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## Preacher's Magazine Volume 63 Number 03

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# THE PREACHER'S MAGAZINE

EXPOSITORY  
PREACHING



**THE SACRIFICIAL SHEPHERD .....11**

**THE PARABLE TO END DESPAIR .....21**

**WESLEYAN MILESTONES .....32**

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## SUITABLE FOR FRAMING

If we are well satisfied with our civilization, our culture, our institutions, it would not be unreasonable to say that Jesus is our great enemy. He is the alien, the fleeting ghost moving in and out among the shadows of the private mind, and of the collective mind. A wanderer. Where can He find a place in which He can be at home? He challenges the very grounds of the common assumptions upon which we live, day after day. He was no radical social reformer; nor was He a radical political reformer. But He was a religious man who, out of His inner experience of God, spoke judgment upon the established order.

—Howard Thurman, *The Growing Edge*



ONDAY



MORNING



EVOTIONS FOR



INISTERS

by Reuben Welch

For Monday, March 7, 1988

### FRUITFUL LABOR



f it is to be life in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me" (Phil. 1:22, RSV).

If we are not going "to depart" and "be with Christ" (v. 23), the life we live is in the flesh. That is especially clear on Monday, when our bodies and emotions are drained and our psychic energy is down.

The trouble is, labor doesn't end. In one sense there is a line between Sunday and Monday, but in another sense there is no line at all. Whatever Sunday was—good, bad, or indifferent—runs over into Monday. And then there is Tuesday. And another Sunday is coming.

We are in the flesh; we are still our weak, human

selves. There is still labor to be done. It might be good for us to let our weight down on both of these realities. They will be with us till Jesus comes or till we go. For us who share the divine calling, life in the flesh means labor.

The word that saves us from drudgery or despair is the word *fruitful*. It isn't work itself that robs us of vitality and energy, it is the sense of futility or ineffectiveness in our labor. What kept Paul going, even in the prison compound, was the confidence that the preaching of Christ and his labor in Christ would be fruitful.

I think we need today a renewal of confidence in Christ's promise to us that our work will bear fruit that will remain (John 15:16). The labor is ours, the fruit is His. We can know, along with Paul, that in spite of our Monday feelings, our labor is "not in vain" in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

For Monday, March 14, 1988

### OUR DESIRE FOR DEPARTURE



y desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again" (Phil. 1:23-26, RSV).

There are Mondays when it would be "far better" just to depart! The same people, the same problems, the same situation—these are enough to make leaving a joy; except for the terrible process of moving.

In Paul's case, departure from prison was not exactly an option. Given his health and his circumstances, departure to be with Christ was, in fact, a real and viable one—except for the Philippians. "To remain . . . is more necessary on your account" (v. 24).

(Continued on page 4)



Reuben Welch

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## MONDAY MORNING DEVOTIONS

(Continued from page 1)

This raises very good questions: Why do we stay where we are? If we move, why will we stay there? I remember hearing Franklin Cook talk in chapel about the complex problems of our missionary enterprise. He asked the question, "What keeps us there?" I will never forget this part of his answer: "An inner heart attachment." That is what keeps us where we are, doing what we are doing.

Another part of the answer is that we are called not to serve our own interests but to produce fruit in those whose interests we are called to serve. Once more in this Philippian letter we see a shift in the center of gravity away from ourselves to God—and to the people of God. It is for fruit in their lives that we stay. The specific fruit Paul mentions here is "progress and joy in the faith" (v. 25). Our people need more faith and they need more joy in believing. For that matter, so do we. Maybe the best thing is to think less about departure and more about how we and our people are growing and rejoicing in our faith.

So, maybe to depart would not be the best thing after all. At any rate the real question is, "What about their faith?"

For Monday, March 21, 1988

### LIFE WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL



Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27, RSV).

What are we to do with a word like *worthy*? Whether or not we feel worthy probably depends a lot on what happened yesterday! Only one life is worthy of the gospel—"Thou art worthy, O Lord." We can be glad, then, that we are given an exhortation and not a command.

How shall we respond to the exhortation? What is life "worthy of the gospel of Christ"? I believe the first thing to say is that it is life whose worth is defined by the gospel and not by any system or institution that promotes the gospel. It is not an easy distinction to keep clear, because we live in a system and are part of an institution that promotes the gospel. We tend to let the system define a worthy life for us, and we calculate our own worth in terms of our value to the system or our productivity within it. Paul reminds us that worthy life is determined by gospel life and not by institutional life.

The approach of Holy Week reminds us of the way Jesus lived within His own religious structure, in total attentiveness to His Father and His Father's will. Those within the structure did not always see His life as "worthy," but His point of reference was neither the structure nor their perceptions. He found His worth in His relationship with His Father. Through the triumph of

Palm Sunday, the agony of Gethsemane, and the desolation of Calvary, He was able to keep His balance because His life was lived for His Father.

He calls us to live for Him, to die with Him to all other dependencies, and to find our worth and meaning in Him and His gospel.

For Monday, March 28, 1988

### LIFE IN THE GOSPEL



Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1:27, RSV).

On this Monday of Holy Week, let's try to think past all the pressures that go with the season and think again about life worthy of the gospel. We have said that it is life defined by the gospel. Actually, it would be easier if the worth of our lives were defined by the system or the program of the church.

In that case we could see to the special services of the week, and the special music for Easter; we could keep our sermon reasonably brief, take the special offering, and hope for a good number of visitors. We could then know we were worthy servants of the gospel.

But the gospel defines the worthy life for us, and the gospel is itself defined by the awesome events we celebrate this Holy Week. We are led, then, to Gethsemane where, whatever our own desires, we pray with Jesus, "Not my will, but thine be done." And we ourselves are brought to Calvary where we participate in the death of Jesus. There the world is crucified to us and we ourselves are crucified to the world (Gal. 6:14).

But, thank God, "If we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his" (Rom. 6:5, RSV). No system, no program can produce such power!

This will be one of the busiest weeks of the whole year. I pray it will be one of the best because it is lived not in our own strength or for our own purposes but in the gospel, lived in Him who died for us and rose again (2 Cor. 5:15).

For Monday, April 4, 1988

### GOSPEL LIFE



Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27, RSV).

After all the events of Holy Week and Easter Sunday, I am wondering if and when any pastor will read this! Who has experienced the "thrill of victory" and who has felt the "agony of defeat"? In any case, we walk on in the presence of the living Christ, called to a way of life worthy of His gospel.

Let's talk about that again. Life worthy of the gospel is defined by the gospel and not by any person who declares it. In 1:27 and in 2:12 Paul expresses concern that

whether he is present or absent, their lives should go on in unity and love. Their primary relationship is not to him but to the gospel of Christ.

Church folk have a tendency to let—no, to demand—that their preachers and teachers define for them how they should live out the gospel. And we are all too ready to do just that. Paul says, “No!” The gospel, not the preacher, defines the worthy life.

We already know that the pastoral task is to relate people to Christ in such a way that with or without us, their lives will be worthy of the gospel. Do we know the same for ourselves? Who is defining the gospel for you? Are you bouncing your Christian life or your ministry off your spouse or your D.S. or the church program? Does anyone’s presence or absence affect how your life in Christ is to be lived?

I think this is a significant issue for us and perhaps a very good time to talk about it. The risen Christ is present among us by His Spirit. He is our Teacher, He is our Center, and we are free to live “worthy of the gospel of Christ.”

For Monday, April 11, 1988

## HOLY POLITICS



ly let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Phil. 1:27, RSV).

I have always expected that life after Easter would have some almost magical difference, but for all the pageantry and proclamation, life seems to go on in pretty much its normal way. We continue our process of learning how to live together in love in the community of believers.

That’s why we come back to this verse we have almost worn out. It contains a significant phrase: “your manner of life.” I hope you will look it up in your versions and lexicons. It contains the word from which we get our word *politics*. Life worthy of the gospel is life together in the gospel.

Proud Philippians who once related to each other as citizens of Rome are called to relate to each other now as fellow sharers of the life of Christ. Their deepest ties are spiritual, they are covenantal.

For me this raises a fundamental question, “How do we relate to each other?” Our college president was sick. I was returning from a visit with him and met on campus a colleague who said, “I feel guilty that I haven’t been over to see him, but, well, he’s the president, and I don’t know if it would be quite the thing I ought to do.” A brother was sick and a brother was caring, but between the two was an arbitrary, man-made, bureaucratic wall that effectively stifled the free flow of the love of Jesus between two Christians. Of course that only happens on college campuses.

We relate as pastor and people, teacher and student, superintendents and pastors, but we are really brothers and sisters in Christ. Underneath our organized structures we are desperately hungry for love that is uncontrived and spontaneous. Can we ever shed our roles and relate to each other as fellow Christians? I think this is a good post-Easter Monday question!

For Monday, April 18, 1988

## SIDE BY SIDE



ly let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear omen to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God” (Phil. 1:27-28, RSV).

When you come right down to it, what kind of life is the worthy life we have been talking about all these weeks? We would expect to hear some word about separation from the world and high moral standards. Instead, we learn that we are to be traveling along, singing a song, side by side! That is a very good word on Monday.

How many of us struggle with feelings of guilt and failure because we can never live up to the word *worthy*? How many have given up because they couldn’t live up to the standards?

What if, in fact, it turns out that life worthy of the gospel is life together in covenant relationship? What if it means having one mind and one heart, working side by side?

If I understand Paul here, our adversaries are not confounded by our perfect lives. The omen of their destruction is the oneness of the Body of Christ, striving for the faith of the gospel, working side by side with one heart and one mind.

There is a word from the Lord this Monday, somewhere between Easter and Pentecost: Don’t let anything—anything—divide the fellowship. One by one we aren’t much. Divided and fragmented we are an offense. But put us together—and we are invincible!

For Monday, April 25, 1988

## A MATTER OF MOTIVE



o if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind” (Phil. 2:1-2, RSV).

Most of the time, we do what we do because it is to be done. We study, administer the church, talk to people, make calls, conduct services, work with the program and a hundred other things—none of which do we need to be reminded of on Monday!

Once in awhile, maybe today, it is good to stop, reflect on our motives, and let the love of Jesus renew us.

When we read Paul’s words, “If there is any encouragement in Christ . . .” we respond, “Of course there is!” Why this prelude to his call for one mind and heart? Maybe he brings up the obvious because he knows it can be taken for granted.

Here are some probing questions for me on a Monday. Does my personal relationship with Christ guide me in my practical decisions? Am I sensitive to the gentle



force of His presence in my life? Does the love of Jesus in me influence how I think and feel about the people around me? Is there tenderness and sympathy in my heart? Do they affect the way I do my work?

These questions are not designed to produce guilt—the answer to each of them is *Yes*. But sometimes that *Yes* can be covered up and almost forgotten in the busy life of a minister. Today may be a good day to bring it out into the open and say it again!

For Monday, May 2, 1988

## ONE MIND, ONE HEART



Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves" (Phil. 2:2-3, RSV).

Paul, how naive can you be! How can a Christian businesswoman like Lydia and a converted Roman jailer have the same mind? And that is nothing to compare with the differences among us. If Paul had ever been in a faculty meeting or tried to get agreement on a curriculum change, he never would have dreamed such things, let alone expected them. And what divisive issues did you have to deal with yesterday? Who got his feelings hurt? And why bring up such things on Monday!

Yet, here are the words: "in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side" (1:27); "same mind, . . . same love, . . . full accord and of one mind" (2:2).

Our best help may not come from our lexicon definitions of these rich terms. I have come to believe that what really divides us is not difference of approach or mind-set. It is ego. It is our selfishness and the conceit behind our attitudes and opinions.

Such thoughts belong to this session of preparation for Pentecost. The disciples were all together in one place when the Holy Spirit came upon them. It is still His work to cleanse our selfishness and our pride and bring us all together in one accord.

When we are really free from the domination of our ego, we can rejoice in the differences among us and live in one accord.

For Monday, May 9, 1988

## THE JESUS WAY OF THINKING



Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men . . . he humbled himself and became obedient unto death" (Phil. 2:5-8, RSV).

Our first father, in the Garden, had all he ever wanted, but it was not enough. He couldn't resist the desire to be

"like God." Grasping for more, he overreached himself, and fell.

Jesus our Brother was, in fact, "like God," but He let it go, gave it up, and saved us. In full self-knowledge He emptied himself, became completely human, and accepted what we would normally call a life of weakness, indignity, and servitude. Then God exalted Him and gave Him a name above all names—and we discover that we are totally wrong in the way we think about power and dignity and service.

We are still much like our first father. I wish we could learn our lesson and be done with it! But we are such that we must come back again and again to the mind of Jesus. It is not a "mind" we can have by just following His example. It is not *our* way of thinking at all and can only be ours as we are "in Christ Jesus." It is His way of thinking in us; His releasing, self-effacing way of loving—the gift of grace.

What does power mean to you? Jesus came in weakness. What does ministerial dignity mean? There is Jesus on the Cross. All the prerogatives so precious to us are yielded up by our Lord who comes to serve us. I guess we had better find a towel and a basin somewhere and get on with what it means to minister.

For Monday, May 16, 1988

## PENTECOST AND THE SELF-EMPTIED CHRIST



Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11, RSV).

Next Sunday we will preach about Pentecost, the Holy Spirit, and a church on fire with His power. Today, let's think about the Christ whose Spirit fell on those in the Upper Room.

I have come to believe that we must not talk about the Holy Spirit without the recognition that He is the Spirit of our incarnate, serving, dying, risen, and exalted Lord Jesus. Peter closed his Pentecost sermon with these words, "God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36, RSV). Paul echoes these words in Phil. 2:9-11.

The promised Holy Spirit is poured out by the exalted Christ. The testimony of the Spirit is, Jesus is Lord. The Holy Spirit is the personal presence of God-in-Jesus, among us in power. His primary function is to glorify Jesus, the One who is the final Revelation of the Father.

We cannot talk of the Holy Spirit and His ministry as though by His coming Jesus were rendered obsolete or left back there in the Gospels. Whatever power the Spirit has, it is the power of the crucified, risen Jesus, exalted in glory.

Life in the Holy Spirit is life in Christ. Spirit-filled living, then, is Christlike living. Christ is the One who emptied himself, took the form of man, and became a servant, obedient unto the death of a cross.

(Continued on page 58)

# PREACHING TIME: USE IT OR LOSE IT

by Wesley Tracy

**Y**ou have 10 minutes to preach; every minute you take beyond 10 reduces your grade at the rate of one letter grade per minute." According to a recent graduate, that is the policy in one Ivy League divinity school. The squeeze is on everywhere, it seems, to shorten sermons. This trend in many churches, particularly in some mainline Protestant denominations, has already reduced preaching to nine-minute ditties, brain teasers, spiritual hints, or devotional hors d'oeuvres. Even in "evangelical circles" preachers are having to scrap and scrape to preserve those precious preaching minutes. We stand at a "use it (well) or lose it" juncture when it comes to preaching time.

Here are some trends and currents that one might consider.

1. In some quarters the recent emphasis on lay ministry has diminished the role of the ordained clergy. Certainly every Christian has a ministry; Eph. 4:11 has been in the Bible a long time. We needed the accent on lay ministry. The imbalance occurred, I think, when some popular "preachers" ran up and down the land bellowing that a Christian farmer spreading manure in a bean patch is just as much a minister as a preacher in the pulpit proclaiming Jesus mighty to save. Most of us were simply not dumb enough to believe that, no matter how loud they yelled, but in the minds of many the ordained preacher slipped downward several notches. Nevertheless, the sacrament of the proclaimed Word is the central event of worship in Protestant, evangelical, Wesleyan churches.

Of course the move to exalt lay ministry at the expense of ordained

ministry was aided and abetted by a lot of preachers who thought they were "lords" of the harvest. The ordained clergy does not "own" the church, it "serves" the church.

2. A second current is a groundswell of intolerance for poor preaching. Once the flow of critique moved from church hierarchy to the grass roots. But now the flow of critique moves from the grass roots to the hierarchy, and its keynote is increasing intolerance for incompetence. The preacher who drones on endlessly flailing away at the obvious and answering questions no one is asking, is asking to have his or her preaching time trimmed.

3. Another trend that affects time for preaching is the crescendolike demand now rising in the holiness movement for more meaningful worship. Some pastors do not recognize the sermon as a *part of worship* and do little or nothing to create a harmonious worship experience throughout the service. Such preachers soon encounter an attack from the liturgists. They come at him with litanies, antiphonal chants, chancel dramas; with choreography, cantatas, concerts, and liturgical dance.

We have rich resources for worship in scripture, tradition, and our Wesleyan heritage. These resources should be explored lest the search for meaningful worship fall prey to the worship as entertainment movement, as inane as it is. Nor is it adequate to plead for a return to the good old days saying we need more hand clapping, more shouting, more aisle running and handkerchief waving. That time, I am afraid, is gone forever. As blessed as that era was, it is hard for me to see today's men and women responding to the


movement of God upon the gathered worshipers in the same way those beloved ancestors of ours did at the turn of the century.

Unless we respond properly to the need for meaningful worship we may find preaching time trimmed more than we can tolerate. For example, a Nazarene minister of music recently sent me a *good* article on worship. In the article he gave three "sample" worship services. Two of the three had no sermon at all—can you imagine that? Use it or lose it.

On the road one Easter, I worshiped at the only Protestant church I could find. The highlight of the service was a liturgical dance depicting the events of Good Friday and Easter. The stage-prop cross and tomb were appropriate; the pantomimed dance was beautiful indeed. But the pastor was left with eight minutes to preach—on Easter!

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One of the ways to use your preaching time well is to preach expository sermons. In this issue, five preachers share and demonstrate their own methods of moving from homiletical spade-work to sermon. We hope their work will instruct or inspire your own biblical preaching.

Further, the weeks ahead, which bring us Lent, Holy Week, Easter, and Pentecost, offer great opportunities for developing meaningful worship services. The month of May offers a chance to celebrate our Wesleyan heritage in worship. May 24 is the 250th anniversary of John Wesley's Aldersgate experience. Read "Significant Wesleyan Milestones" in this issue and reflect on ways to bring this part of our heritage to a worship experience. 

# *REDIGGING THE WELLS OF BIBLICAL PREACHING*

by Jerry Harvill  
*Lexington, Ky.*

**T**here is a crisis facing the Church today. It's not a crisis in the street or in the pew. It's a crisis in the pulpit. A tragic trend characterizes contemporary preaching. Cisterns of emotional devotionals and humanistic "positive thinking" are substituted for the fountain of living water God intended for His people. Long ago God lamented through His prophet Jeremiah, "My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water" (Jer. 2:13, NKJV).

I think I've earned the right to speak out on this subject. I'm not a crank, nor am I a facile armchair quarterback. A 22-year veteran in the pulpit, I know firsthand what an impossible task preaching can be; how stressful it can be to sensitive persons. I know how much uninformed criticism hurts. But what is more important, I've been sitting in the congregation, soaking up the pew-side of preaching for the past two years. I've visited churches that were "high" and "low," large and small, "liberal" and "conservative." The shocking common denominator among all of them is how little spiritual meat is coming from their pulpits. Seeking to be fed, I've come away time and again malnourished on "junk food" sermonettes. What I've sought was a clear word from God; what I've received was a clever word from a man.

As one who loves preachers and preaching, I insist it is past time to earnestly redig the wells of biblical preaching dug by our fathers. As one of the "walking wounded," I'm convinced of the need for clear, unambiguous, great preaching in the '80s.

But when we speak of "great preaching," we must

beware of indulging arbitrary definitions. To reopen the wells of authentic biblical preaching we need to follow a biblical model. In 2 Cor. 4:1-6, Paul bares his heart, revealing his priorities and values as a preacher. In the midst of a candid defense of himself and his ministry, Paul profiles his concept of the source, the subject, the scope, and the significance of preaching. Here is a precedent no preacher can afford to ignore.

## **The Source: The Word**

Paul says bluntly, "We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways; we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word . . ." (2 Cor. 4:2, RSV). For the apostle, the Word of God was the source of preaching. It was unthinkable to him that anyone would distort preaching—either to make it a means to their own ends or to speak what was not legitimately God's word. Since no man has the right to preach on his own merit, but is only qualified to do so by divine mercy and appointment (2 Cor. 4:1; cf. 3:4-6), no man dare preach himself or his own views.

But are we authentically preaching the Word of God today? Some of Paul's contemporaries clearly were not. Their shoddy hermeneutics and manipulative handling of texts cancelled their claims to authenticity. I fear the same must be said against much preaching today, as well. Recently, for example, I listened to a sermon by a respected pastor on the subject, "The Spirit of Christ"—a sermon ostensibly based upon Rom. 8:9, where that phrase occurs. The lesson dealt with Christ's attitudes, and how men today ought to face situations with the same courage, loyalty, and single-mindedness

that Christ possessed—that we should have the same “spirit of Christ.”

Now that is a valuable exhortation. However, it is *not* the message of Rom. 8:9. The context clearly shows that Paul's attention is on the Holy Spirit. Like so much of modern preaching, that sermon was written by a man who had a message he wanted to deliver. Then he found a biblical text to hang it on. It was his own message, not the scripture message, he delivered.

This incident highlights a crisis the Church must face: We who would call the world to God cannot afford to skimp on divine truth. Credibility vanishes when we declare that the Bible is the Word of God, at the same time neglecting elementary prerequisites of grammatical and historical homework of our texts! If there are wise counsel to share and insights to make, by all means, share them—but only after we have accurately identified the original meaning of our text, and only if those applications reflect its message. Anything else is not expounding Scripture; it is rewriting it.

### The Subject: The Gospel

Paul not only tells us where he got his sermon material but also tells us his homiletic theme: “the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:4, NKJV, RSV). His preaching provided “enlightenment” by focusing on Christ, “the image of God” (v. 4, NKJV).

What Paul preached was gospel. It was not the “good news” of positive thinking or of improved social skills. It was not man-centered at all. The Good News was what God had done in Christ. It focused specifically on the death, burial, resurrection, and appearances of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-5). The apostle found potential for great joy in that news, which he summed up for the Corinthians into four key words: *hope* (2 Cor. 3:12), *Spirit* (v. 17), *freedom* (v. 17, RSV), and *glory* (v. 18). Such realities are good news, indeed! And that was what Paul preached.

