeatedly, in his speeches and epistles, Paul spoke of the judgment to come. The Lord Jesus Christ used "*Gehenna*," the Greek word properly translated as "hell fire," more than any other Biblical character. The word appears only twelve times in the New Testament and in eleven instances, it was upon the lips of the Savior. Do you suppose that Jesus preached "hell fire and damnation" because he did not love people? To the contrary, he told others of punishment because he did love them. After having noted the teaching of Jonah, John, Paul and Jesus, one who uses the doctrine of eternal torment properly seems to be in good company.

I have a sermon entitled "What Is Hell Like?" Likely, I have received more criticism from saints for preaching it than any other lesson I use. Some Christians think we should say little or nothing about hell today. It is difficult for me to understand why they feel that way. Perhaps a pseudo-sophistication is involved or maybe some have subconsciously accepted the view of universal salvation. Do you believe a sinner is really lost? Is he truly without any hope? If he dies without obeying the gospel, will his soul dwell eternally in a condition which the Bible calls hell? Is hell as severe as it is depicted in the word of God? Regardless of how liberal one may be in interpreting the Bible metaphors used to describe hell, when he has finished toning it down, it will still be a place of pain and horror. There is simply no way to make it a Sunday School picnic. When one says or implies it is wrong to appeal to sinners from the viewpoint of fear, although he may not recognize it, he is criticizing the Lord Jesus. Because Christ wanted



them to be saved, he told the Jews of damnation. In speaking on hell today, I think I am following the footsteps of the Master.

Dedicated Christians are not motivated by fear. One day while talking to a fellow preacher, I asked what his sermon had been the previous Sunday morning. He replied, "Church attendance and hell." When I inquired what he had preached the Sunday before that one, he said, "Contribution and hell." "And the Sunday before that?," I asked. He said, "Soul-winning and hell." Whatever his topic, he always coupled it with hell. He was only joking. Those who love Jesus with all their hearts are not moved by that approach. The devoted disciple's greatest fear is not that he will go to torment but that he might break the loving heart of God. He does not want to sin against his Heavenly Father. He is dominated by the desire to do right. But, what put him on the right path initially? It was fear that opened my eyes in the beginning. I became a Christian because I did not want to go to hell. The doctrine of hell is put in the Bible as an alarm to awaken the hardened and calloused to a sense of responsibility. James McGready, a Presbyterian preacher, strongly emphasized the teaching of eternal punishment. Barton W. Stone, one of the leaders in the American Restoration Movement, heard him and was turned off by his methods. Later, a young man named Hodge reached Stone by discussing the love of God. Stone did not attack McGready's approach because he had seen many hardened sinners brought to their knees as a result of his preaching about eternal torment. Brethren, we need to preach both the love and wrath of God. In so doing, we will have Biblical balance and reach the largest number possible. Please do not fail to discuss death, the Lord's second coming, judgment, the severity of God and the

end of the world. Many will be motivated by these sermons who could not be reached in any other way.

Employed carefully and in a secondary way, we can move some to obey Christ by discussing their responsibilities to their families. Whether one is married or not, he needs to be a Christian. However, if he is married, discussion about the family might arouse him from the sleep of death. He can be caused to think by statements similar to the ones that follow. "Your lovely wife is a Christian. Your precious children are also disciples. You, the one whom God has charged with the obligation of leading the family, have not yet bowed the knee to Christ. You act as a millstone around the necks of your wife and children by refusing to exercise a godly influence in their lives. Unless you repent, your loved ones will go to heaven while you go to hell. Why don't you play the part of a man by serving God faithfully and bringing up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? Your mate needs a Christian companion and your offspring deserve a Christian father. When will you cease to evade your duty? When will you discontinue grieving those who love you most?" As already indicated, we must be cautious in appealing to one by means of his family. No one should be baptized just to unite a family in Christ.

If we intend to persuade men to receive Christ, let us preach for conviction, hold up Christ as Lord and Savior, clearly set forth the conditions of salvation and, by proper motivation, compel them to obey Jesus. I call this the four Cees—conviction, Christ, conversion and compulsion.

# Lift Up Thine Eyes

**Wendell W. Broom, Sr.**



**Address:** Abilene Christian University, ACU Station, Box 8040, Abilene, Texas 79699

**Family:** Wife: the former Betty Billingsley. They have six children, born between 1947 and 1962.

**Education:** Freed Hardeman College (graduated 1943), Abilene Christian College (B.A. 1945), Fuller Theological Seminary, School of World Mission and Institute of Church Growth (M.A. 1970). Has also studied at Faith Theological Seminary,

Temple University, Harding Graduate School of Religion, and the University of Hawaii.

**Work & Ministry:** Currently Assistant Professor of Bible at Abilene Christian University (joined faculty in June 1970). Has served churches in Wilmington, Delaware (1945 - 1951 and 1960 to 1965), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (1952 - 1955), Nigeria (1955 -1960), and Honolulu, Hawaii (1965 - 1968). He was a resident in Ghana from 1944 - 1945, and in Nigeria from 1980 - 1981.

**Other Fields of Special Interest:** He has appeared on Lectureships at Northeastern Christian College, Harding University, Columbia Christian College, Pepperdine University, York College, Oklahoma Christian College, Lubbock Christian College, and Abilene Christian University . Has written for *Power for Today*,

*20th Century Christian, Christian Chronicle, and Firm Foundation.* Has taught in the Summer Seminar in Missions at Harding College (1965 - 1967), and at the A.C.U. Seminar in Missions (1968 - 1981).

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“It was the best of times; it was the worst of times . . . .” So it was said of the times of the French Revolution, the same time, but both the best and the worst, depending on the eye of the beholder. Jesus, in describing the times in which he was sending out his followers, recognizes this problem of those who see and those who do not see. Even in his reply about why he taught in parables, he comments that some see but do not see, hear but do not hear. Were it dependent only on the seeing organ and the object to be seen, there would be no problem. The mind and the heart of man is involved in “seeing” what is before us; and to this end, Jesus tells his disciples to “lift up their eyes” to see the fields white unto harvest. This is our problem in world missions today.

**Some Cannot See In World Evangelism Because:**

. . . *they have never come within seeing range.* In the Reformation of the 1500s when transportation and communication were so limited, there really was no live option to “see the fields white unto harvest.” Europe did not know what was in the “new world,” Africa, Latin America, and very little about the Orient. No matter how dedicated their eyes, there simply was no possibility of seeing the opportunity for world evangelism because it was beyond the range of their eyes.

There still are some who simply have not seen and cannot think in terms of the four and one half billion people of earth because their child-like eyes have never gotten beyond their own tables, lawns, and work-

routes. They have never yet come within seeing range of God's unsaved children.

*. . . their eyes are dull to see.* Shakespeare spoke with scorn to "you rocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things . . ." There are human beings who do not think, reason, or imagine. They look at the effects without ever asking about the causes. They see differences, but never distinguish between them. They see, but they see not. For themselves, they remain as sheep to be led by those who look and see. But their loss is far greater than their own blindness. They can never become what God intended for them to be, for they have quenched the light of God which made them more than rocks and stones and worse than senseless things (Mark 8:18).

*. . . their eyes are sharp but filled with adultery.* Peter speaks (2 Peter 2:1) of those whose eyes are so filled with adultery that they cannot see. Some of the keenest minds busy themselves with the multiplying of evil for their own lusts, greed, and covetousness. By the selection from the wide range of available human choices, they have filled their fields of vision with the sordid, the wicked, the evil, and the wrong. Although we admire their sense of perception, we grieve to see it occupied with deeper and deeper insights into the destructive and deadly in human life.

*. . . their eyes are sharp and good, but filled with their own peroccupations.* God wills that we should be good parents, neighbors, workers. He wants us to have homes and lawns and healthy pursuits. But some have never seen the white of the harvest because the lawns and boats and commuting and Rotary Club and Little League and next year's vacation have overtaxed their capacity, and there are no eyes left to see where God's concerns really are. Good things these may be; but when

they fill our eyes so completely that nothing else can be seen, they change our destinies for the worse.

. . . *their eyes are untrained to see subtle realities.* A well trained physician can look at a form in a hospital bed and see things the passerby, or even the loving family, cannot see. He has been trained to be sensitive to the the color, texture, form, and appearance of the normal and the abnormal in the body. While it may never be that every child of God will be keenly trained to see with the discernment of an artist, architect, or engineer, there must be some who can detect the subtleties of racism, spiritual receptivity, linguistic differences, cultural nuances—the many signs that people may be ready to respond to the call of God for their lives. We so easily generalize about people (“they all look the same to me”) and cannot distinguish the field white unto harvest from the field resistant unto death.

While some cannot see the realities of world evangelism for the reasons above, others cannot see beyond the superficial and are turned aside from the will of God too easily.

### **Some See Only The Obstacles To World Evangelism**

*“We have no money for missions.”* Churches have money to build buildings filled with comforts for our own enjoyment and edification. We have money to educate our children, care for our health, provide personal levels of luxury unparalleled in the world’s history. When the right dramatic emergency arises, we demonstrate that we *do* have money for whatever has caught our attention, and for whatever we believe in. Money shortage is no real obstacle.

*“Those places are too far away.”* When we think about putting thousands of miles between ourselves and our families, home churches, and beloved brethren, we become frightened. No one enjoys such separations, but



we have not yet seen the compensations. Jesus spoke of the mothers, fathers, houses, and lands that he would give us a hundred fold when we leave behind what is dear to us. What we give up is only the part of the picture which obscures the greater reality and blessing.

*"That language is too tough."* The pain of language study and the self-revelation that it usually brings is a strong deterrent for some who consider going and some who consider sending. For some who lack the aptitude or the motivation, language may constitute a serious barrier. But for the most part, language learning is no more than a rigorous discipline which has been overcome by multitudes of graduate degree candidates who submit to the requirement about language learning to achieve their academic level. If we have enough men and women with necessary aptitude in this area for college degrees, we have enough to send them into the fields where greater rewards await than degrees.

*"The living standards are too low."* While the consumer society that we live in has conditioned us to classify the luxuries of living as necessities, we must recalibrate our thinking. Peace Corps volunteers have found life so rewarding below poverty levels that they have returned for repeat tours. When confronted by national emergencies of war or disaster, we have demonstrated that we can undergo hardships and serve capably without American levels of convenience. In view of the eternal values at stake in the Christian mission, the motivations for accepting a simpler life style are high.

*"This would interrupt my career or retirement plans."* We Americans place high priorities on the carefully laid out plans for our lives, which sounds distressingly like the rich man of James 4:13 who had it all set for his future. We have not yet learned to say, "if

God wills, we shall do thus and so.” And there can be no question about what God wills in missions. The only real question is that of surrender to his will. Those who voted with the ten spies who returned from Canaan had some plans for their families that could not endure a military risk. The career plans they refused to interrupt turned into forty dreary years of waiting for funerals so that God’s responsive generation could have their chance to fulfill his purposes for his people.

*“I’m afraid to trust the church to support me (and/or my family).”* We who train young people for missions so often see them turn aside into the business and professional world because of the fears of church support. The stories of betrayals, of ruthless economies in mission budgets so that other church departments may prosper, of simple refusal to provide money for missions when it can be found for any other church expenditure—all these are such common experiences that fear has descended upon us. Lamentable as these may be, they are not the general rule, but the exception. Such betrayals are not nearly so common among God’s people as they are among the world of business. The missionary servant of God has a contract—a covenant—with one who never fails. Times uncountable God has taken his servants out of relationship with short-sighted churches with wrong priorities to put them into touch with more loving and liberal churches. The primary contract is with the Father, not with the churches. He never fails.

Those who have learned how to put their priorities on that which God values most will, by prayer and the supporting strength of their brethren and God, begin to see the possibilities in world evangelism that cannot be hindered. Once we have gotten our spiritual vision clearly in focus and learned to get our eyes above the

obstacles that superficially divert us, then God is ready to show us things we hadn't dreamed of.

### **Lord, Lift Up Our Eyes To See:**

*The two billion who have never known the name of Jesus.* For us who live in the shadow of bookstores that sell Bibles for the cost of a meal, it is hard to believe there is half of the human race which has never seen a Bible verse, known the name of Jesus, or heard of a church. Religions they have, but they are religions of idols, of fear, of capricious gods, and of uncertainties beyond death. The tribes of Latin America and Africa, the steppes of Asia—enormous blocks of human beings—have seen his hand in created wonders and have known that there must be someone out there who is greater than humanity. They have struggled with the blind desperation of human need without a loving Father to answer those needs. They have invented gods who are sad counterfeits of the loving and living God, our Father. And still they do not know him. We must see the enormity of two billion such people.

*The "hidden peoples."* Missiologists have come to use this term to refer to those who have never known the name of Jesus and who cannot do so because he is culturally and linguistically beyond their reach. There is no one who speaks their language or lives by their standards who knows him. Only if someone will come into their land, learn their tongue, penetrate their thinking and find the way to communicate the Savior—only then can they know him. There is no church, no Bible, no preacher, no book, no tract, no radio—no way—for them to learn. It is these of whom the Spirit spoke when he said, "How can they hear without a preacher." These are the cultural isolates, the Hidden People. Lift up our eyes to see them.

*The two million of our brethren who have every*

*resource available to preach to the world.* When word came of the hunger of our Polish brethren, we forgot the rude polack jokes and got serious enough to send two million dollars to help in their crisis. The money is in our hands, if we can only see it there. We are spending it for pet food and luxuries. We cannot block out our thinking about world evangelism by the delusion that we cannot afford it. We *can* afford it. When the clear vision of the need of the world strikes our hearts, the money is here. It is not yet budgeted. It is not yet in the bank accounts of the churches. It is in our personal checking accounts, our stock portfolios, our savings accounts, and in our pocketbooks. Lift up our eyes to see the financial resources available.

*The western world's civilized pagans.* Not all the barbarians and heathens are in villages and foreign barrios. Some of the most committed secularists, humanists, and idolaters live in high rises, hold graduate degrees, and are ranked among the most advanced of "civilized people" living in the "post-Christian Western world." When God is replaced by stone idols, angels weep. But they weep no less when he is replaced by atomic power and man's most creative technology. The sin that floods the lives of the modern pagans is no less fatal than the polygamy, cannibalism, and immorality of the Third World.

*Our cultural biases and ethnocentrism.* One of our most damaging blindnesses is to our own cultural presuppositions and prejudices which constitute a serious obstacle to the communication of our message to others. The most serious part of this lies in our sometimes not even making a distinction between what biblical faith is and what American custom is. To unravel these is not easy. It frightens us and causes us to feel insecure to question our convictions. But if we are

to teach Christ truthfully, we must pull aside the cultural wrappings and find out what is really universal Christianity.

*The elderly and the young in their roles in world evangelism.* Modern missions have found valid places for the young and the aged. Short term service in foreign fields is becoming more and more a workable contribution to world evangelism. While not all the aged or the young may be qualified, we shall see more and more good works carried out by such overlooked persons in the church.

*The possibilities of churches giving one million dollars in a Sunday for Missions.* We have made headlines with our abilities to give. Two point eight million dollars has been given by one church in one Sunday for a building program. But up to this point no one has done this for world evangelism. Why not? Is world evangelism less a priority than church buildings? Should our commitment to our own pew-padded air-conditioned comfort be greater than the comfort of Christ to broken hearts who have never known his balm?

*God's providence waiting to help.* The unbelieving spies could see only the power of Canaan and themselves as grasshoppers before the land (Numbers 13:33). Elisha's servant could see only the legions surrounding the city until Elisha prayed that his eyes might be opened to see the armies of God (2 Kings 6:14-17). Our culture has taught us that it is impractical and too idealistic to count on God's providence. We shall appear as dreamers if we dare to count on supernatural help. But how else could twelve Galilean disciples have launched out to evangelize the world without trusting in the providence of God. God provides. His resources are at our disposal. His timing is waiting for our call. His

Spirit works changes in men that our resources could never dare to expect.

### **Conclusion**

In his book, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, Michael Green says that the motivation for the rapid spread of evangelism among early believers consisted of thanksgiving, responsibility, and concern. Even in these our failure to see—to lift up our eyes—is a part of the problem. We don't really see the blessings because we are not consistently thankful. We don't take seriously our role in world missions because we do not see the responsibility God has placed on the church. We are not moved to action because we do not have concern—we have not seen the needs of men without Christ. Lord, LIFT UP OUR EYES.



# Urban Evangelism Dreaming God's Dream: Our Worldwide Task

**DOUG KOSTOWSKI**



**Address:** Central Church of Christ, 425 Northwest 27th Ave., Miami, Florida 33125.

**Family:** Wife, Kit, is a reading specialist and teacher at Miami Killian Senior High School. They have two teenagers, Keri and Kirk.

**Education:** Freed-Hardeman College (A.A.), Harding College (B.A.), Wayne State University (graduate studies), Harding Graduate School of Religion (M.A.), American Church Growth Institute and Fuller Theological Seminary (recent

graduate work on church growth studies).

**Work and Ministry:** Currently minister of the Central Church of Christ in Miami, Florida (since August 1978), where evangelistic outreach includes a residency program, Summer Mobilization and Heartbeat Internship.

Throughout the States and Canada, Doug is a frequent spokesman for youth meetings and evangelistic crusades, such as Searchers' Seminar for Western States Outreach. A leadership/church growth seminar has been presented in most parts of the nation. Since 1965 he has been involved with Herald of Truth, often appearing in mass-communications workshops. Doug has spoken at thirteen Christian colleges, with lectureship invitations

from Abilene Christian University, Freed-Hardeman, York College, Harding University, and Pepperdine University. At Harding, Doug coordinated the summer youth forum for three years, and in January 1971, was guest seminar speaker on "Meeting Man's Needs in the Cities." Since the pulpit assignment in Paragould, Arkansas, his local ministry has been dedicated to the megalopolitan areas. He spent ten years in Detroit and Los Angeles. The heart of Doug's dream appears in a newsletter, "The Open Door," which is sent to challenge students to minister in the great cities.

**Field of Special Interest:** Has visited over 200 groups for special lectures. The major emphasis of his travels is campus and youth work, with over 100 such events since graduating from college. Since 1974, Doug has spoken to over 20,000 young people. He has written for a number of periodicals, including *Power for Today*, *20th Century Christian*, *Firm Foundation*, *Bible Herald*, and *Teenage Christian*. Was included in Outstanding Young Men of America in 1974.

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Many kings have come and gone, many kings have captured the hearts of followers who are very devoted, but those same kings have come to rest in their own ashes. One hot dusty summer a few years ago, Kit, Keri, Kirk and I were in the middle of Arkansas burning up in August. I was preaching in a little town, a stone's throw from where Keri was born—Conway, Arkansas. The place was Greenbriar, where we had gone during Harding years to preach and it was a wonderful experience. They had invited us back for Homecoming. An event that week made the newspapers across the land. The Memphis papers announced with big bold print, "THE KING IS DEAD!" Elvis, who had stolen the hearts of so many, was on his way to the ashes.

In the past year an old hero of mine died in Detroit, Michigan, "The Brown Bomber," Joe Lewis. The first fight I ever saw on television was Joe Lewis taking on Jersey Joe Walcott. What a hero in America and what

an interesting man! Dead. . .the King is dead.

I love to fly over New York City. I always look for two things: The Statue of Liberty on one end of Manhattan and way up at the other end "The House that Ruth Built." I love to see Yankee Stadium from the sky. The Babe—he's gone, too. He's dead. Alexander the Great. . .tradition says that at the age of thirty he wept because there were no other nations to conquer. What a victorious king he was. Soon after that, he died. Have you been to Camelot? Have you experienced the legendary kingdom of Arthur? Have you heard him call forth in his kingdom the new way of living, where right would be even greater than might, and men would live honorable lives, caring for other people? Arthur died. We've all had heroes through the years—hero presidents, hero leaders of minorities. Such men and women have dotted history. John F. Kennedy was even a hero president: "Ask not what this country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." The marching orders sounded, people heard the drumbeat and took off on a march that ended for some even on the moon. We saw him wrench in pain, be caught in his wife's arms and die in a few short moments. It was like the death of a king.

Then there is Jesus. . .all the hope tied to him. All the promises heard. All this talk about a kingdom that would have no end. . .and he was taken out like an animal and cruelly put to death. Grown men cried and women stood at the edge wailing. Others took to their heels and went in a thousand different directions lest they would be associated with that kind of an end. The two on the road to Emmaus said, "We had hoped that He was the one." But Jan Weinbrenner has given us this thought: "Death has not escaped its own dying." It lies crumpled, crushed under the weight of a stone rolled

away from a borrowed tomb. The reason the Great Commission is significant at the end of the gospel of Matthew is that the one uttering it has been to death and back! When He has something for His disciples to do, they are going to listen with believing ears! The text, Matthew 28:16-20, is one of the resurrection appearances. For forty days between his death and going back to heaven, Jesus made these appearances, one after another. They made it clear that He was alive. The circumstances were different. The audiences were different. Sometimes it was one person like Peter. Sometimes there were five hundred in one place. He made those appearances in a real body. He was going to great pains to demonstrate: "I am for real—look at the wounds. Do you have anything to eat? How about a piece of broiled fish? I will eat it with you. I will demonstrate that the one you saw die is in fact living before your eyes right now." Many persons became believers, including his own family who had thought him to be misguided, at best. Every appearance was brief, brief, brief. It was as if he was getting them ready for the inevitable—to live without Him. It would just be for a moment and, as it says in Luke 24, "He vanished from their sight."

Before He even got to Jerusalem to die, He had given this message: "Meet me after my death and resurrection in Galilee." Galilee. . . way to the north. . . where He had given most of the three years of His ministry. "After I am raised, I will go before you into Galilee" (Matthew 26:32). When those women stumbled upon the empty tomb, what did the angels say? "He is risen, just as He said. Quickly now, go tell his disciples that Jesus Christ is no longer dead! Go to Galilee. He waits for you there." We would love to know how many people met him in Galilee. Some have thought that the five

hundred were all brought together in Galilee. Obviously, there were more believers there than in the religious town of Jerusalem. They had written him off a long time before.

The commission, then, has a rare setting. Jesus gives these words with the authority of having come back from the dead. It is the picture that John describes in Revelation 1. Someone with a key chain has upon it the key to death and Hades. He has been everywhere that we have not been and He knows how to come and how to go and how to get us coming or going in any of those directions. What a marvelous one—King of Kings and Lord of Lords! The King who overpowered death—the King who lives forever!

Listen to these words; they ought to be significant:

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.' (Matthew 28:16-20)

Matthew thought it was a good way to say "that's the end," or, "that was just the beginning."

There is one great point that comes from this paragraph; every thread comes back to the common cord that the one commanding attention on this mountaintop is in fact the one with all authority. What an opening line! "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." Oh, some kings have had their domi-

nions and some presidents have been over many states. Some people have owned a lot of land and some ships have cut through the depths of the sea, but here is somebody that says that He is in charge of everything that we see on this globe and everything that we see above and everything everywhere! He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords! The word “authority” here means “permission, privilege, right.” There is a man back in Matthew chapter eight, who had the sick servant, and came to Jesus saying, “Just speak the word. I know you can heal without going.” And Jesus said, “My, I am impressed with your faith. What do you mean?” He clarified, “I am a man with authority like yours. I have soldiers under me. I say to this one ‘Go’ and he goes. I say to this one ‘Come here’ and he comes. I say to that one ‘Do this’ and he does it.” That is authority and that is what Jesus has over the universe.

“Lord, you are in charge of me today!” That is the greatest prayer that a person can pray. It brings oneself in submission to the will of the one who is in charge of everything anyway. That is what lordship is all about. That is what a Christian is—a person who in the morning starts the day in surrender, on the altar before God, saying, “You are in charge, you call the shots, you give me your power. This life, whatever it is, is yours today.”

Later Peter would tell Cornelius, “He is Lord of all” (Acts 10). The lordship of Christ is the apex toward which all the lines of history are pointing. In the final moment, it is where they all will reach. . .to Jesus Christ. Here is the idea from Ephesians 1:10, “A plan for the fullness of time was God’s. To unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on the earth.” God’s wonderful plan: to let His Son be Lord of all.

From that authority comes two things in this passage:



a commission, and then, a promise. The commission is one we memorized. "Go. Because I am what I am, I get to tell you eleven followers of mine. . . Go, Go, Go. And as you are going, do this. . . disciple and baptize and teach all the other things I have taught you." They had made that commitment to follow Him and for three years they had trudged together, that small tireless band, at times disappointing, at times irritable, at times doubting, at times scared. But they "hung in there," and here they are all together again. Not all of them . . . Judas had gone to ashes somewhere. The eleven that are left look up at Him and see those wounds that ought to keep anybody from talking. They hear that familiar voice. They listen to a dream—God's dream for a world! "Where I want you to do this discipling and baptizing and teaching. . . is the whole world. I mean everybody. Now. . . Go!" Through the years, almost two thousand now, there have been some people who have worn His name, who have taken these lines seriously. They have gone all over the world. . . big cities, little hamlets and villages. They have forded creeks and swum rivers and crossed oceans and climbed mountains. Some have bedded down on mud-floored huts. Others have walked across shiny tile to tell this story. Some have left kith and kin, family and friends to do it. Some have paid with their lives along the way.

These words have made a difference in this old world of ours. Yet, look who is sounding the charge—a despised Galilean. They tried to put him to death in his own home town. He could not show His face as a religious teacher in the religious capital, because, for sure, they would kill Him! He was a wandering and homeless one who never owned a piece of property nor was invited to lecture in any institution of higher learning. From this humble man came this audacious command. The only

thing He had going for Him was this. . .He was fresh back from death! He was just back from throwing off the shackles of death and was now endowed by God with a universal power. Those who listened and believed, took on this world-wide task. A few years later, about thirty years, one of the apostles wrote and said, "We now have the word in all the nations of our world." Thirty years later he could pen a line like that! We live in an age in which we need someone to come, praying again and again: "Do it again, Lord. Do it again through us."

Today we speak of urban evangelism and yet we wonder if there has ever been any other kind. In the ministry of Jesus, Good News was carried to the cities:

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every infirmity. When He saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.' (Matthew 9:35-38)

Galilee was the prime target of Jesus' ministry. Its dense population surrounded the sea approximately one of our strip cities today. Josephus credits the fertile soil with attracting the teeming population. "The cities lie here very thick; and the very many villages (240 cities and villages) there are here, are everywhere so full of people. . .the very least of them contains above 15,000 inhabitants." (*Josephus*, Wars, III, 3, ii, Life, 45).

Two to three million for the population of Galilee! Jesus was more urban than rural in His ministry—by choice. He went where the people were. His strategy for

this great commission began in a city and included others: "You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Paul dreamed of the cities of the Roman Empire coming to Christ, and he did something about it—by choice: Ephesus (3 years). . . Corinth (18 months). . . Athens, Antioch, Thessalonica, Philippi. . . "From Jerusalem and as far round as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ" (Romans 15:19). . . "I must also see Rome" (Acts 19:21).

The great need of urban America is for Christians to claim her by choice—for the sole purpose—to minister for Christ. Churches in America grew as long as the "in thing" was to move to the city. Such was the pseudo-growth. The spiritual needs of the city have now intensified because the church has fled the urban areas.

The first church left the city of Jerusalem, but things were a little different—because of persecution she ran for her life, or *with* her life and shared with all nations. Today the church has split for lesser motivations: (1) fashionable moves "up-town" to the suburbs—often this was precipitated by "white-flight"; (2) retirement has come for many and the pilgrimage in the city ended via exodus; (3) affluence has allowed some of the church to live wherever she would, and that was elsewhere!

The church in the city used to be able to survive on transplanted culture and a regular diet of folks from back home who "placed membership." That age is gone, and the mandate to address today can only be taken by a daring new breed who will risk all in being God's people in creative and innovative ministries. My visits to campuses across the nation give me hope. I have met a "new breed" of both young men and women who, above all, want to minister for Christ in the urban areas.



### ///Dense Population Strip Cities

### + + + Church of Christ Strong Areas

The map's message is unmistakeable: **WE ARE NOT WHERE THE PEOPLE ARE IN AMERICA!** Our population continues to move toward three great strip cities: San-San (in the west), Chi-Pitts (in the midwest), Bos-Wash (in the east). All the while, our strength remains concentrated in the South.

In America Churches of Christ are not where most of the people are. Our Christian influence is minimal in all three strips with most of our people in the south (Bible Belt). In these three strip cities we find 20.5 million (west), plus 39.8 million (midwest), plus 46.6 million (east). . . totaling 106.9 million people— $\frac{1}{2}$  of the United States population!!!

Along the two coasts and around the Midwest are the top ten populated centers:

|                        |            |
|------------------------|------------|
| Megalopolitan U.S.     | *SCSA      |
| New York City          | 17,180,500 |
| Los Angeles-Long Beach | 10,231,100 |
| Chicago                | 7,615,100  |
| Philadelphia           | 5,642,300  |
| Detroit                | 4,684,400  |
| San Francisco          | 4,585,200  |
| Boston                 | 3,918,400  |
| Washington, D.C.       | 3,015,300  |
| Cleveland              | 2,921,200  |
| Miami                  | 2,223,000  |

\*SCSA - Standard Consolidated Statistical Area

In these ten cities we know of 39,000 members of the Church of Christ. When compared with the 40,000 members in Nashville or the 15,000 in Abilene, one at once can see the "Open Door, Next Door." Most of the congregations that do exist are small, in fact, there are not even ten as large as 500!

Mac Lynn of Harding's Graduate School has compiled "the 100 largest" congregations among us. (Based upon average morning attendance, Sept.-Nov., 1978). A brief analysis reveals that 33% are in Texas, 26% are in Tennessee. A total of 76% are in four states—Arkansas, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Texas. Only 14% are outside the south (Bible Belt).

The top five are our college towns—Nashville, Searcy, Lubbock and Abilene. The first on the list clearly out of the South is Bristol Road in Flint, Michigan (my home church)—number 30 on the list!

The 100 largest range in attendance from 4000 (Madison) to 614. **Only two are in any of the top ten**

**population areas (SCSA) in the U.S.!** Both are in black communities of Los Angeles—Figueroa and Normandie.

Urban evangelism is more than America's leading cities. Beyond the Bible Belt, and the strip cities, is a world of 4 billion. We cannot overlook London, Tokyo, Mexico City, Peking, Moscow, Seoul, Bombay, Sao Paulo and Rio. We must remember Shanghai and the 27 other cities of China with populations in excess of one million!

### **Where do we begin?**

Napoleon achieved tremendous strides in trying to bring the world under subjection in the early 1800's. A masterful strategist of warfare who inspired volumes without end. All of his commanding officers were charged to carry on their person one thing, above all else—a map of the world. They were to reflect upon it because it was their posted goal. It is like some of us who put special reminders on the refrigerator. A map of the world! Our Lord wants us to have that on our hearts, too. Dawson Trotman began an interesting movement, the "Navigators." They have literally invaded college campuses, high schools, sent missionaries around the world, given some of the finest Christian instruction in books, daily devotional guides, and in-depth reading guides like "Daily Walk." All that came from one man: Dawson Trotman. In 1941, in California, Dawson Trotman and Walt Stanton gathered every morning before sun-up for two hours of prayer. They brought with them only one prop—it also was a map of the world. First, they prayed about some things happening in California and some of the people they were trying to train and send out to find others to baptize and to teach. Then, some of their fellows moved beyond California so they started praying and calling out other



names of states. For forty days, this vigil continued until in the end they were naming all of the states and all of the continents and all of the countries of the world. They even named some of the islands they could not pronounce! They stayed before God in prayer, giving this over to Him. They were dreaming God's dream—a world for Christ.

Jonah epitomizes the reluctance of people not believing in God's dream. "Jonah, go to Ninevah." "No! I am going to the people in Tarshish." Off he went, literally in the opposite direction! God wanted him to go 600 miles East and he took off 2,000 miles to the West. He stands for all of us, who through the years have known God's dream and refused to have anything to do with it. Walls were built instead of bridges. We cried for our isolated islands: "We are God's people. We're going to live here and touch nobody so that we will not be defiled." The church has been similarly ineffective through the years, like the Jews. They stayed in Jerusalem. It seemed like they were going to be there forever. Finally, God rattled them out of Jerusalem, not with the Great Commission, but with the persecution that came down upon them. Everybody but the apostles left (Acts 8). That was a pitiful way to get that first wave going out of Jerusalem.

Look at Peter—all that he had been through with the teachings of Jesus—yet he was not about to go to another ethnic group until God (Acts 10—a decade after the commission) rattles Peter with miracle after miracle, and lesson after lesson until finally Peter says, "I get the message! God is no respecter of persons but in every nation He wants people for His children."

What would have happened if there had not been a church like Antioch and a man by the name of Paul who really saw God's dream? That faithful church in An-

tioch said, "Paul, get some traveling companions because we are sending you on your way." Off he went to tell the story and, in just a few years, could announce, "Every nation now has heard the message." Everybody had not been converted or been made a disciple, but every nation had been touched by the wonderful events that came from that one church at Antioch.

Are you a person who is participating in God's dream for our world? You are if you have a task in your life before God. It is more important than a lot of things we spend our time doing. Are we really sharing in God's world-wide dream? Is yours a church that honors God's world-wide dream? Do not think for a moment all churches do! Many churches build nothing but walls. Many churches are nothing but islands. Many churches have no bridges to people.

H. Richard Niebuhr has taken some hard long looks at the Christian movement. He has discovered some signposts along the way toward impotency for churches and movements. They start off with a great flurry with a period where someone tells a dream. Secondly, there is a period of a message when that dream is told and retold. Thirdly, there is a period of a movement where we move out to share and infiltrate and grow. Finally, we come to the moment of impotency when we forget the movement and become just a monument: stable, stagnant, polished, but as hard as stone and as heartless. Today we halt between movement and monument in so many churches in our world. Christianity is in a minority today. Every day the sun comes up, there are less Christians in the world than the day before. We must not close our ears to the commission of the King of Kings. It is over when we quit listening and moving out.

Tolstoy tells the story of the man who is running frantically, wondering what he ought to do to escape a pack

of ravenous wolves. So he says, "I know what I am going to do now. I am going to jump into this well and I'll be safe." He jumps into the well and the wolves stop overhead, only to look down and gnash down at him. He is hanging by a vine! Down below at the bottom of the well, it is dry. . .but there is a dragon with fire and smoke coming out, also licking his chops and gnashing his teeth. The man hangs tighter to the vine and he looks halfway up the vine. There are two rats—one white and one black—and they start gnawing at that vine. All of a sudden he is distracted because on some of the leaves of the vine are droplets of honey. If he can just reach them with his tongue! He can, so he started licking and licking.

That is the church today in many ways. All kinds of signs around us telling us, "We better get about our Father's business! We better get back to the commission." We are sidetracked. . .licking our wounds and licking the honey. . .polishing our buildings and polishing the system, learning better songs, and going back over four-part harmony—when we need to be people with a task. The things we talk about, the things we spend our time with, the things that really intrigue . . .the drops of the honey! Neibuhr is not correct in saying that we go from movement to movement. Somewhere along the way we go through a stage called "system," where we just spend our time polishing and greasing the institution getting it ready to turn into the monument. That is why when you go to Europe today and take the main-line Christian tour, you get to visit all the cathedrals. A lot of things go on there today, but one thing that does not happen in any of the cathedrals is much action for the Great Commission. I love the one little lady who tramped through one cathedral after another and heard which king was buried under which

pew, and which one died in the back, and which one's picture was here, and who used to sit there. Finally, she said, "But I am wondering today. . .is anyone still saved here?"

Are we licking those honey droplets or are we engaged in the task? Listen to our prayers. . .you will know what we are about. Are we praying for growth for our churches? Are we praying for world-wide mission? Listen to our prayers. Visit our meetings. Go to our Bible classes. Is this a dominating theme? Is this what we are about . . .or are we about all kinds of other things? Do we spend more time with budgets than we do with world-wide missions? Answer the questions. Let's not lick those honey droplets. This is the King's business! Early on, Jesus sensed His task from God. His mother came, "Where were you? We got up the road without you!" Listen to Him. . . "I was about my Father's business." Twelve years old and he was already task-oriented, thinking about the things of God. Don't ever think that just because we are a church we are thinking about the things of God!

Our attitude to the Great Commission is seen in so many ways. It is seen in our local church right here. When I studied in-depth the American church growth movement, one thing had to come first: no church will ever grow that does not want to grow. You would think that all churches want to grow. Who would even remind us of that? Visit with our people a while. Is that something we talk about with each other? Is that something in our Bible classes? Is that something in our prayers? Publically and privately? That is the beginning place. We could talk about a preacher shortage, which is unbelievable in our country alone. Are we thinking about missions? Can we think beyond ourselves? Can we have some kind of bifocal vision where we see a



world out there, as well as at home? The largest nations in our world are: China, Soviet Union, Indochina and India. Half of the people in the world live there. Can you name a missionary in China or the Soviet Union or India? There are some in each of those places—pitifully few. We don't pray for them, nor are we involved with half of our world today.

Reuel Lemmons has used his editorial page in the *Firm Foundation* to issue the call for every congregation's participation:

We must build in every congregation a training program that will keep producing and preparing men and women who will uproot themselves from kith and kin, and from local pleasures, however sweet, and go to the uttermost parts of the earth in search of lost souls.

Somehow we must look beyond these Southern states. Frank Laubach led a team to the Philippines in 1915. He said farewell to Harvard and the comforts of home with these words:

If I were in a battle and with no orders from my captain, I would be a coward if I fought where we were winning. I would be a man if I fought where our ranks were thin and we were losing the battle. We are in a battle for Jesus Christ, to conquer the world, and the ranks are thinnest and battle hottest in the Orient. So we are going where we are needed most.

We must start somewhere and it needs to be where we are now. We must bring to our life the task of Jesus Christ. We need to quit thinking about missionary meetings, missionary committees, having so many dollars for missions. We need to think in terms of our life being fit for the task. That is when the difference is going to happen—when the fire is ignited in our life.

**We'll be an encouragement to missions around the world. When we do so, we have this promise from Jesus, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world."**



# The Fields Are White unto Harvest

**PARKER L. HENDERSON**



**Address:** Post Office Box 176, San Fernando, Trinidad, West Indies.

**Family:** Wife: the former Donna Deacon. They have five children: Larry, Jeanie (Allison), Rebecca (Talley), Priscilla, and Timothy.

**Education:** Graduate of Abilene Christian College, Spring 1950.

**Work & Ministry:** Currently missionary to Trinidad, West Indies (since 1979). Local evangelistic work: Cocoa, Florida 1950-52; Tullahoma, Tennessee 1952-56; Gainesville, Florida 1956-57.

Was first American missionary to Thailand supported by churches of Christ (1958-78). Was instructor in Sunset School of Preaching, Lubbock, Texas, while on furlough from mission field (1967-69; 1973-74; 1978-79).

Was sent to Thailand by the University Ave. Church of Christ, Austin, Texas, in January 1958, and supported by that congregation for over 22 years. Is now under the oversight of the North 14th Street Church of Christ in Lamesa, Texas.

**Other Fields of Special Interest:** Established and directed the Bangkok School of Preaching 1969-77. Now directs the Trinidad School of Preaching in San Fernando, Trinidad. Was named "Outstanding Alumnus of the Year" by Abilene Christian University in 1980.

Jesus said, "say not ye, There are yet four months and then cometh the harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together (John 4:35,36).

Here, the Lord is comparing a harvest of grain and the harvest of souls. The first was four months in the future, the latter currently ready. There are three main thoughts that we shall consider in this study: (1) The Fields, (2) Are White, and (3) The Harvest.

The term "fields" here is referring to the place where the harvest was located—the areas where lost souls were located. In speaking of that area as one field in the parable of the tares of the field, Jesus explained that "the field is the world" (Matt. 13:38). Jesus had planned from the beginning to reach the whole world, not just the Jewish people. Isaiah declared, ". . .my servant. . .in whom my soul delighteth. . .he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles" (Isaiah 42:1). Concerning the "house of God" or Church of Christ, he had promised that ". . . all nations shall flow unto it" (Isaiah 2:2). In speaking of Isaiah's prophecy, Jesus declared that ". . . in his name shall the Gentiles trust" (Matthew 12:21). When Peter preached on Pentecost he declared that ". . .the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off. . ." (Acts 2:39). Paul declares, ". . .now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13). John adds, ". . . I Jesus . . .testify unto you. . .whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17).

Thus we see that the fields white unto harvest actually include the whole world. The world where men live is

truly a huge place and our task of world evangelism is immense. The job is overwhelming and getting larger every day. To illustrate the increase in population of our world, in 1910 Brother J. M. McCaleb stated, "Africa is three times as large as all Europe. It contains a population of about 175,000,000."<sup>1</sup> Today's population of Africa is over 400,000,000. Brother McCaleb gives the population of China as 400,000,000 and India as 300,000,00. According to most current authorities, China's population today is over 1,000,000,000 and India's is over 700,000,000. Our world is rapidly multiplying and thus our task is getting larger and larger every day. In Brother McCaleb's day, the world population was 1,600,000,000.<sup>2</sup> This past year, our world population surpassed 4,500,000,000. This means that our world is about three times as large as it was in 1910. We are told that by the turn of the century there will be in the neighborhood of 8 billion people on the planet earth! The field is large and our task is staggering to the imagination of man. The Lord had great confidence in us to have given us such a field of labor.

The fields are "white" (John 4:35) is a way of stating that the fields are "ripe" for harvesting.<sup>3</sup> The Lord here referred to the condition of the people—they were at a point when they should be gathered for God. Others had worked among them—the prophets, John the Baptist and perhaps others so that they should be ready for the gospel message. In Galatians we are told that "... when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his

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<sup>1</sup>McCaleb, J. M. *Christ the Light of the World* (Nashville, Tenn., McQuiddy Printing Company, 1911, p. 26).

<sup>2</sup>McCaleb, J. M. p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>Vine, W. E. *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1966, Vol. IV. Set Z, p. 212.

Son. . .” (Galatians 4:4). The time was right and the people had been prepared to hear and obey the good news. The sad part of the story is that even when they had been prepared and were “white unto harvest,” only a few accepted the message (John 1;11,12). In the world today there are vast areas of the field. Some of the “fields” are whiter than others, but there are pockets of white harvest and sometimes whole fields of white harvest that must either be harvested NOW or else most of the grain will be completely lost.

