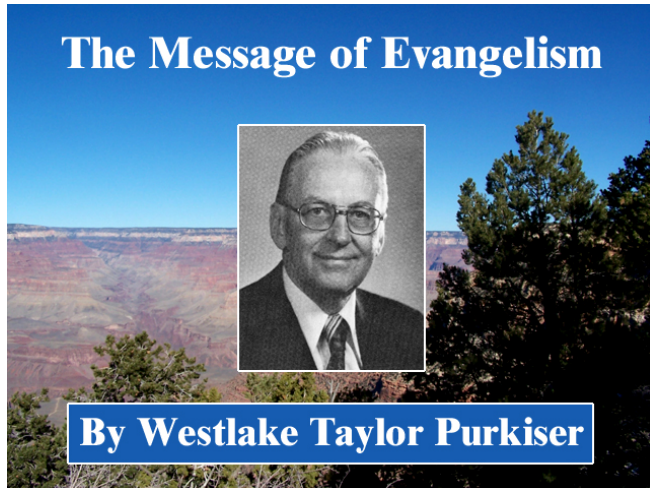


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**THE MESSAGE OF EVANGELISM**  
**The Saving Power of God**

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Rom. 1:16).

W. T. Purkiser

Beacon Hill Press Kansas City, Mo.

Second Printing, 1963

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Library Of Congress Card No. 63-14516

Printed In The United States Of America

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## **INTRODUCTION TO THIS FILE**

I have taken the liberty to create a new Table of Contents (seen above) which lists everything in this file. Also, I have changed the title "Introduction" as in the printed book to "Book Introduction" for this file. Finally, I have omitted the "Index of Names and Subjects" which was at the end of the printed book. Users of this digital edition can easily discover anyone or anything that is, or isn't, mentioned in the entire file by using the "Find" or "Search" function in their text program. -- Duane V. Maxey, Holiness Data Ministry, Surprise, Arizona, February 10, 2009.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **DEDICATION**

To Billie who has personally lived and faithfully witnessed to the gospel her husband has attempted to preach

\* \* \* \* \*

## **PREFACE**

This is a book about evangelism . . . not its mode, or its methods, or its men, but its message. The "how" and "why" of evangelism are vitally important. But so is the "what."

There is a strange and symbolic story in the Old Testament about a young man who aspired to be a messenger. "Let me run," he begged Joab, "and bear the king tidings." But Joab sent another with the message. "Let me run," Ahimaaz again begged.

"Why will you run," asked Joab, "when you have no tidings ready?" "Let me run," the younger man still sought. "Run," said Joab. And run he did, so fast indeed that he overtook and passed the other herald. But when he came to David, through either ignorance or reluctance, he could not tell what the king must hear. He ran and ran well; but he ran without a message.

These chapters were first delivered as the Williams Lectures on Evangelism at Pasadena College in the spring of 1962. They were given to the entire student body -- hence the repeated emphasis that "evangelism is everybody's business."

The Williams Lectures on Evangelism are presented in memory of Dr. R. T. Williams, who served the Church of the Nazarene as general superintendent from 1916 until his death in 1946. With the exception of Dr. P. F. Bresee, it is quite probable that no single man has played a larger role in the formation of the denomination than Dr. Williams.

Yet Roy T. Williams will always be remembered as a great evangelist and an impassioned preacher of the everlasting gospel. It is most fitting that lecture series on evangelism should be named for him.

Soon after the death of Dr. Williams in March of 1946, his widow, Eunice Harvey Williams, and their two sons, Reginald S. Williams and Dr. R. T. Williams, Jr., sponsored the ROY T. WILLIAMS MEMORIAL LECTURES ON EVANGELISM in all of the colleges of the Church of the Nazarene and the Nazarene Theological Seminary. It was an honor to the writer to be permitted to tell again under these auspices the old, old story in which the saving power of God is made real to people of the twentieth century as it was to those of the first.

A wider audience is now offered these chapters in the hope that they will make a small contribution to our understanding and grasp of the message with which we are to run. Perhaps indirectly these pages may even add to the zeal and speed with which we run, since he who knows whereof he speaks is more apt to run well and speak clearly "the wonderful works of God."

Authors of many different sorts of theological persuasion have been quoted when it has seemed to this present writer that they had something to say relevant to the point under discussion. However the inclusion of an author's name or the reference to any book other than the Holy Bible is not in any sense a blanket endorsement of that author's total thought or a recommendation of the book in question. Honesty demands what we are happy to give, recognition for borrowed ideas and words insofar as this is possible.

In view of the scope of the message and the countless volumes which have been written about it, no one is more aware than the writer of these lines of the inadequacy of the treatment. The author's labor will be rewarded if some readers, lay or ministerial, gain new insights into "the everlasting gospel."

A personal word of appreciation is certainly due to President Oscar J. Finch and the faculty and staff of Pasadena College, as well as to an alert and responsive student body, for the multiplied courtesies of the week.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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Broadman Press: Wayne Dehoney, *Challenges to the Cross*.

Cambridge University Press: J. S. Whale, *Christian Doctrine*.

William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.: J. R. Stott, *What Christ Thinks of the Church*; Harold Ockenga, *Power Through Pentecost*.

Epworth Press: Vincent Taylor, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*.

Fleming H. Revell Company: E. J. Young, *Study of the Old Testament Today*; Paul Rees, *The Adequate Man*; James W. Clarke, *Dynamic Preaching*.

Harper & Row: Gene Bartlett, *The Audacity of Preaching*; Daniel D. Williams, *God's Grace and Man's Hope*; C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*; Alan Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament*; Jesse Burton Weatherspoon, *Sent Forth to Preach*; Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament*.

John Knox Press: D. G. Miller, *The Nature and Mission of the Church*.

St. Martin's Press: Wm. Temple, *Nature, Man, and God*.

Charles Scribner & Son: Emil Brunner, *The Theology of Crisis*.

**Student Christian Movement Press Ltd.: R. P. C. Hanson, God: Creator, Saviour, Spirit.**

**The Westminster Press: Ludwig Kohler, Old Testament Theology; Floyd Filson, One Lord, One Faith.**

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## **BOOK INTRODUCTION**

**Evangelism, properly understood, is the first task of the Church. It is impossible to be a Christian in any real sense of the word and not be interested in sharing the faith with others. "The Church exists by mission as fire exists by burning," said Emil Brunner. If there is no burning, there is no fire. If there is no mission, there is no Church.**

**If one is a Christian, he is to some extent an evangelist. If one is in no sense an evangelist, he has no right to claim to be a follower of the One who came to seek and to save the lost. This study, then, is everybody's business, for it concerns the very meaning of Christianity.**

**Evangelism is simply telling all people everywhere the good news of salvation through Christ in such a way as to lead as many as possible to saving faith, entire sanctification, and practical commitment to the work of the Kingdom in the fellowship of the Church.**

**There are several ways one might think about evangelism. One might concern himself primarily with the methods of evangelism, the ways in which men may be brought to Christ, the tools and techniques of the task. One might think of the mode of evangelism, the spiritual dynamic and urgent passion with which the good news must be told if it is to win the hearts and the wills of those who hear. One might tell of the men of evangelism, Peter and Philip, Stephen and Paul, Apollos and John, Francis of Assisi, Savonarola, Wesley, Whitefield, Finney, Moody, and men of our day. Or, as has been done in this study, one may deal with the message of evangelism, the basic structure of truth upon which the whole mission and life of the Church rest.**

**Principal James Denney long ago said, "Our evangelists must be theologians and our theologians evangelists." This is an ideal which has seldom been reached, but which is nonetheless important. Dr. J. B. Chapman wrote: "The true type of preacher is both an evangelist and a theologian, not in the professional sense, necessarily, in either case, but in the proper blending of the two characteristics and capacities to such an extent that his sermons may be described as 'truth on fire.'"<sup>1</sup>**

**This is again to say that evangelism must necessarily combine two elements. It must put together content and appeal, message and motivation. It must call for decision, but the decision must be made between alternatives clearly set forth. How can people choose this day whom they will serve unless they know the options?**

**It will never do to challenge men as the frantic citizen wired the Secretary of Labor during a national strike: "Do something." For we are not called upon to do just anything, but to make a very definite commitment to Christ and His kingdom on earth. This we cannot do until He has been presented and His saving truth declared.**

**Since evangelism is everybody's business, its message is everybody's concern. There are five great truths which together form the Biblical basis for the message of evangelism. They run like a golden thread through the Bible from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22. In summary statement they are:**

**"Man apart from God's initiative is hopelessly involved in self-contradiction and lost."**

**"God's remedy for the human plight is found in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ."**

**"Response in repentance and faith brings deliverance and new life to the individual."**

**"Christian experience reaches its norm in entire sanctification with cleansing and power for holy living in service to God and man."**

**"The final triumph of God's purpose will be revealed in the coming of Christ to judge the quick and the dead."**

**We have here the unfolding message which is the power of God to salvation to all who believe. Beginning with the Old Testament, we make our way through the great events of the Gospels and Acts and the clear interpretations of the Epistles to the final consummation in the Book of Revelation.**

**In all this we discover that the gospel of our salvation is not a system of ideas or a philosophy of life. It is the proclamation of an event, the presentation of a Person. Evangelism the communication of this gospel to all men everywhere, is therefore not a matter of instruction or education only. It is not giving people something to think about. It is pressing a claim, demanding a decision, compelling a choice. It is the application of the saving power of God at the point of human need. It comes to us through the Word of God, which is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword (Heb. 4:12).**

**\* \* \* \* \***

## **I. GOD'S PROVISION FOR MAN'S PLIGHT**

**The God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people. Blessed be God (Ps. 68:35).**

**If we are to see the Biblical basis for evangelism, we must start where the Bible starts. It is in the Old Testament that we learn what God and man are. The first four words of Genesis provide a clue to the understanding of all existence: "In the beginning God." Behind the temporal is the eternal. Beyond the material is the spiritual. Above the limited and finite sphere of human history is the Figure of the infinite Creator and Father God.**

**But the interest of the sacred writer in the opening chapters of Genesis is obviously not in creation as an explanation of the existence of a material universe. His interest is in creation as an introduction to history, and an explanation of the course it has taken throughout the centuries. How else could one explain the proportion which gives two chapters to creation and fourteen chapters to Abraham? As Ludwig Kohler has said:**

**"The creation of the world by God in the Old Testament is no independent fact; creation is intended to be the opening of history. The Old Testament history of creation does not answer the question 'How did the world come into being?' with the answer: 'God created it', but answers the question 'From where does the history of God's people derive its meaning?' with the answer: 'God has given the history of His people its meaning through creation.' In other words, the Creation in the Old Testament does not belong to the sphere of natural science but to the history of man."2**

**In the turmoil of our day, it is important to know that what we have come to call "ideologies" are really theories about human nature. As the British theologian John S. Whale has expressed it:**

**"What is the truth about the nature and end of man? This is the ultimate question behind the vast debate, the desperate struggles, of our time. Ideologies -- to use the ugly modern jargon -- are really anthropologies; they are answers to that question which man has not ceased to ask ever since he began asking questions at all; namely, What is Man? He asks this question about himself, because all his questions about the universe involve it. Who is the being who asks the questions?"3**

**It makes a vast difference even in the arena of political action whether man is a little higher than the animals or a little lower than the angels. It makes a vast difference whether human rights are the grudging gift of an all-powerful party or the inalienable endowment of a divine Creator.**

**The Nature Of Man**

The answer of Scripture at this point is unmistakable. There are three creative acts described in Genesis 1. The first is the creation of the material universe, now known to be far greater than can even be imagined. The second is the creation of conscious life. The third is the creation of a species in God's own image, with body of clay but inbreathed with a breath of life and constituted a living soul. Of all the varied creation, only man stands in relation to God as "I" and "Thou."

It has always been the human tragedy that our greatest good may become our greatest evil. The capacity for self-direction which was part of the image of God could have perpetuated Paradise on earth. It was turned, instead, into the deep self-contradiction which seeks the knowledge of good and evil in defiance of the claims of God.

In simple picture language we are shown how it is with us men. What could have been our paradise has become our purgatory. Because of Adam, we are all Adam, of the earth earthy, repeating in ourselves the self-contradiction which turned a Garden of Eden into a desert waste of futility and heartache.

