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THE TIME IS NOW
By C. William Fisher

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INTRODUCTION

Reading "The Time Is Now" in manuscript form has been both interesting and profitable. In
keeping with the title, this is a timely message. The author recognizes that the Church of the
Nazarene was born amid revival fires, has grown by use of the revival technique, and can only
prosper in the future as this method is wisely and effectively employed. His treatment of his
subject is unswervingly loyal to the doctrine, experience, and method of his denomination.

Here is a dynamic and urgent appeal to the church to follow the "old paths" that have led
the church to experience seasons of "refreshing from the presence of the Lord" in all the centuries
of her history. Here, also, are found the essential elements of a revival ministry. The book has a

solid scriptural content, holy desperation, and moving exhortation. No easy way to revival is found here. No place is given to the superficial entertainment program. No hope is offered in sensational publicity, or in the employment of glamorous personnel. Revival is offered at the price of hard toil in prayer, personal work, and Bible preaching.

The author, Evangelist C. William Fisher, embodies in his own revival work the things which he recommends, with confidence in their value and effectiveness, in his book.

He has proved that this method bears fruit that remains. For this reason he enjoys a wide and successful ministry throughout the church.

It is my earnest prayer that all our pastors and evangelists will read this book, practice its precepts, and give their endorsement to a large circulation of it among the laymen to whom they minister.

-- G. B. Williamson --

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1
THE TIME IS NOW

"Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." -- John 4:35

It was the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt who said, "This generation has a rendezvous with destiny." Mr. Roosevelt was of course thinking in terms of politics and international relations. But his prophetic words are equally challenging on the deeper and more vital levels of morality and religion and evangelism.

Every succeeding age seems to be the most crucial and climactic of all. Yet, since Hiroshima, every thinking person has known that this generation of men is confronted with the most momentous issues and the most decisive decisions that humanity ever faced.

The preachers have been saying that for a long time. But today the military men, the statesmen, and the scientists are climbing the pulpit stairs and preaching to the whole worried world that our civilization faces total destruction, that humanity faces utter extinction unless mankind experiences a mighty spiritual rebirth.

A nation or an individual or a world does not have to reject God to be damned. All that is necessary to be lost is to forget God. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."

If ever the world was in crisis, that time is now. If ever there was a time when men and women should fall on their knees and cry to God for forgiveness, that time is now. If ever there was a time when Christian men and women needed to pray and cry unto God -- not until they just felt better, but until their souls became so spiritually impassioned that they could go out to meet the impact of a doomed and dying world, that time is now!

There are over seventy-nine million church members in America today. But the number who are devotedly faithful and deeply spiritual is admittedly small. In far too many cases religion is not an armor but a cloak. For many of the church members of America attend the same dances and movies and taverns and night clubs as do non-church members. They smoke the same brand of cigarettes. They drink the same brand of liquor. They talk the same and act the same and live by the same rule of expediency. The number of church members is never a true gauge of the spiritual vigor and effectiveness of a nation or of a church.

Every third church member in America is a Roman Catholic. Every ninth church member is a Methodist. Every three hundred and sixtieth church member is a Nazarene. Furthermore, every sixth person in America is a Roman Catholic. Every seventeenth person is a Methodist. Every seven hundred and tenth person is a Nazarene.

A reasonable question then is this: Being so few in number and so limited in material resources, is there any possibility whatsoever that we can make any appreciable impact on the vast need of our world? The answer to that question is a glorious and thrilling affirmative!

And why? For this reason: God, in all of history, has never depended upon the vast majorities to carry out His redemptive will, but upon dedicated minorities!

What could little David do against the mighty Goliath? What hope did Gideon have against the Midianite hordes? What chance did Pentecost's hundred and twenty have against their pagan world? How tiny Luther looked against the entrenched might of the Roman church! Size never determines effectiveness, but intensity of devotion -- and faith!

There are two hundred million people in Russia today. Yet only six million are members of the Communist party. But those six million -- and more properly the thirteen or fourteen members

of the Politburo -- control with despotic power the remaining one hundred and ninety-four million people. The 3 per cent control the remaining 97 per cent. And why? Because the 3 per cent are a dedicated 3 per cent! The six million are a dedicated minority. They are dedicated to a cause -- a cause which we believe to be the enslavement of the human mind and spirit.

Six million followers of Lenin and Stalin in Russia willing to undergo any hardship! Willing to suffer any persecution! Ready and willing to die for their God-defying cause of Communism! And seventy-nine million professed followers of Jesus Christ in America, most of whom are halfhearted, lukewarm, carefree, secular-minded church members who can't be bothered over the world's lost millions!

The time for Christians in America to wake up is NOW!

The time for the godly minority to pray and plan and push and promote a great crusade for souls is NOW!

The time for revival is NOW!

If we are to succeed in that mighty crusade, however, we must give urgent heed to at least three specific areas of life and experience.

I. WE MUST BE DIFFERENT FROM THE WORLD

The only church that will meet the need of the world is the church that is different from the world. There are those in all groups who say, "If we would only soften the message and lower the standards, we could appeal to vast numbers of people who are today alienated by our message and method."

But this much is certain: Whenever any church begins to adapt itself to the world, that church soon becomes absorbed by the world! And the individual Christian who adapts himself to the world is soon absorbed by the world.

The Church has, in some areas, compromised so much and become so much like the world that the world doesn't listen much to what the Church has to say. There are those on the inside of the Church who have become so much like those on the outside of the Church that those on the outside say, "What's the difference?" And, in many cases, what is the difference?

The Church will never win the world with a compromise. The Church will never win the world by adapting itself to the world. The Church will win the world only as it remains different from the world!

When in Rome I stood in the great Colosseum looking out over the ruins of that vast amphitheater which had been the final testing ground for so many early Christians. Finally we were shown the cells where those early Christians were kept just before they were to go out to face the wild and hungry beasts.

As I looked at those cells I realized that those early Christians did not have to die -- they could have surrendered their convictions and their faith. They could have recanted and said, "We will soften up our message. We will make it less revolutionary. We will not be so rigid and inflexible in what we believe; for, after all, we're all heading for the same place anyway and we don't want to be narrow-minded about our religion." Yes, they could have saved their lives that way -- but the cause would have been lost! They could have compromised and lived -- but the cause would have died!

They chose rather to refuse to adapt or compromise with their world. Yes, they went out and soaked the sands of the arena with their blood -- but the cause lived! And that blood that they spilt seeped down and out into the catacombs and nourished the faith of other Christians and proved to the proud pagans looking on that there was, in this evil world, a

... faith that would not shrink,
Tho' pressed by every foe,
That would not tremble on the brink
Of any earthly woe!

If those early Christians had adapted their religion and their faith and their convictions to their world, their faith and their religion would have gone down with their world. But by remaining different from their world, their cause -- and Christ's -- survived the decay and defeat and death of the Roman world.

So if we compromise with our world today, and try to adapt ourselves to its practices and principles, we can measure our spiritual decay and defeat by our success in adaptation. But if we remain different from our world, our spiritual success will be in direct proportion to our failure to adapt.

But wait! The church that has nothing to talk about but a little cluster of negatives has far too small a voice to be heard in a world crashing into chaos. The preacher who has nothing to preach except, "Don't do this and don't do that," simply cannot be heard -- and need not be heard, in the thundering of great and momentous issues.

If every movie house in the world closed its doors, if every liquor and tobacco store in the world went out of business, if every dance hall and tavern and night club and booze joint in the world ceased operations ... there would still be a great gospel to preach and a lost world to save! Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel" -- not because it was the power to preach some pet peeve, but he said he was not ashamed of the gospel because "it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." That gospel is relevant in every age!..

Men and women and young people who want to walk with God will, of course, quit all habits and amusements that are contrary to Christ. But to quit going to the movies does not mean that one is going to heaven. To quit dancing and tobacco and liquor and lust does not mean that one is really right with God. There will be people in hell who never attended the movies or the dance. There will be people in hell who never used tobacco or whiskey or beer. "Getting religion" is

more than just "quitting" something. Getting religion in its truest sense is just what it implies -- giving self and getting Jesus! That's what makes us different!

The "difference" from the world must be more than external. The Pharisees were different -- on the outside! The "difference" must be total -- both within and without. It was the secular sag of the spirit that Jesus called "worldly."

If we are to win the world we must be different from the world in heart, in life, in motive, in direction, in attitude, in emphasis. It must be a spiritual difference that is deep and sincere and positive and aggressive and dynamic!

II. WE MUST RECAPTURE A SENSE OF URGENCY ABOUT OUR BELIEFS

The early disciples did not have a policy or a program to preach or to promote. But they did have a living hold on a few vibrant facts. Or, rather, those facts had a mighty hold upon them! And the grip of truth was so overwhelming and so urgent upon their hearts that it enabled them to meet the impact of their world and turn it upside down for Christ.

There was nothing casual about the early disciples. They were never nonchalant about what they believed. They were never bored with hearing or telling those tremendous truths. They knew that Christ died on the cross. They knew that He was put in a borrowed tomb. They knew that Christ opened the doors of death and arose triumphant, saying, "I am the resurrection, and the life." They knew that He was coming back to earth again -- for He had said so! And they went everywhere telling these thrilling facts to everyone.

They spoke urgently because they knew. They knew because they experienced. They won others because they knew and experienced and lived the truth they preached!

A missionary on furlough was telling some friends that she was praying that God would let her get back to the mission field immediately. When asked if she wasn't enjoying her stay in America she said: "Yes, but when I get up and tell people here about Jesus and what He can do for them, they just look up at me as much as to say, 'Oh, we've heard all of that before. Don't you have something new and different and funny to tell us?'" And then when I go to my room I ask God to let me get back to the mission field, where people are anxious and expectant and thrilled when I tell them about Jesus and His love."

Oh, the vast numbers of men and women who will be damned through eternity because Christians were so casual and carefree concerning the dynamic truths of the gospel! Christians who kept forgetting that Christianity was not a way for nice people to become nicer, but a demanding, revolutionary, challenging task that demanded the urgent best from everybody!

A young preacher went to see that great evangelist, Gypsy Smith. The interview took place just a few months before the great Gypsy passed away. The young preacher wanted to get some advice concerning preaching values and methods.

During the interview, the old Gypsy said: "Young man, whatever else you preach, be sure to preach Jesus Christ. For men and women today are not dying to hear your opinions concerning world problems, or your pronouncements about social conditions, but they are hungry to hear about Jesus.

"But," he continued, "before you will be able to preach Jesus, you must fall in love with Him yourself -- fall in love with Him so personally and so intimately that He becomes the most real and wonderful Person in your life; so real and glorious that you will preach Jesus, live Jesus, sing about Jesus, and witness to the marvelous miracle of His grace in your life wherever you go."

Yes, the way to increased urgency in what we say about Jesus is increased love and devotion and consecration to Jesus. Those words of the Gypsy are not just good advice to preachers; they are needed words to everyone who wears that beautiful name "Christian." Oh, so to fall in love with Jesus that our Service and our testimony and our witnessing and our winning become urgent!