The United States of America is one of the fields now white unto harvest. In a recent poll taken by George Gallup as reported in *Pulpit Helps*, the following observations are given:

1. “Fifty percent of the unchurched see themselves becoming active members of the church in the near future.”
2. “Four out of five unchurched families want their children to have some spiritual nurture and education.”
3. “Two-thirds of the unchurched pray, believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and believe in life after death.”<sup>4</sup>

If this poll by Mr. Gallup be correct, the field of America is NOW ripe. Half of the “unchurched” people have already made up their minds to become something religious! Eighty percent of them want their children to be taught of God and more than 65% are actually praying with some degree of faith in Christ! Of course, they are still lost, but the point is that they are ripe for the harvest. AMERICA IS A NUMBER ONE MISSION FIELD! We should be gathering the greatest

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<sup>4</sup>C. H. Lucas, *At the Crossroads*; Vol. XXIV, No. 28, September 20, 1981.

harvest here. We speak their language, we know their customs, we are their kind of people, **WORKERS MUST ENTER INTO THE FIELD IN GREATER NUMBERS AND WITH MORE ZEAL THAN EVER BEFORE!**

South America, with over 300,000,000 souls, is a field so white unto harvest! Continual reports concerning the "whiteness" of this great field come before our great brotherhood. For more than 20 years Brazil has amazed us with a wonderful ready response to the gospel. Wonderful work done in Sao Paulo is an example of what could be done all over that great country. Guatemala is an example of the whiteness of Central America. The people are so willing to hear that our few missionaries are worked far beyond the call of duty and just cannot answer all of the pleas nor accept all of the opportunities. Our great neighbor to the south, Mexico, has long been a white field with a reception so great that we cannot adequately understand it much less express it. America's proven true friend to the north, Canada, with 20,000,000 people, has long opened her doors to our evangelists. Yet vast cities wait to be evangelized.

The Caribbean, with scores of island countries containing millions of English-speaking people, are among the most receptive fields on earth. Within one day's travel time, these gracious people are indeed like ripened grain that is spoiling in the field because of the lack of reapers. Communism and religious errors of all kinds are rapidly spoiling the harvest and closing the doors to gospel reapers in this area. Delay is disastrous, for many of the fields that are now "white unto harvest."

The fields in Europe may not be as ripe for harvest at the present time as some others, but even here, there is ripened grain among the 500,000,000 souls. In places, there are vast pockets of ripened grain that can be

reaped now that also may prove to be more difficult or impossible to reap in later days.

Asia, with her 2,500,000,000 people, must stand as the greatest unharvested ripened field upon earth. The vastness of this harvest seems to be beyond our ability to grasp. A thousand million people in China and nearly that many in India! One hundred million in Japan, 140 million in Indonesia, 90 million in Pakistan, 85 million in Bangladesh, 50 million in Thailand, 50 million in the Philippines and on and on goes the picture of the vast fields of Asia. We wring our hands and mourn because we cannot go into some of the large countries such as China and India to evangelize in the usual manner. I ask frankly, "what difference does it make?" Did we show much interest in going when we could go? Do we have a force ready to go when we can go? Do we go to the little countries where the door has long been open unto us? When we did go, did we go with enough strength to really get the job of evangelism begun or have we just lightly and rather haphazardly gone into countries and for the most part very temporarily "put in our time." So often we seem to be more concerned that "we have done our part" rather than seeing the job through. Brother James F. Cox, late president of Abilene Christian University, often urged his students to "hoe their row to the end." Few are the mission fields where this has been done. Few are the missionaries who have tried it. Few are the congregations who have even visualized it! **INDEED THE FIELD IS WHITE UNTO HARVEST AND THE LABORERS ARE FEW!**

An example of the whiteness of the field is seen in the following: (1) In Bangkok, Thailand, Mrs. Grace Huang, mother of 9, wife of a medical doctor, Bible student and sincere religious person, once asked this question, "Mr. Parker, if what you say is true, why did not



the Lord lead me to you seven years ago when I joined the Adventist Church?" This was a polite way of asking the most embarrassing question that most missionaries have to answer—"If you have the truth **WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?**" "Why did it take you so long to get here?" "Why didn't you come before my mother died?" That this great lady was sincere is seen in the fact that not only did she obey the gospel herself, but so did 7 of her children, and her husband. She reached back to her mother and down to her grandchildren. Two of her sons are gospel preachers and four generations in her family have been obedient to the gospel. We are grateful that in God's providence we did find her, but what of the millions of persons like Sister Huang who are honestly looking for the truth but whom we have never even thought about starting to commence to get ready to look for? What of these "ripened" souls? We must admit that we have failed in getting to many crops of ripened grain in the past and that we must lift up our eyes and look unto the fields **NOW**. If we tarry, millions more will go to eternity unprepared.

The final part of my assignment is dealing with the "**HARVEST**". In the final analysis, it is the Lord of the harvest that both "sends forth the laborers" (Luke 10:2) and that "giveth the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:7). He does expect, however, that those who believe in him should be "laborers together with him" (1 Corinthians 3:9). He gives us the privilege of living right and teaching right and thus in so doing to "save them that hear us" (1 Timothy 4:16). This is as the apostles of Christ were commissioned by the Lord when he told them to "remit sins" (John 20:23). The powerful gospel that God uses to call sinners (2 Thessalonians 2:14), he has also placed in the hands of men (2 Corinthians 4:7). **God calls man by man!**

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? . . . So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:13-15,17).

God here makes it plain that not only does he not send where his people will not go, but neither does he reap a harvest where we will not preach. As Brother H. K. Dong from Korea used to come to the campus and say in his blunt straightforward way, "GOD SPEAKS TO MAN BY MAN." This being true, our willingness to do his will in preaching to the whole world is vastly important. I used to say that God doesn't **need** any of us. He can use us but we **need** him. I was mistaken! God does need us! Jesus said to two disciples, "Go ye into the village over against you; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied. . . loose him and bring him hither" (Luke 19:30). The Lord had a job for that donkey and sent his disciples to get him. Now, please notice the Lord's instructions, ". . . if any man ask you, why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath **NEED** of him" (Luke 19:31). When the Lord wanted a donkey for a job, the Bible says, "the Lord hath need of him." The Lord's job today requires not donkeys but dedicated men and women. **THE LORD HATH NEED OF YOU IN THE GREAT HARVEST!**

One of the first matters that we must be clear on in order for us to fill the need in world evangelism—the harvest of souls—is to get our thinking straight as to **WHO IS LOST**. The world is lost! All who have reached the accountability of life have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). The wages of sin is

death (Romans 6:23). "He that believeth not shall be damned" (Mk. 16:16b). Jesus is, ". . . the way the truth and the life. . ." (John 14:6). He surely declared, ". . . no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6b). "Neither is there salvation in any others: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). God, in flaming fire, shall take vengeance on ". . . them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:8). ". . . death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). If the Bible is plain on any subject (and it is), it is plain on this one, **THE WORLD IS LOST!**

A second matter that must be clear in our understanding is simply, **WHO IS SAVED?** The Bible teaches that the Church of Christ is the one body (Col. 1:18) and to that one body, that one church, Christ adds the saved (Acts 2:47). To be out of that church is to be lost unless one can be saved when he shouldn't be, because the Lord adds to the church daily those that should be saved. God translates the forgiven into his Son's kingdom (Col. 1:13,14). His kingdom is his church and this kingdom-church contains the saved. To be out of the Church of Christ is to be out of the saved and therefore to be lost. If one doesn't understand that the world is lost and that the church is saved, of course he will not be evangelistic. When we grasp the truth concerning the world being lost and the church being saved, love for God and man will constrain us to be like our Lord in seeking and saving the lost (Luke 19:10).

A third matter of great importance is concerning whose responsibility it is. **WHO IS GOING TO DO IT?** Sometimes we hear, "Well, why don't they do something about it?" Until such time as a large percentage of the church understands that "we" are the

**“they,” we will never evangelize the world. It is the responsibility of the the WHOLE church to preach the WHOLE gospel to the WHOLE world. Notice that the apostles were told to “teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you . . . ” (Matthew 28:19,20). Those taught and baptized by the words of the apostles were also to be taught to do what Jesus commanded. He had just commanded the teaching of all nations. Every baptized believer should be taught to teach to the best of his ability. This is our basic and fundamental responsibility—WORLD EVANGELISM! In the early church all of the disciples except the apostles went everywhere preaching the word (Acts 8:1,4). The apostles declared, “ . . . we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20). The whole church continued “steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine . . . ” and were thus all involved in evangelism as they were all of “one heart and of one soul” (Acts 5:32). It is no wonder that multitudes of men and women were the more “added to the Lord” (Acts 5:15). Their practice was, “Daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:42). Those doing the work of deacons were evangelistic. One of them, Stephen, was so effective in evangelism that the disputing Jews were not able “to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake” (Acts 6:9,10). Another one doing deacon’s work, Philip, lead a whole city to the Lord (Acts 8:5-13). From Acts 15 we get the impression that the elders were excited about world evangelism as they, along with the apostles, worked with the multitude of brethren on behalf of the task of evangelism among the Gentiles and “with one accord” they sent forth evangelists to the**

Gentiles with good news (Acts 15:25-27). The preachers were sold on evangelism and preached the word in season or out of season, in jail or out of jail (2 Timothy 4:2; Acts 16:25-34). The women were excited about evangelism. They supported preachers (Acts 16:15), they were servants of the church (Romans 16:1), they were personal evangelists (as Priscilla) (Acts 18:24-28), and even their funerals were occasions for showing their good deeds (Acts 9:39). They gave of their time daily (Acts 5:42), they gave of their money (Acts 4:34-37), they gave of their children and grandchildren (2 Timothy 1:5), they gave of their houses and lands (Acts 2:34). The modern-day expression of, "I don't want to stick out my neck" was unknown in their practice. Quite the opposite was true, as men and women like Aquila and Priscilla actually "laid down their own necks . . . " (Romans 16:4).

How white the fields are unto harvest! Our problem today is not that the fields are lacking, nor that the grain is not white unto harvest. Our great problem is with the laborers. We are not going into the harvest in sufficient numbers. As I see it, we are needing three main items that we must have from the whole church if we would accomplish the "harvest" for which Christ died. (1) We must have TIME from the whole church. All of us are ministers (Matthew 20:25-28). Time is the stuff our lives are made of. If we give Christ our life, we must give him our time. Daily evangelism by the whole church will produce a harvest of the ripened fields that can never be gathered by a few thousand supported workers. The whole church must take the whole gospel to the whole world!

(2) The Lord needs YOUR CHILDREN. Many missionaries give credit to their mothers for their interest in reaching the lost. This is a great compliment to the



mothers in Israel! And yet, the haunting question rings in our ears, "If mothers are responsible for the majority of our missionaries, who is responsible for the fact that we have so FEW?????" If mothers are a chief source of encouragement for those who go, is it not just as true that mothers are the chief source of discouragement for those millions who do not go? If you mothers have such influence on your children, why not for the cause of God inspire your children for world evangelism? If all parents would train and inspire their children for world evangelism, we would have a tidal wave of evangelism that would sweep across the brotherhood like we have never seen. If we can have more women like Eunice and Lois (2 Timothy 1:5), we will have more Timothys. If we can have more women like Hannah who will "give them to the Lord all the days of their lives" (1 Samuel 1:11), we will have more men and women with great dedication to the Lord like Samuel. Look at some of the great families of our times: With more families like the Padens we would have more evangelists like Cline, Gerald, Harold, Pat and a host more. With more families like the Gus Nichols, we would have more Hardemans, Flavels, Pervies and all of the other great children from that family. Look at the Wallace family and think of the power of Foy E., G.K. and our own Glenn L.!! Mothers and fathers, give us your children in the Master's service! Train your children for world evangelism.

(3) We must give our MONEY. In Trinidad where my wife, Donna, our son, Timothy and I live and work for world evangelism, the people in the audience talk back to the preacher more than is customary in most places in the States. "Amen," "That's right," "Come on now" and such expressions of encouragement may be heard during the preaching. I heard of a preacher who was



preaching in such circumstances on one occasion. He said, "brothers and sisters this church is going to walk." The audience replied, "Let her walk." The preacher proceeded, "This church is going to run." The audience urged, "Let her run!" The preacher then shouted, "This church is going to fly!" The audience happily replied, "Let her fly!" The preacher then declared, "If this church is going to fly, you people are going to have to give more money!" The immediate reply was, "Let her walk!" Sometimes this is much like we have acted. We talk about world evangelism, we pray about world evangelism, we write about world evangelism, but when we come to the cost of it, we say, "Let her walk."

The early church set the example for us in sacrificial giving.

"Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet . . . (Acts 4:34,35)

The Lord has blessed his people with great wealth. By world standards we are all wealthy. In most of our Christian Colleges and Schools of Preaching, we have men and women ready to go to the fields of the earth within a few months. At Sunset School of Preaching, I have seen the graduates by the dozens plead for help to go into various needy fields with but few if any churches willing or ready to help. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15), the wisdom of God is to be made known by the church (Ephesians 3:10). It is our job to give our money for world evangelism. I believe that many brethren are willing and anxious to so do and are waiting for their leaders to

launch out and show the way. This is seen in the example of a number of congregations that have called upon each member to give special contributions for evangelism. For several years the North 14th Street church in Lamesa has done this and the members have responded with more than \$40,000.00 each year in extra giving just for evangelism. The Sunset church in Lubbock gathers about \$150,000.00 per year in one special sacrificial collection for world evangelism. When brethren know that all the money is going for evangelism they will make real sacrifices for others to know the truth.

Perhaps the real need for those of us who have lifted up our eyes and have seen that the field is white unto harvest, is to say it like the Thai brother did in his prayer. Brother Tommy Allison had carried me to the hospital some ten years ago. Word went out in Thailand that I was critically ill. Two Thai men traveled about 500 miles to see me. When they arrived I had been through surgery and looked much like death. They openly wept when they saw me and one of them prayed a prayer that went like this, "Dear Father, please don't let brother Parker die. If anyone in this room has to die, don't let it be him, but PLEASE, LORD, LET IT BE ME." If we are ever going to reach the ripened harvest for God, the masses of God's people are going to have to start praying, "PLEASE, LORD, LET IT BE ME." Let it be me that goes, let it be me that trains and sends my children and let it be me that gives my money, for the fields are "WHITE UNTO HARVEST."

# Obstacles to World Evangelism

Elijah Anthony



**Address:** 209 B Willow Turn, Mt. Laurel, New Jersey 08054.

**Family:** Wife: the former Adoris Gregory, of Birmingham, Alabama. They have one son, Derek. Elijah is a native of Birmingham, Alabama, and a product of the Ensley church of Christ. He was taught the truth by his grandparents, and followed the example of his grandfather, who preached for more than 50 years.

**Education:** Received his post-secondary education at Harding University and

Queens College of the City University of New York.

**Work:** Taught and counseled in the Brentwood Public School District for 11 years, and presently counsels students at a community college in New Jersey.

**Ministry:** Began preaching at the age of 16 and has been actively involved to the present time, where he is serving at the 63rd and Vine Street church of Christ, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The focus of his present ministry is on the inner city, where he feels the Word is needed most.

**Other Fields of Special Interest:** Has been recognized for his determination to excel spiritually and secularly in "Outstanding Young Men of America," in 1976 and 1981.

### Introduction

I am grateful for the opportunity that has been extended to me to speak in this lectureship program, and I am praying that what I have prepared to say will be accepted in the same spirit in which it is presented, that being love for the church. I have been humbled by my continuing study of evangelism and the power of our God, and I have emerged from it filled with courage to speak in behalf of God's plan for the world.

The topic I have chosen is "Obstacles To World Evangelism." This topic touches two important aspects of consideration for every Christian: (1) the responsibility incumbent upon Christians to evangelize the world, and (2) the fact that there are obstacles to the achievement of this goal. An obstacle is that which stands in the way of progress, that which thwarts positive efforts to accomplish a goal, and it is with this definition in mind that I ask your consideration of the topic at hand.

In our attempts to continue what Christ and the Apostles started we have conducted cottage classes; we have conducted gospel revivals; we have gone to school and acquired many degrees; we have held debates; we have initiated what we thought to be fail-proof evangelistic programs; we have sent out missionaries; we have written tracts, manuals, books, and on and on it goes, but we have not come close to obtaining the magnitude of response that 12 common men received as a result of preaching Jesus. This is not to say that tremendous accomplishments have not been obtained, but given what the Apostles had to work with and what we have to work with today, the results have been minimal. The instructions we have received from the Lord (Mark 16:15-16) to "preach the gospel to all the world" have not gone unnoticed by the devil. Con-

sequently, our efforts have not been executed in the absence of interference and obstacles from Satan. It is the design of this lesson to list, discuss, and clarify, as well as to suggest some Bible-based solutions to some of the obstacles that have seriously hindered our efforts to evangelize the world before Jesus' return.

First, let us consider some of the strengths we have exhibited as we identify the areas that are not of major concern and therefore do not present problems for us. The problem is not a lack of knowledge; we have enough materials and expertise in the scriptures to evangelize and save any society. The problem is not a lack of ability in convincing people to commit themselves to the Lord; we have collectively baptized thousands year after year. The problem is not a lack of forceful preaching; we have men in the church who can speak and bring the masses to their feet. What then is this stifling "albatross" that hangs around the neck of God's people? I submit the following answers for your consideration.

### **OBSTACLE NO. 1:**

#### **In Our Ambition To Evangelize The World, We Have Baptized Many People Prematurely**

Praise God that the ambition to evangelize is still present in this age. Many effective plans have been executed, and the results have been a God-send in many areas of the world. Many of our major cities have been saturated with the gospel as a result of campaigns and old-fashioned revivals. Bible Correspondence Courses are in abundance, radio and television broadcasts abound nationwide, but in the midst of all of the good that is taking place, efforts to instruct converts lag behind hasty baptisms. The recent surge of interest in evangelism and church growth is partially due to the



spiraling attrition rate which is a direct result of baptizing people prematurely. The more people we baptize, the more we lose. We take out extra chairs today and put them back in the basement tomorrow. We keep teaching, and people keep leaving the church. There is a Church of Christ in practically every city, but no real difference is obvious as a result of it. There are still many people who have not heard of the Church of Christ though they live in the general vicinity of the church. It seems that our efforts to evangelize have become so competitive that the emphasis is no longer on the soul, but the body; that is, over-emphasis on quantitative growth has caused us to baptize anybody we could corner for a minute or two. Although we understand that people respond to many things in the name of Christianity, we have continued baptizing people whose fascination and subsequent belief are not grounded in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, but in us and how we do things. We have allowed people to respond to our orderliness in carrying out the service, the style of the preacher, the special programs we offer, etc. Obviously, when we allow people to respond to these things rather than Christ, their spiritual lives will be short-lived. There are several instances in the scriptures where Christ turned some away though it seemed they would follow him. It is interesting to note that these potential disciples chose to turn back after Jesus questioned them about their intentions beyond their statements of belief. Consider the young man in Matthew 19 and the three men in Luke 14 who came to Jesus, but wanted to be excused for one reason or another. Jesus' ministry revealed that people are much more productive and their spiritual lives more committed when they sincerely *want* to do his will and not when they merely pay lip service to the idea. We must insist, as Jesus strongly commands,



that the answer to the gospel call be given in the context of "obeying from the heart (mind, understanding) that form of doctrine once delivered to the saints" (Romans 6:17). We invite spiritual suicide when we allow people to commit themselves blindly to that which they do not understand.

Also, there are some basic prerequisites for survival in the Kingdom of God and for learning to serve effectively in God's Army; among them are (1) the realization that hardships will come as a result of accepting Jesus; (2) the realization that the devil will double the severity of his attack on a new convert, and (3) the realization that the time for the new convert to teach is later; initially, he must be taught. Without understanding and accepting these three items, the new convert will continue to be disappointed, disillusioned, and continually drifting away from the church. And in the final analysis, these premature Christian births do more harm than good because just as a "satisfied customer is the best advertisement," a dissatisfied customer is the worst advertisement, and lest we be guilty of promising that which cannot or will not be delivered, we must see to it that the convert understands what his commitment means.

As long as we are content to fill our buildings, we will not evangelize the world. As long as our interest is on head counts instead of heart counts, we will continue to see them leave before we have had a chance to teach them.

## **OBSTACLE NO. 2:**

**The Qualitative Strength And Growth Which Are Prerequisites To World Evangelism Are Absent.**

More important than the number in attendance is the quality of life lived by those in attendance. Therefore,

our efforts to evangelize the world begin in the local congregation as we continue converting ourselves *first* to the principles taught by Jesus. The evangelistic process must be deliberately planned so that the church continually prepares itself to meet the needs of those newly entering its fellowship. Part of the outcome of an over-emphasis on numbers is what I refer to as the "assembly line method of conversion": teach them; baptize them; forget them! Only in the church do we teach men to have a zeal for God and then criticize them when they display it! The church must exemplify a genuineness that is beyond reproach, and this large order takes time, not scriptures only, but quality time spent together (Acts 2:42-46).

Much of the misplaced emphasis on numbers has come about as a result of preachers "ego-tripping" and judging each other by the numbers standard. Preachers enjoy a privilege in having an audience at their command two or three times a week that is quite capable, when used by the devil, of causing an inflated ego. Unfortunately, members of the church have at times fostered this pride in the preacher's heart by preferring one over another (1 Cor. 3). We have begun to judge the worth of preachers by the number of people they can persuade to follow *them*, so that their ability to persuade has become of paramount importance rather than whether they speak the truth. Also, much of the problem has been stimulated by supporting congregations devising desperate plans and methods to measure the success of the Missionary or Evangelist being supported. This practice of using the number baptized as the only facet of the evaluative process has given rise to falsified reports and baptizing people impatiently and without teaching so that the figures could be included in the monthly report.

Many congregations, in the name of evangelism and church growth, are setting goals of 100 or 200 to be baptized this year *while explicit goals are not being set for the fostering of qualitative growth* within the church, and this inordinate emphasis on filling the pews has led to bringing people into the church before we are adequately equipped to care for them spiritually and many times before they are ready to commit themselves maturely. To continue bringing people into congregations that are not prepared to sustain the spiritual growth process is another avenue to spiritual suicide. Quality growth comes as a result of quality teaching and time spent together. Too much of our time together is spent arguing over issues, forming committees to discuss the problems of the local church, and trying to convert a newcomer to our services in one easy lesson. Too little of our time is spent edifying and building each other up—therein is the reason we come together—to encourage, to edify, to build up (1 Cor. 14:12; 2 Thess. 5:11). Further, the purpose of our coming together can be described in terms of boxing competition. The boxers meet in the middle of the ring and fight for three minutes, after which they go to their respective corners to be cooled off, refreshed, advised, instructed, warned, etc. The fighter depends on and must have these things happen in order to be successful in the match. We are all aware of what would happen if the person whose job it is to place the chair, to fan, or to instruct, stopped doing his job (for whatever the reason), and we are just as aware of what would happen if the people in the fighter's corner, who are supposed to be working for his benefit, ceased their efforts and started to fight him; he would certainly be defeated! This is what happens in some of our congregations. We, in essence, fight each other when we don't build each other up.

An integral part of evangelizing the world is the ability on the part of those committed to withstand setbacks and obstacles thwarting their progress. To obtain this, we must focus on qualitative growth which encompasses being grounded in the truth, built up in the faith, and believing that all things happen through Jesus and not our feeble numbers. Twelve men served as the catalyst to the first evangelization of the world, and the task was realized, not by their efforts only, but through Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore, the challenge is not just to have more people, but to have more quality Christians who are (1) willing to grow beyond pettiness, (2) willing to withstand problems and disappointments, (3) willing to believe that Jesus is able to accomplish all things, and (4) willing to be persistent in their efforts to evangelize.

### **OBSTACLE NO. 3:**

**We Have Fostered Divisiveness By Taking The Emphasis And Power Off The Message And Placing It On The Messenger.**

According to the Apostle Paul, the power is in the message (Rom. 1:16), not the messenger. We can be sure that one of the abominations in the sight of God is our unwillingness to give him the glory in our successes. The lesson taught Gideon is far-reaching in its implications for us today. As Gideon prepared to face the Midianites and the Amalekites in war, God told him to cut down his army of 32,000 men so that when the victory was realized, it would also be realized who was responsible for it (Judges 5:7). Seemingly, we have not learned this lesson even now, for we continue the practice of placing the emphasis on the instrument (man) rather than God who uses the instrument. When a doctor performs successful surgery, the scalpel does not receive the credit, no matter how sharp, precise in construction, or the

worth of it; the doctor gets the applause. At times, our preparedness and ability to devise workable programs have clouded our vision and caused us to think that success has come by our own hands. When He feeds us, we talk about our jobs and how hard we work; when He sustains our efforts to do His will, we talk about our abilities and talents; when He saves us, we talk about our works. We must be reminded that in spite of all of our talents, nothing right, good, or worthwhile happens without God! Much too little is said about God, and too much is said about us. Because of this misplaced emphasis, unnecessary competition exists among some preachers. Consequently, many of our modern preachers are more concerned about having a personal following than seeing people commit themselves to the Lord. In Acts 14:11-18, what a perfect opportunity for Paul and Barnabas to reap the benefits of the people's ignorance, but they chose to keep God in His rightful place as they remained in theirs. The evidence in this passage seems to suggest that there will be those who will seek to make of us as preachers that which we were never intended to be. Whereas it is understood that the messenger is an integral part of the evangelistic process, we must remember that it is not our teaching and preaching alone that cause people to convert, but their relationship with the Savior (1 Cor. 3:6). He stands in the spotlight! His name goes on the finished product.

#### **OBSTACLE NO. 4:**

**Our Frustration Level Has Been Heightened Because We Have Overlooked Some Of The Basic Facts Concerning Evangelizing.**

Fact 1—*Everybody Will Not Respond To The Gospel.* There is no indication in all of the scriptures to the effect that all or even most people will (ever) do

what's right or desire to be saved. In fact, all indications suggest the opposite—only a few will strive to do right or desire to go to heaven. We bring much unnecessary frustration on ourselves when we go out thinking that most people will respond positively to what we teach. We add to the dilemma when we take people's rejection of the Word personally.

The realization that not everyone in our families, circles of friends, communities, or the world will respond to the gospel call is an integral ingredient of effective teaching. We know that people *should* respond to the "good news," but the scriptures suggest to us that no matter how much truth is told or how many doors are knocked, many will be lost because "men love darkness rather than light . . ." (John 3:19). And just as fervently as we believe and teach that the Bible cannot be changed in other areas, we must equally believe that our sincerity in preaching the Word will not change the Biblical fact that many will be lost (Matt. 7:13).

Understanding the role of the individual Christian in the evangelistic process will also alleviate some of the frustration we have experienced. In 1 Corinthians, chapter 3, Paul sets forth the role we are to play. In verse 6 of this chapter, Paul says, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." In other words, our responsibility is to preach and teach; God does the rest. Our evangelistic productivity will spiral as we accept this great truth.

**Fact 2—*We Are Hindered By Misplaced Goals.*** Resting at the foundation of many Christian lives is the problem of misplaced goals. The goals that characterize Christians are in direct opposition to the goals of our old carnal natures. Our new birth through Christ represents death to the cares of the world. Since our "hearts will be where our treasures are" (Matt. 6:21),



what we spend the greatest amount of our time doing is a reflection of what is really important to us. Many travels have brought me in contact with many Christians who are so busy trying to get ahead financially that they don't have time to focus on their new found goals. Regardless of what else we desire to be or do, if we are Christians, we are also soul-winners. Christianity must be lived simultaneously with everything else that is happening in our lives. It is not a separate experience having its own time of day. Our dealings with people must carry an ulterior motive, that being to tell the story of the Cross with life and lip.

In addition, we have often sought to win arguments rather than souls. Jesus leads us in a mission that is designed to seek and save, not seek and destroy. Though it is understood that winning arguments has at times resulted in the winning of souls, priorities must be established.

*Fact 3—We Have Presented A Partial Picture Of The Church.* Bringing people into the Christian fellowship with the false belief that everybody there is about the business of Christianity is destructive to their spiritual lives, as they will grow weak and eventually leave when they notice those who are uncommitted. New converts must be prepared for this or they will be in for a rude awakening.

### **OBSTACLE NO.5:**

**We Have Been Busy Fighting Internal Battles And Plagued By Disunity.**

Through Jehovah's dealings with the people at the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11), we have learned a great lesson. God used confusion to halt the selfish dealings of these people because confusion works, even in the hands of God. We would do well to note that the work

was not hindered or crippled by confusion, but it was brought to a definite end. The person making use of confusion is irrelevant to the fact that it works to disunify.

Like the church at Sardis (Rev. 3:1) which had the reputation of being alive but was actually dead, we have a reputation that is not fully borne out under close scrutiny. The devil's game-plan includes helping us to spend our precious time fighting internal battles rather than evangelizing. Until we can accept the fact that we are presently divided, we will not move further beyond this condition in this generation. We teach that the gospel is for all and that "God is no respecter of persons," but we continue to make excuses for all of God's children not working together to evangelize the world. It's still not kosher for us to spend too much time with people (even within the church) from racial groups different from our own, and we have conveniently allowed the "tracks" that have separated Blacks and Whites for centuries to run right through the church. So, while we talk togetherness, we exhibit division; we come together to eat a meal, but there is still some discomfort. We have excused ourselves from the responsibility we have to work together.

The "house" that has the responsibility of fostering unity cannot afford to be plagued by disunity, for Jesus has taught us that "a house or kingdom divided against itself cannot stand" (Matt. 12:25). It doesn't take new converts long to sense that something is not right with our segregated assemblies. Some will say, "we don't discourage anybody from worshipping with us," but the fact is we don't much encourage it either. If there is one thing that will bring the world closer to understanding God's Word and what He desires of us all, it is our working together and really manifesting the fact that in

Christ, there is neither "Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free," male or female, Black or White, but we are all one. Much of the good already accomplished has been invalidated by our disunity. We have often avoided this issue, but it must be addressed or "a little leaven will spoil the whole."

There are two churches (in addition to the many professed by some) in America, the Black Church and the White Church. May the Lord help us to rectify this inconsistency before He returns.

### **OBSTACLE: NO.6:**

#### **We Have Forgotten Whom We Serve.**

The greatness of our God has somehow eluded us. We must be constantly reminded that it was our God who spoke and caused light to come into existence; it was Jehovah who destroyed the inhabitants of the world with a flood; it was He who sent Jesus into the world to suffer and die at the hands of scoundrels; and it is He who sustains us today through our relationship with His Son. Having done these things certainly qualifies Him to do anything we need done today. What is available to us through Jesus Christ and what we ask for are two very different matters. We ask for small things because we have equated our God with small tasks, and nothing could be further from the truth.

If we are to accomplish the task of evangelizing the world, it will be done in the context of what *God* can do and not what *we* can do. Too many of our potential good works are tabled indefinitely because we cannot decide who's going to be out front collecting the applause, and in some cases, the money. Our genuine concern must be directed toward souls rather than silver.

We serve the living God whose "well of sufficiency"

has not been adequately tapped, thus we thirst, foolishly, for things that are ours for the asking (John 15:7). We serve the great "I AM" who can accomplish all things, but who is motivated by our faith in Him. It has taken me along time to realize that the real battle in progress is between two classes of people in the church, those who believe in the power of God and those who do not. Have you re-validated your faith lately? Do you really believe that God created this world, caused it to rain for forty days and nights, sent Jesus to die for the world, and will judge the "quick and the dead" at the judgment? I do not mean to suggest that this faith is easily acquired. Often, we have taken this faith for granted and dealt with it as though achieving it was all in a day's work, but the faith of which I speak must not be underestimated, for it causes us to build large boats when there is no rain; it causes us to sacrifice our all because of a still small voice we have heard; it causes us to go the extra mile; it causes us to go out, not knowing where we're going. This faith never grows old: neither is it something God designed for the Patriarchs *only*. Hebrews 11:6 applies to every generation. We must cease our reliance on each other, for Jesus has called us to a life of complete reliance on Him (Matt. 10). This principle is contrary to what we were taught by our parents and society as children and what we have grown accustomed to as adults. We were taught independence, and much importance was placed on being able to do things for ourselves. But when Jesus enters our lives, He teaches us to rely, trust, and have faith in Him to supply all of our needs, and appropriately enough, the work He has given us to do cannot be done without Him.

### Conclusion

In order to ensure the success of our mission to evangelize the world, obstacles must be viewed as a fac-

tual and forever-present part of that mission, for they will certainly come. Then we must plan for and make provisions for dealing with these obstacles in advance.

The devil knows our weaknesses and uses them to tempt us, presenting only those things that he knows are the most difficult for us to refuse, but "we are not ignorant of his devises" either (2 Cor. 2:11), so the battle is equally fought. The devil is simply more persistent in causing our downfall than we are in remaining faithful to the task at hand.

In spite of these obstacles and setbacks, God can and does work through those who allow Him to do so. God will have an affect on men everywhere, for "every knee shall bow to Christ and every tongue shall confess to God" (Rom. 14:11). May we be continuously inspired—through the truth of scripture—to carry out our responsibility as Christians. We must be evangelists (not on Sundays; that's the wrong time) on the job, at the market, in the street, in the hospitals, when we're ill, when we're well, in the unemployment line, and at the baseball game. We must never lose sight of what it is we are here to do. Let us work hard to reverse the trend that has many people dying before they have heard the gospel, for every time one dies without having heard the gospel, the devil has reduced the population of the heavenly city by one. However, I cannot conclude this lesson without leaving you with a word of encouragement and hope. I am reminded of the story of a little girl who was trying to finish reading a book before going to bed. She read impatiently, wanting to know what would happen in the end. But before she could finish reading the book, her mother came into her room and instructed her to put the book away and go to sleep, whereupon she quickly turned to the back of the book and read the last page and discovered that the hero had been suc-

cessful. Now, she could sleep unencumbered knowing that things had turned out the way she had hoped they would. And I say to you today that there is reason for hope, for I have read the back of the Book, and I know that Jesus will be victorious! (Rev. 14:22). The world must have knowledge of this victory. May we feel the weight that is upon us to evangelize the world. We exist to evangelize and to the extent that we fail to do this, the church fails to exist!



# Lo, I Am With You Always

**Hilton Merritt**



**Address:** 5421 76th Street, Lubbock, Texas 79424.

**Family:** Wife: the former Avaneil Sue Hill. They have three daughters: Leila, Keri, and Rebecca.

**Education:** Abilene Christian University (B.S. in Agriculture; S.T.B.), Nairobi University (Ph.D.).

**Work and Ministry:** Presently serves as Dean of the Sunset School of Preaching, Lubbock, Texas. Spent twelve years in Kenya, Africa, as part of a team ministry, along with Gaston Tarbet, Sonny Guild, Larry

Stephens, and others, where fifty congregations were brought into being. Served seven years ministry with congregations in Artesia, New Mexico; Hawley, Texas; and Tulsa, Oklahoma.

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It took almost four years for this matter to be resolved. Had it not been for tenacity on the part of two women, a happy ending would not have been possible. The story begins on November 23, 1970, when a Russian sailor jumped aboard the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter

**VIGILANT.** A furor arose as Russians were allowed to retrieve *Simas Kudirka*. As he was hauled into Russian custody, young Simas shouted, "But I'm an American, I'm an American."

That event caught media attention. It became a cause. Within a few days, from Admirals on down, men were given options of retirement or court martial proceedings for allowing "piracy" where one asking for asylum was removed from custody. Then the matter faded from the public eye.

Simas Kudirka would have been forgotten but for two women, *Grazina Paegle* and *Daiva Kezys*. Americans of Lithuanian extraction, they became intrigued by Simas' statement, "I'm an American." His cause became their obsession. They campaigned for his release with government officials, congressmen, in fact anyone. Hundreds of rejections failed to discourage the two women.

Persistence paid off when a letter from Lithuania brought information that Simas' mother had been born in America. Mrs. Paegle threw herself into documenting that fact. Finally, a faded "baptismal certificate" dated September 29, 1906, was found in a New York City Orthodox church. It showed that Simas' mother had been born in this country. Government agents authenticated the document. Then the two women haggled with bureaucrats. They spent thousands of hours and dollars. In July, 1974, Simas' citizenship was declared in Washington. In November of that year—nearly four years after the escape bid—Simas came to America again.

One man found freedom because of the commitment to a cause by two women. They spent themselves in the cause of Simas. What an example of commitment they are to us and how true the words, "The people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind

than are the people of light" (Luke 16:8).

These two women had a cause—political freedom. They focused attention on one man's plight in pursuing a goal. We need the same tenacity. Knowing we are called to "snatch others from the fire and save them" (Jude 23), we need to be called back from many frivolous activities.

Someone has said, the more familiar we are with a passage of scripture, the more carefully and slowly we should approach it. If we want direction regarding our calling and work, let us consider the "great commission" in just this way. What is the emphasis? What is the intention?

### **A Claim**

The text begins with a claim, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." Jesus had authority which caused men to follow him when he said, "Come." He had authority even to heal the sick and raise the dead. His words had authority. But the authority claimed here—all authority—rests on one thing, his resurrection. His victory at that point "disarmed principalities and powers" (Col. 1:15), both spiritual and physical.

This claim to "all authority" is based on physical resurrection from the dead enacted in a Messianic setting. It demands a radical response. We have to totally accept it and call Him Lord of our heart of hearts or to totally reject it. Either Jesus Christ won an ultimate victory or he is, as C.S. Lewis has suggested, as "looney" as the man who claims to be a boiled egg.

The Spirit of the Lord tells us that when Jesus rose from the grave, He took on the role of the Son of Man mentioned in Daniel's prophecy (Dan. 7:14).

What a wonder to hold allegiance to a Lord who has authority over even death! What a solace! "Praise be

the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In His great mercy He has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (I Pet. 1:3). He has authority to raise his people from cold graves. Hearts burn when we read the words of the Lord of all authority in the face of death and separation in John 14:1-3.

We hear the words, "authority," "power." But the yoke is easy, the burden is light. Jesus is so personal, so human, so appealing, that power and authority are not frightening. We bow to the Lord of Lords and King of Kings, but our hearts are light because our cosmic Lord is so sufficient for those of us weak and in doubt like those disciples.

### **Three Participles and an Imperative**

Our Lord says: "Go, teach, baptize, instruct." Instead of receiving four imperatives as our English Bible indicates, the Greek text has three participles and one imperative. The "strong" verb—the imperative—is the word "teach" or more literally disciple. This helps establish priorities. Going does not complete the mandate. Baptism is not the ultimate. Even Christian instruction, i.e., "teaching them to observe all that I have told you" is not the primary goal.

If we yearn to avoid a superficiality where missionaries appear too similiar to tourists, where baptismal "head counts" cut across the sound baptismal theology of the apostle who said, "The Lord sent me not to baptize," and where well-intentioned souls are accused of being "cultural imperialists," we will find the answer in the priorities of the text. Going, baptizing and instructing are proper condiments in the commission. But they find their wholeness in relation to discipling. Only when we know Jesus Christ as disciples

and learn to share Him with others in discipling will we break away from many of our problems.

### **Discipling**

As mentioned, discipling grows out of relationship to the Lord. Jesus said, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). He prepared a small band of men by living and ministering the faith principle with them in the dusty arena of daily life for just over three years. That method of living faith together was not only effective—it is a pattern worthy of imitation today.

It is interesting—if not humorous to say the least—to note that a Ph.D. study at a Northwestern USA university draws a final, momentous conclusion that "pattern-ing" or apprentice, or practical training is just as effective in skill training as any other method.

The master teacher knew that. He participated in ordinary, daily life activities with men who were growing in knowledge and awareness of God. His creative initiatives were "remembered" by men who had walked with Him. Because it was life that He transformed in their presence, faithful disciples were also creative. They were to "bring out of storerooms new treasures as well as old" (Matt. 13:52). Obedient friends of the Lord were "gospel gossipers"—that being a literal rendition of Acts 8:4 they "preached" the word wherever they went. The preaching of that early, persecuted band was not a polished, rhetorical message. Rather, disciples knew life had been given from Jesus Christ. They testified in simple language about the King who was both savior and master over death.

Jesus never intended disciples to clone into jerk-step conformity and to lose their sense of wonder as they went telling the gospel message. His cause is hurt when men take their eyes off the "cross and the resurrection" and begin to compare both themselves and their



teachings. Christ is so perfect—without flaw such as ordinary mortals have—(Jas. 1:17)—that we can only preach Him. When we relearn the truth of John 12:23, that when He is lifted from the earth, all men will be drawn to Him—we can disciple.

Oh, when, brothers, will we return to the truth that our identity is in Christ—not in some position evolving out of ever present “doctrinal battles” as we call them. How is it that we limp between opinions and fail to speak of Christ? When will we cease to speak the language of Ashdod and use such unholy language as “mainline” churches, “loyal” churches, etc.? When will we look to the Lord so we can be changed into His likeness “from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor. 3:18)—and become the kind of disciplers we should.

As we do that, we can recapture first century evangelistic zeal. We will find ourselves conducting “soul talks” in strange places. One of our “preaching students” in Lubbock caught a prowler at 1:30 p.m. The police were called and before they could arrive, Tony said, “If you want to know about a better way of life, we want to share it with you.” Within days Tony and the ex-prowler were studying. After two months the man was a baptized believer.

Creativity and service—the early church had that. Because they believed, “The wind blows wherever it pleases” (John 3:8), they were not surprised that the aroma of Christ arrived in Caesar’s household. Recognizing the radical, penetrating power of Jesus Christ, they knew transformation as normative. They said, “And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of God” (I Cor. 6:19). The true disciple “regards no one from a human point of view” (2 Cor. 5:16). He knows that

Jesus Christ can forgive, can transform, and can renew the spirit. He hopes against hope for every fellow creature of the world that the appeal of Christ will strike responsive, obedient chords.