Here are the dignity and tragedy of man: God's image and the serpent's damage; divinity and depravity; with power to bless or blast; as Francis Thompson put it, akin to cherubim and clod; or as Blaise Pascal, "the glory and scum of the universe." The paradox of human nature was expressed by the eighteenth-century English poet Edward Young in his lines from "Night Thoughts" entitled "Man":

How poor, how rich, how abject, how august,  
How complicate, how wonderful is man!  
How passing wonder He, who made him such,  
Who centred in our make such strange extremes!  
From different natures marvellously mixt,  
Connection exquisite of distant worlds!  
Distinguished link in being's endless chain!  
Midway from nothing to the Deity!  
A beam, ethereal, sullied, and absorpt!  
Though sullied and dishonoured, still divine!  
Dim miniature of greatness absolute!  
And heir of glory! a frail child of dust!  
Helpless immortal! insect infinite!  
A worm! -- a god! -- I tremble at myself,  
And in myself am lost! at home a stranger,  
Thought wanders up and down, surprised, aghast,  
And wond'ring at her own: how reason reels!  
O what a miracle to man is man,  
Triumphantly distressed! what joy, what dread!  
Alternately transported, and alarmed!  
What can preserve my life? or what destroy?

**An angel's arm can't snatch me from the grave:  
Legions of angels can't confine me there.<sup>4</sup>**

### **The Tragedy Of Human Existence**

**That our human need is real and desperate is the common testimony of all observers of man's existence. From Socrates to Sartre, from Plato to Paul Tillich, from Krishna to Kierkegaard, from ancient empiricist to modern existentialist, the record is the same. The greatness of the human potential is equaled only by the tragic self-contradictions in human nature which have brought about the collapse of one great culture after another. On an earth stocked with resources abundantly adequate for the physical comfort and well-being of its millions, hunger and famine and disease stalk in the wake of the war, strife, violence, lust, and selfishness which spring out of the soul of man.**

**While the symptoms are unmistakable, the diagnosis of the disease varies. Ignorance, anxiety, evolutionary lag, lack of ultimate concern have all had their proponents. But superficial or faulty diagnoses lead to superficial and faulty remedies. No diagnosis is as thorough or description so complete as that which we find in the inspired Word of God. What has brought civilization to its present impasse and turned individual people into the greatest enemies of their own good? The answer is simple and clear, and best expressed in the words of the Fourth Servant Song in the Book of Isaiah: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" (Isa. 53:6).**

**The fundamental disease of our human existence is described in a number of ways. It is spoken of as evil and guilt, as missing the way or the mark, as enmity, rebellion, or treachery. But essentially, it is more than what we do. It is a corruption of our nature. It is a poison which infects every part of personal existence. Early in the history of the race it was said of man -- and succeeding generations have found no reason to reverse the judgment -- "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5).**

**It is in the fifty-first psalm that, as C. Ryder Smith has remarked, "the Old Testament tells . . . the whole truth about sin."<sup>5</sup> Here is a man who speaks with deep penitence of his transgressions, all his iniquities, and the evil he has done. It is ever before him, and he prays that the sorry record may be blotted out. Although others have been involved, he keenly feels that his sinful acts have been chiefly against God, whose holy law he had broken.**

**But the Psalmist is also aware that his problem goes deeper than the choice which had resulted in sinful acts. It is not only for forgiveness that he prays, but for cleansing. "Behold," he says, "I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (v. 5). The righteous demands of God cannot be satisfied with outer conformity alone: "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts" (v. 6). "Purge me with hyssop," he prays, "and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than**

snow. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee" (vv. 7, 10-13).

This is, indeed, "the whole truth about sin." It stains the depths and pollutes the springs of motivation deep within the soul of man. Here is the reason for the poverty which is induced by greed, laziness, drunkenness, and idolatry. Here is the viper nature that rears its ugly head in war, divorce, and juvenile delinquency. Here is the breeding ground of personal restlessness, the deep fears and hidden hungers of the soul. Here is the source of the anxiety and dread which come from the fundamental insecurity of man's natural state.

Beyond the temporal is the eternal dimension of despair. That our existence is not for time alone is the universal testimony of the human consciousness and conscience. None can deny the grim fact of death, and after death the judgment. In the incisive words of C. S. Lewis, when one persists in living outside God's will, death will finally bring about the fulfillment of this desire. "He has his wish -- to live wholly to the self and to make the best of what he finds there. And what he finds there is Hell."<sup>6</sup>

### **God In Search Of Man**

Here the stalemate well might end but for one fact. Against the deep predicament of man, the Bible places the high promise of God. The Lord God came in the cool of the day and called, "Adam, where art thou?" Standing tall at the very gateway of revelation is this pillar of truth: the initiative toward restoration does not rest with man, but with God. It was not Adam who sought a Deity afar off. It was God who called, and who through the ages has sought to seek and to save that which was lost. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all:" What we could never have done for ourselves has been done for us. God has acted to meet the disaster sin has brought.

This is the record at every step. God confronted Abraham with an exclusive claim while he was still in Ur of the Chaldees, and called him to go out to a land he had not seen. Jacob was not seeking the Lord but fleeing from his brother when God appeared to him at Bethel. Moses was going about his daily occupation when God met him at the bush that burned but was not consumed.

The Biblical faith has never been that God would be found at the end of the mystic's contemplation or the logician's syllogism. He has come when He was not sought, and has appeared when He was not expected. He has broken in with what has often been an unwelcome claim. Sigmund Freud has pictured the God of Christianity as the projection of the hopes and wishes which gather around the father-image of the child. But such is untrue to the facts. God does not come first to

us as the benign fulfillment of our dreams and aspirations. He comes as a burning fire, in judgment on our sins, with a claim which overrides our selfishness.

This is the essential difference between the Biblical faith and the religions of mankind. Religion is essentially man's search for the ultimate, his groping after that which will properly relate him to whatever it is he may hold to be divine. There are many religions. The concern of religion is abstract truth about ultimate reality.

Quite the contrary, the Bible recounts God's search for man. Scripture is, in Suzanne Dietrich's happy phrase, "the book of the acts of God." It is concerned with the historical events in which that search has been evident. Whatever response from us it may require, the fact remains that the Bible is the record of God's initiative toward meeting the human predicament.

The Bible, then, is not the record of man in search of God, but in Herschel's appropriate phrase, "God in Search of Man."<sup>7</sup> The fact that there is any knowledge of God at all possible to us is witness to the divine initiative. As Edward J. Young expressed it:

"We are not dealing with the gropings of ignorant and superstitious Hebrews after God, ff haply they might find Him. We are dealing with what God Himself spoke to these Hebrews. They were ignorant; they were in darkness; they were in bondage. But they were the recipients of light. To them the Word of God came, dispelling the darkness, and banishing the ignorance. No longer need they be like the nations round about them, for they were a peculiar people. They could know the truth about God and their relation to Him, for unto them the very oracles of God had been entrusted."<sup>8</sup>

Herman Schultz long before had made the same point:

"God, as the source of all the life in the world, and, therefore also of man's, cannot be reached by human effort as such. If man is to have aught of God, he can receive it only from God, who is lovingly self-communicating. This is Israel's belief from the first. No narrator dealing with primitive days ever thinks of man as raising himself up to God by his own act. From the first, God is the speaker, man the hearer, and a hearer too very childlike and weak in understanding. God reveals Himself; man calls reverently on His name. The religion of Israel comes into existence by God appearing, speaking, commanding, and by man obeying and believing. So it is with Abraham, and so it is at Sinai. Moses and all the men of God after him are not philosophers who ponder over the mysteries of the transcendental world, but prophets whom God permits to know Him."<sup>9</sup>

### **A Picture And Promise Of Redemption**

This is why the great fundamental fact of the Old Testament is not creation, or the Flood, or the call of Abraham, or the promise to Jacob, but the deliverance of

Israel from Egypt by God's outstretched arm and mighty hand. This is why the Exodus, with the covenant at Sinai that followed, is the heart and core of Israel's faith. In fact Dr. Harold H. Rowley in his little volume, *The Unity of the Bible*, has argued that the whole of Scripture finds its unifying key in the Exodus, for he sees in Christianity the new Exodus wherein the new Moses gives a new law from a new mount, and himself seals the sacrifice with His own blood as Christ, our Passover.

It is in connection with the Exodus that two great Biblical words first appear. One of these is redemption, God's act in liberating His people at the cost of personal effort. The other is salvation, which Moses is commanded to "stand still, and see" (Exod. 14:13), and which he celebrates in his great psalm in which he says:

I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed  
gloriously: the horse and his rider  
hath he thrown into the sea.  
The Lord is my strength and song,  
and he is become my salvation (Exod. 15:1-2).

In both redemption and salvation, the work is God's, wrought by His grace and power alone.

In the covenant which followed immediately, the same great truth is seen. It is no accident that the two halves of our Bible should be known respectively as "The Old or Former Covenant" and "The New Covenant," or the Old Testament and the New Testament. The covenant of God with man is not a bilateral agreement, in which two equals enter into mutual relationships. It is unilateral, originating in the will of God alone. Also, it is not a commercial transaction, in which value is given for value received. It is described as similar to the marriage relationship, based on mutual love, trust, and service -- but still, of course, originating with God.

Even the form of the covenant at Sinai is important. It has been learned that there were two kinds of treaties in ancient times -- between nations which were regarded as equals, and between a great king or emperor and peoples or nations which were to become his subjects and dependent on him.

In the latter form of treaty, there is always a simple pattern. First, the great king is identified by name and position. Second, there is a statement of the historical background of relations between the great king and the people who are to be his subjects, a statement which emphasizes the benevolent disposition of the great king toward his peoples. Third, there is a list of the obligations placed upon the subject nation, one of the chief of which was the cutting of all ties with other foreign powers. Fourth, there was the requirement that the treaty itself be placed in a sanctuary, and publicly read at regular intervals. Finally, there was a listing of blessings or benefits and curses or punishments which should follow the keeping or violation of the covenant. Implied in all this, of course, is the idea that the

covenant is offered by the great king, and received by the people to whom it is offered.

Here, then, is the picture of the relationship between God and His people. His revelation, His salvation, His covenant are not of man's seeking, but of God's giving. That we are not left out of consideration is, of course, true; but first, it must be seen that "salvation is of the Lord." "We love him, because he first loved us." We are able to choose Him and His will because He has first chosen us.

Here is the first and fundamental foundation stone in the message of evangelism: When I knew Him not, He sought me. Before I came to Him, He found me. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." The first note in evangelism is the need of man and the redemptive purpose of God, summarized in Paul's favorite and beautiful word, "grace." It is God's love, mercy, and help extended to those who neither deserve nor at first desire it. As long as the good news is told, John Newton's majestic lines will be sung with joy:

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound!  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved.  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils, and snares  
I have already come.  
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.

When we've been there ten thousand years,  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we've first begun.

\* \* \* \* \*

## 02 -- THE FINALITY OF CHRIST

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God (I Cor. 1:18).

The first word in the message of evangelism concerns God's supply for man's need. The Old Testament pictures our need, and begins the history of

salvation, which is the record of God's initiative in meeting that need. But all the history of salvation moves toward a focal point. The Old Testament is an incomplete volume, a forward-looking book. Its fulfillment lies beyond itself in the One of whom it speaks in many and varied ways. As Edmond Jacob has said:

"A theology of the Old Testament which is founded not on certain isolated verses, but on the Old Testament as a whole, can only be a Christology, for what was revealed under the old covenant, through a long and varied history, in events, persons and institutions, is, in Christ, gathered together and brought to perfection."<sup>1</sup>

Paul graphically pictures the law, and with it the entire record of the Old Testament, as a servant or pedagogue whose mission is to bring us to the true Teacher and Saviour, Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:24-26). As Harris E. Kirk put it: "I go to the Old Testament to find myself, and to the New Testament to find Christ, and that is all I need."<sup>2</sup> C. H. Dodd spelled this out in a noteworthy paragraph:

"Christianity takes the series of events recorded or reflected in the Bible, from the call of Abraham to the emergence of the Church, and declares that in this series the ultimate reality of all history, which is the purpose of God, is finally revealed, because the series is itself controlled by the supreme event of all -- the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup>

### **The Great Good News**

The opening books of the New Testament are known by the title which is a key word in any definition of evangelism. They are "Gospels" -- records of the good news. A Gospel, in the New Testament sense, is a unique literary form. It is not, strictly speaking, a biography-for it is more concerned with a death than a life. It is not a history, as such, for it deals with events and meanings which lie beyond the ken of the scientific historian. It is actually a proclamation, a heralding forth of the glad tidings, or what modern New Testament scholars have come to call the kerygma As W. D. Davies has put it:

"Early Christianity did not merely spread by the diffusion of a vague contagious friendliness centered in Jesus but unreflecting: it was dominated by the burning enthusiasm of a great conviction, the nature of which is revealed to us in the kerygma, namely, that in Jesus of Nazareth the purpose of God revealed in the Old Testament is fulfilled and the New Age inaugurated. If we had lacked evidence for the kerygma, we should have had to invent it, in order to explain the missionary intensity, the theological vitality and deep fellowship, which the New Testament reveals. This is not to claim that the kerygma can be itemized and classified with strict rigidity: there is variety within the kerygmatic unity; but it does mean that it is unthinkable that we should repudiate the kerygmatic emphasis in the work of Professor C. H. Dodd and others, however much modification may be required in details."<sup>4</sup>