We are living in a world of competing faiths, and there is no hope for the person who is half-convinced. There is not a chance that anyone half-won will be able to win anyone else. We must be convinced of the truth ourselves before we can convince others.

The Communists today put most professing Christians to shame when it comes to propagating their faith. They are convinced, they are fervent, and they are urgent; while many professing Christians are casual, unconvincing, halfhearted, lukewarm -- talking of tremendous, world-shaking, soul-transforming truths as though they were piddling trifles.

If we really believe that men must be born again or be lost, let's talk as if we believe it. Let's act as if we believe it. Let's live as if we believe it. If we really believe that Jesus is the Son of God, let's talk and act and live as though we believe it. If we really believe that the believer must be entirely sanctified, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," then let's talk as though we believe it. God help us to live as if we believe it. God help us to preach and sing as if we believe it!

Why is it that sinners can attend our services or be in our presence and feel so comfortable? Why is it that backsliders can attend our services Sunday after Sunday and not feel black and dirty and sinful? Why is it that unsanctified men and women can sit in our services month in and month out and not feel uncomfortable or needy? If Christians were more urgent, sinners would not be so complacent.

God's Punishment for Sin

We must not only recapture that sense of urgency concerning those positive truths, but we must also recapture a sense of urgency concerning those things we say we believe about God's punishment for sin.

Many times, as I look out over the congregation, I ask myself these questions: "Do you really believe in hell? Do you really believe that that man or that woman or that young person over

there and there and there who is without God is going to spend eternity in hell unless he is won, and that soon? You say you believe it, but in your heart do you really believe it? Are you going to preach as though you believe it?"

That is always a sobering question. And it is good for everyone. You, Christian mother or father, do you really believe that son or daughter of yours will spend eternity in hell? You say you believe in hell, but do you? You, neighbor, you say you believe in hell; but that one across the street or next door or in the next apartment who is without Christ, do you really believe he will spend eternity in hell? You say you believe in hell, but do you really believe in it? You, church member, church board member, Sunday-school teacher, do you really believe that men and women in your church who are without Christ will spend eternity in hell unless won to Christ and that soon? You say you believe in hell, but do you really believe in it? Do you act as though you believe in it? Do you talk as though you believe in it? Do you live as though you believe in it?

Could we professing Christians be having such an easy time if we really believed that there were those all around us who were on their way to hell and would land there unless we won them and soon? Some parents are interested in everything about their children except whether those children are right with God.

I asked a Nazarene mother about her son. I asked how old the boy was, and she told me. I asked what year he was in high school, and she told me, and also volunteered the information that her son played on the football team and really, even though she didn't like to boast about it, her son was a very popular boy at school. When I asked the lady if her boy was a Christian, she looked down at the floor and finally said, "Well, I don't know about that. You'll have to ask him."

Some parents actually take a certain pride in their children's success in fields that sometimes are absolutely contradictory to everything the church stands for. One "Christian" father and mother actually were proud that their daughter had won a school dancing contest. Apparently they didn't care whether or not their daughter went to hell -- just so she went there gracefully!

O God, help us either to put our beliefs into practice or to quit the hypocrisy of lip service! God help us to talk and act and live in the home and at school and at work and at church as if we really believed something and that what we believed made an urgent and terrific difference to us!

III. OUR SOULS MUST BE SET AFLAME BY THE FIRE OF THE HOLY GHOST.

To be different, yes. But that, sometimes, is not too difficult. To believe something, yes. But that, sometimes, is not too demanding. But to tarry until power and fire and fervency fill our souls -- ah, that is the difficult thing. Receiving the fire of the Holy Ghost always involves sacrifice and surrender and service.

The early Christians had little else but God. Many of today's Christians have everything else but God. The early Christians had no church buildings, no organs, no promotional literature, no organizational backing. But they did have the power and fire of the Holy Ghost. And having the Holy Ghost, they won their world.

Before those early Christians received that fervency, however, they tarried until they were completely and unconditionally surrendered to God -- wholly "dead" to their world, their friends, their families, and their own selfish interests. When finally they were completely empty of self, they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and the fire of the Holy Spirit enabled them to burn their way across their world.

Certainly they were persecuted. Certainly they were ridiculed. Certainly they were walled about by every tricky stratagem of the devil. But they won their world, not by the power of their brains, not by the power of their propaganda, not by the power of their promotional abilities, not by the power of their organization. They won their world by the power of the Holy Ghost! It took the power and fire of the Holy Ghost for the early Christians to win their world. And it will take that for us to win our world!

The world will never be won by cold, complacent Christians. Souls will never be won to Christ by lukewarm professors of religion. There is no power or winsomeness in dry-eyed holiness. Decency is not enough; we must be dynamic. Morality is not enough; we must move men to Christ. Cleverness is not enough; we must be consecrated. Ability is not enough; we must be all out for souls!

If ever there was a time when cold, conventional, comfortable, complacent Christians should fall on their knees and plead for a new touch of the fire of the Holy Ghost, that time is now!

"Let the Fire Fall"

One of the most dramatic sights in Yosemite National Park is the moment the "fire falls." Each evening there is a huge wood fire built atop Glacier Point. And after dark, while hundreds, sometimes thousands, of people are gazing up from the valley, someone cries, "Let the fire fall!" And that huge, brilliant mass of fire is pushed off the precipice and begins to cascade down fourteen hundred feet to the valley floor. That sight is always dramatic, inspiring, and unforgettable.

Against the gathering darkness of our day we desperately need the fire of heaven to fall upon us anew, inflaming our souls and sparking our torches and sending us out as flaming evangelists across our sin-blackened world.

O God, let the fire fall on every professing Christian. Let the fire fall today on every Sunday-school teacher. Let the fire fall on every church board member. Let the fire fall on every pastor. Let the fire fall on every evangelist. Let the fire fall on every superintendent. O God, let the fire fall on every one of us -- that is our urgent need!

The arsenal of weapons to combat sin and Satan is full and overflowing. We have the "guns" -- big and little. We have the powder. We have the men to man the machines. What we need is the fire!

We have the churches. We have the choirs. We have the music. We have the preachers. We have the schools. We have the organization. We have the promotional know-how. What we desperately need is the fire!

General superintendents, district superintendents, editors, pastors, evangelists, wide-awake and spiritual laymen all across the land and throughout the world are crying for a genuine revival of religion. Not just a little protracted meeting, not just some "special services," where horns are played and songs are sung and poems are recited and sermons are delivered -- but a genuine Holy-Ghost, heaven-originated revival that will make a difference in the lives of the people, that will make a difference in the lives of our churches, and that will energize every phase of the work!

Oh, for the outpouring of the Holy Ghost that will give power to the propaganda, and power to the program, and power to the preaching, and power to the praying, and power to push the mighty crusade for souls here in America and unto the uttermost parts of the earth!

A Challenge

In the year 1849, Garibaldi, that great Italian patriot and soldier and leader of men, stood and spoke to his ragged and hungry and battle-weary soldiers. "Men," he said, "we have gone through many battles together. You have watched your friends die by your side. You have been hit by the enemy's bullets. You have been hungry and thirsty and tired, but you have marched on. The battle now before us is the greatest of all. Everything depends on its outcome. The eyes of the nation are upon you. If you follow me it will mean hunger and thirst and forced marches and battles and, for some of you -- death. But every man who has the courage to follow Garibaldi, step forward!" And the record is that the entire company of men stepped forward at that challenge to follow their great leader into battle and to victory.

In the year 1940, Winston Churchill, another great leader of men, stood before the microphones in London and challenged the British Empire and the whole world by saying: "Ours is not an easy task. It will mean blood and toil and sweat and tears, but we will fight on -- and we will never surrender!" With those challenging words ringing in their hearts, freemen around the world girded themselves for battle -- and victory!

At this very moment Jesus, the peerless Christ, is standing before each soul saying: "You who wear My name, you who claim so much through Me, you who sing pretty songs and preach beautiful sermons about Me, the war with sin and Satan is at this moment raging in full fury. Souls, immortal souls, are this very moment being defeated and damned. If you really love Me as you say you do, if you really love My cause as you claim you do, fall on your knees and tarry there until you are ready and willing to follow Me up and down the line where fallen men and women need redeeming grace, and then help Me as I lift the broken and sin-blasted souls to the merciful arms of a loving God."

Oh, may we hear His challenge! May we accept His challenge and fall upon our knees and tarry there until our souls are filled with His passion and His love and His burden for the lost and the wounded and the dying!

Paraphrasing Mr. Roosevelt, we can say with terrible urgency and realism, "This generation of Nazarenes has a rendezvous with destiny." Never before have so few been confronted with so great a responsibility!

May God have mercy on our souls if we fail in this our day of opportunity! May God in heaven have mercy upon us if we, who profess so much, continue to do so little!

The time for action is NOW!

The time for a revival is NOW!

The time for a mighty crusade is NOW!

May Almighty God help us in this crucial, climactic hour to rise up and accept the challenge and go out with the help of the Holy Spirit to follow Christ in bringing lost men and women to the great loving heart of God!

Few in number? Yes. Limited in material resources? Yes. But as a minority with Heaven's backing, let us be a faithful minority! A God-centered, God-directed, God-empowered minority that is so dedicated, so consecrated to the one task of winning souls that God can use us as the human instrument in turning thousands from sin and destruction to Christ and salvation!

If we are faithful in that task, we will have the high honor of one day being included in that small band of surrendered soul winners of whom a Greater than Churchill will say, as He surveys heaven's redeemed, "Never in the history of the war against Satan and sin 'have so many owed so much to so few."

Prayer:

O God, forgive us if we sit back content, complacent, and dry-eyed in this hour of world crisis. Forgive us if we go on about our business as usual in this hour of church crisis. Forgive us if we are unmoved and unconcerned over a world of doomed and dying men. May we this moment, O God, realize that the hour is late and that the need is urgent and that the time to be stirred and burdened is now. May we feel, O God, the pulse of this sickened and sinful world and then bring the diseased and the dying to that healing "fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins, where sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains." This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

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"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the holy Spirit, and teach them to obey all the commands I have laid on you. And all the time I will be with you, to the very end of the world." -- Matthew 28:19, 20 (Moffatt)

In the year 1929 there was published a book that had for its theme the idea that all philanthropies or kindnesses or gifts had value to the giver in direct proportion to the secrecy involved in the transaction. The author of that book is Lloyd C. Douglas. The title of the book is *Magnificent Obsession*.

The idea that an obsession could be called "magnificent" came as a surprise and shock to many people. For it was generally understood that a mind obsessed was a mind insane or, at least, a mind irrational. But looking for dictionary definitions we come to realize that an obsession is "an urgent and inescapable preoccupation with an idea or emotion." The word "magnificent," of course, means supreme, sublime, noble, or exalted." Thus a "magnificent obsession" is the urgent and inescapable preoccupation with a supreme idea or exalted emotion.

