

COUNSEL

THE ETERNAL PURPOSE

KNOWN IN HEAVEN

FIVE CONDITIONS OF PREVAILING PRAYER

THE SIMPLICITY THAT IS IN CHRIST

HE SHALL REIGN

THE MAN OF GOD

FORBEARANCE

HIS GOING FORTH AND HIS ENTERING IN,
OR HIS DESCENDING & ASCENDING

EVANGELICAL DILEMMA

January—February 2009

With the passing of one year and the beginning of the next we think about time. For many, time seems to go by fast with the years speeding by. And yet for others time may seem to be slow. At any rate—whether fast or slow—time is moving on.

Thinking people, especially the Christian, are conscious there is something more than just time. It is the character of the spiritually blind to live as if there is nothing more than the material and time's method of marking out days and years only. But one cannot help sense there is something more. The word of God discloses to us that there is something more. Something big. Something we could never imagine. And we are brought into it. Paul described it as *"the eternal purpose."* (Eph. 3:11).

There is an eternal purpose of God. Notice Paul's words, *"Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him"* (Eph. 1:9, 10). Or consider these from Ephesians 3:8-10, *"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, ac-*

ording to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Or again notice Paul's words to encourage Timothy found in 2 Timothy 1:8-10, *"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not ac-*

“The summation ... of all things will one day meet in Christ”

ording to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

This eternal purpose is centred in Christ, *"in Christ," "in Christ Jesus."* Human history has been unfolding with a divine purpose in view and the summation or result of all things will one day meet in Christ and He will be seen to be all in all. This relieves us from any fear or anxiety about the future. The Lord is in control.

Furthermore, this eternal purpose, centred in our Lord Jesus Christ, is something that we are connected to. In each of the passages quoted above, if you continue reading the text you will notice that Paul links the Ephesian believers and Timothy to this purpose. Their (and our) standing in Christ involves us in this as well. It is

this big picture that Paul wanted believers to see. It was this big picture that moved him in his life and ministry. It was because of the eternal purpose that the difficulties of *"this present time"* seemed so small, despite their pain and hardship, when compared to the really big thing of the eternal glory of Christ and the immeasurable wonder of believers sharing this with Him.

If this has not gripped you yet, it should. As we move into this new year we need to remember that everything done for and in the Lord is contributing to this purpose of God. The great eternal purpose is made of countless subsidiary purposes working out in our lives and service. Your service for the Lord, or your present circumstances, whatever they might be, and regardless of how small it may seem to you, if it is the Lord's direction you should engage in it in light of the fact it is a big thing. Accordingly, we need to beware of allowing the world system to rob us of our vital role in God's purpose by consuming our time and energy with its paltry purposes. Advancement in the world's agenda at the expense of having nothing for the Lord is a tragedy of immense proportions and must be avoided at all costs.

The eternal purpose. Make this year, and every year the Lord gives you, one in which you will be content with and courageous enough to do all you can to do His will. There is nothing else worth living for.

Brian Gunning
St. Catharines, Ontario



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Known in *Heaven*

**“Then shall I know
even as also
I am known”
(1 Cor. 13:12).**

Down through the years we have often heard the question asked, “Will we know each other in heaven?” It is quite normal and understandable for us as Christians to wonder if we will know our loved ones in heaven, those who have gone on before. While there is no specific scripture that deals directly with the subject, there are a number of ways to bring us to a sound and reasonable conclusion. The Bible will address that question in Old Testament and New Testament many times over.

The Desire of All Nations

From time immemorial men have held to the doctrine of recognition in the future life. Like an unbroken thread in human history there has been a deep conviction in man’s spirit that the purpose of being created could not be fulfilled in this short-lived period of time in this life. The details of the death and burial of several Old Testament characters point to this question.

Abraham

When Abraham died, he was buried in a cave at Machpelah in the

land of his sojourn. He purchased the field himself for a possession to be certain of a burying place at death, but it was not the sepulchre of his ancestors. Therefore, the language of the Scripture does not mean that his body was gathered to the place of his forefathers, for some of them had died and were buried back in Ur of the Chaldees. *“And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him”* (Gen. 35:29). Notice also that Abraham was gathered to his people before his body was buried, for it was after he was gathered to his people, (v 8) that his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, (v 29).

“And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people” (Gen. 49:33).

Moses

And the Lord said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered (Num. 27:12, 13).

Moses lived for one hundred years and was gathered to his people, his body was buried in a valley in Moab, *“but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day”* (Deut. 34:6).

As we study the lives of other Old Testament characters of which it was said that they were gathered unto their people, we will find that it meant more than merely being buried with them. They were gathered to their loved ones in the abode of departed spirits with not one moment's solitude between their memories on earth and their joining them in Heaven. What a blessed recognition! What a happy reunion!

David

David the sweet Psalmist of Israel found comfort in the words he expressed: "I shall go to him" (2 Sam. 12:23).

