

# COUNSEL



THE HARVEST OF THE WORD OF GOD

THE SAVIOUR CAN SOLVE EVERY PROBLEM

LOVE FOR THE LOST (PART 2)

GOD WITH MAN (PART 1)

JESUS IN THE MIDST

THE WORD SPEAKS

INHERITANCE

TWO

*March – April 2008*

The believer in Christ is never alone. Let me cite one verse in proof of this statement: *"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee"* (Heb. 13:5). In my Bible Old Testament quotations are marked and this quote from Hebrews 13:5 is shown as one of those quotations. However as I attempt to locate it, I find that there is no such verse in the Old Testament. There are however several verses with various parts of our verse which tells us this promise is a summary of a great truth that is seen throughout the Bible. On that basis our Hebrew author confidently applies it to us today. The Lord will never leave us or forsake us.

*"And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of"* (Gen. 28:15).

The words were spoken to Jacob in a dream on his journey to Haran where he found his wife Rachel. It was a promise that gave Jacob confidence in a time of uncertainty. It was based on the Lord's repeated promise to both Abraham and Isaac and was not changed for Jacob. Jacob's behaviour was not exemplary. He may have wondered if the faithful God only blessed Abraham and Isaac but was unwilling to bless Jacob too. But the Lord reminded him that God would indeed perform all that He had promised and it was good for Jacob too. We too can be plagued with uncertainty. It may be caused by our own sense of failure. But the Lord's promise to never leave or forsake us is based, not on us, but on Him. We can trust His

word to us today.

*"Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. ... And the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed"* (Deut. 31:6, 8).

These words were spoken by Moses to Israel and Joshua. Moses realized that he would soon be leaving the scene and wanted to encourage the nation and Joshua in God. They might have wondered what was to become of them after Moses was gone. The people may have unknowingly put their confidence in Moses instead of God. They may have wondered how the next generation could possibly provide the leadership that Moses, the man of God did. We serve people well when we inspire their confidence, not in us, but in God. It was the Lord who would remain constant, even though Moses could not. It was the Lord who would never leave them or forsake them. It must have been a tremendous encouragement to Joshua when the Lord Himself restated the promise that Moses had spoken of (Josh. 1:5).

*"And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD"* (1 Chron. 28:20).

A daunting task lay before Solomon – to finish the work of building the house of the Lord. Solomon was evidently a spiritually sensitive man

in his early years and recognized the immensity of the task before him. He could not rely on his earthly father, David. He could not summon mere human experience for such a work. This assignment was far beyond his own ability. Here David assures Solomon the abiding promise of the Lord. Paul followed this practice with young Timothy who in a similar way was to carry on the work of the ministry of teaching and preaching the word of God. The Lord often puts us in circumstances for which we feel inadequate and unprepared for. David assured Solomon that the same God, "my God", would be Solomon's God as well. We too need to realize that the God who performed great things for men and women of the past and present generations is our God too. The human appraisal of greatness in spiritual work is often faulty. We too often assume that those who seem to have had power with God had some rare quality about them that could never be repeated. That rare quality was this: they knew what it was to come to an end of self and rely on God. They too felt their own inability and learned of their dependence on God.

We are never alone. It is always two – the Lord and you. Emotions and circumstances may say otherwise, but the Word of God does not fail. You may feel alone in your circumstances, but it is not true. The Lord is with you. The promise has stood the test of time and still stands today.

**Brian Gunning**  
St. Catharines, Ontario



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TIMELY TRUTHS FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

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**Postmaster:**

Please send address changes to:

COUNSEL  
P. O. Box 427  
St. Catharines ON  
L2R 6V9

**Previous Editors:**

Robert McClurkin  
J. Boyd Nicholson

**Editor:** Brian Gunning, Ontario

**Editorial matters:**

bgunning@sympatico.ca

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Counsel, Inc.  
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COUNSEL  
c/o W. A. McCulloch  
92 Western Road,  
Haywards Heath,  
West Sussex, RH16 3LN

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**Editorial Committee:**

William Burnett, Ontario  
Brian Gunning, Ontario  
Doug Kazen, Washington  
David Robins, Ontario  
Garry W. Seale, Alberta

**Editorial Assistant:**

Caroline Cairns

**Design and Layout:**

Rachel Brooks

**For changes of address and new readers:**

jbn1p322@vaxxine.com

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# The Harvests of the Word of God

*"For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isa. 55:10-11).*

**T**he fitness of the symbolism of this text is apparent even to the most casual observer.

Snow and rain are characterized by gentleness which merges into force. One drop of rain falls upon my hand, and I brush it away, and it is not; but when the drop is multiplied and the great storm sweeps along the valley, it is almost resistless in its onrush. One feathery flake of snow

falls through the atmosphere. I touch it and it passes and is lost, its crystal beauty destroyed forever by the rudeness of my human hand; but let that flake be multiplied and the falling snow will take hold of the thundering locomotive, clog its wheels, check its progress, bury it beneath its soft and noiseless whiteness.

Rain and snow are characterized by helplessness which grows into beneficence. We ask: "What can this drop of rain do for man? What can this flake of snow do for humanity?" And yet we know that when we pass from the individual drop to the great rain, that this in falling makes the earth laugh back in harvest and crowns the labour of the hands of men. There is no more exquisite word in all Scripture about nature than that simple and sublime passage: "*He giveth His snow like wool*"

(Ps. 147:16). Like a warm mantle, it wraps the earth in winter time and keeps it from the penetration of intenser cold. And so we find that rain and snow, helpless as they seem, are the very messengers of beneficence to men.

Again, rain and snow come to us characterized by unfruitfulness, yet generating fruitfulness wherever they fall. Life cannot be sustained by the one or the other. Neither is there in either any element of reproductiveness. Yet in their cooperation with the forces of "old mother earth" and with the ministries of light and air, all that is needed for life's sustenance is produced.

This is but a surface application of the truth. As we watch the rain and the snow and think upon it more carefully, we find a most suggestive symbol of the Word of God. By the

## Inheritance

*"...his inheritance shall be his sons' for them" (Ezek. 46:17).*

A gift from the inheritance of the prince is reserved for permanent enjoyment by his sons. We are sons of the Lord Almighty (2 Cor. 6:18); not merely servants (John 15:15). We are joint-heirs with our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:17), led by His Spirit (Rom. 8:14) to cry Abba, Father (Gal. 4:6). His discipline assures us of sonship (Heb. 12:7-8). We are thus to be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, (Phil. 2:15). But the best is yet to come—we shall see Him as He is! (1 Jn. 3:2). —Garry W. Seale

Here, O our Lord, we see Thee face to face;  
Here would we touch and handle things unseen  
Here grasp with firmer hand th' eternal trace,  
And all our weariness upon Thee lean. —Horatius Bonar

Word of God at this moment I mean all that phrase can possibly mean; the written which reveal the Living, the Living which seals the written; the written which is still ours, the Living which lies behind it and speaks through it in power to the sons of men.