In a real sense, all men who have helped or hindered humanity have been men obsessed -- men with an urgent and inescapable preoccupation with an idea or emotion. Some men have been obsessed with the idea of power, like Napoleon and Mussolini and Hitler and Stalin. Others have been obsessed with the idea of wealth, like Morgan and Rockefeller and the Nizam of Hyderabad, and countless thousands of others in lesser degree. It is not necessary for one to possess great wealth to be obsessed with it.

Today, Paul Robeson, Eugene Dennis, and many thousands of others are obsessed with the idea of Communism. Others are obsessed today with the pursuit of pleasure. But of all these obsessions -- power, wealth, fame, pleasure, authority -- not one can properly be called "magnificent," because not one of them is concerned with ideas and endeavors that are supreme or sublime or noble or exalted.

Those men, however, who have helped humanity heavenward have also been men obsessed. Christ himself was obsessed -- how gloriously He was preoccupied with the urgent and inescapable task of redeeming lost humanity! Paul, too, shared that obsession, as did Peter and Wesley and Brainerd and Moody and the other thousands of men and women who have given themselves unstintingly and unselfishly in that supreme endeavor of helping Christ help humanity.

There is only one obsession in the whole wide range of human endeavor that can properly and rightly be called "magnificent," and that "magnificent obsession is the urgent and inescapable preoccupation with winning men and women to Jesus Christ! Soul winning and soul winning alone is life's magnificent obsession!

I. SOUL WINNING IS LIFE'S SUPREME ENDEAVOR

Soul winning is life's supreme endeavor because it enables man to participate in God's redemptive purpose and plan. In this chrome-plated, gadgety age of ours, man is constantly confronted with a sense of futility -- a feeling that life doesn't mean anything. The evidences of this inner anxiety and frustration are everywhere abundant. What we desperately need, as Robert

Maynard Hutchins says, is "a mooring to something that is lasting, something that gives Us a sense of place in the world, of stability of purpose and significance in life. And," he continues, "if you have a chance to tie up to something lasting, something effectively representing the effort to ennoble human experience, you had better get a firm hold on it without delay. You will need something of that sort before you are through with life."

What could be more lasting, what could be more eternally significant, than that great redemptive endeavor that began long before the morning stars sang together, and that will continue long after time has spilled over into eternity? For "the Lamb [was] slain from the foundation of the world," and throughout eternity God will be busy making man more like Jesus.

God's first purpose now is not creative, but redemptive! God's great purpose now is not to create more stars or spark more suns; God's first purpose now is to redeem lost men!

It did not bankrupt heaven's resources to make man. But it did take heaven's brightest jewel to redeem man. Creation came from the mind of God. But redemption came from the heart of God. Out of the mind of God came the world to nourish and sustain man, but out of the heart of God came Jesus to redeem man.

God did not send His only Son into the world merely to teach ignorant men or merely to guide groping men or to feed hungry men or to heal sick men. God did send His Son to die on the cross to redeem sinful men!

Oh, the lift and lilt and fullness it gives to life to share in God's eternal purpose and plan in redeeming lost men! We are not spectators; we are participants in the divine plan. And so it is that we fulfill our own highest destiny only as we bring lost men and women to Christ.

Requires Total Response

Soul winning is life's supreme endeavor because it requires a total response from man. No one can be a part-time soul winner any more than one can be a part-time Christian. One of the more pathetic sights in life is to see a person with wide talents and a wonderful potential merely puttering around with a task that requires only a fraction of his energies and abilities.

Success in soul winning, however, can never be achieved without total response to its demands. Redeeming men required God's best effort, and it requires man's all-out best. There is no other task in all of life that is so total in its demands upon the energies of the individual. Nothing else so drains the energies as soul winning. The forces and energies and abilities of the whole personality are required in the high and sacred business of winning men to Christ.

Soul winning is not just a pouring out of the emotions. It is not just an exercise of the mind. It is not merely the activity of the will. Soul winning demands all three -- emotions that are pure, a mind that is alert, and a will that is quick to respond to human need.

Soul winning is not a Sunday supplement to life. It is not a task reserved for revivals. Soul winning is a seven-day-a-week responsibility, and it demands our best and it demands our all!

Demands Divine Assistance

Soul winning is life's supreme endeavor because it demands divine assistance. There is no one intelligent enough, or educated enough, or cultured enough, or forceful enough to win a lost soul to Christ. There is no one who through sheer ability alone can really win a lost soul. It takes God's help to do that!

Jesus said that if we would follow Him He would "make" us "fishers of men." In other words, no one, regardless of ability or talent or intellect, is sufficient to win souls. Christ must "make" us soul winners. Again, Jesus said, "I will make you to become fishers of men," implying that no one without God's help and power is a ready-made soul winner. That very fact should be an encouragement to those who say, "I am not talented enough to win souls." Exactly! No one is! Christ must "make" us soul winners!

There are those, of course, who feel that they are sufficient in themselves. They feel that they are educated enough or talented enough to win souls. Education may help. But no one can become a soul winner merely by reading a book on soul winning. One must not only have the "know-how"; one must also have the "wherewithal," and only God can supply that!

T. DeWitt Talmage said: "I never knew a man to be saved by a brilliant argument. You cannot hook men into the kingdom of God by the horns of a dilemma. There is no grace in syllogisms." Education in itself is not the equipment for soul winning. Technical know-how does not make one a soul winner. Smooth, facile speech is not the real requirement. Even the desire to win souls does not equip one to be a soul winner. The one essential and indispensable equipment of the soul winner is the Holy Spirit.

The apostles, of course, were weak and inadequate men. But Jesus told them that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them and then they would be witnesses and soul winners. It took the filling with the Holy Spirit to make the apostles soul winners, and it will take that for us to be soul winners! It takes human personality plus God to win souls!

II. SOUL WINNING IS THE CHRISTIAN LIFE'S INESCAPABLE ENDEAVOR

Soul winning is inescapable because Christ commands it.

Soul winning is not a pious extra. Soul winning is not a sanctimonious side line. Soul winning is not a segment on Christianity's circumference reserved for the enthusiasts. Soul winning is the one central vocation and duty and privilege of every true child of God.

So many professing Christians have diluted the Great Commission until their service is not only weak and inadequate, but their concept of responsibility and service does not even challenge them. There has never been a cheap and easy way to win men to Christ. There was no short cut to Calvary, and there is no short cut in bringing men to the foot of Calvary's cross. But to bring men there is Christ's central command.

There is absolutely no way to compensate for our failure in winning souls. We can't teach our way out of that failure. We can't sing our way out. We can't testify our way out. We can't administrate our way out. We can't preach our way out. We can't finance our way out. We can never fully discharge our soul-winning responsibility with a checkbook!

There is an increasing number of church members who will pay to see souls saved, but they themselves will not provide one ounce of spiritual momentum to get souls saved. Christ didn't merely say send or pay. Christ said Go!

It is never enough to be a church member. We must be soul-winning church members. It is never enough to be a Sunday-school teacher. We must be soul-winning teachers. It is never enough to be a church board member. We must be soul-winning board members. It is never enough to be a song leader. We must be soulwinning song leaders. It is never enough to be a superintendent. We must be soul-winning superintendents. It is never enough to be a preacher. We must be soulwinning preachers! For only as we win souls are we obeying Christ's first and central command!

An Inner Compulsion

Soul winning is inescapable because of an inner compulsion. Jesus said, "Tarry, then go." If we tarry long enough, we will go! -- we'll have to! It is impossible to love Christ and not love lost men. Only loving hearts are burdened, and only burdened hearts can win men. You can deal with a soul without a burden, but you can't win a soul without a burden. It is love for God that nourishes and sustains and necessitates burden for men. If we have the joy of salvation in our own soul, we have to let others know about it!

Every help toward soul winning is welcome. But it is never necessary for a burdened heart to join a club or league or society in order to witness for Christ or to win souls to Christ. From the first disciples to the present time, men and women with the great gladness of God in their hearts have been constrained by an irresistible inner compulsion to win others to Christ.

There is no external pressure, no external compulsion that can sustain the burden for souls. Out of the deep reservoir of spirituality flow the compassion and love for lost men that make soul winning a spiritual necessity. It is that inner compulsion, that holy urge from within, that drives us on when all external pressure is released. Without that inner "must," without that inner joy that finds outlet only in witnessing and winning, all revivals and crusades and campaigns are but weak and temporary stimulants.

We don't need more P-80's. We need more B-29's. P-80's are jet-fighters that have great bursts of speed for a few minutes. B-29's carry heavy loads over long distances. We don't need more people who get stirred to activity only during revivals. We need more men and women who will carry heavy burdens for lost souls for the long pull -- beyond any revival or campaign or crusade.

While in Honolulu I met a young Japanese woman by the name of Alice Kimoto. Alice was formerly a singer in a tearoom, and she was also a Buddhist. But when her pagan gods failed her,

she turned to Christ and is now one of the most radiant Christians one could meet. She goes out several days each week from house to house to tell the people about Jesus and what He has done for her -- witnessing to people of all nationalities, telling them how happy she is now that she has accepted Christ and is wholly surrendered to Him.

Her pastor didn't ask her to do that. She didn't sign a pledge card that she would do it. No one told her to go out and win people. But she witnesses and wins because of a sense of great debt and because of a great love for God in her heart that simply must find outlet in service to others.

We are always ready and willing to ring doorbells when the joy-bells of heaven are ringing in our own souls! Oh, for that inner joy and compassion and compulsion that will make us soul winners everywhere and all the time!

Challenge from Without

Soul winning is inescapable because of the constant challenge from without. The story is told of a Hindu philosopher who was discoursing beautifully to some friends on his religion, when he was interrupted by the cries of a little child dying of cold and hunger and exposure just outside his window. He rose quietly and went to the window, closing it -- shutting out the sound!

How many professing Christians are like that! They can pronounce all the shibboleths of their religion. They can talk beautifully about Jesus. They know and sing all the pretty songs about Him. They can even get very sentimental about their religion -- and yet, while they talk, they close the windows of their hearts, shutting out the cries of lost and dying souls pleading for help. They can't be bothered with that!

Oh, the cries of hurt hearts that are drowned out by high and pious talk about religion!

You there, Christian, do you hear the cries of those neighbors who are without Christ and dying in sin? Do you hear the cries of the man behind the counter who is dying without God? Do you hear the cries of the one just outside your window -- or even beneath your own roof -- who is cold and hungry and destitute and dying without God? Or have you drowned out their cries by your incessant professing and by the constant whirl of your religious routines?

Or do you, Christian, hear the cries of lost souls and shut the window and resume preaching? Or shut the window and start singing? Or shut the window and start testifying? Or shut the window and start praying? Yes, you can drown out the cries of the lost and dying by preaching or singing or praying or testifying when you know in your heart you should go out and bring those souls to Christ!

Oh, that God might help us to go out and, with arms of love, lift those poor souls who are cold and hungry and dying and bring them to Christ -- where their shivering souls may be warmed by His love, and where their hungry hearts may be fed by His bread, and where their hurt hearts may be healed by His blood.

