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THE CHALLENGE OF THIS TRAGIC HOUR
By Glenn Griffith

A Paper read at Rally Day
In Sidney, Nebraska, September 29, 1946
When the author was Superintendent of
The Colorado District, Church of the Nazarene

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We are gathered ... in the most crucial hour that we have ever assembled. Our world is in chaos. The birth place of the "Prince of Peace" has become a seething caldron of madness in every form. Hatred that reaches to the very heart of a just and merciful God. The cruel butchery, the unmentionable atrocities, the beastly lust for power that prevails everywhere, can only be designed by a mind that is diabolical and whose counselor is the arch fiend of the pit, and by one who is determined to defeat Christ at any cost.

This master of mob psychology has hurled to the four winds devilish propaganda, that has not only influenced, but warped the thinking of this whole generation. In other words "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." It has caused the masses to change their attitude toward age-old fundamentals and foundational truths, upon which civilization has rested these centuries. Under its influences, statesmanship has deteriorated into a weak, rotten political maneuver. The ship of state has broken away from its moorings and sails like a derelict on an uncharted sea. It tells us that drunkenness builds manhood, and will balance the budget. That it will strengthen our armies and lift home morale. The social life has been cheated of its moral standards, until vice appears as virtue. The flask and the cigarette take the place of refinement among the majority of women. Nudity replaces modesty, and relationship between the sexes has become so influenced by the minds of perverted Freuds, that lust appears as love, and vulgarity is publicized until there is no blush for shame. The marriage relationship in many refined and even religious circles has become legalized prostitution [through laws allowing easy and quick divorce? --

DVM]. The awfulness of this moral insanity, resulting from Communistic propaganda, has seemingly caused people, even the educated and refined, to believe that right is wrong, that Communism frees the Worker, when in reality it only enslaves him and wrecks his home in segregating his family. Old fashioned decency is branded as old fogeyism. Discipline, in any form, has become a crime in the mind of the public, and a teacher or parent dare not discipline a child, unless endangering themselves to arrest. What an atmosphere in which to build a home, a nation, or a clean character.

The foul influence does not stop there, for even the church is not exempt from its power. The once purified, Pentecostal church, with its fruitful beginning (speaking of the great general church of Jesus Christ) today is denying the Christ that brought it into existence. His blood is mocked. His holy birth is blasphemed. The word of God is torn to shreds, just because some modern atheist says there are spurious texts within it. It is God inspired, but who is God? What does this worldly, lightly rejecting, modern church care about God's law or holy inspiration, when His Son is declared to be a bastard by the same crowd?

When God had to raise up another crowd as His witnesses, the modern holiness movement came into existence. In the beginning these holy people were so much like Christ and their fathers of the faith, in character, sacrifice, humility, vision and obedience, that nothing was too hard for them. No road was too long nor night too dark. No price was too great. They struck their generation like a tornado and shook it from center to circumference with revivals of holy fire.

Whole sections of the country were changed by mighty outpourings of God's Spirit. These people prayed until God really shook things, and the whole faith structure was again grounded on the Rock, Christ Jesus. But even this movement has felt, and is feeling, the results of the same subtle influence of hell's propaganda, upon its once powerful faith, dynamic message, sacrifice and vision.

Something has happened. What is it? That the services have lost their attractiveness. The crowds go right by the churches and to the picture show, the night clubs, the bowling alleys. The church, even with a revival meeting on, is startled by its many empty seats, and the few who attend prayer meetings. They see their people go to the altar again and again, but even the altar service is, more or less, a dead affair, with not much burden on the prayers, or not much groaning and agonizing by seekers or saints. There is not much dying out to sin, the world, and self as they once saw and experienced. In a week or so the so-called revival is gone and not many changed their way of living. Few quit the old crowd. Not much change was affected in conduct, activity, attire, burden for souls, or anxiety about vital salvation.

Evangelists going out to the churches, where they used to almost turn the church upside down and see the whole community stirred, now hardly get a move either within or without the church. Pastors and evangelists, in many cases, do not want to dig down and stir the church, but rather to leave the problems unsolved. The younger generation, stumbling over this condition, lost faith in a definite personal experience of holiness. In this modern holiness crowd, there are the more liberal brethren who would say revivals come in cycles and that we are having the greatest revivals we have ever had. But the fact is that there are not many whole communities stirred to holy religion and holy living. In a great many so-called revivals, where scores are going to the

altar, you can go back in a very few weeks and have practically the same crowd at the altar again seeking. It seems that as far as convictions are concerned, everybody does as he, or she pleases and if, (as they say), God does not condemn, there is no harm in what they allow. But the Word of God was once the source of authority for the whole movement, and it was read purposely to find the will of God for the individual. Oh! It seems this same influence is working to a marked degree in the holiness churches. Churches have banquets and parties in their basements, preachers and people go to bowling alleys, and some even to picture shows. There seems to be more time spent in teaching how to be dramatic, and make up as an actor, to know how to be formal, than there is to teach how to pray and stand in the gap for this poor, broken, hell-bound world. Preachers are going to defense work, selling insurance, or commodities, and this world lost like sheep without a shepherd, broken and faint with their burdens, drifting toward the judgment of the God of justice. The wearing of jewelry and make-up is taking the place of old fashioned modesty.