**The Gospels -- or as we should more properly say, "the Gospel according to Mark, to Matthew, to Luke, and to John" -- the gospel is the point toward which all that has gone before in the Bible converges and the point from which all that follows emerges. The good news we herald to the world is that all the promise and hope of the centuries has been fulfilled, and fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, who is God-in-history, and whose birth divides the centuries as their true center and focal point into before and after, B.C. and A.D. In Him is the revelation -- full, complete, and entire -- of the saving purpose of the God of holy love. It is again no accident that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God who brought His people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, becomes now "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."**

### **Christ Is The Gospel**

**In this line of thought are the reasons why in the New Testament what Christ was and what He did are thought to be more decisive than what He said. One of the surprises almost everyone experiences is the little use made throughout the Epistles of the teachings of Jesus. It is not so much that Jesus came to teach a gospel as that He came to be the gospel. In Him, God not only tells us what the Father is and what He would have us to be; He shows us. Christ said -- not, "I describe the way, and tell you the truth, and inform you about the life" -- but, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."**

**Frederick C. Grant has written:**

**"We lack not only sufficient data for writing a genuinely historical biography of Jesus but also the pattern which would fit him -- he eludes our categories of historical classification for the simple reason that he is wholly unique . . . . All the concepts men have applied to him are inadequate, for they are human, and made of the stuff of human experience or speculation; he out-tops them all, for he is unique, and can accept any one of our human concepts only by first transforming it."5**

**The story is told of a gentleman who came to his pastor and chided him a bit for preaching on the atonement of Christ and not more on the life and teachings of Jesus. Asked the minister, "If I should preach on the life of the Lord, would you follow Him?" "Gladly," said the other. "Very well, then," was the reply. "Here is the first step" -- and he quoted I Pet. 2:22, "Who did no sin." "Can you take that first step?" The man was honest. "No," he confessed, "I guess I couldn't."**

**This is not to say that the teachings of Jesus are unimportant. He gathered and synthesized the great truths of the Old Testament. His remembered and recorded words are the controlling insights of which the balance of the New Testament is the development and interpretation. In Alan Richardson's striking analogy, Jesus is like:**

**". . . a painter holding his palette, full of rich colours of every clashing shade; out of them all, the mind of the artist creates a new and beautiful combination of shades: the colours were all present on the palette, so that in a sense the picture was there too. Yet it was not there; it did not exist until the creative imagination of the artist took the colours -- not all of them, and not in equal quantities -- and blended them into a pattern of meaning. So Jesus fashioned the theology of the New Testament out of the many-coloured insights and mysteries of the Old Testament."**<sup>6</sup>

### **The Name Above All Names**

**But it is supremely in what He was and in what He did that Christ is proclaimed to all men everywhere as the Saviour of the world. The fully developed Name, by which alone under heaven we may be saved, is in itself a profound indication of the Saviour's nature. The three elements, "Jesus," and "Christ," and "Lord," are found in every major combination in the New Testament writings: "Jesus Christ our Lord," "Christ Jesus the Lord," and "our Lord Jesus Christ."**

**Jesus is the human name our Saviour bore. Announced by the angel before His birth, it was His given name. As such, it was not an uncommon name in New Testament times. It is the English form of the Greek name which was equivalent to the Old Testament name "Joshua." We see this indicated in the Gospels, where others are represented as speaking of Jesus in such ways as to qualify the designation: "Jesus of Nazareth," "Jesus the son of Joseph," "Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee," or "Jesus which is called the Christ."**

**It is important that occasionally we recall the importance which the New Testament places on the humanity of Christ, as well as on His deity. In fact, it is precisely those books of the New Testament which speak in highest terms about the deity of our Lord which also speak in clearest terms of His humanity. Indeed, to deny that Christ is come in the flesh is more serious than theological error. It is the very spirit of antiChrist (I John 4:1-3).**

**As Jesus is His human name, Christ is the designation of the office He filled. Christos is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Messiah. For this reason, when others use the term, particularly in the Gospels, it is as a title, "the Christ." When Jesus taught in the Temple unmolested, the people asked one another, "Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?" (John 7:26) And when Peter made his great confession in Caesarea Philippi, it was with the words, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16).**

**Quickly, however, the title became a proper name. So Paul used it, and in his earliest letters introduced himself as the apostle appointed by Jesus Christ (Gal, 1:1), and spoke of the Church being in God the Father and "in the Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thess. 1:1). So the author of Hebrews spoke of "Christ as a son over his own house" (Heb. 3:6). So also James alludes to himself as a servant of God and of**

the Lord Jesus Christ (Jas. 1:1); and Peter, John, and Jude speak of "Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 1:2; I John 1:3; Jude 1) musing the title "Christ" as the proper name for our Lord.

It is in the term "Lord" that the full scope of the Saviour's nature is revealed. Here we are confronted with the fact of His deity. "Lord" in the New Testament has a twofold significance. It was the common Greek ascription of deity, and would be so understood by those who voiced the earliest Christian confession, "Jesus Christ is Lord." But it was also the word used by the Jews to speak of the true God of Israel, who had revealed the meaning of His name, Yahweh, to Moses. This name was regarded with such reverence that it was never spoken, but always vocalized as Adonai or Lord.

### **The Word Made Flesh**

There are many great and powerful texts in the New Testament which speak unequivocally of the deity of Jesus Christ. Two of these frame the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1); and the unequalled confession of Thomas -- unfairly called the doubter: "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28).

Paul speaks of Christ, "who is over all, God blessed for ever" (Rom. 9:5), and writes of the "great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13, R.S.V.), a phrase which Peter also uses (II Pet. 1:1). Paul also states that Christ Jesus was in the form of God and equal with God, and has been highly exalted and given the name above all names, in view of which every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father (Phil. 2:6, 9-11); and "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9).

But every bit as persuasive, if not more so, is the completely unself-conscious way in which the writers of the New Testament, one and all, apply the Old Testament designation for the God of Israel to Jesus Christ as Lord. Verse after verse in which the Old Testament reference is to Jehovah God is applied directly to Christ Jesus. It must indeed be a perverse mind which would fly in the face of evidence such as this and question the New Testament teaching about the complete deity of Jesus.

I am certainly not unaware that the human intellect staggers when it attempts to reason about the great, historic Christian affirmations of the Triune Godhead and the Incarnation in which the eternal Word, the Second Person of the adorable Trinity, became flesh and dwelt among us. But as Cyril Richardson wrote:

"These two things, therefore, it is essential to say: Jesus was man, for only through man could human nature be restored; but Jesus is also God, for only by God could the restoration be accomplished. If Jesus is not man, then human nature has not been redeemed or the power of sin conquered. If Jesus is not God the

victory could never have been won. Man, by himself, could not overcome his predicament."<sup>7</sup>

I am even willing to concede Mr. Richardson's claim that an orthodox doctrine of the nature and person of Christ can only be expressed paradoxically, and that attempts to surmount the paradox surrender something vital -- provided, of course, one does not think of paradox as irrationality or incoherence in the nature of reality, but rather as an antinomy of thought, a limitation of human reason. After all, if our finite intellects could totally comprehend the nature of God and of the God Man, it would be an open question as to whether or not such a Being would actually be the infinite God we love, worship, and adore.

Be that as it may, it is certainly true of the Christian gospel, as Herbert H. Farmer so forcefully said, that "its fundamental dogma, in which all other dogmas are implicitly contained, is that in Jesus Christ God came into history, took flesh and dwelt among us in a revelation of Himself which is unique, final, completely adequate, wholly indispensable for man's salvation."<sup>8</sup> And more recently, John R. W. Stott has written:

"Jesus Christ Himself is the rock on which the structure of Christian theology is built. To be a Christian is to accept Jesus Christ as God and Saviour. The irreducible minimum of Christian belief is that Jesus of Nazareth is the unique Son of God and that He died to be the Saviour of the world. I may not fully understand either statement (the Incarnation and the Atonement are two of the profoundest mysteries of the Christian creed), but if I want to call myself a Christian I must believe both. I must not only believe them intellectually; I must act on them. If my intellectual conviction is genuine, it will lead me to a personal commitment. If Jesus is the divine Lord, I must submit to Him as my Lord. If He is the divine Saviour, I must trust in Him as my Saviour. I must humbly appropriate the Son of God and Saviour of men as my Saviour and my Lord."<sup>9</sup>

### **Atonement Through Christ**

Along with what the Lord Jesus Christ is we must view what He has done for our salvation. Here indeed we stand at the threshold of the "holy of holies" of the Christian gospel. What theologians have come to call the atonement, in the earliest Christian tradition appears as the simple proclamation of the fact that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (I Cor. 15:3-4).

With all due respect to the great minds that have wrestled with theories about the atonement, it still must be said that "there is in fact no theory of the atonement which is quite as satisfying as the simple statements of the vicarious death of Christ in the gospels";<sup>10</sup> or as James S. Stewart so eloquently wrote:

**"We may take it for certain that any formula or system which claims to gather up into itself the whole meaning of God's righteousness, or of Christ's redeeming work, is ipso facto wrong. The only right way to see the cross of Jesus is on your knees. The apostle himself reminds us of that, when he declares, immediately after one of his greatest accounts of his Lord's atoning death, 'Before the name of Jesus every knee should bow.' (Phil. 2:10). In this world, men kneel to what they love. And love has a way of breaking through every carefully articulated system: it sees so much more than the system-makers."11**

**It is thus as J. K. Mozley says: "Through the New Testament there runs one mighty thought: Christ died for our sins: he bore what we should have borne: he did for us what we could never have done for ourselves: he did for God that which was God's good pleasure."12 There is in the divine nature that which requires the punishment of sin. It is not arbitrary, but essential. Were it not a fact, God would not be God. Holiness, justice, righteousness -- these are terms by which we strive to express this fact. The death of Christ on the Cross "expiates sin by exhausting its consequences,"13 for "he has borne on behalf of mankind the full weight of the judgment of God, so that God remains righteous though he acquits sinners."14**

**Throughout the New Testament there also runs the great truth that God in Christ overcomes evil by the sacrifice of himself, through which He wins the victory over the tyrant forces which hold man in sway. In His complete self-identification as our Representative or Champion, He met and defeated our enemy forever -- and this on the enemy's own field of moral conflict, and not by the display of ontological power.**

**Sometimes cynical, always penetrating, Dorothy Sayers has captured this truth in striking lines:**

**Hard it is, very hard,  
To travel up the slow and stony road  
To Calvary, to redeem mankind; far better  
To make but one resplendent miracle,  
Lean through the cloud, lift the right hand of power  
And with a sudden lightning smite the world  
perfect.  
Yet this was not God's way, who had the power,  
But set it by, choosing the cross, the thorn,  
The sorrowful wounds. Something there is, perhaps,  
That power destroys in passing, something supreme,  
To whose great value in the eyes of God  
That cross, that thorn, and those five wounds bear  
witness.15**

**Calvary therefore was deliverance, not defeat. Christ was Victor, not victim. God's judgment on sin was not abrogated, but borne by himself. The forces and**

powers of evil which held men in bondage were broken. The sin of man was unmasked, stripped of its incognito, and shown for what it is -- all this in the highest imaginable display of divine love.

Paul S. Rees has expressed this in some magnificent paragraphs in his commentary on Philippians:

"No one, I believe, has begun to grasp the message of the New Testament unless he sees at least two tremendous things emerging from its pages. The first is that in the death and resurrection of our Lord -- and let it not be forgotten that the two events are really one--the Almighty God has revealed Himself and released His power so directly and overwhelmingly as to constitute a new departure in history. This is creation. It is creation by redemption. It is the shattering of the old creation. It is the beating down and the casting out of the powers of darkness. It is the overthrowing of Satan. It is the invasion, here and now, of 'the powers of the world to come.'

"Nothing less than this would satisfy the mind or interpret the message of the early Church, once they caught the titanic meaning of the resurrection.

"The other truth -- indissolubly linked with this first one -- that gleams and glitters on the New Testament page is this: that not only the Church but the whole world of good and evil is moving now toward a purposed consummation under the Lordship of Jesus Christ; yet this climax is not to be thought of as the winning of God's victory in the world made by Him and marred by sin, but rather as the exhibition of His victory in Christ. The victory has been already won."16

### The Risen Redeemer

More than a hint has been given earlier of the importance of the fact of Christ's resurrection in the message of evangelism. The preaching of the risen Christ is truly the heart and core of the proclamation of the Early Church. Every recorded sermon in the Book of Acts, and twenty-five out of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, affirm the glorious fact that Christ, who was taken by wicked hands and crucified and slain, was raised by the power of God and exalted to the right hand of God, where He lives forever, able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him. As Stewart put it: "There is no true preaching of atonement until we can point men past the Cross and say: 'He is not here. He is risen. Behold Him travelling in the greatness of His strength, mighty to save!'"17

John S. Whale highlights the centrality of the fact of Christ's resurrection:

"Belief in the Resurrection is not an appendage to the Christian faith; it is the Christian faith . . . .