The attitude of David at the death of his child shows that Israel's King believed in heavenly recognition. He had fasted and wept in the hope that God would be gracious to him and allow the child to live. But when final word came that he had died, David wiped the tears away from his eyes and ate food.

New Testament

In the New Testament the disciples recognized the Lord Jesus in His resurrected, glorified body. His outward physical appearance had not changed. There was no

says in 1 John 3:2 that we shall be like the Lord Jesus, it means morally like Him, forever free from sin and its consequences. But certainly we will not look like Him and as a result be mistaken for Him; we will be known as we were known.

Secondly, there is every reason to believe that we will know more in heaven than we know down here. We recognize one another down here, then why should it be thought strange that we should recognize one another up there? If we shall know then as we are now known, that should be enough. Paul expected to know the Thessalonians in heaven. He said that "they would be his hope, joy and crown of rejoicing," (1 Thess. 2:19).

Mount of Transfiguration

There are many references in the Bible to indicate that people will have an ability to identify others they have never seen before. The Mount of Transfiguration would seem to be the classic account on the subject. It is rather significant that we do not read of any introductions on the Holy Mount between the Old Testament and New Testament characters. Moses and Elijah had been dead for hundreds of years;

they had lived about 900 years apart yet were together on that special occasion. Peter, James and John recognized Moses and Elijah and yet we do not read they were introduced, (Matt. 17:4).

The rich man in Hades recognized Abraham, (Luke 16:24). The Lord Jesus told the Jews that "they would see Abraham, Issac, Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God," (Luke 13:28).

One word needs to be added here. While it seems clear that we will know each other in heaven there will be a distinct difference from our relationships that we knew on earth. The husband and wife relationship will have changed, the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 22:30, "In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage." We will have new glorified bodies like unto His glorious body but it will be all things new. In that coming day we will be perfectly transformed into His likeness.

God has given names to all the stars, it says He brings out the host of heaven and calls them all by name, they are known to Him.

Hymns

The hymn writers used words that describe their thinking. For many years the Christian Church has been singing hymns that express positively the belief that heavenly recognition is a blessed assurance.

Oh, how sweet it will be in that beautiful land,
To meet one another again,
I'll soon be at home over there.


"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Cor. 13:12).

“While it seems clear that we will know each other in heaven there will be a distinct difference from our relationships that we knew on earth.”

mistaking that it was "this same Jesus." This would suggest that we too will have our own distinctive features in heaven, though in a glorified form. There is no suggestion that we will all look alike. When it

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Five Conditions of Prevailing Prayer

1 Entire dependence upon the merits and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the only ground of any claim for blessing. (See John 14:13, 14; 15:16 etc.)

2 Separation from all known sin. If we regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us, for it would be sanctioning sin. (Psalm 66:18)

3 Faith in God's word of promise as confirmed by His oath. Not to believe Him is to make Him both a liar and a perjurer. (Hebrews 11:6; 6:13-20.)

4 Asking in accordance with His will. Our motives must be godly: we must not seek any gift of God to consume it upon our lusts. (1 John 5:15; James 4:3.)

5 Importunity in supplication. There must be waiting on God and waiting for God, as the husbandman has long patience to wait for the harvest. (James 5:7; Luke 18:1-8.)

GEORGE MULLER

The Simplicity that is IN CHRIST

**“But I fear, lest by
any means,
as the serpent
beguiled Eve
through his
subtlety,
so your minds
should be
corrupted from
the simplicity that
is in Christ”
(2 Cor. 11:3).**

One of the outstanding aspects of the Gospel is its simplicity. To understand that salvation is simply a matter of acknowledging our need of Christ and looking to Him through faith alone to remove the penalty of sin and to make us citizens of Heaven is nothing short of amazing. Well can we sing the words of that enduring hymn, “Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!” Indeed it is amazing grace and the heart that is fully occupied with the Lord Jesus and

His gracious work toward us will never tire of singing those glorious strains. It truly is “love divine, all loves excelling”. How grateful we are for our salvation and what a debt we owe! His love has been shed abroad in our hearts so that it can be shed abroad from our hearts. It fills us with praise and adoration making us instant in season to proclaim the Gospel to all around so that they too can enter into the same love and appreciation for the Savior. We do not rely on our own wisdom or elaborate explanation to win people to Christ, but strive to be like Paul who confessed to the Corinthians: “*And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God*” (1 Cor. 2:1). False teachers had attempted to corrupt their thinking; we should be on guard lest our thinking (and preaching) is also corrupted through reliance upon our own wisdom and strength. The Gospel does not need to be propped up, nor does it need to rely upon our powers of persuasion or cleverly-packaged programming, but rather on the plain, unadulterated Word of God. We should preach with this in mind and leave the results with God. The apostles and other servants of the Lord did so; we should do

the same. When the Apostle Paul traveled to Athens and stood on Mars Hill before an antagonistic crowd (Acts 17), he unabashedly presented the Person of the Christ and the exclusivity of the Gospel as the only means of salvation. In the midst of rampant idolatry, he boldly proclaimed, “*Him declare I unto you*” (v. 23). It was a simple message that stood in contrast to the various religious and philosophical sophistries that resided atop the Areopagus and nearby vicinity. He did not map out a “seeker-sensitive” strategy before he preached but instead, swung the Gospel hammer (Jer. 23:29) and broke through stony hearts to the glory of God. Certainly we can do the same.