This Word of God in the history of the race, what has it been? Symbols becoming substance, letters advancing to life, that which has seemed to kill becoming, presently, that which has bestowed life everywhere. In or-

ing of Job by God occur these two inquiries; "*Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow...?*" (Job 38:22) which, being translated from poetry into prose means, do you understand the snow? Do you know from whence it comes? Can you analyze the mystery of its crystallization and deposit? Then, "*Hath the rain a father?...?*" (Job 38:28) which, by some process of translation means, are you able to generate it, to produce it? With those questions in mind, let me read again this statement of

which has sweetened everything in its coming, the roads are dusty again and we say, "How soon the rain has passed." So also, soon after the snow has once come under the influence of the sun, it is gone. It has seemed to pour itself out in magnificent waste. Judged by first appearances, it seems as though this gift of heaven had been poured upon earth to be spoiled, contaminated, soiled, wasted.

So also with the Word of God. The Word of God has been given to men in figure and symbol, in prophecy and song, and at last in the Person of Jesus, and since He came, in exposition and explanation, for centuries; and for me! How perpetually it seems to us as we watch the openings and processes of the decades and even of the centuries, as though this great outpouring of divine revelation was lost, falling upon man only to be spoiled. How often have we thought of it as wasted? Nay, have we not thought so of it sometimes when we have been preaching it? Have we not looked out with almost passionate desire upon audiences that have listened and passed away apparently to frivolity and forgetfulness and have said, Yea, verily, "*as the snow and rain from heaven...but it returneth not thither?*" That is the first effect upon us after observing what happens as God gives His Word.

But there is another statement needed to complete and explain this, it "*...watereth the earth...*" Take this dust as it lies upon the highway and over the furrowed field, and know that within the dust is the making of everything that is beautiful and fruitful. But the dust does not of itself laugh in flowers; it is capable and incapable. Lying within it are all the forces of life. All the mysterious magnificence of your personality on

## **Rain and snow come certainly not for nothing and not for the display of their own wonders but for purpose.**

der that we may understand the value of this Word of God and learn the true method of appreciation of such value, let us take this symbolism of the prophet and consider it exactly as he has stated it; first, as to the similarities suggested; second, as to the principles revealed; and finally, as to the responsibility entailed.

Let me first tabulate the phrases which we are to consider in this verse: "*Cometh from heaven; returneth not thither; watereth the earth: maketh it bring forth, and bud; that it may give seed to the sower; and bread to the eater.*"

The rain and the snow come from heaven. Man has nothing to do with the coming of the rain and the snow. You will remember how in that great theophany of the Book of Job when, after the human eloquence of his friends has providentially been silenced, God Himself begins to speak to the suffering man. He speaks to him in the midst of his sorrow and his suffering by making all His glory in creation pass before him. In the midst of that wonderful question-

the prophet. "*For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven...*" The Word of God is a message from God to man which no man was able to find out for himself. It is never a philosophy formulated by human wisdom; it is always a revelation made, something declared that man could not by searching find out. The supreme quality of the Word of God is that however men may occupy their time in discussing the methods by which we have come into possession of these documents, there is stamped upon every page of them the sign manual of Jehovah. They are great unveilings of His nature, great revelations of the deepest secrets of human life, great illumination of the problems that confront men by divine revelation. The Word of God is the gift of God and not the contrivance of man.

But it "*...returneth not thither...*" The snow and the rain pour themselves out on the face of the earth, they melt and pass, and within a very few hours of the great rainfall,

the physical side lies within the dust at your feet, and all flowers that bloom lie there in potentiality. As the rain and snow water the earth, which is at once characterized by capacity and yet unable to fulfill the possibilities that lie sleeping within its own being, it makes all nature laugh with new beauty.

So also the Word of God comes to men in whose nature are the po-

a symbol and by many a song, in many a dispensation; given it to the mocking, laughing, scoffing crowds; He knows that in all the dust that lies about Him there are potentialities; and as He gives His rain and snow to smite the dust into laughter, so He has given His Word that the Word coming to men may touch the unrealized capacity into realization.

taken separately, because I think it really is separate. It is a stronger word than the former—“...maketh it bring forth, and bud...” I feel inclined to use here the literal Hebrew word, “and sprout.” That is to say, the rain and the snow not merely touch the dust into generation but actually come again in the grass, the flowers, the fruitage. You saw that rainstorm as it swept the field yonder. You

**The supreme quality of the Word of God is that however men may occupy their time in discussing the methods by which we have come into possession of these documents, there is stamped upon every page of them the sign manual of Jehovah**

tentialities but not the realizations. The Word of God falls upon the centuries, upon society, upon individuals, and we thought it touched them but to be spoiled and soiled and pass, but we watch and we found that by its falling the soil became productive. There is in every human being the capacity for Deity. There is in every human life the potentialities of the highest and noblest and the best. I am not discussing the question of man's ruin. I know the ruin; I know it in my own life. But that which is ruined is not destroyed. Without some beneficent ministry external to itself it will be destroyed. Given that ministry it is still capable of realization. The very ministry it needs is that of the Word of God. As is the rain, as is the snow to the dust, so is the Word of God to humanity in its ruin. God has not been wasting His Word. As He has given it by prophets, seers, and psalmists, by His Son, in many

The prophet now adds a further truth concerning these elements in the statement, “...maketh it bring forth...” After the rain and the snow the dull russet ground becomes beautiful with emerald and opal and ruby and diamond, and thus we know that when God's rain and snow touch the dust it makes the dust bring forth.

So with the Word of God. The Word of God makes the dormant forces in man move to fulfillment. All men that have realized the possibilities of their own life have done so in response to some part of the Word of God, to the Word spoken, to the Word written, to the Word lived, to the revelation granted; and as the snow and rain coming upon the earth make the earth answer by bringing forth, so the Word of God in the centuries, as they come and go, has provoked into realization the dormant capacities of life.

Here is another word that I have

watched it come; you smiled at the helplessness of the first few drops as they fell. You were appalled at the rush of the storm as the clouds broke and swept that field. Then you watched it as the clouds passed and the sun shone. As you watched the field it seemed as though all was lost and of no avail, and you went to sleep—and God gives unto His beloved in sleep—and you came back again all over it. First the blade and then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear, and so on and on, until russet had become green and green had become golden harvest. And in that waving harvest of gold what do I find? The rain that I thought lost, the snow that I thought perished. It touched the dust with the alchemy of God, and it brought back the glorious, gracious harvest.

It is equally true that the Word of God that He has been giving for centuries has never been lost. It has come from Him to touch the failure of hu-

man life, and it has been returning to Him laughing with the harvest of ransomed souls. The Word was incarnate in Christ supremely, and in a less and different degree but nevertheless as truly, God's Word has been re-incarnate in human lives in all the passing centuries. Do not let us be afraid of the word. I make no comparison finally between the incarnation of our blessed Lord and the incarnation of truth in the life of the believer. Nevertheless, in degree every Christian soul is a re-incarnation of the Word who became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth. Is it not so? (Rom. 8:29). That which is true and beautiful and of good report in you, in others, what is it but God's great Word which has touched the fibre of your being and reconstructed your broken lives to the realization of His purpose and so to the glory of His name? The transmuted rain makes the earth not only generate by the touch of beneficence; it makes it

for the toiler that he may continue his sowing and reap his harvests. But the first thing is that, in the new form in which the rain and snow return to God, there is always found the potentiality of propagation waiting for new showers and new transmutations and new harvests. This is the perpetual story of the harvests as they come and go. Always first, seed to the sower.