Notice that Paul's concern was “the glory of Christ.” Not his own glory, the glory of his supporters, or even the glory of a philosophy. He preached to focus men's hearts on Christ. Professor James Denney used to warn his students, “No man can draw attention to himself and to Christ at the same time!” I have heard sermons that left me more impressed with the cleverness of the speaker than with the glory of Christ; more conscious of a man than of the Son of Man. That may be good showmanship, but it is false preaching.

There is something even more sinister to consider, however. Without realizing it, we may classify a great deal of sermonizing that contains little, if any, *evangelion* (good news) as “gospel preaching.” A random sampling of some influential preachers' sermon outlines from last year will reveal that they are talking a great deal about “issues” and very little about the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. But even worse is the irony of a generation so unfamiliar with the biblical definition of *gospel* that someone preaching Paul's message today appears unevangelical! Though audiences may find other subjects fascinating, the fact remains that only the gospel is the power of God for salvation (Rom. 1:16).

### The Scope: Pure Truth

Paul gives clear indication of the scope of his preaching when, by way of contrast, he vows, “Rather, we have

renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God” (2 Cor. 4:2, NIV). Paul preached pure truth.

At this point, it may be valuable to notice what apostolic preaching was not. First, it was not subtle or esoteric. Paul explicitly says he renounced “the hidden things” (*ta krupta*), which he declares shameful. J. B. Phillips translates it this way: “We use no clever tricks, no dishonest manipulation . . .” (v. 2). It is possible for a preacher to play word games with an audience, using familiar terms with new, hidden, subtle meanings. This is sometimes the style of those in whom cynicism has displaced faith, whose homiletic stock is doubt. They convey messages through innuendo and subtle connotation. The threat is intensified precisely because their approach is so subtle. It would be less problematic and less shameful if their message was open and direct. The pulpit is not a hiding place. If a man no longer shares his peoples' faith, let him declare it openly, not through subtleties and cynicism.

Second, Paul says preaching is not manipulative. He rejects the role of manipulator, using an infamous word, *panourgia*, which means “unscrupulous readiness to adopt any means in order to gain one's ends” (Alfred Plummer).

Consider some of the tactics we evangelicals sometimes employ in evangelistic campaigns. John R. W. Stott warns, “Any kind of slick ‘decisionism’ which sacrifices honesty on the altar of statistics is bound to cause other casualties as well, the victims of our own folly.” He specifies, “. . . one inevitable result of evangelism by unlawful means (what Paul called ‘disgraceful, underhanded ways’ in 2 Corinthians 4:2) is the leakage from the church of those whose conversion has been thus ‘engineered.’”

The precise focus Paul has in mind in 2 Cor. 4:2, however, is the preacher who manipulates Scripture. Scripture exists for his purposes and functions as a footnote for his thoughts and views. There is a difference between taking one's sermon points from text and making up points on our own, then finding “texts” to hang them on. In the first approach, Scripture governs the topic as well as the agenda. In the second approach, Scripture is cut and spliced into a new arrangement that may or may not accurately express the will of God—it has become the vehicle for our ideas. It is high time we declared a moratorium on “topical preaching” and returned to expository sermons. True, they require more preparation, and they are less popular. They are, however, biblical.

There is a third hint in this passage of what Paul despised in preachers. He lashes out at what he calls “watering-down” the Word of God (*Dolountes*). The term he uses here originally meant “to ensnare” or “to corrupt.” Specifically, it signified dilution of gold, wine, or medicine, according to M. R. Vincent. This dilution of the gospel takes place when alien systems are smuggled into sermons and circulated as Truth.

There is a “watering-down” of the gospel that is even more subtle: the danger of preaching arbitrarily. Through an arbitrary selectivity the biblical revelation is reduced to a few favorite passages and themes, weak-

ening the full strength of the gospel message. The only way to guard against our own biases is to discipline ourselves to preach from the Old as well as the New Testament, from the Gospels as well as the Epistles, and from Revelation as well as Acts. The faithful steward will not willfully ignore any part of his Master's Word. Preaching "the whole counsel of God" must remain the true minister's goal.

### The Significance Demands a Verdict

Paul indicates the goal of authentic preaching when he declares, "For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord . . ." (2 Cor. 4:5, NIV). Condensed into these simple yet profound words are the realities of Jesus' exaltation to the Father's throne and His sovereignty over heaven and earth. Here, too, are the opportunity, responsibility, and accountability of men to surrender to that Lordship.

Paul reminds us that authentic preaching always demands a verdict. The Lordship of Christ can never be a matter of indifference; it must be commitment pressed and urged with passion. God in Christ has made His takeover bid, and the sermon is His vehicle by which He declares His terms. Mere exposition is a lesson, but exposition plus application is a sermon. The Lordship of Jesus must be related in concrete terms, and His demands, as well as His promises, must be understood and applied. Preaching must do more than simply deliver a message. It should present Jesus Christ so that people will come to know, love, serve, and yield their lives to Him. The acid test of ministry is the same today as it was in Paul's time: the quality of the changed lives it produces (cf. 2 Cor. 3:1-3).

Let us honestly face a delicate problem. It is natural to want to preach ourselves. It is often painful to faithfully preach the Lordship of Jesus. Most preachers desire the support and praise of their congregations. In fact, many are drawn to the pulpit, at least in part, because of their need for peer recognition and approval. Standing before audiences week after week, being listened to with respect, and being honored as a leader are attractive career benefits to any young person seeking group approval. But this situation is given a fatal twist by a spirit of competition, unwittingly encouraged in churches with celebrity complexes. The practice of exalting preachers is at least as old as ancient Corinth (1 Cor. 3:1-23), and it thrives in our media-oriented culture today. Preachers are evaluated, compared, and labeled in a frantic bid to bag a "trophy" for local display. Is it surprising that some preachers become arrogant and pompous, full of their own importance, while others become cynical and sarcastic as a defense against feelings of inferiority? When we make a fuss over the pot of clay, who is to blame when the pot becomes more conscious of itself than of the Potter? Preachers will stop preaching themselves when churches stop creating a "celebrity" status. Self-serving will end when both pulpit and pew focus on the crucified Christ. The Cross, you see, has a way of "pouring contempt on all our pride!"

Preaching for a verdict is not the same as manipulation. The underhanded methods Paul criticized involve distortions of the Word, motivated by selfish interests. Hearers were influenced away from, rather than toward,

Christ. Violating individual freedom of choice is not an option for God's people. Like the Father, we will always honor that divine gift. Preaching for a verdict does not deny individual freedom; it allows the hearer to exercise it. Such preaching brings Christ's presence as Light of the World into sharp focus. No one can remain neutral toward Him. Authentic preaching is God's invitation to men to choose light. Therefore, it does not do away with men's options. Rather, it clarifies them, filling human choice with eternal significance. Because of those eternal consequences, true preaching must always be a passionate appeal.

### Making It Work

Looking over the preaching model in 2 Cor. 4:1-5, we've seen that the *source* for authentic preaching is the Word of God, that the *subject* is the gospel of Christ, that the *scope* is pure truth and the counsel of God, and that the *significance* is the demand for a verdict regarding Jesus as Lord. But how do we implement this model? Where do we begin?

(1) **Identify the Biblical Goal.** Success is proportional to the clarity of our goal definition. If we know precisely where we are going, we are more likely to get there than if our objective is ambiguous. This means that both pulpit and pew must carefully restudy biblical precedents in order to accurately target an authentic preaching model.

Be prepared to make changes in familiar ministry patterns. To commit oneself to a ministry of the Word demands dropping some of the traditional professional activities that go with the preacher's role today—activities that have gradually changed the minister's *study* into an *office*. It means rediscovering that study and being locked in the presence of God with the Word.

(2) **Go Back to Expository Sermons.** Since divine inspiration is found in Scripture, there can be no option but to place top priority on sermons that expound the inspired text.

We need to stop preaching topically. Preaching a topic instead of a text is not automatically misleading or harmful. It is possible to see broad outlines and themes clearly and to develop them without distortion. However, we risk manipulation and superficiality as we multiply our references. When a man steps forward to preach with eternity in the balance his audience has a right to expect that his message is accurate and faithful in general outline as well as in detail. There is wisdom in confining oneself to one portion of Scripture at a time.

(3) **Go Back to Languages.** Dr. A. M. Fairbairn once said, "He is no theologian who is not first a grammarian." Of course, not every preacher excels in linguistic studies. Languages are a painful struggle for some. Nevertheless, we cannot avoid Martin Luther's advice to "Keep hard at the languages, for language is the sheath in which the sword of the Spirit rests."

The church does not expect all her preachers to be accomplished scholars, but she does expect all her preachers to be scholarly. Not everyone has the gift of academic brilliance, but every minister of the Word ought to have academic diligence. No one excuses ignorance or inaccuracy in the practice of medicine or law; how much less excusable are they in a man who claims to speak words that influence eternal destinies!

(Continued on page 27)



*An Exegetical/Homiletical Study for Lent*

# THE SACRIFICIAL SHEPHERD

by Roger Hahn

*Professor of New Testament, Southern Nazarene University, Bethany, Okla.*

**Text: John 10:11-18\***

The biblical imagery of sacrifice revolves around the ancient practice of animal sacrifice. Though bulls and pigeons were also sacrificed, the animal of choice in the biblical world and in our minds was the sheep. It is the metaphor of the sacrificial lamb that the New Testament applies to Jesus. In the light of the emphasis in the Johannine writings on Jesus as the sacrificial Lamb, it is surprising to find the tables turned in John 10:11-18. With the shadow of the Cross looming ahead, John presents Jesus as the sacrificial *Shepherd* instead of the sacrificial Lamb.

The meaning of the passage arises from both its context and the actual development of the shepherd imagery in these verses. Understanding the author's meaning and purpose will enable us to make an authentic application of the text to our times.

**The Context**

There is no specific indication of the historical context of Jesus' sheep/shepherd teaching in John 10:1-18. John 7:2 provides the nearest previous reference to a time when it places Jesus in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles (late September). John 9:7 indicates that the material in that chapter is also set in Jerusalem. John 10:22-23 still places Jesus in Jerusalem, but the time is the winter Feast of Dedication (late December).

More significant than chronology, the fourth Gospel unfolds these words of Jesus as the Cross became imminent. The only reason Jesus was not arrested was that, "his hour had not yet come" (8:20). Allusions to His death had already appeared in 2:19; 7:19, 25; 8:22, 40, 59. The teaching on the sacrificial Shepherd continues the developing theme of Jesus' impending death.

John 10:11-18 is easily recognizable as part of the larger literary unit, 10:1-18. The literary form of verses 1-6 is difficult to determine because these verses lack the connectedness of the stories we usually call parables. In fact, verses 1-5 contain a series of observations

about a shepherd, a flock, and a robber. These are "common-sense" statements based on what everybody in ancient Palestine knew about sheep, shepherds, and imposters posing as shepherds. The basic point of the observations is that the shepherd enters through the door of the sheepfold, the valid means of entrance. Imposters seek other means of access. Furthermore, the voice of a genuine shepherd is recognized by the sheep. The shepherd's years of faithful shepherding create a relationship of trust and recognition that cannot be imitated by the imposter, though he may speak the same words of summons as the shepherd.

Verses 7-18 flow from the so-called parable, though they are not precisely an application or an interpretation of verses 1-5. They have been described as a meditation (Beasley-Murray, p. 169), an allegory (Lindars, p. 357), or an explanation (Brown, pp. 393, 395) of the observations about sheep and shepherds. In fact, verses 7-18 do contain two extended metaphors, or allegories, based on sheep, shepherds, and sheepfolds. However, they are not interpretations of the material in verses 1-5. Rather, they arise from the arena of life described in verses 1-5 but develop their own direction and meaning. Jesus describes himself in verses 7-10 as the door of the sheep, and as the good shepherd in verses 11-18. Verses 1-5 provide environment or atmosphere for understanding these allegories.

Verses 7-10 are built around Jesus' parallel statements, "I am the door (of the sheep)," in verses 7 and 9. The statements are amplified in two directions. First, Jesus contrasts himself as the authentic door with all those who came before, thieves and robbers, who were not heard (or at least not heeded) by the sheep. The identity of the imposters is not developed; one may assume that He refers to contemporary Jewish leaders, to previous false-messiahs, or both. He certainly is not referring to Old Testament notables. The second use of the door metaphor (v. 9) is developed by identifying Jesus the door as the source of salvation, pasture, and life. The pasture reference (v. 10) extends the metaphor, but the references to salvation (v. 9) and life (v. 10) repeat themes that have appeared earlier in the Gospel.

Verses 11-18 are also built around parallel statements of Jesus, "I am the good shepherd," in verses 11 and 14. Several new thoughts or developments, not implied in verses 1-5, appear. The most significant new thought is the theme of the shepherd laying down his life for the sheep (vv. 11b, 15b, and indirect application to Jesus in vv. 17b and 18). This dark reference to the risky responsibility of the shepherd is not the only conflict-oriented material in the passage. The contrast between the genuine shepherd and the imposter is presented in terms of the response to impending danger. The imposter flees



Roger L. Hahn

\*All Scripture translations are the author's own.

before the wolf; the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. These verses also introduce the concept of other sheep and other folds.

John 10:1-18 appears to be able to function as a totally independent unit of material. The verses immediately following (vv. 19-21) connect easily to 9:41 and the preceding material. Several have suggested that 10:1-18 originally belonged elsewhere and was later inserted into this context. Moffatt's translation of the New Testament actually places 10:19-29 *before* 10:1-18. However, recent scholarship has recognized an internal logic to John's arrangement, even though 10:1-18 has no verbal ties to the preceding context.

The treatment of the Good Shepherd in 10:1-18 strongly contrasts the authentic shepherding ministry of Jesus and the bogus work of the hirelings or robbers. This is a striking illustration of the contrast between the Pharisees' treatment in chapter 9 of the man born blind and Jesus' healing and accepting ministry for the same man. By means of the shepherd imagery, Jesus is able to provide a compelling defense of His ministry in chapter 9 and a stinging condemnation of the attitudes and actions of the Jewish leaders. Further, the healing of the man born blind validates Jesus' statement in 8:12 that He is the Light of the World. The Good Shepherd section emphasizes life. The connection between chapter 9 and 10:1-18 brings together Jesus as Light of the World and Jesus as Life, two themes that have been developing throughout the Gospel.

The linkage of chapter 9 and the Good Shepherd material is made clear in chapter 10. Verse 20 refers directly to the previous chapter's account of the healing of the man born blind. Verses 26-27 refer back to the sheep/shepherd teaching found at the beginning of chapter 10. In both instances Jesus is in conflict with the Jews. There is one further block to be laid in the construction of John's picture of Jesus. Chapter 11, the raising of Lazarus, climaxes the theme that has been developing throughout the Gospel (Jesus as Life) and is a significant part of 10:1-18. Chapter 12 then brings us to Passion Week and the Cross.

There is one other item that must be included in the treatment of the total context of John 10:11-18. The conceptual context of the Good Shepherd material for both Jesus and His Jewish audience, and the Gospel writer and his readers who knew the Septuagint, would be Ezekiel 34. In that chapter, the Lord brings a searing indictment against Israel's rulers for negligent, and thus false, shepherds. They had abused their responsibility by feeding themselves instead of their sheep. As a result the sheep (Israel) were scattered over the earth and victimized by wild beasts. But the Lord promises to shepherd the scattered flock. He would seek them out and rescue them and establish His servant David as their shepherd. No audience familiar with Ezekiel 34 could fail to see Jesus identifying the Pharisees with negligent shepherds of old Israel and himself with the Lord, the true Shepherd who authentically cares for and restores the flock.

#### **The Specific Development of 10:11-18**

Verse 11 introduces a new "I am" saying, "I am the good shepherd." The emphatic construction, "I am" (*ego*

*eimi* in Greek), has long been noted as a special feature of the Gospel of John. (See John 6:35; 8:12; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; and 14:1, 5 for significant Christological statements in the "I am" form.) Whether the "I am" construction is intentionally patterned after the similar "I am" statements in Exodus 3 and similar passages, to express the identity of Jesus and God the Father, has been debated. It is clear, however, that the "I am" statements in John's Gospel have a special role in revealing the essential nature of Jesus as God's Agent in salvation.

"Shepherd" was a word of great feeling in Jesus' world. The shepherd was a figure of rugged strength who provided tender care. It spoke of freedom yet with weighty responsibility. As such the word had been applied to the great Old Testament leaders and even to God himself (Ezekiel 34). But the power of the word *shepherd* is enhanced by Jesus' use of the adjective *good*. The word in the Greek text speaks not only of rightness but also of attractiveness or winsomeness. Thus Jesus describes himself as the "model" or "ideal" shepherd (Brown, p. 386; Lindars, p. 361). As such, He is making a significant statement about the way God is involved in a saving way in the world.

The way in which Jesus is the model shepherd is revealed in His sacrificial self-giving. The definition of a good shepherd as the one who lays down his life for the sheep introduces the new and dominant theme of this passage. The Greek expression is unusual; the word we translate as "lay down" literally means "to put" or "to place." Our expression, "to put one's life on the line," comes close to expressing the risk that is implied by the phrase. However the same construction was used in the Greek version of 1 Kings 19:2, meaning death rather than merely risk. Here, the discerning reader of the Gospel will see more than simply Jesus risking His life; His laying down of His life refers to His death.

The imposter in verses 12-13 is the hireling as opposed to the thief of verses 8-10. The hireling is not attempting to harm or steal the sheep. In fact, the hireling's motive is good. He is a protector, one who cares for the sheep. However, the point of mentioning a hireling is to contrast the level of commitment. When push comes to shove, the hireling is more interested in protecting himself than the sheep. In implied contrast, the Good Shepherd, Jesus, has no concern above that of the care of the sheep.

Thus verses 11-13 speak both of Jesus' character as Good Shepherd and of the care that the church receives as His flock. Part of our creatureliness means that we need someone who will be ultimately concerned with us. Sheep do not survive autonomy very well. Neither does the church, nor do individual believers. Genuine faith or trust in Christ only exists as we are confident that the Shepherd is more concerned for us than for His own welfare. The context of verses 9-10 suggests that care will include salvation, nurture, and abundant life. These benefits are not just one-time, past benefits of the death of Christ, but the ongoing, present blessings and concern of the risen Lord.

The repetition of "I am the good shepherd" in verse 14 marks the next step in the development of the text.

Verses 14-15 focus on the relationship of the shepherd and sheep. "I know my own and my own know me." Verses 11-13 had focused on care and dependence, but verses 14-15 center on intimacy. The care of a shepherd for his sheep may be tender and loving, but the metaphor lacks a personal dimension. The intimacy of Jesus' care for the Church is not simply that of a shepherd for sheep but the same kind of intimate relationship as that shared by Christ and the Father.

The intimate relationship of Christ and the Church that is portrayed here also advances beyond the sheep/shepherd metaphor by its mutual character. The double repetition of "know" emphasizes the mutuality involved. "I know my own and my own know me." "The Father knows me and I know the Father." If sheep of the shepherd were the only metaphor for the Church, it would be easy enough to view all the responsibility and energy in the relationship between Christ and the Church as flowing from the shepherd to the sheep. The introduction of mutual personal relationship means that the Church bears significant responsibility. We dare not simply absorb the care of the Good Shepherd directed toward us; we must share in His concerns and participate in His mission.

Verse 16 turns suddenly to what appears to be an entirely new concept—other sheep, another fold. This is a clear reference to God's concern for the Gentiles (already expressed in the Old Testament) and to the Gentile mission of the Church. Jesus' statement that He must "bring" the other sheep also is never carried out in the recorded Gospel material. In the context of the mutuality of the relationship between Christ and the Church there is only one conclusion that can be drawn. A church that shares intimacy with Christ will "bring" the other sheep and make it possible for those not of this fold to "heed" His voice. The church that is in mutual relationship with the Shepherd will attend His agenda of "one flock, one shepherd."

Verses 17-18 appear disconnected from the sheep/shepherd metaphor that has characterized the opening verses of chapter 10. However, they are a reflection on the meaning of Jesus, as Good Shepherd, laying down His life for the sheep and so belong to verses 11-16. Several new ideas enter the passage in these verses. Love is mentioned specifically for the first time (v. 17). The statement that the Father loves Jesus "because" the Son is laying down His life does not mean that Jesus earns the Father's love by His sacrificial death. Rather, the laying down of Jesus' life for the sheep is the "act which expresses the perfect accord between them" (Lindars, p. 364). The mutual relationship of intimacy between Jesus and the Father points to a shared purpose and love. The love of Christ for the Church, the love of the Father for Jesus, and the laying down of Christ's life are inextricably linked.

The structure in which Christ and the Father are mentioned in verse 15 and verses 17-18 suggests that the other sheep discussion in verse 16 also must be linked to the laying down of the Shepherd's life. The Shepherd's love for the other sheep, expressed by the Church in outreach, is also linked to Father's love for the Church. This theme is developed in 1 John, where love of God and love of brother are inseparable.

The other theme explicitly introduced in verses 17-18 is the Resurrection. The resurrection is an expression of the will and love of the Father, as the closing phrase of verse 18 makes clear. It is also linked to seeking the other sheep. The Gentile mission of the Church did not develop until after the Resurrection. Though these verses function in a predictive way in the Gospel context, they also place the Good Shepherd teaching in the post-Resurrection experience of the Church.

### **Preaching the Text**

The strong emphasis in these verses on the laying down of the shepherd's life make it an appealing and appropriate Lenten text. However, the lectionary places it as the Gospel text for the fourth Sunday *after* Easter. This suggests that the care of the Shepherd in this text really should be understood as an equipping of the Church for its mission in the world. One should guard against preaching this text only in terms of the benefits the sheep receive from the Shepherd. Our mutual relationship with the sacrificial Shepherd means responsibility for sharing Christ's ministry in the world.