**"We cannot begin to understand how it happened. The Gospels cannot explain the Resurrection; it is the Resurrection which alone explains the Gospels. Here is the mightiest of the mighty acts of God, foreign to the common experience of man, inscrutable to all his science, astounding to believer and unbeliever alike. But here and only here is an activity of God, wrought out in this world of pain, sin and death, which is the key pattern for the world's true life. Here is the sure promise that life according to this pattern is eternal. This and this alone is the key to the Christian doctrine of history."18**

**Not only is the resurrection of our Lord important for its completion of His salvation work on the Cross; it is also important because here we have the breaking into time of the powers of the world to come. In the empty tomb of Easter morning we have a prediction of the redemption and restoration of all things, of which Paul speaks in Romans 8. Christ, raised from the dead, is "the firstfruits of them that slept" (I Cor. 15:20-23). As Karl Helm expressively put it:**

**"Just as when a dyke in the Low Countries on the shores of the North Sea gives way, even if it is only one little section, we know that, although this is in itself an event of small importance, the consequences are incalculable: beyond the dyke is the tumultuous sea, which will burst through the opening -- so Paul knew, when he had met the Risen one, that 'He is the first-born of them that slept!'"19**

**The full meaning of this will not be seen until we turn in a later chapter to the final consummation of all things. It is enough here to note that the Church is sent forth with a full-orbed gospel, which finds its supreme expression in Jesus of Nazareth, conceived of the Virgin Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate, raised from the dead by the power of God, living exalted at the right hand of the Majesty on high.**

### **Our Only Hope**

**The life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is an indivisible unity, in which alone there is power to meet the deep needs of sinful humanity. To lose any element of this great gospel is to cripple the whole. To proclaim them all is to return to evangelism the power it knew when transformed men went out across the world of their day announcing the great, glad tidings that God had acted to meet our human predicament-the risen Lord "working with them" (Mark 16:20).**

**To offer a sin-sick world anything short of this is to put before it a bridge over the abyss broken at the other end. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).**

**I know a soul that is steeped in sin,  
That no man's art can cure;  
But I know a Name, a Name, a Name**

**That can make that soul all pure.**

**I know a life that is lost to God,  
Bound down by the things of earth;  
But I know a Name, a Name, a Name  
That can bring that soul new birth.**

**I know of lands that are sunk in shame,  
Of hearts that faint and tire;  
But I know a Name, a Name, a Name  
That can set those lands on fire.**

**-- Author Unknown**

**\* \* \* \* \***

### **03 -- THE TRANSFORMING TOUCH**

**But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name (John 1:12).**

**At once the chief glory and the validating sign of the gospel of Christ is its transforming power in the characters and lives of men. Under its redemptive touch, evil men become righteous, bad men become good, and good men are made better. The Christian faith has meaning for the masses. It has both social and cosmic implications. But its entree into the crowd is always through the individual. Its social and cosmic implications find first illustration in the solitary and the personal.**

**Jesus preached to the multitudes, but it was to the ones and the twos that He said, "Follow me." Peter preached to assembled throngs at Pentecost, but the "so what" of his sermon was, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). However many of us there may be, we each one go "Indian file" into the presence of the Redeemer. As James W. Clarke has said:**

**"The New Testament knows nothing of a 'social gospel' or a 'personal gospel.' It knows and says much of 'the gospel,' which is both personal and social because it has two focal points: the individual person and the Kingdom of God, and brings both together in dynamic tension. The gospel posits the humblest person of priceless worth to God, and the mutual responsibility of each person for each other person, whereby the beloved community can be brought to pass."<sup>1</sup>**

#### **For The Need Of All**

**Certainly the hungers and deep needs for which the good news of Christ offers the only sufficient supply are essentially personal hungers and needs. There**

is a sense of the hollowness and futility of human existence which haunts the midnight hour, the great numbers who live with a sense of personal insignificance. There is a yearning for security, for something solid and dependable by which to live.

There are anxieties and fears of personal failure, of the power of evil and unreason at work in recent history, and the dread of death. There is the overshadowing need to make sense out of life, to find something big enough and worthwhile enough to justify its hardships and sufferings. And there is an almost mystical longing -- greater in some than in others, to be sure to be at home in the universe, to quench the homesickness of the soul in a sense of peace with God. In the very deeps of our existence we carry the infallible proof of the great word of both Deuteronomy and the gospel: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4). Robert C. Strom, grappling with the problems of bringing the families of suburbia to the Saviour, reminds us:

"The New Testament gospel is good news for the wanderer, the homeless, the forsaken, the brokenhearted, the lame, and the dying. To know its power, the minister must touch life with his people. He needs to be aware that one can wander aimlessly on carefully zoned streets. And be homeless in the most fashionable development. And be forsaken surrounded by friends. And be brokenhearted when giggling at a cocktail party. And be lame though a sleek young modern. And die while enjoying the good life. For the sake of Christ and by every means -- preaching, teaching, and living -- communicate the crisis of a daily life less than human. Then the gospel of the new humanity can become a hymn of joy."<sup>2</sup>

The message of evangelism not only concerns the need of mankind and the crucial act of God in Christ to meet that need; it also affirms that the provision has been made for and the plan includes every single member of Adam's race. I realize that a one-sided and un-Biblical view of the sovereignty of God and His election and predestination denies this fact. It is avowed that "by an eternal and immutable decree, God hath once for all determined both whom He would admit to salvation, and whom He would condemn to destruction."<sup>3</sup> It is stated in the Westminster Confession: "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestined to everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death."<sup>4</sup>

Against such savage and unchristian caricatures of the good news of salvation we must protest. The sovereign Lord of the universe has, of His own infinite grace and from before the foundation of the world, foreordained and predestined to be conformed to the image of His clear Son all who receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. The sovereign, elective choice of God is to save all and only those who perseveringly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one

**God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (I Tim. 2: 4-6).**

### **Redeeming Grace**

**The personal reconciliation of man to God takes place within the framework of an experience of man and an act of God described variously in the New Testament as conversion, regeneration, the new birth, justification, or adoption -- and theologically as initial salvation or redemption. It should be pointed out, as Daniel Day Williams has so well done in *God's Grace and Man's Hope*, that both liberalism and neo-orthodoxy are defective formulations of the gospel because both leave out of Christian experience the fact of redemption:**

**"Liberalism has no place for redemption because it does not see the need for it. It conceived the emergence of man from sin and the overcoming of evil primarily a problem of creation, the making of the new man and the new world. Neo-orthodoxy recognizes the need for redemption; hut it has never made an adequate place for the real possibility of redemption as transformation of our human existence, hence it postpones redemption to another realm . . . . Neither liberalism nor neo-orthodoxy has fully interpreted the fact that we know God both as Creator and Redeemer."5**

**Evangelical Christianity has consistently held that reconciliation to God is not a process of nurture or education alone, not merely a program of self-discipline, but a crisis experience -- in different degrees of objective transformation and subjective intensity, to be sure, but nonetheless an event or knowledgeable act of God which takes place at a specific time.**

**This is not to deny that nurture plays an important part in the end result. But it is to recognize that the New Testament uniformly describes the beginning of Christian discipleship in terms that are epochal. It is described as turning or being converted (Matt. 18:3); denying oneself, taking up the cross, and following Jesus (Matt. 16:24); repenting (Luke 13:3); receiving Christ (John 1:12); being born again or born from above, born of the Spirit (John 3: 3, 7); becoming a new creature (II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15); being made alive from the dead and saved by grace (Eph. 2:1, 8). Neither what is done nor the basis on which it is done is such as will properly admit of being gradual or non-epochal in nature. As Archbishop William Temple declared in an italicized paragraph in his great volume of *Gifford Lectures, Nature, Man, and God*:**

**"What is quite certain is that the self cannot by any effort of its own lift itself off its own self as centre and re-systematise itself about God as its centre. Such radical conversion must be the act of God, and that too by some process other than the gradual self-purification of a self-centred soul assisted by the ever-present influence of God diffused through nature including human nature. It cannot be a process only of enlightenment. Nothing can suffice but a redemptive act.**

**Something impinging upon the self from without must deliver it from the freedom which is perfect bondage to the bondage which is its only perfect freedom."**<sup>6</sup>

### **Becoming Children Of God**

**In view of a century of confusion with regard to the so-called universal fatherhood of God, it is important to see that this idea is utterly without scriptural basis. Millar Burrows rightly traces the notion to its source:**

**"The idea of the universal Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man comes from Stoicism rather than the Bible. God is man's Creator; he loves men like a father; men are also of one common origin and descent, and are made in God's image. The terms 'Father' and 'son' are used in the Bible of a relation which is potential for all men but realized only by those who receive the divine adoption."**<sup>7</sup>

**Archibald Hunter, also, reminds us that "Jesus did not teach God's universal Fatherhood. He spoke of God as his own Father, and taught that others might become his sons. But for this high privilege they must become debtors to himself. Not sons of God by nature, they might become sons by grace."**<sup>8</sup> And C. H. Dodd says in his volume on Romans:

**"It is a striking, even to modern ears a startling statement of Paul's that only some men -- namely, those who are guided by the Spirit of God -- can rightly be called children of God. It is commonly believed that Christ teaches that all men are children of God. And yet Jesus Himself is reported as recommending a certain course of action, that ye may be sons of your Father in heaven, which surely implies that those who do not live in this way are not sons of the heavenly Father."**<sup>9</sup>

### **The Meaning Of Repentance And Faith**

**The conditions of reconciliation, upon which we become the children of God, are given in the New Testament as repentance and faith, considered as they properly must be as two sides to one and the same act. As Douglas Clyde Macintosh said, true repentance and saving faith are different aspects of one and the same act, in the very same way that turning from the north means turning toward the south, and turning toward the south means turning from the north.**<sup>10</sup>

**All too often, repentance has been thought of as an emotion, a sort of feeling of regret. But it goes much deeper than this. In Emil Brunner's words, "Repentance is despair of self, despairing of self-help in removing the guilt that we have brought upon us. Repentance means a radical turning away from self-reliance to trust in God alone. Yes, to repent means to recognize self-trust to be the heart of sin."**<sup>11</sup>

**John Knox speaks of repentance as "facing up to the facts about ourselves and taking appropriate action. Repentance is not remorse, or even, in a primary degree, regret or sorrow, however sincere and deep-going . . . . As of the prodigal,**

**'He came to himself.' He faced up to the facts about himself. He realized what he had done to his father and sensed the full bitter meaning of that severing of fellowship with his father for which his own selfish and rash act had been responsible. If the process of realization had stopped there, the end would have been remorse and despair; but it did not stop there, midway. He realized that his Father's house was still there and that his only hope of any security and peace lay there, in however menial a position. He realized not only what he had done, but also what he might and must now do. He arose and came to his father. That is repentance. There is faith and hope and action in it, as well as sorrow."**<sup>12</sup>

Faith, also, is a much-abused term. It is often considered merely in the sense of assent to the truth. But as Alan Richardson insists:

**"Faith in its NT sense is never mere intellectual assent to an hypothesis or dogma . . . . Faith is an obedient, personal response to the personal address of God. . . . Faith therefore involves personal decision, trust, commitment and obedience; it is a wholehearted acceptance of the claim of God upon a man . . . . Hence faith is not something accomplished or attained once for all at one specific moment; it is a relationship which must be maintained by constant striving, since man is never free from the temptation to unbelief and disobedience . . . . It represents a fundamental reorientation of the whole personality."**<sup>13</sup>

Faith, says Rudolf Bultmann, "is self-surrender to the grace of God." In a beautiful and eloquent passage in one of his earlier books, Emil Brunner writes:

**"Faith is first quiet, peace, rest; the turmoil of the soul is silenced; the strain of striving has come to an end, for as a believer one has and is. Above his head hangs the escutcheon of his divine hereditary nobility, the credentials of his citizenship in heaven. Whosoever believeth in Me hath eternal life. This quiet and peace, this having and being, however, is not that of the mystic who passively enjoys heaven upon earth. It is rather the call of the Lord of hosts who is constantly recruiting men for his army, the ecclesia militans. He who has taken the inner fortress of your soul, i.e., your Ego, will not stop there but will take you with him to conquer the world."**<sup>14</sup>

Let it ever be borne in mind that believing repentance or repentant faith implies a deliberate and wholehearted purpose to align the life with the will of God as that will is made known to us. For this reason, faith and obedience are virtually equated in the New Testament. As we read in John 3:36 in the Greek and in the revised versions: "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life: but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Here obedience is clearly made a synonym of faith.