Not only is it important to emphasize the simplicity of the Gospel in our preaching, but we should stress it in our worship as well. We should be like that leper in Luke 17 who being healed of his dread disease, rushed back to thank the Lord for the miraculous work that God had done in his life. We too have been healed of a dread disease—sin and should return to give Him thanks regularly. The early disciples worshiped together on a weekly basis (Act 20:7) and were occupied with but one thing—the Lord Jesus. Peter and John’s boldness was

recognized as a result of being with Jesus (Acts 4:13); when we are taken up with Him and not filling our meetings with other matters, people will also recognize that we too have been with Jesus. Moses face was radiant after being in the presence

emphasize Him and not allow anything to dilute or distract from that emphasis. There is nothing that thrills our soul more than when we set our affections and focus our attention on the Lord. We are not like those who are taken up with

background and not yet a believer, these words were easy to understand and in conjunction with the simplicity of the meeting were actually refreshing and far less intimidating than I had supposed it would be when I first walked through the

“But what will speak more powerfully to the world around us will be a changed life as a result of the simplicity that is in Christ that always needs to be protected. It will be demonstrated by a genuine relationship with the Lord Jesus, adorned ...

of the Lord (Ex. 34:29) and we will be radiant as we spend time in the Lord’s presence and realize afresh all that He has done for us. Simply put, the worship meeting is not about performing, but rather about prostrating ourselves in the sacrifice of praise. When the OT priests entered the Tabernacle to worship the Lord they saw themselves in the mirrors that made up the base of the brazen altar (Ex. 38:8). When we come to worship we cannot help but “see” ourselves in the light of Gospel truth—what we were and what we are now in Christ. Amazingly, we are what we are now despite of who we were then. Without reservation we can say: “we love Him, because He first loved us”. Not only do we love Him, but we look to Him because He is our Shepherd and we daily need His help and guidance. We also live for Him because we know that there are others who are watching our lives closely and could ask us at any time about the hope that lies within us (1 Pet. 3:15). We love Him and look to Him and live for Him. Therefore it makes perfect sense that our gatherings should

religious trappings—ceremonies and rituals and traditions of man, but rather we are taken up with a Christ. We should be like Simeon of old who upon entering the temple where the Lord Jesus was being presented as a little child, (Luke 2:25-35) embraced Him and blessed Him proclaiming, “*Mine eyes have seen thy salvation*” (Luke 2:30). Simeon’s actions underscore the truth that salvation and heart-felt worship is not centered in a place or in performance, but in a Person.

When I first entered through the doors years ago where a NT assembly gathered to worship the Lord, one of the first things that stood out to me was the simplicity of the worship meeting. There were no stained glass windows, no relics, no icons, no special titles, no priestly vestments worn by those who addressed the audience, no candles, and no religious or cryptic-looking symbols on the wall. In many respects it was a regular looking room. There was a verse on the wall however which read: “*For God so loved the world that He gave His begotten only Son...*” Coming out of an unsaved

doors. What also stood out to me was that there were no offerings taken. When I kept looking around trying to figure out who was in charge, I could only guess since all the men seemed quite normal from my vantage point and were dressed in suits, not in flowing robes. When the speaker got up to address the audience, he spoke in such a clear and simple way that I understood completely what he was saying, even though I knew nothing about the Bible. It was as though he was talking directly to me. As he spoke of Christ, tears trickled down his cheeks, though he remained calm and dignified. His voice did not quiver nor was there any histrionics in his manner. I had never heard nor had I ever seen such a thing in my life, which made quite an impression on me. No one ever cornered me as I left, but on the other hand, they did not have to since I was planning to return anyway. Like John Wesley, my heart was also “strangely warmed”. One thing was sure, more was “said” by what I saw. That was my first experience with a NT assembly and its simplicity truly

made a difference to me.

As our world becomes more technologically advanced and we are “wowed” at every turn by new and eye-popping innovations, there will always be subtle pressure upon the Church to borrow from its store to make the Gospel message more impressive and less offensive and the Christian life more palatable to the natural man. But what will speak more powerfully to the world around us will be a changed life as a result of

**... by a transparent
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His great love for
all the world.**

the simplicity that is in Christ that always needs to be protected. It will be demonstrated by a genuine relationship with the Lord Jesus, adorned not by ecclesiastical traditions, but by a transparent life manifested by simplicity in worship and the plain declaration of God’s Word and His great love for all the world.

Mark Kolchin

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He Shall Reign

**“He was born
a King and He
died a King.
When this old
world sees Him
again, He will
still be a King”**

The first direct question in the Old Testament was asked of a troubled man, *“Where art thou?”* when Adam vainly tried to hide from God. The first direct question in the New Testament was asked of a troubled king, *“Where is He?”* It was asked concerning the newborn King of the Jews.