How can any true Christian look out upon a world rotting in sin, cold and hungry and confused and perplexed and fearful and frustrated and sinful and lost, and then be complacent and dry-eyed and halfhearted and lukewarm? O God, that we might rise to the challenge of the lost souls not only in India and China and Africa, but those also who are crying and dying just outside our own window!

III. SOUL WINNING IS LIFE'S MOST URGENT ENDEAVOR

Soul winning is urgent because Jesus is coming soon. One does not need to know all the theories concerning the second coming of Christ to know that that climactic event is at hand. For the whole wide world today is full of the signs of His coming.

The very fact of His soon return should give to every Christian a keen sense of urgency in winning men and women to Christ. For us to know that the darkness of night will soon envelop us should charge us with an intense and holy urgency in the accomplishment of our first and central task.

What if He should come tonight? Would He find us urgently preoccupied in winning souls? You, teacher, if Jesus should come tonight, would He find you thinking first of all about winning souls? You, businessman, if Jesus should come tonight would He find you preoccupied with life's biggest business -- that of soul winning? You, farmer, if Jesus should come tonight, would He find you urgently busy in the all-important harvest of souls? You, housewife, if Jesus should come tonight would He find you working at winning your family to Christ? You cook for them, you sew for them, but are you really working at the first task of winning them to Christ? You, preacher, if Jesus should come tonight, would He find you all-out for souls?

Oh, that everyone would make absolutely certain that if Christ should come tonight He would find us urgently preoccupied with life's greatest endeavor -- that of winning souls!

Threat of Impending Doom

Soul winning is urgent because of the awful threat of impending doom. Man lives today under constant fear of atomic destruction. The awful power of the unleashed atom is so mysterious and horrible that the merest mention of the atomic bomb sends shudders through the soul.

Men, with their brains and hands, have finally devised a destructive force that can literally blow them off the face of the earth. It is not the preachers who are scared now; it is the scientists and the military men who are most effectively drawing the outlines of doom.

People used to think that the preaching of imminent doom was just a false emotional scare that preachers exploited. Today the preachers don't have to talk about it; the theme has become highly scientific, and the scientists and the military men and the statesmen are doing the preaching.

President Truman says: "We cannot stand another global war. We can't even have another war unless it is a total war, and that means the end of our civilization as we have known it"

Raymond Fosdick says: "At long last we have come to the end of the road, face to face with our final choice. This time we cannot postpone the issue. This time the stakes are life or death on a terrestrial scale."

General MacArthur warns: "We have had our last chance. If the flesh is to be saved now, it must be by the spirit."

There is one tremendous truth piercing the gathering clouds and it is this: Only Christ can save us now! It is no longer Christ or confusion. It is no longer Christ or chaos. It is now Christ or doom! Christ or death! Christ or damnation!

As an individual sinner must often come to the brink of disaster before he awakens to his sense of need, just so God, in His vast providence, may be letting this shattered and sinful world come to the very lip of disaster to bring men to their senses and cause them to realize that it is not more culture that they need, but Christ. Not more science, but salvation!

Cry it out in the United Nations Assembly: "Deliberation is not enough. Only Christ can save us now!" Speak it in the congresses and parliaments of the world: "Legislation is not enough. Only Christ can save us now!" Preach it from the pulpits of the earth: "Social program is not enough. Only Christ can save us now!" Whisper it to every sin-weary soul: "New resolution is not enough. Only Christ can save you now!" Shout it out everywhere and all the time: "Either Christ saves us or we perish!"

Let us go into this darkening, divided, dying world and with cool heads and hot hearts and resolute wills point men and women to the Christ who is Light and Love and Life.

The Opening Doors

Soul winning is urgent because of doors opening today that have been closed for centuries. There are in the world today immense vacuums. Russia rushes into the political vacuums. America pours her billions into the economic vacuums. But the greatest and most significant vacuum in the world today is the spiritual vacuum. No one knows the full extent of it, but it is vast.

Old patterns of life are breaking up. The allegiances of men today are very fluid. Everything is in flux. What a tremendous challenge for the church with a world vision to move into that vacuum with the powerful and glorious gospel of Christ!

The call from Macedonia is coming from every country of the world today. Yes, even in Russia, where thousands of true Christians have gone underground rather than to surrender their faith. But the Early Church proved the power of its faith -- underground. So the paganism of the present may be defeated and overthrown by the seeds of living faith sown in the Christian cells driven underground by that godless government.

Hear Japan's eighty million crying for the gospel. Listen to China with her four hundred million crying for Christ. Who can fail to hear the call of India with her three hundred and forty million souls in heathen darkness? Listen to Africa's one hundred and seventy-five million crying,

"Come over and help us." And what of the cries of the millions of lost, sinful, weary, fearful men and women of Europe who need Christ? And the voices of seventy million unchurched in America together with the other millions of church members who have never been saved!

O God! O great God! Have mercy upon us if we fail in this, our greatest opportunity. Have mercy upon us if we go on about our business as usual. Great God in heaven, forgive us if we waste these fateful hours and days in running through our little routines and giving our little reports and patting one another on the back and saying we're doing a great job, when the whole wide world of suffering and sinful men cries to high heaven for help and hope and salvation!

Soul Winning Is Everybody's Job

There are always those, of course, who feel that this challenge of soul winning is only for the evangelists and the enthusiasts. Great God! Help us to realize that soul winning is everybody's job! A number of months ago, some preacher wrote to Dr. J. B. Chapman saying that, since he was more of the intellectual type, he had trouble in making his preaching evangelistic. As though those two words were exclusive! I admired Dr. Chapman even more than before when he answered in the Preacher's Magazine that he had always found it easier to be evangelistic in his preaching when he himself was most conscious of the nearness of Christ.

Was Paul intellectual? Indeed so. For sheer brain power the world has seldom, if ever, produced his equal. Yet the fires of holy evangelism blazed so intensely in his mind and soul that he burned his way across his world preaching, crying, cajoling, threatening, begging, entreating men and women to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. How magnificently obsessed was Paul! As I knelt before the tomb of Paul's headless body in Rome, I prayed, "O God, if it be possible will You somehow spark my feeble heart by the fire of Your apostle's burning zeal!"

Was Wesley intellectual? Indeed so. For breadth and scope of intelligence, England has seldom produced a greater. Yet Wesley was so inflamed by the fires of holy evangelism that in spite of all hell that was marshaled against him, and in spite of scoffing ecclesiastics and jeering critics, he traveled on foot and on horseback over two hundred thousand miles, preaching over forty thousand sermons, warning, witnessing, and entreating by life and logic the godless men and women of his day to accept Jesus Christ and to accept Him in all His fullness! O Wesley, teach our puny little minds and our stuffy, stuck-up little souls the real meaning and grandeur of evangelism!

Yes, Jonathan Edwards and Charles Finney and Dwight Moody and Dr. Bresee, you who were obsessed with the idea of winning souls, teach us by all the powers of your great minds and vast lives that it is never a mark of intelligence to be cold and complacent. Teach us that it is never a mark of intelligence to be dry-eyed. Teach us that it is never a mark of intelligence to be unmoved and unconcerned over a world of lost and dying men. Teach us by all the wisdom at your command that it is never dignified to be dead!

No. The task of soul winning is not reserved for the professional enthusiasts. It is not reserved for the emotional and erratic fringe. Soul winning is so great and so urgent a task that it demands the best from everybody!

If the awful and urgent and terrific challenge of this day does not compel us to action, then what will?

If we who profess holiness of heart cannot be stirred, then who can be?

If we cannot be bothered over lost souls, then who will be?

If we do not care, who will?

The Lost Child

In April of 1949 the whole nation was stirred and moved by the tragedy of a little girl falling into an abandoned well. Time Magazine ran the story under the title "The Lost Child." It happened in San Marino, California. Little Kathy Fiscus, aged three, was running with her sister and her cousin across a vacant lot when all of a sudden Kathy vanished out of sight. She had fallen into an abandoned water well. The pipe was only fourteen inches across, and it was rusted and corroded. The mother frantically called down into the hole, and Kathy answered once or twice. Then there was silence.

The police rushed to the scene and put down a rope, but it was useless and so they gave up. Drills, derricks, bulldozers, and trucks were rushed to the lot from a dozen towns. Three giant cranes came from Los Angeles. Firemen ran an air hose down the well, and pumped air down the hole by a rotary pump. Little more than an hour after her fall a power-drill crew began to sink a shaft alongside the abandoned well. On the other side, big, clam-shell shovels clawed an open pit for exploration. Fifty floodlights were rushed from Hollywood studios. Volunteer workers, engineers, sand hogs, retired miners rushed to help.

By midnight Saturday there were twelve thousand people standing in the chilly spring night. Finally they had to dig by hand. No one thought of pay. The city engineer said, "I haven't even heard the word mentioned." All over the nation citizens swamped newspaper and radio stations for news. Midgets, schoolboys, jockeys volunteered to go down. The men worked on regardless of danger or fatigue. Finally at six o'clock Sunday night, the announcement came that Kathy was dead and apparently had been dead since she was last heard speaking. The whole nation grieved and many wept at the news. Yes, a whole nation was shocked and stirred and moved over a little three-year-old girl lost in an abandoned water well. And rightly so. I listened and sorrowed with everyone else.

But wait. While a whole nation was grieving over a little girl lost and dying in an abandoned water well, a hundred million men and women and young people in America were on their way to hell -- lost and dying and without God. But who cared about that!

We can't be bothered about lost souls! We're too busy! We have other things to do! We have to look after our homes and our business and our jobs; we can't be disturbed about a few million lost souls!

A man came to the altar a few months ago with hot tears running down his face. Oh, the agony on his face and in his voice as he looked up and said: "There is another soul in hell tonight, and I am partly responsible. I have worked by the side of a man for seven years, and during all that time I never spoke to him about his soul. I invited him to church many times, of course, but I never really tried to win him to Christ. This morning, when I got to work, he wasn't there, and they told me that he had died last night. He died and went to hell -- while I was sitting here in church! Seven years, and I never spoke to him one time about his soul! Oh, what can I do? He's gone to hell, and I am partly to blame!"

O mother, father, will that son or daughter look you in the face at the Judgment and say, "Why didn't you talk to me about my soul? You clothed me, you fed me, you schooled me, you talked to me about everything else. Why didn't you talk to me more about God?" What will you say then?

You, businessman, what will you say when that partner comes up to you at the Judgment and says: "Why didn't you ever mention God and salvation and heaven and hell to me? You talked to me about everything else, but why didn't you talk to me about my soul?"

You, preacher, what will you say when those souls come to you at the Judgment and say: "Why weren't you more interested in my soul? You visited us and you joked with us and you invited us to your church, but why didn't you talk to us about our souls and pray with us in our homes that we might yield to God? We expected you to. We wanted you to. You talked about everything else. Why didn't you talk to us about God and heaven and hell and where we were going to spend eternity?"

Magnificently Obsessed

O Christian, O church member, let us go about our homes obsessed with the idea of winning our families to Christ. Let us go to our work obsessed with the idea of winning our fellow workmen to Christ. Let us go to school obsessed with winning other students to Christ. Let us associate with our neighbors and friends obsessed with the idea of winning them to Christ. To win souls! -- that must be our obsession!