So with the Word of God. The Word of God taking hold of human life, changing it, becoming incarnate in it, communicates propagative power; it makes a new wealth of seed which may be scattered still further afield. From every life remade and sanctified by the Word of God, there must go forth the seed that will affect yet other fields and stretch out toward the consummating glory of the final harvest.

Finally we come to the last phase of the symbolism. "...and bread to the eater." The issue then is also sus-

larities to take the broader outlook and consider the great principles that are revealed.

The symbolism of this great prophetic Word teaches me, first of all, that the Word of God is purposeful. Rain and snow come certainly not for nothing and not for the display of their own wonders but for purpose. The symbolism teaches me, second, that the Word of God is powerful. The rain and snow come to victory always; they are never defeated. And the symbolism of my text teaches me, finally, that the Word of God is prosperous. It accomplishes, it prospers, as do also rain and snow.

The Word of God is purposeful. All this is seen by the various similarities which we have rapidly surveyed. The Word of God is not given to be possessed; it is given that it may possess. The truth of God is not given that men may hold it. Oh, I am tired of the men that want to know if I "hold the truth." Of course I don't "hold the truth"; no man can "hold the truth." It is too big for any man to hold, and God has never given His Word to men that they may "hold the truth." The facts are truly stated in quite another way. The truth must hold the man, wrap him around, change the very fibre of his being, permeate his complete life, and unless the Word of God is doing that for me it is failing in the first intention that God has for it. Not for our good only does it come, It is seed as well as bread. Unless we come to receive the Word as the earth takes the sun and the rain, then I am not sure that we had better not absent ourselves from every occasion when the Word is opened. If I come with my notebook to write down all I can learn about the Word of God in order that I may know it, then I

## **May I not reverently say as in the present of the inspired declaration, God's Word never returned to Him void because it never comes void from Him.**

sprout and bud and answer back in harvest. So also, the Word re-incarnate in believing souls is the harvest of the earth which supremely satisfies the heart of God.

Yet that is not all. "...that it may give seed to the sower..." What is this harvest for? You say for the sustenance of human life. That is not the first thing. What is the harvest for? "that it may give seed to the sower" comes before "bread to the eater." Bread to the eater is a secondary thing. Bread to the eater is provision

tenance to the toiler. The man that plowed and sowed and reaped, feeds. So surely also is it with this Word of God. It comes, as we have seen for the larger purpose, the creation of new seed that may be scattered still for the uplifting of man, but the Word of God is also the bread of life to the toiler. By it his own life is sustained, both in health and strength, and so he is enabled for the service for which he is created and to which he is called.

Let me pass now from these simi-

am absolutely failing. But if I come to strip from my soul all that the things that hide me that the Word of God may search me, if I have to lay my life out in the light of the Word that the Word may correct it, then I shall find the Word in me is fruitful as is the snow, as is the rain upon the earth. It is a purposeful thing.

Then, thank God, it is powerful. He says it shall not return to Him void. And why not? May I not reverently say as in the present of the inspired declaration, God's Word never returned to Him void because it never comes void from Him. Every word of God thrills with fruitfulness. If we but know how to receive it and how to respond to it, then it shall return to Him not void but fruitful, in lives changed, remolded, re-fashioned, sanctified.

And finally, then the Word of God is prosperous. It is so because it is His Word. *"It shall not return unto me void, but it shall..."*—and mark the two word—*"...accomplish... prosper..."* The word *"accomplish"* means it does something, it makes something, it realizes something, and Hebrew word *"prosper"* literally means it *"pushes forward."* It is a great dynamic force. It is prosperous, moreover, by selection. *"...that which I please,...the thing whereto I sent it."*

These are the principles which we must bear in mind as we take up our Bibles and come to listen to the teachings of the Word of God. It is given for a purpose; it is full of power; it accomplishes the purpose by reason of the power.

In conclusion, it is important that we inquire as to the responsibilities

that are entailed? Rain and snow might fall upon the earth a long time, and there be no harvest unless the earth is prepared. The rain and snow may fall in all their prodigal munificence and magnificence upon the earth, and there will be no harvest unless the seed is sown. And rain and snow may fall and make the earth laugh with harvest if the earth be ready and the seed be sown, and yet men get no benefit unless the harvest be reaped, the seed be sown again, and through the process the bread be eaten.

Here, then, are three things at least that I would say: the earth must be prepared; take heed how ye hear (Luke 8:18). The seed must be sown; preach the Word (2 Tim. 4:2). The bread must be eaten; let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly (Col. 3:16).

Take heed how ye hear. In all tenderness and yet with great earnestness and great conviction, I would sound that word in the hearing of all. Take heed how ye hear. How shall we hear? Prayerfully, obediently, and in faith. The spirit of criticism never produces the result of power. Let us pray that in our lives God will plow up the fallow ground, give us the receptive heart, the child heart, willingness to hear and learn, deliver us from preconceived notions and prejudice, make us ready when He speaks to obey, make us simple-hearted at His feet, for as the rain and snow demand an earth plowed, broken, prepared, so does the Word of God demand a condition in those who hear, if it is to bring forth a harvest.

The true seed must be sown,

and it must be by the preaching of the Word if the work is to be done. We are not to criticize the Word of God, not to account for the Word of God, not to defend the Word of God. We are to preach it and hear it. And there is a yet fuller application of that truth. The final preaching of the Word is not that of the lips but that of the life. Fundamentally the Word is the seed in the hearts of men, but functionally for the sake of the world, the seed is the sons of the Kingdom, the men in whom the Word has had its true effect.

Finally, the Word, the bread that comes, must be eaten or the toiler will grow weak. We are to let this Word of Christ dwell in us, take it into our life. The Word must come into the intellect, the emotion, the will; and when we take the Word of God into our whole life and answer its every claim, then in that moment God's purpose will be fulfilled in us.

One of the greatest instruments of God in the world has been the Bible societies. They send out no preachers, but accompany the preacher with his message in the tongue of the people to whom he goes. They cannot issue statistics of conversion, but they pour forth the great stream of living water over all the earth and by such action quenches the thirsts of humanity as with the river of God. Alone, however, it would soon fail. As the Word circulates it becomes the sustenance of human lives, and so over earth's wilderness wastes the green appears which merges at last into the golden glory of the harvest of the Word of God.

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**G. Campbell Morgan**

# The WORD Speaks

The apostle John clearly states the reason for writing the manuscript which became the Gospel of John. John 20:31 tells us that the intent of the writing was to set forth proof that Jesus of Nazareth was, and is, God the Son; giving reason for the reader to believe in Him and to have life through His name. John affirms that there were many other signs performed by Jesus, in the presence of His disciples, which are not included in this Gospel. If one looks back through the Gospel, we find eight distinct incidents, each of which was a miracle, and each performed in such a fashion that none other than eternal God could have performed it. What better reason could there be for being convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was eternal God than to take note of His actions which were clearly of divine origin?