Exegesis suggests that several ways of approaching or structuring the text for preaching are legitimate. The repeated phrase, "I am the good shepherd," in verses 11 and 14 suggests a two-point sermon developed as follows:

- I. The Care of the Good Shepherd (vv. 11-13)
  - A. The Ideal Shepherd's Commitment to the Sheep
  - B. The Danger of Substitutes for the Ideal Shepherd
  - C. The Confidence of the Flock in Christ, the Ideal Shepherd
- II. The Intimacy of the Good Shepherd (vv. 14-18)
  - A. The Mutual Intimacy of the Father and the Son
  - B. The Mutual Intimacy of Christ and the Church
  - C. The Mutual Obligation Arising from Intimacy

It is also possible to use the references to "laying down [his] life" as the structural guide. This could produce a three-point sermon along the following lines:

- I. Sacrificial Love Defines a [or the] Good Shepherd (vv. 11-13)
  - A. A Shepherd's Ultimate Concern—the Sheep
  - B. Imposters' Ultimate Concern—Themselves
  - C. Sheep's Ultimate Trust—the Sacrificial Shepherd
- II. Sacrificial Love Defines Intimate Relationship (vv. 14-15)
  - A. The Mutuality of the Father and Son is based on self-giving love
  - B. The Mutuality of Christ and the Church is based on self-giving love
  - C. The Mutuality of Our Relationships are based on self-giving love
- III. Sacrificial Love Drives Us Beyond Ourselves (vv. 16-18)
  - A. Christ's Love Reaches to Other Sheep
  - B. The Church Incarnates Christ's Love of Others
  - C. We Lay Down Our Life for One Flock, One Shepherd

The close relationship of verses 11-18 with the preceding context certainly would suggest sermon possibilities.

*(Continued on page 58)*

# FROM EXEGESIS TO SERMON: *A PREACHER'S STUDY OF EPHESIANS 1:15-23*

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**T**he purpose of this study is to trace the sermon through the gestation period up to the point at which the form of the sermon is clearly visible. Conception has already taken place. The preacher already knows that he wants to preach from Eph. 1:15-23, either because he is preaching through the Epistle sequentially or because his attention has been attracted by this passage during occasional reading. To have that settled is an olympic start, as every preacher knows. As he begins his preparation, he is neither intimidated by a blank sheet of paper nor thrown into panic by that book full of texts (known as the Bible), none of which is emitting enough homiletical warmth for his heat-seeking soul to fasten on to.

Given this enviable situation, then, the preacher begins to make the long trek from what the passage *meant* to what it *means*; from what the passage *said* to its first readers to what it *says* to the contemporary reader. The first task is exegesis, the second is sermonizing: converting exegesis into cashable currency for 20th-century consumers.

## *Exegesis*

The golden rule in exegesis is to begin not with the passage itself but with its broad setting insofar as this defines the meaning of the passage. The details of the individual passage find their legitimate meaning only against the background of the entire work of which it is a part. The ideal, therefore, is not to begin with the passage and work out but to determine the periphery of reverence and work in. Even if this is not always the chronological order in which the preparation is done, it must be done at some point, individual details being compelled to justify themselves at the bar of the general setting. Only after the overall setting has been determined will it be possible to examine the theological content or message of the selected passage at close quarters.

### *I. The Passage in the Setting of the Epistle*

The framework within which the sermon necessarily stands is the total setting of the Epistle to the Ephesians. Three aspects of this have a significant bearing on the interpretation of the passage.

#### *A. The Setting of the Epistle in the Life of the Author*

Whether Ephesians was written directly by Paul (as held by F. F. Bruce<sup>1</sup> and G. B. Caird<sup>2</sup>, to name no others); or whether

it is an assemblage of his spoken and/or written teaching put together by a follower of his, but no less Pauline in substance (as suggested by R. P. Martin, who nominates Luke for the honor<sup>3</sup>); the point of importance is that *it stands late in Paul's missionary career*.

Reference is made to his being in prison at least three times (3:1; 4:1; 6:20); and there are fewest difficulties in taking this to be his imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28:30).<sup>4</sup> This means that most of Paul's missionary work is behind him. Problems have had time to arise in some of the churches he has founded (as well as in others that came under his supervision); and in response to these problems, especially those of doctrinal character, he has extended principles and ideas that have been part of his equipment in the past to new lengths.

#### *B. The Geographical-Historical Setting of the Epistle*

Two aspects of this help to provide the frame of the message of the Epistle.

1. *Destination.* Some of the oldest and best Greek manuscripts omit the words "in Ephesus" (1:1), while others equally clearly contain these words. The most probable inference from this is that the Epistle was not sent to Ephesus only, but to other churches as well: that is, it was a circular letter. Two notable features of the Epistle seem to suggest this conclusion. The first is the absence of personal references in a letter

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ostensibly sent to a city where Paul had ministered for two years. This is striking in view of his habit in other letters of greeting those whom he knew by name (e.g., Rom. 16:3-23; 1 Cor. 16:13-20; Col. 4:7-17). It is even more striking in that he implies that his knowledge of them was secondhand (1:15), as was theirs of him (3:2). The second factor pointing to a multiple destination is the high degree of similarity between Ephesians and the Epistle to the Colossians. The precise nature of the relationship has been debated, but the almost identical wording of Eph. 6:21-22 and Col. 4:7-8 regarding the detail of Paul's sending Tychicus to give them news of him shows that they were sent to the same general area. Indeed, it has been suggested that Ephesians is the Epistle to the Laodiceans, alluded to in Col. 3:16.<sup>5</sup>

What these features amount to is that Ephesians was a circular letter or encyclical sent to all Asian churches, some of which Paul did not know personally (Col. 2:1).

2. *Occasion.* What appears to have happened is this: Ephraim of Colossae (Col. 4:12) had visited Paul in prison, telling him of a gnosticizing, theosophical heresy at Colossae that denied the supremacy of Christ. Paul wrote Colossians to refute this (see, for example, Col. 1:15-20). Paul's mind goes on to consider Christ's person and work in relation to the whole universe, especially the "principalities and powers." It is this extension of his thought that comes to expression in Ephesians. Paul argues that God's plan is to reconcile all things in Christ, including these hostile powers (Eph. 1:10; cf. Col. 1:20). The Church is the model and masterpiece of reconciliation, because the uniting of ancient enemies—Jews and Gentiles—within it (Eph. 2:15-16) is but one example of the defeat of the divisive purposes of the hostile powers accomplished through Christ's death, resurrection, and exaltation (Eph. 1:20-23; cf. Col. 2:13-15). Indeed, the Church is the *instrument* of this reconciliation, and Paul, as the apostle to the Gentiles, plays a crucial role in the fulfillment of this ministry (see Eph. 3:1-13).

It would seem, then, that the macro-purpose of Ephesians is to show that God's plan to bring about a redeemed universe is realized through Christ as universal and cosmic Lord, proclaimed by the apostle to the Gentiles. Other details will be filled in later as we turn more specifically to the content of the Epistle, but its broad outline would seem to point in the direction indicated.

### C. *The Literary Character of the Epistle*

The preacher must always take careful note of the type literature from which he is preaching. A story or narrative will require quite different principles of interpretation from a section of theological teaching or a prayer. Two features must be taken into account regarding our chosen passage.

1. *The Literary Character of the Epistle.* To call it an Epistle at all is probably a misnomer. It is not like any other of Paul's writings from a literary point of view. As noted earlier, there are no indications of personal knowledge of the readers, even though they are addressed personally (see 2:1-2 where, in contrast with verse 3, they are shown to be Gentiles). Stylistically, it consists of long, periodic sentences (e.g., 1:3-14 is a single sentence in Greek); while other features give it a lofty, elevated tone. This has led scholars to question whether it was written on the pattern of a typical Pauline letter at all. Thus R. H. Fuller describes it as "really a tract dressed up in epistolary form"; while R. P. Martin characterizes it as "a liturgical-epistolary sermon."<sup>7</sup> This suggests at the very least that we may expect theological instruction, cast at least in part in the form of praise and prayer.

2. *The Character of Eph. 1:15-23.* The passage begins with

an expression of thanksgiving that spills over immediately into prayer (1:16). The remaining verses (17-23) spell out the content of Paul's prayer. The Thanksgiving section usually comes second in Paul's letters, immediately after the salutation or greeting.<sup>8</sup> Sometimes Paul lists the things for which he gives thanks (as in 1 Thess. 1:3-6). Elsewhere he hurries on into prayer (as in Rom. 1:8-17). In such cases, the Thanksgiving tends to "telegraph" the content of the letter.<sup>9</sup> The matters about which the apostle is praying are those that are prompting him to write the Epistle. This means that our chosen passage is critically important inasmuch as it may serve as a guideline to the purpose of the Epistle as a whole. It is clearly a passage of great significance to the writer, and not simply conforming with literary etiquette.

We may sum up what has been gleaned from a study of the setting of the Epistle by saying that in Ephesians we encounter Paul, at an advanced stage in his missionary career, coming to grips with a form of teaching that denied the supremacy of Christ. His response is to show that Christ's Lordship extends over all the "powers" in the universe, and the proof of it is seen in the Church, in which the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles is plainly visible. In his thanksgiving-prayer in our selected passage, Paul prays specifically that his converts in Asia Minor will become fully aware of the meaning of Christ's reconciling Lordship in their own lives.

## II. *The Message of the Passage*

A pyramid of techniques may be applied to a given passage in order to "crack it open," and uncover its message. Not all techniques are productive in all passages, but it is worth trying them and giving them a chance. Those we shall employ here are cumulative in their effect, each successive technique adding its own contribution to the others.

### A. *Determining the True Text*

The first step in interpreting any passage must always be determining the exact words used by the original author. We have already encountered an instance of this in 1:1: did Paul write "in Ephesus"? We concluded that, because some important manuscripts lack these words, the letter was probably sent to a number of churches in Asia Minor and not just to the church in Ephesus. This type of text study (Textual Criticism) can only be done on the Greek text in the final analysis. Readers of the Greek New Testament are familiar with the listings of variant readings and the manuscripts in which they are found, as well as with the probability ratings (A, B, C, D) given in some editions. However, even those who are Greekless can, and should, be aware of the existence of textual problems and should take them into account in interpretation. They are listed as footnotes in most translations of the Bible and are discussed in good commentaries. In Eph. 1:15-23 there are no textual variations of such a scale as to affect the meaning. We can rest assured that our passage is indeed in the Bible: something of which the preacher will want to be sure.

### B. *Examination of Key Words*

The key words in any passage are an important clue as to the message the author is trying to get across. Our passage is remarkable for a series of concentrations of words, the various terms within each concentration denoting roughly the same thing. We may group them as follows.

(a) There is a group of words denoting "knowledge" in 1:17-18. These are: "wisdom" (*sophia*), "revelation" (*apokalupsis*), "knowledge" (*epignosis*), "know" (*eidenai*); to which may be added "enlightenment" (*pephotismenos*) of the eyes of the heart," which is a metaphor for knowledge.

(b) There is a group of words denoting "power" in 1:19-20.



Included here are: "power" (*dunamis*), "working" (*energeia*), "might" (*kratos*), "strength" (*ischus*) (v. 19); "energize" (*energein*) (v. 20); "rule" (*arche*), "authority" (*exousia*), "power" (*dunamis*), "lordship" (*kuriotes*) (v. 21).

(c) There is a group of words and phrases denoting Christ's exaltation to the heavenly realm. Among these are: "at his right hand in the heavenly (places)" (v. 20); "above (*hyperano*) all rule and authority" (v. 21); "he put everything under his feet," "he made him head (*kephale*) over all things for the church" (v. 22).

The presence of these concentrations of terms in which one word or phrase is piled on another with little distinction in meaning<sup>10</sup> shows clearly that these are the central ideas Paul is concerned to highlight: knowledge, power, exaltation. Each has a different referent. The referent of "knowledge" is the Ephesians: this is the knowledge he wants them to grasp. The referent of the power is God; and the referent of the exaltation is Christ.

This is about as far as word study can take us. Words in themselves say little; for statements we must go to words in connection. The next question is therefore: What do these words add up to?

#### C. Examination of Theological Themes

In terms of theology, the groups of words listed above appear to converge around two distinguishable themes. First, the words in groups (a) and (b) denoting knowledge and power are, broadly speaking, soteriological in intent. They focus on aspects of the doctrine of salvation. The knowledge prayed for is of the hope of God's calling, the glory of God's inheritance, and the greatness of His power at work in believers: a power defined in terms of that which raised Jesus from the dead—the thought that triggers the explosion of terms denoting power. The precise meaning of these expressions will be considered later; enough is clear to indicate that they are concerned with the saving work of God.

The second theme around which the key terms congregate is Christological. This is located in verses 20-23. The passage reaches a rhetorical climax in the exultant declaration of the Lordship of Christ over all other powers in the universe, and specifically in His headship of the Church, which is described as His body.

The remaining problem for the exegete and preacher is how these themes are related in order of importance. They are approximately equal in length. Are they then equal in weight, so that a sermon of two equal parts is indicated; or, is one subordinate to the other, and if so, which? An important tool for deciding this is analysis of the syntax.

#### D. Syntactical-Grammatical Analysis

Syntax is the way in which words are connected so as to convey the precise meaning intended. A list of words by itself says nothing. It is the way in which they are related that indicates meaning. "Grammar" is being used here in the narrow

sense to refer to the meaning of smaller groups of words. We may apply syntactical and grammatical analysis in that order.

1. *Syntactical Analysis.* Eph. 1:15-23 is a single sentence in the original. The main events in it are as follows:

(a) Main clause: verse 16.

(b) Object clause: verses 17-18a. The word "that" (*hina*) denotes purpose: "in order that" in classical Greek (it may also express the imperative). In Hellenistic (i.e., New Testament) Greek, its range broadened. C. F. D. Moule writes: "There are some indications that it would be better in some cases to describe the *hina* as 'denoting content.'"<sup>11</sup> One of the examples of this that he proceeds to quote (from A. R. George) is Eph. 1:16-17.<sup>12</sup>

(c) Subordinate clause of purpose or result<sup>13</sup>: "that you may know . . ." (v. 18b). This purpose (or result) clause has three objects, each introduced by the interrogative pronoun "what" (*tis*) used as a relative: "that you may know":

(i) "what is the hope to which he has called you" (v. 18b)

(ii) "what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints" (v. 18c)<sup>14</sup>

(iii) "what is the surpassing greatness of his power in us who believe" (v. 19a)

(d) A relative clause: "which he worked" (v. 20a) (*hen energeisen*), qualifying "the working" (*ten energeian*) (v. 19b) that, with the addition of a few other elements, runs on to the end of the chapter.

This syntactical analysis is decisive in showing that *the heart of Paul's concern here is with the object clause that, in turn, is explicated in the subordinate clause of purpose (or result) with its three objects.* Without doubt Paul is animated about the power and authority of Christ, writing about them at great length (vv. 20-23), but *syntactically they are ancillary.* This is an important guide for both exegesis and preaching.

2. *Grammatical Analysis.* Using the term *grammatical analysis* in the narrow sense defined above, one phrase in verse 19 calls for comment. Within the word-group "his power in us who believe" the phrase "in us" (*eis hemas*) is variously rendered in the translations: "to usward" (KJV); "in us" (RSV); "open to us" (NEB); "toward us" (NASB); "for us" (NIV). The rendering "in us" is almost certainly correct. Indubitably, the Greek preposition is *eis*, which in beginner's Greek we learn means "towards," "in the direction of," in distinction from *en*, which means "in." However, in Hellenistic Greek the distinction between the two had become blurred,<sup>15</sup> and there is no question that *eis* could carry the sense of "in." The context must decide. There is no question that Paul believed that the resurrection power is available *for* (i.e., "towards") believers; but it is doubtful if that is all he is saying here. More probably, he is affirming that this power is already at work *within* the believer. He certainly says this elsewhere (Rom. 6:4; 8:11; Col. 3:1). Perhaps the decisive consideration here is that, in the parallel context in Eph. 3:20, in which the prayer begun in 1:16 finally reaches its conclusion, Paul speaks of "the power which is

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working in us" (*en hemin*). Thus he is praying not for the beginning of the operation of God's power in the lives of his readers but rather for its significant extension.

For the purposes of this article it is not necessary to pursue the exegesis of the chapter further, except for some passing comments as we seek to build the bridges between exegesis and sermon.

### FROM EXEGESIS TO SERMON

Given that the exegetical meaning of the text determines the content of the sermon, what kind of sermon may legitimately be based on Eph. 1:15-23? At least three options present themselves as deserving of consideration, and their comparison may help to illuminate the tests of exegetical preaching.

#### I. Sermon Based on the Primary Elements of the Passage

Syntactical analysis has made it clear that the accent of the passage falls on the object clause, which is further and specifically explicated in the purpose (or result) clause. It has further shown that verses 20-23 are adjectival and ancillary. In terms of theme, this means that the stress falls on soteriology, and therefore a sermon on God's work in salvation is indicated.

The sermon introduction may make use of the "knowledge" word-group in verses 17-18. Paul is emphatically concerned that his readers come to know certain things about God's salvation. If one looks at the emotive level of the words Paul uses to describe it: "wealth," "glorious," "surpassing greatness," we may reasonably infer that Paul is anxious for them to know how great such salvation is. That is to say, they did not know how well off they were, and were imposed on by Gnostics who thought they knew much more than the Ephesian Christians.

What was it, then, that Paul wanted them to know? The passage sets this out in ripe-apple order: the phrases are suspended before the preacher for the picking. Having plucked them, his sermon outline is in his hand. Fuller exegesis<sup>16</sup> and application are all they require.

##### (I) *The Hope to Which He Has Called You* (v. 18b)

Careful attention must be given to the meaning of the word *hope* in Ephesians (see 2:12); in Paul generally (Rom. 8:24 ff.; Col. 1:27); and in the New Testament as a whole (e.g., 1 John 2:3), where it is a virtual synonym for salvation.

##### (II) *The Wealth of His Glorious Inheritance in the Saints* (v. 18c)

The idea goes back to the occupation of the Promised Land, where Yahweh refuses a share such as each tribe will receive, because "the Lord's inheritance is his people" (Deut. 32:9). The Lord's glory is not territorial possessions but the transformed lives of His redeemed people. This is even more true of the new people of God (Eph. 2:6-7; Col. 1:12-14) than of the old.

##### (III) *The Surpassing Greatness of His Power in Us Who Believe* (v. 19a)

Paul is intent on affirming that the power of God is at work in the lives of His people; and goes on to stress that this is specifically the power that raised Jesus from the dead. Elsewhere Paul links this with deliverance from the power of sin (Rom. 6:4, 8). The same happens here. Eph. 1:19 looks forward to 3:14-18, which fleshes out the content of Paul's prayer; and 3:20, which affirms that the power by which it is possible is the resurrection power already at work in the lives of believers.

By following the primary elements of the passage, we see the text providing not merely the *content* of the sermon but also its *form*: the phrases of verses 18-19 have become successive points of the sermon. These are capable of further homiletical refinement if the preacher desires. For example, a distinguished contemporary preacher fashioned his sermon from these verses thus:

- (I) Future Hope
- (II) Past Heritage
- (III) Present Power<sup>17</sup>

#### II. Sermon Based on the Secondary Elements of the Passage

Syntactical analysis showed that verses 20-23 are adjectival to the "power" referred to in verse 19, and therefore ancillary to Paul's main point. This does not mean, however, that they are unimportant. They are preoccupied with the second theological theme isolated by our analysis, namely Christology. Just as verses 17-19 are concerned with the glory and greatness of salvation, so verses 20-23 are concerned with the glory and greatness of Christ.

Is it exegetically legitimate to preach a sermon on the secondary elements of a passage? Each case must be considered on its merits. It depends on *how* secondary the words and phrases are: whether they are germane to the writer's teaching in this context; and above all, whether the teaching they express can be documented elsewhere in the author's works and shown to be an authentic part of his mind-set. There can be little doubt of this with Eph. 1:20-23. The exaltation of Christ is not only a characteristic theme of other of the Prison Epistles (Col. 1:15-20; Phil. 2:9-11); it is the presupposition of this Epistle. Of Eph. 1:20-23 F. F. Bruce writes: "This paragraph is syntactically attached to what precedes . . . But while the adjective clause provides the transition, the new paragraph quickly becomes an independent statement of the raising and enthronement of Christ."<sup>18</sup>

If, then, it is legitimate to preach on the greatness of salvation from verses 17-19, it is no less legitimate to preach on the greatness of the exalted Christ from verses 20-23. As in the earlier part of the passage, so in this the text provides us with our outline.

(I) *Christ as Exalted from the Grave to the Throne*: "He raised him from among dead people, and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places" (v. 20).

(II) *Christ as Exalted Above All the Powers in the Universe*: "Above all rule and authority and power and lordship and every name named not only in this age but also in the age to come" (v. 21).

(III) *Christ as the Exalted Head of the Church*: "He made him head over everything for the church, which is his body" (vv. 22-23).

The successive ideas are a challenge to the preacher to expound and interpret; they are also both a reassurance and a challenge to the Church. How are the "powers in the universe" to be made meaningful to the 20th-century mind? What does it mean for the Church to live under the Lordship of Christ?

While therefore this passage is tangential to Paul's prayer, the idea is significant in his thought in general and in this Epistle itself. The ethical injunctions of the later chapters (e.g., 4:1-3) and the poured out gifts of the Spirit (4:11-12) are grounded in the triumph of the resurrected Christ (4:10).

#### III. Sermon Based on the Passage as a Whole

Would it be exegetically defensible to preach on the passage as a whole? The problem here is that, as the syntactical analysis has shown, verses 19b-23 constitute an elongated syntactical tail, and its incorporation in the sermon in more than a subordinate way (i.e., as an elaboration of verse 19a) might seem, if not to allow the tail to wag the dog, at least to make it as important as the dog. However, if it has been correctly argued above that verses 19b-23 quickly become an independent statement (recall the quotation from F. F. Bruce at note 18), then it is not inadmissible to construct a sermon on the entire passage (vv. 17-23).