### **Baptizing and Instructing**

Those disciples were to be baptized and receive additional instruction. New Testament theology linked "the washing of water with the Word" (Eph. 5:32). The ancient Christian assumption was that immersion is a practice where believers participate in death, burial, and resurrection with Christ. The "rite" is not magical, it is effective because of "faith in the working of God" (Col. 2:12). It has a quality akin to the affective "prophetic symbolism" of the Old Testament. Unlike the mainly negative symbols of that period (illustrated by the tearing of Samuel's mantle as inauguration of God's tearing the kingdom from King Saul, I Sam. 15:27-28), the "presence of the glory of the Lord" makes baptism into a "divine initiation." There is a sense of authentication, energizing, inauguration in New Testament baptism. The active God transforms a disciple and promises, "Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you" (Heb. 13:5).

After baptism, the instructing process begins. It is so important. Newborn babes who have tasted the "milk of the Word" who know that the Lord is good, must develop into "faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). Ministry is ill-conceived when we are willing to speak of a congregation as the "walking wounded." The balm of Gilead has been applied. It is more than adequate.

Perhaps in no area have we failed the Lord as in the area of "teaching men to observe all things whatever He has commanded us." We've developed fine church

facilities. We have talented pastoral teams, but we have lost the sense of adventure that forces the newly converted to grow. We have sadly numbed ourselves into accepting "spiritual two-year-olds" as normative and acceptable.

Lest I get off on a tangent, let's move from the need for "growing up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ" (Eph. 4:15).

### **The Promise**

The commission is ominous were it not for the promise which accompanies it, "Surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age." Michael Green, in his book on early church evangelism, very correctly, and significantly, notes that its effective zeal stemmed from gratitude—appreciation that Jesus had won the victory. The imperative was not viewed as duty or a means of earning salvation. Rather, it was seen in light of a relationship with Jesus which made it impossible for men to remain silent.

Let's observe the phrase, "Surely I will be with you always." The language in this promise is unique phraseology in the New Testament. It is akin to the Old Testament Shekinah, "the presence of the glory" of God promised people of the covenant. The "presence of the glory" is prominent in O.T. scriptures for every need: salvation, victory, rest, protection, and deliverance. One example of salvational usage is in Jeremiah 1:19, "They will fight against you, but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you" declares the Lord. Scripture is "shot through" with initiatives from the God who acts. Jacob was not alone in experiencing Bethel where he declared after a dream "Surely the Lord is in this place and I was not aware of it" (Gen. 28:16).

The promise of the presence of the Lord should create

expectation among us today making it possible to recapture that lofty motive which motivated the earliest church—gratitude. The eye of faith should make us more helpful than Martha was when she met Jesus after the death of Lazarus, “I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask” (John 11:22). That presence can be such a reality to us that as we minister the Word we become like the two on the road to Emmaus. As they walked with Jesus without knowing it, then became aware of the fact that they had accompanied the Lord, they said, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures” (Luke 24:32).

God has promised something to men ministering in the name of Jesus Christ. It is not just an emotional charge, but it is divine power and presence enabling weak men to accomplish the initiative. There is a guarantee from Jesus of his personal, continuous, spiritual presence when discipling is being attempted. The promise is more than a guarantee of providence—of “an all seeing eye watching you.” Rather, Jesus has given assurance that those faithful to the discipling imperative will be:

1. *Blessed with a “new every morning” appreciation of Christ.* He is both personal and precious to the active soul winner. As someone has said, “Are you depressed? Teach a friend the gospel. That will remove your negative feelings.” Paul knew the value of sharing faith when he said, “I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith” in Philemon 6. The reason for prayer is “so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.”

Many have personally experienced this truth. The spirit of the Lord can renew and give life to individuals and congregations who recommit and involve

themselves in sharing Jesus Christ with lost neighbors. We come nearer the heart of our Lord when we practice words, "A faith not worth sharing is not worth keeping." (Example—"Why have you forsaken me?")

Recently one of the "prophets" of our brotherhood characterized the theology of churches of Christ as "schizophrenic." He observed the difference of the God preached from legalistic pulpits from that of the left wing antithesis. We can lament that fact and wish upon ourselves better scholarship, humility, psychological analysis, "whatever-you-mind," but nothing will get us back on the track quicker than reaching out to others with Christ.

Evangelism is a purge and a refiner's fire. Theology emanating from the ivory tower is destined to irrelevance and death. Our "prophet" is not incorrect in seeing diversity in 20th century churches of Christ contrary to the New Testament ideal. Too many congregations are like the five condemned in the book of Revelation. They have "forsaken their first love." Or they "allow false teachings." Or there is sexual immorality. They have a "reputation for being alive but are dead." "They are neither hot nor cold." Brothers, until we gain a burden for the millions of lost, we cannot benefit from the promise, "Surely, I am with you."

If we minister to the world—the whole world—missions will cleanse us from trivia and negative theology. Angry young (and old) men will find yesterday's issue a "cul-de-sac" which must be abandoned for the evangelistic posture.

Brothers and sisters. We stand at a crossroads. The restoration ideal our spiritual forefathers accepted is in danger of becoming a cold, codified heritage. Unless we accept the scandalous challenge of presenting our Lord as the way, the truth, and the life to every culture and



philosophy in the world, we are in danger of finding ourselves speaking some archaic “language of Ashdod” in a denominational backwater far from the “presence of glory” of the Lord. Evangelism and missions hold a prominent place in the potential for institutional regeneration. Those who obey discipling imperative have that “new every morning” appreciation of the winsome Christ—because he is with them!

2. *Transformed from weaklings to ministers of Certitude.* Some men were doubting when Jesus gave this commission (Matt. 28:17). But they were transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit into courageous preachers whose opponents could only “take note that these men had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). The presence of the Lord can also give men a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline today (2 Tim. 1:7). Just as early disciples spoke the word of the Lord to a world which had no absolutes, men can do the same today. Just as they had a stewardship with the “oracles of God” we have the same today. Balance is needed so God’s men are not pompous, but our Lord demands speaking the truth in love.

A true discipler speaks authoritatively. Though from a fleshly standpoint the Christian is weak and filled with trembling (I Cor. 2:2), God’s Spirit—the Shekinah, the promised presence—empowers the messenger. The world thinks in terms of relativism, pragmatism, uncertainty, and doubt, but God equips with the sword of the Spirit. Nothing speaks of cognitive, absolute truth and power more than the words of Paul as he defended his ministry in 2 Corinthians. He said, “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take



captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor. 10:4-5). When we "resolve to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified" we are promised a demonstration of the Spirit's power which can only be a fulfillment of the promise "Surely I am with you always."

If a man does not really *know* Jesus Christ, if he is not being conformed to the image of the Son, he has no right to the promised authentication of His message. But for one with the missionary spirit who works on his knees in prayer, there is awareness of the fact that "We speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel (I Thess. 2:4). Faithful stewardship of the good news means we speak, "the Word of God, which is at work in you who believe."

3. *Entrusted with a soul touching message.* God energizes the word spoken in testimony to Jesus Christ. Proclamation of the Jerusalem gospel is authenticated by the way it reaches into hearts of men and women—around the world. The promise that the "word of the Lord will not return to him void" is fulfilled by the way Jesus empowers His word in the hearts of people from every culture, language, and tribe of the world.

Those who boldly preach the Word of God soon become aware of the fact that God precedes us. Missionaries, as a Nigerian Christian prayed, "Must understand that the missionary is not bringing God to Africa, rather God is bringing the man to Africa." God uses us simply as earthen vessels to proclaim unsearchable riches. We are instruments but the Spirit of the Lord is in the word "which sustains all things" (Heb. 1:3). The Word and the Spirit of God fit man's deepest needs. That Word, as the Hebrews passage says, "judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (4:12). Anyone who has preached to another tribe or people

knows how true the words "Surely, I will be with you always" are when preaching and teaching from the timeless, precious Word of God. That Word is so powerful, and it is the only means by which men can know salvation in Jesus Christ.

### **Conclusion**

The promise of protective companionship, of authentication, of energizing ministry given by Jesus in his parting words takes the dreariness out of the commission. It is an imperative guaranteeing privilege and authority of ambassadorship. Rather than accepting a commission with heavy hearts, we need to respond to the imperative with the joy and gratitude those early "gospel gossipers" did. If we do so, we have the means of being able to claim with Paul in the first century, the gospel has been proclaimed to "every creature under heaven" (Col. 1:23). What a privilege to be Christ's instruments, to know that he indwells us. What a joy to claim the promise of spiritual presence which is glorious as we disciple.

We appreciate the truism, "the church exists by mission just as fire exists by burning" when we contemplate the great commission of Jesus. We are transformed—saved to save. We accept the scandal of being light in the midst of darkness. We are slaves who have protection and power sufficient to "snatch others from the fire and save them" (Jude 23).

He will sustain to the ends of the earth. Praise God that we have these ennobling words of Jesus. May we never fail him—else God will raise up others. Let us contemplate the task devotionally, believing in the sufficiency of Christ, the dignity of man and the sovereignty of God as the evangelistic task is addressed. May we accept this blessing:

**“The Lord bless you and keep you;  
the Lord make his face to shine upon you  
and be gracious to you.**

**The Lord turn his face toward you  
and give you peace.”**

**Numbers 6:24-26.**

# The Twenty-First Century Christian

Landon B. Saunders



**Address:** Heartbeat, 11947 North Freeway, Suite 400, Houston, TX 77060.

**Personal:** A native West Virginian, he now lives, when not on the road, in Houston and New York City.

**Education:** Attended Freed-Hardeman College, Harding College, Harding Graduate School of Religion, and Arkansas State University.

**Work and Ministry:** Landon is the director and speaker of Heartbeat, an evangelistic effort to reach

secular America. He began Heartbeat in 1971 under the guidance of the Fifth & Highland elders in Abilene, Texas, as part of the Herald of Truth ministry.

In 1969-1970, Landon traveled through 60 nations preaching and teaching. Since that time, he has been traveling this country approximately 10 months each year, lecturing and teaching in some 50 cities annually.

In 1975, Landon produced for Heartbeat the first evangelistic radio program ever accepted for broadcast as a commercial message by the NBC radio network. In 1979, the CBS radio network donated free public service time for Heartbeat to be aired across the nation. In addition, Heartbeat is heard daily on many in-

dependent stations.

Landon was invited to address the convention of National Religious Broadcasters in Fort Worth in 1975. In 1977, he was honored by Abilene Christian University with a plaque for excellence in Christian mass communications.

His interest in Christian education takes him to many of our college campuses each year, including Crowley's Ridge College in Paragould, Arkansas, where he serves as Chairman of the Board, and Abilene Christian University, where he has taught a three-week course dealing with religious mass communications in their Missions Seminar program.

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### **Facing the Twenty-First Century**

In 1982 historians are already beginning to summarize the events of the twentieth century. Political and economic goals are reaching into the twenty-first century. Children born today will not take their places in society until the beginning of the twenty-first century. And some, at least, do not see the church there.

We live in troubled times. Christians especially are beginning to awaken from the complacency of self-interest and isolation and are discovering that American society is no longer friendly to the ideas of Christianity. These are dark days for the people of faith.

Within the churches spirituality has become so superficial, so separated from the real world, that it is not easy to find real spiritual resources in our assemblies, nor reliable guidance from our spiritual leaders and teachers, in so many cases.

What can we do? We can continue on the present course, unwilling to look ahead, deceiving ourselves that all is well—and die. Or, determine that having put our hands to the plow, we shall look forward and not back.

The twenty-first century Christian will emerge from the complacency of decay of twentieth century religion

with a new-found power. He will not be unaware of the struggle of faith in a non-Christian world. He will not be unfeeling for the lost. He will not be confused by his own struggles. The Christian who endures the times ahead must be equipped with an inner vision of the future that is certain and hopeful, and an inner courage to face the present with a vision of what lies ahead.

Our times are not unique. Nor are we without the needed model and guidance for our task. To take us the first step of the way, let us focus upon the circumstances, the response, and the promises of Christ recorded in Matthew 11:25-30. I believe the inspiration for the goals for our lives is contained in these verses:

At that time Jesus declared, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will. All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

### **Heartless Religion in the First Century and in the Twentieth Century**

Think about the time in which these words were spoken. Christ had made an appearance as a servant at a time and a place in which religion had great visibility. And yet it was a religion that had lost its heart. Any time religion, whether practiced personally or as a group,



generally loses its heart, it become vicious. It's vicious to a family. It's vicious to a church. It's vicious to a community. It's vicious to a nation and world.

Has your religion lost heart?

At a time when religion had lost its heart Jesus made his appearance to the world, and yet he could handle it. How do you deal with your religion?

How do you deal with your religious problems?

How do you feel when the church doesn't do as you wish it would do? What do you do with that?

What do you do when your prayers are not as effective as you would like them to be?

What do you do when you find the assembly boring?

What do you do when you look about you and see so many people who are religious by "lip" but not religious by life?

What do you do when you see hypocrisy?

What do you do when you see misplaced goals?

What do you do when priorities are turned up-side-down?

What do you do when religion becomes completely commercialized, as it has become in our society?

What do you do when you turn on the television and the religious programs seem more interested in money than in people? What do you do?

What do you do when religion becomes so mercenary, so insensitive to the things the New Testament says really matter?

What do you do when religion becomes partial and discriminatory in its practice and presentation of itself to the world?

What do you do when churches respect the rich and ignore the poor? What do you do?

What do you do when the more religious we are, the further away from the people we seem?

### **The Circumstances of Christ**

When things don't go right, when there's widespread failure in religion, and the prospect for the church at the end of the century is bleak, the place to turn is to Christ. It was the same kind of world for Him, everywhere He looked. Clergy/laiety distinctions. Mercenary priests. Lawyers who were taking away the key of knowledge. People who placed form over substance. People who were devoid of spirit. People who were legalistic. People who were impressed with the letter of the law, who forgot what mercy is. People who were more interested in the rituals than they were in the compassionate expression of God's heart to the world.

The world into which Jesus came and stood was a dark period of religious failure. And, mind you, it was not a pagan type of failure. It was religious failure. But remember, it was the religion that had been revealed from God. This was no humanistic religion. It was no religion of man. This was religion that had been revealed by God. This was a religion that included in its past Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses. This was the one that contained the spirit of the prophets; people like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekial, and Daniel. These were the people of God. And yet . . . massive failure.

What does a person do living in that kind of environment? Here is what that person does.

### **The Response of Christ**

The person bows his head and says, "I thank thee, Father" (Matthew 11:25). That's what you do when things are not going right with your faith. When things are not going right with your church. When things are not going right with the way you feel outreach should go. What you do is stand in the midst of it all, full of gratitude and praise.

You say, "But, how can you pray, how can you be grateful, when there is so much failure?" By looking to Jesus. That's the right response. There is really no alternative.

### 1. Praise, not criticism.

Now, instead of despairing in the midst of religious failure, even within our own churches, say, "I thank thee, Father!" Sometimes what we do say is, "Dear Father, I want to criticize everyone in my church." Either you will criticize or you will find the reason to be thankful. Your relationship with Christ will determine that. If your relationship is intact, criticism won't come from your lips. And if the relationship is uncertain, then perhaps you will be critical, because you just haven't stopped to think and when you do you will need to make some changes.

### 2. Praise in the hard times.

You see, the negative, the critical, the fault finding—they don't accomplish anything in this world. But the people who do are those who can stand in the midst of darkness, even religious darkness, and say, "Father, my heart is full of gratitude and my lips praise thee." Don't forget who God is. God is the same even when there's failure. I happen to believe we are not going through our best days of fellowship. I personally feel that this is in many respects a very, very dark hour. There are less than one million people in our fellowship, only 953,000 members. We have less than 10,000 congregations. We have only 500 churches of Christ with a membership of 200 or more. We don't seem to realize how small we are! We don't realize how insignificant we have allowed ourselves to become. What will we do with all of that?

Unless within us can arise a spirit of thanksgiving and praise and prayer, unless we can follow Christ within a

religious atmosphere that's full of gloom and darkness, then we cannot follow Christ when we reach the mountain peaks. You see, you must decide that if you are going to stay with Him, you stay with Him. If you aren't going to stay with Him, you don't stay with Him. But you must decide. You either stay with Him the best you know how, or you don't. You have to make a decision.

### 3. What is worthy of praise?

Then Christ said, "During times like this, what are you thankful for? Are you thankful for the intelligent? Are you thankful for the wise? Are you thankful for the leaders? Are you thankful for those who are most visible? Ah," He said, "I'm thankful that God has revealed these things not to the wise and understanding ones, but to the babes" (Matthew 11:25).

Wouldn't it be a remarkable thing if, when we sense that things are wrong in our fellowship, we could listen to these words and bring in the babes to tell us what is wrong, and what we could do?

Sometimes there is a kind of spirit that can infect the leaders so that they are distracted from the real problem. It can actually make them antagonistic when the babes cry out. If we would only bring into our offices and into our conference rooms those who are on the fringes, those who are in the margins. If we would only listen to the babes. The babes could tell us what's missing—if we won't be defensive. If we would take them seriously. The underlying principle that Christ announced was, "The first will be last, and the last will be first." And, as Paul described how to nurture the church, he said. "You must take those who are weak, those who are inferior, those who are on the bottom rung of the church, and you must bring them up and exalt them." The truth is, the only way the church can be nurtured is from the fringes inward. It can't go the other

way. You'll never get to the fringes from within. You'll never get to the edges that way.

The remarkable thing about a fellowship like this is that people who are weak, who are inferior, who are not wise, can come to the fellowship of Christ, and this is the only place on earth that they are exalted into positions of first place. It is the only place in the world that this can happen. And brothers and sisters, if that does not happen in our churches we are not going to grow. We're in violation of the very genius of a fellowship like this. Christ says when these times come you want to move close to the babes. You want to move close to those who are lowly, and you will find them. They are people who are not so upset. People who are not reactionary. People whose hearts are full of love. People who go about doing good.

### **The Promises of Christ:**

#### **1. I will give you rest.**

Christ is speaking to people who are not pagan. They were a religious crowd—a religious crowd that had grown away from a true religion that had been revealed by God. And He says to them, "Come to me, . . . and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

How many hearts of how many Christians today are heavy laden? We think of these words as applying to a world that is "out there," living in unrighteousness and sinfulness. We think of them as being weary and heavy laden. But what about those on the inside? I talk to a lot of Christians who are not able to make their religion work. It has become a great burden, a great load of weariness. There's vast boredom among us. There's vast cynicism among us. There's a joyless spirit. It so cloaks our lives that anybody who knows us cannot see the exciting reality of the presence of Jesus Christ.

"Come to me," He says, "If you are religiously



weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Too often we do not go all the way. As Christians we go to the elders, or we go to the preacher, or we go to the church. We go from this church to that church, to another church. It's an endless cycle. Christ says, when things are going bad for you religiously, "Come to me and I will give you rest. I am gentle and lowly in heart." I love the twenty-second chapter of Isaiah, which says in essence, "I look forward to the coming of God's servant, Jesus Christ," and describes Him as one in whose hand the bruised reed will not be broken and the smoldering wicks will not be extinguished. You can move close to a person like that. He is careful not to hurt you. Gentle. Humble.

What can you do when you pray and you aren't sure you are being heard? Many Christians are sensing a spirit of dryness, and everything is beginning to lose excitement. Many feel weak and full of doubt and fears. It is then that you wonder about yourself, and feel unequal to the task of telling somebody else. You sense your own failures. You are filled with your own guilt. That's when you are like a bruised reed, so that you will break if anyone even touches you. Christ says, "Bring that life to me. What I will give you is rest." A "smoldering wick" is extinguished if you just put your finger on it. But Christ says, "If you will come to me, I will deal with you so gently that you will not go out. The smoke will become a flame again." When your brow is fevered, and your heart is empty, go to Him.

You may even be an elder. I've been preaching for a long time and I get like that. My heart breaks. Sometimes I think there's just no way. In the midst of that, when I've searched for God, I want Him to be real, and I want Christ to be real. But, I can't feel, and I can't taste. Sometimes a kind of spiritual loneliness engulfs



us. Hear the words of Christ. "Come to me and I will give you rest." Sometimes it's hard to remember that, but it's real.

You say, "I'll try to come back, but I don't even know if I know how to come back." If you can't say any more to Him, say, "Oh, I do not know the way, but I want to know where you lead. I do not know if you are holding me. I do not know if my life is working. I don't even know if I'm living right. I don't know if I should be here, or if I should be there. I don't know."

"But, there's one thing I do know. I will call on you in my dying breath. . .I will call on you. If you do not answer me for the rest of my life, I will still be calling your name. If you do not come to me, I will come to you. I'm going to stay with you. I will stay with you. I will call your name. I will not turn back. Even if you leave me alone in the depth of darkness, I will not leave you. I'm there. I'm there. I will never turn away. I will never leave."

It is only with that faith that we can survive the bewilderments, the contradictions, the reversals, the loneliness, the disappointments, and the massive failures that are all about us.

### **The Promises of Christ:**

#### **2. I will ease your burdens.**

Then Christ says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me" (Matthew 11:29). What does Christ mean when He says, "take my yoke"?

The yoke that I've tried to wear has certainly been difficult. And it has rubbed my neck raw! The problem of the human race is that it wears yokes which don't fit, yokes that are self-imposed. Yokes in the forms of careers and professions. Yokes in the form of wealth and fame. Yokes in the form of ambition and our attempts at success. They rub us raw. They hurt us.

They weaken us. They take away our joy. They put frowns on our faces. They put death in our eyes. They tear up marriages, destroy children. They work inside churches to destroy joyous, winning fellowship and outreach. Our own yokes don't fit.

### **The Yoke of Christ:**

#### **The Power of the Twenty-first Century Christian**

The yoke of Christ fits. It is our source of power. Everyone has a heavy burden to bear. The promise of Christ is to pull together with us. The yoke is not a constraint, but a tremendous gift. It is the symbol of what Christ enables us to do and to be. I believe there are at least four basic things that Christ gives us, which are symbolized by receiving His yoke.

##### **1. Humanity**

I think the first thing is our humanity. Now, think about this for just a minute. When Christ came to the earth, in what form did He come? He came as a man. What is man? It's humanity. "Take my yoke"—it's humanity.

My humanity doesn't work. The world is trying to make it work. I need to recover my humanity.

Christ felt it was important for Him to raise Himself in human form. Yet we are living in a time of so much inhumanity. And so, what Christ is saying to us, is, "look, the reason you are weary is that you don't know how to be a human being. So the first thing we have to do is trade in your old humanity, which hasn't been working. I will clean it up, pure as the glistening snow, and I will give it back to you redeemed and cleaned and whole."

Now, when He gives us back our humanity, what does that mean? We don't have to do strange things. What is humanity? Part of being human is learning to think. We ought to be given new minds. That's part of

it. So when He gives you your new humanity, all cleaned and pressed and pure, He fills it with a new mission, with a new idea. Christ gives us new minds, filled with new ideas about living. A new idea about people. A new idea about relationships. A new idea about success. The new humanity is a humanity of new ideas about how to be human.

The only thing you have to make contact with other human beings is your humanity. Why do you think Christ became a man if it wasn't to have contact with us in order to show us how to do that? If I allow my religion to "spiritualize" itself until I'm no longer an exciting human being, full of laughter and tears, with spontaneity, with humor, with joy—if I'm not an attractive new human being that Christ has taken and given back to the world, then how can I make contact?

You don't set aside your humanity to make contact with people. That's the point of contact. Furthermore, if you take Christ and then empty Him of His humanity, you will no longer know Him. You first make contact with humanity in Christ, and the vision of His divinity. I'm afraid that today we have emptied Christ of His humanity.

The other day, I was sitting beside a young man who is about sixteen years old. He began to tell me about his plans to enter college next year. He said he is a pretty good golfer. His father is a professional golfer and he wants to take up professional golf after college.

I said, "Let me ask you a philosophical question."

He said, "I don't know if I can answer it or not."

I said, "Well, try. Here you are a bright, good-looking young man with all these hopes and dreams. Tell me, what is the most important thing in the world to a young man with such dreams?"

He thought a moment. Then he said, "That Jesus is

the Son of God.”

I said, “That’s an interesting answer. What do you mean by that?”

He said, “That Jesus is the Son of God—that he’s Lord.”

So I pressed further. “You said that. What are you talking about?”

He made another stab at it. But it was no better.

“That’s the trouble with you Christians,” I said, “I asked you what’s the most important thing in the world and you give me an answer that is heavenly. But people don’t even understand the earthly things, and you try to get us to understand the heavenly things. Tell me in human language, in common, ordinary words, what is the most important thing in the world?”

He thought a moment, then replied, “I don’t know what those words mean.”

I knew he didn’t. Not many people do. How can you make contact if you’re trying to make contact “in heaven”?

Jesus gave us His humanity and He gives us back our humanity—cleaner, purer, better. He restores the essences of humanity. One of the essences is our sexuality. When Christ hands you back your humanity, He hands it back with a basis for freedom from hang-ups about your own sexuality.

Isn’t it strange what we’ve done? No wonder we’ve lost touch with the world. We’ve taken all the things that are of deep concern, which are driving the world right up the wall, and we’ve just moved them aside.

When Christ said, “Take my yoke upon you,” He gave you back your humanity, but a humanity that now fits, not something depersonalizing and inhuman. He sets you on a course toward the fulfillment of what it means to be a person. The church has to be a commu-



nity of living demonstration of what it means to be human. That's what we are.

## 2. Time

The second thing Christ gives us is time. There is a sense in which all that you have is time. But time is such a big problem because you're always doing the wrong thing at the wrong time. You're always here when you ought to be there. You are afraid you're going to live out your life only to discover in the end that your time was wasted, and you can't do anything about it.

What Christ has taught us is that time has little to do with length and everything to do with quality. You are not going to die too soon. You are not going to die with unfinished business. You have all the time you need. Relax.

Why? Because, "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15). It is no longer important how long we live, the only thing that is important is the quality of our life. The only thing that is important is that I live fully every waking moment that God has given me. The biggest problem in human relationships is human beings who do not live each moment fully and completely. You can't rest with those people. You can't communicate with them. You look at them, and their faces are blank and their thoughts are always somewhere else. People are trying to have intimate relationships based like that.

Therefore, what you can do now is accept each moment of eternity as the greatest thing in the world. This time is the best time, because this is the time you've been given. And all the great mass of people who fill your time—who are they? Men and women and children who are capable of such excitement, such imagination, such hopes, such dreams! And you, because you have accepted the yoke of Christ, have recovered the meaning



of your humanity, and you have been freed from the anxiety of time. So you can give yourself fully and completely, without reservation or distraction, to each of these human beings you meet.

That is the yoke of Christ. It won't give you ulcers. He gives us a view of time that fits. That's our message to the world.

### 3. Joy

The third thing He gives us, when He gives us His yoke, is joy. I've almost "fallen in love" with joy. I lived for a long time and didn't really begin to know what the word means. I've always heard, you know, that you can't command happiness. I don't think you can either, but I believe you can command joy. Paul encouraged the Philippians, "Rejoice in the Lord!" (Philippians 3:1)

Rejoice when you are tired. Rejoice in your afflictions. Rejoice when you are tempted. Rejoice! "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4)

Is there trouble in your home? The reason it has trouble is because you haven't summoned joy to your household. The music has stopped. The laughter has gone. Get together with your husband. Get together with your wife. Get together with your children. Summon—command joy!

We live in a world that does not know joy. It doesn't know about time. It doesn't know about death. Our world doesn't know about humanity. Children don't know. The parents don't know. Their grandparents don't know. Executives don't know. The people that sleep on the streets don't know. The world doesn't know. And if we are not a people of joy, they will never notice us. They will never come to us. The first mark of God's child is joy. And when Christ gives us His yoke, He gives us everlasting, never-ending, powerful joy.

#### 4. Task

A fourth thing you receive when you accept the yoke of Christ is your task. The great thing about your task is that for the first time in your life you are given a task that fits and is designed just for you. You are not trying to fit into someone else's yoke. You are not trying to fill someone else's shoes. You're not trying to live in someone else's skin. Suddenly, He says to you, "You are unique. You are special. You are unlike anything that has ever been in this world, and what we must do is bring you out."

Now, how are you going to do that? You say, "Well, I don't know what I have to do with my life."

Do you work in your life? You say, "Sure, I work." Well, that's what you're supposed to be doing. Are you loving people? That's what you ought to do.

You are supposed to work. Go out and work. That's what you're supposed to do. You're supposed to have joy. That's what you're supposed to do. You're supposed to help the people. That's what you're supposed to do. You already know what to do.

You say, "Yes, but that's common, every-day life. I want something special." If you have made the elements of your life into something just "common," I can tell you for sure that God isn't going to give you something special. You would mess it up. When He gives you back your humanity and the right view of time and joy in your task, He says, "Keep doing, for the most part, what you are doing. These are the things that make up a human life. That's what you're supposed to be doing. But, let me hallow every one of those activities. I will make sacred your every moment."

No more wasted moments. Every moment takes on eternal significance. Beginning in your home and working out from there, this is your task. You can't skip from here over to there. The only way to go beyond

where you are is to do better what you are doing right now. Anybody can get from where they are to any place they want to be if it's right. It's guaranteed. All you have to do is start doing a better job with what you have to do right now, and you can go as far as the east is to the west.

God does not give new tasks to people who have made their present task commonplace and insignificant. There are no insignificant moments in your life, since God is there. And He has put eternity in your heart and in your home.

He gives you His task, beginning with your family, working out from there. If we could only learn to make all the activities of life today significant to us. A "cup of cold water" is significant. A compliment is significant. If we felt our own significance and saw significance in others, then we could be constantly lifting people to significance. What a power we would be wherever we are. That's what Christians are to do in this world.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." He begins with these basic things: your humanity, your time, your joy, and your task. Then He says, "Now that's a yoke you can wear, and your life will count. You will find rest because this yoke is easy and this burden is light" (Matthew 11:30).

There's a community all around us. There's a nation. There's a world which waits for that gift. We can become so burdened with the heavy load of religious self-interest, obligation, ritual, activity! We can get so tied up in a thousand programs or committees. But if the sum of our efforts does not show people how to live the abundant life, how to be human and joyful with time significant and with the simplest task sacred, we will never reach the dying world. What is feared will be true. The twenty-first century Christian will be a vanishing breed. And rightly so.

**Don't worry about your failures. Don't worry about your struggles and all the tensions that are part of every person's life. Don't go too fast. Don't shout. Be quiet, and let the living Christ come to where you are right now and give you rest.**

**There's time to do everything you need to do in the church if you will just wait and wear the yoke that Christ gives us.**

**Keep questing. Keep dreaming. Keep reaching.  
The rest will come.**

## Exegeses of Difficult Passages





# Continuing In Sin — Matthew 19:9

Carroll D. Osburn



Carroll D. Osburn has served as Professor of Greek and New Testament at the Harding Graduate School of Religion in Memphis since 1973. He has doctorates in Biblical Studies from Vanderbilt University, and the University of St. Andrews, Scotland. A popular speaker at lectureships, seminars, and retreats, he has written numerous articles in brotherhood and scholarly journals. He is also actively involved in Bible translation among primitive people in Central and South America.

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In recent discussion of the interpretation of Matthew 19:9, it has been ventured by some that *moichatai* must mean "continues to commit adultery" because the present indicative necessitates continuous action. That understanding seems to be based upon a statement by Burton<sup>1</sup>: "The most constant characteristic of the Pre-

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<sup>1</sup>E. deWitt Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek* (3rd ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1898), p. 7.

sent Indicative is that it denotes action in progress." As is well known, though, "mood" constitutes the most difficult aspect of Greek syntax,<sup>2</sup> and Stagg<sup>3</sup> and Greenlee<sup>4</sup> have called attention to a number of serious abuses of Greek syntax in biblical exegesis. Accordingly, it is imperative that careful distinctions in linguistic usage be observed lest the appeal to syntax result in misinformation. With regard to Matthew 19:9, the appeal to the present indicative to establish that *moichatai* must necessarily refer to continuity is not cogent based as it is upon imprecise understanding of Greek mood distinctions.

Observing that in the present indicative no clear distinction can be drawn between ongoing action and so-called "punctiliar" action as is possible in the imperfect and aorist indicative, Robertson notes, "it is not wise therefore to define the pres. ind. as denoting 'action in progress' like the imperf. as Burton does, for he has to take it back on p. 9 in the discussion of the 'Aoristic Present,' which he calls a 'distinct departure from the prevailing use of the present tense to denote an action in progress.' In sooth, it is no 'departure' at all. The idiom is as old as the tense itself and is due to the failure in the development of separate tenses for punc-

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<sup>2</sup>A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934), p. 912.

<sup>3</sup>Frank Stagg, "The Abused Aorist," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 92 (1972): 222-231.

<sup>4</sup>J. Harold Greenlee, "The Importance of Syntax for the Proper Understanding of the Sacred Text of the New Testament," *Evangelical Quarterly*, 44 (1972): 131-146.

tiliar and linear action in the ind. of present time.”<sup>5</sup> In explaining the difficulty of relegating the present indicative to “linear” action, Turner<sup>6</sup> states, “In order to say I walk without reference to time, English can be unambiguous; not so Greek. It must use the indicative of the present. . . . Thus in Greek one seldom knows apart from the context whether the pres. indic. means I walk or I am walking. In other moods than indic., of course, the problem does not arise. . . . One must always bear that in mind for exegesis.”<sup>7</sup>

Thus, while it is true that in moods other than the indicative the present tense denotes continuing action, in the indicative mood itself no distinction can be drawn from the mood between the action which is continuing and that which is not. By way of analogy, the familiar present indicative in 1 John 3:9 *hamartian ou poiei*, “does not continue to sin,” derives its continuity not from the mood, but from the following *hamartanein*, a present infinitive which cannot mean other than “is not able to continue in sin.” Similarly, in 1 John 3:8, *hamartanei*, a present indicative, is used to mean that “the Devil continues to sin,” but the continuity involved derives not from the present indicative, but from the attendant *ap arches*, “from the beginning.” Too, 1

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<sup>5</sup>A *Grammar of the Greek NT*, p. 864. A. Thumb, *Handbook of the Modern Greek Vernacular* (2nd ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912), p. 119, illustrates the development of such a distinction in modern Greek with *pegaino*, “I keep going,” and *pago*, “I go.”

<sup>6</sup>N. Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), III, p. 60.

<sup>7</sup>Thus *dzeteite*, “keep on seeking,” in Matthew 6:33 and Colossians 3:1 cannot be cited as parallel to the usage in Matthew 19:9, for those are present imperatives, not present indicatives. Such inattention to Greek mood distinctions would constitute an abuse of Greek syntax.

John 1:7 is understood correctly to mean "the blood of Jesus his Son continues to cleanse us from each sin," but any attempt to base that continuity upon the present indicative is an abuse of Greek syntax. In this, as in the other examples, it is the context which must settle the matter of whether continuity is involved.<sup>8</sup>

The indicative mood is normally employed in all Indo-European languages to denote a simple statement of fact, but it has a wide variety of uses, such as the present of customary action, present of general truth, conative present, futuristic present, oracular present, historical present, annalistic present, present for perfect, and past and present combined.<sup>9</sup> Robertson<sup>10</sup> notes that the most frequent use of the present indicative is the "descriptive present," the simple statement of a fact with no specific reference to continuity. The "iterative present," involving repetition, is not so frequent. Of the more than 700 instances of the present indicative in Matthew's Gospel, the vast majority of occurrences are "descriptive" with no continuity under consideration, as 3:11 where *baptidzo*, "I baptize," connotes no repetitive or continual action but is merely a declarative statement. Similarly, in 8:25 *apollumetha*, "we perish," can hardly refer to a continual perishing, and in 20:30, where, when the blind men heard that Jesus "passed by," *paragei* must not be understood to mean that he continued to pass by. In such instances the point at issue is not whether the action could con-

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<sup>8</sup>See Steve McKenzie, "The Church in 1 John," *Restoration Quarterly*, 19 (1976): 211-216.

<sup>9</sup>H. W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1959), pp. 421-423, who notes on p. 414 that "the present stem may denote the simple action of the verb in present time without regard to its continuance."

<sup>10</sup>*A Grammar of the Greek NT*, pp. 879ff.

ceivably involve continuity, but whether the present indicative necessitates continuity. Certain instances, of which there are several in Matthew, actually prohibit any notion of continuity, as in 13:14 where a certain man sells his possessions and “buys,” *agoradzei*, a field, but it cannot be said that the man kept on buying the field. Such “aoristic presents” are a common usage in NT Greek, as in Matthew 13:44<sup>11</sup> and 26:63.<sup>12</sup> Other uses of the present indicative with no reference to continual action are the 93 occurrences of the “historic present” in Matthew,<sup>13</sup> such as 26:40 *heuriskei*, “he finds them sleeping,” and 27:38 *staurountai*, “they crucify him between two.”

In only a few instances does the present indicative in Matthew involve continuity, as 15:23 where the Canaanite woman, *kradzei*, “keeps crying out” for Jesus to heal her demon-possessed daughter. However, in most of these instances, it is difficult to envisage the intended continuity as inherent within the present indicative, for even in 15:23 the continuity is evident in the disciples’ response to her continual pleading, which derives from the imperfect *ekradzen* in verse 22. In 17:15 where a youth is said to “often fall into the fire” the continuity is brought to bear in *pollakis*, “often,” rather than in the present indicative. Even in such cases as 10:38, where one is admonished to take up his cross and *akolouthei*, “follow Christ,” and 14:2 where the

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<sup>11</sup>F. Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the New Testament* (trans. and rev. by C. L. Rogers; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), p. 38.

<sup>12</sup>Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek NT*, p. 865.

<sup>13</sup>J. C. Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), pp. 148ff. See also S. M. Reynolds, “The Zero Tense in Greek: A Critical Note,” *Westminster Theological Journal*, 32 (1969): 68-72.



powers are *energousin*, "working in him," the evident continuity still cannot be said to derive from the present indicative.

The actual use of the present indicative by Matthew, then, corroborates Robertson's contention that "action in progress" is not adequate to describe that linguistic phenomenon and that the context must decide in each instance.

Now in Matthew 19:9 Jesus answers the question addressed to him by the Pharisees, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" (vs. 3). It was a test question designed to probe his rabbinical lore and legal acumen, and his answer was expected to provide the Pharisees with further leverage against him. The question had a "cutting edge" on it as Antipas, in whose region they were at the moment, had only recently been divorced. The question was well suited for their test since rabbinical training would suppose that an answer would be based upon that collection of rabbinical lore which would later be collected in written form as the *Gittin*. As formulated, the question expected an interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1:

When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a bill of divorce and puts it into her hand and sends her out of his house . . .

The *Gittin* clearly demonstrates that the Hebrew text of Deuteronomy 24:1 is ambiguous both in syntax and expression.<sup>14</sup> The phrase *some indecency in her* had been interpreted in several ways, and therein lay the test.

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<sup>14</sup>D. S. Margoliouth, "Christ's Answer to the Question About Divorce," *Expository Times*, 39 (1928): 272.

Now Deuteronomy 24:1 did not create the requirement of a bill of divorce but does assume that such a process was already in operation at the time it was written. From such texts as Genesis 2:24, Ezekiel 16:8, Hosea 2:19, and Malachi 2:16, it is apparent that the God of Israel considers marriage to be a sacred covenant and that he hates divorce. Thus some rabbis disapproved strongly of divorce, as R. Eleazar ben Pedat, who noted that the very altar drops tears upon one who divorces the wife of his youth (*Gittin* 90). Others, however, were freer, such as R. Judah, who comments on Malachi 2:16, "If you hate her, put her away." Although many rabbis did disapprove of divorce and imposed various restraints upon it, Deuteronomy 24:1 did recognize a man's right to dismiss his wife.<sup>15</sup>

In the first century A.D., the schools of Hillel and Shammai differed as to what, in view of Deuteronomy 24:1, constituted legitimate reasons for divorce.<sup>16</sup> Shammai thought that divorce could be granted only for marital unfaithfulness. Hillel, on the other hand, asserted that even such a minor irritation as scorching the food was adequate grounds of divorce.<sup>17</sup> In *Gittin* 10 this view is based upon a loose interpretation of the phrase *some indecency* (*ervath dabar*) in Deuteronomy 24:1, and R. Akiba even inferred from *if then she finds no favor in his eyes* that a man might even divorce his wife if he found a more attractive woman. Whatever

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<sup>15</sup>See among others, *Ketuboth* 7:6,10; *Yebamoth* 4:12; 6:6; *Sotah* 6:1; also Sirach 25:13-26, apparently without claiming that she had committed adultery.

<sup>16</sup>*Gittin* 9:10; *Sifre Deut.* 269.

<sup>17</sup>Philo, *Spec. Leg.* III, 30, and Josephus, *Ant.* IV, 253, approximate the view of Hillel.

one's understanding of Deuteronomy 24:1,<sup>18</sup> it happened that Hillel's interpretation became the rabbinic norm. The question, then, "*Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?*" was actually a question as to whether Hillel's interpretation was correct. Obviously, if by eliciting from Jesus a statement as to which side he took in this rabbinic dispute over Deuteronomy 24:1 the Pharisees could involve him in a controversy, they would be well on their way toward nullifying his influence on the multitudes.<sup>19</sup>

In Jewish custom the only partner who could divorce was the man; the woman had no right to divorce her husband, although she could ask the court to compel her husband to grant her a divorce.<sup>20</sup> The cultural role of Jewish women in the marriage relationship was such that the power of a man to divorce his wife was prac-

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<sup>18</sup>See Jack P. Lewis, "An Exegesis of Deuteronomy 24:1-4," *Abilene Christian University Annual Bible Lectures* (Abilene, Tex.: ACU Bookstore, 1979), pp. 145-161.

<sup>19</sup>Against Kirsopp Lake, "The Earliest Christian Teaching on Divorce," *The Expositor*, 8th series, 10 (1916): 421, who states that it cannot be proved conclusively that Jesus mentioned the certificate of divorce because of the dispute between Hillel and Shammai, and views the statement as the work of a redactor. B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels* (London: Macmillan, 1927), p. 260, notes correctly that divorce was a burning question at this time. See also H. L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (2nd ed.; Munich: C. H. Beck, 1956), I, pp. 801-804.