Oh, that we might be so magnificently obsessed that we can say with Paul, "I count not my life dear ... I am ready to die for the Lord Jesus ... But I must warn everyone night and day with tears."

Oh, that we might be so magnificently obsessed that we can cry with Brainerd, "I care not where I live or what hardships I endure, so that I may gain souls for Christ!"

Oh, that we might be so magnificently obsessed that we can pray and plead with Whitefield, "O God, give me souls -- or take my soul!"

That should be our prayer! That must be our prayer! That will be our prayer! "O God, give me souls -- or take my soul!!!"

Let us then rise with warm hearts and burdened souls to the challenge of our redemptive task, and with the call and command of Christ charging our souls with holy urgency, and with the insistent voice of our own conscience demanding action, and the clamoring cries of sin-sick souls forever shattering our indifference and complacency. Let us go with a burning passion for the lost, with our minds and our emotions and our wills aflame with Life's Magnificent Obsession!

Prayer:

Show us, O Christ, Thy pierced hands. Show us, O Christ, Thy two spiked feet. Let us feel now the jagged wound of Thy pierced side. Let us look again, O Master, upon Thy broken, bleeding body and that brutal, blood-soaked cross. Then through the holes of Thy hands and feet may we look upon the nice houses we live in, the soft beds we sleep in, the nice cars we drive, and the fine clothes we wear, and the good food we eat; and may we, O Christ, feel that burning sense of shame for having done so little, and cared so little, and cried so little, and suffered so little, and sacrificed so little for such a suffering Christ, and for such a sinful world! This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

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A SHOUT, A CRY, OR A SONG

"And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written.

"And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.

"And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp.

"And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear.

"And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount." -- Exodus 32:15-19

Moses had a rendezvous with God on the rugged summit of Mount Sinai. As the Children of Israel watched their great leader as he made his way up the mountain, they saw fire from heaven fall to the summit of the mount. Then they saw great clouds of black smoke swirling back towards the heavens, and they felt the old mount itself tremble and shake under the mighty impact and terrific weight of Deity.

When Moses was delayed in his coming back to them, the children of Israel grew restless and they demanded that Aaron give them gods to worship. Aaron, in one of the weakest moments of his entire career, commanded them to bring their golden earrings to him; and when they had done so, he melted the gold and fashioned a golden calf. Before the calf he built an altar, and the children of Israel rose up and sang and danced and said one to another, "These be thy gods, oh Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

When the interview was over, Moses started down the mountain and was met by Joshua. As the two men continued their way down the mountain, Joshua suddenly said, "Listen, Moses, it sounds like the noise of war in the camp." Moses cupped his hand to an ear, and a puzzled look swept across his face as he said, "It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome." And then a look of utter disappointment and disgust as he said, "It's just the noise of them that sing that I hear."

Then Moses, in the full fury of anger, lifted the two tablets upon which God himself had written, and hurled them to broken bits on the jagged rocks below. What had caused such wrath? Was it simply anger? No. It was simply the last full measure of loathsome disgust for a people that had been so faithless and so trifling in the one great trust that God had placed in their hands.

If Moses could stand at some vantage point and look upon the work of the Church today -- could listen to the weak little platitudes that come from the pulpits of the land, and the tepid little praises that come up from the pews of the land, and could witness that tragic shifting of emphasis from personal soul winning to the multitudinous social activities of the ordinary church of today -- real candor would compel him to say, "It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome ... it is just the noise of them that sing that I hear."

There has been that shifting of emphasis from actual soul winning to countless other activities, until the Church in many areas has become little more than just another social service center. And when any church becomes nothing more than that, it might as well close its doors and forget about the high business of real religion. God has already written "Ichabod" across the doors of that church, for the glory has definitely departed.

The Church has one primary task, one primary duty, one primary responsibility, and that is to win souls to Christ! Soul winning and soul winning alone must ever have first priority in the program of the Church!

If we believe soul winning to be the first task and fundamental responsibility of the Church, then we will readily realize that, regardless of what else the Church is doing and how well it is doing it, regardless of how else the Church is succeeding, if it fails in its first and central task then it is failing at the job -- and it is neither shouting, nor crying, but just singing.

I. THE CHURCH OF TODAY LACKS THE SHOUT OF MASTERY

One of the most obvious facts of our day -- and it is just as tragic as it is obvious -- is that the Church of today is failing to meet the tremendous impact and challenge of this age.

Dr. Paul Hutchinson, editor of the Christian Century, after a world tour said: "The most casual survey of what is going on in the contemporary world will disclose new stirrings of interest in religion. To those who carefully examine this new stirring, however, a paradox immediately presents itself. At the very time when man has new respect for the claims of spiritual interpretation of life, the institutional forms of religion are plagued by spreading weakness.

"Not for a hundred years," says Dr. Hutchinson, "has so much importance been granted the values championed by the churches or less authority conceded to the churches themselves. The paradox seems to be worldwide. A report adopted by the Church of England declared that Britain is a 'pagan nation.' When a survey was made in Tokyo concerning religious importance, an overwhelming majority of the capital's inhabitants answered that religion is indispensable -- but an equally overwhelming majority acknowledged that they never enter temples or shrines or churches. Similar answers would probably be obtained in almost any large city in the world except in Russia.

"Institutional religion," concludes Dr. Hutchinson, "has little influence over the masses and over contemporary social orders and agencies. Such is the universal paradox -- man under such terror of the future that he is turning with new openness of mind to a spiritual interpretation of life, while the churches are less and less able to command the active loyalty of the masses."

In his usual penetrating analysis, Canon Bernard Iddings Bell arrives at the same conclusion, and gives a similar indictment when he says, "The Christian church has today for the most part ceased to have any influence worth mentioning over human affairs, particularly on men who think and lead."

The church world meets in Amsterdam and makes high pronouncements. But the world rolls on with much the same hard, cynical attitude as was expressed by Stalin: "And how many divisions does the Pope have?"

A defeated world needs a victorious Church. A fearful world needs a courageous and triumphant Church. But the Church today is neither victorious nor triumphant -- it is just as fear-ridden and frustrated and perplexed and worried as the world around it.

Is there a shout of mastery coming from the churches in America? Some say yes. And to substantiate their claim they point to the fact that church membership in America is at its highest peak, both in numbers and in percentage of population. But as Dr. Trueblood says: "Christianity would have a much better chance in most communities if there were only twelve real Christians instead of the thousands of church members on the rolls."

Church membership in America has never been higher, and the influence and effectiveness of the Church have never been lower than at the present time. What real difference would it make if everyone in America belonged to some church -- if church membership didn't mean any more to the unchurched millions than it means to millions whose names are already on the rolls?

While it is true that there are over seventy-nine million church members in America, it is also true that less than half that number ever attend church with any semblance of regularity

whatsoever. It has become impossible for many churches to have prayer meetings or Sunday night services. There are thousands of churches in America that not only have not had a revival in years, but do not have enough spiritual fervor even to try to have one. Some churches that do bestir themselves for an evangelistic campaign find that in too many instances their campaign for souls degenerates into just another campaign for church members.

It is only when Zion "travails" that souls are born into the Kingdom. But the majority of churches today are not only unwilling to travail; they are not even vigorous enough to conceive the need for souls. Consequently their churches are never maternity wards -- they are just morgues.

While the churches in America are marking time, the devil is on the march. According to recent statistics there are over fifty million drinkers in America, and 6 per cent of them are confirmed alcoholics. There are more young women selling beer and liquor as bar maids in saloons and taverns and cafes and night clubs than are enrolled in all the colleges and universities in the United States. Over \$13,000,000,000 spent on liquor in the United States during 1948 -- or an average of ninety dollars for every man, woman, and child in America. In the same year, the American people smoked an average of seven cigarettes a day for every man, woman, and child in the United States. Add to all of this the infamous divorce rate and the climbing crime costs and the increasing godlessness and secularism of the American people, and then begin to contemplate the tragic failure of the churches in America.

Oh, in this day of confused sounds, clamoring voices, and shifting convictions, men and women desperately need to hear the note of certainty, the note of triumph, the note of mastery! But instead of hearing the blowing of the bugles and the beating of the drums for victorious advance, the men and women of this day, if they hear anything at all from the Church, hear nothing more than muted violins and clarinets. No shout of victory. No shout of mastery. No shout of triumph. Just the muffled, muted sounds of mournful singing!

II. THE CHURCH TODAY LACKS THE CRY OF BURDENED HEARTS

It would seem that the challenging conditions confronting the Church today would literally compel Christians to their knees in prayer. But even more sad than the lack of the shout of mastery is the lack of the cry of the children of God. If there could be heard across America that cry of soul-agony over the lost, there would be more basis for hope that the Church would rise to meet the challenge of this crucial age.

One reason for the lack of the cry of God's people is that too many of God's people are sound asleep -- resting, relaxing, and slumbering! In the most crucial moment in the life of Jesus before He went to the cross, the three most trusted disciples were not interested or concerned enough to stay awake, and finally Jesus had to say to them, "Sleep on and take your rest."

In this most crucial hour in the life of the Church of Christ, Jesus is depending on His followers to be awake and busy at their first task. But instead of being awake and working, too many professed followers are sound asleep -- taking their rest, while the world goes to hell. There are some, of course, who attend church and go through the routines of their profession. But there are people in America who have been known to walk and talk in their sleep!

Slumbering Saints

God's people everywhere are too drowsy! There are too many slumbering saints in every church! A spirit of rest and relaxation has settled down over many professing Christians like some mist or pall or smoke screen, until vast thousands of "good" church members are sound asleep.

One reason why so many of God's children are sleeping today is that they feel they have carried the burden long enough; they have supported the work long enough; they have shouldered the responsibility long enough; and now it is time for the burden to be carried by younger shoulders. They have retired from active service. Yes, their names are still on the church roll. They still profess. They still attend. But they have really retired from active duty.

There is never a safe time in the Christian life to begin to take it easy or to rest or to feel that one has done enough. The only way anyone can coast for very long is downhill. Jesus did not say, "Occupy until you get tired," or, "Occupy until you think you have done enough." Jesus did say, "Occupy till I come."

Other Christians feel that, since night is upon us, we had better rest until things settle down to normalcy, and then we can begin to work and promote the Kingdom. But God never commanded His people to mark time. God did command His people to "go forward!" The fact that our day is dark and the blackness of night will soon be upon us should not cause us to rest or to slumber or to take it easy, but that very darkness should be the greatest impetus in the world for us to get down on our knees and begin to pay the price for the winning of souls to Christ.

Let us be done with singing, "O happy rest, sweet happy rest!" and begin singing, "We'll work till Jesus comes; we'll work till Jesus comes -- and then be gathered home."

Contagion of Complacency

Another reason for the great number of slumbering saints is this: the contagion of complacency. It is only human to look at others and say: "Well, if he can profess so much and do so little for the church ... if she can stand and testify like that and do no more for God and the church than she does, I'm going to take it a little easier myself. I can't do it all." And finally that attitude catches on until there are today entire congregations slumbering and sleeping and resting and relaxing and taking it easy -- while the world, in their neighborhood, goes to hell!