The effect of this is to incorporate both the soteriological and Christological themes within the same sermon. This will have an immediate effect on the structure of the sermon, making it bipartite rather than tripartite as the two earlier ex-

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# GOD'S AMBASSADORS

## *Preparing to Preach from 1 Thessalonians 2:1-6*

by D. L. Huffman

*Pastor, St. Paul's Church of the Nazarene, Kansas City*

**Scripture:** 1 Thess. 2:1-6 **Text:** v. 4

*You know, brothers, that our visit to you was not a failure. We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition. For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts. You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness. We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else (NIV).*

### **Steps in Developing the Sermon**

1. Overview of the scripture
  - a. Several readings of the passage—from other translations
  - b. Historical background
  - c. Conditions at the time of writing
  - d. Purpose of the book
2. In-depth meaning
  - a. Significant words—establish their meaning
  - b. How do they give insight for understanding the passage?
3. Meaning of the passage
4. Purpose of the sermon
  - a. What do you want your congregation to understand and decide?
5. State your proposition
  - a. In one sentence state the truth of the passage and its purpose.
  - b. Simply, the sermon in one sentence
6. Initial outline
7. After going over research material and consulting commentaries finalize outline.
8. Introduction
  - a. How will you introduce the message?
  - b. Are there details, history, setting, etc., that need to be explained?
  - c. How will this "grab" the listeners' interest?
9. Conclusion
  - a. Nothing new
  - b. Call the listener to a decision or a particular action.

### **Historical Background/Conditions**

When we work in 1 and 2 Thessalonians, we are studying two of the earliest, if not the earliest Christian writings. They were written not more than 20 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. They are sent by Paul, Silvanus (Silas), and Timothy to the Church of Thessalonica a few months after its foundation. The letters reflect basic Christian teachings of the period.

In Paul's time, Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia. It was a thriving city because of its location on a major Roman

highway connecting Rome with Constantinople. Because of its location, it had a special place in Paul's strategy. Thessalonica was the bridge between East and West. Once the gospel was planted here, it had a base to reach to Rome in the West and all of Asia in the East. So, bringing the gospel to Thessalonica was a crucial event in Paul's missionary strategy to take the gospel to the whole world.

In Thessalonica there was a sizable Jewish community with its synagogue, which Paul and his friends attended according to their custom. Some members of that congregation were reached for Christ. Several converts were also made from God-fearing Gentiles who attended the synagogue. These formed the nucleus of the church in Thessalonica. This number was soon increased by a greater body of converts, won from outright paganism, turning from idols to God.

The Thessalonian church had a rough beginning—a lot of trouble. Activists in the local synagogue did everything they could to destroy this new church—so much so that Paul and Silas were forced to leave after only a few weeks there (Acts 17:10). They went to Berea, but the same hotheads from Thessalonica showed up and forced another hasty departure by Paul (Acts 17:13). The next stop was Athens, where he found a greater tolerance for his ministry.

When Timothy and Silas finally leave Berea and catch up with Paul, they bring him a report—good news and bad news. The good news: the church is standing strong, and they hold Paul in high esteem and love. The bad news: the church is experiencing some doctrinal division. There are strong temptations from the surrounding culture. There are some real problems around the expectation of Christ's return. Some had quit their jobs believing it would be any day. Others were upset and discouraged because their loved ones had died and, they thought, missed that great event. Then there was the constant difficulty of adapting to an entirely different lifestyle—especially in the area of sexuality.



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These were some of the things that prompted Paul to write his first letter to this young church.

### Word Study

The text is taken from verse 4, "... we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God ..."

The following in-depth study on significant words or phrases will help us to understand the meaning of the passage. (Word study done in KTD.)

#### 1. "Approved by" (NIV); "were allowed" (KJV)

The stem word is *watching*, referring both to person and object and denotes someone tested in battle to prove him reliable, trustworthy; a man tested, recognized, esteemed, worthy. This denotes the earthly situation of the community of Christ. It is set in a position that salvation is not yet seen; the community is oppressed and persecuted by satanic powers; it is despised by the world around it.

The basis of attestation is to be found in the patience that keeps the faith and defies circumstances. The fruit of this patience is a living faith that knows the victory of Christ. Testing thus has its origin in the situation of the community, and it consists in the patient perseverance of faith in Christ to the day of judgment. To the attestation of faith in Christ belongs faithfulness in ministry. There is also an attestation in conduct. Show yourself to be approved by doing good. Obedient conduct consists essentially in the demonstration of love. In 2 Cor. 8:8, Paul's aim is to test the genuineness of love.

Christians are summoned to a twofold testing. They are to test or prove what is the will of God. If they are approved, they must do the will of God. But to do God's will, they must know His will by testing. Paul himself had been tested and approved by God to be entrusted. This exact statement is not found anywhere else and is an expansion of the words in verse 5, "You know what kind of men we proved to be" (author's paraphrase). They had courage, wisdom, purity, candor of speech, unselfishness, humility, gentleness, love, industry, independence, and appreciation. This frank self-proclamation was required because of the savage attacks of the local Jews and pagans, who accused Paul and his associates of mental delusions, libertinism, cupidity, and cold-blooded deception.

#### 2. "To be put in trust with the gospel" (KJV); "men ... entrusted" (NIV)

Poetically it is used of confidence in weapons, or skill; of trust in men. Inasmuch as trust may be a duty, it may come to have the nuance—obedient.

This sense of trust is combined with faith. It is natural that the faith of the characters in Hebrews 11 should include trust and obedience—faith, trust, confidence in God's miraculous power. Hence, the believer is exposed to temptation and has constantly to prove that he can be trusted. Only if they conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel that they proclaimed could they reasonably expect their converts to live in a manner worthy of the gospel they received.

#### 3. "Speak": To gather, count, enumerate, narrate, to say.

4. "Pleasing": Implies the establishment of a positive relationship between two factors and therefore to make peace or to reconcile. Also a reference to attitude, where serving men and being the slave of Christ are brought into contrast.

### Meaning of the Scripture Passage

"You know, brothers" (v. 1) is an appeal to what the Thessalonians already know. It is a reference back to the missionaries' conduct in Thessalonica. It is not so much the missionaries' reception by the Thessalonians as much as their personal conduct that is emphasized.

Verse 2 is a reference to the illegal beating and imprisonment endured by Paul and Silas in Philippi (Acts 16:19-24). This experience didn't put so much fear in them that they

toned down their message in Thessalonica. Rather, they were bold, or as the NIV puts it, they "dared" to preach the gospel. They frankly and fearlessly preached.

Their aim was to please God, not men. They didn't water down the gospel message. Because of the truth of the gospel, it provoked opposition. It was necessary for Paul and his friends to emphasize the purity of their motives and actions. And the reason for this was because there were so many promoters of heathen gods, false religious leaders, who deceived the people and behaved in underhanded ways. Paul states, "We don't operate that way! We have been approved after testing; we are commissioned; we are entrusted with the gospel."

Only if they conducted themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel, which they proclaimed, could they reasonably expect their converts to live in a manner worthy of the gospel. They didn't preach to please men. Paul could easily have become a fence sitter, adapting his message to suit his varying audiences, but he didn't. He preached to please God. Every clause and phrase here expresses the sense of responsibility Paul constantly felt with regard to his apostolic commission.

### Determine the Purpose

Now that we have found the historical setting, the conditions, understand the key words and phrases used, and have a clear concept of the meaning of the passage, we are ready to determine the purpose of the sermon, what we want our congregation to understand and decide.

We want them to understand what it means to be tested and approved by God, and how this comes about. We want them to know there is a responsibility in being entrusted with the gospel. And both of these factors will influence the attitude and action of our everyday living. Are we ready to be ambassadors for God?

### Proposition

Stated in one sentence, the proposition is: Those with whom God entrusts His gospel are first tried and proven—proven that they may live to please God and not man.

### Initial Outline

- I. Persons Approved by God
  - A. Faith Approved
  - B. Conduct Approved
  - C. Love Approved
- II. Persons Entrusted with the Gospel
  - A. The Gospel Must Be Preserved
  - B. The Gospel Must Be Proclaimed
- III. Persons Living to Please God
  - A. Readiness to Witness
  - B. Readiness to Suffer
  - C. Readiness to Stand

### Finalize and Complete the Outline

In finalizing and filling in the outline, I pull together all of the research material, findings from commentaries, and illustrations I have set aside to use. I also determine how this material will be presented.

#### I. Persons Approved by God

Men and women who are approved by God will soon discover that their faith has to be approved. The words used here denote testing, such as in battle. We prove that we are reliable and trustworthy. This testing will come in the setting where we live. The basis of this test is the fact of whether or not we can keep the faith, and even defy the circumstances. The fruit of this is a living faith that knows the victory of Christ.

God knows that if we stand the tests of life and our faith remains strong, we have proved ourselves, proved our faith is strong. He can then trust us with more. In Jesus' parable of the talents in Matthew 25, He said, "You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things" (v. 21, NIV).



Not only is our faith tested and approved, but our conduct is also tested and approved. Talk is cheap; you learn fast to recognize those individuals who talk a big game, but they cannot or will not deliver the goods. There are people around the church who can talk a pretty good Christian experience. They can give a good testimony. It's easy to learn all of the right words. Yet for many people their conduct does not support their words.

In standing approved before God, we must prove not only our faith but also our conduct. James wrote, "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? . . . faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (2:14, 17, NIV). If James were speaking today, he would probably say, "Put up or shut up!" If you're going to talk it, then live it. If you're not going to live it, then don't profess it.

There is a truth for us. Our faith and our character are going to be tested. If we are going to give a testimony and make a profession, then we must live by it. James would say, "Let's cut through all of the flowery and theological jargon, and let us see your faith in action!" The tests will come to determine if our faith is strong—strong enough to put into action what we are saying in words.

Not only is our faith and conduct tested and approved, but our love is also. Obedient conduct consists essentially in the demonstration of love. That means more than just some fancy speech; more than just saying religious words.

We can tell God we love Him. But He says to us, "If you love Me, do you love Me enough to be faithful to the means of grace? Do you love Me enough to find your ministry that I'm calling you to, and fulfill it? Do you love Me enough to get involved in the lives of people and serve them?"

Paul points to himself as an example of one who has been tested and approved. In verse 5 he says, "You know what kind of men we proved to be." In essence, Paul and his companions were saying, "We don't just preach it and witness to it, our lives have been proved of God; you can see it in action."

Whether or not we are forced to face the severe testing that Paul did, God still demands people of high quality and deep commitment.

Of all the favors bestowed by God on man, there is none greater than to know that you stand tested and approved by God. To those who have been tested and approved by God, He entrusts His gospel.

## II. Persons Entrusted with the Gospel

Being entrusted with the gospel is a big order. When we are entrusted with the gospel we need to realize that first of all He intends for us to preserve the gospel.

The word *entrusted* carries the idea of a confidence. As you are going into battle, there is a confidence in your weapons and a confidence in your skill. There is a sense of obedience and a sense of reliability.

As Christians who are tested and proven, who are entrusted with this precious gospel, we must determine that we will protect it. We will preserve it in its purity, preserve it in its holiness, and preserve it in its power. Allow no one to tamper with it, to alter it in any way, to water it down, to add to it or take away from it.

In order to preserve it you must know it, understand it. To do that you must experience God's saving and sanctifying power. Be filled with the Spirit so that He can be your Teacher. Then when the attacks do come, as they did to Paul, we can effectively defend and preserve the gospel.

We must not only preserve the gospel, but also proclaim it. It's not enough to hold onto it or to hoard it. If we try to hoard it, we will lose it. We have been entrusted with the gospel to proclaim it. The truth of this gospel is not to be wrapped up in a napkin and hidden. We must take it to our society and proclaim it. If, in fact, in our effort to preserve the gospel, we put it in a napkin and hide it, never share it, we will lose it.

May the Holy Spirit so consume us that the proclamation will simply become a life-style. A New Testament church happens when people take the gospel that is entrusted and allow the Holy Spirit to so fill them that the proclamation becomes a life-style.

This is what we are entrusted with to preserve and proclaim until God calls us home. We are men approved by God and entrusted to preserve and proclaim the gospel.

## III. Persons Living to Please God

We are men living to please God, not men. If we are going to live to please God, we will have several characteristics, among which is a readiness to witness.

Witnessing tags right along with the proclamation of the gospel. Probably our most familiar passage in regards to witnessing is the promise in Acts 1:8, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses . . ." (NIV).

Again, this must be something we develop as a life-style. Walking in the power of the Spirit, it can proceed from an active, intentional process to becoming a life-style.

Second, if we are going to live to please God, we will have a readiness to suffer.

It does not please God when we suffer. God takes no pleasure in human suffering. He is not sadistic by nature.

It is pleasing to God though, when He sees a readiness, a willingness to suffer for the gospel rather than to compromise or renounce it. We would rather suffer, whatever the form, than to compromise in our Christian life, if through our suffering He would be glorified.

We sing, "Ready to suffer grief or pain, ready to stand the test" (Charlie D. Tillman, *Worship in Song*). That is what it is—a readiness and a willingness.

This readiness reverts back to the first point, the testing of our faith, our conduct, and our love. Many times that testing comes through suffering. Because we proceed through those testings and stand approved, God is pleased because He sees a readiness to do that.

In addition, men living to please God, having a readiness to witness and a willingness to suffer, must have a readiness to stand firmly. Rom. 14:4; 2 Cor. 1:24; Eph. 6:13; 1 Cor. 16:13; Phil. 4:1; and 2 Thess. 2:15 all clearly exhort us to stand firm. We must have a readiness, a willingness to stand firmly.

Again, the ability to stand firmly reverts back to the testing and approval by God. God knows that if you have come through the testing victoriously, you can stand firm. And that certainly pleases Him.

## Conclusion

Persons approved by God, entrusted with the gospel, living to please God. That is a big order. It is not humanly possible. But through the power of the Holy Spirit, it becomes not only a possibility but also a reality.

This is the course of our ministry. We are ambassadors for God, His representatives. We are acting on His behalf and being a credit to Him.

As ambassadors of God, we must be faithful and strong. Being tested and approved, standing firmly, and being a credit to His kingdom. That is our mission.

The question is this: Are you one of God's ambassadors? Are you a person approved by God and entrusted with the gospel? Are you preserving it and proclaiming it, living to please God and not men?

Persons approved by God, entrusted with the gospel, and living to please God.

God's ambassadors.

## Introduction

I usually prepare the "Introduction" last.

Use the accusations that appear in the Scripture passage and put them into dialogue form. "You're only in it for the  
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# THE PARABLE TO END DESPAIR

## *Preaching from the Parable of the Sower*

by Morris A. Weigelt  
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If you ask a rabbi a theological question, he will probably respond by telling a story. He understands that it is possible to communicate more richly through the medium of the story than through the medium of concept structures.

Isn't it fascinating that Jesus chose to place His message in parable form? He, too, understood that most cultures communicate essential beliefs in story form.

Big and small children love stories. You need only watch an ordinary congregation to see them come alert when an illustrative story is inserted in the sermon. Stories and parables provide entrance to the truth of the great themes of the kingdom of God to persons of every educational level.

William Barclay has noted that parables were designed to be heard, not read. When we read them and submit them to the detailed exegetical processes that we have been taught, we sometimes dissect them and make them nearly unrecognizable.

The genius of the parable is its ability to involve the hearer in the story and subtly trap him into making a judgment upon himself. This is most clearly visible in the story of David and Nathan in the Old Testament. Nathan presents the parable, which invites the power-hungry king to make a judgment of justice. When David falls into the trap, Nathan solemnly declares: "Thou art the

man—which being interpreted, means that you have pronounced judgment upon yourself."

C. H. Dodd defines the parable as "a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought."<sup>1</sup>

In this article I propose to work with the model parable known familiarly as "The Parable of the Sower." William Barclay suggests a title that captures the essential content more accurately: "The Parable to End Despair."<sup>2</sup> In the first half of the article the exegetical "homework" will be discussed. In the final section an expository sermon based on this parable will be suggested.

### **I. The Exegetical Homework**

Since we live 20 centuries away from the original usage of the parable, we must work carefully with the contextual clues to touch the core of the parable as it teases us into active thought. There are four simple stages of exegetical procedure that unravel the parable for our understanding.

#### *A. Historical and Cultural Details That Provide Insight and Information*

Jesus tells the parable outdoors, on the shore of a lake. A sower may have been working in the distance even as Jesus told the story. If a sower actually was visible, the time frame was probably October, for sowing in Palestine occurs in that month.

Farming practices of the first century are an important part of the historical and cultural details. Modern persons tend to fault the sower for his inefficient processes.

Joachim Jeremias points out that rabbinic materials suggest that sowing preceded plowing in first-century Palestine. This reversal of modern procedure would account for the rather random sowing of the seed upon soils that were highly unlikely to produce a rich yield. By the first century, the soil of much of Palestine had been mismanaged to the point that topsoil was thin in many places—with rocky ledges scarcely hidden by the thin layer.

First-century farmers anticipated a return of 10 bushels per acre. They were pleased with 20. They were



Morris A. Weigelt

amazed and excited to receive a 30-fold return. The amazing element in this parable is Jesus' prediction that there would be 30- and 60- and even 100-bushel returns.

Historical information also provides insight on the thorns, which were not visible when the grain was placed in the ground. Then, as now, the thorns grew so prolifically that they overwhelmed and choked out the good grain. Farmers have always been battling with competing thorns. One aspect of the curse after the Fall was the prediction that thorns and thistles would grow profusely (Gen. 3:18).

Historical and cultural information helps us to understand the basic direction and content of the parable.

#### *B. Contextual Clues That Provide Insight and Information*

Although the parable appears in all three of the Synoptics, the Marcan context is representative and aids in understanding the message of the parable.

A crescendo of opposition is clearly visible in the opening chapters of Mark. The exorcism of the evil spirit (1:21 ff.), the healing of the man with leprosy (1:40 ff.), the healing of the paralytic (2:1 ff.), the calling of Levi as a disciple (2:13 ff.), the question of fasting and eating on the Sabbath (2:18 ff.), and the healing of the man with the shriveled hand (3:1 ff.) create a great popularity for Jesus and a simultaneous opposition from the leaders of the Jews. Mark writes in 3:6: "Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus" (NIV). It is amazing that such popularity and such opposition have both arisen so early in Jesus' ministry.

In 3:21, Mark records that the family of Jesus comes to take charge of Him under the assumption that He is out of His mind. The teachers of the law, unable to counter His popularity, announce that these obviously supernatural events can only be the work of Beelzebub. They attack Jesus as one of the devil's cohorts. Jesus responds with strong language about the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. In 3:31-32, His mother and brothers arrive on the scene again. Jesus claims that His real mother, brothers, and sisters are those who do the will of God.

Mark 4, in which our model parable appears, presents several different parables and then returns to the miraculous works of the Messiah as He calms the storm (4:35 ff.), heals the demon-possessed man whose name is Legion (5:1 ff.), raises a dead girl, and heals a sick woman (5:21 ff.). As chapter 6 opens, the crowds are amazed at the miracles and the wisdom of Jesus, but their lack of faith amazes even Jesus himself. It becomes necessary to leave His hometown because of the opposition against Him.

It is in such a setting that the parable of the sower is presented as the model parable. The disciples, who are called in 1:14 ff., and appointed in 3:13 ff., have begun to understand that Jesus is the Messiah—although a fuller understanding occurs in 8:27 ff. They also are amazed at the miracles and the wise teachings of Jesus. They are even more amazed at the growing opposition. The contemporary cultural, biblical, and theological training had not prepared them for opposition. They anticipated an irresistible Messiah, whose strength and popularity

would drive away all opposition like chaff before a mighty wind.

It is in such a setting that Jesus first teaches in parables. It is in this context of rising opposition with the shadow of the Cross already falling across His ministry that "The Parable to End Despair" is presented. The immediate context adds even further clues. In verse 10, the 12 disciples crowd around Jesus and ask the meaning of the parable. Even they are not certain what the parable conveys, but their minds have been teased into asking what is implied.

Jesus responds with the enigmatic saying in verse 11: "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables" (NIV). To help His disciples understand, Jesus now turns to a quotation from Isaiah. He closely identifies with Isaiah, whose call from God was almost discouraging. Isaiah was informed that the "normal" response to his message would be indifference and opposition. His task was to go on teaching until the rebellious majority had been eliminated. Then, from the remnant, God would create a genuine people of God who would be the recipients of the promises.

The context provides powerful clues to the parable's primary meaning. The growing opposition was the signal for Jesus to begin teaching in parables.

#### *C. Literary and Structural Clues That Provide Insight and Information*

"The Parable to End Despair" is presented in classical parabolic form. The form critics of the last century have helped us understand the contribution of form to content.

The parable begins with a call to attention: "Listen!" The invitation to hear and respond is visible by this flag word at the beginning of the parable. The parable ends with the proverbial saying: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." The parable is an invitation to learn and become obedient to the message presented.

The parable is presented with an economy of detail. Only minimal information is presented.

First, the negative side of the process is presented in a classic triple repetition. The first seed falls along the hardened path and is promptly devoured by the ever-present birds.

The second failure is a result of thin soil. It provides the possibility of germination under ideal conditions, but it is unable to sustain growth when the sun scorches the plant and steals the moisture in the soil. Notice that the second failure is explained more thoroughly than the first.

The third failure begins in an even more promising manner, but those ever-present thorns begin to grow and steal space, sunlight, and moisture until the grain is unable to produce fruit. The failure side of farming is now clearly visible.

The parabolic form now uses the rule of composition known as *the law of contrast*. In contrast to the repeated failures, other seed falls on good soil. The progress of the seed's growth (no distinction in the quality of the seed is noted) is very crisply described: "It came up, grew and produced a crop" (v. 8, NIV).

The rule of composition known as *emphasis upon the end* is now visible. The failures were surprising, but the

range of the success is even more arresting. Instead of the anticipated 10- or 20- or perhaps 30-fold returns, Jesus posits returns of 30 and 60 and even 100 times the amount of seed sown. What an amazing, sensational success!