In similar vein, Paul speaks of both "obedience to the faith" and of "the obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). In Daniel Whedon's classic definition: "New Testament faith is that belief of the intellect, consent of the affections, and act of the

will by which the soul places itself in the keeping of Christ as its ruler and Saviour."15

## **Forgiveness**

When the human conditions of salvation are met, something very wonderful happens in the individual. There is, first off, the forgiveness of the sins of the past and the state of guiltlessness or justification before God. We are in God's sight as those who had not sinned, as no longer under the condemnation of the law, as redeemed by His grace.

Let it not be thought that there is any sense of unreality or fiction here. For those whom God accounts as righteous He also, by the power of His grace and the change which shall be described in the next section, has actually made righteous. To "impute" or "reckon" in the language of the King James Version does not mean to regard as true what is really false. Such would be a self-deception, of which God is incapable as the God of truth.

It rather means to take cognizance of what is really true. We are told that this is a bookkeeping term. It describes an asset listed on the ledger. Against those who would make God the supreme Embezzler of history, we must maintain that the imputing of righteousness means the recognition of an empirical and actual change of moral state as well as a change in legal status.

## **A New Birth**

It is this Change of moral state with which New Testament writers deal in such a variety of ways. John and Peter speak of it as being "born again" or "begotten again." Paul uses the term "regeneration," a combination of Greek terms which literally means beginning again, or a new nativity or generation. Paul also speaks of this new redeemed state as a "new creation," or a "new creature," and relates it to the fact that the believer is "in Christ." As Daniel Day Williams has noted, this is a key concept in the whole of the Christian faith: "Christian theology should hold the doctrine of the new life created by the redemptive love of God as the center of its interpretation of Christian experience."16

This is but another way of saying that God deals not only with the guilt of sin, but with the power of sin in the lives of those touched by His redeeming grace. One of the tragedies of our time has been the tendency of one great branch of evangelical Christianity to define salvation in terms of forgiveness only.

In Protestant Thought Before Kant, A. C. McGiffert has written a very instructive passage tracing the source of this idea that salvation relates only to the constant forgiveness of inveterate and repeated sinning. He points out that Paul taught that salvation is possible in this life by a transformation of moral character

effected by the regenerating and sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit in human life.

Catholic theology concurred that salvation must bring about deliverance from sin, but failing to find such deliverance in the worldliness and carnal corruption of the church, came to teach that this life is a preparation on earth for a salvation from sin in the life to come. Luther and the reformers reacted against the Catholic doctrine of future salvation, returned salvation to the course of this life, but based it upon divine forgiveness and not upon a transformation of ethical character.<sup>17</sup>

While Dr. McGiffert does not draw the conclusion, it would be fair to say that Wesleyan theology, on the other hand, completes the Reformation in a return to the Pauline New Testament teaching that salvation is both for this life as well as the life to come, and from the dominion and power of sin right here and now.

There is a gratifying breadth of recognition for this truth. Rudolf Bultmann, the controversial prophet of demythologizing, has said that Paul's "avoidance of the term 'forgiveness of sins' . . . is evidently due to the fact that 'forgiveness of sin' is insofar ambiguous as it seems to declare only release from the guilt contracted by 'former sins,' whereas the important thing for Paul is release from sinning, release from the power of sin."<sup>18</sup>

Floyd W. Filson, dean of McCormick Theological Seminary, wrote:

"Accurate interpretation of the New Testament has long been hindered by a tendency to let forgiveness stop at negative results. The guilt of sin is cared for. The individual will not be damned or punished. But this does not leave the individual where the Gospel seeks to bring him, in grateful loving fellowship with the Father. Repentance and forgiveness involve the turning of the sinner from his evil ways, with sorrow and with the deep desire to be forgiven, restored to fellowship with God, and renewed in right purpose. A forgiveness that does not give a strong sense of moral obligation and issue in a faithful response to the will of God lacks reality."<sup>19</sup>

And James S. Stewart, eloquent preacher of the Church of Scotland, says:

"To be united to Christ means to be identified with Christ's attitude to sin. It means seeing sin with Jesus' eyes, and opposing it with something of the same passion with which Jesus at Calvary opposed it. It means an assent of the whole man to the divine judgment proclaimed upon sin at the cross. It means, as the writer to the Hebrews saw, 'resistance unto blood' (Heb. 12:4). It means, as Paul put it tersely, death. In face of all this, to find antinomianism in Paul is simply to caricature his Gospel."<sup>20</sup>

Actually, this is the crucial test of the reality of grace in the individual life. The distinction between believing and bluffing is sharply drawn in the New Testament:

**"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6:1-2)**

## **Adoption**

**But one other point must be added. The transforming touch not only brings forgiveness for the past, and new power for righteousness in the present; it provides assurance and hope for the future. This is seen in a third New Testament metaphor describing the new life in Christ. While peculiarly Paul's, and derived from Roman law, it is yet full of truth and meaning. I have reference to the idea of adoption.**

**Many have felt that once the new birth was declared, adoption was a redundancy and actually added little or nothing to our understanding of our relationship with God. Such have failed to see that in the two great passages wherein Paul proclaims the believer's adoption, two new truths are added -- and always in the same order. It is quite possible for a child, orphaned at early age, never to know his father, and never to share anything by way of an inheritance from his father.**

**But such can never be true of the child of God. Jesus had declared, "I will not leave you orphanous," a word which the King James Version translates "comfortless" and the revised versions render "desolate," but a word which has obviously come over into the cognate English term "orphans," and which in Jas. 1:27 is translated "fatherless."**

**In two great passages, Paul spells out the meaning of adoption: "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. 8:15-17). "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Gal. 4:4-7).**

**Here two ideas are added to what is implied in being children of God. These are the witness of the Spirit, or the assurance of filial relationship; and the truth of inheritance, being heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. There is that within which looks up to God with the warm and trustful attitude of a child toward his father. And with this sense of being children of God comes the assurance of the inheritance provided through Christ, our Elder Brother.**

The message of evangelism proclaims the transforming touch of the Redeemer God and the living, contemporary Christ through the Spirit. In Him are sight for the blind, hearing for the deaf, and life for the dead in trespasses and sins. Andrew Young, the Scottish poet, in his play Nicodemus, pictures the ruler of the Jews who had come to Jesus by night, talking with John the beloved:

[I have not attempted to retain the poetic form of the text. -- DVM]

"Nicodemus: 'Tell me one thing; why do you follow Jesus?'

"John: 'It was because of John the Baptist first.'

"Nicodemus: 'But why because of him?'

"John: 'One day when we were standing by the Jordan, John and my cousin Andrew and myself. We saw a man pass by, tall as a spirit; He did not see us though he passed quite near; Indeed we thought it strange; His eyes were opened but he looked on nothing; And as he passed, John, pointing with his finger, Cried -- I can hear him cry it now -- 'Behold, the Lamb of God!'

"Nicodemus: 'And He, what did He say? What did He do?'

"John: 'Nothing; we watched Him slowly climb the hill; His shadow fell before Him, it was evening. Sometimes He stopped to raise His head to the home-flying rooks or greet a countryman with plough on shoulder.'

"Nicodemus: 'John said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God?'

"John: 'He said so.'

"Nicodemus: 'And from that day you followed Him?'

"John: 'No, that was afterwards in Galilee.'

"Nicodemus: 'But tell me why; why did you follow Him?'

"John: 'I think it was our feet that followed Him; it was our feet; our hearts were too afraid. Perhaps indeed it was not in our choice; He tells us that we have not chosen Him, But He has chosen us. I only know That as we followed Him that day He called us we were not walking on the earth at all; It was another world, where everything was new and strange and shining; we pitied men and women at their business, for they knew nothing of what we knew.'

"Nicodemus: 'Perhaps it was some miracle He did.'

**"John: 'It was indeed; more miracles than one; I was not blind and yet He gave me sight; I was not deaf and yet He gave me hearing; nor was I dead, yet me He raised to life.'"**

**No distant Lord have I,  
Loving afar to be.  
Made flesh for me, He cannot rest  
Until He rests in me.**

**I need not journey far  
This dearest friend to see.  
Companionship is always mine;  
He makes His home with me.**

**I envy not the twelve.  
Nearer to me is He.  
The life He once lived here on earth  
He lives again in me.**

**Ascended now to God  
My witness there to be,  
His witness here am I because  
His Spirit dwells in me.**

**O glorious Son of God,  
Incarnate Deity,  
I shall forever be with Thee  
Because Thou art with me.**

**-- Maltie D. Babcock**

**\* \* \* \* \***

#### **04 -- THE SPIRIT AND THE POWER**

**For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind (II Tim. 1:7).**

**The message of evangelism must be as big as the scope of redemption. It must have a healing word for all our human need. Here, probably, is the place where what is commonly known as evangelism most often breaks down. It is defined chiefly in terms of a first work of grace, an initial salvation. It often tends to ignore the importance of what happens after conversion.**

**R. Newton Flew in his classic study of The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology has stated this most clearly: "The truest evangelism is to preach the full**

ideal for which power is offered in the present life. 'The work of God does not prosper,' said John Wesley, 'where perfect love is not preached.'"<sup>1</sup> The mission of Moses to the Israelites in Egypt was not only to bring them out of the land of bondage. It was also to bring them into a land flowing with milk and honey. The wilderness was infinitely better than Egyptian slavery, but it was still short of the best God planned for His people.

We will never really understand the teaching of the New Testament until we grasp the fact that its books and letters were written from faith to faith. They are the work of a believing community and addressed, certainly for the most part, to believers. While in the Gospels and the Acts we find recorded some of the preaching of the Church to an unbelieving world, the Epistles and Revelation were without exception addressed to Christians.

It is this fact which gives direction to the oft-repeated commands: "Present your bodies a living sacrifice"; "Reckon ye yourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God"; "Let us go on unto perfection"; and, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." There is an insistent note in New Testament evangelism that the change begun in the new birth must be completed in holiness.

## **The Holy Spirit**

It is in the closing pages of the Gospels, in the Book of Acts, and in the Epistles that the pre-eminent importance of the Holy Spirit in Christian life and thought is set forth. As Archibald Hunter remarked of the writings of Paul, one might as well expect to understand modern industry and civilization without electricity as to understand the New Testament faith without the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup>

Christian thought about the Holy Spirit must always take its start with the teachings of our Lord. In the vastly important "Paraclete sayings," as they are called, recorded for us in the Gospel of John, we have a whole theology of the Spirit. It was not until He was alone with His disciples at the Last Supper that Jesus unfolded that truth about the Spirit which casts its decisive light over the whole of the Old Testament and the balance of the New. In the words of Vincent Taylor:

"The Fourth Gospel is the crown of the biblical revelation concerning the Spirit because, while it begins with history and the events of time, it soars into the heavenly realms of faith and experience, revealing to us what the history and the events mean. Perhaps the best description of its nature is still that of Clement of Alexandria: 'Last of all, John, perceiving that the bodily facts had been set forth in the Gospels, being urged by his friends and inspired by the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel.'"<sup>3</sup>

There are five great passages in John 14 -- 16 dealing with the coming of the Holy Spirit. The first is John 14:15-17: "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And

**I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."**

**The original term here rendered "Comforter" has proved very difficult to translate into English. It is Parakletos, and literally means "One called alongside" with the idea of being a Helper, or an Advocate -- as the King James Version translates the same word in I John 2:1 when it applies to Christ. Several of the modern versions have adopted "Advocate" throughout the passages in the Gospel of John, as it applies to the Holy Spirit. "Comforter" could be misleading if one thinks primarily of comfort or ease or solace in grief, rather than of the derivation of the term -- con meaning "with," and fortare meaning "power, strength, fortification, defense."**

**There are many important truths in this passage, not the least of which is that, while the Spirit has a vital role to fill with regard to the world, He is to be received as an abiding Advocate only by those who know Him and with whom He dwells. It is to those who love Him and keep His commandments that our Lord addresses this magnificent promise of the all-pervading and established and settled presence of the Spirit.**

**We must never forget that "to receive" means much more in the New Testament than to have access to, or to be affected by. It means to acknowledge and accept without hindrance or reservation. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:11-12). "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me" (Matt. 10:40).**

**The second saying is in John 14:26, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." As the "Spirit of truth," coming in the name of Him who is "the way, the truth, and the life," the Holy Spirit comes as the Teacher, making relevant to every generation the words of Christ. As Henry P. Van Dusen forcefully said: "A Church devoid of a vital and vibrant possession by the Holy Spirit is a Church congealed in ancient forms, or well on the way to spiritual sterility. Perhaps, here is the much-discussed 'lack' in the Church's life in our day."<sup>4</sup>**