Of course one of the most tragic aspects of being asleep is that we don't like to be awakened. It is so much easier to go through the religious routines, it is so much easier to keep faith with techniques of private devotions, than it is to fall on our knees and tarry until God pours His Spirit out upon us so that our complacency is shattered and we are compelled to go out and witness and win for Christ.

One can attend Sunday school and be complacent. One can attend the services of the church and be complacent. One can teach a Sunday-school class or serve on the church board and be

complacent. But no one can be complacent and win a soul to Christ. It takes a burdened soul to do that! But carrying burdens is hard work! It involves crying and agonizing and fasting.

Marred by Mediocrity

Another reason for the lack of the cry of the children of God is that too many of God's children have at last become satisfied with mediocrity. They plan and pray and promote for the mediocre -- and they are not disappointed. If God should pour out His Spirit in a really supernatural way, they would be surprised -- and chagrined.

A district superintendent was asking one of his pastors about a recent revival. The pastor said that they had enjoyed a good revival. "How many prayed through?" asked the superintendent. "Oh," the pastor answered, "I think it was three or four." The superintendent raised up in his chair and said, "Man, you didn't have a revival at all -- you might have had a meeting, but you didn't have a revival!"

Oh, the tragedy of becoming satisfied with the ordinary -- when God is anxious and willing to pour out the extraordinary and the supernatural! We have a right to plan for and pray for and expect supernatural results. We're serving a supernatural God!

This world with its tensions and pressures and fears and sins desperately needs a Church that is moved and stirred and burdened. But the world will never hear the "cry" of the Church so long as the Church is sleeping or complacent or content.

III. THE CHURCH TODAY IS FILLED WITH THE NOISE OF "SINGING"

With nothing to shout about, and not enough spiritual urgency to cry, it is only natural that the Church has fashioned beautiful golden calves -- to sing about! Golden calves can be so glittering -- and so blinding! Success in other tasks, regardless of how brilliant or how glorious, can never compensate for the failure in the first task -- that of winning men and women to Jesus Christ.

The Golden Calf of Financial Security

One golden calf that has been erected in the effort to hide the failure in winning souls is that golden calf of financial security. There are churches across America that made a real impact for God in their community when they were small and struggling. But now that God has blessed them in a far grander way than they ever thought possible, with more moneys flowing through the church treasuries than they ever imagined possible, they have folded their arms and taken the attitude, "We have now arrived." But when any individual or any church takes that attitude, it is absolutely impossible for God to use that individual or that church in carrying out His redemptive will.

God himself has a word to individuals and churches that have "arrived." He says, "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

Great numbers of churches today are giving obeisance to the collection plate. Even in their reports, they smooth over their failure in winning men and women to Christ by reciting figures of the tremendous increase in finances flowing through the church treasuries. The guide showing a visitor to the Vatican the great wealth of the church smilingly said, "The church today doesn't have to say with Peter, 'Silver and gold have we none.'" "No," said the visitor, "and neither can the church today say to poor, crippled souls, 'Rise up and walk!'"

The Church is not an institution competing with other businesses on the basis of finance. The Church is a soul-saving institution! And when it becomes something else, it is no longer the Church that has Christ's blessings, and it is no longer the Church that can carry out His Great Commission!

Golden calves have even been known to emerge from burnt mortgages. Some churches when they had the tension and challenge of paying off their church debt had to pray and believe God, and thus there was power in all the phases of the church work. But now that the debt is paid off and the challenge is lifted, the church no longer prays as much, or believes as much -- or accomplishes as much!

Why do we pay and overpay budgets? Because of external pressure? Because of the competitive angle? No. We pay and overpay the budgets because of the vision of world need -- the cries of the countless millions who are still in heathen darkness pleading, "Come over and help us."

Why do we want churches and want them paid for? To provide a comfortable place for us to come and worship? To add to the church's prestige in the community? No. The reason we want them and want them for our own is that we might have a place, in our community, where broken and sin-weary souls might come and hear the gospel and where they can kneel and find Christ and go out with new hearts to live transformed, radiant Christian lives.

It doesn't matter how much money is passing through the church treasuries, or how much we pay or overpay our budgets, or how nice or how big our church building is -- if we fail to win men to Christ, we're failing at the job! We're failing Christ, and we're failing humanity! And we're not shouting, nor crying -- we're just "singing"!

The Golden Calf of Sunday-School Statistics

Another golden calf that has been erected in an effort to hide the failure in actually winning men is that golden calf of Sunday-school statistics. The first question usually asked concerning the church is this: "How many are you averaging in Sunday school?" A legitimate question, certainly. And, in a way, an indication of the promotional abilities of the church.

How many thousands today are giving obeisance to that glittering calf of Sunday-school statistics! Bowing down at the golden calf of numbers. Prostrating themselves before the shrine of the Sunday-school register. Worshipping statistics! How glittering that calf can be! How blinding it can be! How deceiving it can be!

Certainly we strive for great numbers in the Sunday school. But wait! Why do we want them? Why do we seek great numbers in our Sunday-school classes? To increase the prestige of the teacher or officer? To place higher up on the list in the district paper? To have something to talk about? The reason we want them is to win them! It does not take a burden to get people to come to Sunday school. Many outside pressures can do it. Awards, or competition, or prestige can get them there. But it does take a burden and a passion for souls to win them after they get there!

O teacher, the contests and the socials and the parties and the wiener roasts and the showers and the rallies are not ends in themselves. The objective, the purpose, and the reason for it all is that those pupils might be won to Christ. Only a great, overwhelming, all-consuming love for the souls of those pupils can give sustained romance to the Sunday-school task.

Regardless of how many hundreds we are averaging a Sunday in Sunday school, if we are not winning a consistent percentage of those scholars to Jesus Christ, we are failing God and we are cheating the pupils, and we are not shouting, nor crying -- we are just "singing"!

The Golden Calf of Numbers in the Altar

Another golden calf erected in the effort to hide the failure in actually winning men is the golden calf of great numbers in the altar. We can never have too many "seekers" in the altar. But we can easily have too many sentimentalists. One comes to the altar because of heart hunger; the other comes because of habit. One comes because he is convicted; the other comes because he is coaxed. One comes because he is burdened; the other comes because he is begged. One comes because he wants salvation; the other comes because he wants sympathy. God give us more seekers!

Why do we really want great numbers in the altar? Why do we want the altar "lined"? Because of the pressure of personal failure? Because we know that a revival should have seekers?

The reason we want them is to win them -- to Christ! They are not won when they kneel at the altar. They have just been reached. And there is a vast difference between reaching men and winning men. To be sure, souls must be reached to be won. But the motive and goal are not merely to reach them, but to win them. We should never be satisfied until our "contacts" become "conversions."

It does not take real burden or strong crying to reach men, but it does take real burden to pray and believe until the heart is melted and the soul begins to meet conditions and to look up with real faith, believing God for salvation. That is the reason why many will come down to the altar to pray with seekers, but few will tarry in real intercessory prayer until victory comes. They are concerned with the reaching, yes; but the winning is far too hard and demanding a work.

Regardless of how many we "reach," regardless of how many we have in our altars, if we are failing actually to "win" them to Christ in real experience, we are failing in our first task, and we are not shouting, nor crying -- we're just "singing."

The Golden Calf of the Nonessential

Still another golden calf erected to hide the failure in the first task of winning men is that golden calf of the nonessential. It is the devil's business to get the energies of the Church diverted from its first task. The devil is unconcerned about the Church's success in the secondaries. He is eternally and ruthlessly opposed to the Church's success in its first task -- that of winning men and women to Christ!

The devil is pleased when he can successfully divert the attention of Christians from the great task of winning men -- regardless of what their attention is focused upon. If he can sidetrack Christians on some tangent, get them out on some spur line, he is successfully defeating God's first purpose for His Church and God's great plan for redeeming men.

And yet many good, sincere Christians are today worshipping the golden calf of the nonessential. Their energies are not going out in fighting sin and the devil; their energies are being dissipated in the marginal skirmishes with "appearances." The golden calf of nonessential is not so glittering as the others, because it is fully clothed! -- but it is just as deadly to the cause of winning men and women to Christ.

Oh, if all real Christians would quit wasting their energies on the side issues and the marginal and the external and the nonessential, what an advance could be made against the devil and sin in the actual winning of men and women to Christ!

A young couple knelt at the altar and were gloriously converted. The mother of the young lady was a worshiper at the shrine of the nonessential. She discouraged the young couple and said if they really had prayed through they would do this and that, and she was so naggingly persistent that finally the young lady and her husband gave up and are now lost to God and the church. The mother has never been able to win her husband or any of her children to Christ -- she has been too busy worshipping the golden calf of the nonessential.

Regardless of what we put on, or what we put off -- if we're failing actually to win souls to Christ, then we're failing God and we're failing souls, and we're not shouting, nor crying -- we're just "singing"!

Smash the Golden Calves

Oh, that today we might take these golden calves that are so glittering and so blinding and so deceiving and do with them exactly as Moses did with the golden calf of his day -- literally smash them! Destroy them! Obliterate them! Then quit our singing and fall on our knees and begin crying! If we will do that, it won't be long until we can really begin shouting! All genuine shouting must be preceded by genuine crying. Could that be one reason why there is so little real shouting today -- because there is so little real crying? One must earn one's right to shout!

In one of our campaigns in Portland, Oregon, there was a small, elderly woman who was heavily burdened for several of her loved ones -- one man in particular who was a backslider. The first Saturday of the meeting she felt that God wanted her to fast for this man's salvation. No one asked her to do it. She didn't pledge to do it. God told her to fast, so she started fasting.

She was past seventy years of age and very frail in body, and her family and friends urged her to stop fasting; but she went right on -- Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. I felt myself that she should break her fast because she was so frail, but I said nothing. Thursday and Friday and Saturday she fasted, and the man had not knelt at the altar even one time. But that little Christian woman held on -- fasting and praying.

Finally, on Sunday morning, that man was in the service and when the altar call was given he was the first one to kneel. It wasn't long until he gloriously prayed through. Need I say that that little Christian woman shouted that Sunday morning? No one will ever forget the sight of her as she walked up and down in front of the altar with her handkerchief waving, her face aglow, and her heart pouring itself out in praise and gratitude to God for answered prayer. Yes, she shouted. But she had earned her right to shout.

We look back nineteen hundred years and defame Nero because he stood on his palace balconies -- fiddling while Rome burned. And yet we professing Christians of this twentieth century are standing on the balconies of our time -- merely singing -- while our world is on fire! O God! Drive us to our knees. May our eyes be wet with strong crying over the lost souls everywhere about us!

God Still Lives

Throughout history, when God's people have humbled themselves and have begun to cry out to God from the weakness of their hearts, God has heard their cries and has answered by giving mighty deliverance and mastery and triumph.

When the children of Israel were a slave nation under the tyranny of Pharaoh, they began to cry unto God out of the weakness of their hearts; and God, in His great strength and power, heard their cries and gave them a mighty deliverance and the shout of victory.