#### *D. Theological Context Clues That Provide Information and Insight*

Interpreters of parables have carefully taught us that parables contain the essential elements in the central message of Jesus. So we always ask the questions: What false concept of the kingdom of God did Jesus address in this parable? And what genuine concept of the kingdom of God did Jesus present in this parable?

Obviously, the false concept is that the Kingdom is inevitable and irresistible. As the intertestamental period evolved into the New Testament period under the domination of Rome, Judaism developed several different strands of messianic expectation. Some anticipated a military leader who would throw off Roman oppression. That was part of the reason for Jesus' popularity on the day of His triumphal entry. Some anticipated an apocalyptic messiah who would dramatically defeat all of the forces of evil in a mighty bloodbath that would lead the true Israelites to victory. Evidently, His disciples shared both of these ideas.

Now Jesus corrects that false concept of an unconquerable messiah by beginning to point toward the Suffering Servant concept. The Messiah will not win by an excessive demonstration of force but through the gracious power of God.

The Kingdom is already visible to those who understand. The miraculous events of Jesus' ministry have already captured the minds of the populace and aroused the opposition of the leaders. But the Kingdom calls for responsive obedience—and that always leaves room for rejection, for obedience is a choice.

The presence of rejection and opposition, however, is not a true test of the final outcome of the Kingdom. There will be sensational failures and dramatic rejections, but there will ultimately be a final and amazing victory. Rejection and opposition are not signals for cessation of sowing the seed.



"My gutsy, eyeball-to-eyeball sermon, subject of course to the congregation's approval, will be . . ."

Rather rejection and opposition are indications that the Kingdom process is moving according to design. Jesus invites His disciples to keep on sowing the seed in anticipation of the mighty and sensational victories of the Kingdom—both final and intermediate.

#### *E. Summary of the Exegetical Work*

The parable of the sower is clearly the parable to end despair. Jesus invites His disciples to understand the place of indifference, rejection, and opposition in the processes of Kingdom proclamation. He helps them to see that despite apparent failures and even vehement opposition, the kingdom of God moves forward to inevitable and magnificent success. He encourages them to a Kingdom perspective from which to be the evangelists to their world: although you bear the transforming message of the kingdom of God which shall not fail, you will be faced with dramatic and sensational opposition. When that occurs know that it is not the messenger who has been rejected but the God of the Kingdom himself. Know at the same time that the magnificent successes are also not the fault of the messenger but the work of God who was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

The corollary truth in this parable to end despair is an invitation to the steadfast obedience to the Kingdom that enables the responsive believer to share in that final success. Obedience to the Kingdom is a lifelong event. Helmut Thielicke summarizes that truth: "God's grace is no cheap grace; you must pay for it with all you are and all you have. You can loaf your way into hell, but the Kingdom of heaven can only be seized by force."<sup>3</sup>

Finally, let's turn to a suggestion for an expository sermon based on this exegetical homework.

## **II. Preaching from the Parable to End Despair.**

**Scripture Lesson:** Mark 4:1-12; Matt. 13:1-17; Luke 8:5-10

The theological bridge (the theological affirmation forms the bridge over which we can move authoritatively from the 1st to the 20th century): Despite apparent failures and even vehement opposition, the kingdom of God moves forward to inevitable and magnificent success. The corollary truth is the invitation by Jesus to that steadfast obedience to the Kingdom that enables the believer to share in that final success.

**Suggested title:** "The Parable to End Despair"

**Text:** 2 Cor. 2:14-16: "But thanks be to God, who leads us in a constant pageant of triumph in Christ and uses us everywhere to reveal and spread abroad the fragrance of the knowledge of himself. We are indeed the incense offered by Christ to God, both for those who are on the way to salvation, and for those who are on the way to ruin and destruction—to the latter a deadly fume that kills and to the former a vital fragrance which brings life. Who is equal to such a task?" (author's paraphrase).

**Thesis statement:** The visible failures in Kingdom operations are not the true indicators of the stability and success of the work of God in Christ.

**Audience:** A local church setting in which an "established leader" has denied his faith and his ethics and created a major crisis of faith for the whole congregation—collectively and individually.

**Introduction:** Use some well-known example of a Fourth-of-July Christian (other than the one who created

the crisis). I would be tempted to use the one of the pilot of experimental fighter planes whom I met several years ago. Shortly after his conversion he was leaving on an experimental flight. On the end of the runway the cabin was filled with an obvious sense of the divine presence. As the plane crossed through the speed of sound the whole plane went into harmonic destructive patterns—the wings were undulating snakelike shapes like a rope that has been shaken abruptly from one end. The pilot kept asking the flight engineer on board to hang on a few more minutes before ejecting and finally was able to ride it through the bucking seesaw motions till it smoothed out and they were able to bring it back to earth in one piece. His pastor took the young convert with his fantastic story on the lecture circuit, but his maturation was insufficient in Christ and his life turned into one magnificent fiasco after another. He harmed more persons than he aided—at least from a human point of view.

Finish the introduction by asking the pointed question: What happens to your faith when someone you respect in the work of the Kingdom apparently fails? How does opposition to your values by respected friends affect your faith?

In the passage of Scripture before us, Jesus was facing that same issue. Perhaps the question was even more pointed for His disciples, whose understanding of the work of the Messiah was colored by contemporary teaching that the Kingdom was an irresistible force.

Spend some time highlighting the growing opposition to Jesus and His marvelous ministry of healing and teaching. Then read the Scripture passage as a response to that setting.

### I. The Dramatic Failures of Kingdom Work

Failures always disappoint us and cloud our vision. Our personal disappointment creates doubt and fear. Jesus' disciples had thrilled to the exciting progress of the Kingdom and to the unquestioned miracles Jesus had performed. But the rising tide of opposition baffled them. Why would Jesus' family come to take Him home in a straitjacket? Why did the teachers of the law attribute the miracles to Beelzebul? Did opposition indicate that Jesus was not really the Messiah?

Jesus responds to their crisis of faith by using the parable of the sower—the parable to end despair. First Jesus points out the magnificent failures. Since obedience is a result of choice, rejection and disobedience are always options. Look at the three different samples of failure that Jesus highlights in the parable:

- A. Asphalted hearts in which the seed of the Kingdom never germinates
- B. Shallow hearts in which commitment is too delicate to survive
- C. Good hearts in which the challenge of final and total commitment is too high a price to pay

Magnificent, heart-wrenching failures that destroy persons—and homes—and churches—force all of us to ask the hard questions: Is faith in Christ the ultimate question? How should I react? Should my disappointment lead me to despair?

### II. Dramatic Successes in the Kingdom

After Jesus has drawn the rather dismal picture of the sensational failures, He turns, in contrast, to the mag-

nificent successes. In the first century, farmers expected to receive a 10- or 20-fold return from their efforts. Thirty bushels to the acre was an amazing bumper crop; 60 bushels to the acre was almost beyond belief. One hundred bushels to the acre was absolutely incredible! Jesus promises that despite apparent failures and growing opposition to the Kingdom, seed will produce absolutely incredible returns to those who are obedient to the end.

- A. Successes in the Kingdom are long-term issues.
- B. Successes in the Kingdom follow dogged responsive obedience despite apparent failures. (You may wish to use the Thielicke quote here.) There is no detour around the Cross.
- C. Successes in the Kingdom are the work of God himself through Christ. (Select some of the great victories of Jesus in the context—then illustrate with a contemporary example of some ordinary saint whose steady, obedient service to the Kingdom has an ever-widening circle of influence—not necessarily spectacular but obviously dramatic. There are some mighty examples of this kind of faithful obedience in any congregation, and this would be a great time to honor one of them.)

**Conclusion:** Opposition and failure will be part of the picture as long as we continue to live in a world where choice leads to obedience or to disobedience. Often the outlook will be clouded by doubt about the ultimate question. The passage before us suggests that Jesus himself was plagued by such questions. The temptation centered on questions of this type. Even the disciples of John the Baptist came asking Jesus if He really was the one they were looking for or were they to anticipate another? The Great Confession came back to this same issue.

Jesus himself found consolation and courage and perspective from Isaiah. He quotes from Isaiah 6 as He completes this parable. He identifies with Isaiah in the uphill task of living out faith and proclaiming faith in a world like this. But His deeper identification is with God, whose work will never be finally thwarted. His kingdom will not fail. Obedience is worth the price. Success is coming.

Paul states this powerfully in our text for the morning: 2 Cor. 2:14-16: "But thanks be to God, who leads us in a constant pageant of triumph in Christ and uses us everywhere to reveal and spread abroad the fragrance of the knowledge of himself. We are the incense offered by Christ to God, both for those who are on the way to salvation, and for those who are on the way to ruin and destruction—to the latter a deadly fume that kills and to the former a vital fragrance which brings life. Who is equal to such a task?" Paul answers his own question in 3:5: "Our competency comes from God!"

Yes, the parable of the sower is a parable to end despair! Praise be to God! As T. S. Eliot says in *The Four Quartets*: "Not fare well, but fare forward!"

### NOTES

1. C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), 5.
2. William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), 100.
3. Helmut Thielicke, *The Waiting Father*, tr. by John W. Doberstein (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1959), 60.

# THE HOMILETICAL PROCESS

by Daniel L. Burnett

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**T**he preaching process is an individually unique endeavor. We bring to this task such variable qualities as education, personality, and experience. Through these and other influences we develop preaching styles that are reflected not only in the pulpit but also throughout the entire preparatory process.

The following is a summary and example of the process I have developed in my approach to preaching. It is not intended to be a specific model for others to follow; it is simply a sample of one preacher's process that might help other preachers better understand and utilize their own unique process.

## AN OUTLINE OF THE PROCESS

### I. Occasion of the Sermon

(special occasions, seasonal themes, etc.)

### II. Understanding the Scripture Passage

#### A. Context of the passage

1. Overview of introductory material (from commentaries, OT/NT survey textbooks, Bible dictionaries, etc.)
2. Chapter/section summaries, being aware of:
  - a. Major themes
  - b. Significant events/people/places
  - c. Literary styles

#### B. Analysis of the passage

1. Relationship to the context
2. Type of passage
  - a. History
  - b. Epistle
  - c. Narrative
  - d. Poetry
  - e. Parable
  - f. Prophecy
3. Content

- a. Significant word studies and issues of syntax
- b. People/places/events
- c. Major issues/themes
- d. What is happening, or what thought is being presented?

### III. Moving Toward the Sermon

- A. What is the point to be made from this passage for my congregation?
- B. Shaping the sermon (rough outline)

### IV. Writing the Sermon

### V. Evaluating the Sermon

- A. Is it true to the scripture passage?
- B. Is it relevant to my congregation?
- C. Does it communicate the point to be made (III A)?
- D. Is it Christian?

## A SAMPLE SERMON FROM MATTHEW 4:1-11

### I. Occasion of the Sermon: *The first Sunday in Lent*

### II. Understanding the Scripture Passage: *Matt. 4:1-11*

#### A. Context of the passage

1. Parallel passages: Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13  
Only Matthew and Luke specifically tell of the temptations. Matthew places the mountaintop scene last, probably to emphasize Jesus as Messiah and King. Luke places the Temple scene last, probably to emphasize Jesus as a true man facing the temptation of the spectacular as a means of drawing attention to himself.
2. The temptations do not question whether Jesus is the Messiah, but how He will handle that status.
3. Jesus was tempted as all men are, but His temptations were also unique because of His messianic awareness.

Daniel L. Burnett





4. Surrounding chapter/section summaries. Chapters 1—2: the birth of Jesus (narrative). Chapter 3: John the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus (narrative). Chapter 4: the temptation of Jesus and the beginning of his ministry (narrative). Chapters 5—7: the Sermon on the Mount (discourse). Chapters 8—9: return to narrative of Jesus' ministry.

#### B. Analysis of the passage

1. This passage immediately follows the baptism and affirmation but is prior to the actual beginning of Jesus' ministry.
2. Literary style: Narrative
3. Notes from the verses:

*Verse 1:* Jesus was led by the Spirit for a time of testing. He was not entering on His own. He was not setting himself up in a vulnerable situation out of His own carelessness or desires. He was led to the desert area, a rocky, barren, isolated stretch between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea.

*Verse 3:* There are two possible meanings: (1) prove to yourself that You are the Son of God by doing this; or (2) since You are the Son of God, use Your power to take care of yourself by doing this.

*Verse 4:* The reference is to Deut. 8:3, which is a reminder of God's provision of manna for Israel.

*Verse 5:* The highest point of the Temple was the corner that overlooked the Kidron Valley, which is said to have been 450 feet to the valley floor. It could also be a reference to the corner overlooking the Temple court.

*Verse 6:* Satan quotes Ps. 91:11-12. The temptation could have been either for Jesus to reassure himself or to reassure others of His Messiahship. In Luke, this temptation is placed third.

*Verse 7:* Jesus refers to Deut. 6:16, in which the people are told to not test God as they did at Massah (Exod. 17:1-7).

*Verse 8:* Satan assumes his own ownership of the world. This is the only "messianic" temptation. Satan's offer is that Jesus can be the Messiah, but Satan still wants recognition as king.

*Verse 10:* "Away from me, Satan" is essentially the same comment made to Peter in Matt. 16:23 and Mark 8:33 when he played the role of the tempter. The quotation is from Deut. 6:13.

*Verse 11:* Following the test there is strengthening.

### III. Moving Toward the Sermon

- A. The point to be made: When we know Jesus as the Man "who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin" (Heb. 4:15, NIV), then we can also know Him better as the Son of God and Risen Lord who gives us strength and guidance in our own temptation.

#### B. General outline

1. Introduction/seasonal connection
2. The temptations were real
3. The temptations were reasonable
4. The temptations were resisted
5. Conclusion

### IV. Writing the Sermon

#### INTRODUCTION/SEASONAL CONNECTION

This week we have entered a very significant season in the life of the Church. With our usual emphases on Christmas and Easter we have sometimes overlooked the importance of this season in between. The season is Lent—the 40 days plus 6 Sundays prior to Easter.

The history of Lent goes back to the early centuries of the Christian Church, though the exact origin is debated. What we do know for certain about the history of Lent is that it has always focused on the theme of self-denial, primarily through fasting. By the time of the Middle Ages a partial fast was actually enforced by law, making meat, eggs, and milk forbidden foods during Lent.

Today, of course, we have no such laws. We do, however, still have the spirit and purpose of Lent; that is, the denying or disciplining of self in order to better remember Jesus in His life, suffering, and death. Lent is actually a time of preparation for the celebration of Easter. For in order to fully appreciate Jesus as the Risen Lord and Savior, we must also appreciate Him as a fellow human being who experienced life as we experience it. So Lent becomes a time when we remember Jesus as one very much like the rest of us—tired, sweating, hurting, lonely, frustrated, scared, and even tempted.

We especially see Jesus as the One with whom we can identify in our own struggles in the temptations. We find in Him the needed strength for our own times of temptation because He has been there before us and has emerged victorious.

#### THE TEMPTATIONS WERE REAL

As a boy growing up in Sunday School, the temptations of Jesus did not seem real enough to mean anything to me. I knew I could not turn stones into bread even if I wanted to, so it was never a temptation to try. Leaping from the Temple also failed to entice me. I had a horrible fear of falling, so I was not interested in jumping off of anything. As for worshipping the devil, I didn't even want to see the devil, let alone get close enough to bow to him. I wasn't that brave.

As a boy, I failed to realize two important things about the temptations of Jesus. First, the actual tests were not so superficial. These temptations involved deep inner struggles over the meaning, evidence, and outcome of Jesus' Messiahship. Second, these were not Jesus' only temptations, as Luke 4:13 indicates. Even He never outgrew temptation.

When we see the reality and validity of Jesus in temptation, we see a Jesus with whom we can identify—a Jesus who has truly been where we are.

#### THE TEMPTATIONS WERE REASONABLE

Turning stones to bread in order to provide nourishment after such a lengthy fast was a reasonable thought, but it would have called into question the issues of motive and purpose in His use of God's power.

A spectacular confirmation from atop the Temple that He was the Messiah could be a reasonable means of drawing attention to His presence, but it would have raised the issues of sensationalism and manipulation as means of achieving God's purpose.

Striking a deal with Satan as a short-cut to world recognition that He was the Messiah was a reasonable compromise to consider, but it stood in stark contrast to the later question, "What can a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26, NIV).

When we see that the temptations were not so absurd, but quite reasonable, we again see a Jesus with whom we can identify. We remember that our own greatest temptations are those that are the most reasonable and the most easily justified.

The extremes to which we can go in order to justify the fulfillment of our temptations was illustrated in an article in *The Christian Century*, titled "Male Clergy Adultery as Vocational Confusion" (September 15-22, 1982). The article included the following observation:

Those who counsel male clergy report that many genuinely believe that the "other woman" is a gift of God. In a culture in which the success ethos has infected all vocational expectations, including those of clergy, the other woman may seem a consolation for vocational or marital disappointment, sent by an extremely gracious God.

#### THE TEMPTATIONS WERE RESISTED


The best news of Jesus' temptations is that they were resisted. But our own temptation at this point is to no longer identify with Jesus. The resistance seems beyond us. But even here we can still identify with Him. Through the resource of Scripture, through our relationship with Him, and through the sustaining ministry of

the Holy Spirit, we too can resist in the face of temptation.

I have recently witnessed this resistance in the life of a young woman who is recovering from a sudden and devastating divorce. She has struggled for over two years against the temptation to enact a bitter revenge against her ex-husband for the emotional pain she has suffered. Her victory over this temptation has not come easily or quickly, but through prayer, Scripture, and the support of God and others, her bitterness is subsiding and peace of heart is returning.

The opportunity is before us this Lenten season to appreciate Jesus in a more complete way. Not only as Risen Lord, but first as Jesus the Man who knows our battles with temptation and has provided for us a means of victory over it. We can become steadfast in temptation because truly He "has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin" (Heb. 4:15, NIV).

#### V. Evaluating the Sermon

- A. Is it true to the scripture passage?  
The sermon works within the content of the passage and moves with it to practical application.
- B. Is it relevant to my congregation?  
The issue of temptation is universally relevant, but there was a special relevancy in this sermon for my congregation as many were resolving the temptation of bitterness over a past situation.
- C. Does it communicate the point to be made (III. A.)?  
The sermon keeps the point in focus throughout and strives to bring it to that conclusion.
- D. Is it Christian?  
Christ is the real subject and the final solution in this sermon. It is a Christian message. 

## BIBLICAL PREACHING

(Continued from page 10)


What is distressing is not that so many have no background in biblical languages but that among those who have studied Hebrew and Greek so few actually maintain their studies to sufficiently influence their preaching. Dr. A. T. Robertson charged that "the chief reason why preachers do not get and do not keep up a fair and needful knowledge of the Greek New Testament is nothing less than carelessness, and even laziness in many cases. They can get along somehow without it, and so let it pass or let it drop."

A related need among today's preachers is the rebirth of reading. It is shocking to see preachers' libraries barren of books of quality scholarship. A craftsman is reflected in his tools, and a preacher who does not have and use quality exegetical tools is severely limited. A personal library of mediocre books identifies a mediocre preacher. On the other hand, a library full of high-quality books suggests a growing, expanding mind and a quality preacher. Great books are always over your head. That's why it's a mistake to read books you could have written for serious study. As C. L. Rose once said, "When we walk with great men we seek . . . to match their stride."

(4) **New Pew Standards.** Hearers of the Word need

to recognize and accept their share of responsibility for both the decline of exegetical sermons in the contemporary pulpit as well as for their recovery. I'm convinced that congregations get the preaching they deserve. If the standards of the congregation are low and superficial, those of the preacher will correspond.

The church should not have to wait for a new generation of preachers to upgrade the pulpit. Pastors need to be encouraged to prepare biblical sermons of quality and of spiritual depth. Congregations must stop being satisfied with weak, superficial devotionals from the pulpit.

Certainly these are not the last words on this subject. These are hopefully seminal words to motivate pastors to a deeper spirituality in the proclamation of the gospel. These are not the words of a critic but the words of one who can empathize. As I hear you preach on the Lord's Day, I know the weight you're carrying, and I pray for you, not against you. I know your awesome responsibility. And as I listen, I pray that you will know you are not alone. But most of all, I find myself praying that the love of Christ will pressure you to speak out; that today I may hear the voice of God in your faithful preaching. "If I say, 'I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,' there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot" (Jer. 20:9, RSV). 

# AN EXEGETICAL METHOD ILLUSTRATED

by Alvin S. Lawhead

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**F**or the Old Testament exegetical courses I teach, my students are expected to prepare exegetical essays on biblical texts, following the four steps of this method. This method will be illustrated in the study of Psalm 1 that follows, with some explanation for each step. (Students at NTS are provided with a four-page handout explaining this method for exegesis.)

## INTRODUCTION TO THE METHOD

Exegesis is the process of dealing with a biblical text. The results of exegesis provide the "raw material" for constructing a sermon on the text. Exegesis is essentially a *historical* endeavor as opposed to a *homiletical* endeavor. It is background or spadework for homiletics. A sermon is developed out of the results of the exegetical process.

Exegesis may be defined as "leading the way," or "bringing forth" (from the Greek *hegeomai*). Applied to Scripture, it is the attempt to bring forth the truth contained therein. It seeks to know what truth—what demand—this text places upon the individual or upon the community of faith. The rationale for exegesis begins with respect for the thought and intention of the inspired writer. We attempt to become contemporary with the writer to the fullest possible degree, thereby realizing God's will. The exegete must then build the "hermeneutical bridge" in making present application of the truths discovered from the text.

What is presented is *one* exegetical method; it is not the *only* method. To a degree, the four steps are interdependent and circular. For example, one may begin with a particular translation of the Bible (Step I), but on the basis of the remaining steps in this exegetical

method, eventually turn to another translation that better represents the results of the entire study.

## STEP I—Choosing the Translation

Since there are a number of good English translations of Scripture available today, we must compare them to determine which one best represents our specific passage. If this poses a problem in your congregation because of adherence to one particular translation (usually the KJV), read your passage from that translation early in the service, and then read the same passage from your selected translation just before you preach.

When choosing a translation:



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1. Beware of paraphrases (especially *The Living Bible*). These have their place, and may be helpful in specific instances, but check your passage in a more standard translation.