To Adam as he awakened to life, God said, *“Have dominion.”* Adam was set over all creation. For a

time, in innocence, he was king of the earth, a dominion many have lusted after.

Sadly, this king abdicated his throne and went into hiding! Deposed by sin, stripped of his radiant garment, his crown in the dust, and concealing himself with his consort Eve among the trees of the garden, he had willfully yielded his dominion to Satan, the enemy of God and man. However, this wicked usurper

did not become the king of the earth but the god of this world.

The History of kings fills the libraries of men, but none was born already a king. This is the singular glory of the Lord from heaven, the Son of God.

Darkness fell upon God's earthly people, and heaven was silent for four hundred years after Malachi laid down his pen. Many a longing eye must have looked for deliverance and many a broken heart must have cried for a saviour, a mighty deliver, who would come in power and fulfill the words of the prophets.

At last, there came an angel to the virgin Mary with the message of God's King:

"He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32-33).

God the Father gave Him; great angels announced Him, the heavenly host praised God at His arrival; the stars of heaven pointed to Him; the prophets foretold Him; the Scriptures declared Him; the rich and the poor worshiped before Him. As a King, He has no peer. His claim to the throne of David was legitimate; His authority was evident; and His power and wisdom were unsurpassed.

A Potentate with such authority and power might well strike fear into the hearts of His subjects, but His decree is "Peace," His banner is "Love," and "Compassion" is the beating of His heart. "Righteousness" is His rule and "Holiness" His character.

No conscript service will He demand of His people: "His yoke is easy." No grievous taxation does He

lay upon His subjects: "*His burden is light.*" His riches are unbounded and His treasuries are open.

He came to heal the broken-hearted; to bring the wealth of heaven to the poor; to give sight to the blind; to offer deliverance to the captives; and to set at liberty those cursed by the calamities of life. More than dealing with social ills and physical

"Be not deceived, beneath that thorny crown lay all the authority of Godhood."

problems, He came to deal with the root cause of the whole moral and spiritual disorder. He was not only born a King, He was also born a Saviour from sin.

Oh, what a Visitor to this vale of tears! Angels might well envy the sons of men. How the weary inhabitants of earth would welcome Him—but did they? He was born a King, but those who should have been His willing subjects mocked His claims. He was crowned with thorns, anointed with spittle, and the royal scarlet He wore was drawn from His bleeding back with the lash. At last they took Him out to the only throne men ever gave Him, and they nailed Him to it through His blessed hands and feet.

Be not deceived, beneath that thorny crown lay all the authority of Godhood. Only a thought, a single word from those parched lips and the earth would have opened up beneath the feet of His tormentors. One word and a battalion of over seventy thousand eager angels would have sped from heaven to destroy this world and its wretched inhabitants. He speaks from the cross. What is it that He says? "*Fa-*

ther, forgive them, they know not what they do." Oh, what kind of wondrous love is this!

He was born a King and He died a King. When this old world sees Him again, He will still be a King. Not robed in the homespun of a carpenter, speaking "Peace" but blazing in majesty and leading the armies of

heaven to judge, make war and deal with His enemies. Who are the enemies of this King of all kings? "*Them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (2 Thess. 1:8).

Dear reader, have you obeyed the gospel and received this wondrous Saviour as your own? If not, quickly bow the knee!

One day the trumpet
will sound for His coming,
One day the skies
with His glory will shine;
Wonderful day,
my beloved ones bringing;
Glorious Saviour,
this Jesus is mine!

Living, He loved me;
dying, He saved me;
Buried,
He carried my sins far away;
Rising,
He justified freely forever:
One day He's coming
—oh glorious day!

—J. Wilbur Chapman

J. Boyd Nicholson

“The Man of God”

1. His Role and Significance

The phrase “*the man of God*,” or “*a man of God*,” recurs quite regularly throughout the Old Testament from Deuteronomy 33:1 to Psalm 90’s title, but not in the Prophetical Books. It translates the Hebrew words *ish ha-Elohim*, meaning “an individual man of God,” and always a male person. By contrast, the corresponding phrase in Greek, *ho tou Theou anthropos*, and a slight variant of this, occurs only twice in the New Testament, both times in Paul’s letters to Timothy. There the word used for “*man*” is that for a “human being,” rather than specifically a “male person,” although the first of these

ten by their leaders) from the truth of His Word, and faces consequent surrounding conditions of moral and spiritual declension. So that he could perhaps aptly be described as “God’s emergency man” with the mission of calling God’s people back to Himself. Most Scripture references to the phrase bear out this description of him.