**The third of the teachings of Jesus concerning the Comforter is found in John 15:26, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me." Here also is a truth we ignore to our own peril. The Spirit's witness is not to himself, but to Christ. His mission is to magnify the Saviour, to direct attention to the eternal Son of God. "He shall not speak of himself," we shall read shortly (John**

**16:13). What Daniel Steele has called the "divine reticence" of the Spirit, who inspired the written Word, is a clue to the emphasis and balance we ought to follow. "The Holy Spirit is the true Author of the Written Word; and His authorship there is occupied with the main and absorbing theme not of Himself but of another Person, the Son of God."5**

**In the fourth "paraclete saying," Jesus makes the startling statement that it is better for His people to have the presence of the Holy Spirit than it would be to have His own presence in the body. "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged" (John 16:7-11).**

**Here also we have the role of the Holy Spirit in relation to the world outside the Church. It is a mission of reproof, of convincing, or of conviction. The New English Bible: New Testament has an interesting rendering here: "When he comes, he will confute the world, and show where wrong and right and judgement lie. He will convict them of wrong, by their refusal to believe in me; he will convince them that right is on my side, by showing that I go to the Father when I pass from your sight; and he will convince them of divine judgement, by showing that the Prince of this world stands condemned."**

**The final statement about the Comforter follows the fourth very closely. In John 16:13-15 we read, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine:, therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you."**

**There is here, no doubt, a pre-validation by Christ of the apostolic writings which comprise the New Testament. But there is also an assurance for Christians in every age that the Holy Spirit will take the letter and give it life. The life-giving power of the Word of God is not a matter of abstract truth, but the dynamic of the Spirit. In a finely worked-out analogy, Dr. J. B. Chapman wrote:**

**"Truth in the abstract may be likened to the cable which, while ever so necessary, is cold and lifeless and powerless except the hot, burning, powerful electric current permeate it. But just as the cable which is permeated with the electric current is 'alive,' so also is the truth when accompanied by the Spirit.**

**"And just as the cable of silver furnishes a much better path for the current than a log of wood, so does clear, definite, biblical doctrine furnish a better channel for the Holy Spirit than doctrine which is mixed with error and misapprehension. But just as a cable of the finest conductivity can do no useful work without the**

current, so the most flawless orthodoxy can accomplish no genuine work of salvation apart from the Spirit."6

### **Christ's High Priestly Prayer**

It is no accident that the Last Supper discourse in which these memorable passages about the Holy Spirit are found climaxes with the great prayer of John 17. This we have come to call "The High Priestly Prayer" of Jesus. It is a prayer said specifically to be "not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me" (v. 9) and "for them also which shall believe on me through their word" (v. 20). It is a prayer for believers, and places in another framework the results and effects of the coming of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth," (v. 17) is the key petition (cf. v. 19), and the effects which are expected or the results which follow are stated as fivefold:

"That they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves" (v. 13).

"Not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (v. 15).

"That they all may be one" (v. 21)

"That the world may believe that thou has sent me" (v. 21).

"That they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me" (v. 24).

### **Pentecost In History**

The fulfillment of promise and prayer is found at Pentecost. Luke gives a twofold account of the last words of the risen Lord to His apostles and of the Ascension. In Luke 24 he relates Christ's parting words as, "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven" (vv. 49-51).

The account in Acts 1 is a bit more full "And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in

Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight" (vv. 4-9).

What happened is well known. The events of Pentecost have a historical side, for they signified the beginning of a new age, the age of the Spirit. The cloven tongues as of fire, the noise of the mighty rushing wind, the miraculous gift of languages unlearned but understood by those about, all served to mark the beginning of a new dispensation.

### **Pentecost In Experience**

Yet there was more to Pentecost than the birthday of the Church, the beginning of the age of the Spirit. There was an experiential side to it also. What happened in the hearts of the 120 happened again in Samaria, to Saul of Tarsus, at the household of Cornelius, and in Ephesus. And it still happens when Christians obey (Acts 8:32), and ask (Luke 11:13), and believe (Gal. 3:14).

Peter, who so well interpreted to the Jerusalem crowds the meaning of the Jewish Pentecost, also gives us the existential meaning of the baptism with the Holy Spirit in Acts 15: 8-9: "And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." Here it is quite clear that apart from dispensational signs in the noise of the wind, the tongues of fire, and the unlearned languages, the essential nature of the Pentecostal work is the purifying of the heart.

Both Paul and Peter write of the "sanctification of the Spirit" (I Thess. 2:13; I Pet. 1:2), and both relate the work of the Spirit in the believer's heart to the cleansing of the moral nature: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the (Mosaic) law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:2-3); and, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" (I Pet. 1:22).

If one adds up all the New Testament says about the Holy Spirit in relation to the Christian's experience, it becomes clear that there are two sides to what is accomplished. There is the inner or subjective side, which is cleansing or purity of heart. The Hebrew and Greek languages had no word for "subconscious," but from what the Scriptures say about the heart as the source and seat of deep-lying motivations and impulses, it is made clear that the pure in heart experience a cleansing which goes deeper than the stain of sin has gone. But there is also an outer or objective side, which is the power so definitely related to the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Yet these are not really separable, and certainly are in no sense mutually exclusive. Power in Christian service always rests back upon personal purity. Even the great "power promise" of Acts 1:8 is concerned with being as much as it is doing. Like faith and works, that which God has joined together must not be put asunder by man.

### **A New Interest**

One of the inspiring facts of our times is a resurgence of interest in the ministry of the Holy Spirit among Christians of many denominations. Typical of this is the recent work of Harold John Ockenga, pastor of the Park Street Congregational Church in Boston, and president of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena. Dr. Ockenga calls his book *Power Through Pentecost*. He disclaims any thought of advancing a "second blessing" theory, although it is more than a little hard to draw any real line of distinction between what he describes and "the second blessing properly so-called." I have no desire to read into Dr. Ockenga's words more than he intends, but there are some tremendously far-reaching statements in this significant little volume.

Dr. Ockenga tells in the preface that he was a Christian for some years, and a minister of the gospel, before he felt "the deep need and the compelling necessity" of the fullness of the Holy Spirit. But once the Spirit came to him in this way, he says, the whole quality of his spiritual experience was changed. While not proposing to make his own religious experience a standard for all other Christians, he states that his personal experience led him to study the Bible and to read the biographies of other Christians and "to the conclusion that it is necessary for Christians to enter the deeper life by a critical experience if they are to enjoy all God has for them."<sup>7</sup>

Step by step, the Boston pastor traces the path to the power of which he writes. He says:

"To enter into the power of Pentecost as did Peter, one must have made a good beginning in following Jesus, in confessing Him as Lord, and in doing His work. If, in such a life, failure, backsliding, and resultant misery have occurred, it is necessary to become restored, make confession and restitution, and then to seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit. For those who will do what Peter and the apostles did by way of consecration and waiting upon the Lord, there is an experience which settles their doubts as to doctrine, which makes them holy persons, which gives them missionary zeal, and which endues them with power in the service of the Lord."<sup>8</sup>

But before the seeking can be successful, there must be the confession of the carnal state and the resulting spiritual need. In a memorable paragraph, Dr. Ockenga writes:

**"Confession is the admitting of being in a carnal state, of having a dissatisfaction with one's spiritual experience, of experience of deficiency in either knowledge or life. It is necessary for a Christian to face his inward sinfulness realistically. Few Christians realize the presence of this corrupt nature at the time of their conversion, for they are involved in the joy of the new life of forgiveness, of the removal of guilt, and of adoption into the family of God. But finally the question of sin will arise to plague this Christian. The first joy, peace and exultation of the regenerate experience will flee and the struggle with self will arise. Then he will be tempted to sing: 'Where is the blessedness that once I knew, when first I saw the Lord; where is the soul-refreshing view of Jesus and His Word?' It is for this reason that Romans is divided into four sections. The first section deals with our sins and victory over them through imputation of the redemption in Christ Jesus. The second section deals with sin and victory over it through sanctification with Jesus Christ in death and in resurrection so that the Spirit may be released in our lives."**<sup>9</sup>

**In connection with confession there is consecration. Dr. Ockenga states that, when a man comes to Christ in repentance and faith, he is sealed with the Holy Spirit unto redemption; but "when he makes a full committal to God, meeting the conditions thereof, he is filled with the Holy Spirit." He writes:**

**"When a Christian makes that full consecration, taking his place with Christ upon the cross, reckoning himself to be dead unto sin and alive unto righteousness, when he has yielded himself and his members as instruments of righteousness unto God, then Jesus Christ may fill him with the Holy Spirit. This is synonymous with the process of sanctification, according to Scripture. Thus, Paul taught what he himself also experienced, namely that there is a second phase of the Spirit's work in filling a person with power and manifesting His gifts and His grace."**<sup>10</sup>

**Also impressive is Dr. Ockenga's summary listing of the conditions for receiving the fullness of the Spirit. He gives them as five:**

**"It is necessary for us to confess the condition of being in the carnal state, of being dissatisfied with one's spiritual experience. It is necessary to face one's inward sinfulness, to realize that the joy of forgiveness, of new life, of eternal inheritance is not all that Christ has for us. We must confess that we need a greater work of grace.**

**"Secondly, we must consecrate everything to God and surrender all to Jesus Christ . . . .**

**"Thirdly, we must definitely pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit . . . .**

**"Fourthly, there must be the simple faith which appropriates the gift of God. Just as it was the instrumental cause in justification and righteousness, so it becomes the instrumental cause in the receiving of the spiritual life.**

**"Finally, there must be obedience. Just as Isaiah heard the Lord saying, 'Whom will I send, and who will go for us?' when he had been cleansed by the coal from off the altar, so we also will hear the Lord speaking to us concerning His work, our lives, our possessions, our relationships and our answer must always be: 'Yes, Lord.'"**<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps as notable as any statement in the book is Dr. Ockenga's clear-cut position that the life in the fullness of the Spirit is not specifically the qualification for the ministry, missionary service, or some special task. He says:

**"It is normal Christianity. Those who are not spiritual Christians are abnormal Christians. We are not to seek the Holy Spirit only for praying, or preaching, or witnessing but for every detail of life that we may be spiritual. When we rise in the morning, sit at the family table, get on the bus, work at our desk or bench, or go to our friends' homes we should be Spirit-filled. This has been commanded, promised and expected in the Bible."**<sup>12</sup>

Even more recently, Claude H. Thompson has written on a "New Call to Saintliness." He says: "It is our claim that a proper appreciation of the Incarnation of the Holy Spirit will produce a new concern for saintliness in Christian living. We cannot take seriously the moral claims of Christ, 'You are to be perfect, like your heavenly Father,' (Matthew 5:48), and read this to say: 'You must be almost perfect - -,' or 'You must be partly perfect--,' or 'You must be perfect here and there, now and then--'"<sup>13</sup>

Dr. Thompson summarizes the points relevant for our time which are included in this new and fresh call to sanctity. They are: a life clean both within and without, in action and attitude; a life of boundless love -- of "love without boundaries," a life of indescribable peace, a life of disciplined power, a life of social righteousness, and a life of contagious radiance.<sup>14</sup>

At the latter point, Dr. Thompson writes: "The saintly life can become a life of contagious radiance . . . . It can be said of those of the mid-century as it was of those in the early church: 'Verily, this is a new people, and there is something divine in the midst of them!' (Quoted from Aristides, Apology, c. 16, in The AnteNicene Fathers, vol. ix, p. 278) . . . . And the contagious radiance is found in these words: 'A strange, sober joy went across that sad and decaying world -- joy that goodness was here for the asking, that moral victory was possible now, that guilt could be lifted from the conscience stricken, that inner conflict could be resolved and inner unity found, that the total person could be heightened and a "plus" added to one, and that a Fellowship of like-souled persons gave one a sense of belonging. It was Good News. And it worked.' (Quoted from E. Stanley Jones, The Way to Power and Poise, p. 28 f) ."15

The message of evangelism, then, must stress the full-orbed truth that God's supply for our human need goes as deep as that need always is. For we have not only sins to be forgiven, but sin from which to be cleansed. In the fullness of the Holy Spirit of God is both purity and power.

Gracious Spirit, dwell with me!  
I myself would gracious be;  
And, with words that help and heal,  
Would Thy life in mine reveal;  
And, with actions bold and meek,  
Would for Christ, my Saviour, speak.

Truthful Spirit, dwell with me!  
I myself would truthful be;  
And, with wisdom kind and clear,  
Let Thy life in mine appear;  
And, with actions brotherly,  
Speak my Lord's sincerity.