2. Remember that every translation has its strengths and weaknesses. A translation produced by a group or a committee is usually better than one produced by an individual. (The KJV was the first English translation produced by a group.)

3. Do not choose a translation simply because it agrees with your ideas. Be objective and open-minded; let the evidence from your exegetical study be decisive. If you can use the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, begin there. Beware of highly conjectural emendations of the text based upon subjective considerations (usually found in critical commentaries).

With regard to Psalm 1, there are no great differences among the various English translations. All of them express clarity of thought and faithfulness to the original Hebrew text. However, verse 6 of this psalm is the deciding factor in the choice of English translations. The RSV, KJV, and NASB all have, "The Lord *knows* the way of the righteous" (NASB has a marginal reading "approves, has regard to"). The NIV translates this verse, "The Lord *watches over* the way of the righteous." We will discuss this translation of the Hebrew *yada* in Step III, but the NIV's rendering of this word prompts us to select it as our translation for this passage.

## STEP II—General Background

Most of the material in this step is for the general understanding of the exegete concerning the passage of Scripture. Relatively little of its material will find its way into the actual construction of the sermon, but it is essential in the overall understanding of the passage.

This step consists of the following two parts:

1. *Wider context* (often includes the entire book)

a. Include history involved.

b. Critical disciplines are employed, if they aid in interpreting your passage or add to your understanding. For instance, determine the type of literature in your passage; the setting in life (*Sitz im Leben*). These considerations may affect the form of the sermon more than the content.

2. *Immediate context*

a. Consider the paragraph, chapter, or section of the book in which your passage appears.

b. "A text without the context is only a pretext." (Some would consider Step II as the major element of exegesis. I would consider Step III as the major element.)

In exegeting Psalm 1, the following considerations grow out of application of Step II:

1. *Wider context* (once this is done, it applies to any psalm)

a. Psalms is perhaps the best-known and best-loved book of the entire Old Testament. It runs the gamut of human emotions and situations—from the highest expression of spiritual ecstasy to the lowest depths of human despair. It has been noted that Scripture usually speaks *to* us, but the psalms speak *for* us.

b. There are five divisions or collections in Psalms, and these come from a long period of time, re-

flecting different settings, life situations, and different authors. The title of Psalm 90 attributes it to Moses; Psalm 74 describes the devastated sanctuary, which would suggest the earliest date as 587 B.C.; Psalm 126 celebrates the return from Exile. Not every psalm is as easy to date, but commentators usually try to give some historical setting for each.

c. There is a variety of classifications of the psalms according to content. Ever since the work of Hermann Gunkel on the psalms in the 1930s, we recognize that they contain hymns of praise, laments (both individual and community); songs of thanksgiving (both individual and community); wisdom psalms; royal-Messianic psalms; and some mixed types.

d. One must not treat the poetry of the Old Testament the same as law statements, history, or narrative. One must recognize Hebrew poetry (fully one-third of the Old Testament) and its chief characteristic of parallel thought. This is crucial to any treatment of the psalms. Identification of the type of parallelism in a poetic text will go a long way in determining how one develops the thought of the text. Psalm 1 contains a combination of synonymous and synthetical parallelism in its individual verses, while the psalm as a whole has antithetical parallelism in its two major parts (vv. 1-3 describe the righteous; vv. 4-6 describe the wicked). Each individual verse is made up of basic units called stichs (or *stichoi*), which are parallel to each other.

2. *Immediate context*. This is difficult when considering a psalm, since each psalm is an individual unit, unless one is dealing with a portion of a longer psalm.

Psalm 1, however, stands as an introduction to the entire book and is a keynote to the Psalter. The vivid contrast between the righteous and the wicked stresses the centrality of morality, the hallmark of biblical religion. Thus the compiler of Psalms gives first place to this one in order to call the reader to obedience and trust in God.

Psalm 1 is further identified as one of several wisdom psalms, whose intention is not only to guide and educate but also to press for a decision. It is characterized by its clear structure, its simple language and familiar figures of speech, and its challenge to holy living. The fundamental religious ideas of covenant prevail in the wisdom psalms, reflected in the theme of biblical wisdom that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. 111:10; cf. Prov. 1:7).

## STEP III—Word Study

We need to pay particular attention to the words of the biblical writers and be certain that we understand their intended meaning, or else we will miss the message.

The following considerations are vital to word study:

a. Our goal is an in-depth study of the *important* words or phrases in your passage. These are *key* words—theological, cultic, psychological, didactic,

hortatory terms. Be certain that these words carry the weight of the message. Recognition of key words will improve with practice.

- b. The temptation will be to include too many words for study. Do not include every word, not even every two or three words.
- c. Remember that words are best defined by usage; do not assume that a word is exactly the same in meaning every time it occurs.
- d. If you can use Hebrew lexicons for Old Testament word study, you have an invaluable source at your disposal. There are also important works on Hebrew words written in English, including *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Harrison, Waltke, Archer) and the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Botterweck, Ringgren) with five volumes available.
- d. Invaluable aid can be gained from *Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible*; *Strong's Concordance of the Bible*; *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, by Kittel; *Theological Word Books of the Bible*, by Alan Richardson; and *An Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*, by W. E. Vine. Various Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias will assist your word study. Certain Old Testament theologies contain an appendix of key biblical words. Among commentaries that deal with key words note the following: *Old Testament Commentary*, by Keil and Delitzsch (10 vols.); *International Critical Commentary*; *New International Commentary*; *The Interpreter's Bible*; *Anchor Bible*; and the *Old Testament Library* series.
- e. Do not go into the interpretation or meaning of the passage as a whole at this time. (See the note at the end of Step IV.) Stay with the purpose of this step—the meanings of key words or phrases.

In Psalm 1 there are a number of key words crucial to the message of the psalm. We shall include a study of six of these words or phrases. As always, there are other words of significance in this passage, but these six are preeminent. The selection of key words in Psalm 1 is complicated by the fact that in Hebrew poetry individual words tend to carry more meaning than in narrative.

"Blessed" (*ashrai*) (v. 1): Just as the Sermon on the Mount begins with "blessed," so does Psalm 1 (the Old Testament counterpart that deals with the application of the Law to the inner life also).

This word is found 26 times in Psalms. In the original Hebrew it is a plural form. But the Hebrew plural form can be a plural either in number or of intensity. As a plural of intensity, this term refers to a *full measure of blessedness or happiness*. It is also a congratulatory term and can express a sense of envious desire by the writer or speaker. When the queen of Sheba visited Solomon in all of his glory, she exclaimed, "Happy (*ashari*) are your wives! Happy (*ashrai*) are these your servants, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom!" (1 Kings 10:8, RSV). Psalm 1 begins by expressing the enviable position of the righteous man. He is blessed in the sense of this word because he has been blessed by God. (Hebrew always uses another word [*baruch*] for the blessing of God by man.)

"The law of the Lord" (*torah*) (v. 2): This common word occurs 221 times in the Old Testament and has the basic meaning of teaching, guidance, instruction. The parent verb in He-

brew means to throw or cast with a strong sense of control by the subject. Its most frequent uses are with shooting arrows, sending rain, or teaching.

Thus, through *torah* God gave instruction and guidance to His redeemed people. The inclusiveness of *torah*, touching every aspect of life, shows God's interest in all of man's life. For historical Israel, divine deliverance came first, followed by the giving of *torah* to instruct and guide God's people into a fruitful and abundant life of fellowship. Put succinctly, *torah* was the gracious gift of God, revealed to His people to instruct and guide them in the way of holiness.

Eventually, the *torah* of the Lord became parallel in meaning to the Word of God, signifying that *torah* is the revelation of God's will. (Isa. 1:10, "Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching [*torah*] of our God, you people of Gomorrah!" [RSV]) Originally, *torah* was limited to the revelation of God received at Mount Sinai. But in its fullest sense, it refers to all that God has made known to His children. (Jews today often refer to the whole of their Scripture—the Old Testament—as *torah*.) In Psalm 1, however, much revelation of God's will and way had been received, the Psalmist declares that it is the object of the blessed man's deepest interest and attention.

"Meditates" (*hagah*) (v. 2): Basically, this verb means to make a dull sound, as a vibration. It is used for the mourning of a dove (Isa. 38:14) and the growling of a lion over its prey (31:4) and in a poetic sense (as here in Psalm 1), it means to muse or meditate. The process involved could include elements of repetition, which signify close attention and interest. The parallel expression in the first stich of verse 2, "his delight is in the law of the Lord," bears out this attitude of deep concern, even preoccupation. Since *torah* stands for the revelation of the divine will, the only acceptable attitude toward it is one of constant conscious attention.

"Wicked" (*rashim*) (v. 4): This is a common word in the Old Testament, an antonym of "righteous." It signifies negative behavior, that which is contrary to God's character, is hostile to the community, and it betrays the inner unrest and disharmony of the individual. The true measure of the *rashim* is in their contrast with the character and attitude of God as reflected in Ps. 5:4, "For thou art not a God who delights in wickedness" (RSV).

In wisdom literature, this word is used in synonymous parallelism with almost every Hebrew word for sin, evil, and iniquity, a total of 266 times. It occurs 80 times in antithetical parallelism with the righteous. It is often used in the psalms for the enemies of God. In typical fashion, the Psalmist uses it here in a black-and-white contrast with righteous. The *rashim* are the opposite in character and attitude, as well as in the end result.

"Knows" (*yada*) (v. 6): This verb occurs 944 times in the Old Testament and covers the whole range of knowledge. It is used for basic cognitive knowledge; technical skill; experiential knowledge; knowledge derived from relationship (such as the covenant relationship between God and man, as in Amos 3:2, "You only have known of all the families of the earth . . ."); and sexual intimacy. It covers all degrees of knowledge from mere acquaintance to complete comprehension. In the religious realm, in addition to the general knowledge derived from the covenant relationship, this word refers to moral distinctions between good and evil. The heathen do not know God—it is perception possessed by the wise; and the knowledge of God is parallel with the fear of the Lord as a descrip-



tion of true religion. Isa. 11:9 declares that in the Messianic age "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Of course, it is only God who possesses absolute knowledge.

On rare occasions this term refers to God's care and protection on behalf of His people. One can see this as the logical conclusion to the infinite knowledge of God. Nah. 1:7 reads, "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him" (RSV). The NIV reflects this nuance in translating Ps. 1:6, "The Lord watches over the way of the righteous." The *Jerusalem Bible* reads, "The Lord takes care of the way the virtuous go."

"Perish" (*to'bed*) (v. 6): This common verb basically refers to some great loss. It is often used for things passing away or for persons dying. Many such common words in Hebrew take on theological meaning, and in the case of *perish*, it can refer to death and eternal punishment, as in Ps. 73:27, "For lo, those who are far from thee shall perish; thou dost put an end to those who are false to thee" (RSV). In this psalm, it is the way of the wicked that perishes, suggesting a dead end, a futile and meaningless conclusion to life.

#### STEP IV—Theological Meaning

In the final step of this exegetical method, the exegete draws together the results of his study. These ideas and statements become a link between the exegesis and the construction of the sermon. They are based upon the previous steps of this method, but they also lead to the major points and considerations of the sermon. The two general divisions of this final step concern the meaning of the passage there and then (to the contemporary readers or hearers of the writer) and the meaning of the passage here and now (to the hearers of your sermon).

1. *There and then*: What did the writer intend for the original readers/hearers to understand? (At this point, let the Old Testament speak for itself with all of its historical, cultural, and religious conditioning.)
2. *Here and now*: Build the hermeneutical bridge to the present. Discover the theological motifs in your passage, and make them relevant to our present day. Beware of uncritical use of commentaries at the beginning of this fourth step. Usually they take short-cuts in the exegetical process and proceed immediately to the interpretation and meaning of a passage. Also, beware of including meaning and interpretation of the passage in the earlier steps of the method.

Since Psalm 1 is a wisdom psalm, the didactic purposes are the same today as they were at the time of its composition. Thus, we cannot make great distinctions in the theological meaning between the "there and then" and the "here and now." (Other types of literature in the Old Testament more readily lend themselves to this process.)

#### A. *There and Then*

1. The main thrust of the psalm is a positive and constructive depiction of the righteous person in all of life. This is seen initially in the congratulatory expression "Blessed." It continues in the illustration of the healthy, productive tree, which represents stability, meaningfulness, and worthwhileness, and concludes with the general declaration that God intimately knows and cares about the way of the righteous.

2. By contrast, the wicked have no good prospects for life. This is clearly portrayed in the illustration of the chaff, which represents instability, meaninglessness, futility, and worthlessness.
3. This wisdom psalm with its clear-cut, black-and-white teaching leaves no doubt that there are only two spiritual categories of persons—the children of God and the children of the devil. There is no morally neutral category. The challenge to decision is also clear; it is only the fool who would choose the way of the wicked.
4. The chief goal of human life is to know (in the fullest sense possible) and to do the will of God. This is accomplished first of all by avoiding any participation in, or association with, evil or evildoers. It is completed by positive and diligent seeking of the revealed will of God (*torah*).

#### B. *Here and Now*

(NOTE: All of the above theological meanings there and then would also apply here and now.)

1. What one sows, he also reaps. This is true not only in this life but also for the life to come. The further revelation of the New Testament gives added emphasis to this truth in its clear teaching of a final and universal judgment.
2. We can correctly define eternal life in terms of quality, the present possession of the righteous here and now.
3. God's ultimate judgment is the final vindication for righteous living. The Old Testament does not have the full light of the New Testament on such matters, but enough is made known to portray the end of both ways of life.

#### Sermon Outline

##### Psalm 1: A Contrast of Two Ways of Life

**Introduction**—there are several possibilities:

1. Contextual—Psalm 1 as an introduction to this biblical book that majors on personal piety.
2. Commendatory—based on the nature of wisdom literature and its purposes.
3. Illustration—a real-life story of two similar individuals, perhaps of the same family, one of whom chose the way of the righteous and one of whom chose the way of the wicked.

**NOTE:** The following outline is based on the structure of Psalm 1, technically known as envelope structure. It may be diagrammed as follows:

- IA (v. 1) is parallel to IID (v. 6)
- IB (v. 1) is parallel to IIC (v. 6)
- IC (v. 2) is parallel to IIB (v. 5)
- ID (v. 3) is parallel to IIA (v. 4)

#### I. **The Way of the Righteous** (vv. 1-3)

- A. The way of the righteous described in one word: "blessed."
  1. Intensity of this concept
  2. Has promise of good prospects
  3. Covers the whole realm of life
- B. The way of the righteous is distinctly different from that of the wicked (v. 1) (things from which the righteous refrain).
  1. Thinking of the wicked—bias of the will
  2. Behaving of the wicked—actions, life-style

(Continued on page 60)



1738 • 1788 • 1988

# **SIGNIFICANT WESLEYAN MILESTONES**

by Herbert McGonigle

*Principal, British Isles Nazarene College, Manchester, England*

**T**he year 1988 provides us with two significant Wesleyan historical reminders, being the 250th anniversary of John and Charles Wesley's 1738 Whitsun spiritual awakening and the 200th anniversary of Charles' death in 1788. Another look at both these happenings is therefore appropriate.

When 1738 is mentioned in connection with the Wesleys, it nearly always has reference to John's Aldersgate Street "heart-warming" of that year, but it must be remembered that Charles' experience of spiritual assurance preceded that of brother John. Charles Wesley's

evangelical pilgrimage can profitably be examined from February 1738 onward. He had returned from Savannah on December 3, 1736, and the next year was spent living at Oxford, visiting friends, meetings with eminent Christians including William Law and Count Zinzendorf, and preaching frequently. His *Journal*, begun on March 9, 1736, when he arrived in Georgia, recounts his spiritual condition at this time. He was zealous for God and for the discipline of the Church of England, emphasized the need for obedience and self-renunciation, and preached and practiced the value of religious conversa-

Nazarene

## Update

UPDATE EDITOR, MARK D. MARVIN, PASTORAL MINISTRIES

EXPOSITORY  
PREACHING

The cry for an improved quality of preaching is being heard from laymen throughout the land. Exposition of the Bible has been greatly neglected in the modern pulpit. In many instances, a substitution is made to correspond with the modern topics of the day. There is, however, a renewed interest in the Word of God which speaks to the modern times and consequently a hopeful trend to a return to expository preaching.

The term "expository" is derived from the Latin *exposui*, which means to lay open the subject proposed. As it relates to a sermon, it means "to expose the truth contained in a text or passage of scripture; to lay it open to the inspection and understanding of all; to put it forth where the people may get hold of it." It is a teaching method, an explaining method that makes the ancient truth clear and at the same time involves an evangelistic appeal to the heart.



By General Superintendent  
Charles H. Strickland

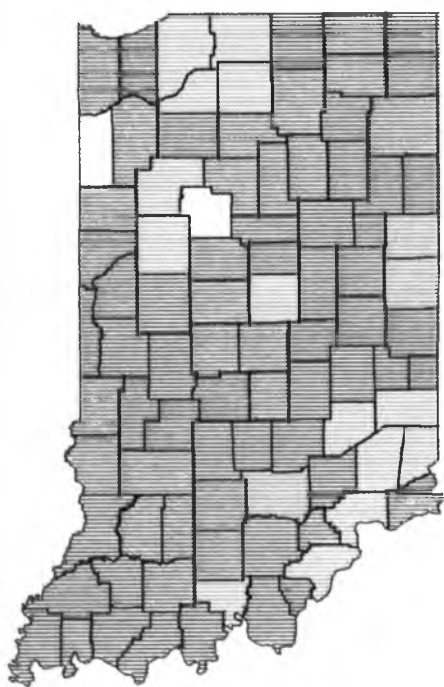
Homiletical writers agree that expository preaching is the preaching ministry at its best. It is the most valued type of sermon development. Dean Brown of Yale Divinity School has stated: "Expository preaching has the historic warrant of being apostolic. It insures a more thorough knowledge of the Bible on the part of the preacher himself."

Professor Smythe, of the University of Dublin, says: "Our teaching would be much more systematic if we had more expository preaching."

There are some genuine spiritual benefits of expository preaching to a congregation. First it enables the people to rediscover the Bible. There is a desire on the part of our people to learn about and discover a greater understanding of the Word of God. The pastor who can lead his people into this new discovery can be assured always of an interested group of people at the Sunday services.

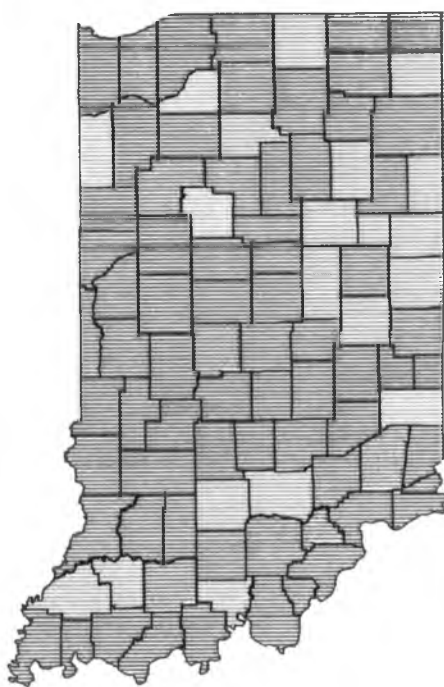
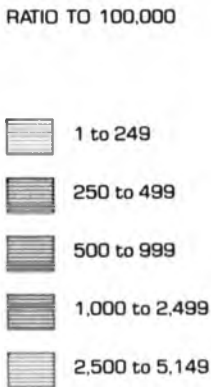
Secondly, it stimulates growth in Christian experience. A true understanding of the Word of God helps people to understand the biblical foundations for doctrinal concepts and ethical standards that affect daily conduct in Christian living. People who sit under the right kind of preaching enjoy the heartwarming experience of finding the "path of the just" and of walking in the will of God in their daily pursuits.

Nazarene Adherents



Pockets of high ratios of Nazarenes to the general population are found throughout Indiana, with relative weakness in both the southeast and the northwest.

Holiness Adherents



The east central area has the largest concentration of holiness adherents, with isolated areas of weakness throughout the rest of the state.

# WHERE HAVE NAZARENES DONE WELL

in reaching their neighbors for Christ? Where are there opportunities for better growth?

The relative size of a denomination is a good indication of the evangelism that has taken place. Nazarenes can take heart from the upper left map. Many areas, shown in red and orange, throughout Indiana report at least 1 percent of the population was affiliated with the Church of the Nazarene in 1986. Areas of potential growth can also be seen in blue and green.

However, before targeting that southeast block of green counties for a special evangelistic effort, further study is in order. Indiana is the center for several sister holiness denominations. If they are successfully evangelizing certain areas, we might better target areas where the overall holiness message is less known.

The map in the upper right indicates that other holiness groups are reaching the Nazarene "weak spots" in several parts of the state. Nazarenes might better concentrate in counties with a small holiness presence. And even though east central Indiana has many holiness people, 95% of the "best" county has not yet responded to the message of full salvation.

How is the holiness message reaching the community you serve? If you need comparative figures, contact the Church Growth Research Center. We are ready to serve you.



# E X T E N D I N G

## YOUR MINISTRY IN THE MILITARY RESERVE



Chaplain (CPT) Richard Humston, of the Florida Army National Guard, conducts a service at a field location from the hood of his Jeep.

Looking for more prospects and new avenues of ministry? Then let me challenge you to serve as a Reserve/National Guard chaplain. This ministry will enable you to serve not only your church, but your country as well. Whenever citizen/reservists meet, you will find a diverse group of dedicated people who stand ready to go where needed to keep America and our world free.

The reserve is made up of corporation presidents and laborers, nurses and waitresses, college professors and mechanics all working side by side. Reserve chaplains are pastors, college professors, and religious executives who are called to serve as challenging and exciting a parish as you could find anywhere. Frequently the service personnel to whom they minister are from the same community, thus expanding the pastor's prospect list for potential church members. The opportunity and privilege for ministering and evangelizing are extraordinary. The rewards for this ministry flow not only to the church but to the unit the pastor serves as well.