2. His Exemplars in Scripture

In the Scriptures altogether twelve different men are described as a “*man of God*.” Of these twelve, seven are named, six in the Old Testament, one in the New Testament, while five are unnamed. The last New Tes-

four other unnamed prophets who are called a “*man of God*” in the Historical Books. These men suddenly appear, pass on their messages, and then as quickly disappear from the scene, all at times of crisis in the nation’s history. They address failing priests and kings, who should have known the mind of God, but were out of touch with Him. Firstly, a man of God comes to Eli in 1 Samuel 2 to announce God’s judgement on his undisciplined sons, Hophni and Phineas. Secondly, in 1 Kings 13, the wicked king Jeroboam is sent a message of judgement by a man of God out of Judah, who subsequently dies for disobeying the precise instructions God had given to him. Thirdly, in 1 Kings 20 a man of God gives wicked king Ahab of Israel wise guidance concerning a battle about to be fought, probably because Ahab, as “*the king of Israel*,” represented God’s interests in His people. Finally, in 2 Chronicles 25 the generally good king Amaziah is given warning guidance by a man of God concerning Israelite troops hired to fight a battle alongside the troops of Judah.

In the New Testament only Timothy is addressed as a “*man of God*.” He had had the gift of prophecy bestowed upon him and certainly stood for God and the Apostolic faith in the early days of the departure of local assemblies from the Word of God. For Paul—and Peter and John also—were even then predicting dark days for the future of local assembly testimony and general apostasy from the faith. In the last reference in Scripture to “*the*

latter references describes Timothy himself. The second reference is more generic, describing a particular kind of believer.

“*The man of God*” is always a prophet, that is, one who acts as God’s special spokesman with a message given him by God for a particular person, or occasion, whether concerning the present or the future. The fact that the phrase “men of God” never occurs in Scripture is very significant. For “*the man of God*” is always and essentially a solitary figure. He is often found witnessing faithfully for God alone in days of general departure by the people of God (and of-

tament reference is applicable to any believer in the age of grace today.

In the Old Testament, therefore, some prominent and godly leaders and prophets of Israel are, not perhaps surprisingly, so-called, including Moses, Samuel, David, Shemaiah, Elijah, and Elisha, the latter prophet most frequently of all of these. In Judges 13, Manoah and his wife mistakenly so described the Angel of the Lord, who appeared to them to announce the birth of Samson. In fact, the Angel was probably a Christophany, an appearance of the pre-incarnate Son of God in human form. In addition, there are

man of God,” however, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Paul asserts that it is open to any faithful believer today to stand firmly for God and to maintain a Scriptural life and testimony.

3. His Essential Moral and Spiritual Characteristics

If we take the Old Testament references first, we find that there are at least four main characteristics of *“the man of God.”* Firstly, he is so *“in touch with God”* that he knows His mind and will at all times, and can

The two New Testament references are also very profitable to consider. In 1 Timothy 6:11 Paul exhorts Timothy as a *“man of God”* to be characterised, not by foolish and hurtful worldly lusts, but by *“righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience”,* and *“meekness”*. These virtues pre-eminently characterised the Lord Jesus during His perfect life here on earth, and may be paraphrased helpfully as follows: moral integrity and straight dealing; God-likeness and gravity of conduct;

is prepared to count the cost, and to accept the solemn responsibility, of being *“the man of God”* in our own day and generation today? This challenge comes to all of us, man or woman, boy or girl, who truly trusts the Lord. For many of us either have found, or will at some time find, that we are the only witnessing Christian in our particular family, street, school, college, or place of work. And even in the context of the assemblies with which we are in fellowship, we may sometimes find that we are the

“God is looking for those who will out of love for Christ stand firmly for Him in evil days of growing departure from the revealed truth of Scripture and increasing apostasy.”

therefore pass on an appropriate word from God, either in blessing or in judgement, to suit every occasion of need. He habitually lives in the light, atmosphere, and spiritual good of Scripture. Secondly, he is characterised by implicit obedience to the word of God in his own personal life. The one sad exception to this in 1 Kings 13 only serves to prove the general rule. Thirdly, he is characteristically *“like God,”* remarkable for personal holiness. The Shunammite woman, as she daily observed Elisha’s manner of life, said, *“I perceive that this is a holy man of God.”* Finally, he dispenses blessing to others around him through the application of the Word and power of God to their lives. This is true in the first reference in Scripture to the phrase, used of Moses blessing the wayward children of Israel, and was most characteristic of Elisha, who, in the fact that he performed many miracles of blessing, pre-figured the Lord Jesus Christ Himself in His earthly ministry.

soundness in doctrine, firm trust in God, and dependability in relationships; sacrificial self-giving for the good of others; longsuffering with others and patient endurance of trials; and quietness and gentleness of spirit, together with submissiveness to God’s will. These qualities of character would enable Timothy, and ourselves, to fight the good fight of faith against all opposition successfully. Furthermore, according to 2 Timothy 3:16-17, the believer who is fully instructed in, and moulded by, the inspired Scriptures will be perfectly qualified and equipped to undertake any spiritual task, and to dispense blessing to those around him by means of every kind of good word and work. *“The man of God”* in this passage is a complete Christian, able to represent his Lord effectively in every circumstance of life.