<sup>20</sup>See *Ketuboth* 5:6; *Nedarim* 11:12; *Arakhin* 5:6. However, note also the flagrant violation of this Jewish custom by Salome, the daughter of Herod the Great, who divorced her husband, in Josephus, *Ant.* XV, vii, 10. 1 Cor. 7:10-16 reflects the Greek custom in which a woman could divorce her husband, although the note of Andre Bonnard, *Greek Civilisation* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), I, p. 128, correctly relates the difficulties involved.

tically unlimited and the grounds for divorce were several. In Jewish towns there was a court of three rabbis, the *beth din*, whose responsibility it was to hear ordinary marital disputes, but in the time of Christ it was unnecessary even to appear before this court if the divorce was by mutual consent.<sup>21</sup> In this case it was sufficient merely for the husband and wife to sign the bill of divorce in the presence of witnesses. In such cases there was no real necessity for the ground of separation to be specified.<sup>22</sup>

However, the wife's consent was not necessary for a divorce, nor did the divorce need rabbinic approval unless she contested the matter. The norm was that "a woman may be divorced with or without her will, but a man only with his will" (*Yebamoth* 14:1). If the wife objected, the matter was taken before the *beth din*. If adultery was alleged, the possible exemption from paying the *ketubah* and the Jewish intolerance of adultery meant that the case was referred to the highest court in Jerusalem.<sup>23</sup> Apparently the *beth din* was more concern-

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<sup>21</sup>Israel Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels* (New York: KATV, rep. 1967), p. 70.

<sup>22</sup>See further discussion in T. V. Fleming, "Christ and Divorce," *Theological Studies*, 24 (1963): 82; D. R. Mace, *Hebrew Marriage* (London: Epworth, 1953), pp. 184-200; Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels*, chap. 9 on "Jewish Divorce in the First Century"; and J. Pederson, *Israel* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, rep. 1959): I-II, pp. 60ff. The standard discussions in George Foot Moore, *Judaism* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1927): II, pp. 110-127, and Emil Schurer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ* (trans. P. Christie; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1893): II, ii, pp. 120-125, remain vital to any discussion on this topic, and now one must add S. Safrai and M. Stern, eds., *The Jewish People in the First Century* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976): II, pp. 787ff.

<sup>23</sup>*Sotah* 1:4-6.

ed with property settlement than with grounds for separation. Generally speaking, a Jewish man could divorce his wife for no grounds at all. The ambiguity of Deuteronomy 24:1 and the 24:4 statement that a man may not take a woman to be his wife after he has put her away were considerably abused.<sup>24</sup> So many liberties had been taken by the populace that even the masses recognized that divorce was frivolous and often carried out on the most trivial pretexts.<sup>25</sup>

Bearing in mind these features of Jewish society and opinion, one perceives that the Pharisaic question was not concerned with the legality of divorce, but with the phrase *for any cause*. The Pharisees designed to render Jesus vulnerable with either answer they expected (see Matthew 12:14; 15:1ff.; 16:1ff.). If he chose to support the Hillelic interpretation, he would be accused by the school of Shammai of laxity with respect to such passages as Genesis 2:24, Malachi 2:16; but, if he chose to support the interpretation of Shammai, he would be readily accused of narrow-minded rigorism and would be clearly at variance with prevailing practice. Depending upon how one takes the *pasan*, "any," before the anarthrous noun, it could be that some expected him to be even stricter than Shammai.

The seriousness with which Jesus took this question is evidenced in his reply. Jesus responded, not by treating Deuteronomy 24:1 or referring to contemporary rabbinic discussion as had been anticipated, but by referring to Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 and noting the ideal which predated the Mosaic concession. It is equally noteworthy that Jesus did not refer to Malachi 2:14ff. Ideally,

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<sup>24</sup>See *Moed Katan* 1:7.

<sup>25</sup>Josephus, *Ant.* IV, viii, 23.



Jesus said, they ought not to separate, and this ideal—not Deuteronomy 24:1—was God's intention for marriage. In verse 6, the teaching contained in the quotations of verses 4 and 5 is driven home.

The Pharisees, obviously irked by this turn of events, appealed to Deuteronomy 24:1 anyway, arguing that there Moses clearly sanctions divorce. The Pharisaic notion that Moses commanded the bill of divorcement which surfaces in verse 7 overlooks the salient fact that Moses did not command, but only permitted divorce. Jesus' reply in verse 8 leaves no doubt that while Moses permitted divorce, he did so only in view of man's hardness of heart. The *from the beginning, it has not been this way* reinforces the teaching of verses 4 and 5. Jesus put the entire subject on a different footing by stressing that it is none other than God who has joined the two together and made them complementary parts of a single entity. It can only be considered sacrilege for either to undo what God himself has done and for any human authority to recognize that sacrilege with official approval is abominable.<sup>26</sup>

Before treating the "exceptive clause" in verse 9, it is essential to address the textual problem in the Greek manuscript tradition. The older manuscripts, including the old Latin, old Syriac, and sahidic versions, are decidedly in support of the shorter text which reads, ". . . except for fornication and should marry another commits adultery." A second clause appears in later manuscripts which reads: ". . . except for fornication and should marry another commits adultery and whoever should marry the one who is put away commits

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<sup>26</sup>Theodore Robinson, *The Gospel of Matthew* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1927), p. 159.



adultery.” This longer text, being the Byzantine reading, is read by the KJV. While it might be argued that a possible omission of the last clause in the older manuscripts could be due to homoeoteleuton in which a scribe accidentally skipped from *moichatai* at the end of the first clause to *moichatai* at the end of the second, the fact that Vaticanus and several other early witnesses read *moichatai* only once at the end of the second clause makes it more probable that the shorter text of Sinaiticus, *et al*, was expanded by copyists who accommodated the saying to the prevailing text of Matthew 5:32. In view of the strength of the external evidence and the transcriptional probability of the longer text being an assimilation of 5:32, the shorter reading printed in UBS Greek NT and Nestle-Aland 26th and read by RSV, NEB, and NIV has certain claim to represent the original text.<sup>27</sup>

Further, the “exceptive clause” *me epi porneia* is omitted apparently only by 1574 and no credible textual arguments can be made against the genuineness of the clause.<sup>28</sup> *Me epi porneia* of Sinaiticus and other early manuscripts is to be considered original and *parektos logou porneias*, “except on the ground of fornication,” of Vaticanus, Bezae, and others is likewise an assimilation to 5:32 where the text is firm, as is the reading *poiei auten moicheuthenai*, “makes her commit adultery,” of Vaticanus and Ephraemi rescriptus.

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<sup>27</sup>Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (corr. ed.; London: U. B. S., 1975), p. 48, and G. D. Kilpatrick, *The Origins of the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), p. 103.

<sup>28</sup>Josef Schmid, *Das Evangelium nach Matthaus* (Regensburg: F. Rustet, 1956), p. 103.

On the other hand, many recent commentators have regarded the "exceptive clause" as not having been a part of the saying as it was originally uttered, but as merely a community regulation which was inserted into the text at a later date.<sup>29</sup> Rightly recognizing the tendentious base upon which this *redaktionsgeschichtliche* theory rests, others have rejected this postulation and see the clause as original with Jesus.<sup>30</sup>

However, once the "exceptive clause" is admitted to be an authentic saying of Jesus, the understanding of the clause is open to a maze of interpretations.<sup>31</sup> Traditionally this clause has been interpreted by the Roman Catholic Church as allowing separation but not

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<sup>29</sup>See among others E. deWitt Burton, "The Biblical Teaching Concerning Divorce," *The Biblical World*, 29 (1907): 193ff.; E. Brunner, *The Divine Imperative* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947), p. 651; T. W. Manson, *The Teachings of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1951), p. 200; G. Bornkamm, "Die Stellung des NT zur Ehescheidung," *Evangelische Theologie*, 7 (1947/48): 283ff.; J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem zur Zeit Jesu* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1962), p. 413, fn. 160; and J. Dupont, *Mariage et divorce dans l'évangile* (Bruges: Desclee, 1959), pp. 82f.

<sup>30</sup>See Krister Stendahl, *Peake's Commentary on the Bible* (eds. M. Black and H. H. Rowley; London: T. Nelson, 1962), p. 777; H. G. Coiner, "Those 'Divorce and Remarriage' Passages," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, 33 (1968): 373; and Fleming, *Theological Studies* (1963): 115f.

<sup>31</sup>Note the useful summaries in E. Schillebeeckx, *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery* (trans. N. Smith; New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965), pp. 141-155; A. Mahoney, "A New Look at the Divorce Clauses in Mt. 5, 32 and 19, 9," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 30 (1968): 29, fn. 1; U. Holzmeister, "Die Streitfrage über die Ehescheidungstexte bei Matthäus 5:32; 19:9," *Biblica*, 26 (1945): 133-146; B. Vawter, "The Divorce Clauses in Mt. 5:32 and 19:9," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 16 (1954): 155-167; M. Zerwick, "De matrimonio et divortio in Evangelio," *Verbum Domini*,

divorce,<sup>32</sup> while the Protestant viewpoint has been that the innocent party has the right to remarry.<sup>33</sup> Although a thoroughgoing critique of the various contemporary interpretations is beyond the scope of the present essay, several observations are pertinent to ascertaining whether any contextual understanding can be found to clarify the use of the present indicative *moichatai*.

In partial answer to the question of verse 3, Jesus' response in verses 4-6 altered the entire discussion, leading the Pharisees to shift from concern about the grounds for divorce to concern over a conflict between Genesis 2:24 (1:27) and Deuteronomy 24:1 which Jesus' answer seemed to imply. Jesus' response to this latest concern in verse 8 did have the effect of stifling the Pharisees, but the seeming contradiction in the Pentateuch remained, viz., how is it possible to reconcile Jesus' interpretation of Genesis 1:27; 2:24, "What God has joined together, let not man separate," with the fact that Moses did permit divorce, implicitly admitting the possibility of a man divorcing his wife legitimately?

The answer to both Pharisaic concerns is given by Jesus in verse 9, where the "exceptive clause" is consistent with Genesis 2:24 and Exodus 20:14, "You shall not commit adultery." In using *porneia* with reference to irresponsible sexual relationship, Jesus is not merely

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38 (1960): 193-212. Patristic interpretations are discussed by H. Crouzel, "Le texte partistique de Matthieu v. 32 et xix. 9," *New Testament Studies*, 19 (1972): 98-119; and J. P. Arendzen, "Ante-Nicene Interpretations of the Sayings on Divorce," *Journal of Theological Studies*, 20 (1919): 230-241.

„See L. Sabourin, "The Divorce Clauses (Mt. 5:32; 19:9)," *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, 2 (1972?): 80-86.

„See R. J. Ehrlich, "The Indissolubility of Marriage as a Theological Problem," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 23 (1970): 303.

commenting on the indecency of Deuteronomy 24:1, nor does he side with the school of Shammai.<sup>34</sup> The term rather denotes unchastity per se, and the response of the disciples in verse 10 clearly shows that they took his "exceptive clause" in an absolute sense rather than merely as an agreement with the school of Shammai. *Porneia* translates what Jesus would have originally said in Aramaic, probably *ne'ap*, and suggests illicit sexual behavior antagonistic to the marriage union. Jesus' answer, then, to the questions of the Pharisees is that it is perfectly possible for a man to divorce his wife, provided Exodus 20:14 was broken by her. If a wife was unchaste, the intrinsic character of her marital commitment was already broken. To put away such a wife would not adulterate her, as she was already adulterated. To put away a wife for any other reason would be a clear violation of the intrinsic character of marriage and would constitute adultery if he remarries.

In the question-and-answer interchange between the Pharisees and Jesus, then, the point at issue is the true way to look at divorce. The use of the present indicative in discussing a general truth is called the "gnomic present."<sup>35</sup> and the limits of time on either side of the present moment are not defined.<sup>36</sup> Several occurrences of the "gnomic present" are in Matthew, as 7:17, "every good tree bears (*poiei*) good fruit."<sup>37</sup> This idiomatic use

<sup>34</sup>See Coiner, *Concordia Theological Monthly* (1968): 378.

<sup>35</sup>C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (2nd ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1959), p. 8.

<sup>36</sup>W. W. Goodwin, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses of the Greek Verb* (London: Macmillan, 1889), p. 9.

<sup>37</sup>G. B. Winer, *A Grammar of the Idiom of the New Testament* (7th ed.; Andover: W. F. Draper, 1870), p. 266, notes that Matt. 3:10, "every tree which brings not forth good fruit is cut," is not a

of the present tense to denote a general truth is as old as Aeschylus, *Ag.* 587, and Plato, *Phaed.* 58A. It is this "gnomic present" which occurs in *moichatai* in Matthew 19:9 when Jesus provides the general truth that "whoever divorces his wife except for unchastity and marries another commits adultery." In such a "gnomic present," or "present of general truth" (Smyth, pp. 421f.), continuity is not under consideration.

Arndt and Gingrich<sup>3</sup> observe, "the use of *an w.* subjunc. after relatives, the rel. clause forming virtually the protasis of a conditional sentence, 1) of the . . . present general type . . . *w. pres.* in apodosis, to show that the condition and its results involve repeated action, regardless of the time element," and cite in this regard John 5:19; Mark 9:18; Acts 2:39, and James 4:4. This observation must not be misconstrued, however, to mean that the occurrence of the protasis necessarily results in continuing action in the apodosis. Of course, in moods other than the indicative, the present specifically denotes continuity, as in Matthew 7:12, "all things whatsoever you wish that men should do to you, thus you must continue to do (*poieite*, pres. imperative) to them," and Luke 9:4, "into whatever house you enter, remain (pres. imperat.) there and depart from

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"gnomic present" since these words are connected with "the axe is already lying at the root of the trees" and must therefore be seen as a "futuristic present," "will be cut." Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek NT*, p. 866 mentions Matt. 6:2 and 23:3 as good examples of the "gnomic present." G. Mussies, *The Morphology of Koine Greek as Used in the Apocalypse of St. John* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), p. 250, mentions also Matt. 5:45 in this regard.

<sup>3</sup>A *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (2nd ed. rev. by F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker; Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 48.



(pres. imperat.) there.” In such cases, it is the mood, rather than the presence of the particle *an* in a relative clause, which denotes continuity. The use of *an* in a relative clause with a present indicative in the apodosis necessitates contingency; however, one still must rely upon the context to determine whether any continuity is in focus. For instance, continuity can hardly be the focus of the present indicative in 1 John 3:22, “whatever we ask, we receive from him.” In this and other NT usages, repetition involves both the protasis and the apodosis and continuity in the apodosis is not necessarily specified, thus “as often as we ask, we receive,” not “whatever we ask, we continually receive.” Similarly, in 1 Corinthians 11:26, “as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you announce the death of the Lord,” and Mark 9:18, “as often as the spirit seizes him, it throws him to the ground,” and Matthew 23:16,18, as often as one swears by the gold of the temple or by the gift on the altar, he is obliged to fulfil his oath. Accordingly, the use of *an* with a relative clause followed by the present indicative *moichatai* in Matthew 19:9 means only that whenever and as often as the situation mentioned in the protasis occurs, adultery is committed in that act each time it occurs. This idiomatic construction does not necessitate continuity being involved in the apodosis; rather, it specifies that with each repetition of the protasis, there is a concomitant recurrence of the apodosis.

Thus it cannot be said that the present indicative in Matthew 19:9, or any other Greek text, “cannot mean other than continuous action,” for any such argument blatantly disregards the several idiomatic uses of the present indicative in which continuity is not explicit. Greek syntax requires that each occurrence of the present indicative be understood in terms of its context to



determine whether continuity is involved. The context of Matthew 19:3-12 involves a discussion of a general truth, and in Jesus' statement of that truth *moichatai* must be taken as a "gnomic present" in which continuity is not under consideration. Now continuity may or may not be involved, but it is not legitimate to appeal to the Greek present indicative to assert that it must be involved.

# Paul on Marriage and Divorce (1 Corinthians 7:1-16)

Neil R. Lightfoot



**Address:** Abilene Christian University, ACU Station, Box 7778, Abilene, Texas 79699.

**Family:** Wife: Ollie Robinson Lightfoot. They have three daughters, Donna Lynn Thompson, Lu Anne Bourland, and Michelle, plus three grandchildren.

**Education:** Baylor University (B.A. and M.A. in philosophy), Duke University (Ph.D. in Religion, Biblical Field). Ph.D. dissertation entitled "A Critical Examination of the Revised Standard Version of the New

Testament."

**Work:** currently Professor of Bible at Abilene Christian University (since 1958), and Graduate Advisor in New Testament. Received A.C.U. Trustee's Award for "Outstanding Teacher of the Year," in 1978.

**Ministry:** Has preached for thirty-four years for churches in North Carolina and Texas. Now serves as an elder for the 11th & Willis church of Christ in Abilene.

**Publications and Honors:** Books: *How We Got the Bible*, *Lessons From the Parables*, *Jesus Christ Today: A Commentary on the Book of Hebrews*, *The Role of Women: New Testament Perspectives*. Has written chapters for other books, articles for

Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias, and articles for various religious journals.

Filmstrips: "How We Got the Bible," "Now That I Am a Christian," and soon to be published, "Can We Believe the Bible?"

Listed in *Who's Who in Religion*, *Who's Who in the South and Southwest*, and *Dictionary of International Biography*.

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I am particularly happy to speak on this topic on this program. When I was first invited, it was not difficult for me to think of numbers of reasons why I should decline the invitation. I had not done any special study on "marriage," nor on divorce and remarriage. Yet on further reflection I felt that if there was any special qualification that I had, it was that I had not researched it thoroughly, that I had not written anything on the topic, and that I did not have any stated position that I *had* to defend. I might add that I have sought to make this an independent research project. For this reason I purposely have not read the main books and articles written by well-known brethren, many of whom are my very good friends. I did not want in any way to be influenced by their thinking.

Helmut Thielicke is on the right track when he says that a text does not need simply to be quoted, but rather it needs to be interpreted. This points to the necessity of exegesis, a critical study of a passage by which a text is made clear. And good exegetical principles—so long neglected by many of us in the church—especially must be applied to troublesome texts such as those concerning marriage and divorce.

Since my time today is necessarily restricted, I want to focus on 1 Corinthians 7 and see if it is possible to cast some light on this extraordinarily difficult passage. 1 Corinthians 7 is central not merely because it is the earliest recorded New Testament teaching on divorce,

but because (1) it contains key terms and concepts that need explication, (2) it places side by side two possible divorce situations, and (3) it presents Paul's manner of handling these possible divorce situations in the life of the church and by explicit reference to what Jesus taught. My procedure will be to look briefly at the background of 1 Corinthians 7, to sketch the main lines of Paul's thoughts in selected verses, and then to examine more closely the points that are crucial for exegesis.

1 Corinthians is probably Paul's second letter to Christians at Corinth. He had written a previous letter (cf. 1 Cor. 5:9) and in the meantime the Corinthians had written Paul and had asked him some specific questions. What these questions were we cannot know with certainty.<sup>1</sup> Paul, when first among the Corinthians, had probably conveyed on to them what the Lord had said about divorce and perhaps also His sayings such as "in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage" (Matt. 22:40).<sup>2</sup> Possibly also Paul had taught the Corinthians, as he had written the Galatians, that in the

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<sup>1</sup>On the reconstruction of the Corinthians' questions, see John C. Hurd, Jr., *The Origin of 1 Corinthians* (New York: Seabury Press, 1965), p. 154ff.; A. Isaksson, *Marriage and Ministry in the New Temple; A Study with Reference to Mt. 19. 3-12 and 1 Cor. 11. 3-16*. Trans. by Neil Tomkinson and Jean Gray (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1965), p. 108f.; Kirsopp Lake, *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul* (London: Rivingtons, 1911), p. 180ff.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Mk. 12:25; Lk. 20:34-35. David Balch suggests the possibility of a Corinthian use (or misuse) of Jesus' sayings similar to those found in Luke 14:20, 26-27; 17:27; 18:29-30; 20:34-35. See "Backgrounds of 1 Cor. VII: Sayings of the Lord in Q: Moses as an Ascetic *Theios Aner* in II Cor. III," *New Testament Studies* 18 (1971-72), 356.

one body of Christ "there is neither male nor female" (Gal. 3:28). Perhaps these and similar teachings had been seized upon by the proto-Gnostic, "super-spirituals" at Corinth and had become for them a sort of religious platform as part of an ever-widening Hellenistic disdain for things of the flesh.

What Paul writes the Corinthians provides clues to their questions. They asked something like the following. First, is marriage a legitimate relationship and should married people abstain from sexual intimacy (vv.1-7)? Second, are the unmarried and widows to remain single (vv. 8-9, 39-40)? Third, what about divorce (vv. 10-11)? Fourth, what about a relationship where one person was converted to Christ and the other remained heathen (vv. 12-16)? Fifth, what about engaged couples?<sup>3</sup> Should they marry or refrain from marriage (vv. 25-38)?

In 7:1 Paul begins to answer these questions. He starts with a statement probably found in the Corinthians' letter to him—"It is well for a man not to touch a woman."<sup>4</sup> Paul expresses some sympathy with this

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<sup>3</sup>I take it that Paul is talking, from v 25 on, about engaged couples. See J. K. Elliott, "Paul's Teaching on Marriage in 1 Corinthians: Some Problems Considered," *New Testament Studies* 19 (1972-73), 219ff.; cf. Isaksson, p. 108. See Hurd, (p. 169ff.) for a good summary of various views and for the pertinent literature. Cf., for example, the RSV and NEB on these verses.

<sup>4</sup>Most recent interpreters regard the statement as part of the Corinthians' letter to Paul. In addition to Hurd (pp. 68, 163), see e.g., G. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript; Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity* Trans. by Eric J. Sharpe (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1961), p. 311; J. Massingberd Ford, "Levirate Marriage in St. Paul (1 Cor. VII)" *New Testament Studies* 10 (1963-64), 362.

view, especially on account of the "impending distress" and because "the form of this world is passing away" (vv. 26-31). But Paul makes it plain that marriage is equally acceptable to God, and that in marriage neither partner has the right to refuse sexual intercourse to the other (vv. 3-4). Husband and wife may abstain from intercourse—which some at Corinth seemed to be doing—but this should only be a temporary abstinence and that by mutual agreement (v. 5). Paul emphasizes that he says this by concession and not command (v. 6).<sup>5</sup> That is, on this point he is willing to make concession to the Corinthian ascetics, on the condition that their sexual abstinence be brief and for purposes of prayer. When Paul wishes that all were as he was, this is not an expression of bias against marriage and sex; rather he expressly declines to judge others by himself. Each has his own endowment of grace, and one endowment is no greater than the other (v. 7).

Verses 8-9 are in line with the principles of the previous verses, now applied to the unmarried and widows. Verses 10-11 contain Paul's charge to "the married," a charge which, he insists, is not his but is the Lord's. Paul's command is reinforced by what Jesus taught on marriage (Mk. 10:11-12 and parallels): "the wife should not separate from her husband . . . and the husband should not divorce his wife."

Here a slight problem surfaces. The Revised Standard Version distinguishes between "separate" (*choristenai*) and "divorce" (*aphienai*).<sup>6</sup> This may reflect the fact

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<sup>5</sup>This is a common Rabbinic distinction between a command (*kat epitagen*), which must be obeyed, and a concession (*kata sugnomen*). See Isakkson (p. 107) and Gerhardsson (pp. 311-14).

<sup>6</sup>J. K. Elliott, among others, likewise makes this distinction. Elliott, "Paul's Teaching on Marriage in 1 Corinthians: Some Problems Considered," p. 224.



that in Judaism the husband had the exclusive right of divorce; a woman could leave her husband but she could not divorce him. But this is hardly the place to attempt a discussion on "separate" and "divorce." Suffice it to say that there is considerable overlapping of the terms in both contemporary literary and nonliterary texts.<sup>7</sup> In the Corinthian passage at hand the terms are practically interchangeable.

1 Corinthians 7:11 contains an important parenthesis: "but if she does [that is, if the wife does separate from the husband], let her remain single or else be reconciled to her husband." This is the parenthesis that R.H. Charles regarded as an interpolation, partly because, I think, Charles was not able successfully to resolve the problem of "separate" and "divorce."<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the parenthesis supplies, I believe, the answer to his problem: for *choristhe* here must refer to divorce, else why would it say let the wife "remain unmarried" (*meneto agamos*)? But what is the significance of the parenthesis? In it Paul recognizes that even though the Lord strictly taught against separation of wife and husband, that the wife (presumably also the husband) nevertheless might violate this teaching and, if so, she must remain single or be reconciled to her husband. Marriage to someone else would close the door on reconciliation.

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<sup>7</sup>For a good discussion of this and related problems, see Donald W. Shaner, *A Christian View of Divorce* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), 60ff; also Jay E. Adams, *Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage* (Phillipsburg, N. J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1980), p. 32ff. For the various terms on divorce, see David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: The Athlone Press, 1956), pp. 362-72.

<sup>8</sup>See R. H. Charles, *The Teaching of the New Testament on Divorce* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1921), p. 46ff.

Paul proceeds to deal with a situation not addressed by Jesus. "To the rest, I say, not the Lord . . ." (v. 12). Paul, speaking in his own name, is conscious of making an important, apostolic deliverance. "I say, not the Lord" is not a contrast between the authoritative teaching of Jesus and his own unauthoritative, uninspired teaching. Paul's manner is emphatic, as shown a few verses later when says "this is my rule in all the churches" (v.17). To "the rest" (*tois loipois*) can only mean the others not so far named. Notice the structure of the statements, each introduced with dative plurals:

- (1) "To the unmarried and the widows . . ." (v. 8)
- (2) "To the married . . ." (v. 10)
- (3) "To the rest . . ." (v. 12)

In other places (e.g. 1 Thess. 4:13; 5:6) Paul uses *hoi loipoi* for unbelievers. Here the context makes it clear that "the rest" refers to so-called mixed marriages where a believing partner is married to an unbeliever. If the unbeliever is willing to live with the believer, the believer should not divorce the unbeliever (vv. 12-13). The believer should never initiate divorce. Instead of the believer becoming defiled by such a relationship, the opposite is true: the unbeliever is sanctified in connection with the believer (v. 14). Here sanctification is not that of salvation through Jesus Christ (cf. 6:11) but a sanctification of relationship. Somehow the believer sanctifies the relationship in mixed marriages.

On the other hand, suppose the unbeliever is not disposed to continue with the believer. "If the unbelieving partner desires to separate (*chorizetai*), let him do so (*chorizestho*); in such a case the brother or sister is not bound (*dedoulotai*)" (v. 15). We meet here again the *chorizo*, which at least in verse 11 denotes divorce. Verse 15 probably has the same sense, "to separate by

means of divorce.” In verses 12-13, where the unbeliever wishes to remain with the believer, Paul is very decisive. He employs the imperative, “let him not divorce” (*me aphieto*). In verse 15, Paul uses the permissive imperative, “let him depart,” (*chorizestho*). Paul has no way of making demands on the unbeliever. He speaks only to the believer and says “let the unbeliever be gone.” Under these circumstances the Christian husband or wife “is not bound.”

These verses pose a bewildering maze of exegetical difficulties. I want to focus attention on some of these by asking a few questions.

1. Does 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 refer to the married in general or specifically to married believers? A good case can be made for the viewpoint that, though Paul is writing obviously to married Christians at Corinth, the principles here are far-reaching and apply to all marriages. Paul stresses that it is the Lord’s command. And did not Jesus in His teachings on divorce go all the way back to creation and say “from the beginning it was not so” and also “the two shall become one flesh”? Do these statements have a bearing only on marriages where both mates are Christians?

Now it seems unquestionable that Jesus’ declarations on marriage in the beginning apply to all marriages. It is God’s will, for example, that a man leave father and mother and become one with his wife. This applies to all men. But this does not change the fact that in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 Paul is speaking specifically to married believers and, further, that Paul applies and restricts Jesus’ teachings on divorce to married believers. I use

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\*The words in quotes are those of John Murray in his book entitled *Divorce* (Philadelphia: The Committee on Christian Education, The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1953), p. 68.

the word "restrict," for Paul does restrict Jesus' teachings if on such as mixed marriages Paul says that he has no teaching from the Lord.

2. How is 1 Corinthians 7 connected with the teaching of Christ? This has already been suggested, but I want to explore some other aspects of this question. In recording Jesus' teaching on divorce, it is Matthew alone (chs. 5 and 19) who has the exception clause (except for **porneia**). It may be that Mark and Luke are dealing with lesser causes of divorce than sexual sin, and so they depict Jesus as simply forbidding divorce. Matthew's exception clause has been explained variously—as an unhistorical statement, as an editorial comment, as a gloss, and so forth.<sup>10</sup> But it is unnecessary now to explore these hypotheses. According to Matthew the Pharisees asked, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" (19:3). Jesus' answer that **porneia** (sexual sin) is the only cause fits the occasion of the question raised by the Pharisees.

I previously used the word "restrict" to describe Paul's use of Jesus' teachings on divorce. Paul does not lessen the force of Jesus' teachings; he simply restricts their application. In effect Paul says that Jesus did not cover all particulars having to do with divorce.

Jesus often taught by stating a principle in its most extreme form, without indicating how the principle is to be applied in concrete situations. "Do not swear at all"; "Give to him who begs from you"; "When you pray, go into your room and shut the door." All of these—and there are many others—are principles

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<sup>10</sup>For an excellent discussion on the exception clause, see H. G. Coiner, "Those 'Divorce and Remarriage' Passages (Matt. 5:32; 19:9; 1 Cor. 7:10-16), *Concordia Theological Monthly* 39 (1968), 272 ff.



which, though understandable in context, are later explained by apostolic teaching and practice.

Even Jesus' teachings on divorce illustrate this. While Mark and Luke report Jesus' teaching without qualification, Matthew makes clear that Jesus was not against all divorce. The fact is that in Matthew there is additional teaching on divorce not found in Mark and Luke. (Matthew may well be including a saying of Jesus made on a different occasion.) This could even be termed a "Matthean interpretation," an inspired interpretation, to be sure, but an interpretation or explanation nevertheless.

Now in the same way that Matthew supplements Mark and Luke, Paul gives additional teaching to what is present in the Synoptics. "I say"—that is, the Lord did not give teaching on mixed marriages. Need we emphasize that this additional teaching of Paul is as binding and authoritative as anything in Scripture?

3. What does Paul mean by the expression "not bound"? The Greek phrase *ou dedoulotai* ("not bound"), though it literally means "not enslaved," is, of course, to be understood figuratively. But to what does the figure of enslavement (or not enslavement) refer? Although there are numerous opinions, I will mention only those that contextually seem to have merit.

(1) The believer is not bound to oppose the divorce of the unbeliever. Here stand Robertson and Plummer of *The International Critical Commentary*<sup>11</sup> and presumably also C. K. Barrett—"not enslaved, that is,

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<sup>11</sup>The references, unless otherwise indicated, are to the authors' commentaries on 1 Corinthians. Robertson and Plummer, p. 143; also R. L. Roberts, "The Meaning of *Chorizo* and *Douloo* in 1 Corinthians 7:10-17," *Restoration Quarterly* 8 (1965), 181.

to a mechanical retention of a relationship the other partner wishes to abandon."<sup>12</sup> A variation of this is that the believer does not seek reconciliation.<sup>13</sup>

(2) The believer is not bound by the Lord's saying against divorce. If the heathen breaks off the marriage, the Christian is to accept it. The Christian, in such a case, is not bound like a slave to the Lord's saying. This is the view of Foerster in the respected *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*.<sup>14</sup>

(3) The believer is not bound to the obligation of evangelizing the unbeliever.<sup>15</sup> Verse 16 asks: "Wife, how do you know whether you will save your husband? Husband, how do you know whether you will save your wife?" Opinions are mixed whether this is an expression of optimism or pessimism concerning the possible salvation of the unbeliever.<sup>16</sup> Taken pessimistically, Paul is saying that the believer is no longer bound to convert his mate, for, he asks, "How do you know whether you will be able to save him anyway?"

(4) The believer is not bound by the marriage contract. If the unbeliever deserts or divorces the believer, the believer is released from the marriage bond. The marriage is dissolved. This is the view of the majority of

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<sup>12</sup>p. 166.

<sup>13</sup>M. J. Harris, "Separate, Divide," *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. III, p. 535.

<sup>14</sup>TDNT, Vol. II, p. 416.

<sup>15</sup>See Shaner, *A Christian View of Divorce*, p. 65.

<sup>16</sup>See S. Kubo, "I Cor. VII. 16: Optimistic or Pessimistic?" *New Testament Studies* 24 (1977-78), 530-44.



commentators—Macknight,<sup>17</sup> Hodge,<sup>18</sup> Meyer,<sup>19</sup> Stauffer,<sup>20</sup> Murray,<sup>21</sup> Hering,<sup>22</sup> and Coiner,<sup>23</sup> to name only a few—and this is the view that I have adopted only after preparation of this paper. It is the view, I think, that meets the linguistic and contextual demands of the passage.

(a) "Not bound to the marriage bond" fits the broad context of chapter 7 on marriage.

(b) "Not bound to the marriage bond" fits the immediate context of these verses on marriage ties. "In such a case (literally, "in such cases") the brother or sister is not bound" (v. 15) cannot mean any less than in other cases the believer is bound. In what cases? The context suggests the answer. If the unbeliever agrees to continue the marriage, the believer is bound. If the unbeliever does not agree to continue the marriage, the believer is not bound.

(c) "Not bound to the marriage bond" meets the necessary linguistic requirements. It is true that **douloo** in other places in the New Testament is not used of marriage. **But only one thing determines meaning—context.** Not lexicons, not other passages, only context! And the context here argues that **douloo** refers to marriage. In another context, 1 Corinthians 9:19, **edoulosa** (from **douloo**) is the opposite of "free" (**eleutheros**); and in still another context, 1 Corinthians 7:39, **dedetai** (from **deo**) is the opposite of "free"

<sup>17</sup>Vol. II, p. 96.

<sup>18</sup>P. 118.

<sup>19</sup>Pp. 161-62.

<sup>20</sup>TDNT, Vol. I, p. 652, n. 22.

<sup>21</sup>Murray, *Divorce*, p. 69ff.

<sup>22</sup>P. 53.

<sup>23</sup>Coiner, "Those 'Divorce and Remarriage' Passages," p. 382.

(*eleuthera*). From this one might conclude that *douloo* ("enslave") and *deo* ("bind") are equivalent in meaning. I think they are; but in the final analysis *douloo* means what it means only in the context of 1 Corinthians 7:15.

It is superfluous to comb the territory for "proof" on the origin and/or connection of *douloo* ("enslave") and *deo* ("bind"). The etymology of a term does not explain Paul's use or non-use of it in a given context.

Now a word on the tense of "not bound." *Dedoulotai* is the perfect, passive, indicative. The perfect ordinarily denotes past action with a continuing effect. *Dedoulotai* thus has the force "has not been bound and is not bound." To argue from this, however, since the believer has not been bound, that Paul here is not speaking of marriage, is a fallacious argument. It makes the expression "in such cases" meaningless, for, as we have noticed, if "in such cases" the believer is unbound, there must be some cases where the believer is bound. Why, then, does Paul use the perfect tense? In context, when the unbeliever departs, from that very moment the believer has not been bound and is not bound. The marriage is broken up. Reconciliation is scarcely a possibility. The believer is free.

So this means that the believer has the right to remarry? Paul does not say this. He does say that widows, though they would be better off to remain single, may marry "only in the Lord" (vv. 8-9, 39-40). Because Paul does not mention remarriage in verse 15 does not mean, however, that under different circumstances, where the "impending distress" (v. 26) is not present, the believer must remain single. If he is free, he is free to take whatever course of action he wishes. But if he marries again, he should marry "only in the Lord"—a principle that should be followed in all

marriages that involve believers.

There are other questions of interest. If in some cases a believer is not bound, it seems there would be cases where an unbeliever might be no longer bound to an unbeliever. This has implications for some of the problems about baptizing divorced persons. Where there is no Biblical teaching on specific cases, there is no alternative except to follow the guidelines of Christ and the apostles.

I close by emphasizing that Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 7 in no way opens the door for believers to practice divorce. Christian husbands and wives, who are truly seeking to please God, can have a successful, lasting marriage. The Christian at no time will seek to break up a marriage. But if the unbeliever forces the issue and leaves, the believer is free.

# Apocalyptic Imagery In Matthew 24:29-31

**Ian Fair**



**Address:** 901 Green Valley Drive, Abilene, Texas 79601

**Family:** Wife: Moira June Fair. They have three sons, Deon Bernard, Nigel Roy, and Douglas Ian, plus one granddaughter, Rachel D'nae.

**Education:** Witswatersrand Technical College, South Africa (Civil Engineering), Abilene Christian University (B.A. in Bible), University of Natal, South Africa (B.A. Hon. in Religion; M.A. in New Testament; Ph.D. in Systematic Theology).

**Work and Ministry:** Currently Associate Professor of Bible, Abilene Christian University (since 1978); and Pulpit and College Minister, South 11th and Willis church of Christ, Abilene, Texas (since 1978).

Worked as a Civil Engineer from 1952-1960. Has done preaching and mission work since 1960. Did mission work in South Africa from 1960-1974. Was Dean and Instructor at Sunset School of Preaching in Lubbock, Texas from 1974-1978.

**Other Fields of Special Interest:** Preaching, Exegesis, Contemporary Theology. Member of Society for Biblical Literature, Evangelical Theological Society, and the Southwest Seminar on the Development of Early Catholic Christianity.

The topic for discussion in this paper has been chosen for two basic reasons. The first is that it involves a passage around which considerable uncertainty and conflict arises not only within the brotherhood of churches of Christ,<sup>1</sup> but also with the interpretations of premillennial demoninational scholars that view both the book of Revelation and Matthew 24 from a dispensational perspective.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>There is a continuing debate as to whether Matt. 24 has reference only to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, or whether it speaks to both the destruction of Jerusalem and the "second coming" of Christ at the end time. In addition to this it is argued by some that this passage reduces and limits all references to the "second coming" in the New Testament to Jesus' coming at the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, thus "solving" the supposed problems growing out of the first century church's imminent expectation of the return of Christ. Cf. Jim McGuiggan and Max King, *The McGuiggan-King Debate* (Warren, Ohio: Parkman Road Church of Christ, 1975), and Ed Stevens, *What Happened in 70 A.D.?* (Ashtabula, Ohio: Northeast Ohio Bible Institute.) See Furman Kearley "An Exegesis of Matthew 24," *Until He Comes: Abilene Christian University Annual Bible Lectures* (Abilene: Abilene Christian University Book Store, 1980), pp. 118-135, R.V.G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew, Tyndale Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1961), pp. 233-231, and Jack P. Lewis, *The Gospel According to Matthew, Part II* (Austin, Texas: Sweet Publishing Co., 1976), pp. 120-132, for excellent discussions on the meaning of Matt. 24.

<sup>2</sup>This dispensational approach limits both Revelation and Matt. 24 exclusively to references regarding the eschatological "signs of the times" concerning the last days, or the end of the world, thus removing these works from the context of first century needs and problems. Cf. Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959), *The Blessed Hope and The Tribulation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), and "Christ's Olivet Discourse on the Time of the End," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 129 (1972), numbers 512, 513, 514, 515.

A second and perhaps more significant reason for choosing this passage is that it offers us the opportunity of illustrating some meaningful and helpful models for interpreting this and similar difficult passages of scripture in the New Testament.<sup>3</sup> The language is so highly figurative and symbolic, and leans so heavily on Old Testament images, that the student seeking for meaning is driven of necessity to parallel passages in both biblical and extra-biblical sources in an effort to identify some model along which the meaning of this difficult and fascinating passage is conveyed.

It is essential, however, before we begin an examination of Matthew 24:29-31, that we make some comments regarding methodology. Before attempting to interpret any passage, or to establish what a passage means to us today, it is essential that we first seek, humbly and carefully, to establish to the best of our ability what the original writer intended the original readers to understand. There is always the danger that without due care being exercised in this regard we will read into a passage our contemporary concerns or presuppositions. However, by a careful application of some deliberate steps in the approach to a text we can build the necessary checks and balances into our study

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<sup>3</sup>Members of churches of Christ have not always been careful to apply a sound exegetical model to their interpretation of scripture. Exegesis of scripture must always be the essential foundation for hermeneutic, meaning, and theology, and not vice versa. This means simply that we should be careful not to permit our own religious views to become the presupposition for establishing the meaning of a text. We should rather let the text become the foundation of our religious views.



that will mitigate against subjective presupposition.<sup>4</sup>

As this careful method of study is followed, the student addresses certain questions to the text which attempt to direct attention away from the student's presuppositions to the historical circumstances of the text. By pursuing these questions the student seeks to establish the following: (1) the best textual base for his study,<sup>5</sup> (2) the literary type or genre adopted by the writer,<sup>6</sup> (3) the immediate and larger contexts of the text, (4) the historical, religious, and sociological con-

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<sup>4</sup>This approach to a text, or exegetical method, is technically called the Grammatico-historical method. It is a systematic approach to the text and the historical circumstances of the text supply objective safeguards to subjectivism. Cf. Abraham Malherbe. "An Introduction: The Task of Exegesis," *Restoration Quarterly* 5 (1961), pp. 167-78, I. Howard Marshall, ed. *Exegetical Method* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1967). There will always be a subjective element in any attempt at interpretation, but following a model such as presented in the Grammatico-historical method will help control this tendency.

<sup>5</sup>It should be obvious to any serious student of the Bible that a variety of versions and copies of manuscripts in the original biblical languages are available. By careful study of these manuscripts and versions a sound textual base is chosen for the study. Technically, this study of the manuscripts and translations is known as Textual Criticism. One should not pick up any translation of the Bible and automatically assume that one has the best words or text available for one's study.

<sup>6</sup>The writers of the New Testament use a variety of literary genre as they seek to make their message meaningful to their readers. For example, the Gospel writers record Jesus' teaching in parables; Luke uses the historical narrative in Luke-Acts as a framework for his message (Lk. 1:1-4). Paul quotes from the Greek poets Epimenides and Aratus in Acts 17:28 and also quotes early Christian hymns (I Tim. 3:16). John makes much use of the highly symbolic apocalyptic style in Revelation. Each of these literary types

text of the recipients of the text, and (5) the meaning of the words in the text as used by the writer in his historical and sociological context. The need for such safeguards against subjective interpretations becomes more urgent when the text presents a literary type not readily used and understood in modern times, or with regard to texts that have become the victim of conflicting speculative interpretations. Such is the case with Matthew 24 and in particular verses 29-31.