But there is more: John begins the narrative with this statement, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"* (ch. 1:1). The force of this startling declaration is that a verbal statement coming from the One who makes the statement has all the power of the eternal Godhead. John makes the unambiguous declaration, *"the Word was God."* The reader may wonder why the apostle began with such a unique statement; until he realizes that the eight incidents included in the book, each of which could only have been performed by God

Himself, are each precipitated by a verbal statement from the Lord. Thus, associating the impact of His Word, with His person, and the miracles which He performed, the reader is confronted with absolute proofs that Jesus was none less than eternal God. It is instructive to consider the eight miracles John cites to make his case.

The first is in chapter 2. It relates to the marriage in Cana. Cana was a tiny village located within walking distance of the village of Nazareth

**It is still true today: those who are content to remain in the sickness of sin will do so; while the sinner who longs for recovery will get the attention of the Savior**

where our Lord spent His youth. Cana is still a distinct neighborhood, but Nazareth has now expanded into a considerable metropolitan center, which has engulfed Cana, so that the area where the marriage took place now seems to be a part of Nazareth itself. In any event, at this marriage, evidently attended by a good many significant folks from the area, the unthinkable occurred: the host ran out of wine. This caused a stir be-

cause the liberal use of wine on a happy occasion such as a marriage was traditional in those days. Mary, the mother of Jesus, directed the wine stewards, in their urgent need, to her Son, telling them to do whatever He would command. There were at hand six water pots. The Lord directed the servants to fill the six vessels with water. He then spoke a commanding word: *"Draw out now, and bear onto the governor of the feast."* They did so, knowing as they did it that what they were bringing to the master of ceremonies, was no longer water but wine. Our Lord's verbal directive in regards to filling the vessels with water, then serving the contents to those who needed wine, was an act which only divine power could achieve. There was no gathering of grapes; no squeezing out of the juice; no mixing or blending. There was no act involved which man could achieve

in the remotest sense. The Word was spoken, and the best wine ever made available was instantly at hand.

John's next proof is found in chapter 4. The Lord was proceeding from Jerusalem back to Cana of Galilee. Meanwhile, there was living at Capernaum a nobleman whose son was sick, and dying. It may be assumed that the nobleman had consulted any and all at Capernaum who may have had some ability to help his dying

son. Nothing had availed. Hearing that Jesus was returning northward from Judea, the nobleman hastened to meet him. Upon meeting, his request was simple and urgent: “*Come down ere my child die.*” Now Jesus, in responding to this urgent request, did not propose to send one of His disciples to the local pharmacist to compound some potion that may bring about a cure. Nor did the Lord propose to go to Capernaum and lay hands on the one who was ill. Rather, the Word merely spoke: “*Go thy way,*

**Yes, He who could walk on the water, still the elements, and take His disciples instantly home, could be no less than absolute God.**

*thy son liveth.*” The nobleman, believing what he had been told, hastened homeward. He had gone quite a distance to meet the God of the universe, and the next day was met by his own servants coming to fetch him. They carried a happy message, to the effect that the boy who had been dying was now well. When, inquired the nobleman, had this occurred? At the seventh hour the previous day, he was told. He knew then that at the very moment the words were spoken, telling him that his son liveth, the son became well. For the divine Word had spoken, and it was done. Jesus of Nazareth could be nothing less than absolute God. Indeed, the Word was God!

At the beginning of chapter 5, we find Jesus once again in Jerusalem. Jesus evidently visited the pool of Bethesda, around which, on the stony patios, lay a large number of

people who were immobile. They were a helpless and pathetic lot. Apparently, however, the majority of them had accepted their situation, and had no thought toward recovery. But there was one who thought otherwise, and the Lord focused on him. It is still true today: those who are content to remain in the sickness of sin will do so; while the sinner who longs for recovery will get the attention of the Savior. For thirty and eight years the poor fellow had been lying by the pool. When there was an

occasional stirring that seemed to offer some hope that someone would recover, he had always missed out. Now the Great Physician was asking if he would like to be made whole. The poor man, lying on his bed, did not give expression to the hopelessness of his situation. Nor did the Lord stoop down, get his arms under his shoulders, and lift him up. Jesus made no suggestion that any physical act on His part was necessary to this man’s cure. Rather, the divine Word spoke, “*Take up thy bed and walk.*” In that statement was the power of the Godhead. The man who had not walked in 38 years arose, gathered his possessions, and walked. Only God could do it.

Then we come to chapter 6. In a grassy place, likely near Gadera, a great company of people approached the Lord. The Lord raised, with Phillip, the issue of feeding this multi-

tude, which amounted to 5,000 men. Phillip sensed this was a huge challenge. He remarked that the typical salary one might earn in 200 days of labour might buy enough bread so that each of the multitude could have just a little to eat. Andrew, one would suppose speaking almost apologetically, noted that there was a lad at hand with five loaves and two small fish, but what, asked he, is that bit of groceries when confronted with the hunger of so many? The Lord’s response was to have the hungry multitude sit down. It was time to eat. He took the loaves and the little fish provided by the lad, gave thanks, and told his disciples to distribute to the seated multitude. This writer is convinced that the apostle John was among the disciples present. If you divide 5,000 men by 12, you will note that each of the 12 disciples was evidently charged with distributing food to upwards of 400 men. It is easy to imagine the Lord distributing those five loaves and two little fish to his 12 disciples, then sending each forth to feed his share of the total multitude. John tells us nothing of what must have gone through his own mind, as he would have started to follow his Lord’s command in distributing his share of the lad’s provision to so many men. Yet he did it, and evidently the food grew in the hands of each disciple as they dispensed, and dispensed, and dispensed. The expressed statement that came from the divine Word, “*make the men sit down,*” was all that was necessary to bring about a miracle. Did every man get a little, as Phillip had noted? No! Every seated guest ate to the fill; and then there was a basketful leftover for each of the twelve disciples to gather up. Indeed, the Word was God.

Evening comes. The Lord absences Himself from the others. The disciples

decide to take their boat and go to Capernaum, which was home to most of them. If they started from Gadera as we suppose, their course was north westward, toward Capernaum. But a wind arose. Wind is typical of the Sea of Tiberius, blowing from the northwest, the general direction of Tyre and Sidon, through a cleft in the Galilean hills, down over Magdala (the town where Mary Magdalene grew up), and sweeping across the lake. If you have had the pleasure of being out there in a small boat, you can readily sense what the disciples faced that night. In the darkness, those strong men rowed with all their might, likely directly into the teeth of the wind. They had gained less than one-half mile from shore when, over the rising seas, they saw a sight the like of which they had never seen before – someone walking toward their boat on the water. That Someone spoke, *“It is I, be not afraid.”* Recognizing their Lord immediately, they invited Him aboard. And instantly they were at their destination, Capernaum. The divine Word had spoken, to identify Himself, and to still their fears. The sea and the wind instantly loosed its grasp upon the little boat. Distance was no longer a factor. The disciples were at home. Yes, He who could walk on the water, still the elements, and take His disciples instantly home, could be no less than absolute God.