4. His Counterpart Today

The question must be asked, therefore, whether or not each one of us

only person willing to stand up for the truth of God’s Word. So are we prepared, if need be, to stand alone for Christ, even when in so doing we know that we shall face ridicule, ostracism, or outright opposition? Such a stand will require a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures, a willingness to submit to all its teachings, practical and consistent holiness of life, and, not least, a love for those around us who do not know, or follow, the Lord as we do, bearing with their misunderstanding of us at times. God is looking for those who will out of love for Christ stand firmly for Him in evil days of growing departure from the revealed truth of Scripture and increasing apostasy. Will we answer His call to us? For *“the man of God”* is needed today as much as he ever was.

Malcolm C. Davis
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Forbearance

Lord, grant me the gift of forbearance,
A merciful spirit I pray.
That suffers the wrongs of another
And seeks not the ill to repay.

Lord, help me be kind and forgiving-
I who Thy forgiveness have known.
So oft for my many transgressions.
Grant me, Lord, a love like Thine own.

Thou who didst once suffer for sinners
Such bitter reproach and disdain,
Fill me with that same gentle spirit,
That reviled, still reviles not again.

Lord, grant me the gift of forbearance,
Thy tender, compassionate grace,
That others beholding my visage
The light of Thy likeness may trace.

—Avis B. Christiansen





HIS GOING FORTH AND HIS ENTERING IN, OR HIS DESCENDING AND ASCENDING

The Holy Scriptures abound with references to the going out and entering in, as well as to the descending and ascending of our Blessed Lord. Great lessons can be learned by meditating on some of these passages, in regards to His Person, His work and His manifold glories.

I. HIS INCARNATION

The Savior said about Himself *“I came forth from the Father, and I am come into the world; again, I leave the world and, and go to the Father”* (John 16:28). But how vast is the difference between those two realms; the one He left behind and the one He came into. In heaven He was with God, (John 1:1), and was in the bosom of the Father for all eternity past, (John 1:18). There He enjoyed love unmeasurable, (John 17:24), abode in glory in-describable, (John 17:5), and dwelt in light unapproachable and un-seeable by man, (1 Tim. 6:16).

Yet He came into this realm of darkness and sin where the prince of this world reigns supreme over the hearts and minds of wicked

men, and where as a result of sin the creation has been hopelessly marred (Rom. 8:20). A sad scene of sorrow, suffering and death surrounded Him while here on earth.

To enter into this realm He had to take unto Him perfect sinless humanity. *“For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him*

Yet He came into this realm of darkness and sin where the prince of this world reigns supreme over the hearts and minds of wicked men.

the seed of Abraham” (Heb. 2:16). Incarnation was an absolute necessity for Him to accomplish the work of redemption. Thus we further read *“Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body thou hast prepared me”* (Heb. 10:5). That body prepared Him was the very same one He gave for the life of the world (John 6:51).

II. HIS DETERMINATION

It is remarkable how the Savior all through His earthly journey was constrained to be baptized with the baptism which He called His own, (Matt. 20:22) and to drink that cup which His Father had given Him, (John 18:11), and from the moment He came into Jerusalem on that first

Passover feast, He had before His eyes the upcoming *“destroying”* of the temple of His body, (John 2:19-21). Therefore when the hour was come, He went forth to endure the cross despising the shame and willingly laid down His life for the sheep, (John 10:15).

His determination to do the work given to Him by the Father is clearly seen in other scriptures. *“And it came to pass, when the time was come that he*



should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51, see also Isa. 50:7). And with steady steps towards Calvary He “Knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth” (John 18:4). And in full knowledge of His unspeakable sufferings He went out to do the Father’s will.

III. HIS DECEASE (EXODUS)

It is of great interest to see that the way of accomplishing the work of redemption was described by Luke as *“His decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem” (Luke 9:31).*

“And with steady steps towards Calvary He ‘Knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth”

The word decease is also translated exodus (or going out), and was used by Peter to describe his own death, (2 Pet. 1:15). The sacrificial death of our Lord was the topic of conversation between Him, Moses (representing the Law) and Elijah (representing the prophets) on the mount of transfiguration. And that was so appropriate, because all the sacrifices of the Law found their fulfillment in it. And all the hopes of the prophets hung on that one offering.

That exodus literally took place when our Lord was taken outside the walls of Jerusalem, there to suffer without the gate so that He might sanctify the people by His blood, (Heb. 13:12).

After the false trial and the examination by the governor, after the torture He was subjected to by sinners we read that *“He, bearing his own cross, went forth into a place called the place of a skull...Golgotha. Where they*

crucified him” (John 19:17-18). The cross with all its shame and suffering was His and His alone; no one else could share His atoning sufferings with Him. That is why He said to the disciples “Where I go you cannot come” (John 13:33).

IV. HIS VICTORY

But the cross was not the end of the story for Him, in spite of His entering the gates of Sheol; the grave could conceal Him no longer. *“Because it was not possible that he should be holden by it” (Act. 2:24). And without His body seeing any corruption*

God has raised Him up by the power of an endless life.