When the children of Israel stood with the Red Sea in front of them and Pharaoh's armies in back of them, they fell down and cried to God; and God, in His vast power, brought them through the Red Sea victoriously -- so triumphantly that the shouts of victory could be heard even above the cries and cursings of Pharaoh's drowning armies.

When Gideon and his three hundred found themselves confronted with vast numbers of well-equipped and well-trained soldiers, they cried unto God for direction and help; and God, in His mighty power, heard their cries of weakness and gave them a military victory that still amazes and mystifies. The shouts of victory from Gideon's three hundred could be heard above the agonized cries of the hundred and twenty thousand dying barbarians. Gideon's God still lives today!

When the hundred and twenty in the Upper Room prayed out of the weakness of their hearts -- confronted as they were by their pagan world and obstacles that seemed insurmountable -- God heard their cries of weakness and surrender and gave to them a power so real and so tremendous that they became "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." And the

shouts of their victory were heard even above the clatter and crash of their frenzied world. The God of Pentecost still lives today!

When Wesley and his small band were faced with ecclesiastical ridicule and howling mobs, and when defeat seemed inevitable, they cried out of the weakness of their hearts to God; and God, in His great power, heard their cries and gave to them such marvelous victory that they were able to stem the tide of ungodliness in their generation and become a mighty movement that for scores of years preached full salvation around the world.

When Dr. P. F. Bresee and those early pioneers who burned their way across this nation -- when they were gradually squeezed out of the larger fellowships and were forced to go out under the stars to preach their mighty truth -- they prayed out of the weakness of their hearts until God, in His might and power and strength, heard their cries and gave to them the shout of victory that is now reverberating in churches across the face of America and in twenty-three lands beyond the sea. Glory! Bresee's God still lives today!

And if God can find a few people today who will tear down their golden calves and quit their singing and fall upon their knees and cry out of their burdened souls, He will give glorious victory today! And the pagan, secular, materialistic, worldly people everywhere will again hear the shouts of victory from the children of God!

Let each one of us then be so fired with that sense of holy mission that we cry and pray and trust and witness and win so that in the days beyond, if Jesus tarries, men can say that our day of challenge and opportunity was not wasted in singing, but that we cried and prayed and tarried until the shout of mastery was again heard in the land.

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REVIVALS AND THE MID-CENTURY CRUSADE

"And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." -- Acts 5:42

There is across this land a deepening and unmistakable conviction that evangelism, as we have known it, is at the crossroads. We do know that evangelism in the Church of the Nazarene is in crisis. And since our whole church program is geared to the evangelistic emphasis, the present crisis and challenge affect every layman and every preacher -- in every area of responsibility.

Our world today is in flux and ferment -- not only politically and socially and economically, but religiously as well. And the Church of the Nazarene, in its thinking and re-evaluation of emphasis, has not escaped the disturbing tides of our times. The attitudes we take today and the decisions and choices we make in the immediate future will, if Jesus tarries, determine the future effectiveness of the church for many, many years to come.

In our attempts to rethink evangelism in the light of present conditions, regardless of how hard we try, we cannot divorce revival effort from any sustained evangelistic emphasis, at least in the Church of the Nazarene today or in the foreseeable future. It is true, of course, that there have been great denomination-wide spiritual crusades promoted by some churches in the past which did not include the revival method. But the total impact of those crusades invariably resulted in the dissipation of the spiritual and physical capital, with the whole crusade degenerating into just another campaign for church members. And if the Mid-Century Crusade in the Church of the Nazarene degenerates into that, the church would be better off had the campaign never been launched. Sheer weight is never the determining factor in effectiveness. The determining factor in the success of any cause is intensity of devotion -- and faith!

Many churches today face a real crisis in their evangelism because they have neglected, or in some cases, repudiated altogether, the revival method. Could it be that we in the Church of the Nazarene face our crisis because we have depended too exclusively upon the revival to meet all our evangelistic needs?

The true solution for effective evangelism today must lie between those two extremes. And that is why the challenge and program of the Mid-Century Crusade are so thrilling -- it reaffirms the necessity of revival, while at the same time emphatically points to the need of enlisting the whole church in the actual winning of men and women to Jesus Christ. That is not to say that revival is any less important; rather, it is to say that other methods of evangelism are vastly more important than we have sometimes thought.

There are those, of course, who blame any decrease in evangelistic effectiveness upon ineffective revivals and revivalists. It is so easy -- and human -- to lay blame. But when we are really honest with ourselves we know, and admit, that all of us -- pastors, evangelists, superintendents, and laity -- share in the blame, remembering that revival, in this sense, is merely the outgrowth of the evangelistic attitude and spirit.

There are those who apparently can afford that easy cynicism which says, "Yes, the church was born in a revival, and unless we are careful it will also die in one. And so, believing that we have really outgrown the revival, the cynics are ready to relegate the revival to some marginal activity of the church, thus enabling them to throw the full weight of their enlightened and progressive genius to some other method. Fortunately, that attitude is not widespread.

Whatever our attitude might be toward the revival method, with all its limitations, the Church of the Nazarene is committed to it -- not exclusively, of course, but as a central part of its evangelistic effort, in the Mid-Century Crusade and beyond.

Believing then that revivals have been, are today, and must in the future be a central part of our evangelistic effort, let us discuss ways in which revivals might be more fruitful within the general framework of the Mid-Century Crusade.

We are spending today in the Church of the Nazarene almost two million dollars per year in special revival effort. Each church is giving on the average from four to eight weeks per year to special evangelistic campaigns. There are approximately three hundred men and women in the

Church of the Nazarene giving their full time to the field of evangelism. Of course, that number varies from week to week -- as pastors are constrained to enter the evangelistic field, and as evangelists are constrained to enter the pastorate.

But the question comes: Are we getting value received from our program of evangelism? Do our revivals actually justify the unprecedented expenditure, the unparalleled promotion, and the untiring energies we are pouring out upon them today? In this crucial, challenging hour, are the results of our revivals as fruitful and as constructive and as abiding as they should be? And if they are not, then why not?

Some, of course, lay the blame for our evangelistic ills on the inflationary costs of religious work today. It is true that the per capita cost of conversions is steadily rising -- and in the Church of the Nazarene the cost has been rising steadily since 1935. Yet that is neither an adequate excuse nor an ample explanation.

Lack of Member-Participation

The real reason for the decline in evangelistic effectiveness is an alarming and tragic lack of member-participation in the actual work of winning men and women to Jesus Christ. And that, of course, implies that deeper lack of a vigorous and positive spirituality.

It is said that fifty thousand Nazarenes could die tonight and their passing would not visibly affect the church in its first task of winning souls to Christ. What is the condition in your local church? Could you lose one-fourth of your total membership without any appreciable decrease in evangelistic effectiveness?

The fact remains that whenever there are in any church more souls needing to be won than soul winners, that church is a field rather than a force for evangelism! And I submit that God does not intend His Church to be just a field for evangelism, but that God does intend His Church to be a force -- a mighty and militant spiritual force -- for the evangelization of the world!

There are, of course, great numbers of church members who are good, decent, respectable people, most of whom consider themselves real workers in the church. They can recite a stereotyped testimony. They are able to pronounce all the religious shibboleths. They long ago learned the holiness vocabulary -- even though some of them have long since lost the experience -- content of that vocabulary. They are even willing to serve on committees and boards or teach a class. They are very loyal and very devoted and very faithful -- to the marginal and the secondary. But the actual participation in the church's first task, that of winning men and women to Christ, is much too demanding and much too hard work for their soft and flabby souls.

All of us are thankful to God for those members who are spiritually alert and who are not only morally decent but spiritually dynamic -- who not only pray to win souls, but win souls because they pray. Who are not concerned chiefly with contacts, but are glad and willing to pay the steep price for conversions. Who are not only glad to deal with souls, but are willing to hold on until they win souls. May the emphasis of the Mid-Century Crusade be so stirring and so challenging that this small class of the concerned shall be increased -- by the thousands!

This type of burden and interest and passion for souls never comes easy -- and it can never be promoted nor organized nor advertised into the hearts of our people! This sincere burden and passion for souls comes as a by-product of deep devotion and consecration and an ever-increasing awareness of the glorious truths and claims of the gospel of Christ!

One thing we are learning, thank God! -- and not any too soon either -- is that artificial zeal, regardless of how loud or how sparkling or how persistent, can never take the place of genuine spiritual power!

A Deepening Spirituality

There is one truth that all of us should rediscover and have the courage to face, and that is that evangelism is not the cause but the result of a spiritual church! On the Day of Pentecost was it the revival, the winning of three thousand souls to Christ, that made the disciples spiritually dynamic, or was it the new spiritual power that made the revival possible and inevitable? True, the spiritual tone of the church is far better after a genuine revival, but that is because revival is but the completion and renewal of the evangelistic process.

Evangelism, then, is really the outflow and the overflow of a spiritually vigorous church. Evangelism is the glow of an inner warmth, the go of an inner compulsion.

That is why a church can never be propped up indefinitely by periodic meetings. That is why no evangelist, no matter how good or how famous or how eccentric, can ever really produce a genuine revival; he can only "exploit" a spiritual condition! That is why a church that is making little or no impact should not ask, "What is wrong with our program of evangelism?" but should rather ask, "What is lacking in the spiritual equipment of our people?" And that is why Dr. E. Stanley Jones is so urgently right when he says, "Before we can go further we must first go deeper!"

Without that deepening spirituality which issues in passionate, all-out service, all of our visitation and advertising and methods -- the effectiveness of all our plans and programs and promotions will be reduced to a final and futile spiritual zero. As someone has so challengingly said: "Revival is not going down the street with a great big drum; revival is going back to Calvary with a great big sob!"

The slogan of the Mid-Century Crusade catches that same spirit: "Begin on your knees -- then go to the task!" And if we tarry on our knees long enough, we will go to the task -- we'll have to!

If our revivals are to justify the place given to them in the program of the church, and if they are to make the spiritual impact they should in this great Crusade, two changes are desperately necessary.

First, our revivals must become more God-centered and less man-centered! We don't really need more high-powered personality behind the pulpit; but we do urgently need more of the personality and power of the Holy Spirit upon the whole church.

Secondly, we must get the spectators out of the gallery and into the witness chair! There are far too many "onlookers" in our churches. There are far too many professing Christians and church members who are on the side lines. In this great task of winning men, no one can be effective as an "onlooker." No one can participate from the side lines. Soul winning is everybody's job!

Oh, that every Nazarene would make the slogan, "Begin on your knees -- then go to the task," more than a slogan, but an actual heart and life experience! Our revivals -- and every phase of the work -- would be more God-centered. Our "spectator" members would begin to participate in the soul-winning task, and our churches would receive that spiritual impetus that is so desperately and so urgently needed.