Military members are ministered to by a Nazarene chaplain with a caring heart and a clear message of the gospel. The pastor often serves with more non-Christians than he will ever contact through his own church ministry. The pastor's church benefits in numerous ways:

- Their pastor has the periodic refreshment of a change in the routine in his ministry.
- He receives continuing education through his attendance at military schools and other seminars at mil-

itary expense, thus enhancing his ministry to the local church.

- Their pastor receives a helpful stipend added to his salary, as well as a contribution to his retirement fund.

Reserve chaplaincy is a unique opportunity to minister not only to your own flock, but to influence others to personal faith in Christ, and a Spirit-filled daily life-style whose influence will be felt throughout the rest of their lives. The military affords the privilege of ministering within a person's workaday world in ways not available to civilian pastors.

**Many ministers misunderstand the requirements involved in becoming a reserve chaplain. One weekend a month does not mean a Sunday a month out of the pulpit. Duty time is arranged so that the pastor does not miss his own church service responsibilities.**

In order to qualify, one must have completed three resident years of graduate study in theology or related subjects (normally validated by an M.Div. or equivalent degree of 90 semester hours), be under 40 years old (or have prior service), and have passed a physical examination. At present, the Church of the Nazarene has only 30 Reserve/National Guard chaplains. We need to have at least 100. We need to launch out into this mission field with fervor and commitment.

Ask God to direct you in your response to this challenge.

For more information, contact CH (COL) Curt Bowers, USA (Ret), Chaplaincy Ministries Director, 6401 The Paseo, Kansas City, MO 64131. □



# ISN'T IT ABOUT TIME FOR YOUR CHURCH TO HAVE A MAC ATTACK?

**WHAT'S A MAC ATTACK?** It's when your church's Mission Action Committee decides to seriously attack a problem or need in the community. That's a MAC ATTACK.

There are so many outreach opportunities to minister to hurting people! There are the migrants (in rural areas), the homeless (in inner cities), the poor (everywhere), New Americans (those immigrants and refugees flooding into the U.S. by the hundreds of thousands). There are unchurched people in your community who might be reached through a home Bible study, a language Bible class, or an extension VBS. Lead the charge that will reach people from your community for Christ and your church.

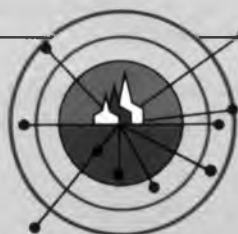
## HOW TO HAVE A MAC ATTACK

- Do a community or neighborhood windshield survey
- Prepare a calendar
- Have a prayer crusade
- Choose prospective areas for ministry
- Inform the congregation through sermons, films
- Cultivate the target community
- Launch a church-type mission or other outreach ministry



**CHURCH EXTENSION MINISTRIES**  
**CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE**

6401 The Paseo  
Kansas City, MO 64131





Mrs. Nina Gunter  
Nazarene World Mission Society  
6401 The Paseo  
Kansas City, MO 64131

Dear Mrs. Gunter,

In January of 1987, Mona and I went to the doctor's office for routine physical examinations following a term of service on the field. It was discovered that I had up to 90% blockage in five different places in one of the heart's main arteries. Open-heart by-pass surgery was the only way to treat my condition.

This was a great shock to us, because we had not expected anything of this nature. Through this experience, Mona and I came to appreciate the NWMS more and more and what it does for the medical needs of missionaries like ourselves.

After receiving word from the doctor that I needed open-heart surgery, we felt the need for immediate prayer support before making any of the decisions that needed to be made. You will never know how much comfort and relief came from knowing that our need was going out over the Prayer Mobilization Line. As a result, people throughout the church were praying for our need. God answered their prayers and ours.

An operation of this nature can run more than \$25,000 when the costs of doctors, the anesthetist, and the hospital are considered. The bills could double should there be any complications. Knowledge of this helped us appreciate the various methods the NWMS uses for raising moneys for missionary medical needs. The Distinguished Service Award provides recognition for honored members of the church and at the same time provides moneys for the Medical Plan. Likewise, the Memorial Roll provides a permanent record of deceased loved ones on the register at the NWMS office at the International Headquarters of the Church of the Nazarene. Contributions for these certificates, as well as special offerings, become a part of the Medical Plan.

Stress is one of the major factors that a heart patient must deal with in his recovery program—stress brought on by mounting medical bills, stress brought on by work, and stress concerning his ability to handle future assignments. Because of prayer support, encouraging letters and visits from our people, and the way the Medical Plan helped pay the bills, our stress was not only reduced and the recovery time shortened, but our faith was rewarded. We thank God for a church that loves and cares.

I have been cleared by the doctor to return to Papua New Guinea for another term of service.

Please express our love, thanks, and appreciation to all those who have prayed for us and given to make the Medical Plan possible.

Warm Christian Regards,  
Wallace White

# STEWARDSHIP FOR THE FUTURE



**R. T. WILLIAMS**  
*General Superintendent*  
1916-46

**"We must  
build  
schools,  
or die  
as a  
church."**



**J. B. CHAPMAN**  
*General Superintendent*  
1928-47

**"If I had  
a million  
dollars to  
give, I  
would give  
\$800,000  
to the  
educational  
work of  
the Church  
of the  
Nazarene."**

Nazarenes gave nearly \$11,000,000 last year to support our educational institutions. These contributions, along with tuition, room and board, individual gifts, and corporate matching gifts, are the major sources of the total funds for the operation of our educational institutions.

Without this local church support, Nazarene educational institutions would cease to exist. At least 3 percent of the total funds spent by a local church is given to educational support.

Nazarene colleges and universities are our best resources to insure the proclamation of holiness to future generations. Supporting them is, in a way, exercising stewardship over the future of our church.

Educational Support, a new brochure produced by Stewardship Services, will show you the need and tell you how you can help. Write for your free copy.



**STEWARDSHIP SERVICES**  
6401 The Paseo  
Kansas City, MO 64131

# THE ***HARD SELL*** FOR NAZARENE COLLEGES MAY BE OVERDUE

**ITEM:** We still serve primarily undergraduates in the 18 to 22 age-group.

**ITEM:** Residential life, lifelong friendships, close relationships with professors are values worth the cost.

**ITEM:** Nazarene colleges offer quality education and are regionally and nationally recognized.

**ITEM:** More Nazarene young people are going to college this year than ever before.

**ITEM:** We must get every student to the financial aid office or he or she will never know whether college is financially possible.

**ITEM:** Commuting, gathering credits from hither and yon, is not to be compared to residence work at a Nazarene college.

**FINALLY:** All of the above is most crucial at ages 18 to 19, the age when wreckage, mistakes, and entanglements can be so blighting.

Get acquainted with your Nazarene college. Have a representative in your church. Encourage your high school students to visit the campus.

***EDUCATION SERVICES AT YOUR SERVICE***

# HAS YOUR CHURCH

# STRUCK OUT?



According to pastors' reports, some five hundred local churches have shared more than seven million spendable dollars that came into their coffers through bequests in wills over the last two years.

**That's right, I said,  
Seven Million Dollars!**

Has your local church "struck out"? How long has it been since a Life Income Gifts Services representative presented a wills seminar for your congregation?

The seminars are a free service of your General Church. Only a free-will offering for the representative is requested.

**LIFE INCOME GIFTS SERVICES**

Church of the Nazarene

6401 The Paseo

Kansas City, MO 64131

Rev. Robert D. Hempel, *Director*

-----

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Church: \_\_\_\_\_ District: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Please send the brochure, "Answers to All the Questions You Have Wanted to Ask About Life Income Gifts Services."

☐ I/We would like to talk to someone about scheduling a wills seminar at our church.



**Shelter** (shel'ter) *n.* something that covers, protects, or defends; protection; refuge



Photo by Dave Anderson, The Downstairs Attic

You are fortunate that your church offers you a special tax-sheltered annuity opportunity . . . *The Nazarene Supplemental Retirement Program*. Compare these features:

- You maintain sole ownership of all funds in your account.
- *NO* load or expense fee is charged on your account.
- All contributions are sheltered from current Federal income taxes.
- Deposits grow at substantial interest.

**8<sup>1/4</sup>**  
**PERCENT**

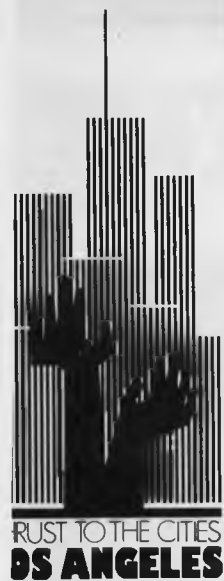
- All interest earned and accumulated is tax-sheltered.
- Retirement income is usually taxed at lower than your current rates.
- Complete flexibility and no penalties.
- Multiple options are available for receiving your funds.

**Now there's another reason to participate!**

***YOUR BENEFITS MAY QUALIFY FOR TAX-FREE WITHDRAWAL!***

If you are a minister at the time of withdrawal, you may request your Board of Pensions and Benefits USA to declare an amount of the withdrawal as **TAX-FREE** "housing allowance" and exclude it from income taxes to the extent allowed by law.

Further details of this "service" offered to church employees are available through your Board of Pensions and Benefits USA, 6401 The Paseo, Kansas City, MO 64131. Telephone: 816-333-7000.



# Thrust To The Cities Is A Call

...to the neglected quarters...to the wasted places  
 ...to the many souls seeking pardon and cleansing  
 ...to the city of Los Angeles.

Perhaps no other American city is feeling change like Los Angeles. You see it in the large influx of Vietnamese, the flood of illegal aliens, the drug trafficking on street corners, the vast number of homeless and the \$177,000,000 cost of two earthquakes. Los Angeles is hurting.

It is not a call to judge and condemn. But it is a call to care, to love and to pray.

The Church of the Nazarene has committed itself to bring about a spiritual change to the city of Los Angeles.

It was here our vision of ministering to the poor, the unreached, and the forgotten began. Today the need is even greater. And we are called to respond to this need by:

- starting 30 new churches ● strengthening existing churches ● ministering both physically and spiritually
- we are called to have compassion for every need!

## HOW YOU AND YOUR CHURCH CAN HELP US ANSWER THIS CALL

**PRAY** — Pray for the funds that are needed. Pray for the Work and Witness teams. Pray for the pastors and laity of the inner city. Pray for the volunteers who will give of their time and talent.

**GIVE** — Pastors must be supported. Workers need to be trained. Churches have to be built. And operating equipment has to be purchased. But it can't be done without the giving of dollars.

**WORK AND WITNESS TEAMS** — Assistance will be required in various building projects. Plan now on how you can join in these life-changing programs.

**"ADOPT" A SISTER CHURCH** — Beginning a new church can be difficult and very lonely. "Adopting" a church can be a special way to help, encourage and support a new congregation and at the same time motivate your church into greater giving.

**VOLUNTEER** — This can be a highly rewarding experience for people with special abilities and talents. Someone in your church needs to use their gifts in this great outreach.

### TOOLS FOR THE PASTOR

★ **DONATIONS to THRUST TO THE CITIES** — **LOS ANGELES** are eligible for approved 10% mission special giving (including Work and Witness monies).

★ **LOS ANGELES THRUST, 1988** 16-mm film. This new 15-minute film will help the pastor explain THRUST TO THE CITIES — **LOS ANGELES** to his church. This film is available in 1/2" videocassette format. (Order through Nazarene Publishing House. Rental only. Cost: freewill offering plus a \$7.50 handling fee.) PAFR-161 (film), PAVT-171-VHS (Video).

★ **LOS ANGELES THRUST, 1988** Pastor's kit includes: posters, newsletters, ad slicks, advertisements, and special speakers availability schedule. Contact Los Angeles District Office, 1546 E. Washington Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91104. Phone: 818-794-7104.

★ **WORK AND WITNESS AND NAZARENES IN VOLUNTEER SERVICE** are being coordinated through headquarters in Kansas City.

Plan now on how you and your church will answer this call to obedience. For further information, please write or call today:

## THRUST TO THE CITIES

6401 The Paseo  
 Kansas City, MO 64131

**"I AM SENDING YOU...SO THAT THEY MAY TURN  
FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT." (Acts 26:17-18, NASB)**



# NEW YORK

## THRUST TO THE CITIES, 1988

The Church of the Nazarene is taking seriously its obligation to bring the Light of the World to a city in spiritual darkness. Ministry to New York centers on three distinct aspects:

### **CHURCH PLANTING**

- 3 English-speaking congregations
- 3 Spanish-speaking congregations
- 1 Indo-Pakistani
- 1 Haitian

### **WORK AND WITNESS**

Restoration and renovation of:

- Homes for the elderly and homeless in Brooklyn
- Haitian church for use as vocational training school

- Building to house a Nazarene school in Brooklyn

### **COMPASSIONATE MINISTRIES**

- Establishment of a soup kitchen for the poor and homeless
- Migrant ministry—holistic ministry to meet spiritual and physical needs of migrant workers
- Clothing distribution center/thrift store for the poor

If you would like to be a part of this vital ministry to New York, contact THRUST TO THE CITIES, 6401 The Paseo, Kansas City, MO 64131 (816-333-7000).



# THE SHEPHERD'S LIFE

Coming to you each quarter from Pastoral Ministries, Wilbur Brannon, Director

LEADERSHIP • INSPIRATION • FULFILLMENT • ENRICHMENT

## INTEGRITY IS THE ISSUE

Public outcry is against Wall Street shenanigans, automobile manufacturers' odometer games, and the hide-and-seek play of human nature. We get angry when love and justice are violated, when the sacredness of life is sacrificed for the love of lust, when peace efforts are defied by fanatics.

There is a desire to see honest-to-goodness *goodness*! People who are real, transparent, true to themselves. It is not an honesty that justifies character flaws but demonstrates a consistency with what we value.

Some are only too glad to admit their faults—even to the point of glorying in their moral incompetency. That is not the honesty I'm talking about. The point I'm trying to make is not that people have a sense of what is moral. We know that.

The issue is whether we so conduct our lives that they reflect the true character of what is Christian. It is easy to develop a blind spot that permits us to maintain a profession of the Christian faith without keeping our motives sanctified to all that is consistent with the character of Christ. To

put it another way, the integrity of Jesus Christ is reflected or distorted in the way we are committed to Him.

We are responsible to "let the light shine" just as it is through the person of Christ! It will be distorted through selfish ambition, human manipulation, and insincerity. The power of the gospel and the hope it brings is experienced in truth when demonstrated by how closely our decisions, attitudes, and reactions are consistent with the content of that gospel.

In these days we are called on to be genuine, consistent, and responsible representatives of Him who is our Savior. We are not peddlers of the Word for our own advantage. "Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God" (2 Cor. 4:2, NIV).

That does not ignore our human frailties. "We have this treasure in jars of clay" (2 Cor. 4:7, NIV), but not as an excuse to carelessly disregard our responsibility to be true to Christ. Rather, as Paul says, "to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (2 Cor. 4:7, NIV). □



**Wilbur Brannon**  
Pastoral Ministries Director

## CONSULTATION AT SNU

Rev. Wilbur Brannon facilitated a consultation on preparation and credentialing of Nazarene ministers at Southern Nazarene University, September 28-29. Those present included the president and faculty of SNU, district superintendents, members of the Ministerial Studies and Ministerial Credentials Boards, and headquarters personnel.

Seventy-seven participants gained from the discussions on:

1. Foundations for ministerial preparation
  2. Facilitating preparation for ministry
  3. Functioning to help qualify ordinands
  4. Focusing on new dreams
- Several papers were presented with ensuing discussions focusing on specific topics:
1. Ingredients of a "call" to the ministry
  2. Responsibilities of ministerial boards
  3. Ministerial preparation
  4. Mentor/internship program
    - a. Motivation through modeling
    - b. Model as well as guide
- The consultation provided a forum through which all educational levels of the South Central Region could converse. There is hope this pilot project will open further doors of communication for those involved in educating ministerial students. □

## ... AND YOUR DAUGHTERS

One hundred twenty gathered in the Upper Room, one hundred twenty men and women waiting in obedience for the Father's gift. And then He came! And all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit.

The crowd was amazed and perplexed by what they saw and heard. Under the Spirit's anointing, Peter hastened to explain that what they were witnessing was a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy:

*In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy . . . Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy (Acts 2:17-18, NIV).*

When the Church of the Nazarene was born in the West, the original constitution specifically recognized the right of women to preach. In 1908, six months before the union at Pilot Point, Dr. Phineas Bresee preached at Texas Holiness University and then formed the pioneer Church of the Nazarene in Texas. The church board, with Dr. Bresee's approval, called Mrs. Ellyson, the president's wife and a Friends minister, to be their pastor. These were among the first of many who ministered in the early days of our church.

For a time, women's participation in ministry diminished. But it is new on the upsurge. Last year, women made up 12% of our seminary student enrollment. They were preparing to serve both as pastors and in the support role of deacons.

God is still pouring out His Spirit today. Should we share the surprise of those at Pentecost when both men and women answer His call? Christ says, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21, NIV). It is a call to servanthood. It is a call that will be answered increasingly by His daughters of the twentieth century, Spirit-filled women in ministry. ☐

—Maureen H. Box

Minister of Christian Education/Outreach  
Glendora, Calif.



## THE HEARTLINE REACHING

The CoNET "Heartline" is your district superintendent's heart reaching yours. He knows you have feelings you are not able to express to just anyone. He wants you to have a safe, confidential sounding board for your feelings that is consistent with our Nazarene commitments.

Your district superintendent's heart aches with yours when you are trying to save marriages and put the pieces of broken lives back together. He yearns to be at your side and be your counselor in such cases, for he has come from pastoring and has a caring heart. But his responsibilities and time limitations do not permit him to do what his heart feels like helping you do.

So the CoNET "Heartline" is the line that connects your district superintendent's heart to yours. You can call 1-800-874-2021 toll free. It has become a source to thousands of pastors and spouses (even children) already. You may call today—no charge, no record on your phone bill, safe and confidential. It's the line that gives you heart in the midst of difficult situations—whether it is personal, family related, or professional support.

It's your district superintendent's heart to yours, giving you heart!

Thank him today that he cares.

## PASTORAL MINISTRIES ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT COURSE OF STUDY



Pastoral Ministries receives several calls per week from people asking questions about the Course of Study. Apparently, many of you have the same

concerns, because a few of the questions are asked repeatedly.

In order to help you, Pastoral Ministries arranged an interview between the UPDATE editor and Rev. Don Welch, Pastoral Ministries coordinator, to answer some of the most frequently asked questions.

Don Welch joined Pastoral Ministries in September 1987, coming from the pastorate of the Kansas City, Kans., Rainbow Boulevard Church. Previously, he had served as the associate dean of students and assistant chaplain at Point Loma Nazarene College. Don participated in a number of Pastoral Ministries programs, including Continuing Education and Ministry Internship before joining the Pastoral Ministries team. Now he's here to answer the questions you ask most frequently.

**UPDATE:** Why does the district have to send supporting documents with their request for graduation certificates?

**Rev. Welch:** Even though the district graduates a candidate from the Course of Study, Pastoral Ministries still must confirm that all educational requirements have been met before a certificate can be issued.

**UPDATE:** Why do the district's records not match with Pastoral Ministries records?

**Rev. Welch:** Pastoral Ministries depends on the district for the information that is entered into the computer. If a copy of a student's progress is not sent to headquarters, we have no way of knowing the student's status. Both sets of records must agree before a Certificate of Graduation can be issued.

**UPDATE:** Can a student get college credit for the work he does in the Directed Studies program?

**Rev. Welch:** No. The Directed Studies is not an academic program, and Pastoral Ministries is not an educational institution.

**UPDATE:** After a request for a graduation certificate has been made to Pastoral Ministries, when is the certificate issued?



**Rev. Welch:** All certificates for each assembly year are issued four weeks prior to the district assembly and are sent directly to the Ministerial Studies Board secretary. If a request comes in after the district assembly, it will be issued the next assembly year.

**UPDATE:** Why are exams and keys only sent to District Ministerial Studies Board secretaries?

**Rev. Welch:** The duties of the secre-

tary include acquiring the necessary materials to administer the Course of Study on their district. Each district operates differently in its administration of the exams. Pastoral Ministries does not have enough support personnel to work with the way each district operates. After the secretary receives the exams and keys, he may distribute them to the people on the district responsible for ad-

ministering exams.

**UPDATE:** Who is responsible for transferring students from one district to another?

**Rev. Welch:** The "sending" district must fill out a transfer form and send the form and all records to the "receiving" district. This should be done as soon as possible so that the student does not suffer any delay in his studies.



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June 27—July 1	Eastern Nazarene College
July 11-15	Trevecca Nazarene College
July 18-22	MidAmerica Nazarene College
August 1-5	Northwest Nazarene College
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**THIS CONFERENCE CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE!**

# THE GOOD NEWS OF EASTER

*"The light  
of the world  
is Jesus"*

*Share that light with others*

OFFERING FOR WORLD EVANGELISM

CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE



# WE HAVE IT ALL

For Your Discipling Needs

Discipling began early in the life of the Church. New believers needed teaching, encouragement, and training. Today, a variety of plans and a vast supply of literature is available for discipling believers. The age and spiritual

maturity level appropriate for use are indicated in the Discipling Tracks and Resources Chart. Every Nazarene church should be able to find material to assist with their discipling needs.

—Bill M. Sullivan

## DISCIPLING TRACKS AND RESOURCES

Four steps are necessary for a new convert to become a mature follower of Christ, spiritually reproductive and prepared for total involvement in the Body of Christ. The first step is usually best accomplished by working one-on-one with the new convert while the balance may be achieved in group settings. Below, in each color bar, are the resources available for achieving each step.