He came out of the grave having achieved a victory over death, a victory which He has won for His people, and He is willing to share it with them.

And in this wonderful victory the three Persons of the Godhead were involved; He raised Himself, (John 2:19, 10:18). He was raised by the glory of the Father and by His mighty power, (Rom. 6:4, Eph. 1:19-20) and also by the power of the Holy Spirit, (1 Pet. 3:18).

V. HIS DESCENDING AND ASCENDING

That brings us to His descending and ascending, *“Now that he ascended, what is it but he also descended first in the lower parts of the earth?” (Eph. 4:9). The “lower parts of the earth” has been interpreted as the grave or else as the womb of the virgin,*

(see also Ps. 139:15). And if indeed this describes the miracle of Bethlehem, how could anyone fathom the depths of the meaning of these words: that the Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God the Everlasting Father and the Prince of peace, was born as a child and given as a son? Beholding Him in a manger instead of a king's palace fills our souls with wonder and amazement. And though He entered the world in such a peaceable manner He was promptly met with hostility even as a baby, wicked Herod seeking after Him to kill Him. This seems to have been the prelude to a holy life lived in poverty and to a cruel death on a Roman cross. To the burning hearts of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, He argues *"Ought not (the) Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?"* (Luke 12:26).

So after His glorious resurrection, came His entering or ascension into heaven itself, (Heb. 9:24). But not as His descending was His ascending. He has come down as the Son of God, and great indeed is that mystery of godliness. As God manifest in the flesh He has added to Him perfect sinless humanity, which He was not going to leave behind at the time of His ascension. He would therefore pray *"And now O Father glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was"* (John 17:5). What could this request mean but that He was asking for the glorification of His perfect humanity with that same glory which he had before His incarnation? This is His essential glory which He never lost nor laid aside, but had it hidden in the veil of His flesh, howbeit often allowing it to shine through. So right now we can adoringly lift up our eyes and see a man in glory at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

VI. HIS COMING AGAIN FOR THE CHURCH

And though He is now at the pinnacle of the universe in bright glory above, there will soon be another coming out for Him. *"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God"* (1 Thess. 4:16). He will then raise the dead in

"Beholding Him in a manger instead of a king's palace fills our souls with wonder and amazement."

Christ and catch up the living saints. And so shall we be forever with the Lord. Thus he will remove His beloved bride the church from this scene before the wrath of God will be poured down on it.

VII. HIS COMING AGAIN IN GLORY

Yet again later still (about seven years) He will be seen coming out of the open heaven riding on a white horse, (Rev. 19:11-16). And as the Faithful and True King He will judge and make war in righteousness against His enemies. He will also rescue the pious remnant of His earthly people Israel. And He will return them again to a covenant relationship with Jehovah; their God.

The OT prophet Hosea summed this up for us, *"I will go and return to my place* (this is the ascension of the Lord into heaven after he was rejected by the Jews) *till they acknowledge their offense and seek my face in their affliction they will seek me early* (This is the act of repentance of the Jewish remnant during the great tribulation). Next comes the advice of the prophet to his people, *"Come let us return unto the Lord; for he hath smit-*

ten and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight, (The entire nation will be resurrected in one day). *Then we shall know, if we follow on to know the LORD,* (The new covenant applied to their hearts). *His going forth is sure as the dawn"* (margin). What assurance of deliverance this is for

those who wait on Him, for as dawn comes every new day He will surely come. *"And he will come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth"* (Hosea 5:15—6:3). How refreshing His advent will be to their parched souls.

Thus He will establish His kingdom and will reign over all the earth. And then will be fulfilled the saying *"And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him"* (Heb. 1:6).

In glory bright above,
Thou art exalted Lord;
And we who know thy love,
Unite with glad accord,
To sing thy praise, for thou alone
Art worthy to ascend the throne,
Art worthy to ascend the throne.

—H. J. Vine

Dr. Boushra Mikhael
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Evangelical DILEMMA

**"There can
be no true
conversion
without
conviction
of sin."**

There is a curious problem today in the evangelical world—one that poses sobering questions for the church and for the individual believer. The problem in brief is this: a great army of personal soul-winners has been mobilized to reach the populace for Christ. They are earnest, zealous, enthusiastic, and persuasive. To their credit it must be said that they are on the job. And it is one of the phenomena of our times that they rack up an astounding number of conversions. Everything so far seems to be on the plus side.

But the problem is this. The conversions do not stick. The fruit does not remain. Six months later there is nothing to be seen for all the aggressive evangelism. The capsule technique of soul winning has produced stillbirths.

What lies at the back of all this malpractice in bringing souls to

the birth? Strangely enough it begins with the valid determination to preach the pure gospel of the grace of God. We want to keep the message simple-uncluttered by any suggestion that man can ever earn or deserve eternal life. Justification is by faith alone, apart from the deeds of the law. Therefore, the message is *"only believe."*

From there we reduce the message to a concise formula. For instance, the evangelistic process is cut down to a few basic questions and answers, as follows:

"Do you believe you are a sinner?"