Revivals and the Crusade

Of course, before the revival ever starts, the pastor will be working the plan of the Mid-Century Crusade -- not just in its initial phases but in the fourth phase, that of definitely talking to and praying with men and women with the one aim of winning them to Christ. And in the remaining months of the Crusade, intensive working of that plan before each revival will tie in the whole emphasis of the Crusade into one constructive evangelistic effort. It will be impossible, of course, to keep sustained interest at that intensity so necessary for real effectiveness in all the phases of the Crusade; but if the fourth phase is worked immediately preceding each revival the results of the revivals should prove constructive and abiding.

But that personal work must not stop when the revival begins! The fact cannot be too strongly emphasized. How often it has been true that, regardless of the preparation for the revival, just as soon as the evangelist arrived and the revival started the people sat back and said by their actions, "All right, here we are; let's see you put it on" -- thinking that they could "hire" their evangelistic work done for them, and that their responsibility was somehow suspended for the duration of the meeting. Is it any wonder that many of our revivals lack depth and constructive results? And by "constructive" results, I mean that residual work -- that you have left when all the shouting dies away.

Constructive and abiding results in any revival require more than horn-playing or special singing or recitation of poems or jokes or even unique sermons. Really constructive and abiding results stem from the deep moving of the Holy Spirit and the participation of the whole church in the whole task.

We simply cannot afford to let the plan of the Crusade in any of its phases stop when the meeting begins! Then, of all times, it is so urgently necessary to have our people trying to change some of their contacts into conversions.

A Suggested Plan

The following plan is one that has been used for a number of months in an attempt to enlist more active participation in the actual winning of souls to Christ. It is not presented as the only plan, certainly, nor even the best plan; but I believe it does point in the right direction.

In order to continue the emphasis of the Mid-Century Crusade during the revival, all of those members who have signed up or expressed their willingness to do personal work and visitation are asked to meet after one of the early services of the meeting, there to discuss homes that can be entered and worked, and loved ones and friends who need definite spiritual help. Then the workers decide among themselves which homes they care to work and the size of the group to go -- usually two and not more than three persons to a group. Then throughout that night and next day they can pray for those into whose homes they will go the following evening.

Everyone, of course, comes to service the next evening; but during the song service, or about thirty minutes after the service has begun, those who are going out to do personal work come to the altar and prayer is offered for them in the specific task before them. Then while others in the congregation stand with bowed heads, the personal workers arise from the altar and go out of the church and into their cars and to the homes to be worked. They report back to the church after their visitation and prayer to report any conversions that might have taken place or the response of the people to their dealing and prayer. Of course the service continues at the church while the personal workers are out. This plan is carried out one or two nights of the first week of the meeting, and perhaps one night of the second or last week.

When the workers are met at the door by the prospect or prospects, the workers simply say, "We have left our revival service to come and talk with you and pray with you." Very seldom are the workers refused entrance into the home. If there are visitors in the home, the conversation is, of course, very general; the scripture is read and prayer is offered, and the workers leave the home with a strong invitation for the people to attend the revival services.

However, if the situation is "right," if the prospects are there alone, after the rather general conversation (and the prospect or prospects will usually see to it that it is kept general!), the small talk can be ended by saying, "We would like to read a scripture while we are here." And after the scripture, the workers can make the dealing very pointed and plain -- working toward a definite decision: excuses answered, and reasons given why the prospects should settle it right then and there. Finally the prospects are asked to kneel, and while all are kneeling the workers can all pray -- for that definite decision! The prospect or prospects can then be dealt with exactly as though they were kneeling at the altar in church.

After prayer the workers rise and rejoice with those who have prayed through -- or if such is not the case, promise the prospects that they will continue to pray for them, and urge them to attend the revival services; then thank them for the privilege of prayer in their home, and courteously and graciously leave.

"Sounds all right," you say, "but will it work?" Yes, thank God, it has passed that test! Not every needy prospect prays through in that type of home-evangelism. But, does every needy person go to the altar and pray through in the regular or revival services? There are at least four important advantages to this plan of evangelism -- or any other plan with the same objective.

Reaches Souls Not Attending Church

1. It makes possible the reaching and winning of men and women who never attend church -- much less kneel at an altar if they did come. In sober truth, great numbers of men and women living in our communities will die and go to hell if we wait for them to come to church and pray through. If they are ever won to Christ, it will be through personal dealing and prayer in their own homes.

A man past sixty years of age was not attending church -- and had not attended for years. He was hard and cynical. The members of the Church of the Nazarene in that California town had invited him to church many, many times, but he wouldn't come. His wife invited him constantly, but he wouldn't come. Finally, four men of the church went out to see him. His wife came to the door; and when the man saw the four men from the church there, he started out the back door. But they at last persuaded him to sit down, and they began to talk to him about his soul and about Christ and His wonderful love and mercy. The usual objections and excuses were given. Finally, the four Christian men and the man's wife knelt to pray. The man not only wouldn't kneel, but he sat with head unbowed, stony and resistant.

At last the wife went over and knelt in front of her husband and cried and prayed that he would get on his knees and accept Christ. "Watching" and praying, the men saw a tear trickle down the man's cheek; then all at once he was on his knees praying and crying and pouring out his heart to God. It wasn't long until the man prayed through and was on his feet saying, "Thank God for saving me! I have held out a long time, but I'm so glad that I have at last accepted Christ." Yes, the man was in the very next service of the revival -- and testified that Christ had saved him! Does it pay? Does it work? You answer that!

A mother of seven children was not attending church. She lived just outside the city limits of a Texas city, and with the children and transportation problems she easily justified herself in not attending church. Two personal workers went out to her home to talk to her and to pray with her. She continued ironing while the workers talked and witnessed. The woman was not hard nor resistant; she simply had not been able to find time to get everything else done and then get to church.

Finally, the workers asked the woman to get on her knees for prayer. She did so, and even while one of the workers prayed this woman broke out in sobbing -- crying to God for salvation. She had never been a Christian, and as she poured out her heart in prayer she told God that she was so sorry she had just neglected Him so long and that she really wanted to be a Christian mother and to set a good example before her children. God, of course, heard and answered that mother's earnest prayer. And that woman stood with tears streaming down her face, praising the Lord, saying, "Thank You, Jesus, for saving me! Thank You, Jesus, for coming into my heart. Now I know that I'll be able to meet my precious boy who is in heaven." Oh, how happy she was! How thrilled she was! A mother of seven children, a woman forty-five years of age, and a Christian for the first time in her life! Yes, she was in the next service of the revival and testified that Christ had saved her; and then, in the closing service of the revival, she, with others, stood and united with the Church of the Nazarene.

Oh, the vast thousands of men and women and young people who never attend church services or revivals and who will be lost in hell unless someone prays with them in their own homes and wins them to Christ! With the ... attractions that keep men and women out of churches, this plan of home-evangelism will be increasingly important -- and necessary! But, the early Christians witnessed and won -- in homes!

Increases Dependence on God

2. This plan of visitation and home-evangelism during the revival increases the sense of dependence on God. It doesn't take a great amount of spiritual fervor to sit and listen through a revival service. But it does take real burden and a sense of utter dependence upon God to go out into a home and witness and win for Christ. Church members can come to revival services and even participate to a certain extent in those services -- without God's help. But no one can go into a home and pray and win a lost soul to Christ without God's help!

How many times have workers come back from the homes saying that they felt so inadequate as they pulled up in front of the home to be visited and worked, that they tarried in the car for a few minutes to ask God's special blessing and help! As one woman, who had been a professing Christian and a church member for years, put it, "As I rang the doorbell I was shaking all over with fright, but I asked God to help me; and by the time the people got to the door, my fear was gone and God wonderfully helped me throughout the evening." A Sunday-school superintendent said when he returned from praying with friends in their home, "I don't know just how much good it did them, but I know this: I'll never be the same!" If this plan did nothing more than to increase that sense of dependence upon God it would be gloriously worth while -- to every church member and to every church. Our work, in all of its phases, must be more God-centered.

Increases Sense of Personal Responsibility

3. This plan increases the awareness of personal responsibility in the task of soul winning and gives Christians, during the revival, an avenue of actual witnessing. Church members become not mere spectators in the task of winning souls, but participators, proclaimers, evangelists in their own right, which is, of course, God's plan and purpose for every Christian.

To the same degree that we have detached soul winning from the responsibilities and duties and privileges of the individual Christian, and placed that responsibility upon some "hired" evangelist, to that same degree have we departed from God's plan for winning men. Jesus said, "If you follow Me, I will make you a fisher of men." According to Jesus, every true Christian is to be a soul winner!

As workers go into the homes to pray and win, they feel in their hearts that it is their responsibility and duty and privilege -- just as much as it is the duty and privilege of their pastor or the "hired" evangelist. As a church board member put it, "I have known all along that this is what I ought to do, but somehow I just never got started until tonight." Or, as a Sunday-school teacher expressed it: "I have heard preachers talk about this all my life, but I never felt that I could do it, even though I knew I should. But I'm so glad that I have finally got started."

All of us know that this is God's plan -- every Christian witnessing and winning. All of us know that we should do it. All of us know that there are thousands of men and women who will go to hell unless they are prayed with and won right in their own homes. But getting started! That's the difficulty! As someone has said, "The best way to start is to start!" And if we will start, God will go with us!

Conserves Results

4. This plan worked during the revival will help to conserve the results of the revival. If one has had a personal interest and part in the winning of a soul to Christ, that one will also be more vitally concerned about that soul staying true to God -- thus providing the only atmosphere for the successful conservation of results.

When we are honest with ourselves, we know that the results of any revival are never really conserved by any number of church socials or suppers or showers. If we spent half the time in spiritual concern for our new converts that we do entertaining them, we would see more of our converts actually hungering for holiness and more of those converts permanently won to the church. The results of any revival are never really conserved by merely adding names to the church roll. To accept into membership those who know nothing of the church or its doctrines is to lay the groundwork for future misunderstandings and trouble.

It requires the same spirituality -- the same intensity of prayer and passion and personal concern -- to conserve souls that it does to win them. No amount of organization or promotion or entertainment can ever take the place of that!

Is it any wonder that when our revivals are so man-centered -- when so much of the soul-winning responsibility is relegated to the evangelist -- is it any wonder that, when the evangelist is gone and there is no reservoir of spiritual concern or personal interest, so many of the results of the revival "evaporate." It takes personal concern plus the help of God to win souls -- and it takes personal concern plus the help of God to conserve souls!

Reveille or Taps

This great spiritual offensive known as the Mid-Century Crusade for Souls can mean either reveille or taps for the church. And remember, both of those can be blown on the same bugle -- by the same person! It will mean the beginning of the end if, in these days of terrific challenge, we dissipate our spiritual energies in that feverish activity which degenerates a crusade into a "campaign" for members and organizations, while high-sounding reports and imposing and flashy statistics continue to pile up, blinding us to the awful and tragic fact that our God-given mission of holiness evangelism is passing into other hands and hearts.

Oh, that God will make this Crusade a stirring reveille, awakening us to the need and to our responsibility, and summoning us to rise and meet the challenge of a world in crisis with a holiness evangelism which is at once the dynamic of the church and the only adequate answer to a confused and chaotic world!

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THE END