When considering the textual base of Matthew 24:29-31 there do not appear to be any variants of major concern to the meaning of the text,<sup>7</sup> and the translation of this paragraph and its synoptic parallels by the Revised Standard Version is an adequate basis for study.<sup>8</sup>

A cursory glance at the passage under consideration is all that is necessary to establish that the language is highly figurative and symbolic. The Lord had carefully chosen the language of apocalyptic imagery to convey the full force of this argument. Images well known to

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carries with it a theological message unique to its style. Cf. the German term *Gattungsgeschichte* which is often used for "genre research." Richard Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1976), p. 66.

<sup>7</sup>The Greek texts of Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibleanstalt, 26th ed., 1979) and Kurt Aland, et al., *The Greek New Testament* (United Bible Society, 3rd ed., 1975) have been used for this purpose, and other than some minor variants in synoptic parallels, and the insertion in some minor traditions of the word *phone* after "trumpet" in verse 31, there are no significant textual problems.

<sup>8</sup>Revised Standard Version (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, second edition of the New Testament, 1971). There are one or two minor translation alternatives to the RSV rendering of Lk. 21:25-28, but these are not of any significant nature and add nothing to the meaning of the text.

his Jewish disciples, drawn from the Old Testament and other Jewish religious writings, would clearly emphasize the certainty of the message Jesus desired to impress on the disciples.

As we focus our attention on Matthew 24:29-31, it is obvious from the immediate context beginning in Matthew 24:1 that the disciples were awed by the beauty and grandeur of the Temple. Jesus was fully aware of this, and of their allowing the Temple to become the focal point of their lives, and later even their mission. He needed to explain the futility of this, knowing that Jerusalem and the Temple were soon to fall. But he needed to do this in a manner that would explain to them the significance of the fall. He wanted them to understand that this event was the result of the definitive and judicial will of God. The disciples' Jewish heritage and consequent familiarity with the message and theology of apocalyptic<sup>9</sup> made this an ideal vehicle for this striking emphasis, and it is this symbolism that Jesus draws upon in this section of this discourse on the future of the Temple.

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<sup>9</sup>Apocalyptic is a technical, or near technical, term for a literary type that was especially popular among the Jews and Christians during the centuries between 200 B.C. and 200 A.D. Its use, however, can be traced back before 200 B.C. as a powerful medium of expression, but it is particularly during the centuries of persecution by the Seleucids and Romans that this type of expression became so popular. It is a type of expression in a highly figurative and symbolic style that arose during times of distress and oppression, and it was intended to encourage to faithfulness those being persecuted under pagan oppression. It called for faithfulness to God as the ruler of the universe, and assured the oppressed that God was still in control and that he would personally see to the downfall of the oppressor. The message was usually couched in terms of a cosmic battle between the forces of evil and the forces of

rebellious people is symbolically described as a punishment of the physical world. The catastrophic nature of the description of God's judgments clearly demonstrates the awesome nature of God's judgment of sin and rebellion. W.C. Allen observes that "Such signs are symbolical of any great manifestation of Jehovah's power."<sup>12</sup>

If from the above examples the nature of apocalyptic, that is, its figurative symbolism of catastrophic judgments on the physical universe, is apparent, so too is its theology. Whenever apocalyptic language is used to describe an event, it implies that the judgment thus portrayed in catastrophic symbolism is not merely the simple result of some human action. It implies that the event can occur only through the direct intervention or action of God. It is not an ordinary happening. It is the result of divine judgment upon a nation or people who were clearly rebellious against God and thus in process of being rejected by God. It is this message that Jesus wanted to establish clearly in the minds of his disciples regarding the fall of Jerusalem, and the language of apocalyptic was a perfect vehicle for this purpose. Jesus wanted the disciples to see the fall of Jerusalem as the sovereign will of God upon a rebellious people and not simply an ordinary historical act of the spread of Roman dominance.

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<sup>12</sup>Allen, W.C., *The Gospel According to St. Matthew. The International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1907), p. 258. Allen, however, mistakenly assumes Matt. 24:29-31 to be a reference to judgment at the end of the world. He understands correctly the nature and message of apocalyptic, but applies it incorrectly.

Having attempted to identify the literary genre that is used in Matthew 24:29-31, it now becomes encumbent upon us to illustrate how this message fits beautifully into the context of Matthew 24. To do this it is necessary that we briefly trace Matthew's record of the movements of Jesus leading up to this apocalyptic discourse. In chapter 21 Matthew describes Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Jesus was ready to die. He cleansed the Temple (Matt. 21:12ff) and cursed the fig tree (Matt. 21:18ff., symbolic of his rejection of barren Jerusalem). His authority was challenged by the chief priests, and he told parables reflecting on the hardness of the chief priests' and Pharisees' hearts (Matt. 21:45). He continued his argument with the chief priests and the Pharisees in Matthew 22, and in Matthew 23 pronounced seven "woes" upon the Pharisees. He concluded in Matthew 23:29 by calling them hypocrites. This led to a poignant lament over Jerusalem for its rebellion. Matthew 24 begins with Jesus' discussion of the destruction of Jerusalem which the disciples then misinterpreted as the end of the age, or world.<sup>13</sup> Jesus corrected this by arguing that the destruction of Jerusalem would clearly be accompanied by signs (Matt. 24:3-35), whereas in Matthew 24:36 he spoke of "another day" ("but of that day and hour no one knows") for which there will be no sign. This second day, distinct from the first "day" (namely, the destruc-

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<sup>13</sup>Cf. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, p. 223. The Greek expression "end of the age" seemingly has reference to the present age as contrasted with the age to come. The phrase is used in Matt. 13:39, 49, and 28:20 also apparently in reference to the end of the world.

tion of Jerusalem) is clearly a reference to the final day of judgment.<sup>14</sup>

Into this discussion of Jesus' condemnation of Jerusalem, and of the disciples' erroneous ideas regarding the final judgment, Jesus inserted our passage, Matthew 24:29-30. The question is, "To what does this passage have reference, to the discussion of the destruction of Jerusalem which preceded it, or to the discussion of the final judgment which followed it in Matthew 24:36-25:46?"<sup>15</sup>

From the above remarks regarding "that day," it is apparent that the transition of thought to "another

<sup>14</sup>The force of the Greek phrase *peri de tes hemeres ekeines* ("but concerning *that day*") is that it does not refer to the day having been discussed immediately prior to verse 36. The day under discussion in verse 36 cannot therefore be the day of the destruction of Jerusalem but must refer to another more remote day. It has reference, therefore, to the more remote day in the context, namely, the end or final day of judgment. The force of the Greek makes it certain that two distinct days or occurrences are being discussed in Matt. 24. For the first and "immediate" day there are signs. For the second and "remote" day there are no signs.

<sup>15</sup>Many scholars, following the traditional interpretation of these verses, refer this passage to the final coming of Jesus at the end of the world. Cf. G.R. Beasley-Murray, *A Commentary on Mark Thirteen* (New York: Mcmillan, 1957), pp. 87-93, W.C. Allen, *St. Matthew*, pp. 252-262, Floyd V. Filson, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1960), pp. 256-257. Others, however, see these verses referring to the discussion immediately at hand, i.e., the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple. Cf. R.V.G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, pp. 223-228, Jack P. Lewis, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Part II, pp. 127-131, and J. Marcellus Kik, *Matthew Twenty-Four* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1948), pp. 69-92.



day" other than the destruction of Jerusalem, namely, the final judgment, begins in Matthew 24:36. Furthermore, the context of signs that can be interpreted extends from Matthew 24:15-35. It would therefore seem obvious from the position of our passage (Matt. 24:29-31) that it forms part of Jesus' judgment on Jerusalem, and not part of the final day of judgment, which day is not to be announced by signs (Matt. 24:36).

Furthermore, with regard to Matthew 24:29, our preliminary observations above regarding the meaning and use of apocalyptic indicate that this verse with its strong apocalyptic imagery of sun being darkened and moon not giving its light, could have reference to God's judgment on a rebellious people. It is interesting to note that Jesus had just concluded a condemnation of Jerusalem for its rebellion and hardness of heart. This much seems obvious in regard to Matthew 24:29; Jesus used this imagery in keeping with its apocalyptic symbolism of a cataclysmic divine judgment on Jerusalem for its rebellion.

Further questions, however, arise regarding Matthew 24:30,31. "To what do the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and the coming of the Son of man on the clouds refer? Are these not an indication that Jesus had turned from his condemnation of Jerusalem to discuss his second coming?" Or, "To what does the gathering of the elect refer, if not to final judgment?" It is our opinion that these references are also apocalyptic in nature, and refer in the same manner to Jesus' judgment on Jerusalem.<sup>16</sup> It is to these references that we now turn

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<sup>16</sup>For an excellent discussion on the use of these images by Jesus, see Tasker, *Gospel According to Matthew*, pp. 225-228, Lewis, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Part II, pp. 127-130, and Kik, *Matthew Twenty-Four*, pp. 69-85.

our attention in the remainder of this study.

In Matthew 24:30 Matthew records Jesus' reference to the "sign of the Son of man in heaven." Mark and Luke in their parallel passages<sup>17</sup> do not record these exact words of Jesus, but agree broadly with Matthew in recording that men will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. The reference to the sign of the Son of Man in heaven is apparently a reference to Daniel 7:13 where the coming of the Son of Man with the clouds of heaven is a symbol of his kingly reign and dominion. This tradition of God coming in clouds was already by Daniel's time common to the Jewish mind. God's glory is often depicted as coming on or with clouds. The presence of God in the clouds as a theophany speaking of the real presence, glory, and majesty of God, is found throughout the Old Testament.<sup>18</sup> The context of Daniel 7:13 is one of the persecution of God's people (7:21, 25), God's judgment of the persecutor (7:10, 22, 26), and the dominion of God and his people (7:14, 18, 27). The similarities to Matthew 24 are striking: persecution (24:9), the judgment of God on Jerusalem (24:15-29), and the dominion or authority of God and the Son of Man. The figure of God coming in the clouds in judgement was a common motif of the Old Testament,<sup>19</sup> so when Jesus used this figure in the context of this condemnation of Jerusalem, the message should be clear. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans was not simply a Roman act but the divine presence of Jesus coming in the judgment

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<sup>17</sup>Mk. 13:24-27 and Lk. 21:25-28.

<sup>18</sup>Ex. 13:21; 19:16; 24:15, 16; 40:34, 35; Lev. 16:2; Num. 9:15. Furthermore, the Lord is often spoken of as appearing on clouds. Ex. 16:10; 19:9; 19:16; 34:5; Num. 11:25; Dan. 7:13.

<sup>19</sup>Isa. 19:1, Lam 2:1, Ezek. 30:18. In these references the judgment of both Egypt and Jerusalem is associated with clouds.

of God upon Jerusalem. Tasker draws attention to the destruction of Jerusalem being rightly considered as a "coming of Jesus." He notes, furthermore, that it can refer to the parousia or second coming of Jesus. He says that "Jesus would seem to have regarded both of them as 'comings' in judgment . . ." He continues, however, and concludes that:

The destruction of the Jerusalem Temple was indeed a divine visitation, which one familiar with the language of Jewish prophecy could describe as a coming of the Son of man on *the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*<sup>20</sup>

At a later stage of church history the apostle John would also pick up this imagery when reassuring the church under Roman persecution that Jesus would again come in judgment "with the clouds," but this time on Rome (Rev. 1:7). The terminology used by John in Revelation 1:7 is strikingly similar to that used by Jesus in Matthew 24:40. Here John, like Jesus, draws Daniel 7:13 and Zechariah 12:10-12 together, and infers from his use of the Zechariah passage the mourning of the tribes of the earth, in particular Rome, over the crucified Christ who would come in judgment on Rome.

Jesus had, however, before John, already joined these two separate traditions together as a symbol of his divine judgment on Jerusalem. Drawing on the one hand from Daniel 7, there is Jesus coming in the clouds in his sovereign authority and judgment on Jerusalem, and on the other hand, drawing from Zechariah 12, there is the mourning of Jerusalem from the crucified Christ whom they have rejected and for which they are now being judged. This instance of Jesus' and John's use of Zechariah 12, however, is interesting. Both have drawn from the Zechariah tradition, but both have in-

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<sup>20</sup>Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, pp. 226-227.

terpreted it and applied it slightly differently from Zechariah. For this reason, some scholars believe that Jesus and John have used an apocalyptic fragment based upon Zechariah 12, rather than using the exact text of Zechariah 12.<sup>21</sup>

It is not uncommon for New Testament writers to pick up themes developed in the Old Testament and to re-use them in similar, yet not exact, applications. This is especially true in the case of John and Revelation. Austin Farrer has called this practice the "rebirth of images."<sup>22</sup> The presence of this Zechariah tradition in the parallel traditions of Revelation and Matthew is therefore an excellent aid to understanding Jesus' use of this in Matthew 24. Robert H. Mounce expresses this rebirth of images well in this commentary on Revelation.

These two prophetic motifs (Dan 7 and Zech. 12. IAF) are joined by John and adapted to describe the impending advent of the victorious Christ and the response of a hostile world to the revelation of his universal sovereignty . . . The mourning of Zechariah 12:10-12 was that of repentance, but the mourning of Revelation is the remorse accompanying the disclosure of divine judgment at the coming of Christ . . . <sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Isbon T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), p. 431. There is, however, no such extant fragment supporting this view, however desirable it might be. Whether such a fragment existed, it does seem that both Jesus and John are drawing upon a common tradition.

<sup>22</sup>Austin M. Farrer, *A Rebirth of Images* (Glasgow: University Press, 1949), pp. 15-19. Cf. also G.B. Caird, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 11.

<sup>23</sup>Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 72-72. Caird, *Revelation*, p.18, refers this use of Zech 12 to "ultimate vindication of the Christian

The language of Matthew 24:30 is therefore remarkably similar to, and in keeping with, the tradition expressed in Revelation 1:7. Jesus comes in the clouds in judgment on Jerusalem. This is at once a vindication of the Christian faith, and a cause for alarm to those who rejected Jesus and crucified the Christ.

In regard to the "gathering of his elect" in Matthew 24:31, it is difficult for some to connect the apparent message of judgment on Jerusalem in Matthew 24:30 with this gathering of the elect.<sup>24</sup> This expression could have reference in some contexts to the final salvation at the end of the world. This, however, is not an insurmountable problem when these expressions are considered out of their expressive apocalyptic and eschatological backgrounds. We have already observed that Exodus 19:16 connects the presence of God in a cloud with the sound of a trumpet. In addition to this, trumpets announce God's kingly reign (Ps. 47), his judgments on the nations and his people (Isa. 18:3; Jer. 4:5; 6:1; Joel 2:1; Amos 2:2; Zeph. 1:16), and his call of Israel to repentance and deliverance (Isa. 27:13; Joel 2:15; Zeph. 9:11-15). By using this symbolism of trumpets, Jesus drew all of these images and expectations together regarding his divine judgment on Jerusalem.

To Israel the Messianic expectation and gathering of the elect were tied closely to national unity. Jerusalem

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faith." Leon Morris, *The Revelation of St. John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1969), p. 49 sees in this a reference to "the manifestation of the Lord to his foes, who will be disconcerted at this unexpected reversal of roles." Beckwith, *The Apocalypse*, P.432, likewise sees the mourning "on account of the terrible judgment which they associate with him at his appearing."

<sup>24</sup>The variant reading in Lk. 21:28 'look up and raise your heads for your redemption is nigh' is in complete agreement with the expression "gather his elect . . ." used in Matt. 24 and Mk. 13, and poses no problem to the interpretation of this passage.



figured prominently in this. By bringing together these two contradicting thoughts, the destruction of Jerusalem and the gathering of the elect, Jesus explained that the destruction of Jerusalem was in no way an abrogation of the gathering of the elect. In fact, this is the key to the whole eschatological discourse in Matthew 24. The destruction of Jerusalem was not to be interpreted by the disciples as the end of the world. The gathering of the elect was not in any way tied to Jerusalem or the national unity of the Jews, but would in fact continue simultaneously with the destruction of Jerusalem.

It is interesting to note that the terminology used by Jesus was lifted from references in the Old Testament that discussed the loss of national unity and the Messianic expectation of the future gathering of the elect (Deut. 30:4; Jer. 18:17; Ezek. 5:10, 12; 12:14; 17:21; Isa. 11:12; 27:13; Jer. 23:3; Ezek. 11:17, et al., cf. also Ps Sol 11:1-3; Shem Esreh 10, Apoc Abraham 31). William Lane correctly points out that:

The regathering of dispersed Israel is an essential and traditional theme of Jewish eschatological hope . . . When Jesus touched upon this theme in the context of the eschatological discourse he reinterpreted Israel's hope in a profound way. Until that time the Temple of Jerusalem had been the visible center for the gathering of the scattered chosen people. The destruction of the Temple, however, would not result in their permanent dispersement . . . The counterpart to the destruction of Jerusalem and the sanctuary is the eschatological salvation of the elect. The remnant will recover their lost unity through Jesus, the triumphant Son of Man.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup>William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 476-477. The apocalyptic and



The Messianic hope growing out of this loss of Jewish national unity consequently involved the restoration of Jerusalem and the ingathering of the elect remnant. Jesus, in discussing the impending judgment and destruction of Jerusalem, used these Messianic figures and expectations to explain to the disciples that the loss of Jerusalem and national unity were not to be equated with the cessation of the Messianic gathering of the elect. The Messianic work would continue because this hope rested in the Messiah himself and not in Jerusalem or upon national unity. Jesus did not want the disciples' hope to be shattered by the impending destruction of Jerusalem. In fact, they were to flee from Jerusalem.<sup>26</sup> The reference to the Messianic hope of the gathering of the elect by Jesus in Matthew 24:31 is therefore not a reference to the final judgment, but a skillful argument by Jesus regarding the correct understanding of the destruction of Jerusalem. The destruction of Jerusalem and continuation of the ingathering would also be further vindication of the crucified Jesus that Jerusalem had rejected.

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eschatological nature of this passage is also well illustrated by Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to Mark* (London: Macmillan Co., 1963) pp. 518f. and Alan Hugh M'Neile, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (London: Macmillan Co., 1952), pp. 352f.

<sup>26</sup>Matt. 24:16ff. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), vol. 1, p. 201, explains that the disciples did this very thing in A.D. 66; "the people of the church in Jerusalem were commanded by an oracle given by revelation before the war to those in the city who were worthy of it to depart and dwell in one of the cities in Perea which they called Pella. To it those who believed on Christ migrated from Jerusalem . . .

One final matter of concern is the opening statement "Immediately after the tribulation . . ." of Matthew 24:29. It is this statement that has caused many scholars considerable difficulty, especially those who see in this passage a reference to the final judgment. If this passage did refer to the final judgment to occur soon after (immediately after) the destruction of Jerusalem, or that the word "immediately" (*eutheos*) had some other meaning or implication. One should remember that in apocalyptic imagery time sequence is not the major concern. Apocalyptic is not interested in "when" questions, but in "what" questions. Even if time concerns were present, Jesus was merely saying that immediately following the surrounding of Jerusalem by the Romans, and the great tribulation this would cause, he would come in judgment on Jerusalem. A better implication, and one in keeping with the style of apocalyptic, is to see this statement as an emphatic connective between the "desolating sacrilege" (Matt. 24:15) and Jesus' divine judgement. The meaning might better be explained as the *immediacy of implication* rather than the immediate chronological sequence of events.<sup>27</sup>

It now remains to be demonstrated that this exegesis of Matthew 24:29-31 fits smoothly into the context and line of thought developed by Matthew and the Synoptic Gospels. In Matthew 23 we saw that Jesus began a denunciation on the Scribes and Pharisees. He concluded with a lament over Jerusalem in Matthew 23:37-39. After concluding this denunciation, Jesus and the disciples began to leave the Temple where Jesus spoke of the destruction of the Temple. This prophecy was one

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<sup>27</sup>Cf. Kik, *Matthew Twenty-Four*, pp. 69-70, and Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, pp. 225-226.

of considerable alarm to the disciples who were well aware of Jewish expectation of national unity and Messianic hope. Surely if the Temple were destroyed this would be the end. Jesus therefore explained in Matthew 24:4-14 that this would not be the case. The disciples were not to believe those predicting the coming of Christ and the end, as there would be no signs of the coming of the end. However, regarding the destruction of Jerusalem there would be signs (Matt. 24:15-28). Before leaving this terrible hope-jarring thought of the destruction of Jerusalem Jesus had to explain that the destruction of Jerusalem was to be a divine act of judgment and certainly did not mean the end of the Messianic ingathering (Matt. 24:32-34). However, regarding the day of final judgment there would be no sign (Matt. 24:36-44). For this day the disciples would need to be spiritually alert and prepared (Matt. 24:45-25:46).

It would seem therefore in conclusion that the text under consideration (Matt. 24:29-31) is a message from Jesus to the disciples, couched in apocalyptic and eschatological concepts, that was intended by Jesus to dispel the fears of the disciples and explain clearly to them that the destruction of Jerusalem would not be the final eschatological end, nor the end of the Messianic ingathering of the elect. It therefore becomes a key passage to understanding the significance of Jesus' rejection of Jerusalem as the center of redemptive hope. Redemptive and Messianic hope would be centered in the person of Jesus and not in the national hope of Israel.



## Featured Classes



# God Teaches Us To Cope

Doris Jo Black



**Address:** 13008 Stillforest, Round Rock, TX 78664

**Family:** Husband: Jack M. Black, Financial Manager for Motorola, Austin, Texas. Married 30 years. They have four daughters (three married, and one 19-year-old college student), and seven beautiful grandchildren.

**Education:** Attended Cochise Junior College and Mesa Community College.

**Work:** For years her primary career was the rearing of four daughters. Interspersed with that task were a variety of part-time

and full-time jobs, including newspaper reporting, bookkeeping, secretarial, and engineering specialist. She is presently employed by a printing and office supply firm.

**Ministry:** The Lord has provided a ministry in the area of women's special problems, women's Bible classes, retreats, seminars, workshops, and inspiration days. Has taught everything from cradle roll and up, and for the past nine years has focused on a special ministry to women.

Growing out of her Bible classes on "Coping," she developed a Self-Improvement Seminar, which has been presented at Round Rock Community School, Women's Clubs, Homemaker's Groups, Child Nurture Groups, Library Support Groups, etc.

**Other Fields of Special Interest:** Has many interests, but because of time pressures, they are currently restricted to writing and ancient history. She is particularly interested in the Intra-Testament



period of history, and has developed a series of lessons on this time period, which she plans to produce in book form.

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## Introduction

The following lessons are from the book, *But How Can I?*, and have been arranged for presentation at the 1982 Abilene Christian University Lectureship.\*

## Depression

*"Weeping endureth for the night but joy cometh in the morning."*

*-Psalms 30:5*

## THE PROBLEM

Jane was lying on the couch staring at a TV game show. The breakfast dishes were on the table, she was in her housecoat, her husband would be home in a couple of hours and her eyes filled with tears as she anticipated how disgusted and angry he would be with the mess. Jane was suffering from depression.

The depth of depression can vary from a prolonged case of the blahs to very serious mental, emotional, and physical illness. Its symptoms are many and experienced in a variety of combinations: eating problems, erratic sleep patterns, unkempt appearance, neglected chores, loss of affection, indifference, sadness (weeps), irritability, hostility, anxiety, fear, worry, hopelessness and numerous physical ailments.

In the United States each year there are from 50,000 to 70,00 suicides and over half of these are attributed to depression. Annually, 125,000 are hospitalized and treated for depression and another 200,000 are treated privately. Yet, there are many times that number who suffer from depression and are never treated professionally.

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\*Doris Black and Charlotte Mize, *But How Can I?* (New Day Press, Round Rock, Texas, 1981).

It is not just a contemporary problem. Hippocrates wrote on the subject in the 4th century B.C. and named it melancholia, meaning heavy, dark red blood, which he thought was responsible for the symptoms. (And if you have ever been depressed you can understand part of his reasoning.)

It has been widely studied for years; thus reams of material have been published on the subject, yet it remains as much a problem today as ever.

### **What Causes Depression**

Science does not have an answer to this question. Scientists have developed a variety of methods to treat the symptoms of depression but the cause eludes them. They have vast amounts of information concerning depression and have discovered: (1) it is a universal problem, (2) all age groups are susceptible, (3) some people are more prone to depression than others, (4) the degree of depression varies, (5) no group or individual is totally immune, and (6) depression always starts with an external event. All of these observations coincide with the Biblical insight on depression but the last is by far the most significant.

### **How Does Depression Develop**

Depression can develop slowly or instantly. However, it usually starts with a feeling of the blahs and a few days of, "I don't want to do anything today." If unchecked it progresses into fatigue, irritability, eating problems, and tears as things begin to stack up. Or occasionally an event will be so traumatic that you go instantly into the depths of full-blown depression characterized by uncontrolled weeping, nausea, and feelings of hopelessness, etc.

Man can do about the same thing for depression that he can for the common cold—treat the symptoms, which is not to be taken lightly. For although, it may

not cure the depression, it often makes the depressed more comfortable.

### THE SOLUTION

God's solution to depression is based on "response." He teaches you to respond to "external events" in a manner that avoids depression. Man has discovered that depression always starts with an external event and God's teachings (Genesis 4:5-7) indicate that the way you respond to an event can either lift your countenance up or let you countenance fall (depression).

To better understand this concept, let's use a mental visual aid. Imagine a beautiful country road running along the upper edge of a valley. Along this road are several exits that lead south toward the valley. All of these exits have a junction where you can either turn north back to the upper valley road or continue on down to the heart of the valley. Now, let the upper valley road represent the life's journey God would have you travel; the exits represent events that can or will occur in your life; the road continuing down into the valley are Roads of Depression; and the valley shall be the Valley of Despair. With this mental image let's study God's solution to depression.

### Exit of Disappointment

Everyone that lives travels many side roads of disappointment. Some are large, some small; but all are capable of detouring you onto the Road of Depression if not handled God's way.

Disappointments arise from many different sources: job situations, longed-for goals, financial desires, and the most common of all, people (wives, husbands, children, Christians, friends, etc.). A disappointment is really nothing more than an unfulfilled expectation and all such side roads should be required to have a sign posted that reads, "Watch Out For Falling Expecta-

tions.”

Consider the things you become disappointed and depressed over which are nothing more than expectations that did not come true: the house you wanted but someone else got, the promotion you worked for and an outside man received, the son that joined the Marines instead of finishing school, or the party you prepared for 30 and 6 showed up. All of these were “wants” and “dreams” that did not come true for whatever the reason.

When your dreams shatter you often turn aside into the lane of disappointment. This lane quickly approaches a junction where you may choose to turn back north to the upper valley road or south on the the Road of Depression to the Valley of Despair.

Few people want to be on the Road of Depression for it's well known as a bad trip, but many travel it anyway, unaware they have a choice. It has a comforting sign that reads, “What can you expect? Who wouldn't be depressed?” which offers momentary relief. While the road north to the upper valley is obviously a toll road, and feeling bankrupt from disappointment, it is just easier to turn south to depression. But if you investigate a little more closely you will notice a sign along the northbound road which reads, “This road provided by the courtesy of God. Free tokens available in Scripture for toll fees.”

For the return from the Lane of Disappointment two tokens have been provided: The Token of Blessing and The Token of Purpose.

**The Token of Blessing.** Paul uses this token a great deal during his life and it protected him from the road of depression. One example is 2 Timothy 1:15-18. In verse 15 Paul states, “You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me . . . ” (a disappoint-



ment no doubt) and then he devotes verses 16-17 to expressing his gratitude to Onesiphorus who had helped him so much. From this passage we can see that Paul acknowledged a disappointing fact that concerned "everyone in the province of Asia" but focused his attention on the blessing one man was to him.

**The Token of Purpose.** In 2 Timothy 2:9-10, Paul used a second token for dealing with disappointment. In this passage he tells Timothy that his imprisonment (a disappointment) is the result of his preaching Christ. Then he points out, ". . . I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus . . ." His words emphasize the fact he never lost sight of the purpose of his life—reconciling man to God (2 Corinthians 5:19).

By using these two tokens, focusing on his blessings and remembering his life purpose, Paul could return to the upper valley road when caught on a land of disappointment without travelling the Road of Depression and the Valley of Despair.

### **What of the Road to Depression?**

The Road of Depression is paved with components of anger and self-pity, sometimes visible, sometimes concealed but nevertheless there. For they are they responses to external events (disappointment, rejection, illness, comparison, ambivalence, etc.) that trigger depression. The proportion of self-pity to anger determines how rapidly and to what depth you descend into the Valley of Despair.

Paul could have chosen this road in either situation and made it sound quite justifiable. For example, he could have said, "I risked my life to teach the people of Asia, gave so much of myself for them and now every one of them has deserted me but one. Some thanks." Or he might have thought, "I don't understand, I have

worked as hard as I can for God, given up everything for Him—family, friends, prestige, wealth, etc. and He lets me rot in this prison when all I was doing was trying to serve Him.” Had Paul chosen to respond in this way he would have found himself catapulting full speed into depression.

### **The Exit of Comparison**

The Exit of Comparison is a quick trip on the Road of Depression. And if it doesn't lead to depression it usually leads to sin. Consider, if you compare yourself or situation to someone that appears to have less going for them, pride and smugness will likely be the outcome. If you compare yourself to someone that appears to have it better than you, discouragement, envy, jealousy, and a poor self-image will possibly be the result. Either way you lose.

However, it is the second situation of comparison that detours many into depression. It's easy to become depressed when you: (1) look at people who never seem to have a problem of any kind while your life is just one crisis after another, or (2) see how well-behaved and loving your neighbor's children are when yours act like they hate you, or (3) watch your slender sister gorge herself and not gain a pound while you have starved all of your chubby life, or (4) notice the way your friend's husband appreciates her when she doesn't even try to be a good wife.

For the frustrating Exit of Comparison God has provided the Token of Imitation to return you to the depression-free upper valley.

**The Token of Imitation.** Scripture never encourages us to compare ourselves to others. Instead it commands us to imitate God and Christ (Matthew 5:48; Luke 6:36; John 13:15; I John 2:6). “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you leaving you an example,



that you should follow in his steps.” (I Peter 2:21). To follow anyone’s example is an admission they are preceeding you in the direction you want to go. And that admission protects you from pride and the concentration it takes to follow protects you from the discouragement of comparison. Paul encourages us to follow the example of himself and others that are following Christ. “Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.” (Philippians 3:17). All of these scriptures focus on imitation of Christ and faithful Christians instead of “comparison.”

### **The Exit of Illness**

Short sideroads of illness that we all must take occasionally, rarely lead to serious depression, but prolonged periods on these detours of illness make you particularly vulnerable to depression.

The sideroad of prolonged or chronic illness is probably the most dangerous of all. It is paved with continuous frustration. It is flooded by frequent storms of guilt because your family and friends are being forced to ride along carrying much of the load of your illness. It is usually travelled DWI (Driving While under the Influence of drugs and medication) affecting your emotional and mental attitude. And it seems the road is on an incline, which means if you relax your grip for a moment you automatically angle into the valley of despair.

As you consider the obstacles of this road you are almost overwhelmed until you remember that when you are weakest in yourself, Christ is the strongest in you. Only in your weakness is God made perfect (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). When once you grasp the impact of this passage you will discover God can take your lane of illness and transform it into the upper valley road.

For this lane you have been given the most powerful

tokens of all—the Token of Glory and the Token of Concern for Others (a pain medication).

**The Token of Glory.** John in chapter nine tells of a man that had been given this token. Jesus healed him after he had been blind for 40 years, and said his blindness was, “so the work of God could be displayed in his life.” The healing took minutes but the man had lived in blindness toward this moment for 40 years. Through Christ’s touch he was given physical sight that glorified God, and through his response to Christ he was given spiritual sight which was even a greater glory to God. Every time you respond to God’s way while on this road the token of glory is magnified in your life. In the same way Christ’s greatest glory for God was during his greatest humiliation and physical pain on the cross.

**The Token of Concern of Others.** Christ used this token on the cross. Of the seven statements made during this agony, four expressed concern for other people. Only this focus away from self can ease the pain of the Exit of Illness.

### **The Exit of Rejection**

All of us will at some time be forced into a lane of rejection. It may be as simple as the family dog not liking you; or as painful as your 13-year old daughter wishing your best friend was her mother; or as shattering as your husband of 17 years wanting a divorce to marry a 22-year old file clerk. Whatever the situation, the lane of rejection is never easy. It is painful by itself but it usually merges with the lane of disappointment, and the two form a rut that appears impossible to cross, avoid, or escape.

But you can be confident that God never allows you to be burdened with anything he doesn’t give you the strength to bear or avoid. The road of rejection is no exception. To return to the upper valley, God has pro-

vided three tokens: the Token of Acceptance, the Token of Purpose and the Token of Forgiveness.

**The Token of Acceptance.** Rejection often is an unpleasant side effect of God's gift to man—the power of choice. Your life becomes unbearably frustrating when you refuse to accept the choice of a rejector. Christ was wounded by rejection and remained open to reconciliation (through forgiveness) but he always accepted the rejector's decision. And until you are willing to use this token you cannot escape the road of rejection; instead, you will just travel it over and over again.

**The Token of Purpose.** Jesus was often rejected but was never “bogged down” because he had his purpose firmly in mind. And it was following this purpose that protected him in John 7:2-14. There his own brothers did not believe and were apparently embarrassed by his behavior. Christ responded by accepting their decision then going about fulfilling his purpose. In dealing with rejection he consistently followed 3 steps: (1) he taught and loved a would-be-rejector as he did everyone else, (2) he accepted their decision, and (3) he continued with his Father's business regardless of the path they chose. Paul teaches this same principle in 1 Corinthians 7:12-15 concerning a believer's response to an unbelieving mate's desire to dissolve the marriage.

**The Token of Forgiveness.** You cannot overcome rejection until you forgive your rejector, as Jesus did on the cross when he prayed, “forgive them . . .” (Luke 23:34). Jesus was aware his rejectors did not totally understand and consequently did not appreciate what he was offering them, but he recognized their decision was their responsibility as forgiveness was his. Therefore, he did not respond with fury, revenge, and contempt. Instead, he responded with sorrow and forgiveness as

taught in Romans 12:17-21.

### **The Exit of Ambivalence**

The lane of ambivalence is one of the most miserable of all sideroads. It is permeated by a sense of being trapped with no possible way out. The hopeless trapped feelings of ambivalence can arise from many sources, i.e., marital problems, financial burdens, frustrating job situations, unfulfilled expectations, health problems, too many unrelieved days in the house, etc.

These feelings often result from: (1) decisions you would like to back out of instead of work through, or (2) circumstances in which you have no choice. The first category would consist of such things as unwise spending that has created serious financial problems or the dream marriage that is gradually turning into a nightmare. The second category (where you have no choice) might be: three months of strep throat, tonsillities and ear infections with three "below-school-age" children or your husband losing his job two months before the new baby is due.

But take heart, God will not allow you to be caught in a trap that is eternally hopeless. You can return to the upper valley with The Token of Straight Ahead, The Token of Promise, and The Token of Humility.

**The Token of Straight Ahead.** There is only one way out of ambivalent feelings—straight ahead. We often try to remake the decisions that got us there, but you can only repent of past decisions, not re-decide them. Decisions are made for the future or straight ahead. Even if you are on this lane through no decision of your own, the only way off is work (or live) through it. This token is called "perseverance" in scripture and is a characteristic of the mature Christian life (James 1:2-4).

**The Token of Promise.** God promises that trials (which an ambivalent situation certainly is) produces

perseverance, and perseverance is the only way out of a trial. So no ambivalent lane is eternal or hopeless, for the longer you stay there, the greater perseverance you develop and with greater perseverance comes greater ability to return to the upper valley (Romans 5:3-5).

**The Token of Humility.** You are sometimes trapped in ambivalent situations because you haven't thought "straight ahead" and made the necessary decisions. But other times you honestly don't know how to get out, in that case—ASK (Romans 15:14). All it will cost is a little pride, and God has provided this token for that situation.

### **We Could Go On and On**

*point* We could continue to find situations that are capable of triggering depression for the next 20 pages. But no doubt you understand the basis now for overcoming depression. Depression does not result from your situation or circumstances but from our response or attitude regarding that situation or circumstance.

### **I Am Living Proof**

The first time I was confronted with this concept I became very indignant, for I was struggling with a fairly serious depression. I was recovering from a long period of illness, feeling guilty about the heavy emotional, physical, and financial burdens my illness had created for my family, suffering frustration with a teenage daughter who was suddenly skipping school, and resenting the things my physical condition would not allow me to do. As I lay on the couch exhausted and frustrated I honestly objectively listened to my thinking patterns for the first time since my depression began, "It's not fair . . . we have tried so hard . . . the bills . . ." It was true, I was angry about the situation and wallowing in self-pity.

Thank God I understood his principles enough to



realize I had to deal with my anger and self-pity if I ever intended to live a useful, happy life again. For as long as I justified my depression I would not be able to overcome it. I would have to trust God when he said in 1Corinthians 10:12-13 that he would not allow me to have more than I could bear (although in this situation I was convinced he was overestimating me).

However, once I got up, quit feeling sorry for myself and started dealing (living through) my problems, my depression disappeared. It took longer to get through the problems—but eventually even they disappeared. Now I thank God for the blessing I received from those problems, for the language of pain and compassion they taught me, and most of all for the meaning they gave to Psalms 30:5, “Weeping endureth for the night. But joy cometh in the morning.”

## **Anger**

*“Anyone can become angry. That is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose and in the right way—that is not easy.”*

*-Aristotle*

### **THE PROBLEM**

Have you ever become angry and (1) lashed out verbally or physically just to hurt; (2) sulked and pouted, wallowing in self-pity; (3) made a fool of yourself in a temper tantrum; (4) controlled your behavior but become resentful and bitter? If so, join the human race, you’ve had a sinful response to anger.

The force and frequency of angry feelings have probably caused more broken hearts, broken homes and broken heads than any other emotion. Angry feelings are like dynamite sticks, useful when managed correctly but they kill, cripple, maim and scar when uncontrolled or handled improperly.



### **Man's Natural Response to Anger**

Man, by nature, responds to anger in two different ways. The first and most dramatic is the explosion, capable of wreaking havoc and leaving paths of destruction. The second is the implosion—internalized anger. It is more subtle and sometimes slower but it can be just as devastating and deadly.

#### *The Explosion*

The explosion is easily recognized for it is always accompanied by some type of violent behavior. Though you tend to think of violence as kicking, hitting and gouging, you cannot ignore or dismiss the wounds inflicted by the violent tongue. James 3:6 speaks of this type of violence, "The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell."

During an explosion of anger some people who recoil at the thought of bringing physical pain to others may not hesitate to land a barrage of verbal abuse that causes more emotional and mental damage than any physical blow and with more lasting effects.

The explosion usually has one objective—to hurt. Even when that is not the aim, it is usually the result. When it is directed at the object of your anger, it serves as punishment or revenge. When it is directed at the world in general, it serves to make everyone else as miserable as you.

Man usually attempts to justify his explosions with, "Well, they made me mad . . . Of course I did that, but you should have heard what they said to me . . . I may have, but I was mad . . ."

Some schools of behavioral science not only justify angry explosions, they encourage them by teaching to go ahead, explode and:

•*Get it out of your system.* This theory is a fallacy. You can never explode anger out of your system. You may get even, and your anger may be temporarily relieved, but you have not gotten it out of your system. Quite the contrary, each explosion furrows the rut a little deeper for the next angry explosion.

•*You will feel better.* You might, until you realize that no one else does and you have to deal with the mess your explosion has created (the hurt feelings, the broken relationships, the barriers, etc.).

•*Just direct it in a way that does not harm.* This theory teaches to, among other things, pretend a pillow is the object (husband, wife, parent, friend, etc.) of your anger and kick, hit, stab and scream at the pillow until your anger is drained. This theory reasons that by directing the explosion in this way, supposedly it will be harmless. But in essence you are committing mental violence or murder. Jesus condemned sins of the mind in Matthew 5:8. And though you may receive a temporary form of relief because you have *gotten even* in fantasy, you have dealt with reality. The problem that triggered your angry feelings is still there, ready to trigger them again. In addition, you are establishing dangerous thinking patterns (hit, beat, stab, kill).

Explosions are never harmless, and what is more they do not solve problems. Your temper may browbeat someone into letting you have your way, but you have not solved the problem

### *Internalized Anger or Seething Mad*


Internalized anger is frequently more difficult to recognize than explosive anger even though it is every bit as painful and certainly just as dangerous. It is like a festering boil. The pressure builds in internalized anger and the pain increases until it is no longer bearable, then it erupts into an exploding volcano or a seeping sore of

resentment, bitterness and hatred.

Internalized anger has a mental dialogue. And when you hear yourself thinking, "It is not fair . . . They do this to me all the time . . . I'll get even if it is the last thing I do . . . How much longer do I have to take this . . ." be alert to the peril of unresolved anger in your life.

### What Causes Angry Feelings

There are many situations and circumstances that cause angry feelings to flare, but the majority are rooted in James 4:1, "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it . . ." This base for anger is practiced in a variety of combinations:

- 
- Someone is doing something you don't want them to.
  - Someone is not doing something you want them to.
  - Someone is doing something in a way you don't want it done.
  - Something is not getting done fast enough—or getting done too fast.
  - Someone has *offended* or wronged you.
  - Someone has violated your *rights*.
  - You are frustrated over something you can't change.

Though knowing the cause of angry feelings is often of value, God has given strong warnings concerning anger **regardless of the cause.**

"For man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires." James is telling us in 1:20 that man's anger is a handicap to a righteous life, which you can attest to as you recall sins you've committed while

under the influence of anger.

“A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.” (Proverbs 29:11). This proverb calls the man who vents his anger a fool. That definitely stands to reason considering it puts him at odds with those around him and with God.