"Yes."

"Do you believe Christ died for sinners?"

"Yes."

"Will you receive Him as your Saviour?"

"Yes."

"Then you are saved!"

"I am?"

"Yes, the Bible says you are saved."

At first blush the method and the message might seem above criticism. But on closer study we are forced to have second thoughts and to conclude that we have oversimplified the gospel.

The first fatal flaw is the missing

emphasis on repentance. There can be no true conversion without conviction of sin. It is one thing to agree that I am a sinner; it is quite another thing to experience the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit in my life. Unless I have a Spirit-wrought consciousness of my utterly lost condition, I can never exercise saving faith. It is useless to tell unconvicted sinners to believe on Jesus—that message is only for those who know they are lost. We sugar-coat the gospel when we de-emphasize man's fallen condition. With that kind of a watered-down message, people receive the Word with joy instead of with deep contrition. They do not have deep roots, and though they might endure for a while, they soon give up all profession when persecution or trouble comes (Matthew 13:21). We have forgotten that the message is repentance toward God as well as faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

A second serious omission is a missing emphasis on the Lordship of Christ. A light, jovial mental assent that Jesus is Saviour misses the point. Jesus is first Lord, then Saviour. The New Testament always places His Lordship before His Saviourhood. Do we present the full implications of His Lordship to people? He always did.

A third defect in our message is our tendency to keep the terms of discipleship hidden until a decision has been made for Jesus. Our Lord never did this. The message He preached included the cross as well as the crown. "He never hid His scars to win disciples." He revealed the worst along with the best, then told His listeners to count the cost. We popularize the message and promise fun.

The result of all this is that we have people believing without knowing what they believe. In many cases they have no doctrinal basis for their

people to make an intelligent commitment to Christ the first time they hear the gospel? Certainly, there is the exceptional case where a person has already been prepared by the Holy Spirit. But generally speaking, the process involves sowing the seed, watering it, then sometime later reaping the harvest. In our mania for instant conversion, we have forgotten that conception, gestation, and birth do not occur on the same day.

A second question: can a capsule presentation of the gospel really do justice to so great a message? As one who has written several gospel

were saved. A young doctor testified that every time he goes to a new city, he looks in the phone book for people with his last name. Then he calls them one by one and leads them through the four steps to salvation. Amazingly enough, every one of them opens the door of his heart to Jesus. I don't want to doubt the honesty of people like this, but am I wrong in thinking that they are extremely naive? Where are all those people who are saved? They cannot be found.

What it all means is that we should seriously re-examine our

**"Unless I have a Spirit-wrought consciousness
of my utterly lost condition,
I can never exercise saving faith. "**

decision. They do not know the implications of commitment to Christ. They have never experienced the mysterious, miraculous work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration.

And of course we have others who are talked into a profession because of the slick salesmanship techniques of the soul-winner. Or some who want to please the affable, personable young man with the winning smile. And some who only want to get rid of this religious interloper who has intruded on their privacy. Satan laughs when these conversions are triumphantly announced on earth.

I would like to raise several questions that might lead us to some changes in our strategy of evangelism.

First of all, can we generally expect

tracts, I confess to a certain sense of misgiving in even attempting to condense the good news into four small pages. Would we not be wiser to give people the full presentation as it is found in the Gospels, or in the New Testament?

Thirdly, is all this pressure for decisions really scriptural? Where in the New Testament were people ever pressured into making a profession? We justify our practice by saying that if only one out of ten is genuine, it is worth it. But what about the other nine—disillusioned, bitter, perhaps deceived en route to hell by a false profession.

And I must ask this: is all this boasting about conversions really accurate? You've met the man who solemnly tells you of ten people he contacted that day and all of them

streamlined, capsule evangelism. We should be willing to spend time teaching the gospel, laying a solid doctrinal foundation for faith to rest on. We should stress the necessity for repentance—a complete about-face with regard to sin. We should stress the full implications of the Lordship of Christ and the conditions of discipleship. We should explain what belief really involves. We should be willing to wait for the Holy Spirit to produce genuine conviction of sin. Then we should be ready to lead the person to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

If we do this, we'll have less astronomical figures of so-called conversions, but more genuine cases of spiritual rebirth.

William MacDonald

COUNSEL

Teach Me

Morning by morning waken me, my Father,
Let Thy voice be the first my soul to greet,
Bidding my spirit rise from earthly slumber,
And sit a learner at Thy sacred feet.

There, in the stillness, open Thy good treasure,
The precious things of Christ unfolding still,
And, as Thy Spirit brings them to remembrance,
Let gratitude and love my spirit fill.

Teach me to do Thy will, Thy pattern show me;
Reveal Thy purpose for my life each day.
Then for Thy service with fresh oil anoint me,
And with Thy presence hallow all my way.

—Freda Hanbury Allen