Come now to Chapter 9. Here, evidently again in Jerusalem, the disciples take note of a blind man. He had been blind from birth, and the disciples asked the Lord a foolish question: was the man blind because his parents had sinned or he had sinned himself? Well, if he was blind because he sinned himself, and was blind from birth, then he must have sinned before he was born! A preposterous proposition. The Lord was not

interested in the placement of blame. The man and his blindness was the issue. Here, the Lord addressed the need, first, through a physical act: using His own spittle and clay from the ground, He made a sort of poultice with which He covered both of the blind eyes. But then He gave a verbal command, to the blind man: to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. The man went, washed the clay off, and came back seeing. Sight was restored. Here is a beautiful picture of a sinner rescued from the blindness of sin. The spittle, the clay, and washing in Siloam (which means “sent”) remind us of the repentance of a sinner who seeks relief from the blindness of sin. There must be repentance before salvation occurs. But here again, the divine Word works the miracle by sending the blind man to the pool to wash.

In chapter 11 we have the well-known story of Lazarus, his death, burial, and resurrection. Lazarus died and there followed considerable mourning. There was blame directed at Jesus of Nazareth because He had not been there before Lazarus passed away. The mourning and blaming group ultimately found their way to the grave where Lazarus had been interred for three days. Obviously, he was quite beyond hope! The sisters expressed only sorrow and regret. Jesus is moved to weep, as He beholds their lack of understanding and the absence of faith. For Mary, Martha, and their friends had not perceived at this point that Jesus of Nazareth was absolutely God, and possessed power to overcome death. At the grave He demonstrated His power through the spoken Word, *“Lazarus, come forth.”* And he came forth, with neither delay nor difficulty. The divine Word had spoken. Only God could do it.

The crowing miracle that John describes in his manuscript, to prove that Jesus of Nazareth was absolute God is found in chapter 20. The Lord had plainly declared, with the Word of His mouth, that He could lay down His life and take it again. John described how that life was laid down at Calvary. The One who was the Word proclaimed as He was yielding up His spirit, that His work to save sinners was finished. He surrendered His spirit to His Father. He was buried. And the third day an earthquake opened the sepulcher to show that the Lord was no longer within. There was, however, a disciple who had declared that he simply could not believe that Jesus had risen. He said that unless he saw for himself and touched for himself, he would not believe. And so, that unbelieving disciple had the privilege of meeting the risen Christ on a most personal level, seeing Him, touching Him, and hearing Him. The One who was the divine Word invited Thomas to indulge himself in the evidence before him that the Lord indeed had risen. The One who was God had spoken and it was fulfilled.

Child of God, do you think He has changed? Do you think His Word has lost its power? Is there discouragement and despair within you which drags you down? Perhaps you have forgotten that the things John wrote were written with the intent that we should recognize that Jesus of Nazareth was none less than absolute God. Our lives should be filled with the faith and joy of knowing, as we believe in Him and in who He is, that the One who is our personal Savior is nothing less than God eternal. The divine Word still speaks and still prevails.

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**Doug Kazen**  
Kirkland, WA



# Jesus in the Midst

## Introduction

The phrase *"in the midst"* conveys two thoughts to our minds. First, it signifies Identification with those in whose midst one is found. Secondly, in many circumstances it signifies the Pre-eminence of the one in the midst over the whole company in which he is found. Now both thoughts are true of our Lord Jesus Christ whenever the Scriptures state that He was or is *"in the midst"*. And we find that the Scriptures which mention that He is *"in the midst"* span between them the entire past, present, and future phases of His incarnate life. As we consider our matchless Saviour in the chronological sequence of the relevant verses, let us marvel at His wonderful grace and condescension in ever becoming identified with us, His sinful and rebellious creatures, and then bow in grateful homage before Him as our Sovereign Lord and Master, truly *"the firstborn among many brethren."*

## Meditation

We first find Jesus *"in the midst"* in Luke 2:46 in connection with His Education. Here in the temple we find our Lord as a boy of twelve sitting *"in the midst of the doctors,"* the teachers of the law, *"both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers."* He was both identified with the scholars of God's law, but

also clearly pre-eminent over them. He could truly say with the Psalmist in Psalm 119:99, *"I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Thy testimonies are my meditation."*

We next find Jesus *"in the midst"* in Luke 22:27 in connection with His Public Ministry, when He says to His disciples, who had been disputing among themselves which of them was the greatest, *"but I am among you [literally, "in your midst"] as he that serveth."* For humility in service such as He showed in abundance is always the sign of true greatness.

John 19:17-18 speaks thus of His Crucifixion, *"Golgotha: where they crucified Him, and two other with Him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst."* Here we see the Son of God incarnate in rejection and humiliation, even identified with condemned criminals on a Roman cross. Yet, in God's purposes of grace and salvation He was thus proving His absolute uniqueness and pre-eminence by giving up His life in death as the one acceptable, holy, and all-sufficient sacrifice for the sin of the whole world for all time, the eternally-appointed Lamb of God.

From John 20:19 onwards in the New Testament the Lord Jesus is never again identified with unregenerate sinners, but usually with His own who trust in Him. Here in His resurrection, identified with His disciples in the upper room, He dem-

onstrates His complete triumph over death by showing them the wounds in His glorified body and then proclaiming peace to them on the basis of His accepted sacrifice for them. This is the basis of our peace with God, too, and of the daily experience of the peace of God in our hearts and lives. No longer need we fear men or death. Furthermore, John 20:26-29 indicates what a profound effect the risen Lord's presence *"in the midst"* should have upon all believers. Thomas, who had previously doubted, was compelled to fall at His feet in worship, and exclaim: *"My Lord and my God."*

The next two references to Jesus being *"in the midst"* are both words of our Lord Himself spoken concerning His church. The first, Matthew 18:20, relates to the basis of all local church fellowship, prayer, and discipline. There the Lord stated, *"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."* Wherever a company of believers are gathered together fully acknowledging the authority, worth, and supremacy of the name and thus the Person of Christ, there He promises His presence in the midst, empowering their prayers and decisions made in local assembly capacity. If we make Him the focal point of the local assembly, then He will identify Himself with us and our joint actions in discipline or requests in prayer.

The second reference concerning Christ's relationship to the church is found in Hebrews 2:12, a quotation of Psalm 22:22, where the risen Lord says; "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee." This concerns His worship of God in the church. In His perfect risen manhood Christ identifies Himself with believers as His brethren, and also becomes the leader of the corporate worship of the church, local or universal, to God His Father. Christ, having declared the Person of God His Father to us, now leads our praise and worship of Him. He is the leading worshipper in the company. Therefore, all believers in Christ who participate or lead in worship must realize that they should harmonize with Christ's own praise of His Father.

Of the four references in the Book of Revelation to Jesus being "in the midst," three relate to scenes of judgement, while the last relates to a scene where persecuted believers are comforted. First, in Revelation 1:13, John sees the glorified Christ in the midst of seven golden lampstands, which are said in verse 20 to symbolize the seven local churches of Asia Minor to which the whole book was written. Christ is identified with them in their testimony to Him, and also pre-eminent over them as their Lord and Judge. In the vision He appears as the Son of Man, God's Priest-King, in all His judicial glory in ascension, ready to execute judgement in the earth. The effect of this glorious vision upon John was to cause him to fall at Christ's feet as dead. But Christ reassured John that he need not fear, since He had, through becoming dead Himself at Calvary, conquered death, and is now alive forevermore. Christ's death and resurrection mean that believers in

Him need no longer fear to face Him in all His present glory.