“And angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered man commits many sins.” (Proverbs 29:22). These are two excellent reasons for controlling anger.

### THE SOLUTION

If you recognize that you have a problem with anger, then you face a choice. You can be like the blind man in the ninth chapter of John when Jesus offered to heal him. You can obey Jesus and go wash the mud from your eyes and return with spiritual and physical sight, or you can be like the rich young ruler of Matthew 19:22. When Jesus told him of a change he needed to make in his life, “. . . he went away sorrowful,” not willing to make the sacrifice.

### Where Do You Start?

Any change starts with repentance—repentance that is more than being sorry you’ve messed up or sorry you’ve been caught. True repentance is motivated by sorrow for your disobedience to God, for your sinful behavior, and for the pain you have caused. It must be a sorrow that moves you to *want* to change. And with God’s training, you can. If your *want* to is weak, spending consistent time in Bible study, being confronted by God’s teachings, will strengthen your *want to* power.

True repentance seeks forgiveness from God and others. In this way you are relieved of feelings of guilt and you give those you have harmed an opportunity to overcome feelings of anger and resentment they may have.

### **Know That An Angry Feeling Can Work For You**

To experience an angry feeling is not sin. There are more than 80 occasions in the Old Testament that scripture says, "God was angry." Angry feelings are usually unbidden. Although we can't always control their coming, we can control our response to them.

Emotions (or feelings) have been given to mankind by God and when managed as He intended, they are good. Most serve to motivate, i.e., passion motivates you to intimacy and reproduction; sorrow motivates you to face the reality of a situation; fear motivates you to be cautious; and anger can motivate you to deal with a problem, whether it be in your environment or your attitude.

For example, consider a squeaking door that should have been fixed long ago. Every time you hear it, you feel angry or irritated. You can respond to those feelings by (1) yelling and screaming at someone who has not fixed it, though asked many times; you can tear it off the hinges; you can kick the dog and make the kids turn off the cartoons; or (2) you can get a can of oil and fix the door.

In your first response you attacked the world, in the second you attacked the problem.

### **God's Ideal Method For Handling Anger**

The first and most effective of God's methods not only deals with the angry feelings, it prevents most of them. It could be called the "New Man" or "Replacement" method. The basis of this method is taught in Romans 6 where Paul teaches the *old you* was buried in Christ, the *new you* has a new life to live and a new way to behave. Although the angry feelings of the *old you* were usually unbidden they were often triggered by wrong attitudes that should die with you in Christ.

Ephesians 4:22-24 gives specific instructions for

implementing your new life. Recently scientists have discovered this method which they call Behavior Modification. It teaches you to quit doing one thing by doing something in its place. God has used it for centuries to teach his children to "quit lying by speaking only the truth" (Ephesians 4:5), "get rid of your anger, rage, slander, and brawling by being kind, compassionate and forgiving" (Ephesians 4:31-32).

Unfortunately, the sinful patterns of the old you are often stronger than the faith of the new you. But God in his wisdom included some fundamental methods for dealing with anger, until you mature spiritually enough for the *selfishness* of the new you to neutralize the anger of the old you.

### **Back To The Basics**

Using God's basic methods for handling angry feelings is similar to a return to childhood for reprogramming your response to anger.

The first method we will call the DROP IT method. God says in Proverbs 17:14 "Starting a quarrel is like a breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out." In other words, shut your mouth, take a walk, mind your own business, do whatever you have to do but "drop it" before the fight starts and you cannot drop it.

A second method is the HOLD IT method. It is in direct conflict with man's "Go Ahead and Explode" theory. Proverbs 29:11 says, "A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man, holding it back quiets it" (NAS). This does not teach to internalize anger; it teaches to control your anger by holding it back to see if it quiets down.

A third method is the ARE YOU LISTENING method. James says in 1:20, "My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to



“speak and slow to become angry.” So many angry feelings could be avoided by listening. Many quarrels are the result of assumptions and misunderstandings—someone was not listening.

The fourth method could be called the **CLOSE YOUR MOUTH AND THINK** method. Proverbs 15:28 teaches “The heart of the righteous weighs its answer, but the mouth of the wicked gushes evil.” A man striving to live righteously will ask himself, “Is what I am going to say true? Is it fair? Will it bring unnecessary pain?” While the person not committed to righteousness just opens his mouth while evil and vicious words roll out.

A fifth way to handle anger is God’s **REMOVE YOURSELF FROM A TEMPTING SITUATION** method. God teaches this method by example in Exodus 32 and 33. There God told the Israelites their stubbornness and rebellion provoked him to such anger that he might destroy them; therefore, he would send an angel in his place to guide them on their journey to Canaan. God was not avoiding a problem in this decision. He had already dealt with the immediate problem (making of the golden calf) and had taken steps to prepare them for the future. In the meantime, he was going to remove himself from a situation that would trigger anger in him. Proverbs 22:3 teaches this type of foresight, “A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it.”

A sixth method could be called the **COOL IT** method. Proverbs 15:1 teaches, “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” This proverb is often viewed as beautiful poetry without realizing the strength involved. The gentleness of your voice is dynamic and simple tool for controlling your own anger and the anger of others. The muscles in your body must

tense to speak angrily they must relax to speak gently. Unfortunately, it is easy to develop the habit of speaking with harsh and irritated tones that infect your whole environment with tenseness.

The seventh and ultimate method is the **SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE** method. If you have tried the basics and you still have angry feelings, not being able to forget or forgive, then you must speak the truth in love. Speaking the truth in love is openly telling the other person of your feelings of anger but in a loving (1 Corinthians 13:4-7) manner. If he changes the behavior that is bothering you, then you can rejoice. If he does not, then you must forgive as Paul teaches in Ephesians 4:2 and leave his response in the hands of God (Romans 12:17-19).

These basic methods are so simple we tend to dismiss them without trial just as Namaan wanted to when God told him to dip in the river Jordan seven times to cure his leprosy (2 Kings 5:1-27). His young slave pointed out that if God had given him something difficult he would have gone to great lengths to have performed it, so why not put the same energy into something simple God had commanded.

Namaan agreed to try God's way (with some skepticism) and found that the simplicity of God's commands are greater than the difficult and creative imaginations of man.

## **Resentment and Bitterness**

*"A man's venom poisons himself more than his victim." - Wings of Silver*

### **The Problem**

Have you ever been coldly indignant because you felt you were treated unfairly and insulted, your rights were violated, or someone had an unfair advantage? If so, you experienced resentment. Resentment is a painful

emotion because it make you feel cheated and mistreated, and it is a downhill road to self-pity, bitterness and hatred.

If you were unable to overcome your resentment, it more than likely developed into bitterness. Bitterness is a malignant form of resentment and it is capable of spreading rapidly to all areas of your life. It causes you to feel intense animosity, severe pain, grief and regret. It is harsh, reproachful, and unpleasant. The Bible associates bitterness and misery.

### **Resentment Is Easily Justified**

In many cases of resentment the "resentee" has truly been injured by the "resented" and feels justified thinking, "What can you expect under the circumstances . . . you would be resentful too if . . ." Justifying sinful behaviors and attitudes due to circumstances has always been one of Satan's most effective rationales. But for a Christian it is in direct opposition to the life he is committed to live, "For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God" (1 Peter 2:19).

### **Resentment Is A Secondary Infection**

Resentment can easily be compared to a secondary infection or complication of a physical condition. For example, pneumonia can develop from bronchitis, a lung condition, surgery, trauma, the common cold, or other physical disorders. In the same way resentment is usually a secondary infection of a spiritual disorder: unresolved anger, conflict over personal rights, selfishness, non-acceptance of God's provision, envy and jealousy. And though it must be treated swiftly and seriously lest it develop into bitterness and hatred, the best treatment is prevention.

Little mention is made of resentment in God's

teachings, although He warns severely of the result and consequences of bitterness and hatred. Instead he focuses his instruction on the sources of these spiritual maladies.

### **The Most Common Forms of Resentment**

Resentment can develop in any spiritual problem; however, there seem to be five major forms that afflict mankind:

*The I'M MAD form.* This type of resentment is very persistent and thrives in an atmosphere of unresolved anger. It is easily detected through its sullen appearance and basic "cop outs," "It wouldn't do any good to talk about it, they won't listen . . . I shouldn't have to say anything, they know they owe me an apology . . . I can't get them to . . . They will never change . . ."

*The IT'S NOT FAIR form.* This is probably the most widely spread form of resentment. It develops rapidly where conflict over personal rights exists. It has an appealing persecution color and is usually accompanied by a popular theme, "It's not fair, I have rights too . . . It's not that I care for myself but they shouldn't be allowed to get away with that . . ."

*The BIG I form.* This chameleon-like form of resentment is often difficult to diagnose for it parades under many guises, but it is actually a secondary infection of selfishness. It is most easily detected by its "I/ME" focus, "Doesn't anyone care about what I want . . . When is it going to be my turn . . . I never get to do what I want . . ."

*The I WISH form.* This virulent type feeds on a primary infection of envy and jealousy and if left untreated literally makes life not worth living. It afflicts the mind with continual comparison, "Everything just falls into his lap while I have to work like a dog . . . I wish I had her looks and she had a wart on her

nose . . . I resent the way she complains about how tough they have it; she doesn't know what tough is . . . ”

*The IF I COULD JUST form.* It is easy to mistake angry frustration as the source of this form of resentment, when it actually develops from non-acceptance of God's provision. It has a frustrated or sorrowful dialogue of, “If I could just have . . . If I could just do . . . If I just wasn't . . . ”

It's possible to recognize these symptoms in your life and be frustrated and overwhelmed because you do not know how to overcome them. But, acknowledging the truth opens the door to freedom.

## THE SOLUTION

You always start with repentance. A repentant spirit that is resolved to be free of resentment and bitterness. Next, commit yourself to following God's way out of resentment, aware it will take effort and trust—effort to develop new attitudes and behaviors, and trust that God's methods work.

### God's Remedies For Resentment

To treat resentment in our lives and ignore the underlying spiritual problem would be like diligently mopping up the leak from a broken water pipe and never mending the pipe. Therefore, it is necessary to honestly analyze your resentment and its point of origin. Then deal with the root problem (anger, envy, selfishness, etc.). Don't be surprised if you find more than one.

Resentment is not the result of your circumstances. It results from your attitude about your circumstances. Therefore, the only safeguard for resentment is “At-

titude Therapy." When God's attitudes are patiently and consistently developed, they can help you resist painful attacks of resentment.

1. *The Total Heart Attitude.* Have you ever been pressured or forced to do something against your will, for example, clean a huge stack of dishes you did not dirty? And you were miserable with dread for an hour before and resentful and sullen during the hour of work. God's immunizing attitude for that type of resentment is called the Total Heart Attitude. It is based on Colossians 3:23, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men." Paul taught this to slaves who had no choice in what they did or for whom they did it. And he was able to promise them, "The Lord will reward . . ." in verse 24. There is joy in doing something willingly, well and with the right motive. In this attitude, the motive is you are working for the Lord, not men. The "willingly" makes it go quickly. The "well" makes it rewarding. When this attitude is part of your life, you will find you can be resentment free whether picking up dirty socks or mowing the lawn.

2. *Only the Truth Attitude.* Have you ever been suspected of something you didn't do, called a liar when you weren't, punished when you were innocent? God has an attitude to protect you from the resentment that often develops. It is called "Only the Truth" attitude, based on John 8:32, ". . . know the truth and the truth will set you free." Christ, by accepting only the truth, was free from inner turmoil, conflict and resentment when he was accused of blasphemy, demon possession, etc. He dealt with false accusations in John 8:48-59 and 10:33-42 by answering them truthfully, doing his best to avoid persecution and then proceeding with his responsibilities. Christ refused to let unjust ac-



cusations claim his focus.

Proverbs 26:2, "Like a fluttering sparrow or a darting swallow, an undeserved curse does not come to rest." This teaches that an undeserved curse can do no permanent damage. It can and should be ignored, for it will not last--only the truth remains forever.

3. *The Follow Me Attitude.* Have you ever felt resentful because someone else was not doing what they should. God has a preventive attitude. It's called the 'Follow Me' attitude based on John 21:22ff. Jesus taught this attitude to Peter when he said to him concerning John. "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me." While Jesus was telling Peter what he would have him do, Peter looked around and asked the Lord what was to happen to John. Jesus told him pointedly it was none of his business, "... what is it to you?" He also told him pointedly what his business was—"you must follow me." Keeping your focus and attention on following Christ will protect you from painful bouts of resentment.

4. *The Thank God Attitude.* Have you ever felt resentful because the kids have the mumps, the car broke down, the washer overflowed, the telephone man didn't come and your husband is working late? God has a preventive attitude for you from I Thessalonians 5:18, "... give thanks in all circumstances . . . " For example, "Thank you God, that our children are recovering from this childhood disease; that I have a washer instead of washing in a stream as millions of others in the world; that we have a nice car that usually takes me anywhere I want to go; that I do not have to answer this phone all day; thank you for my husband that loves and cares for me, please bring him home safely." Paul said in Philippians 4:12, "... I have learned the secret of

being content in any and every situation.” Contentment and thankfulness are learned attitudes. Thank God you don’t have to be born with them and that you can learn them as Paul and others have.

5. *The What Next Attitude.* Have you ever felt resentful because it seems that things work out for everyone but you? God’s safeguard is a What Next attitude based on Galatians 6:9-10, “Let us not become weary in doing good . . . as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people . . . ” God teaches you to serve every time you have opportunity. One of the best defenses against resentment is a busy hand and a busy mind that has no idle hours to contemplate how others have it easier than you.

6. *The Giving Instead of Getting Attitude.* Have you ever felt resentful because someone took advantage of you? God has a preventive attitude for you. It is called a Giving Instead of Getting Attitude and is based on Matthew 5:38-48. In a condensed version that passage would read, “If someone strikes you—turn; if someone sues you—give; if someone forces you—go; if someone asks you—loan.” Verse 45 explains why, “that you may become sons of your Father in heaven.” This world dwells on what others owe you which makes you constantly aware of what you should be getting. God teaches you to focus on what you should be giving others regardless of what they do or do not give you.

Developing these attitudes and dealing with underlying spiritual problems will prevent and overcome a great deal of resentment and bitterness. But on occasions they are not potent enough to deal with the bitterness resulting from a deep personal injury.

### **Overcoming Bitterness**

God’s broad-spectrum antibiotic for bitterness is called “forgiveness.” It’s easily available, but expensive

and often difficult to administer. God, however, demands you use it, for he warns, "But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." Such strong motivation may make you sincerely want to forgive, but your hurt is often so deep that you feel you just can't.

### *Understand What Forgiveness Is*

To think you can't forgive is usually the result of not understanding forgiveness. Forgiveness is simply the way you behave toward the one who has hurt you. As a man, you want to base forgiveness on your "feelings." You tend to think you must feel forgiving before you can forgive. But God knew the feelings would follow the action and he teaches you how to forgive by teaching you how to behave: (1) "Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult but with blessing . . ." (I Peter 3:9). (2) "If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat, if he is thirsty, give him water to drink" (Proverbs 25:21). (3) "Bless those who persecute you . . ." (Romans 12:14).

Notice in each passage that God is teaching you how to respond to someone that has hurt you or is hurting you. Christ taught this in the Garden when he healed the ear of the soldier who came to take him to a false trial (Luke 22:51).

### *Get Out Of The Punishment Game*

Forgiving a person is "returning blessing for cursing" and leaving the punishment in the hands of God. When you do not forgive you take their punishment into your hands, which can be a time-consuming and painful process. Refusing to forgive is holding a grudge which is nothing more than punishment on the installment plan. Develop A Forgiveness Focus

First, learn a lesson from Peter in Matthew 18 when he asked Jesus, "Lord how many times should I forgive

someone, seven times?" Peter might have been focusing on, "How much do I have to take?" Jesus gave him a somewhat unrealistic answer, "Seventy times seven." He then went on to explain the principle in the parable of the Unmerciful Servant. He concluded in verse 32 and 33 when he taught that you can't afford to hold others' sins against them, considering how many God could hold against you.

Secondly, practice focusing on your "response" instead of your "injury." For example, if you discover a friend has made a vicious statement about you, instead of wallowing in pain wailing, "How can she do this to me after all I have done for her," focus on how God would have you react. Romans 12:17-21, "Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the sight of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge, I will repay,' says the Lord." If your focus is on the wrong you have suffered you cannot help but become angry, resentful, unforgiving and bitter. *BUT*, if you focus on your response, follow through on what you know God teaches, you will come out with a forgiving heart and a clear conscience.

### Jealousy, Envy & Covetousness

*Jealousy, Envy and Covetousness are like acids. They do more damage to the vessels in which they are stored, than to the objects on which they are poured.*

*- paraphrased from Wings of Silver*

### THE PROBLEM

Satan's largest catches are often made with a three-pronged hook named Jealousy, Envy and Covetousness. The coveting prong is baited with houses,

cars, clothes, travel and exciting life-styles. The envy prong is covered with Farrah Fawcett's looks, the gifts of a talented friend, and the achievements that would have been yours if given the chance. The jealousy prong is disguised with the confidence you are winner, loved and secure.

Satan snagged mankind out of the garden with the prong of covetousness. He lured Eve to look and then covet the forbidden fruit until she was moved to disobey God. He drove Saul out of his mind with envy of David and he incited Cain to slay Abel in a jealous rage.

It is doubtful the man lives who has not felt the painful barbs of this three-pronged hook.

### **The Prong of Jealousy**

The dictionary defines jealousy as: (1) intolerant of rivalry or unfaithfulness, (2) disposed to suspect rivalry or unfaithfulness, (3) apprehensive of loss of another's exclusive affection, and (4) hostile toward a rival or one believed to enjoy an advantage.

As we look at the first definition of jealousy we can understand why God refers to Himself as a jealous God. In Exodus 20:4-6, and other passages, he demands that his people have no other gods before him. And though he is capable of experiencing justified feelings of jealousy, he does not respond to them in a sinful way.

Man on the other hand, does not have a very good record of handling his feelings of jealousy. Of the nine instances listed in the Old Testament, jealousy was either unjustified or responded to sinfully, i.e., Cain of Abel, Sarah of Hagar, Joseph's brethren of Joseph, Saul of David, etc.

A person skewered with jealousy is often driven to illogical and cruel behavior. In 8:6 of the Song of Solomon jealousy is described as, "cruel as the grave" and Proverbs 27:4 says, "Anger is cruel and fury over-

whelming but who can stand before jealousy?" When jealousy controls a person, he is often so frantic he would rather destroy than suffer the knowledge someone else has what he wants.

### **The Prong of Envy**

The dictionary definition of envy is painful and resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by another joined with desire to possess the same advantage.

Feelings of envy are never justified and are always sinful. It is listed as a work of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-20 and James warns in 3:16 that its presence will bring about, "... every evil practice," which is understandable when you consider how often envy is the motivation for slander, criticalness, dislike, anger and even hatred.

Seven times we are told not to envy the sinner, which seems surprising until you recall the times you have thought, "It's not fair, they totally ignore God yet look how easy their life is compared to mine." Or the times you have resented yet wanted the achievement, honors and wealth of people who have perhaps traded their souls for things of the world.

### **The Prong of Covetousness**

Covetousness is defined as marked by an inordinate desire for wealth or possessions, or another's possessions, or having a craving for possessions—in other words greedy.

Colossians 3:5 calls it idolatry. And it is—because it longs for and chases after the "things" of this world more than it longs for and chases after the things of God.

A coveting eye is not confined to material possessions alone. It's obvious how all-consuming it can be when God said, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house.



You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor" (Exodus 20:17).

A coveting heart is a heart with the wrong priorities. It is a deceitful heart that whispers, "This is all you will ever want, as soon as you get this you can relax." But it cannot keep its promise for a coveting heart is a "wanting" heart that cannot be filled. Solomon described it in Ecclesiastes 5:10, "Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income."

### THE SOLUTION

Jealousy, envy and covetousness and "inside" sins that motivate us to "outside" sins. They are particularly dangerous because they feed where you are the most vulnerable—the very core of your being—your heart. You can be aware of their presence and burn with shame and yet be unable to free yourself of Satan's pull. David knew he was incapable of freeing himself when he asked God in Psalms 119:36, "Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain." For that is where freedom is—in God's statutes. It is available to all who are willing to submit to God.

### Overcoming Jealousy

Under certain circumstances, feeling jealous is justified, just as feeling frightened, happy, sad or angry is justified under certain circumstances. For example, to see your spouse passionately kissing another person would trigger justified feelings of jealousy. This is the jealousy God experiences when he sees his creation involved with idols. Justified feelings of jealousy should motivate us to "deal" with the problem by turning to God for our options and then acting on those options.

Regardless of whether your jealousy is justified or not, God's teachings will help you understand and deal

with the feelings.

### *Recognize Suspicion For What It Is*

Much of man's jealousy is based on suspicion and it's important to learn to recognize it for what it is—your fears, your evil desires, your past experiences.

Suspicion is often simple fear, fear of what they will do, fear of what they are doing, fear of what others will think, fear you are not loved, etc. Suspicious fear should be illegal. Even our laws say a person is innocent until proven guilty. Fear says, "I'm afraid he is guilty so he must prove to me he is innocent."

Suspicion is often based on your own evil desires. It is easy to suspect others of what you do, what you have done or what you want to do. For example, it is easier to believe someone would steal from the cash register if you have stolen from the cash register, or lie if you have lied.

Suspicion is sometimes the watchdog acquired after an unhappy experience. But all it's barking and watching simply boils down to keeping a record of wrong. This attitude does not imitate the "forgiveness and forgetfulness" exhibited by God.

One of the main hang-ups in overcoming any type of suspicion is the age-old question, "What if they make a fool of me?" But remember the age-old answer—"only you can do that." If someone committed to you is going to become involved with someone else, all your policing, accusing and suspecting will not stop it.

All suspicion displays a certain lack of love. Therefore, the only way you can overcome it is to practice sincerely I Corinthians 13:4-7. And give particular attention to verse 7, "It (love) always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."

### *Break the Cycle of Insecurity*

A jealous person is usually a very insecure person

caught up in a cycle of insecurity. To meet his needs for security, he desperately demands and pressures others for their undivided attention, but the more he pressures, the more he drives others away, the more they pull away, the more urgently the jealous person pressures—and on and on in an endless cycle of insecurity. Lasting security can only be built on God. It cannot be based on someone else's devotion to you.

But you can break the insecurity cycle by becoming secure. You can do so by "giving" security. It is impossible to "get" security, but it is possible to "give" it and in giving it to others you will become secure yourself. Consider the principle on which this is based in Galatians 6:9, "A man reaps what he sows." If you would reap security—sow it.

### *Jealousy and Simple Selfishness*

There is an element of simple selfishness in unjustified jealousy. Its possessiveness feeds its ego by dominating and controlling. It is very manipulative and will go to almost any length to retain its control. Dealing with this type of jealousy is as simple as dealing with a selfish child. It must not be catered to and must learn to give instead of take. I Corinthians 10:24 gives you a valuable tool for fighting this type of jealousy in your life, "Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others." That's the secret, seeking the good of others. Choose one person a week that you can help, i.e., an elderly person, a shut-in, a hospital patient, a neighbor and then get busy helping them. Stay so busy that self can't get a jealous thought in edgewise.

### *Jealousy and a Rival*

The jealousy you feel toward a rival is fear someone else will get something you have or want (job, position, honor, etc.). In dealing with this type of jealousy it is important to review your motive, goal and purpose. The

Jewish leaders had lost sight of these when they were caught up in their jealousy of Christ. Their purpose had become the praise of men, their motive and goal to gain honor and preeminence. Only one thing can overcome this type of jealousy—a return to your original commitment. “. . . if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Matthew 16:24-25).

### **Overcoming Envy**

It would be nice if feelings of envy set off an alarm that flashed: spiritual immaturity (I Peter 2:1-2), worldliness (I Corinthians 3:3), lack of love (I Corinthians 13:4) and all systems activated to free you from Satan's prong of envy. But God did not create robots; he created men. Then he offered them freedom from envy through his teachings.

#### *Envy and Spiritual Immaturity*

I Peter 2:1 lists envy as one of the attributes of a person who has not grown spiritually. The same passage gives a treatment for this condition, “Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like new born babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow . . . ” (NAS). He is simply saying to outgrow envy, spend time in the Word. Just as a physical baby must be fed consistently, adequately and appropriately to grow, a spiritual baby must be fed consistently, adequately and appropriately to grow.

#### *Envy and Prayer*

Matthew 5:44 teaches you how to behave toward an enemy. Anyone you envy is your enemy, not because he behaves as an enemy, but because you feel toward him as you would an enemy. By exercising Matthew 5:44 you can change your feelings, “But I tell you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” Pray-

ing consistently for someone makes you their benefactor and changes your attitude toward them. Does that sound too simple? God has always chosen simple methods to deal with sins we consider too complex to overcome.

### *Envy and Comparison*

It seems the major cause of envy is comparison. We consistently compare our appearance, talents and achievements with other people's appearance, talents and achievements. To overcome Envious Comparison you must develop two new focuses.

The first is the *Fact-Focus*. Has the person you envy accomplished something you want? How did they do it? Are you willing to pay the same price? Examples: (1) If they are thinner than you, it is probably because they eat less 'or exercise more, which they are willing to do? (2) Do they have a better knowledge of scripture, then they are studying more. Are you willing to put in the time? (3) Do they have a degree you envy? Are you willing to go to school? Most skills are learned, most achievements earned, while envy wants something for nothing. Remember, "A mans reaps what he sows" (Galatians 6:7).

The second focus, when mature, will totally free you from the sin of envy. It is called the *Christ-Focus*. If your attention is locked on Christ, you will have no time or occasion for envious comparison. The only valid comparison for a Christian is comparison to Christ, to the person he was, the things he taught, and the life he lived. We must be busy patterning after him as he patterned after God. ". . . I tell you the truth, the Son can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does" (John 5:19).

### **Overcoming Covetousness**

There is no greater temptation to man than

covetousness. Where jealousy and envy are painful emotions to experience, coveting is often pleasant, robbing you of your "will" to overcome. Who has not experienced the bittersweet pleasure of "wanting" and even found it more exciting than "having." But the pain of coveting will come with its consequences, i.e., Eve being cast from the garden.

### *A Formula For Avoiding Covetousness*

Matthew 6:33 provides a formula to avoid covetousness, "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things shall be given to you also." See the formula: a command, a priority, a purpose and a promise.

**The Command—Seek.** It's an action word meaning to go in search of, strive for, look for, try to get. To fulfill this command we must acquire information, apply energy, discipline and focus. It leaves very little time for being tempted by covetousness.

**The Priority—First.** God gives the "seeking" a priority. This is what covetousness usually upsets. Often the things we want are not sin until they are wanted with the wrong priority. The parable of the great banquet in Luke 14 is an example. The guests were invited, the banquet prepared, but when it was time to come, excuses were sent regarding cattle, land and even a wife. None of these things were wrong until they stood between the guests and their invitation from the Lord. As long as you submit to God's priorities "things" cannot come between you and Him.

**A Purpose—The Kingdom and His Righteousness.** To live, man must have a purpose. If he doesn't have the right one, he will have a wrong one. When your purpose is the one God chooses for you, "things" will lose their overwhelming allure.

**A Promise—All These Things Shall Be Given.** "All



these things” refers to clothing, food and lodging that Jesus pointed out God provided for nature (Matthew 6:26-29). This is a promise that everything you need you will get without anxiety and worry on your part. But it is not an excuse for laziness. Nature is provided for but at the same time it is busy glorifying God.

Any Christian conscientiously applying Matthew 6:33 will not have the time or the opportunity to live the life of covetousness described in Matthew 6:32, “For the pagans run after these things . . . ”

### **The Treasure—Love Circle**

In Matthew 26:19-24, Jesus taught about treasures on earth and treasures in heaven. In verse 21 he makes a profound statement, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will also be.” In other words, what you work for you love and what you love you work for. What a beautiful and reassuring thought. If you want to love the things of God, work for them. Consider the love and labor of a mother for a child. Which came first, the love or the labor? It’s a circle. So working for heavenly treasures will produce love for heavenly treasures instead of things of the world.

## **Self-Image I**

*“I would know myself better, if there weren’t so many of me.”*

*-Wings of Silver*

### **THE PROBLEM**

Have you ever heard someone say:

- *I have the worst self-image.*
- *My biggest problem is my self-image.*
- *I can’t do anything because my self-image is so poor.*

Or perhaps you have:

- *Felt so inferior you were sure even God didn’t like you.*
- *Lashed out at others because you were so disgusted with yourself.*

•*Found yourself boasting, desperate to make a good impression.*

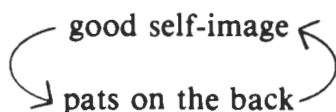
All of these are symptoms of self-image problems.\*

Your self-image influences every area of your life. It affects the way you respond to family, friends, opportunities, situations and even to God. It can affect the amount of conflict you have with others and the amount of inner conflict you have with yourself. It can determine whether you live with self-respect or self-reproach. It can void every success in your life and magnify every failure. It can give you the strength to try again or make you surrender without trying at all.

In the last few years, society has become very self-image conscious. It considers a good self-image the primary explanation for success, and a bad self-image the automatic reason for unhappiness and failure. In fact, for many, obtaining a good self-image has become a major concern in life.

After devoting a great deal of time to studying self-image problems, behaviorial scientists have developed a variety of methods and formulas for cultivating a good self-image. And almost all of these techniques are based on two major principles: (1) experiencing positive reinforcement, and (2) liking yourself.

Experiencing positive reinforcement can be explained simply as getting a pat on the back. To have a good self-image you must get pats on the back, but to do so you need a good self-image. If that sounds like a circle, it is. I could be illustrated like this:



But how do you get started on such a successful merry go-round? Your parents or some other supportive force

in your life can put you on this upward spiral. But if they don't, you can enter through various aspects of positive thinking.

Sounds good doesn't it? And it very often works. On the other hand, it very often doesn't work because some important ingredients are missing.

Liking yourself is also a must according to man's self-image program. If there are things about yourself that you cannot like, they are considered hang-ups. To overcome your hang-ups you must (a) accept yourself the way you are, (b) get rid of any feelings of guilt, and (c) adjust your values until they are realistic for you. It seems reasonable until you realize that it means change your values to match your behavior.

Liking yourself and feeling valuable is an important part of God's self-image program also, but God and man differ on how to accomplish it.

### **How Successful Is Man's Self-Image Program?**

Man's formula does not always cure self-image problems, but he has some reasonable sounding explanations when it fails: (1) you were criticized too much as a child, (2) you were taught impossible standards for you, or (3) you have been rejected and abused until your self-esteem has been destroyed.

On the other hand, man's formula often experiences a degree of success, which is easily understood when you realize it coincides in several aspects with God's program. Unfortunately though, it leaves out or distorts some basic fundamentals.

### **THE SOLUTION**

It may seem strange to say God has a solution for self-image problems when the word self-image does not appear in the Bible. But God deals with self-image problems as he does a multitude of others. He approaches them very simply by: (1) teaching you the truth concern-

ing the situation, and (2) training you to avoid or overcome the problem in the future.

The first principle, **TRUTH FREES**, is based on John 8:32. In this passage Jesus tells his disciples that by knowing the truth they can be free. At the time, he was referring specifically to being free from sin. But the principle is applicable to a multitude of situations. For example, knowing the truth and living by it can free you from traffic tickets, lung cancer resulting from smoking cigarettes, or a black eye from picking a fight with someone a lot bigger than you. God frees you from self-image problems by teaching some basic truths that apply to self-image problems.

The second principle, **GOD'S INSTRUCTION PROTECTS AND DEVELOPS**, is founded on 2 Timothy 3:16,17. There Paul teaches that through scripture you can be taught, corrected, trained, well-prepared and fully equipped for every good work. With such instruction you can have a good productive life that develops a glowing self-image.

### **Your House of Mirrors**

To better understand self-image problems, imagine yourself building a house for self-inspection to be filled with mirrors. If you carefully select each mirror you install and make sure it is absolutely accurate, you will be able to step into the room and from any angle get an honest reflection of yourself. That is what your self-image is—your reflection as seen by you. Then anything in your reflection you do not like, you can alter by changing yourself. For example, if your image is too fat, go on a diet. If your image has temper tantrums, start controlling your anger. And if your mirrors are perfect, this lesson can end with this conclusion—what you don't like about your image, transform by changing yourself.

But unfortunately you often include some imperfect mirrors in your house of self-inspection which distort your image, giving you a false reflection to work with. It is these distorted images that are the source of many self-image problems.

In this study we will work with some of the most commonly distorted mirrors, regrinding them with truth. Then you can reevaluate your image in these corrected mirrors as you take shape under God's instruction.

### **Correct Vision Through Self-Acceptance**

To work realistically on your image in your house of self-inspection you must have correct vision. For no matter how accurate the mirrors, without correct vision you will perceive a distorted reflection.

The basis for correct vision is acceptance of your heritage (or roots). God created you and gave you the freedom of choice in many areas of your life. But one choice he withheld, the selection of your roots (heritage) **which includes your** natural parents and grandparents, **your natural** appearance, your natural aptitudes (abilities), and your **social** and ethnic background. The rejection of any **one of these** roots makes it impossible to see **yourself realistically** because you are blocking out a portion **of your image**. However, by applying God's truth and instruction you can develop acceptance and respect for your heritage resulting in realistic self-vision.

### **The Root of Natural Appearance**

The root you most often reject or refuse to see **realistically is natural** appearance. Very seldom will you **answer, "Nothing,"** when asked what you would change about your appearance. But, if you have a good self-image, you would simply be saying your appearance could be improved. However, if you have a poor self-image, you could mean everything from general dissatisfaction with your looks to actual self-hatred.

**The Truth:** Outward beauty cannot by itself bring inner happiness or a good self-image. In fact, Proverbs 31:30 tells us that outward beauty is deceitful (it can temporarily cover inner ugliness, thus deceiving) and vain (because it gives a false pride). Real beauty only comes from within (1 Peter 3:4) with a quiet and gentle spirit. The man who brought salvation to the world was not outwardly beautiful (Isaiah 53:2) but his inner beauty guaranteed that he was never forgotten or even ignored. By this same token, if you wish to be beautiful and remembered, develop inner beauty.

**God's Instruction:** God's instruction develops a new countenance, self-acceptance, appearance and appreciation. Conforming to Ephesians 4:17-5:20 cultivates a radiant inner beauty and following Proverbs 31:10-31 develops a beauty that grows with each passing year.

### **The Root of Parentage**

At some time (often in early teens) you are usually embarrassed, ashamed or in some way reject your parents. But as you mature that attitude should change to one of acceptance. If it doesn't, you'll find you cannot accept yourself because, like it or not, they are a part of you.

**The Truth:** There are many excuses for dishonor, disobedience, or rejection of parents, but only one explanation—sin. The sin of pride causes you to be ashamed of a parent's poverty, lack of education, appearance, social graces, etc. The sin of rebellion causes you to be disrespectful and contemptuous of their authority, while an unforgiving heart causes bitterness, resentment and even hatred for actual or imagined wrongs. Dishonor of parents really has nothing to do with a parent's worthiness or unworthiness—it has to do with your heart.

**God's Instruction:** "Children, obey your parents in



the lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother—which is the first commandment with a promise—that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” (Ephesians 6:1-3). This command appears to benefit only the parent, but the blessing of obedience to God is always multi-faceted. It is pleasant for a parent to have an obedient, respectful child but it is critical for the child to be respectful and obedient. Obedience protects a child from conflict, foolish decisions, physical trauma, ignorant mistakes, etc., while at the same time it trains him to respect authority, trust others, be teachable, not to be self-willed, etc. He will find the more respect he gives the authority figures in his life the more respect he will have for himself. Invariably the child (or adult child) that does not esteem his parents will not esteem himself.

### **The Root of Natural Abilities**

If you have a good self-image you accept your natural gifts and abilities with a degree of thankfulness and appreciation. If you have a poor self-image you are probably convinced you do not have any gifts or abilities. And if one is pointed out, you more than likely answer incredulously, “You call that a gift, anyone can do that.”

**The Truth:** You (and everyone else) have been given natural gifts and talents for specific purposes. (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-26). Your attitude about those talents plays a major role in your self-image. If you have a good self-image, you are probably busy exercising and multiplying your gifts. If you have a poor self-image, you are probably ignoring your talents and longing for someone else’s. (See chapter on **Envy**).

**God’s Instruction:** Two of God’s basic commands can help you overcome this source of self-image problems. The first, “. . . give thanks in all circumstances;

for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (I Thessalonians 5:18, RSV). Try it, thank God for each gift or talent, even those that seem trivial. You will find even as you utter your thanks you will receive insight into its potential. For example, "Thank you God that I have been taught how to cook. I realize I can use it to please my family, exercise hospitality, take meals to the sick, train my daughters, write a cookbook, and even teach a cooking class for children." As you thank God you will see your talents in a new perspective.

The second command, "Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men" (Colossians 3:23). Any job you perform, no matter how trivial, affects your self-image because it reflects your worth. As a result, your self-image is based more on how you perform than what you perform. So God teaches you to attack every job heartily. For example, compare the dreariness and fatigue of weeding a flower bed "reluctantly" to the pride and joy of a freshly weeded bed you've attacked cheerfully. Nothing enhances your self-image more than the satisfaction of a job well done. In this command God gives Christians the motivation (as serving the Lord) to exercise every talent, task and chore with enthusiasm.

### **The Root of Social, Ethnic, Racial Background**

As a man you often have difficulty being comfortable unless everyone else is just like you. Frequently, your response to this comfortableness is to develop prejudices—racial, ethnic, social, etc. When those prejudices are directed at others; they are bigotry. When they are directed at your own racial, ethnic, or social status, they are even more damaging because they bring about self-rejection.

**The Truth:** God deals with this problem by removing every source of difference. In Galatians 3:26-28 we

read, “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” This scripture reminds me of a parent with a group of children who are quarreling over who gets to be superman. He solves the argument by declaring all of them superman. God has decreed that in Christ you are all sons. Your spiritual birth which superceded your physical birth transposes you into a spiritual realm where there is no social, ethnic, racial or sexual difference. The next chapter goes on to talk of the difference between an heir and a slave and in Galatians 4:7 he says, “So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.” If your social, ethnic, or racial background is controlling your reactions to God and others, then you are thinking like a slave instead of a son.

**God’s Instruction:** Romans 13:8-10, “Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law . . . Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.” In this passage we are told our responsibility is to love our fellow man. Colossians 3:12-14 gives some specific ways we can behave toward our fellow man, i.e., compassionate, kind, humble, gentle, patient, and forgiving. The passage concludes with, “And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.” By putting love on (something you can choose to do) you bind all your behaviors together in a perfect unity that can cross racial, ethnic and social barriers.

### **Your Roots, God's Picture Frame**

You are God's creation, you didn't just happen. According to Psalms 139:13-16, you were designed by God. He created you just like every other man and yet unlike any other man. Part of your uniqueness is your roots.

When an artist creates a painting he does not just slap it into any frame. Instead he selects the "right" frame to bring out the colors, texture and perspective of his painting so it will better illustrate his message. That is what God has done with you and your heritage.

Have you known people that appeared rather average until you know their background, then they became an inspiration to you? Your heritage is the frame selected to display your message to the world. And because of your uniqueness there are people who will hear you in a way they would not hear others. An example of this is found in Acts 4:13. In that instance the Sanhedrin was astonished at Peter's presentation because he lacked education, was from a provincial area, and was just a fisherman. However, it was these very things that gave Peter's message power and brought credit to Jesus, ". . . they took note he had been with Jesus."

Consider the frame God chose for the Savior of the world. He did not send him with the best education, great wealth, or a position of prominence (all of the "advantages"). Instead he sent him with no particular attractiveness (Isa. 53:2), no special education, a birth veiled in disgrace, and the social background of a craftsman. Yet Christ did not suffer self-image problems because he knew his mission and was confident of his relationship with God. These happen to be the two greatest defenses against self-image problems—knowing your purpose and being secure in your relationship with God.

Seeing your heritage realistically and accepting it is the foundation for your self-image. If not viewed realistically, it will not only create self-image problems, but it will distort other situations that can also create self-image problems. So before proceeding to the next portion of this study be certain you resolve any conflict you might have with any area of your heritage (God's special roots for you).

The next chapter, Self-Image II, is a continuation of this chapter. It will deal with the distorted mirrors that cause many self-image problems.

\*For the purpose of this study, the commonly understood definition of good/bad self-image will be used. Bad self-image meaning feelings of inferiority and dislike; good self-image meaning self-liking and respect.

## Self-Image II

*QUESTION: How successful would a cake be if you left the flour out of the recipe?*

*ANSWER: As successful as this chapter will be if you attempt to study it without studying Self-Image I!*

## THE PROBLEM

The information in Self-Image I is like the flour or base for Self-Image II. It notes man's awareness of self-image problems and explains the principles in God's solution. It also applies those principles to the foundation of your self-image, your heritage.

This chapter will pick up where the last chapter left off and deal with the distorted mirrors mentioned in Part I. Recall, in that portion you learned your self-image is merely your reflection as seen by you. Therefore, what you don't like in your image, change by changing yourself. This method can effectively deal

with self-image problems unless you are inspecting yourself in a distorted mirror.

### **The Distorted Mirror of Past Sin**

A poor self-image often originates from not having your past life in the proper perspective. You can always recall behavior that makes you burn with shame. Frequently, that behavior was so repulsive and unjustified that it is painfully and eternally seared in your mind's eye. And everytime you look at your reflection you only see the person that behaved in that manner.

**The Truth:** If you are a Christian, God murdered the image you are looking at. He/she was crucified on the cross (Galatians 2:29), buried with Christ (Romans 6), and raised to a new life (a new way to live, a new way to talk, a new way to behave, and a new way to think).

If you experienced that death, burial and resurrection and yet you are still struggling with your old self-image, it is probably because you have dug up the corpse and are dragging it around with you. Naturally, the stench of that dead body will make it difficult and unpleasant to live your new life. You must let God bury it under the truth—and this is the truth—the old you is dead. Now let it return to the dust “from whence it came.”