Oh brethren! God knows my heart. I accuse none personally. I am one of the crowd. But these facts as I see them disturb and trouble my soul. I cannot agree that revivals or spiritual awakenings come in cycles. Every awakening, I have ever read about, came when leaders and the people that are called by His name, humbled themselves, prayed and sought His face, and turned from their wicked ways. Then God heard from heaven, and came down and healed their land. (II Chron. 7:14). I know Elijah had a mighty revival on Carmel, but it was the result of obedience, faithfulness, and forty days spent with God alone. Daniel turned a nation to God, but by faithful, consistent prayer, God given convictions, a lion-den testing, and three weeks of fasting and praying. Cycles of time have very little to do with a revival. When men touch God, God touches men, and a work of grace is accomplished in the hearts of the seekers. When Zion travaileth she bringeth forth children but not until then.

Beloved, if I didn't know better than I know anything else, that I will have to meet this generation at the Judgment, it would be different.

We could then look at the picture and with a sigh, say, too bad, the Lord help us, and forget it all. But, brethren, we are here, not just as men and women, but leaders, ministers, ambassadors of Christ, and I tremble under the mighty responsibility. I am afraid that the destiny of our beloved church hangs in the balance, with its ministry as the fulcrum, over which it will be determined whether it will remain a holy, dynamic, evangelistic church, or take its place among the other denominations who had the opportunity but went to Egypt for help and failed, and thus became a has-been. There are dangerous trends along these lines creeping in.

Then this perspective of the future concerns me tremendously. The Foreign Mission opportunity with this war closing will be challenging. India will be more open to the missionary, because her caste system will be more or less crushed by this war, and China with the influence of Chiang Kai Shek and the friendliness with us, because of our lend lease assistance, will be a wide open door. Then, every island where our boys have been fighting will be open to the Gospel. They have carried to these places western ways of doing things. They have built pontoon bridges, worked the ground with massive machinery, and all these things will break down the prejudice through the soldier, and the Gospel will break like a mighty light across that heathen darkness. Yes, New Guinea, the Solomons, Marshalls, Gilberts, Australia, New Zealand, New Caledonia, and Madagascar should all be evangelized. Add to that the fact that from the defense areas will

come back the people who located there by the hundreds or thousands during the war, backslidden holiness folks, and many others. The soldiers, maimed and discouraged, trained to hate and kill, yet trying to stand up under it all, will also be returning.

Brethren, all these facts stagger me. I am not discouraged, neither am I pessimistic, but I must face the facts as a leader. Oh, gracious Christ, what a challenge to your power through sanctified human leadership. Dare we accept the challenge? Will I? I can only answer for myself. I know it can never be met with a soft-handed, tender-kneed, convictionless, light-rejecting, common-place, Pharisaical, timed, professional, time-serving, liberal-minded, unsanctified ministry. It can never be met by educators, or education, philosophers, or philosophy, idealists or ideologies, orators or orations. Only men. God-made men, can stand in the gap, and make up the hedge. Holy men. Men with deep convictions. Men with burning hearts. Men who will risk their reputations. Men who will deal faithfully with carnality in all its subtlety. God looked for a man that would make up the hedge and stand in the gap, but found none. Therefore, He had to pour out His indignation upon that generation.

But, by the power of the Holy Ghost, and the grace of Jesus Christ, men can face the facts and accept the challenge.

Those giants of faith whose mantles fell upon us, as Holiness ministers, stood in the gap. Some were cast into slime pits, thrown to wild beasts, put into lion's dens, sawn asunder. They wandered in desert sands, in caves of the mountains, lived on locust and wild honey. They were stoned, they were beheaded, but they never yielded. They accepted the challenge, and bared their hearts to a carnal world, and wrought righteousness, builded kingdoms, brought the dead to life, stopped the mouths of lions; (Of whom the world was not worthy). Oh, mighty God, what a heritage they gave us; from Moses, to Paul, to Bresee. Oh, God, help me to pray until the place is shaken where I am. Pray 'till Pentecost blazes in my own soul, Pray 'till my heart is completely melted in its flame. Pray 'till my entire past, present, and future, my reputation, my all, rests surrendered to God. To be hurled against this mighty foe to defeat him in the hearts of lost men. Help me pray 'till my faith embraces a warm flowing Calvary. Till the Word of God will not only be my source of authority, but the answer to the sin question in every heart I contact. Pray till I realize the value of a lost soul slipping into hell.