In Revelation 2:1 we find that the risen Lord Jesus is "walking in the midst of" the seven golden lampstands in His judgement of the local churches as testimonies to Him. Here the local assembly at Ephesus, perhaps the most privileged of the first-century local assemblies established by the apostles, is subjected to the most rigorous scrutiny by the Lord. He looks beyond their faithful service, patience under hardship, and intolerance of evil and rebukes them for having forsaken their first love for Himself. Outwardly they were what we would probably call "a good, strong, orthodox, active local assembly," but the Lord missed their pristine, exuberant, true, and deep devotion to Himself of earlier days, and even threatened the complete closure of the testimony, unless they repented and did "the first works." How do we stand up to this test of devotion to Christ? For nothing else can replace it or satisfy Him.

Our study rises to a wonderful crescendo in Revelation 5:6, as we enter the very throne-room of heaven itself, seen by John "in the Spirit" after the rapture of the church and before the outpouring of God's wrath upon this world. For there he "beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts [living creatures], and in the midst of the elders [probably the glorified Church saints], stood [in the power of resurrection life] a Lamb as it had been [freshly] slain, having seven horns [His omnipotence] and seven eyes [His omniscience], which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth [His omnipresence]." The slain Lamb is the only One found worthy to take the scroll containing the title-deed of earth and to open its seven seals, in order to reclaim the earth for

God by means of the judgments of chapters 6-18. Here Christ is identified with all the power of the throne of God and absolutely pre-eminent in His judgment of the world. Not only so, but He is also the center of all heaven's worship, because He died to redeem men to God, including ourselves. Truly, therefore, He alone is worthy to receive glory after all His suffering on the cross for us. And He is the only One worthy to judge men, because He died to redeem them.

Finally, in Revelation 7:17, John is shown the persecuted believers of a future day coming out of the Great Tribulation, and sees that "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne" is shepherding them and comforting them after all their sufferings for Him. Here is His comfort of His persecuted saints. They will prove the truth of the words of the hymn; "My Shepherd is the Lamb, the living Lord who died." Identified with all the power of the throne of God, Christ will use it to gently tend His persecuted saints with true shepherd love and care.

## Conclusion

Thus we have seen that the Lord Jesus Christ is both identified with mankind and pre-eminent over them in every phase of His incarnate life. Throughout Scripture He is "in the midst". But we have also seen that He only fully identifies Himself with believers in Him by whom He has first been acknowledged as pre-eminent Lord. God the Father has given His Son the central and pre-eminent place both in earth and in heaven. Has He still that place in our hearts and lives today? He is worthy of it.

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**Malcolm C. Davis**  
Leeds, U.K.

# GOD with Man

## The Dwelling Places of God—Part 1

### God in the Garden

**A**nd they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden" (Gen. 3:8).

It was God's desire to place man in the garden (Gen. 2:15), and to walk and talk with him (Gen. 2:16).

That desire was linked with the fact that man would worship Him for who He was, as man's creator. How sad that man, living in a perfect environment, chose to disobey God's command and sin entered. How often people say 'Why doesn't God do something about the problems in the world, by removing the sin?' Even in a perfect environment, man only proved that his heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Then in accordance with the verse that we read, we find that God came to man, but man did not come to God (Gen. 3:8). It is evident from the responses of Adam and Eve that they passed the blame on others rather than on themselves. This is still the same today, for men and women still blame others for the problems that exist in their own surroundings rather than on their own doings.

Enoch walked with God (Gen. 5:22); to walk with God, is to please Him, delight in His presence, to enjoy His nearness and His care. (Amos 3:3). It is said of Enoch that he pleased God; such was his walk

of faith he was so near to God that God took him (Heb. 11:5). Noah also walked with God.

God talked with Abraham (Gen. 12:1; 17:1, 3; 18:3, 13). Here is one who was in scripture known as "*the friend of God*" (Jas. 2:23). So much so, that the Lord said shall I hide anything from him (Gen. 18:17)? Because of his walk of faith, and communion with the Lord, and obedience to the commands which had given him, the Lord reveals His mind and will to Abraham (Gen. 15 & 18).

God communed with Moses (Ex. 3:4). What a high and holy privilege that Moses had, called as he was to lead a nation out of bondage, and to be known as "*My servant.*" (Num. 12:7; Heb. 3:5). God gave to him not only the ability and the authority to do what he did, but also the privilege of talking with Him face to face. So it was that the Lord gave instructions to him and we find:

### God in the Tabernacle

*"And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them"* (Ex. 25:8).

It was that He might have fellowship with them. He had called, redeemed, delivered and led them. And then ever the loving and wondrous God, He still reaches out for that fellowship and communion, condescending to wander through the wilderness with His people. They lived in tents, and God condescended also to dwell among them in a tent.

He chose not only to dwell with them, but also to direct them. They were not left to their own devices, but all necessary instruction was given. God begins with Himself and moves out to man. Not only are all necessary instructions given and the materials to be used, but also the ability.

The tabernacle is not something built and God invited to it. Here is something that is most instructive. God would have His people to adhere to the pattern delivered, for God had said to Moses "*as it was showed thee in the mount, so shall they make it*" (Ex. 25:40; 26:30; 27:8).

In our assembly life, we are not left to do as we please; for the Lord has given instruction in His Word as to how the assembly is to function. Also, in any work for the Lord that we do, we must be sure that He is in it. We cannot put the cart before the horse in the work of the Lord. Too often halls are built, and then a work to win souls commences; no, it should be the other way around. Souls need to be won, nurtured and taught in the Word of God, seeking His help and guidance each step of the way. Then, as the work progresses, the exercise of those new believers will be to seek a place of the Lord's leading.

So it is today, the Lord ever desires to meet with His own. "*And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee*" (Ex. 25:22), as it was in the Tabernacle, where the Lord is hon-

oured and owned and His glory is known (Ex. 40:34; John 14:23).

It is where the *"two or three are gathered together in His Name"* (Matt. 18:20), and as John says, *"truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ"* (1 Jn. 1:3).

### God in Solomon's Temple

*"So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD"* (1 Kgs. 8:11).

Their pilgrimage had given place to residency; their wandering had given place to settlement. The desert had given place to fruitful fields, and tents gave place to houses; they became a kingdom, they had a King (David to Solomon and war to peace).

Solomon's Temple was a magnificent building, and its glory was known throughout all the countries around. Solomon began well, but his behaviour brought about a declension in the nation with the result that man again turned his back on God, and the Temple was destroyed. How sad was that decline, Solomon, who had begun so well, allowed his many wives with their gods to turn his heart away from the Lord (Neh. 13:26). The decline was evident all through the reigns of the various kings that came to the throne, whether it be that of Judah or Israel after the division of the kingdom. Yet, with tenderness God spoke again and again through His prophets, *"But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear"* (Zech. 7:11). They forsook the Lord (Jer. 2:13) and were soon to learn the awful consequences of their sin. The Lord's patience ended, and the wrath He had promised through His Word was fulfilled and

they were then taken into captivity for seventy years.