If your self-image problems originate in sins you've committed since you became a Christian, repent and accept God's gift of forgiveness. Take advantage of Hebrews 8:12 where God promises to remember your sins no more. And rejoice that Christ's blood is continually cleansing you (1 John 1:7).

**God's Instruction:** Your bad self-image resulted from your past behavior (the things you did, said and thought). But that is over, God is now patiently instructing you for your new self-image. He has outlined it for you in Ephesians 4:17-5:20. And as you submit to his guidance you cannot help but develop as a child of light



(Ephesians 5:8) with a radiant self-image.

### **The Distorted Mirror of Self-Expectations**

Frequently, self-expectations are a source of self-image problems. When unfulfilled, they can keep you living and thinking as a failure and are responsible for self-anger and self-disgust.

Self-expectations should *not* be confused with self-confidence or self-goals. Self-confidence is the belief you are capable of achievement. A self-goal is an end you have chosen for yourself, while a self-expectation is something you expect to do, be or get. Time and again what starts out as self-confidence or a self-goal becomes a demanding self-expectation. If you don't live up to that expectation, you see yourself as a failure, thus creating self-image problems.

Any self-expectation has the potential to create problems, but the ones that almost invariably trigger self-image problems are: the *unfulfilled* and the *unrealistic*.

The *unfulfilled* expectation can be recognized by its accompanying disappointment. Your life may be permeated with unfulfilled expectations and you be unaware of it. Test yourself by listening to the way you talk or think, "I am so disappointed with myself over this or over that, because of this or because of that, etc." If that is your thinking, your various wants and wishes have become self-expectations and when unfulfilled they become one disappointment after another, giving the illusion of failure.

*Unrealistic* expectations (because they usually remain unfulfilled) often create feelings of failure which have a strong impact on your self-image. Unrealistic expectations don't just challenge you but run ahead of your abilities and accomplishments always keeping you in the shadows of failure.

Self-Expectations are unrealistic when they are:

(1) Based on someone else's abilities, circumstances, etc. For example, you cannot expect to be a gifted vocalist, straight A student, and the local beauty because your mother or best friend's aunt was. (You may be all of those things, but you cannot assume you will be.)

(2) Based on wishful thinking instead of a workable plan. For example, you cannot expect to know the Bible well by wanting to know it well, talking about knowing it well, thinking about knowing it well and getting angry at yourself because you don't know it well. You must sit down and get into it.

(3) Beyond your ability or skills to perform. If you are 5'2" and weigh 97 pounds you cannot expect to play football for the Dallas Cowboys, or if you have never learned to drive you cannot expect to be hired as a Greyhound bus driver (without learning to drive first).

**The Truth:** God teaches us to "strive" toward goals, not "expect." You can easily understand why when you realize "to strive" is to work toward while "to expect" is to depend on someone (yourself) fulfilling. When you *expect* you are in the market of *getting* when you *strive* you are in the market of *giving* which is God's way. Even God does not **expect** of man. He loves man, offers him an abundant life if he submits to his instruction and even forgives him on the occasions he falls short. It seems the only thing God really expects of man—with good cause—is to fall short. This is not a negative attitude toward man or his abilities, instead it is a realistic, generous, and merciful one.

**God's Instruction:** The attitude displayed by Paul in the Philippian letter gives valuable training in the handling of disappointment, goals and confidence.

(1) Disappointment. Paul's desire for freedom from

prison could have become a self-expectation. He wrote time and again to the disciples saying he felt very certain he would be released soon. And each time he wasn't he could have sunk into a depression and abased himself for not convincing the judges to release him, or for his hasty appeal to Caesar that hindered Felix from freeing him, etc. But Philippians 1:12-18 displays his openness to seeing every situation in God's perspective. Paul overcame what could have been disappointment in God and himself by being God-oriented instead of self-oriented.

(2) Goals. Paul's attitude regarding a goal was one of "straining and pressing toward" according to Philippians 3:12-14. In other words, giving it everything he had, aware it would be his if it was God's will.

(3) Confidence. Paul placed his confidence (and expectation) in Christ not himself (vs. 12ff) and was never confronted with failure because when his plans did not work out, God's did (Philippians 1:12-18).

### **The Distorted Mirror of Self-Pity**

Self-pity is an unlikely sounding source of self-image problems but it can and does create some very serious ones. For if you feel mistreated you invariably feel of little value. One of the most relentless self-image problems I have ever seen controlled an attractive, successful businesswoman. She had been rejected by her parents when she became a Christian and rejected by her husband in their marriage. After struggling with both situations for years, she developed among other things a bad case of self-pity, creating a severe self-image problem. If she had responded to those rejections in God's way, her self-image could have survived and she would have grown spiritually as a result of her problems.

**The Truth:** John 16:33 tells us that, "... in this world you will have trouble . . . ." Jesus is saying very

plainly in that scripture you will have difficult times, times of unfair and unhappy situations. But 1 Corinthians 10:13 tells you that whatever the circumstances, nothing will happen that has not happened to other people before you. And with every temptation you will be given a way of escape.

**God's Instruction:** "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Obeying this command and practicing it as a principle will protect you from self-pity and its accompanying self-image problems. It will also help you develop insight. A most dramatic example of this was in the case of Joseph in Genesis 45. If any one ever had a right to a little self-pity, Joseph did. He was rejected by family, sold into slavery, thrown into jail when he was innocent, and forgotten by the cellmate he befriended. Yet, Joseph concluded all of this with the remark in Genesis 50:20 when he lovingly said to the brothers who had wronged him, ". . . you intended to harm me, but God meant it for good."

A second example is in Acts 7:40-42. There the apostles were called before the Sanhedrin, told to quit preaching in the name of Jesus, and flogged to reinforce the point. They could have felt mistreated because they were. But verse 41 says they went out rejoicing because they were counted worthy to suffer for the Lord's name. They could have been miserable but they were happy because they were viewing the situation God's way.

Very likely both of these examples are a little extreme for the things that will happen to most of us. But the principle is the same and can be applied to every circumstance. For example, a mailman delivers a tax refund to 122 E. Anystreet. The woman is thrilled, thanking God for the money to pay an unexpected dental bill. The same mailman delivers a tax refund to 127 E.

Anystreet. That woman becomes depressed. She had expected to be able to save a little and buy a few extras. Instead they would have to use it to pay an unexpected dental bill. It didn't seem fair, something always came up to keep them from getting ahead. The situation is identical but the way they view it is different. One is using God's perspective, grateful for everything, thus she is happy. The other is seeing the situation in man's way and is miserably sinking deeper and deeper in self-pity.

### **The Distorted Mirror of Weak Faith**

Do you know what you should be doing for the Lord but you're not doing it and consequently you're disgusted with yourself? If so, your weak faith is creating a poor self-image.

**The Truth:** If you realize you have a poor self-image and it's due to your weak faith (a faith that does not motivate you to be the servant God wants you to be), there is only one way to deal with it—strengthen your faith.

**God's Instruction:** Colossians 2:6-7 teaches us to strengthen our faith, "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught and overflowing with thankfulness." Notice this teaches three things accompany a strengthened faith: (1) continuing to live in him. In other words, you must "hang in there" be steadfast in continuing to live as you did when you first came to know Jesus, (2) being rooted and built up in him. In order to let your roots go down into Christ you must know him and that can only happen through his Word and prayer. It is impossible to be rooted and built up apart from the Word of God. (3) Overflowing with thankfulness. Practicing thankfulness trains you to see God's hand in your life and that perspective strengthens your faith as nothing else can.

Jesus teaches a beautiful and astonishing principle in John 13:17 that will strengthen your faith, your life and your self-image when practiced. "If you know these things you are blessed if you do them." Remembering the word blessed means "happy" you can understand that the road to happiness is doing what you know to do. Anytime you fall short of doing what you "know to do" you are going to suffer conflict and self-image problems. For example, I know that nothing strengthens me and contributes more to my spiritual growth than a daily devotional time with God. If I neglect that for several days, I begin to feel separated from God and my self-image suffers.

When both scriptures are considered they seem to conclude that when you are busy doing what you know to do your faith will be strengthened, you will be happy with your life, yourself and your self-image.

### **The Distorted Mirror of Rejection and Disapproval**

Do you feel something is wrong with you because this person doesn't like you or that person doesn't like you? If so, your self-image is based on the reactions of other people. No one is more miserable or insecure than the person whose self-image is controlled by the reactions of others. The reactions of others are valuable tools telling you when you are being kind and loving and reminding you when you are being rude or inconsiderate. But they cannot be the basis for your self-image for "their" reactions are based on "their" distorted mirrors and may not always be truthful or justified.

**The Truth:** The person does not live who has not faced rejection and disapproval sometime in life. Even Christ was rejected and he had led a sinless life. However, it did not affect his self-image because it was based on God's approval and not man's. If you follow his example you will find disapproval and rejection can



hurt but they cannot destroy you or a good self-image.

**God's Instruction:** 1 Peter 2:23 tells us that when Christ was rejected or insulted he "entrusted" himself to God. Have you ever considered how he entrusted himself to God? (1) He put himself in God's protection and accepted what came; (2) He relied on God by responding as God had taught him to, i.e., "love your enemies . . . pray for them that despitefully use . . . do not repay evil for evil . . . "; and (3) He waited for God instead of reacting man's way, i.e., getting even, wallowing in self-pity, becoming resentful and bitter, etc.

Romans 8:28 gives us valuable insight in following the example of Christ's responses, "All things work for the good of those that love the Lord." This teaches (among other things) that there is not a circumstance in your life that cannot work for your good if you respond in the way God teaches you to.

Both scriptures keep your attention focused on your response and God's will, thus putting others' reactions to you in proper perspective. With the right focus your self-image will be based on God's approval instead of man's.

### *In Conclusion*

At the beginning of this study we looked at man's solution for self-image problems, experiencing positive reinforcement and liking yourself, which are also a part of God's solution. However, God is capable of giving them much greater depth than man. For example, man teaches you to experience success through positive thinking and then must turn you over to the world for the pats on the back which result from success. But God teaches that each one of his children starts as a success, "For everyone born of God has overcome the world, This is the victory that has overcome the world, even

our faith" (1 John 5:4). Then he changes your standards of success from those of the world to those in his Word: faith, love, kindness, gentleness, patience, steadfastness, etc. He even trains you in that success—a success that the world cannot take away from you. Man wants you to experience success but he must rely on the world to give it to you which is an "iffee" situation. God offers you success through a relationship with him which is not "iffee."

God encourages you to think success through the positive thinking approach from Proverbs 23:7, "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." Man interprets this scripture to mean that anything you think (believe) you can do, you can. This is a valid interpretation when qualified with "if it be God's will." What it does positively teach is that your behavior, accomplishments, and goals begin in your mind. Then he promised to aid you with those behaviors, accomplishments and goals. "Ask and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8).

Man teaches "like yourself"—also a portion of God's program but man tries to help you accomplish that by adjusting your "likes" until they fit your "behavior." God's program recognizes the importance of "liking yourself" and he starts by giving you value and worth through his love. He backs up his love with the death of his Son. He teaches you what he would have you be and then teaches you how to like yourself by being that person. And with that new way to live he gives you self-respect, self-esteem and self-liking. Man's program teaches you that guilt exists only in your mind, while God's program teaches man what guilt is, how to be free of it, and then reinforces the new you with love

and approval by surrounding you with Christians who have been taught, “love one another as I have loved you,” (John 13:34) and “greet one another with a holy kiss” (1 Corinthians 16:20).

# The Christ For The Man In The City

Kieth A. Mitchell



**Address:** 329 Jamestown Road, Bridgewater, New Jersey 08807.

**Family:** Wife: the former Linda Diane Florea. They have three children: Margie, Rhonda, and Stephen.

**Education:** Adams State College (B.A. 1961, Communication & Education); Abilene Christian University (M.S. 1972, Bible Practical); New York Theological Seminary (M.Div. 1976, Urban Ministry); and New York Theological Seminary (S.T.M. 1978, Pastoral Counseling).

**Work & Ministry:** Founder and present director of International Mission (1972 to present); teacher in Practical Studies, International Biblical Institute, New York (1981); pulpit minister, Manhattan church of Christ, New York City (1981); teacher of Urban Anthropology, Abilene Christian University Summer Missions Seminar; other local preaching—Mullinville, Kansas (1962-63), Hays, Kansas (1963-64), Englewood, Colorado (1964-69), Vine Street church of Christ, Abilene, Texas (1969-72).

**Other Fields of Special Interest:** In conjunction with founding International Mission as a spoken English improvement school for foreigners in the United States, Kieth has developed a language curriculum which is Gospel-related. *Good News for Reading*,

*Writing, Listening and Speaking* was authored and published in 1976. *Eye Witness News* was co-authored by the teaching staff, edited and published in 1978.

Kieth has done extensive special preparation for and been engaged in gospel outreach to Jewish persons. Related to this, he authored and published *Speak Tenderly to Jerusalem* in 1976.

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For an effective witness to major population centers, it is essential that our message square with "the truth of the gospel;" one must preach *the Christ* and Him only. To build a viable fellowship of believers in the city, it is equally vital to disciple them properly; to form of them disciplined *men and women* under the leadership of the Lord Jesus. To minister the saving message to the world, God's people in our day must take *the city* seriously. The city is not one community, but many—many cultures, languages, and ethnic groups. Ministry to the world's cities demands the best we have to give in both preparation and service.

### **The Christ**

One of the great joys of ministering to a major northern United States city, or a foreign urban center, is that one is calling persons to a first-time response to the name of Jesus, the gospel, the power of God.

An exegesis of Romans 1:16-17 seems most vital.<sup>1</sup> The Gospel is God's revelation/declaration of salvation to the world—the Jesus story. Such is the power of God. Definitions for this power include at least these: (1) God's activity which controls history (OT/Jewish influence), (2) miraculous manifestations (Hellenistic influence), (3) but most significant is the culmination of

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<sup>1</sup>Ernest Kasemann, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), pp. 21-32.

God's eschatological (history directing) power pure and simple. Salvation's power is outside of human power or control, independent even of the church and its ministers. Salvation's power is experienced in believers' lives as the story constantly becomes a reality through its proclamation about Jesus and the power of His spirit to bring about radical life change.

Salvation is the redemption of the whole person for time and all eternity—a Hellenistic expectation. It is *not* just the application of deliverance in the final judgment (Philippians 1:19), but redemption for the new aeon as a present reality in Christ with present peace and joy as a state of openness between God and man (Romans 8:24; 2 Corinthians 6:2). The gospel is for everyone—a radical individuation and universalism combined. As Paul uses this, it means both the *whole world*—Jews and Greeks, and the *Gentile world*—Greeks and barbarians.

The primary meaning of *to believe* is to make a decision; to receive the Gospel is the central idea. To believe is to personally appropriate the eschatological (history culminating) public proclamation made to the whole world and to each individual. Possible culturally influenced meanings of *to believe* are: (1) to regard something as true (a Greek idea but not central); and (2) to trust and become part of a new relationship with God (an OT/Jewish influence but not central).

The central thrust of the gospel is the righteousness of God. This term suggests at least five dimensions: (1) God's self-manifestation in history; (2) the record of the climactic manifestation and divine claim that divides history: the Jewish idea was *linear*—"perceiving this age and the age to come;" the Hellenistic idea was *elevational*—"perceiving present evil world and kingdom of righteousness;" (3) the divine revelation of



righteousness broke into the world as an eschatological revelation; (4) the Lord's righteousness is reflected in Jewish apocalyptic imagery related to the verdict of justification at the last judgment; (5) God's righteousness is the content of the gospel and its end-time gift pure and simple—righteousness of God and righteousness of faith are equated (Philippians 3:0).

Much controversy has centered upon the phrase "from faith to faith": believer's faith linked to God's faithfulness. Faith is always linked with faithfulness, trust with obedience. Faith's movement is seen in salvation history and in the individual believer's life. Abraham is an example of such—he counted God faithful by his own faith (Gen. 15:6, Rom. 4:3).

What is the Gospel proclamation? (1 Cor. 2:2) Couple Romans 1:16-17 with 1 Cor. 2:2. It is the Gospel *of Christ*—good news about Jesus Christ. It is the *power of God*—divine history controlled to its climax. Its salvation is redemption of the whole person for time and all eternity. It is the righteousness *of God*—the divine self-manifestation that divides history. The gospel's "from faith to faith" is God's movement of faithfulness at every point of salvation history. The message is to everyone, Jews and Greeks—a radical individuation and universalism combined. Specifically it is for the one who believes—who makes a decision to accept the gospel.

How is the term Gospel used in relationship with the *personal ministry of Jesus*? It is designated or explained in these terms: (1) Gospel *of Jesus Christ, Son of God* (Mk. 1:1); (2) Gospel *of God—time fulfilled, kingdom of God at hand* (Mk. 1:19); (3) Gospel *of kingdom—testimony for all nations—healing every disease and infirmity (sign of Messianic reign)* (Mk. 13:10; Mt. 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; Lk. 9:6); (4) Gospel—

*imminent anticipation of the age to come* (Mk. 10:30); (5) Gospel—*self-denial, taking up a cross, losing a life to save* (Mk. 8:34-35); (6) Gospel—*special death and burial* (as related to Mary's anointing of Jesus' body) (Mk. 14:9; Mt. 26:13); (7) Gospel—*signs following; promising salvation; and calling for belief and baptism* (Mk. 16:15-20).

How is the term Gospel used in the *writings of Paul*? It is designated or explained in these terms: (1) *Gospel of Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, glory and image of God, agent of grace* (Romans 15:19; 2 Cor. 2:12; 9:13; 10:14; Phil. 1:27; 2 Thes. 1:8; Rom. 1:9; 2 Cor. 4:3-4; 11:4; Phil. 1:15-18; 2 Thes. 2:14; Gal. 1:6-7); (2) *Gospel of the blessed God*, promises of the prophets fulfilled, as in the Holy Scriptures, about His Son—in human terms, King David's descendant, in spiritual terms, Son of God—declared Son of God by the resurrection—Jesus Christ, our Lord (Rom. 15:16; 2 Cor. 11:7; 1 Thes. 2:2, 8, 9; 1 Tim. 1:11; Rom. 1:1-4); (3) *Gospel of declared judgment* and Hope in tension—justice, proclamation of Jesus Christ as able to establish, revelation of hidden mystery, mentioned by prophets, of Jews and Gentiles together in one covenant kingdom (Rom. 2:16; 16:25-27; Eph. 3:6; 6:19); (4) *Gospel of new age* (same passages as under No. 3); (5) *Gospel of salvation*, deliverer, covenant, forgiveness (Rom. 11:26; Eph. 1:13); (6) *Gospel of a special death*, cross of Christ full of power, death, burial, resurrection, and appearances according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 1:23; 15:1-8); (7) *Gospel of grace*, message of faith, love and hope for individuals (Eph. 6:15; Col. 1:5).

The Gospel *is not* any message other than the JESUS STORY whether a survey of Bible material, New Testament Scriptures, a catalog of commandments, ecclesiastical history, ecclesiastical dogmas (Gal. 1:6-9).

Furthermore, it is not a subjective experience within the heart of an individual (1 Jn. 1:1-4), nor is it the ethical teachings of Jesus for his disciples (Mt. 28:18-20; 2 Jn. 9-11). Proclamation of the gospel is not any power from human wisdom: correcting Christian doctrine, correcting Christian tradition, moralizing, reproving, exhorting to be good, commanding persons to obey the Lord. It is not logically proving the basis of the Christian faith, or leading a person persuasively to accept Christ. (1 Cor. 1:18-2:5, Eph. 3:1-13).

It is imperative that one discovers the general framework of the *kerygma*. The word *kerygma* is the content of *God's proclamation for unbelievers—the Gospel*. It is the content of *preaching for unbelievers—that which is the power to save!*

It is the *sperm* to beget life. *Keryssein* means "to proclaim." *Kerx* is the "town crier, herald." *Euvangelizathae* is "to proclaim Good News" (Mk. 16:15). Generally *kerygma* is made of *statements* you *may* or *may not* believe—always in *indicative* mood (simply expressing something as true), a *herald's* announcement. *Kerygma* is *not* teaching—the content for believers. *Didaskein* is the *bread* to feed the life of believers, such is ethical instruction (Mt. 28:20), urging to moral reformation (exhortation), and even apologetic material.

Understanding the framework of *kerygma* sets the *canonical limits* of the Gospel proclamation (Gal. 1:6-9). Two expressions are paramount for describing the message to unbelievers. The first is *GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM*—focusing on the *prophetic expectation* and divine promise—the eschatological age "according to the Scriptures" (Old Testament Canon). The *kingdom gospel* is a *transition* message: (1) *this age—age to come*, (2) *kingdom of darkness—kingdom*

of light, (3) *this present evil world—heavenly places*. The *kingdom gospel* is an *eschatalogical message (historical climax)*: (1) *the plan of God*, as revealed in the Jewish Scriptures, reaches the climax, its critical moment; (2) fulfillment is of God's own timing; (3) the *Day of the Lord* has arrived, and (4) these are the *last days*. The *kingdom gospel* focuses on the age of the Prophet greater than Moses (Mk. 9:1-8), the *age of David's descendant on an eternal throne* (Acts 2:29-36), a *Supernatural entry* into history—open manifestation of God's power over all the forces of evil and suffering (Mk. 1:14-8:30), *Judgment* (Jn. 3:16-21), *Eternal life* (Jn. 17:1-5).

A more frequent expression for the saving message is the GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD—focusing on *historical fulfillment*—the eschatalogical age “according to the Scriptures” (Old Testament Canon). This too corresponds to a *transition message*—fulfilled “in Christ”: (1) believers have *tasted of the powers of the age to come* (Heb. 6:5). (2) Believers are rescued out of the dominion of *darkness* and *transferred into the kingdom of the Son of God's love* (Col. 1:13); the darkness is passing and the real *light is already shining* (1 Jn. 2:8). (3) Believers are being *transfigured from glory to glory* (2 Cor. 3:18).

God's *eschatalogical* message is completely fulfilled “in Christ”: (1) *the time is fulfilled*—the *kingdom of God* is at hand (Mk. 1:15)—the *kingdom of God* has come upon you (Mt. 12:28), (2) it is the *last hour* (1 Jn. 2:8), (3) all of this is *that spoken* by the prophet (Acts 2:16). If any is in Christ, then he is a *new creation* (2 Cor. 5:17). He saved us by the washing of *rebirth* and the *renewal* of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5). We are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of *incorruptible* (1 Pet. 1:23). “In Christ” the one greater than Moses is

here (Heb. 1:1-4:13). "In Christ" David's descendant is already on his eternal throne (Acts 2:29-36). "In Christ" the *supernatural entered* history with an open manifestation of God's power over all the forces of evil and suffering (Mk. 1:14-3:30). "In Christ" *judgment* has come (Jn. 3:16-21). "In Christ" *eternal* life is a present reality (Jn. 17:1-5).

As kerygma's framework sets the limits of the gospel proclamation, so the original components of the *kerygma* settle its essentials. *Kerygma* was consistent with all the apostles though they preached to persons of different cultures (1 Cor. 15:1; Gal. 1:11-18; 2:2; 1:6-9). There were essential components:<sup>2</sup> (1) The new things that are happening fulfill the Scriptures. (2) The new age was started by the life and death of Jesus. (3) God raised Jesus from the dead. (4) Jesus has been exalted to the realm of God. (5) Forgiveness and the Holy Spirit are now being given in the new age. (6) Men must believe, repent, and be baptized. (7) Jesus is coming again.

Here are selected texts which are capsule expressions of the *kerygma*: (1) expressed by the *original apostles*: Acts 2:14-39; 3:13-26; 4:10-12; 5:30-32; 10:36-43, and (2) as expressed by the *apostle Paul*: Acts 13:17-41; Gal. 3:1; 1:3-4; 4:6; 1 Thes. 1:10; 1 Cor. 15:1-7; Rom. 1:1-2; 8:34; 1:4; 2:16; 10:8-9.

The detailed components of Peter's *kerygma* are these: (1) The *age of fulfillment*, spoken of by the prophets, has dawned (Acts 2:16). The things predicted are fulfilled (Acts 3:18, 24). (2) David's predicted descendant is on his throne (Acts 2:30-31; Ps. 132:11). Miraculous signs introduced the Messianic reign. The prophet Moses said to hear has spoken (Acts 2:22;

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<sup>2</sup>Robert M. Montgomery and W. Richard Stegner, *Kerygma* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1970), p. 34.

3:22). (3) He died by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God by lawless men (Acts 2:23; 3:13). (4) He *was buried*. (5) By *virtue of the resurrection*, Jesus is raised to God's right hand as head of the new Israel as the Scriptures had said He would be (Ps. 110:1; Acts 2:33-36; 3:13; 4:11; Ps. 118:22). (6) The *Holy Spirit* in the Church is the sign of Christ's present power. (7) The Messianic age will reach its ultimate consummation in the return of Jesus to judge (Acts 3:21). (8) The *kerygma* closes with an *appeal for repentance* as an act of faith and the meaning of baptism, the offer of salvation (forgiveness and the Holy Spirit).

The GOSPEL OF MARK is presented as a full expression of the *kerygma*: *the basic Jesus story accompanied with its interpretation in light of the eschatological age*. A perfect capsule of *Mark* is found in *Peter* (Acts 10:34-48) and *Paul* (Acts 13:16-41)—in their sermon outlines: (1) "This is the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (1:1). (2) The Jesus story unfolds "as it is written in Isaiah the prophet" (1:2-3). (3) "A stronger than John was coming. John baptized with water, but Jesus baptized with the Holy Spirit" (1:8). (4) "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has drawn near. Repent and believe the Gospel." (1:14-15). "They will see the kingdom of God come with power" (9:1). (5) "The suffering of Christ preceded the glory to follow" (8:31-15:39). The introduction to the passion story is *Peter's confession* of "JESUS BEING THE CHRIST" (8:29). The build-up to the passion story combines historical narrative and theological interpretation: First Jesus gave the promise of His suffering ending in glory. The disciples caught a vision of glory in the transfiguration when the Father said, "This is my Son. Listen to Him." No one but Jesus was left as the transfiguration cloud lifted. Apocalyptic narrative is



employed with Jesus' identification of himself with the Old Testament themes (Mk. 13). The conclusion of the passion story is the Centurion's confession of "JESUS BEING THE SON OF GOD" (15:39).<sup>3</sup>

Wow! What a powerful story! The herald needs no other announcement and the faithful dare not admit any other content as gospel. In the city, the man and woman pressed by the crowd still need to catch a glimpse of Jesus. Faithful heralds claim to know nothing, to preach nothing but *the Christ*.<sup>4</sup> The only saving message is *the Christ*; the church acknowledges "no creed, but Christ." The believer's only confession of faith is, "I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, my Savior and my Lord."<sup>5</sup>

### The Man

The Gospel's purpose and demand is to make disciples—disciplined men and women. This must be understood before a valid profession of faith is in order. The universal human predicament is spiritual death. This is true both of the undisciplined sensualist, and the conscientious religionist. That accomplished by Jesus' death is called the *atonement*—a theological term for unity established between man and God through the sacrifice of Christ for redemption. The atonement includes total and continuous forgiveness necessary for a right relationship with God, and the continuing ministry of Christ as our mediator who has complete understand-

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<sup>3</sup>C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1964), pp. 17-24.

<sup>4</sup>Dodd, pp. 79-96.

<sup>5</sup>O. Jessie Lace (ed.), *Understanding the New Testament* (Cambridge: University Press, 1965), pp. 69-71.

ing of both the divine demand and the human predicament.<sup>6</sup>

The salvation experience brings spiritual and eternal life. Such a life is taught by the Word—God has an eternal moral code revealed in the entire canon. The spiritual life is modeled by the Lord Jesus—holiness for life is revealed in the real situation. Spiritual life is empowered by the Holy Spirit—supernaturally equipping for the life of practical holiness.

An exegesis of key passages is helpful to one's study of the Christ-disciplined person. Galatians 5:13-24 seems to be pre-baptismal instructions when this material is compared with primitive catechetical instructions found in the *Didiche of the Apostles* (a church manual for new believers dating to the first century).<sup>7</sup> Paul reminds believers of what he told them before they came to Christ: **THOSE WHO DO THESE THINGS SHALL NOT ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD**—cannot become part of the new age, the Kingdom of Light, the heavenly places—cannot enter into the fellowship of the church. The works of the flesh break down into four major categories.

The first is *unrestrained sensuality*—this includes: (1) Sexual immorality—in the general sense of using (rather than loving) another person sexually, (2) Impurity—unnatural use of sex as with bestiality and homosexuality, and (3) Debauchery—every vile and profit making use of sex, orgies, pornography, etc. The second category is *idolatry—witchcraft, sorcery, or holy magic from one's*

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<sup>6</sup>Reginald H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), pp. 243-249.

<sup>7</sup>Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), pp. 283-290.

*previous religious life.* This may include: (1) demonic powers to facilitate witchcraft and sorcery. (2) Even within the church, believers are warned about Satan coming as an angel of light with lying signs and wonders that are so impressive as to deceive even the elect of God if that were possible. (3) Signs and wonders were immediately to surround the Christ event as evidence the Kingdom of God had come—to extend an expectation for such signs beyond the immediate time confuses the issue as to *who is the Messiah* and *where is the Kingdom* to be found.

The third category is *unrestrained emotional expression*—this includes: (1) *hostile acts*—actions intended to hurt another, (2) *strife*—pattern of always being at odds with others, (3) *jealousy, envy*—prideful protection of one's self interests at the expense of others, (4) *outbursts of rage*—uncontrolled expressions of anger and abuse, (5) *quarrels, disputes, outbreaks of selfishness*—fighting with words, (6) *dissensions*—using one's energies to separate people, and (7) *factions*—using one's energies to create a personal following. Paul's last category of behavior which cannot be condoned in the church is *uncontrolled socializing*: (1) *outbreaks of envy*—social competitiveness, "keeping up with the Joneses," (2) *cases of drunkenness*—using drink as an escape or excuse for otherwise unrestrained behavior, (3) *excessive banquets*—using eating and drinking as escapes or excuses for unrestrained behavior, and (4) *things like these*—anything that is expressive of unrestrained living. The potential convert must understand these forms of behavior absolutely must be left behind if one is coming into the Kingdom.

For a man or woman to come into the Kingdom, one must understand that entrance is possible by divine power. **THOSE WHO BELONG TO CHRIST JESUS**

HAVE CRUCIFIED THE FLESH WITH ITS PASSIONS AND DESIRES—their uncontrolled, unrestrained desires. Christ is their Lord who redeemed them (Gal. 1:3, 19; 5:10; 6:14, 18)—He is sufficiently powerful to release them from uncontrolled living. They are baptized into Christ and put on Christ—His very

nature envelops them and puts a high demand for holiness upon them (Gal. 3:27). They are given the Spirit of Christ—the Holy Spirit's power is sufficient to equip the believer for living the Christ life (Gal. 4:6).

By divine grace and power **THOSE WHO LIVE BY THE SPIRIT AND WALK BY THE SPIRIT DO NOT GRATIFY THE DESIRES OF THE FLESH—THE SPIRIT HIMSELF BEARS FRUIT WITHIN THE BELIEVER'S DISPOSITION AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR.** *Spiritual power of the first order is given*—dispositions attributed only to God, Christ, and redeemed humankind: (1) *Love is given—agape*—unconditional benevolence, even of one's enemies; Jesus called it "being perfect like Father." (2) *Joy is given*—capacity for contentment even with suffering, sorrow and grief; not to be confused with elation or happiness. (3) *Peace is given*—sense of utter security in the face of any opposition without or within the believer. *Spiritual power for social behavior is given*—relational qualities attributed only to God, Christ, and redeemed humankind: (1) *Forbearance is given*—inexhaustible endurance. (2) *Kindness is given*—reaching benevolently to others without regard for their response. (3) *Goodness is given*—capacity for stable character without regard to the actions and reactions of others. *Spiritual power is given for internalized ethics and morality as contrasted with legal controls:* (1) *Faithfulness is given*—fidelity to a commitment, covenant relationship. (2) *Humility, meekness is given*—hav-

ing a healthy self-image and not having to exalt oneself at the expense of others. (3) *Self-control is given*—instructed mind, sensitive conscience, and awareness of divine power to cope. Life and walking “in the Spirit” is a promise.

Romans 1-3 gives another overview of pre-baptismal instruction. There are those GOD GIVES UP—THOSE WHO CANNOT ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD: One category is the *undisciplined sensualist* (1:18-32), who: (1) *refuses to honor God or be thankful*, (2) *claims wisdom to fashion his own gods*, (3) *practices impurity (dishonoring his body with unnatural passions, homosexuality)*, (4) *selfish motivation (wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice, and envy)*, and (5) *abusive behavior (murder, strife, deceit, malignity, gossip, slander, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless)*. Another category of those outside the kingdom include the *conscientious religionist*—(2:1-29) who is like the: (1) *Jews with the Law* and outward righteousness, even self-righteousness, but no internalized holiness; and (2) *Gentile godfearers* equally devout but lost in themselves rather than being lost in the Lord.

New life is possible by divine grace and power. THERE IS A RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH (APART FROM WORKS) FOR THOSE WHO HAVE ACCEPTED THE FREE GIFT OF REDEMPTION “IN CHRIST.” For such God passes over former sins (3:25), and offers pardon to any one who trusts in Jesus (3:26). THOSE RIGHTEOUS BY FAITH TOTALLY UPHOLD THE ETERNAL LAW OF GOD (3:31)—the standard of holiness is not lowered “in Christ” but is upheld and fulfilled.

Romans 6-8 gives another overview of pre-baptismal

instructions. Again Paul cites **THOSE WHO ARE HELPLESSLY LOST—WHO CANNOT ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD**. He again indicts the *undisciplined sensualist* (7:1-5) by describing him in terms of: (1) symbolic adultery (infidelity to commitment and covenants), (2) living in the flesh (unrestrained human behavior), (3) living with sinful passions (unrestrained response to every desire at any cost), and (4) bearing fruit unto death (lifestyle marked by destruction).

Here Paul amplifies the status of the *conscientious religionist* (7:7-25): (1) He respects God's commandments as designed for life but bringing death (2) He is out of Christ; even at his best, he is carnal, sold out to the sin principle (3) He is in confusion—he does not do what he wants, but does the very thing he hates (4) He can will what is right, but cannot do it (5) He wants to do right, but sin lies close at hand (6) He delights in God's law, but another force controls him (7) He is a wretched man needing deliverance.

Paul again reminds **THERE IS THEREFORE NOW NO CONDEMNATION FOR ONE WHO IS "IN CHRIST"** (Rom. ch. 6). (1) He is buried and raised to walk in newness of life (2) His old self is crucified; he is no longer enslaved to sin (3) He is freed from sin (4) He is dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ (5) He has been brought from death to life (6) Sin will have no dominion over him (7) While being set free from sin, he is enslaved to righteousness (8) Divine grace and the power to save are called the free gift of God—eternal life.

New life is possible by divine grace and power **FOR THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT SETS ONE FREE FROM THE LAW OF SIN AND DEATH** (Rom. ch. 8): (1) Walking by the Spirit, one can fulfill the demands of the Law (2) The Spirit brings life and peace (3) By the Spirit one becomes alive to righteousness (4) By the



Spirit one puts to death the deeds of the flesh (5) The Spirit gives confidence to make one know he is a child of God and gives the courage to cry "Abba Father" (6) The Spirit helps in all human weaknesses (7) In all things the believers are more than conquerors through Christ (8) Nothing is able to separate one from the love of God in Christ Jesus the Lord.

There is a clearly drawn behavioral line between the people of *darkness* and the people of light. For one "in Christ" the darkness of sin is extinguished, sin's chain is broken, and sin's enslavement has been "bought off" by the cross. The true believer "in Christ" receives both *forgiveness* and the *dynamic* Holy Spirit as his salvation birthright. "In Christ" the Lord supplies the spiritual dynamite to blow up the sin nature and fashion the believer into the holy nature of Jesus. What a message for the oppressed person trapped by the sin and moral hopelessness of a major urban center!

God's servant in the city must possess and display great **CULTURAL SENSITIVITY IN SHARING THE JESUS STORY**. Within the New Testament canon one sees the apostolic witnesses displaying every flexible culture adaptation. In the Jewish community the evangelists did many things to show their taking people seriously: (1) participated in Sabbath synagogue observances; (2) made reference to Hebrew prophetic literature; (3) made reference to the speaker's being a "fellow Jew;" (4) made reference to Israel's eschatological hope; (5) made reference to the speaker's being a Pharisee (very Orthodox Jew); (6) made reference to Israel's divine history; (7) showed respect for the rulers and other leaders among the people; (8) made reference to God as being God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and (9) made positive references to the Torah (Law of God); (10) participated in the Jewish

lifestyle (11) expressed empathy for Jewish resistance to Jesus as Messiah and Son of God; (12) made reference to Jesus' being from Nazareth in Israel; (13) made positive reference to the Talmud (traditions and laws of the fathers); (14) continued participation in Jewish temple rites; (15) continued participation for the Jerusalem religious pilgrimages; (16) showed respect for national monuments such as David's tomb; (17) made positive reference to God's covenant with Israel; and (18) made positive reference to the great Jewish teacher, Gamaliel (Acts 2:14-39; 3:11-26; 4:8-12; 5:29-32; 7:1-53; 9:20-22; 13:4-5; 13:12-48; 14:1-7; 16:11-15; 17:1-15; 18:1-17,24-26; 19:1-16; 22:1-23:11; 24:10-27; 26:1-32 and 28:17-21).

The first evangelists employed *CULTURAL SENSITIVITY IN SHARING THE JESUS STORY* in a mixed or Gentile community: (1) acknowledged God's being for all nations; (2) acknowledged God's being the Creator and Provider for all humanity; (3) encouraged acceptance of Gentile hospitality; (4) made positive reference to pagan literature; (5) respecting (not desecrating) pagan temples was the rule; (6) showed respect for the leaders of the people; (7) preached in the market place where the Gentiles gathered; (8) considered as right the attending of the town meeting to show respect to leaders; (9) considered as appropriate the acknowledgment of another's religious devotion; (10) showed respect for the religious shrine and altars of others; (11) showed keen spiritual sensitivity by respecting (not blaspheming) pagan gods (Acts 8:12-13; 3:40; 10 & 11; 14:8-20; 16:16-46; 17:16-34 and 19:17-41). Since culture is the heart's language, taking the culture of hearers seriously is vital<sup>8</sup> to taking people seriously

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<sup>8</sup>William Baird, *The Corinthian Church-A Biblical Approach to Urban Culture* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), pp. 29-60.

and receiving an honest hearing for the gospel.

Even **CHRISTIAN CONVERSION-INITIATION** sounds the call to a disciplined life in Christ: Christian water-baptism took the place of John's water-baptism. It parallels John's baptism as being a baptism of repentance (one's repentance is expressed in baptism) and looks forward to the reception of the Spirit (Acts 2:38). This is why the 120 and Apollos did not need to receive Christian water-baptism. Christian water-baptism is a vehicle for *expressing* faith (Acts 2:41, 8:12-13; 8:37; 16:14-15, 30-33; 18:8; 19:2-3). (Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? . . . Into what were you baptized?) Baptism was the necessary expression of faith without which they could not be said to have truly believed. Christian water-baptism is the occasion on which the initiate calls upon the Lord for mercy (Acts 2:21, 22:16). Christian water-baptism without repentance/faith is meaningless. Baptism *symbolizes* cleansing (1 Pet. 3:21), but it is the faith and repentance that receives forgiveness, baptism being a concrete means of expressing them. (The New Testament knows nothing of an unbaptized Christian.)<sup>9</sup>

Christian water-baptism claims the receiving of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17, 10:44-47). The Spirit is given to faith (Acts 11:17, 15:7-10). "God gave the same gift to them as He gave to us *when we believed* in the Lord Jesus Christ" (11:17). "And God *who knows the heart* bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit *just as He did to us*; and He made *no distinction between us and them*, but *cleansed their hearts by faith*" (15:8-9). The Spirit claims forgiveness (Acts 15:8-9). The two verses are synonymous. Verse 8: "God . . . bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as He

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<sup>9</sup>C. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962).

did to us." Verse 9: (God) "made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith."

God's bearing witness is equivalent to his making no distinction; the outpouring of the Spirit was both his testimony to Peter on behalf of Cornelius, and his dissolving the difference between Peter and Cornelius. By giving Cornelius the Spirit, God Himself accepted Cornelius, and thus removed the distinction between the pious God-fearer and the Christian Jews, showing that they, too, must accept him as one of themselves. Likewise, God's giving of the Holy Spirit is equivalent to his cleansing of their hearts; these two are one—two ways of describing the same experience. God cleansed their hearts by giving them the Spirit, and God gave the Spirit to cleanse their hearts.

The relationship of the elements of *CONVERSION-INITIATION* centers on Acts 2:38 as the only verse that directly relates to one another the three most important elements of conversion-initiation. The disciplined command *REPENT* is *imperative active*—it is what man himself *must do*. Repentance and faith are opposite sides of the same coin: (1) turn away from sin; (2) turn to God; (3) make a commitment to Christ. All three may be used *singly*, as in passages where they comprehend the whole act of faith (e.g. 9:35; 11:18; 16:31; 26:18); or they may be used in *pairs* in the restricted sense as defined above (e.g. 3:19; 26:20; 2:38 with 2:44; 20:21; 11:21; 26:18). The discipling command to *be baptized* is *imperative passive*—what must be done to the inquirer by the community. Baptism is also to be seen as the rite of entry into the Christian community and is the means by which the community receives the initiate into its fellowship. (Luke cannot conceive of a local Christian not in the company and the fellowship of the Christian community gathered there.) A promise is given the new

disciple—*YOU SHALL RECEIVE*. This is *future indicative active*—what God does for the inquirer. The community can play a role in the gift and reception of the Spirit (8:17; 19:6; Luke 8:45-48). The decisive gift of the Spirit which makes of a person a Christian comes neither before nor after conversion, but in conversion. Acts underlies the freedom of God to meet faith when and as He pleases and makes the point of showing us the early church adapted itself in accordance with God's manifest action through the Spirit. A valid use of baptism in the church implies a *Christ-disciplined, Holy Spirit-empowered* course of behavior. God's man and woman, in the urban center, must be both—*disciplined and empowered*.