Tender Spirit, dwell with me!  
I myself would tender be;  
Shut my heart up like a flower  
In temptation's darksome hour;  
Open it when shines the sun,  
And His love by fragrance own.

Holy Spirit, dwell with me!  
I myself would holy be;  
Separate from sin, I would  
Choose and cherish all things good,  
And whatever I can be  
Give to Him who gave me Thee.

-- Thomas Toke Lynch

\* \* \* \* \*

## 05 -- THE KINGDOM TO COME

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen (Matt. 6:13).

June 6, 1944, is a date which will long be remembered in the Western world. With our modern fondness for alphabetic abbreviations, it has become known as "D-day." It is the date on which Allied armies landed on the Normandy coast between Cherbourg and Le Havre. A long period of preparation had preceded D-

day. Some of the most bitter and bloody battles of the war followed it. But it was the action which sealed the doom of the Third Reich as surely as unconditional surrender of the German High Command eleven months and one day later. It was the decisive day.

Oscar Cullmann has seen in this momentous bit of history an intriguing analogy of the advents of Christ into this world. The coming of Jesus nineteen centuries ago with His atoning death and victorious resurrection breached the fortifications of evil and struck the deathblow against God's adversary and ours. We still fight on -- bitter and bloody battles. D-day has come and gone. V-day is yet to dawn. The enemy struggles on with the desperation of imminent defeat, determined to do as much damage as he can in the time that remains to him. But there is no shadow of uncertainty as to the final outcome.<sup>1</sup>

We have been considering the message of evangelism as telling the good news throughout the world that D-day has come. That for which the centuries waited and toward which they moved was fulfilled in the redemptive life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Christ the last days dawned, and the Kingdom was begun. "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4-5).

#### News About The Future

No treatment of the message of evangelism can afford to overlook that point at which God's good news differs very greatly from the occasional item of good news which finds its way into man's news media. God's good news not only relates to the past. It also has to do with what we call the future. It not only concerns D-day, but V-day as well. It embraces not only the First Advent, when God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. It also includes the Second Advent, when God in Christ shall judge and rule the world.

A synopsis of the sweep of redemptive history grows out of Paul's lesson in Christian humility in which he holds up the example of Christ Jesus -- "who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:6-11, R.S.V.).

The ease with which the apostle's thought ranges across the future to the coming coronation day is eloquent testimony to an ignored fact of Biblical theology. The doctrine of the future -- or what our theologically literate friends call eschatology -- is not an appendage tacked on at the tail end in a sort of

afterthought. It is rather a central and unifying truth in the whole system. As Frederick C. Grant has said:

"Eschatology, the doctrine of the future full establishment of the divine reign, far from belonging at the very end of the series of Christian doctrine, belongs (for the New Testament) in the very closest relation to the doctrine of God. The doctrine of the coming kingdom is basic to all that follows -- the doctrine of Christ, of salvation, of church and sacraments, and so on."<sup>2</sup>

### **The Return Of Christ**

The expectation of Christ's return, then, is "not something that can be dropped without affecting anything but itself, but something that is directly related to the message of the Cross and the Resurrection," as H. H. Rowley has pointed out. He continues: "To Greek thought, with its cyclic conception of Time, it is alien, but to the Hebraic and Christian conception of Time, which is linear, it is closely related. The Kingdom of God is not merely something supraterrrestrial, but something that is to be realized on earth as the crown and climax of the redemption that stands between Creation and this re-creation of heaven and earth."<sup>3</sup> "To reject this hope," Oscar Cullmann reminds us, "is to mutilate the New Testament message of Salvation."<sup>4</sup>

Never was this phase of New Testament faith more needed than it is today. We who tremble every time a Russian dictator rattles his rockets need to remember that the final issues of human destiny are not to be settled in Moscow, or even in Peiping. Nor are they to be settled in Washington or London. The God of the Bible is a God whose kingdom comes.

Eschatology can help us keep in mind, also, the fact that the issues of the world struggle are neither political nor economic, but essentially spiritual and cosmic. Behind the human striving is a mortal combat between good and evil, light and darkness, God the Creator and the personified power of chaos. We are called upon to choose our sides. There can be no neutrality, no attitude of non-commitment.<sup>5</sup> In that choice are both temporal happiness and eternal well-being. It is never so important that God be on our side as it is that we be on His. With John S. Whale we say:

"The Christian doctrine of Last Things is always affirming one great truth, through all its varied imagery, namely, that the only true evaluation of this world is one which recognizes the impermanence of this world. Here we have no abiding city; we seek one that is to come, beyond history and beyond death. We are always strangers and sojourners; our citizenship is in Heaven."<sup>6</sup>

### **The Kingdom: Present And To Come**

In considering the Kingdom to come, as part of the message of evangelism, we must keep clearly in mind two points, each of which represents something of a paradox. The first is that the kingdom of God is both present and yet to come. The presence of the Kingdom has given rise to C. H. Dodd's controversial and one-sided phrase, "realized eschatology." The better epithet is suggested by Archibald Hunter, "inaugurated eschatology."

When Jesus came preaching as recorded in Mark 1:15, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel," He was announcing the fact that the reality of the Kingdom lies in the presence of the King. As Floyd V. Filson has argued, "The word Kingdom refers primarily, not to the area or people governed or to the machinery of government, but to the fact of divine sovereignty. The basic idea, therefore, is the rule or sovereignty of God."<sup>7</sup> "The kingdom of God is within you" or "among you," however one might wish to translate Luke 16:21, and does not come with "swords loud clashing, nor roll of stirring drums." It was probably of Pentecost that Jesus said some standing there should see the kingdom of God come with power (Mark 9:1). And Paul states that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom. 14:17).

Yet withal, the fullness of the Kingdom is not yet. We are taught to pray, "Thy kingdom come." Contrasted with the "here and now" is the "then and there" aspect of the Kingdom. There is an "already" and there is a "not yet." Jesus speaks of those who will seek to enter the Kingdom "in that day" but who shall be excluded because their deeds do not conform to their words (Matt. 7:21-22). The King's invitation to those on His right hand will be, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34).

Paul also speaks of the future dimension of the Kingdom when he says, "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (I Cor. 15:50); and, "The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (II Tim. 4:18).

There is something of this in the term "heir" as used to describe the position of the Christian in this world (cf. Rom. 8:17; Gal. 4:1-7). For an heir is one who is already in possession of an inheritance which he yet does not possess fully.<sup>8</sup>

Donald G. Miller has summarized this point: "The New Testament church lived in tension. Much as the early Christians believed in the glory of what Christ had done, they lived in hope of something he was yet to do. That which he had begun he would complete. Faith in what he had already accomplished in his first appearing, therefore, quickened hope in what he would do at his final appearing. Jesus was not only the fulfilment of promise, he was also the promise of fulfilment. His Lordship in which the church believed was now hidden, seen only by the eyes of faith. Since this Lordship was real, it must some day be openly manifested for all

to see. What is true in the heavenly places where Christ is seated at the right hand of God must become true in the whole created universe which is in rebellion against him."9

We live, then, to refer back to our earlier comparison, between D-day and V-day. The Kingdom within is an earnest and foretaste of the Kingdom to come. Nothing is more clear in the New Testament than the fact that the Church of the first century lived in anticipation of the return of Christ. It is true, these early disciples had no calendar of the Kingdom. They had begun to speak of a day as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day as early as the time of the writing of II Peter. But they had no doubts as to the coming of the day of the Lord. Their faith in the imminence of the Lord's return should not be thought of in terms of time alone, but in the conviction that, since certain events had happened, the coming of Christ again was known to be certain.

### Day Of Darkness

The second paradox connected with the coming of the day of the Lord is expressed in the fact that there are two great contrasting sides to this climactic event of human history.

There is certainly no space nor need here to go into the maze of speculation which has gathered around the second coming of Christ in the teaching of the last fifty years. Much confusion has arisen through failure to recognize that in both the Old Testament and the New the "day of the Lord" was an event with two different aspects to it. One of the keys to unlock the puzzles of prophecy is the question and answer of Isa. 21:11-12: "He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night."

"The morning cometh, and also the night." In the same event there are both morning and night, hope and fear, vindication and judgment. Just as a single turning of the globe on which we live brings morning to one half of mankind and night to the other half, so the coming of Christ will both be the dawn of eternal day and the darkness of eternal night. The day of the Lord is both salvation and judgment.

Paul puts it in strong terms in II Thess. 1:6-10: "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day."

**There is a dark face to the message of the Kingdom to come. God's wrath, which Luther called His "strange work," is still His grace -- in James Stewart's strong terms, "His grace smitten with dreadful sorrow. It is His love in agony."10 J. S. Whale has put it with trenchant logic:**

**"It is illogical to tell men that they must do the will of God and accept his gospel of grace, if you also tell them that the obligation has no eternal significance, and that nothing ultimately depends on it. The curious modern heresy that everything is bound to come right in the end is so frivolous that I will not insult you by refuting it. 'I remember', said Dr. Johnson on one occasion, 'that my Maker has said that he will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left.' That is a solemn truth which only the empty-headed and empty-hearted will neglect. It strikes at the very roots of life and destiny."11**

**We must not throw the mercy and the wrath of God, His love and His holiness, into an unnatural and unScriptural contrast or contradiction. As Alan Richardson expressed it: "Only a certain kind of degenerate Protestant theology has attempted to contrast the wrath of God with the mercy of Christ.12 And R. P. C. Hanson says:**

**"Wrath is the converse, the under side, of God's love. It accompanies love, as darkness accompanies light; if you reject light you must have darkness. There is no neutral state of existence in which you live neither in light nor in darkness. If men reject God's love, the love of a god so sovereign, so demanding, so inescapable as the God of the Bible, then they must involve themselves in a state of ruin and disaster, and this state is called the wrath of God."13**

**We need to see clearly that there is an inner necessity in the fact of the judgment to come. It will not there be decided whom God will admit and whom He will exclude from His eternal kingdom, but it will there be recognized who in fact has entered and who has refused to enter. Paul expressed this to the men of Antioch when he said, "Ye . . . judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life" (Acts 13:46). The judgment is absolute and inescapable because it is essentially the judgment men pass upon themselves by their attitude toward the good news preached to them.**

**In a little volume entitled The Relevance of Apocalyptic, H. H. Rowley has written: "He who will not order his life by the will of God cannot belong to the kingdom, not because God will not admit him, but because admission to the kingdom is a matter of the spirit, and he will have none of that spirit. Just because we picture the bliss of the kingdom in physical and material images, we suppose that in the Hereafter all men will desire that bliss, and a loving God will not have the heart to deny them their desire. And we tacitly assume that God will set His seal on what is a purely selfish desire of men. The bliss of the kingdom is the joy of doing the will of God. It is the antithesis of selfish desire."14**

## Day Of Light

The other side of the day of the Lord is a note which should be sounded often in days such as these in which we live. The coming of Christ ushers in the dawn of eternal day for those whose hearts are ready for His return. It is "that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2: 13, Greek). It is the comforting assurance that He who has gone to prepare a place for His own will return and receive them unto himself.

Jesus envisioned days like these. There shall be, He said, "upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:25-28).

This is no pessimism, no counsel to despair. This is optimism of the highest order, because it is born of the strong conviction that God, who works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform, still controls the course of history and directs the destiny of man.

## The Revelation Of Jesus Christ

The last book of the Bible, the cryptic and challenging "revelation of Jesus Christ . . . unto his servant John," sounds the final and clarion call in the message of evangelism. It is one of the conceits of the modern mind that it treats what is called "the apocalyptic literature" of the Bible with ill-concealed distaste.

The Book of Revelation is often described as the Apocalypse, taken from the Greek title. The word is derived from apokalypto, which means "to uncover," "to bring to light that was hidden," "to reveal," "to set in a clear light," "to display." As a form of Biblical literature, an apocalypse is a description of the final action of God in history in terms of symbolic figures and events. It is because we insist on treating the Apocalypse as we would an allegory such as Pilgrim's Progress, trying to make each detail represent a day or a year on the calendar, that we get into difficulty and turn a "revelation" into a puzzle and an obscurity.

The theme and message of Revelation is really clear and categorical. In the vast struggle then shaping up between Caesarism and Christianity we have a picture -- a parable, if you please -- of the great and final cataclysmic struggle of evil against the good. Whatever we may doubt about the details, of the outcome there is no question.