We as believers today need to maintain a right relationship with the Lord by giving heed to His voice, that when He speaks to us through His Word we may be obedient to His commands. The Lord said to His disciples in the upper room, *"If ye love me, keep my commandments"* (John 14:15; 15:10). They were then led into the Babylonian captivity for 70 years, and then they repented, and then returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel.

### God in Zerubbabel's Temple

*"But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy"* (Ezra 3:12).

They had taken two years to lay the foundation in the verse above,

## **We as believers today need to maintain a right relationship with the Lord by giving heed to His voice, that when He speaks to us through His Word we may be obedient to His commands.**

but after this for fourteen years the house laid waste, they had tired of it and given their time over to their own houses. The Lord's displeasure was evident, in that the land was not yielding its fruits or its harvest (Hag. 1:9-11). It had not been easy for them, for they had faced difficulties and opposition on every hand. They had become discouraged yet God was still desirous to have that fellowship with them and sought to encourage them. It was still sad

that they were unable to see the disciplining of His loving hand, yet He speaks with encouragement to them, *"Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD"* (Hag. 1:8).

It was poor and insignificant, compared with Solomon's, but God accepted it, and took up His abode with His people again. Brethren, we should not despise the day of small things. The Lord requires us to put effort into the work which He has entrusted to us, and to leave the results with Him.

It had taken them twenty years to complete the building (Ezra 6:15-16). Cyrus the king of Persia was on the throne when the building was started until Darius reigned at its completion. Too often we are thinking of day's gone by when we had halls that were full, and there was an evident presence of the Lord in our midst. It was when His people

sought Him with all their heart, and were walking in obedience to His Word, that the Lord commanded the blessing. So it is with us today, *"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"* (Mic. 6:8).

**To be continued...**

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**Fred Whitelock**  
Warrington, Cheshire, England

# Love for the Lost: Strategy for the Future (Part 2)

In this second article on the title subject we wish to look to the future, and to determine what course we should follow, particularly as all signs seem to indicate that the 'Day of Salvation' is about to end, and countless souls will discover that their day of opportunity to be saved is forever past, and that they have no future, *"But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries"* (Heb 10:27). We hope to establish some key strategies for the future in light of the crisis that is upon us.

## THE DIFFICULTIES WE FACE:

### In the World

The world that we live in today, is different in many ways from the world that our fathers lived in.

In a past generation the problems were neglect, and indifference to the gospel, but this has given way to open hostility and outright rejection. The media is favourable to almost any kind of religious notion, but seems to take advantage of every possible opportunity to attack Bible believing Christians. Christians who believe in the authority of God's Word, and who live accordingly are grouped by the media, with the most violent and undesirable characters in our world as "fundamental extremists." If this trend continues we may have a price to pay for our faith and testimony.

### In the Church

There can be no doubt, that the

Laodicean phase is now with us, and that the same lukewarmness of that early church has infected the church today. This is seen particularly in the apathy of the church to the gospel. Local assemblies are losing their zeal and passion for the gospel. The inroads of materialism and Calvin-

introducing the gospel to a waiting world, and afterwards, to handle the formidable task of establishing local churches where the new believers could find fellowship, and practice New Testament church principles. Faced with such a task, and considering their lack of qualification by

**There can be no doubt, that the Laodicean phase is now with us, and that the same lukewarmness of that early church has infected the church today.**

ism have dimmed our vision of the lost and their eternal doom, and the importance of preaching the gospel. Many assemblies are becoming lecture halls where the mind is educated, but the heart is left cold. The gift of the evangelist is also being downgraded, and neglected. The church today needs a revival internally. An awakening to the true mission for which we are here: *"To seek and to save, that which is Lost,"* and a renewal of the passion and zeal for the gospel that marked the early church.

## STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE:

### Give Ourselves to Prayer and Supplication

In the interval between the ascension of the Lord Jesus, and the descent of the Spirit, 120 believers gathered together in an upper room (Acts 1:13-15). Ahead of these simple men and women lay the daunting task of

worldly standards, we might well ask how they spent their time in preparation? Luke gives us the answer when he records that, *"these all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication"* (Acts 1:14) and again *"They were all together with one accord in one place"* (Acts 2:1). They knew instinctively that prayer was the key to success in service, and that nothing more was needed, and that nothing less would do. It is not surprising therefore, that when they stood up on the day of Pentecost and preached the gospel for the very first time, that about three thousand souls were saved. There can be no doubt there was a direct link between the exercises of the upper room and the success they experienced in the city.

One feels that there is a need, to get back to the example of these early pioneers. We bemoan the lack of results in the gospel, while our prayer

meetings are often the poorest attended. Not only so, but the sense of "continuing with one accord," is being lost. Modern thought has the mistaken idea that if more people pray, the more God will be impressed, so instead of being united in prayer, some assemblies are being fragmented into groups, including some for women, with subsequent loss of unity and power. We appeal to local church elders, to get back to the format described in Acts 1 and 2.

### Assume a Crisis Mode in Evangelism

When the great Titanic struck the iceberg in the winter Atlantic, a terrible unexpected crisis was thrust upon all on that ship. Stories have been told of many who refused to accept that the ship could sink. Even some of the crew seemed to act as though all was well, and continued to encourage some in their frivolous pursuits. Many of the lifeboats left half-full. The result was that over 1500 people perished in the cold waters of the Atlantic on that dreadful, dark night. Perhaps if the passengers had been imbued with a sense of urgency, and had stronger warnings of impending doom, more might have been saved.

It seems that the world today is in somewhat the same mode. Scripture makes clear that this world is doomed, and our mission is not to improve conditions in the world, or to entertain them, but to save souls from out of it. In this crisis, we need to abandon all but the critical activities and in these last moments of the Day of Grace, to spend our energies in the spread of the gospel by whatever means possible to see people saved from eternal doom.

As one travels around assemblies, one is very concerned about the

neglect of the gospel. Time and time again after preaching the gospel, concerned believers tell how genuine, convicting, soul-saving, biblical gospel preaching is seldom heard in their assemblies. While the lost die in darkness around us, and when the Day of Salvation is about to close, we feast on spiritual dainties, and debate and ponder whether we should be preaching the gospel in our buildings or not.

How sad. How tragic.  
Let the lower lights be burning,  
Send a gleam across the wave,  
Some poor fainting, struggling  
seaman,  
Your may rescue, you may save.  
—Philip P. Bliss

### Getting Back to Biblical Gospel Preaching

One would have thought that after almost 2,000 years of exposure to the gospel that most Christians would have a clear understanding of what is meant by "the gospel." Unfortunately this is not the case, and one of the problems of the day, is that the

**We bemoan the lack of results in the gospel, while our prayer meetings are often the poorest attended.**

gospel is being redefined, to embrace everything to do with the faith. This teaching gives credence to the idea that we can preach from any passage of Scripture, and still be able to satisfy our consciences that the gospel has been preached.