Let me pray till I am moved with such compassion on the lost, that I will forget the price of rescue, and go into all the world and preach the Gospel. Till messages both negative and positive burn within my heart. Till that unction of the Holy One comes upon me. Then!! Let me preach. Preach the Word. Preach it in the streets, in mission halls, in little churches and big churches. Preach it with such power that souls will get under conviction and quit sin. Preach until souls will cry out, "What must I do to be saved." Preach until this awful propaganda of hell and this commonplace religion is given up. Oh, God, let me preach Thy word until genuine revivals break out, and all the chaff is burned up. Preach until the most unconcerned will believe in my earnestness. Preach until the show-crowd will get under conviction and go through with God. Yes, dear Lord, let me preach till the word has answered the challenge of carnality, and destroyed it in human hearts.

The day is far spent; the hour is critical. Hell's forces are turned loose, but the God of Elijah is still leading on to give revivals.

It is easier to run than to stand. It is easier to drift with the passive, than to pray and watch in the secret place. It is easier to pass the burden on to someone else, but God and the church expects us to go through. The people will follow if I can take them far enough into the garden. The church will never backslide through the laity, but if the leader fail, and run from the battle, and get worldly, and begin to quibble over scriptural standards, so will our people. If we quit preaching against sin, wedding rings, rouge, lipstick, or any other form of pride and sin, then we become unfaithful in our preaching and soon we will not be preaching the whole Gospel at all. Not to ride a hobby, but with compassion to lead our people out of bondage into the glorious freedom of perfect love. If we have not gone beyond the place where so-called non-essentials bother us, we will never get to the real battle field, where there is sweat and blood and tears. Out there where the real offensive against Satan is on. It is not just to hold standards of Holiness, but to give the people with my anointed ministry a Holy heart and mind.

All these things present a challenge. The gulf is going to widen between the true church and the world. It will not become easier to preach the old-fashioned Gospel. The pressure from carnal brethren and sin will intensify as the battle rages on until Jesus comes. The temptation, (if we don't dwell in the shadow of the Almighty) will be to get bitter and critical. Here is the test of our true, holy life and ministry. We can only do it with broken hearts, and the vital truth. God help me to fight on with compassion and earnestness of heart and life until Christ says, "Enough, come home."

I remember while in one of the most weird and terrible nights on the battle fields of France, while lurid flashes of bursting enemy shells lit up the sky with a hideous red. Big men were dying, others running and yelling with their courage broken. Behind us the shells were dropping thick and deadly, there was a trench extending across the street in the town we were expected to hold. We were trying to get the men down and into that trench, partly, for their safety and also to form a line of defense against the enemy who held the other side of the town. It was a time of tenseness. A soldier ran up to me and handed me his rifle that was sticky with his own blood. Blood was running down his face. He said, "Use it, I won't need it," and vanished in the darkness. It seemed there was a power unseen that pulled at me to go. To run, I could have, for I was the leader in charge, but the men would have followed and many would have lost their lives.

We would have lost the town and the battle. The urge was to run for safety, but somehow, "I'll never know why," I couldn't run. There was something within me that held me to my job. I had told my father when I left home that I would do my duty, and I knew if I got out of the war I would have to face him. I could not face him a coward, so I crawled into the trench along with the others who would get in and fought and won, and many lives were saved. Some ran and fell torn and fatally wounded and lost as cowards. Now, in this awful time of compromise how easy it would be as a leader to surrender to the enemy or run when the battle is raging. But men and women, boys and girls are depending on me not to run or surrender. The trench of duty is here, as Jesus said, "Go ye," and preach, and do your duty. I will have to face Him one of these days and by His grace I do not intend to face Him a moral coward. I expect to see Him as He is. I cannot speak for you, brethren, but as for me, I am getting into the trench. With those who dare, we will accept the

enemy's challenge. We will fight until the enemy is defeated or Jesus calls us home, or comes and gets us at His glorious second coming.

Let our slogan be "Revivals at any cost." Our message be Holiness both negative and positive. Our lives be wholly the Lord's, and our trust in Him who said "Go ye," and, "Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world." Let us give ourselves to this great task in this tragic hour. Let us Pray!

-- Glenn Griffith

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THE END