Urban ministry cannot afford the luxury (or the sin) of sectarian divisiveness and traditional denominationalism. The church's task is to make potential disciples *CHRISTIANS ONLY* (" . . . that they may be one . . . " John 17:11). The *Centrality of the Holy Spirit* must be captured to implement authentic faith. The *definitive authority of the Bible* alone must be upheld for possession of authentic faith. The *Unity of believers* with authentic faith must be seen as the believer's spiritual birthright and responsibility. Denominational Christianity has failed the city. To make new men and women, equipped for the city, evangelists must share a new message—or is it the old message?

To create a favorable atmosphere for a response to the gospel, one must clearly define *SIN IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY*. A review of moral history is advantageous.<sup>10</sup> Hebrew *seers* preached the value of a

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<sup>10</sup>Karl Menninger, M.D., *Whatever Became of Sin?* (New York: Bantam Books, 1973).

moral code. The Dark Ages employed oppression as a way of dealing with moral violation. The Enlightenment turned to exploitation as a way of erasing the sin problem.

What is wrong? The unchecked depletion of resources is "stealing" from unborn generations. Ninety per cent (90%) of all consumable goods are consumed by less than ten per cent (10%) of earth's population—such *covetousness*! Unarmed protests are frequently met with brutality. The U. S. military raped a simple people in Vietnam. The work of Satan must be exposed: pollution, imposed poverty, oppression, alienation, business and political corruption.

An acknowledgment of sin has disappeared from contemporary culture. Violation of the Sixth Commandment is rationalized by "the justified war doctrine"—55% of all U. S. citizens favored bombing Vietnam. Theologically *sin* is transgression of God's law, divine will; it is moral failure. Augustine and Karl Menninger both see sin as "willful, defiant disregard or sacrifice of the welfare of others for the welfare or satisfaction of self." It is the refusal to respect and love others. Dr. Seward Hiltner defines theological sin as *rebellion, estrangement, isolation, and error* in performance.

A doctrine of sin implies guilt, answerability, and responsibility, but also confession, attrition, reparation, repentance, forgiveness, and atonement. Conscience cannot be one's highest law because *conscience* relates to moral conditioning and personal experience. Psychoanalysts look for aggression and self-destruction as evils to purge.

What happened to sin? The historic church converted sin into crime by a penitential system which established an artificial consequence and eroded internal morality.



This is in sharp contrast to the earliest church which practiced self-disclosure of sin, public announcement of penance, pleas of forgiveness, plans for restitution; and friendly fellowship rewarded the penitent with love and renewed togetherness. Church-imposed punishment changed sin to crime and released the individual from moral responsibility. This led to oppression by church, court, and parents. Because punishment is so expensive and excessive, sin/crime is being negated.

The historic shift of attitude toward masturbation reflects a cycle. The antisexual bias of Tertullian and Augustine viewed any non-reproductive sex as crime worthy of punishment. The attitude was clearly excessive, unreasonable, and unbiblical. In the example, masturbation was first negated as crime, then as sin. The cyclic change of attitude in one "unreasonable" area negated the reality of sex sin in any area.

Much of what one might designate the "new morality" grew from an effort to understand reasons, but not excuses, for misbehavior. *Hypnosis* (Mesmer, Braid, Liebault, and Berisheim) led to the discovery of psychoanalysis and the many dynamic unconscious factors of behavioral motivation. *Psychoanalysis* (Freud 1910) brought an increase of dynamic understanding about conflicts and patterns of "normalcy," but was interpreted so as to give license to sinful behavior. *Conditioned Reflex* (Pavlov 1900) awareness cited external conditioning for behavior and tended to negate individual responsibility and also the internal determinants of behavior. *Mood and behavior controlling drugs* brought a removal of pain, anxiety, boredom, and even remorse which strongly affected internal morality. The *Scientific Method and Research* helped society recognize parental/societal factors involved with juvenile delinquency, and the juvenile criminal respon-

sibility diminished.

First, sin was turned into crime; then in this century into symptom or sickness. Legal crime is determined by degrees of voluntarism—unless one is sane, he cannot have criminal intention and has not the capacity to profit from any prescribed punishment. The integrity of law is subverted by permission. What in reality is illness? A diagnosable set of symptoms is the most common answer. What is the function of symptoms—physical, emotional, mental, or behavioral? They are warning signs that something is wrong. They serve as self-administered punishment. They can be compensatory—making the best of a bad situation. *If sin were sin* rather than crime or illness, the treatment available would be pastoral, not just medical or legal.

Sin is collective irresponsibility. The group is an enemy force to individuals—group thought dominates. This social pattern leads to: (1) feelings of invulnerability, (2) rationalizations, (3) unquestioned belief in group morality, (4) stereotypes given to leaders of enemy groups, (5) social pressures on group dissenters; and worst of all (6) unanimity becomes an idol in the new cult of social consensus. Group guilt releases the individual—what is done for the *group* is not seen as sin. The sin of war is the grand prototype of all group sin. Contemporary slavery is rationalized away from the sin code whether by (1) Nazi annihilation, (2) migrant labor oppression, or (3) imperialism (whether Eastern or Western). Sins of corporations are winked at, but individuals involved feel little responsibility for (1) illegality, (2) monopoly, or (3) exploration evidence shown by Ralph Nader's exposures. Other collective sin is environmental—the wasteful destruction of resources taken from unborn generations. Other group sins center on the handgun scandal, racism, sexism, over-

population, and even the continuing saga of the American Indian situation.

Sin thrives, but the individual does not assume responsibility for it because it is the act of the “mysterious others”—government, big business, the church, group consensus, etc. The “mysterious others” cannot repent, make restitution, or enjoy redemption. Group-sin is very personal. Modern man must see as personal sin even his own refusal to fight the injustice and oppression of the group.

Medieval theologians designated *seven deadly sins*. All sin must be seen as deadly and its expression forms are more numerous than seven. *Pride* is always related to selfishness. *Sensuality* is the sin that violates another's personhood—lust, fornication, adultery, pornography. *Gluttony* is the sin of self-love turned to self-destruction—whether with foods, drinks, or drugs. *Anger, expressed in violence and aggression*, is the sin of ruthlessly injuring another's self-respect and status. *Sloth* is the sin of noninvolvement in productivity. *Envy, Greed, Avarice, and Affluence* are related sins that contribute to injury of others and/or self-destruction. *Waste* is the sin leading to an inequitable distribution of goods. *Cheating and Stealing* is the sin of enhancing one's status at the expense of others. *Lying* is the sin of self-protection at the expense of concealment. *Cruelty* is sin in any form that causes pain to children, adults, or animals. Child abuse has reached incredible proportions. Equally sinful is *psychological cruelty*—libeling others to the point of destroying meaningful identity. Yet there are other sins—*breaking faith* with promises, *betrayal*, and any *conspiracy to harm*. One may ask, “Sin—so what?”

The fact is that sin has enveloped contemporary society. No safe place is left for residence. Aggression is

used in such primitive ways but is capable of so much more destruction. What can one do? He can share awareness of the reality and deadliness of sin. A designation of aggressive behavior as sin implies further action—restitution and reparation. The pleasure of sin is its only motive. *Hedonism* is a cult that enslaves modern man. There can be real benefit in sin's awareness. While criminals can be punished, and neurotics can be treated, only sinners can be forgiven. The power of confession, repentance, restitution, and divine atonement might serve contemporary society very well. Indeed it would!

Evangelists and pastors must be seen as curers of souls—lightening burdens, interrupting and redirecting circular thinking, relieving pressure of guilt feelings and self-punishment, and solidly inspiring the individual to lead in social improvement. Other potential moral leaders can be believers in the roles of lawyers and judges, police persons, statesmen and politicians, and medical doctors.

To *CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE FOR RESPONSE* one must be able to define and demonstrate the power of divine “togetherness-atonement.”<sup>11</sup> In the earliest church many came to Christ because believers commanded the respect and “favor with all people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). Jesus took time for *individual persons* even when the crowds pressed him. From Him one discovers his own identity with the view of sharing his life with others. There are many natural points of contact between the social community and a particular spiritual community of believers. There are steps to take

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<sup>11</sup>James S. Woodroof, *The Aroma of Christ* (Dallas: Gospel Teachers Publications, Inc., 1981).

in a transforming relationship.<sup>12</sup> There are levels of deepening communication to be learned. The power of atonement ("Divine Togetherness") is seen from a look at a few days in the life of Jesus.

*Day One* (Mk. 1:14-34): He had a clear message—"the time is fulfilled, the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe the gospel." He invited four fishermen to join Him. Sharing in the synagogue many were astonished at His teaching. He removed an unclean spirit and His fame spread. He healed Peter's mother-in-law and the city gathered at this door for healing. All in just one day! He took time for *individual persons* even when the crowds pressed Him.

*Day Two* (1:35-45): Early in the morning Jesus was alone in a *lonely* place for prayer and spiritual renewal. He was not pressured by crowds (everyone was searching for Him), but He moved on to the next town. He healed an untouchable leper, telling the leper not to tell anyone. One can handle only so many lepers in one day.

*Day Three* (2:1-13): Many gathered and Jesus preached. He healed the paralytic. He went out by sea but still the crowd gathered and He taught them. All in just one day! He took time for *individual persons* even when the crowd pressed Him.

*Day Four* (2:14-17): He saw Matthew, the tax collector, and called him to discipleship. He spent the evening at dinner in Matthew's house with many tax collectors and sinners.

*Day Five* (3:1-12): Jesus went to the synagogue and healed a man with a withered hand. He then withdrew with his disciples to the sea. Crowds followed. He heal-

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<sup>12</sup>E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1965), pp. 133-137.

ed many. He asked his disciples to have a boat ready: He needed to get away.

*Day Six (3:13-20):* Jesus went to a mountain and called twelve friends. He appointed them *to be with Him* and later to be sent to preach with authority. He went home and crowds pressed him so He could not even eat.

*Day Seven (5:1-20):* Jesus went into the land of the Gerasenes. He met a man among the tombs with an unclean spirit—clearly an insane man. Jesus attacked the economy of the region by sending the swine into the sea. The people begged Jesus to leave. The man wanted to go with Jesus, but Jesus said to the demoniac, “Go home to your friends and tell how much the Lord has done for you.” The secret of Jesus’ success lay in the fact that He always had time for individual persons even when pressed by the crowds.

If one is to be successful in ministering to the city, individual persons must be taken seriously. Success with the masses depends upon success with individuals—broken men and women scattered along the avenues and alleys of the major urban center. It takes strong men and women to minister to the city in the name of Jesus. The purpose and demand upon believers is to make of them disciples—disciplined persons with a *radical commitment to a new lifestyle modeled by Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit*. The Christian initiation rite of immersion must be seen as symbolizing a radical (death to life) change—a total break with one’s sinful past and a solid commitment to unstained holiness, while the concern is to call disciples into a nonsectarian fellowship, a non-cultic community—commitment to a life of biblically defined patterns of holiness without compromise!

Urban evangelists must doubly concern themselves with a plan for *assimilating and retaining* new members



in the local church. The pressures of the world are so near, so attractive, and all-consuming. The urban fellowship must be a disciplined community and unapologetically exercise discipline with members. Part of a disciplined community must involve *frequent times of togetherness*. Once a week is not enough to shield new believers from the world. A daily fellowship must be restored for the urban church.

A new believer has a right to expect certain things from his brothers and sisters in the local fellowship: (1) *A shared life of fellowship* must be offered with some opportunity for daily contact. (2) *A shared message* must be offered in a purposeful, methodical study of the whole Bible. (3) *A shared concern* must be promised that will offer both instructive and corrective discipline when a believer violates the expectations inherent in one's "new life in Christ." The price of having no discipleship program for new believers is a mass of spiritual casualties strewn along the urban thoroughfares. Less than 50% of all Christian College and University graduates in New York City have active affiliation with a local church. And yet these have received benefit of some of the best "institutional discipling" our brotherhood has to offer.

### **The City**

Urban centers need the Good News. One is reminded of the Lord's message to Paul as he approached the metropolis of Corinth:

"Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent;  
for I am with you, and no man shall attack you to  
harm you; for I have many people in this city"  
(Acts 18:9-10).

This century began with only eleven cities in the whole world boasting more than one million in population, but today note the cumulative effect of this almanac-

like list of the top ten:<sup>13</sup>

|                |            |                 |            |
|----------------|------------|-----------------|------------|
| 1) N.York City | 17,000,000 | 6) Sao Paulo    | 10,000,000 |
| 2) Mexico City | 14,000,000 | 7) Los Angeles  | 10,000,000 |
| 3) Tokyo       | 12,000,000 | 8) Paris        | 10,000,000 |
| 4) Shangai     | 10,000,000 | 9) Peking       | 10,000,000 |
| 5) London      | 10,000,000 | 10) BuenosAires | 10,000,000 |

The latest atlases count sixty-one cities of more than 2,000,000 but no longer list those cities of a mere 1,000,000. The United Nations says that soon there will be on earth a total of 414,000,000 cities!<sup>14</sup>

The great English preacher, F. B. Meyer, is known to have said: "Christian missionaries should be strategists, expanding their strength where populations teem and rivers of world influence have their rise."<sup>15</sup>

After much has been said about cities statisically, socially and strategically, one is still left wondering how God views cities—what does He see? He sent two angels to Sodom and Gomorrah so He could learn personally about the people, looking among them for the ten righteous, so He could spare both cities in full. Mighty Ninevah was a world capital city that lasted 1500 years. Its outer ramparts stretched for sixty miles; its inner walls were a hundred feet high. Horse-drawn chariots, three abreast, could ride its battlements.<sup>16</sup> "Arise, Jonah, go to

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<sup>13</sup>*The World Almanac and Book of Facts*, 1981 Edition, ed. by Hana Urnlauf Lane (New York: Newspaper Enterprise Association, Inc., 1981), pp. 604-605.

<sup>14</sup>Roger S. Greenway, "Content and Context: The Whole Christ for the Whole City," *Guidelines for Urban Church Planting*, p. 88.

<sup>15</sup>Roger S. Greenway, *Guidelines for Urban Church Planting*, p. 477.

<sup>16</sup>Roger S. Greenway, *Apostles to the City* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1978), p. 19.

Ninevah, that great city and proclaim to it the message that I tell you . . . should not I pity . . . that great city . . . ” (Jonah 1:2; 3:2; 4:11). About Babylon, God said to His people in Jeremiah 29:7, “ . . . seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf.” The Hebrew word for “welfare” is “shalom” meaning peace and meaning wholeness, soundness. It also includes the idea of community, reconciliation and fellowship.<sup>17</sup>

The New Testament is a book largely about urban evangelism. Large foreign cities were the church’s first and some say main mission work. God hears the request voiced in Ernest T. Campbell’s “A City-Dweller’s Prayer”:

Our fathers stayed their minds on Thee  
in village, farm and plane;  
Help us, their crowded, harried kin,  
no less Thy peace to claim.  
Give us to know that Thou dost love  
each soul that Thou has made,  
That size does not diminish grace,  
nor concrete hide Thy grace.<sup>18</sup>

How does one define a city? There are several inadequate definitive factors: relative size, population density, relation to the surrounding territories, and the occupational roles of inhabitants. The criteria for defining all urban centers are these: there is *extensive and dense population*. The inhabitants are *full-time specialist craftsmen, transport workers, merchants, officials, and religious leaders*. Financing is from *tithes or taxes* from

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<sup>17</sup>Roger S. Greenway, *Apostles to the City* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1978), pp. 34-38.

<sup>18</sup>Roger S. Greenway, *Guidelines for Urban Church Planting* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1976), p. 105.

major producers. Cities are marked by *monumental public buildings*. Cities may be ruled by the religious, military or political officials. There are *centers of writing and other formal communication*. Specialist craftsmen find *security based on residence* rather than kinship.<sup>19</sup> Horace Miner calls the city, "the center of dominance,"<sup>20</sup> and Aidan Southall reminds that "density of role relationships is the index of urbanization."<sup>21</sup>

As one looks for the origin of the earliest cities, he finds dates 5,000 to 6,000 years ago. The sizes of the first Sumerian cities were 7,000 to 12,000; Ur was probably 25,000 in Abraham's day. Residents were full or part-time farmers.<sup>22</sup>

The earliest cities were farming villages that grew up. Prerequisites for urban centers have not changed with time; those necessities were and are *fertile land, water, and agriculture*. Development of agriculture allowed for a potential concentration of population. Every city needs a *favorable ecological base, relatively advanced agriculture or non-agriculture technology*. All need *complex social organization* and a *well-developed power structure*.<sup>23</sup>

Post-industrial cities possessed a technological base. They were the producer cities, post-western expansion cities, world-wide managerial and modern administration

<sup>19</sup>V. Gordon Child, "The Urban Revolution," *The Town Planning Review*, 21: 3-17, 1950.

<sup>20</sup>Horace Miner, *The City and Modernization* (New York: Praeger, 1967), pp. 5-10.

<sup>21</sup>Aidan Southall, *Urban Anthropology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

<sup>22</sup>Richard Basham, *Urban Anthropology-The Cross-Cultural Study of Complex Societies* (Palo Alto, Ca.: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1978), pp. 38-40.

<sup>23</sup>Gideon Sjoberg, *The Preindustrial City* (New York: Free Press, 1960), p. 27.

cities.<sup>24</sup> American industrial cities possess many pre-industrial features: (1) Behavior differs significantly between the lower class and the elite. (2) Upper status groups occupy positions of power. (3) Formal education tends to perpetuate, rather than change, social order. (4) There is a sexual division of labor.<sup>25</sup>

The development of cities is often a *natural outgrowth of the traditions of which they are a part*. Non-civilized folk society may be transformed into two components: *urban center* and *peasant hinterland*. Cities elaborate on pre-existing "little traditions," codifying them into a more sophisticated "great tradition." Cities become the social point of the nation's religious, legal, aesthetic and moral life. Countrysides become pale, vulgar imitations of their urban context. Migration always means leaving folk traditions to enter more complex versions of the native culture. Cities may seem strange but no alien.<sup>26</sup>

*A secondary form of urbanization grows out of grafting onto a civilized or pre-civilized folk society and urban tradition, as the result of foreign influence.* Unity between city and countryside does not rest on commonality of tradition but upon politics. Economic concerns overwhelm all others. The force of concentrated power and wealth, in the hands of members of another culture, tends to undermine the value of pre-existing traditions and the status of those who cling to them. All of this provides a new scientific and bureaucratic world-view that non-Westerners have found difficult to internalize. Members of the old elite have been displayed by those not so committed to the past. Frequently old traditions can co-exist

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<sup>24</sup>Basham, p. 47.

<sup>25</sup>Aidan Southall (ed.), *Urban Anthropology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 48.

<sup>26</sup>Basham, pp. 62-63.

with the new technologies. Examples of secondary-urbanization cities would be cities built by the Romans, European colonial centers and other conquered societies, like the Japanese after World War II. American materialism has become the philosophy of the new Japan; technology is their new god.<sup>26</sup>

Immigration gives rich opportunities for missionaries to relate to the felt needs of people and share the gospel. The *push factors* for urban migration are most significant; George Foster, who studied urbanism in Mexico, pointed out that rural peasants view their world as only "limited good." All desired things *existed in limited quantity*—land, wealth, health, friendship, love, manliness, honor, respect, status, power, influence, security and safety. They saw themselves in a rural setting where the system was closed and where one could improve his condition only at the expense of others. The tensions of rural, peasant, small town society "pushed" them to see the city as the place of "unlimited good."<sup>27</sup>

In addition to *push factors* in migration, there was certainly the *pull factor*—the sheer *attractiveness of the city*. Migration is motivated by the illusion that cities provide the path to and potential for prosperity. Moving to the major cities is related to the desire to enhance one's status back home. Those remaining behind expect (and demand) continual remittances from their urban kin. Those who leave the villages for the city tend to become alienated in time from their past so the village people are distrustful and jealous of those who *follow the Europeans*.<sup>28</sup>

Receptivity for the gospel is found in the migration patterns as the people of God relate to the felt needs of the

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<sup>26</sup>Basham, pp. 63.

<sup>27</sup>Basham, pp. 63-72.

<sup>28</sup>Basham, pp. 73-77.



people. Complex factors contribute to the migratory processes. There are several patterns of migration: (1) *Sedentary* (primarily restricted to the home territory with occasional visits to ritual and ceremonial centers); (2) *Circulatory* (takes one to the urban center for extended periods, but he currently resides in the home community); (3) *Oscillatory* (resembles the circulatory pattern, but the migrant eventually leaves his native community to live in the city permanently)' (4) *Linear* (true rural to urban migration where one leaves the rural setting to live in the city for good).

What drives people to the city? Juan Elizaga's study of Santiago, Chile, cites that 60% go to the city for work and 10% go for extended education. *Lower classes are pushed* to migrate; *more educated people are pulled* to migrate. The most frequent ages for migration are the late teens to early thirties. Chinese religion, traditions and even law habitually discourage emigration—this relates to the traditional loyalties to one's family and ancestral land. In earlier times only marginal members of Chinese society emigrated. All of this changed with the cultural revolution, and now substantial Chinese persons are pouring into the world's cities outside of China.<sup>29</sup>

Likely the question arises, "What benefits are there in *Urban Studies* for evangelism planners?" *Urban anthropology* can be studied to learn how to best communicate the gospel across cultures without a loss of meaning. Among the tools of such studies would be these: linguistics, communication, cultural differences, cultural structure, social structure, religion, patterns of cultural change, and recent developments within the

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<sup>29</sup>Basham, pp. 79-82.

complex urban society.<sup>30</sup>

Cultural anthropology (urban anthropology is a new division) has long been employed by missionaries. From this field of study, one learns of *Jesuit syncretism* (cultural accomodation) and other missionary modes. An effective urban witness needs to know the *basis of communication* (the relevance of symbols for sharing the Good News).<sup>31</sup> He needs to appreciate the *basis for cultural relevance* (concern for the total impact of a new message on hearers). But most important is learning of the *stimulus to radical decisions* (how the people are motivated to change in a given culture).<sup>32</sup>

Missionaries would be well served by doing careful cultural research. They might study the *basis for cultural shifts* and the *areas of tension* resulting from cultural change. Missionaries must be sensitive to interpret the demands and problems entailed in drastic cultural change so as to be sensitive to those in the process of gospel acculturation.<sup>33</sup>

Problems of involvement in a new culture (and this is the case for many Christians choosing to work in cities whether domestic or foreign) bring *cultural shock and fatigue*. There are many images to be overcome for the "ugly American" or "southerner or westerner" (going into even a major northern U.S. city).<sup>34</sup>

Any kind of social anthropology helps with cultural

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<sup>30</sup>William A. Smalley (ed.), *Readings in Missionary Anthropology* (S. Padadena, Ca.: William Carey Library, 1978), pp. XV-XXV.

<sup>31</sup>Smalley, pp. 837-843.

<sup>32</sup>Smalley, pp. 842-843.

<sup>33</sup>Smalley, pp. 844-876.

<sup>34</sup>Smalley, pp. 903-912.

equilibrium and acculturation for the missionary family. All are concerned about how to give protection and help without their being viewed as charity. All are concerned too as to how to create and lead an indigenous movement in the Lord.<sup>35</sup>

Every urban missionary needs a sound biblical theology for his urban missions effort. Believers must face the truth—*the city is not all bad!* John Stott, who has done rich research on Urban Missions, insists, “People in less deeply populated areas suffer *more* from paranoia, psychosis and neurosis than people in cities.” This is good news for the two thirds of all Americans who live in great urban centers within a 300-mile radius of New York City.<sup>36</sup>

Believers possess *two* attitudes toward their “urban neighbors.” On one hand, there is a tendency to *escape*, almost with rejection and irresponsibility. The only faithful alternative is that of *engagement with compassion*; the Lord wants his people to be involved in the world to which Christ came and for which he died. Believers cannot compartmentalize evangelism, compassion and actions.

There are five great doctrines in *systematic theology* which need to be related to the city. The first is the *Doctrine of God*; believers need a bigger God to confront the city. Jews emphasized the God of covenant; they made of Him a tribal deity. The Bible begins with the world, the creation of Adam (humankind); God is the Creator of the universe and Lord of all nations. Believers need to recall God’s promise to bless all

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<sup>35</sup>Ellis Long, *Megalopolis* (Unpublished speech, 1981).

<sup>36</sup>John Stott, *A Theology of Urban Mission* (Unpublished speech, New York University, 1977).

nations through the seed of Abraham. Amos confirmed that God is concerned with social justice in all nations; his people must have the same concerns.

The second great element of theology is the *Doctrine of Man*; this is also too small in many minds. Believers must have a sense of man's importance. Christians have the only solid basis of social service, because of what man is by divine creation, unique as being made in God's own image. Because man is physical, spiritual and emotional, he must be served in all these ways. The Gospel humanizes as nothing else can. The gift of new life in Christ confirms that people matter. Christian mission is to make human beings more human (in the empathetic sense). Christian love is meaningful only as it gives dignity; as it looks beyond the grotesque to the essential person.

Sometimes one's understanding of the *Doctrine of Christ* is also too small. Imagine, the cosmic Christ, Lord of the universe, at the supreme place of honor, became Bethlehem's babe. The King of Kings entered the world as Servant of Servants. He became vulnerable as a child, subjected himself to temptation, preached and demonstrated the gospel and then allowed himself to be killed. Jesus was plunged from the unimaginable glories of heaven to the unimaginable horrors of hell—all for a complete identification with humanity's fallen race. Believers in the city must model mission and ministry after the mission and ministry of Christ—the costly identification with the world without the loss of godly identity.

Urban missionaries must possess a solid *Doctrine of Salvation*. One cannot really separate personal salvation and the Kingdom of God. Jesus, as Savior, must be revered as Lord. Faith, love and works all go together. Salvation is by faith, but it produces good

works through love. "By faith serve one another" (Galatians 5:6, 13). Even with all knowledge, faith and every other capacity for ministry, one is worthless without love.

The *Doctrine of the Church* must be enlarged for the city. The church is really to be the new community, the new humanity. Jesus didn't die and rise again for one personally, but to purify *a people* for Himself—to naturalize folks into a new citizenship. The church exists for the benefit of unbelievers—it exists for God and for others. The church is not to be insulated from the world, but to be immersed in the world. Jesus' images for the church are *salt* and *light*—earth's two most available commodities. The world is like rotten meat; *salt* is rubbed in to retard the rot. The world is a dark place; *light* exposes the loneliness and tragedy. The church is to retard the putrification and light up the darkness. The church's response is too often to be horrified. Whose fault is the rot and the darkness? Don't blame the meat or the night—where is the salt and where is the light? There are many practical considerations for urban missions. Most workers in the Lord's vineyard know little about either urbanism or mission. Many believers flee the city as a *dying community*. The city daily reminds one that the *whole creation* is groaning in pain and dying (Romans 8:18-25). The Lord's providence and the fellowship of faith inevitably join to raise believers from the poverty level of sheer existence (Acts 4:32-35). "Moving up" too often means "moving out" from the pains of the city. It is always more appealing to identify with the brother of substantial means than with the brother of low estate (James 2:1-17).

Urban mission efforts are defeated at once if one fails to see that the city is not one community but many; *racial lines* mark off the city's unique communities, but

more important are *socio-economic lines* and *ethnic lines*. The inner-city ghetto is as far removed from the solid middle-class sections of the city as is the city from the countryside.

Too often urban missions are *dominated by a suburban mentality—paternal and condescending*. Such ministries become service-oriented to the point of imbalance and create a dependance which threatens a sense of real “community in the Lord.” Most settle for the easier task of being a “brother’s keeper” rather than the more noble task of being a “brother’s brother;” this means accepting him exactly where and how he is. Suburban-based urban churches exercise leadership characterized by manipulation and controls, rather than full acceptance and sharing. Authentic urban churches fail to form.<sup>37</sup>

*Urbanism is the word used to describe life at the heart of the city. Such is inevitable because the powers that rule the masses are centered in cities. The city is the heart of society, even if it is a diseased heart. The challenge of urbanism is that of fashioning some sense of community out of cultural confusion and contradiction.* Cosmopolitan is the term that describes the ethnic and cultural *diversity* of the city. Headline problems of the city fall under such banners as *racism, sexism, imposed poverty, and crime*. Urbanism imposes life patterns that are both demoralizing and dehumanizing. Alvin Toffler’s prophetic work, *Future Shock*,<sup>38</sup> *pinpoints the elements of death in contemporary society which are more evident and more pronounced in the*

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<sup>37</sup>William Webber, *Urban Ministry* (Unpublished Lecture Notes, New York Theological Seminary, 1975).

<sup>38</sup>Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York: Bantam Books, 1970).



city: (1) rootlessness; (2) artificial privacy in the form of anonymity; (3) sacrifice of personal identity for the group; (4) sense of impotence against "Big Brother" government; (5) lack of mobility trapping people in their life situation; (6) education geared to promotion rather than excellence; (7) social and moral apathy; (8) subjective morality; (9) deterioration of stable marriage; (10) breakdown of purposeful parenting; and (11) the viewing of religion as a dusty antique from past generations—possessing some intrinsic beauty but no utilitarian value.

Urbanism makes more sense, even if it is a demonic sense, when seen from the Lord's vantage point. The emerging events of history have shaped God's agenda of concerns and providential activity (Acts 17:24-28). The Lord, through Paul, identifies the trilogy of support for all urbanism—three elements essential for supporting the city's dehumanizing effect. Paul points them out as sexism, child abuse and slavery. Where these are found, in any form or disguise, Paul insists believers are in mortal battle, "wrestling not against flesh and blood but against principalities, powers and the rulers of darkness of this world—against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 5:21-6:20). While the city may be the location of "Satan's throne," the Lord calls his people to take both the challenge and welfare of the city seriously. Those in Israel who encouraged a premature exodus from Babylon were labeled as false prophets, appealing to the selfishness of people above the purpose of God.

Mission may be described as "confronting the whole of humanity with the whole of the gospel through the body of Christ." The grand purpose of mission is to announce and implement God's great mystery, hidden from earliest times, and revealed in Christ, to bring all

kinds of people together in Christ as a viable community of faith under the sovereignty of the Almighty (Ephesians 2:11-22). Paul, the greatest missionary of all time, centered his efforts into urban ministry—concentrating on provincial centers, but always pressing on to Rome (Romans 1:8-15). Urban evangelism is unique from all other tasks. Urban ministry means calling people to make an initial commitment to Jesus Christ, not simply a proselytizing of sectarian believers from one party platform to another. Urban evangelism involves the exciting challenge of defining the purpose of the church for those not yet burnt-out on institutionalism. The route of the gospel must always be *from Jerusalem* (the center of faith) *to Rome* (the center of the world).

The essential dynamics of mission are threefold: *koinonia*, *diakonia* and *kerygma*. Mission's *koinonia* is the fellowship of faith—the vibrant community of all coming to the Father by way of the Son (1 Corinthians 1:9). The church must be seen as God's covenant people, disciplined of the Lord (Romans 10:9-13). The church exists for mission—those who take witness and service seriously (Matthew 5:14-16). The church must take the doctrine of the *laity*—those who take the mutual ministry and common priesthood of all believers seriously (1 Corinthians 12). *Mission* calls for the church as seeking renewal and revitalization only *through the power of the Spirit*—not through human plans, procedures, gimmicks and games. The church, as God's *salt* and *light*, stands actively for the purposes of God: brotherhood; the nonviolent lifestyle; and loving as neighbors. For the church to be authentic it must create a fellowship that is human—knowing all the trials and pains embodied in flesh and blood. The church must be a "pilgrim" people, bound together under God but free from structures that might hinder their moving

in His will.

Urban evangelism's *diakonia* is *perpetuating the compassionate life of service* of Him of whom it is said, "He went about doing good." People first met Jesus in the ministry of compassion; they invited His ministry of witness. The church must encourage a broad base of creative compassion (James 1:27-2:17). *Diakonia* is the "doing theology" or demonstrative faith. A servant church is able to establish a solidarity with neighbors—in all their fears and loneliness (Luke 10:25-37).

Urban evangelism's *kerygma* is the *ministry of witness—the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ*. Such calls people to make an initial commitment to the Lord Jesus and defines a biblical, yet practical, purpose for the church for those who have not had "church" as part of their emotional or cultural furniture.

Urban centers need the "colony of heaven." Urban life breaks down the basic building block of human society. The substitution of secondary for primary contacts leaves a wide-open door for the church. The city sees a weakening of kinship bonds; there is a declining social significance of family. The conjugal family is emancipated from larger kinship group characteristics of the country. Individuals pursue divergent interests in vocation, education, religion, recreation and politics. Worldwide, families are moving closer to a conjugal system.

Urbanism does have some *positive* effects on family life and values. Nuclear families are common and seen as ideal; this upholds the importance of the marriage union. It can be demonstrated that neither urbanization nor industrialization has to isolate nuclear families from their extended kin. Marriages of love are viewed as a by-product of industrialization/urbanization.

Urbanism has a decided effect upon *individuals*. Urban adaptation is not easy for male emigrants, and most never realize the urban dream—prosperity. The emigrants are removed from rural lineage and moral support. Too many are inflexible and cannot adjust to the altered environments. Frequently, it is the maladaptive personality that is pressed to emigrate, and that person becomes more unfit in the city. Dreams are thwarted by a scarcity of even lowest employment. Urbanism creates for some a pathology: racism, ethnic conflict; squatter settlements; alcoholism; crime; begging; and a culture of poverty.<sup>39</sup> Poverty patterns are pronounced in the city; there is a pan-generational quality of poverty. This is marked by no future planning, no steady employment, low wages, absence of property, savings and food supplies; such persons are forced to buy at economical loss and to borrow with makeshift financing.<sup>40</sup>

*Middle-class values are alien* to those trapped in the poverty culture, and law enforcement is designed to protect only the alien (middle-class) culture. Recognition is weak of any organization beyond the residential family. Marriages are substituted with consensual unions, and no legal protection is afforded, and divorce is unnecessary. Male domination gives way to *female dominated families*. *Sexual activity* begins early. The common emotions of poverty are *fatalism, helplessness, inferiority* and a *tendency to exhibit*. It is appropriate for the people of God to renounce the “middle-class lie”; the lie insists upon there being a *widespread abuse* of public assistance by *unworthies and unneedies*. Even

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<sup>39</sup>Basham, pp. 147-169.

<sup>40</sup>Basham, pp. 165-166.

a study during the present administration shows that real abuse of public assistance is at a 3% level; if industrial theft could be brought to that figure, major industry would feel very successful. A Bombay study is almost identical to an American study: 47% of all recipients of public assistance are able-bodied though *illiterate and unskilled*, 18% are *aged beyond employment*, 12% are *chronically ill*, 10% are *blind and crippled*, and 13% are *mentally disabled*.<sup>41</sup>

There are *definable disease patterns* related to urban living. Likely these are products of urban stress where higher blood pressure readings are the rule. Many are also diet-related illnesses of the poor urbanite related to excessive and refined carbohydrates: obesity; diabetes (the average onset is 20 years after urban living); coronary thrombosis; gout; appendicitis; gall-bladder disease; peptic ulcers; infections of the urinary tract; and dental disease. These are statistically disproportionate in the urban center, as contrasted with the rural or suburban setting.<sup>42</sup>

The effects of urbanization on *mental health* are unclear. Studies indicate no relationship between relative urbanization and levels of suicide. High levels of psychiatric consultation cannot be denied;<sup>43</sup> a midtown Manhattan study showed 23.4% (impairment rate), 18.5% (well rate), and 58.1% (mild moderate rate). Almost identical rates are to be seen in a study of the rural setting of Sterling County, Nova Scotia. Cities

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<sup>41</sup>Marshall B. Clinard and B. Chatterjee, *India's Urban Future* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), pp. 72-73.

<sup>42</sup>G. D. Campbell, *Forms on Centers* (Durban, So. Africa. Institute for Social Research, 1970), p. 315.

<sup>43</sup>Leo Srole, *Mental Health in the Metropolis* (New York: Harper Torch Books, 1962), p. 213.

provide a sense of anomie for some and for others stimulation and freedom to develop talents inhibited by a less cosmopolitan setting. Cities are at once centers of social problems and the chief centers of positive innovation. San Francisco has the highest rates of alcoholism, drug addiction, street crime, divorce and suicide in the United States—yet it is regarded by many as a point of cultural renaissance for America's most creative thinkers. Tilantogo Indians migrating to Mexico City drink less and agree life is better in the capital. Migrants in Lima, Peru, feel subjectively better off than in the rural settings.<sup>44</sup>

Much of urban life must be seen in the context of *political oppression* from which the poor have no recourse. Newly arriving urban dwellers are intimidated by the political power structure and exploitation. Believers, in relating to the urbanite, *need to find a healthy tension between Romans chapter 13 and Revelation chapter 13*. Middleclass citizens tend to bear heavily upon the thought of government being the *servant of the Lord*; sometimes government becomes a *servant of Satan* and is to be seen as a demonic force. Likely Paul and John were writing to different periods of the Empire's life—different situations were created by the State. Wealthy criminal elements can afford protection against exposure while they oppress the powerless segments of society: tenants of privately owned apartments; non-union workers; illegal aliens; health care agencies; and aged tenants. Popular solutions to political oppression are these: public housing projects; rent controls; union memberships; cooperative apartments; registration of agencies. The most powerful

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<sup>44</sup>Douglas S. Butterworth, "A Study in Urbanization," *America Indigens* (Vol. 22, pp. 257-274).



force to support the poor is exposure by the media (newspaper, radio, and television)—*the most powerful recourse for oppressed members of society* in a democracy. This combines the forces of public exposure and popular indignation. Public picketing and demonstrations are designed to capture the attention and sympathy of the media and in turn outrage the community at large. The tragedy of modern times is that the *real prophets*, calling for justice, are on thirteen channels rather than in the pulpits of the churches within the city.<sup>45</sup>

*Adult crime* in western-inspired cities shows a unique pattern. Organized crime has gained *illegal control of certain industries*: trash collection (in New Jersey); gambling; drug traffic; prostitution; and pornography. *The affluent exploit the poor* with exorbitant rent for inadequate housing. Prices are excessively marked on necessary commodities in poorer sections of the city, and loan sharks thrive with excessive interest. *Respectable crime* involves embezzlement of funds and goods from major industry by employees, and tax evasion. *Violent crimes* express the rage of the oppressed; such are largely related to juvenile delinquency and young adult behavior.<sup>46</sup>

Sometimes major cities have an exaggerated image of violence. New York City is number 18 in per capita crime in the United States. Albuquerque, Houston, San Antonio and Denver are among the top in per capita crime. Why the savage popular image of New York City? Population concentration focuses on *numbers*, *forgetting per capita significance*. New York is also the center of all parts of the national media; what happens

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<sup>45</sup>Basham, pp. 155-157.

<sup>46</sup>Basham, pp. 151-153.

in the "Big Apple" becomes national knowledge. Lest evangelists excessively fear the major cities, it is important to note some facts. Other factors can lessen fears of violence in New York City. Many published stories of violent crime are among members of organized crime, not against the population at large. More than 70% of New York City homicides are among family members, not against the population at large. More than 70% of New York City's rapes are among family members and close acquaintances, not against the population at large.

The Bureau of Social Affairs of the United Nations correlates *juvenile delinquency* with rapid urbanization. In a large majority of cases there is a direct lack of adult control. The pattern of partial family migration contributes to the instability of homes. Recent migrant children are more likely to fall into crime patterns. Juvenile crime goes down proportionately as socio-economic conditions for families move up. Stability of the home is still the most significant factor for curbing juvenile crime. Low income, permanently settled urban families have less juvenile crime than does the average population at large.<sup>47</sup> The church has a significant ministry to building good families.

*Corrupted sexuality* is a pattern of the city. *Prostitution* has always been largely an urban phenomenon for several reasons: lack of kinship and moral controls; limited job market for unskilled females; a disproportionate male/female ratio and because it can be lucrative. Most prostitutes are single mothers supporting families. What do prostitutes *like* about their work: 71% (nothing), 21.5% (money), 12.3% (shelter and security), 3.8% (other prostitutes), and 1.5% (oppor-

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<sup>47</sup>Basham, pp. 151-153.

tunity to meet a man). What do prostitutes *dislike* about their work: 63.1% (everything), and 24.6% (sexual intimacies and abuses). The people of God have so much more to offer in the field of human sexuality than the world does.<sup>48</sup>

*Sexual deviation* in the form of *homosexuality* is more open in the city. The Kinsey studies of 1948 show that 4% of American males were admittedly homosexual (latent to overt); 37% have participated in a homosexual act at least once (adolescence to adulthood), and 50% admit to have responded, at some time, to homosexual motivation. While the *genetic* theory for homosexuality has little support, the *psychogenic* (environmental/developmental) factors related to disrupted urban families is unquestioned. Weak fathers and domineering mothers confuse role learning. Arrested maturation results. The Lord's message to parent-child relations could spare such pain.<sup>49</sup>

*Social stratification* is an urban reality. Inequality is the basic, inescapable, universal aspect of the human condition. In modern United States cities, the lines are no longer cases of *tribalism and ethnicity, caste and class*, or even *race and roots*. Lines are drawn in the contemporary city along the bases of *socio-economic-educational homogeneity*. This kind of "casting" is a product of the complex industrial systems and cosmopolitan urbanism. Only the gospel of Jesus Christ envisions fashioning a community out of all kinds of

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<sup>48</sup>Samir Khalaf, *Prostitution in a Changing Society* (Beirut: Khayats, 1965), pp. 87-88.

<sup>49</sup>Nathaniel N. Wagner and Eng-Siong Ton, *Adolescent Problems and Treatment* (Kuah Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1971).

cultural confusion and contradiction. In fact, this is the “great mystery” revealed in Christ—breaking down the “wall” between Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarism, freeman and slave, male and female.<sup>50</sup>

The city cries for that which is dear to the saints of God—for *taking people seriously!* The Lord calls His people to the city—His greatest concerns lie where his creatures are concentrated. He still pleads with the faithful,

Seek the welfare of the city;  
In its welfare you will find your own.

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<sup>50</sup>Basham, pp. 205-279.