At the root of this teaching is failure to differentiate between what applies to saints already in Christ, and what brings people to Christ. The one is the province of the teacher, the latter the province of the evangelist. For example, I would not invite my unsaved neighbours to come and listen to someone dealing with church truth at the Family Bible Hour. This would hardly fit the description of a convicting gospel message that would lead them to Christ. They need to hear about sin and its consequences and to be convicted of the need to be saved. Unfortunately, the gift of the evangelist is being set aside in our assemblies, while the gift of the teacher is being vigorously promoted. Apart from the benefit to the unsaved among us, our younger men with potential preaching ability will benefit like I did, from hearing the gospel preached and thus learn how it should be done. In addition, the saints will have their affections further deepened towards Christ. Brother Boyd Nicholson once told me that he had seen more assemblies revived and restored from the preaching of the gospel, than from much of the ministry he had given. As the hymn writer put it:

Tell me the story often,  
for I forget so soon,  
The early dews of morning,  
have passed away at noon.  
—A. Catherine Hankey

### The Biblical Gospel

The apostle speaking to the Corinthians said, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-5). Now here we have the essence of a Biblical Gospel message:

**Scripture makes clear that this world is doomed, and our mission is not to improve conditions ... but to save souls from out of it.**

- 1) Christ died for our sins.
- 2) He was buried.
- 3) He rose again the third day.

Again, the apostle giving his last address to the Ephesians said *'Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ'* (Acts 20:21). Note the two points that Paul stressed:

- 1) Repentance towards God, and
- 2) Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Note that in the above references the question of sin is raised, and the need for repentance. This kind of language is fast disappearing from today's gospel preaching. People are encouraged to "give their hearts to Jesus" and such like, without raising the question of their sins, and the fact that forgiveness of sin cannot be obtained before there is repentance. To preach anything else, or anything less, is *"another Gospel."*

**Stay the Course with All Possible Avenues of Gospel Outreach**

There are a variety of avenues that can be used in the spread of the gospel, provided there is no violation of scriptural principle involved. Some examples are given as follows:

1. Witnessing one-on-one with friends, neighbours and colleagues.
2. Reasoning or disputing the gospel with others as Paul did in the Synagogues.
3. Preaching the gospel in various available forums (Open air services at public festivities etc.).
4. Preaching the gospel in our assembly buildings.
5. Drop in center for street people.
6. Commending missionaries to evangelize in our large cities.

There seems to be general agreement on most of these points, but we should say something on points 4) and 6) above.

**Preaching the Gospel in Our Assembly Buildings**

Some have taught that we should not be preaching the gospel in our buildings as we do not find any examples of that in the Acts. I think we would all agree that we need to do more outside of our buildings than we do, but we cannot take a precedent from something that is not said; such as preaching in buildings. We must bear in mind that in Acts we are dealing with a pioneer situation where in most cases they did

should or should not be preached, either in the commission, or anywhere in Scripture. God has left the choice of place to us. For example, we now have buildings and for good reason. Climatic condition in Canada would not lend themselves to going to the market place or the parking lot, in the dead of winter, hence the reason that we preach in our buildings. Also unsaved people know where to come, where the gospel is preached. When this teaching about not preaching the gospel in our buildings was first heard some decades ago, the late J. M. Davies of India, one of that generations great expositors, responded by showing that the church has a corporate responsibility in the gospel. He noted that each of the seven churches in Revelation 1 were represented by a lampstand, whose only function is to shed light. The Lord Jesus also said, *"Ye are the light of the world,"* and this is the case whether it be the *"candlestick"* (personal witness) or *"a city set upon a hill that cannot be hid"* (corporate witness). One has knowledge of a one-time large vibrant assembly

**In this crisis, we need to abandon all but the critical activities and ... to spend our energies in the spread of the gospel by whatever means possible.**

not have buildings, although Paul did forsake the synagogue when they rejected his teaching, and continued his preaching in the school of Tyranus. The great commission exhorts us to *"go into all the world and preach the gospel..."* and it should be noted that there is no instruction or prohibition as to places the gospel

which only a decade ago decided to replace its evangelical meeting with teaching meetings. Tragically that assembly is now much depleted, and scrambling to recover the lost ground by having regular gospel meetings Sunday morning. Another assembly which followed the same route, is no longer in existence. The

evidence speaks for itself. If we don't evangelize we will fossilize.

### Commending Missionaries to Evangelize in Our Large Cities

The prime responsibility for evangelism lies with the corporate witness of the local assembly, where one exists, and individuals who are exercised in this work. However, where the size of that community is greater than can be reached by the local assembly effort, such as in large cities, the commendation of evangelists to work in that city would be a distinct asset to the spread of the gospel. Lest our intention be misunderstood, we are not proposing that an assembly have a salaried full-time worker who might also evangelize the neighbourhood. Nor is it being suggested that the evangelical efforts of local assemblies and individuals should be delivered over to someone as a "job." What we have in mind is that our

large cities represent a great opportunity for evangelism in a concentrated area. Many missionaries commended by local assemblies to foreign countries, evangelize in large cities with great success. It is suggested that there is no reason why we could not adopt this avenue of spreading the gospel in the homeland, where it is needed, in addition to the efforts of assemblies and individuals. Brethren commended to this work would be supported in the same way that missionaries abroad are supported – by the spiritual exercise of the Lord's people in their free-will offerings.

Of course, there is also ample opportunity for those who are in the work-force, or for those who have retired, to engage in evangelistic effort among neighbours, friends and colleagues. The commendation of someone to work in a city should not be allowed to displace this effort.

In conclusion, these articles have

been written with a deep conviction of spirit, and burden of heart for the lost around us, and out of concern that we might not be doing as much as we could be doing to meet this crisis. World events indicate that the coming of the Lord for His church is imminent, and this being the case, let us put every effort and energy into spreading the gospel as a priority in the world using whatever means we can to bring people to Christ.

Rescue the perishing,  
duty demands it.  
Strength for thy labour,  
the Lord will provide,  
Back to the narrow way,  
patiently win them,  
Tell the poor wanderer,  
a Saviour has died

—Fanny J. Crosby

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**W.H.BURNETT**

*Oakville, Ontario, Canada*

# The Saviour Can Solve Every Problem

The Saviour can lift every burden,  
The heavy as well as the light;  
His strength is made perfect in weakness,  
In Him there is power and might.

The Saviour can bear every sorrow,  
In Him there is comfort and rest;  
No matter how great the affliction,  
He only permits what is best.

The Saviour can strengthen the weary,  
His grace is sufficient for all;  
He knows every step of the pathway,  
And listens to hear when we call.

The Saviour can break sin's dominion,  
The victory He won long ago;  
In Him there is freedom from bondage,  
He's able to conquer the foe.

The Saviour can satisfy fully  
The heart that the world cannot fill;  
His presence will sanctify wholly  
The soul that is yielded and still.

The Saviour can solve every problem,  
The tangles of life can undo;  
There is nothing too hard for Jesus,  
There is nothing that He cannot do.

—Oswald J. Smith



## God's Way is Perfect

As for God, His way is perfect!  
Oh to grasp this truth divine!  
Oh to rest upon His promise,  
And accept His will as mine!

As for God, His way is perfect,-  
Love divine my path has planned.  
I can safely leave the future  
In my Saviour's mighty hand.

As for God, His way is perfect!  
May I never doubt it, Lord.  
May I lean in sweet assurance  
On Thy precious Holy Word.

As for God, His way is perfect!  
Some day I shall clearly see  
All His purposes unfolded,  
And rejoice eternally.

—Avis. B. Christiansen