We live in real peril of pulling in the horizons too short, of living and working as if this temporal order would go on forever. The constant temptation of the

**Church is to allow uncertainty as to the day and hour of the Lord's return to become practical certainty that it will not be soon.**

**But the final triumph of the gospel is sure. Through dark days and desperate the Church has moved, and is destined to move again. The message which spoke to the need of John's day when Caesar made his bid to be Lord speaks to the need of our day when Marx and Lenin, Khrushchev and Mao Tse-tung mouth their vain threatenings.**

**Soon the great day of God's wrath will come (Rev. 6:17). Soon others will come up out of great tribulation, having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (7:14). Soon the angel with the little book in his hand, with one foot on land and the other on the sea, shall lift his hand and cry that there shall be time no longer (10:1-6).**

**Soon the two witnesses shall have finished their testimony (11:7), and the loud voice shall proclaim, "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down. . . , and they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (12:10-11).**

**Soon the New Jerusalem shall descend out of heaven from God, having the glory of God -- a city with "no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God" shall lighten it, and the Lamb shall be the Light thereof. From it shall flow a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal; and in it shall be the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. "And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads" (21:10 -- 22:4). "These sayings are faithful and true . . . Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book" (22:6-7).**

**But we should miss the secret of it all if we were to fail to hear the evangelistic invitation which summarizes and climaxes the whole splendid panorama of Revelation in particular and the Bible in general: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (22:17).**

**Here is the moving dynamic of evangelism: The Spirit says, "Come."**

**Here is the method of evangelism: The bride and all who hear say, "Come."**

**And here is the eternal message of Biblical evangelism: "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."**

**\* \* \* \* \***

## **EPILOGUE: PROCLAIMING THE MESSAGE**

**For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12).**

**God uses a variety of ways and means to do His work in the lives of men. The methods of evangelism are many and varied. But all require, in one way or another, making known the message of evangelism as the saving power of God in His gospel.**

**Paul stated this in his great "theology of preaching" in I Cor. 1:17-18, 21: "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel [Greek: euangelizesthai, literally "to evangelize," "to bring good news"]: not in wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made void. For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching [Greek: tou kerygmatos, "the proclamation"] to save them that believe" (A.R.V.).**

**The New Testament has several words to describe communicating the message of God's saving power. The simplest and most basic simply mean "to tell" or "to speak." As one writer has noted: "In the New Testament there is little about 'preaching sermons' or 'delivering discourses,' but much about talking to people, telling or speaking the Word. These words suggest face-to-face, direct-personal speech. Apostolic preaching was as personal as private conversation."<sup>1</sup>**

**A second and closely related term means "to bear witness." The directness of person-to-person communication demands a personal involvement on the part of the speaker. The message of redemption can come only through the redeemed. It is surely true that one can no more preach what he has not experienced than he can come back from where he has never been.**

**Daniel Niles has well reminded us that there are three levels of witnessing. One may, for example, witness an automobile accident in the sense of standing on the sidewalk and watching two cars collide. Or again, one may view the accident as a rider in one of the cars but uninjured personally in the crash. Or finally, one may witness an accident as a driver or as a passenger who is injured in the collision, vitally and personally changed by the experience.<sup>2</sup>**

**It is in this last sense that we bear our witness to the saving power of God. We may say, "I know the gospel changes lives because I have seen it work in the lives of others." But we do not really witness until we can say, "I know the gospel changes lives, not only because I have seen it in the lives of others, but because it has changed my life."**

Yet another New Testament word for the communication of God's saving power in the message of evangelism is a beautiful term which means "to proclaim as a herald." There is a volume of meaning wrapped up in this one idea. A herald does not speak for himself. He brings a message from the king or ruler. The herald of the gospel does not speak for himself. He brings a message from the sovereign Lord of the universe. His word is not, "Thus saith the books I have read," or, "Thus saith my own experience," or, "Thus saith the wisdom I've acquired." His message is that of the prophets of all the centuries: "Thus saith the Lord."

As we have seen in an earlier context, the gospel itself is often called "the kerygma," or "that which the herald speaks." It is this term Paul used in the verses just quoted: "It was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of preaching [literally "the message which the herald proclaims"] to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1:21, A.R.V.). This fact makes him who speaks the gospel humble before God and bold before men. He speaks the word of Another, One who makes that word power and life.

Standing with the idea of proclaiming as a herald is a term which supplements it: the word *didaskain*, "to teach." In the New Testament there is none of the sense of contrast in method we have sometimes made between preaching and teaching. The prelude to the Sermon on the Mount tells us that Jesus "taught them" (Matt. 5:2) -- yet this was preaching in every true sense.

As it relates to the gospel, preaching and teaching are two sides to the same process. The teacher explains what the herald proclaims. As John Knox has said, "The proclamation of the gospel of God's action in Christ and the explication of the situation which that action had brought about were closely related, ultimately inseparable, functions; and the one can hardly have been carried on without the other . . . . If the gospel is not being proclaimed in the classroom, Christian teaching is not taking place; and if the implications of the gospel the obligations it lays on us as well as the promises it offers us -- are not being opened up in the pulpit, Christian preaching is not taking place."<sup>3</sup>

A much misunderstood New Testament term for making known the gospel of God's saving power is one which means "to prophesy." This word is generally thought to have to do with foretelling the future. But Paul says, "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and consolation" (I Cor. 14:3, A.R.V.). What it means for us is to show us that the communication of God's saving truth must be under the immediate unction and inspiration of the Spirit. For "prophesying" is one of the gifts of the Spirit (I Cor. 12:7-11). It is the Spirit's touch which sets logic afire, and adds the warmth without which the light does not shine through. Said Dr. P. F. Bresee:

"Reforms go slowly creeping, begging their way. There is one thing that will go leaping, bounding triumphantly along, and that is the Word of God under the baptism with fire."<sup>4</sup>

**A final and most important word is one which has become familiar to us by being a loan word into our English language -- euangelizesthai, "evangelize." The root of this term is the noun we translate "gospel"-euangelion, the "good news" or "good tidings." It stresses not only the manner of the communication, but the nature of that which is made known -- God's good message to men. Weatherspoon has to say of this:**

**"The distinctive idea which it adds to the concept of preaching lies in the prefix eu ('well,' 'good'). The idea in the root of the word (angel), 'to announce,' adds nothing to the meaning of 'tell,' 'witness' and 'proclaim.' It is the eu that makes the difference, filling out the picture with the warm tones and shining features of a message of joy and hope. So in this one word we see (1) the messenger (2) delivering his message (3) which is good news (4) for an anxious and needy world."5**

**There is a distinction between God's good news and the news of men which must not be lost. Most of what we call "news" is merely information. We listen, and nod or shake our heads, and go on about our business. But God's good news is the word of pardon to one in prison. It is the message of reprieve to one condemned. It is addressed to those deeply and vitally implicated. It demands an answer. Gene E. Bartlett comments:**

**"News, as we hear it daily, most often is information, usually information about other people. It confronts us with no decision; it leaves us with no need of response; it implants no radical hope. Yet in the gospel sense 'the news' is vastly different. It is proclaimed to those who are involved. It is not information; it is tidings for which we have been waiting, changing the whole situation of our lives."6**

**Through all the ways of describing how the saving power of God is to be made known runs one clear note. In telling, witnessing, proclaiming, teaching, prophesying, and evangelizing, the truth or the message, the good news, and the invitation are not ours. It is God's message, God's good news, God's invitation that we bear. It has become personally real to us, so that we as Paul may speak of "my gospel" or "our gospel" (Rom. 2:16; II Cor. 4:3). But it is "my gospel" or "our gospel," not because we control it or determine its nature, but because it controls us and determines the nature of our lives and witness.**

**This means that all the saving power of God is channeled to us through His Word. Power in evangelism is not original or underived. It is not the power of human emotion or personal magnetism. It is the power God has made inherent in His Word and which He imparts through His Spirit. In the words of Emil Brunner: "Where there is true preaching, where, in the obedience of faith, the Word is proclaimed, there, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, the most important thing that ever happens upon this earth takes place."7**

**This is because in the communicating of the Word of God from the Bible we have the necessary condition for the saving event in which individual redemption takes place. As Peter T. Forsyth said, "The Bible is the book, as Christ is the person, where the seeking God meets and saves the seeking man."s Our task is not chiefly a recitation of truths about religion. It is the proclamation of the saving Word.**

**Such communication of the Word -- by preaching, by teaching, by witnessing -- is not only "saying something"; it is doing something. It becomes part of a divine-human encounter in which God meets human needs. In a very real and gracious sense, it reproduces here and now what God did in Christ at Calvary and Pentecost.**

**Thus the words which communicate the Word become a work of God, part of the dynamic event wherein God redeems the lost and sanctifies His people. Such words, for all their human inadequacy, become "an act wherein the crucified, risen Lord personally confronts men either to save or to judge them."9 Alan Stibbs writes:**

**"In a fallen, sinful and dark world, in a day of marked human despair, in a generation in which the feebleness, futility and frustration of human effort are all too apparent, the one person who has something to offer worth having is the faithful Christian preacher; because he has to give to men the Word of God, which is the one thing that is stable, reliable and sure of fulfilment in a totally uncertain and insecure world."10 Stewart recalls a simple sentence of Wesley:**

**"'I came into the town,' wrote John Wesley in his Journal, 'and offered them Christ.' To spend your days doing that -- not just describing Christianity or arguing for a creed, nor apologizing for the faith or debating fine shades of religious meaning, but actually offering and giving men Christ -- could any lifework be more thrilling or momentous?"11**

**The message of evangelism is not an end in itself. It is a means to the end of bringing the saving power of God into human life. It is the arena in which God confronts the soul with His claim and invitation. Its purpose is not to give information, but to transform life. To impart this message -- as preacher, teacher, and witness was to supply the "catalytic agent by which the redemption recorded in the Bible and the need for redemption in the human heart shall be brought together in a mighty fusion."12 Nowhere has the purpose of it all been better stated than in John 20:31: "That ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."**

**Evangelism cannot be satisfied with anything short of response. It expects results. It must always convey the element of appeal. This is the difference between telling the good news of salvation and lecturing about religion. The purpose of a lecture is to inform. The purpose of evangelism is to redeem. To be redemptive,**

**communicating the message of evangelism must combine proclamation with appeal.**

**It is through the message of evangelism that the saving power of God in the Holy Spirit is released to men. F. B. Meyer wrote: "The Holy Spirit's power proceeds along the line of the Word of God, as the electric message along the wires. It is His sword; the life-giving seed which He has vitalized; the word in which the Word is incarnated. Through long centuries He has been at work communicating to prepared natures the thoughts of God, and naturally He avails Himself of His prerogative. The ministry therefore which is most carefully based on Scripture and honors Scripture and saturates itself with Scripture is the ministry with which the Spirit of Truth can cooperate in the most perfect abandonment."<sup>13</sup>**

**The Apostle Paul is both example and teacher at this point. He states in I Cor. 2:4, "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Again in I Thess. 1:5 he says, "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake."**

**When the Holy Spirit anoints the words of a man or woman telling the message of the saving power of God, a real miracle takes place. The words of the man or woman become the Word of God. The redemptive act of God which took place at Calvary nineteen centuries ago is re-enacted. The Cross, which was a unique historical fact of the past, becomes a present reality. In this experience is actually the "real presence" of Christ, and witnessing, teaching, or preaching becomes a true sacrament in a very literal sense. Something happens as understanding is widened, resolves are strengthened, lives are changed, and hearts are cleansed.**

**There is a desperate urgency about making known the message of evangelism, telling forth the saving power of God. Wayne Dehoney has spelled this out in terms simple and clear:**

**"Today, there are eighty million uncommitted people in the United States. They are neither evangelical nor Catholic; not Baptist, Methodist, or Presbyterian. They live in a spiritual vacuum! They know no loyalty to any church or creed. They have no soul-saving, life-redeeming experience in Jesus Christ. This is the vast army of eighty million people we call lost and unenlisted. These people will determine the destiny of America. Whoever wins these eighty million uncommitted souls will win America. We are in a life-and-death struggle to win them. We will win them to our way, or they will be won to another persuasion. They will not continue in a spiritual vacuum."<sup>14</sup>**

**In a sense, all the challenge of the centuries is focused on us "upon whom the ends of the world are come." Evangelism and its message is not the concern**

only of a chosen few. It is the interest and concern of all who love the Lord, literally everybody's business. While we cannot stop with learning and knowing the message, we must start here. The first requirement in teaching is something to teach. The first demand in preaching is a gospel to preach. The first need of a messenger is a message.

In proclaiming the message, may we keep the spirit and passion attributed to the Apostle Paul in the familiar verses from F. W. H. Myers:

Oft when the Word is on me to deliver  
Lifts the illusion and the truth lies bare;  
Desert or throng, the city or the river,  
Melts in a lucid paradise of air,--

Only like souls I see the folk thereunder,  
Bound who should conquer, slaves who  
should be kings,--  
Hearing their one hope with an empty wonder,  
Sadly contented in a show of things.

Then with a rush the intolerable craving  
Shivers through me like a trumpet call,--  
Oh, to save these, to perish for their saving,  
Die for their life, be offered for them all!

-- From "St. Paul"

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**THE END**