### BEGINNING NURTURE

### ASSIMILATION

### GROWING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR LORD

### CONTINUED DISCIPLING

#### ADULT

Basic Bible Studies for New/Growing Christians

Step II

New Convert Sunday School Class: New Life Primer  
Membership Training: Discipleship—Your New Life in Christ  
Doctrinal Instruction: Dynamics of Discipling  
Christian Maturity: Living in the Power of the Spirit  
Leadership Development: Leadership Multiplication

Personal Evangelism Training

#### YOUTH

Basic Bible Studies for New/Growing Christians

New Convert Sunday School Class: Discovering the Word Series  
Membership Training: Design for Disciple-Making  
Doctrinal Instruction: Understanding Our Church Series  
Christian Maturity: Journal for Disciples  
Leadership Development: Leadership Multiplication

Wednesday Night Curriculum: TOTAL Workshop on Witnessing (WOW)  
Personal Evangelism Training

#### CHILDREN

Basic Bible Studies for Children  
Living as a Christian for Boys and Girls

Scriptural Foundation: Bible Memorization for Children  
Membership Training: This Is My Church  
Doctrinal Instruction: Foundations of Faith  
Christian Maturing: Children's Quizzing

Wednesday Night:  
Chippewa (Caravan for fours and fives)  
Caravan  
Children's Mission Education  
Sunday School  
Children's Church  
Vacation Bible School

Order from Nazarene Publishing House  
P.O. Box 419527, Kansas City, MO 64141

# EVANGELIST'S DIRECTORY

EVANGELISM MINISTRIES, CHURCH OF THE  
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(Monthly states published in the first issue of the "Herald of Holiness" each month)

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*An adequate budget for evangelism at the beginning of each church year is imperative for each congregation.  
A revival savings account is useful in building toward adequate support for the evangelist.*

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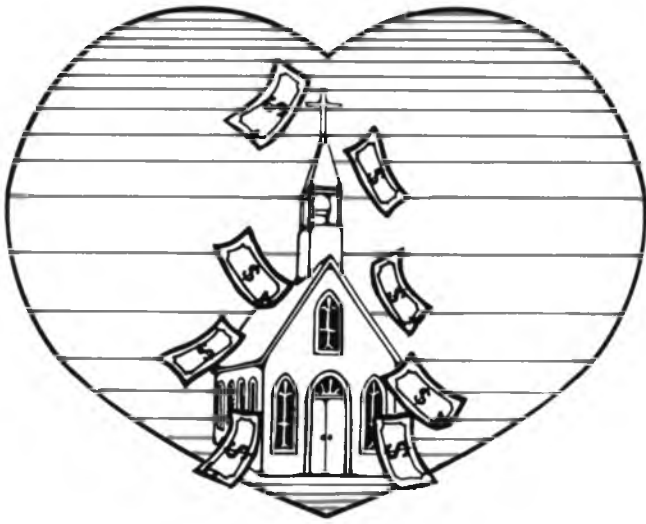
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tion but as yet seemed to understand little about justification by faith.

Having made the acquaintance of the German Moravian Peter Böhler and helping him to master English, Charles also spoke with him about the nature of saving faith. Böhler bluntly asked him: "Do you hope to be saved?" "Yes," answered Charles. "For what reasons do you hope it?" Böhler further pressed. Charles replied: "Because I have used my best endeavours to serve God." Böhler only shook his head, and Charles thought him uncharitable.<sup>1</sup> Nearly two months later, on April 20, his *Journal* records that he had "the satisfaction of once more meeting that man of God, Peter Böhler." Two days later both the Wesley brothers were in conversation with some of their friends on the nature of spiritual conversion. The conversation turned to whether or not conversion was gradual or instantaneous. Charles recorded: "My brother was very positive for the latter and very shocking; mentioned some late instances of gross sinners believing in a moment. I was much offended at this worse than unedifying discourse."<sup>2</sup> This extract is very illuminating.

John Wesley, since his return home from Georgia on February 1, 1738, had been deeply influenced by Peter Böhler, especially with regard to the nature of saving faith. In his *Journal* for March 4, John had written: "I found my brother at Oxford . . . and with him Peter Böhler, by whom (in the hand of the great God), I was, on Sunday the 5th, clearly convinced of unbelief, of the want of that faith whereby alone we are saved." Three weeks later John spoke of the amazement he felt at Peter Böhler's account of the holiness and happiness that are consequent upon "living faith" in Christ.

John was now convinced that the exercise of personal faith in Christ resulted in immediate spiritual birth, and it was his insistence on its instantaneous character that so annoyed Charles.

However upset Charles may have been because John was now advocating a Moravian-type conversion, his *Journal* clearly shows that from this time he began seeking after Christ with a new and stronger hope. Being seriously ill, he was visited by Peter Böhler on April 29 and of that visit Charles recorded that "God had detained him [i.e., Böhler] in England for my good . . . For

some days following I felt a faint longing for faith and could pray for nothing else." On May 11, still quite ill, Charles was given lodging in the home of John Bray, a brazier, who is described in the *Journal* as "a poor ignorant mechanic, who knows nothing but Christ; yet by knowing him, knows and discerns all things . . . We prayed together for faith." What a picture that is! Charles Wesley, Anglican minister, Christ Church College Scholar and Oxford Don, seeking the spiritual help and counsel of "a poor ignorant mechanic." The *Journal* continues: "Mr. Bray read me many comforting scriptures, which greatly strengthened my desire, so that I was persuaded I should not leave his house before I believed with my heart unto righteousness."

For the next two weeks Charles' *Journal* records his search after spiritual reality and assurance. While his *Journal* lacks the deep insights and moving personal confessions found in John's *Journal*, yet this record holds the key to his May 21 experience. Some brief extracts will illustrate. "I walked in the same blessed temper, hungry and thirsty after God" (May 12). "I longed to find Christ that I might show him to all mankind; that I might praise, that I might love him" (May 14). A very notable entry is made in the *Journal* for May 17: "Today I first saw Luther on the Galatians . . . and found him nobly full of faith . . . Who would believe our Church had been founded on this important article of justification by faith alone? I am ashamed I should ever think this a new doctrine . . . I spent some hours this evening in private with Martin Luther, who was greatly blessed to me, especially his conclusion of the 2nd chapter. I laboured, waited and prayed to feel 'who loved me and gave himself for me.'"<sup>3</sup> "I waked much disappointed and continued all day in great dejection, which the sacrament did not in the least abate" (May 20).

May 21, 1738, was Whitsunday, and Charles began his *Journal* entry for that day with the words: "I waked in hope and expectation of His coming." At nine in the morning John Wesley and some friends visited Charles, and together they sang "an hymn to the Holy Ghost." After they left, Charles prayed privately and was then quietly seeking sleep when he distinctly heard a woman's voice say: "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, arise, and believe and thou shalt be healed of all thy infirmities." Charles thought, from the accent, that the words were spoken by a Mrs. Musgrave, a frequent visitor in the Bray home. On making inquiries, however, he was told that Mrs. Musgrave was not in the house; the words had been spoken by Mrs. Turner, Bray's sister and herself a recent convert. Some time later she related the whole episode to Charles in detail. In a dream she had a kind of vision in which a voice commanded her to speak these words to Charles Wesley. When she awoke the memory of the dream troubled her and, consulting her brother, was advised to do as she had been told.

However this whole incident is to be explained, one thing is quite clear. Charles Wesley heard the words, and they spoke faith to his soul. He sent for John Bray who encouraged him that this was indeed Christ's word to him. Bray then began to read to him the opening words of Psalm 32, from the Prayer Book Version: "Blessed is the man whose unrighteousness is forgiven and whose



Herbert McGonigle

sin is covered . . ." Charles records: "I felt a violent opposition and reluctance to believe; yet still the Spirit of God strove with my own and the evil spirit, till by degrees he chased away the darkness of my unbelief."<sup>4</sup> Later, in the company of John Bray and Mrs. Turner, he opened the Bible and read: "'And, now, Lord, what is my hope? Truly my hope is even in thee.' I then cast down my eye and met, 'He hath put a new song in my mouth . . .'"<sup>5</sup> "Afterwards I opened upon Isaiah 40:1, 'Comfort ye, comfort ye . . .'" As Luke Wiseman so appropriately remarks: "In that hour—with Bray and Mrs. Turner as his Aquila and Priscilla—the Methodist Apollos found peace with God and rejoiced in the hope of loving Christ."<sup>6</sup>

In this way the great spiritual transformation happened in Charles Wesley's life on that Pentecost Sunday of 1738. The next day his *Journal* records how he rejoiced as he read Psalm 107, "So nobly describing what God had done for my soul." Later that day there is the significant entry: "My brother coming, we joined in intercession for him. In the midst of prayer, I almost believed the Holy Ghost was coming upon him."<sup>7</sup> At nine the next morning, Tuesday, May 23, Charles entered in his *Journal*: "I began a hymn upon my conversion but was persuaded to break off for fear of pride." Happily, for the whole Christian Church, wiser counsel prevailed: "Mr. Bray encouraged me to proceed in spite of Satan. I prayed Christ to stand by me and finished the hymn." The identity of this hymn will be noted later, but it should not be forgotten that had it not been for the sage advice of John Bray, its first rough draft might well have been consigned to the flames.

This brief glance at Charles' *Journal* is both needful and timely. His spiritual experience on May 21 was just as revolutionary and had as many far-reaching repercussions as John's was three days later, yet, while John's *Journal* entry for May 24 is so widely known and cited, Charles' account of May 21 is hardly known at all. But it was Charles Wesley who was the first "Methodist"; a member of the Oxford "Holy Club" before John joined and then finding assurance of Christ's pardon earlier than John. The spiritual fires that, under God, the Wesley brothers spread throughout Britain, were kindled first in the heart of Charles Wesley.

Wednesday, May 24, 1738, was destined to be prominent and unforgettable in the subsequent annals of English Church history. John Wesley's personal spiritual quest had been proceeding along lines very similar to those of Charles' and the Moravian influence on both brothers, through Peter Böhler, was to be crucial. John's *Journal* entry for May 24 is significantly prefaced: "What occurred on Wednesday the 24th. I think best to relate at large, after premising what may make it the better understood." Then follow 12 paragraphs in which he sets out an account of his spiritual life from the age of 10 to the present. These paragraphs cover the years at Charterhouse School, London (1714-20), his undergraduate days at Christ Church College, Oxford (1720-26), his Fellowship at Lincoln College (beginning in 1726), his time in Savannah (1735-38), his return to England and his meeting with Peter Böhler. This very personal record also recounts his diligent search after holiness by observing weekly fasts, regular attendance at the Lord's table and all other available means of

grace. He visited the sick, the needy, the poor, and the prisoners and strenuously endeavored to overcome sin and please God in everything he did. His reason for this fairly detailed résumé of his life is quite obvious; he wanted the events of May 24 to be seen and understood in their proper context.

At five o'clock that morning he read and noted the words of 2 Pet. 1:4. Later he recorded how he read, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark 12:34). In the afternoon at St. Paul's Church, he heard the anthem: "Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice." These particular scriptures are noted by Wesley because unquestionably they expressed the deep spiritual longing in his own heart. In the evening he attended a society meeting (one of many such gatherings where sincere Christians met in private homes for mutual edification)<sup>8</sup> in Aldersgate Street in London where the chosen reading that evening was Martin Luther's preface to his commentary on *Romans*. Then follows in John Wesley's *Journal* the now-classic entry: "About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death." For the evening of that same date, Charles' *Journal* records: "Towards ten, my brother was brought in triumph by a troop of our friends and declared, 'I believe.' We sang the hymn with great joy and parted with prayer." There can be little doubt that by "the hymn" Charles means his conversion hymn finished the day before, nor can there be any reasonable doubt about its identity. It was that great declaration of newfound faith in Christ, that poetic evangel issuing from a warmed heart, that Methodist manifesto declaring spiritual war on the kingdom of darkness and beginning:

*Where shall my wondering soul begin?  
How shall I all to heaven aspire?  
A slave redeemed from death and sin  
A brand plucked from eternal fire  
How shall I equal triumphs raise?  
Or sing my great Deliverer's praise?*<sup>9</sup>

What a scene is suggested by Charles' brief *Journal* record; Charles himself, rapidly recovering from illness and growing strong in the faith of Christ, John, his heart-warming experience scarce one hour old, together with their friends in John Bray's humble home and all singing the first truly evangelical production from the prolific pen of Charles, a harbinger, in song, of the coming revival.

How significant were these two events of May 21 and 24, which together may be conveniently called the Wesley brothers' 1738 Whitsun experience? What did they each mean to the man concerned in them? As far as this question can be answered at all convincingly, it can only be done by giving close attention to what the Wesleys themselves tell us and comparing that to the lives and work of John and Charles subsequent to 1738. From their earliest days in their Epworth rectory home, John and Charles Wesley had been orthodox Christian young men, believing Scripture to be the Word of God and wholly committed to the historic Christian faith as ex-

pressed in the article, homilies, and offices of their beloved Church of England. Whitsun 1738 did not make them orthodox; in later years they would defend their evangelical preaching as that which they had always believed as Anglicans. Nor was 1738 the beginning of spiritual seriousness in their lives. Both their *Journals* show that at least since their Oxford days they had endeavored, in every possible way, to know God and do His will. Both brothers played leading parts in consolidating the "Holy Club" and religious seriousness was its chief hallmark. Again Whitsun 1738 did not witness the conversion of two noted sinners into sainthood. As far as their daily conduct was concerned, John and Charles Wesley lived disciplined, dedicated, and devoted lives, wholly surrendered to God and quick to acknowledge and confess every sin and shortcoming they found in themselves.

Can the Wesleys' 1738 Whitsun experiences be called their evangelical conversions? Much of the evidence certainly seems to point that way, but it depends on what precisely is meant by "conversion" in this context. In evangelical thinking, this term usually refers to that experience of grace of which regeneration is the result, the true beginning of the Christian life in the forgiveness of sins and spiritual rebirth by the Holy Spirit. If the Wesleys' experience is interpreted like that, then it means, in plain terms, that, prior to that weekend, the Wesley brothers were not truly Christians in the New Testament sense of that term. To put it more bluntly; such an interpretation means that prior to May 21, 1738, John and Charles Wesley were lost souls. But surely such a conclusion is too severe and simply will not fit the facts. However deficient was the Wesleys' understanding of salvation by faith prior to Whitsun 1738 (and their *Journals* show it was deficient) and however weak and vacillating was their own experience of that faith (and again the *Journals* have ample proof of this), there can be no doubt at all that John and Charles Wesley did have faith in Christ as Savior and Lord before May 1738.<sup>10</sup>

What did happen to them, then, in those three remarkable and epoch-making days. The answer to this lies in the language they employed to record those days. John wrote: "*I felt my heart . . . I felt I did trust in Christ . . . and an assurance was given me . . . I then testified openly . . . what I now first felt in my heart*" (italics ours). In his "conversion hymn," which Charles had completed on May 23, he had the lines:

*O, how shall I the goodness tell  
Father, which Thou to me hast showed?  
That I, a child of wrath and hell  
I should be called a child of God.  
Should know, should feel, my sins forgiven  
Blest with that antepast of heaven.*  
(emphasis ours)

The "Whitsun event" brought to John and Charles Wesley the warm certainty of spiritual assurance. They knew then their acceptance of God; they knew their sins forgiven; they knew and felt within them the power of birth from above. Precisely *when* the spiritual climax happened in their souls may not be capable of pinpoint calendar precision, but Whitsun 1738 brought the great assurance that they were in Christ. The hymns that

flowed from Charles' pen in the immediately succeeding months bear eloquent testimony to this spiritual certainty, which in turn inspired a fervent evangel, hymns like "And Can It Be?" "O for a Thousand Tongues," "My God! I Know, I Feel Thee Mine," "Sinners, Your Saviour See!" "Ho! Every One That Thirst," and so on.

Their preaching also had a new note of certainty in it. With persuasive and spiritual power, they proclaimed Christ crucified and the nature of saving faith—and the fruits of that preaching were immediately visible. Prior to Whitsun 1738 both the Wesley brothers had seen some spiritual fruit for their labors, but now the harvest was abundant. In John's words: "From the year 1725 to 1729 I preached much, but saw no fruit for my labour . . . From the year 1729 to 1734 . . . I saw a little fruit . . . From 1734 to 1738 I saw more fruit of my preaching . . . From 1738 to this time . . . the word of God ran as fire among the stubble."<sup>11</sup>

Beyond all doubt it was the happenings of Whitsun 1738 that made John and Charles Wesley the evangelists of a spiritual awakening. Had they not had their May 21 and May 24 experiences, it is extremely doubtful if Church history would even have recorded their names. Both might well have spent their remaining years at Oxford, conversing with their chosen friends, very probably writing treatises on the spiritual life and devotedly following God in meditation and charitable service. Had that happened, England would have been immeasurably the poorer, for it could be cogently argued that what happened to John and Charles Wesley at Whitsun 250 years ago was the most significant event in English Church history since the Reformation. But it did happen, at Pentecost, and having kindled fire in their hearts, God thrust out John and Charles Wesley to be His witnesses. This is the event we celebrate this Whitsun; the beginnings of revival in the heart-warming of the Wesley brothers two and a half centuries ago.

This year has, as noted, a second Wesleyan anniversary, for 200 years ago, on March 29, 1788, Charles Wesley, Methodist preacher, stirring revivalist and England's greatest hymn-writer, died in London at the age of 80. This is not the place to attempt an evaluation of his life and work, but the Methodist revival of the 18th century is almost as unthinkable without Charles Wesley as without his brother John. For 20 years, from 1738 to 1758, he itinerated and preached in the open air as often and as successfully as John. Among the soldiers and peasants in Ireland, with the miners in Cornwall and Newcastle, in the midst of the crowds on one of London's commons and facing the mobs in Colne and Walsall, Charles was to be found, proclaiming the great themes of redemption through Christ alone.

"The power and seal of God is never wanting," he wrote, "while I declare the two great truths of the everlasting gospel; universal redemption and Christian perfection."<sup>12</sup> And for 50 years, his pen, dipped, as it were, in the very ink of holy Scripture, poured out its biblical treasures to set the Methodist converts singing—and to bless the whole Christian Church ever since. Every scripture doctrine is there in his hymns, almost every page of the entire Bible is referred to by citation or allusion, in his verses, for Charles Wesley was, supremely, a Scripture poet. Some 6,700 pieces came from his pen,



from his conversion hymn written on May 23, 1738, to his last stanza, dictated to his wife, Sarah, a few days before he died:

*In age and feebleness extreme  
Who shall a helpless worm redeem?  
Jesus! my only hope Thou art;  
Strength of my failing flesh and heart.  
O could I catch one smile from Thee  
And drop into eternity!*

Charles was buried in St. Marylebone churchyard in London, and 70 years later the Methodist Conference erected a monument there for "the brother of the Founder (under God) of the Methodist Connection." Chiseled into the stone were words that Charles himself had written for a departed friend:

*With poverty of spirit blest  
Rest, happy saint, in Jesus' rest.  
Thy labours of unwearied love  
By thee forgot, are crowned above;  
Crowned, through the mercy of thy Lord  
With a full, free, immense reward.*

And ever since the Church of Christ has given praise to God for "the sweet singer of Methodism," the scriptural Orpheus of the Church universal. Of all the tributes ever paid to Charles Wesley, perhaps the most moving was that paid by brother John. How close they had been all through their years; at Epworth, in Oxford, in Savannah, at Whitsun 1738—and for the next 50 years as together they called England to repentance. Three weeks after Charles' death, John was preaching in Bolton in north-west England, and gave out Charles' great hymn, "Wrestling Jacob": ("Come, O Thou Traveler Unknown"). When they came to the lines

*My company before is gone  
And I am left alone with Thee*

the old veteran slumped down in the pulpit, put his hands in his face and burst into tears, while the entire congregation wept with him.<sup>13</sup>

And so, in this year of grace 1988, we celebrate and give thanks to God for 1738 and 1788, remembering the lives and labors and legacies of those remarkable brothers, John and Charles Wesley.



## NOTES

1. *The Journal of Charles Wesley*, 2 vols. (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1980) 1:82.
2. *Ibid.*, 84. On April 22 John Wesley confessed that he could not understand Böhrer when he spoke of "an instantaneous work." He began to search the Scriptures again and wrote: "To my utter astonishment I found scarce any instances there of other than instantaneous conversions." See *The Journal of John Wesley*, 8 vols., ed. by Nehemiah Curnock (London, 1938), 1:454.
3. Commenting on Gal. 2:20, Luther wrote: "Let us dwell on that word 'me'—'who gave himself for me.' . . . Read, therefore, with great vehemency, these words, 'me' and 'for me' that thou with sure faith mayest conceive and print this 'me' in thy heart and apply it unto thyself, not doubting but that thou art of the number to whom this 'me' belongeth" (Luther's *Commentary*, in. loc.).
4. *Journal*, 1:91. In his *Journal* for May 21 John wrote: "I received the surprising news that my brother had found rest to his soul."
5. Ps. 39:8 and 40:3; both citations are from the Prayer Book Version.
6. Luke Wiseman, *Charles Wesley* (London, 1933), 49.
7. *Journal*, 1:93.
8. There is a full account of these societies given in John S. Simon's, *John Wesley and the Religious Societies* (London, 1921).
9. See *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, ed. by G. Osborn, 13 vols. (London, 1868), 1:91-93. Charles significantly titled it "Christ the Friend of Sinners."
10. See John Wesley's *Journal*, 1:429-31.
11. See his very important second letter to Thomas Church in *The Letters of John Wesley*, 8 vols., ed. by John Telford (London, 1931), 2:264. Of particular importance is why John Wesley saw how much more fruitful was his ministry after May 1738; the letter to Church was written in June 1746. See also how John Wesley refers back to 1738 and, by implication, to May 24; e.g., *Journal* for October 30, 1783; for December 30, 1745; for May 14, 1765; for July 13, 1788.
12. *Journal*, 1:286.
13. Luke Tyreman, *The Life and Times of John Wesley*, 3 vols. (London, 1871), 3:527.

# PASTOR, ANGEL, OR DONKEY?

In a small Minnesota town the presiding elder of the district, B. V. Seals, was conferring with a church congregation regarding a new pastor. After much debate it was voted to lower the salary for the new minister.

In the rear of the church sat one of the community's reprobates who was also a faithful attender and contributor to this church.

When the motion was passed to lower the incoming minister's salary, he stood to his feet and asked the presiding officer for a special privilege to speak. Permission was granted.

He said, "I have attended this church from my youth. I have faithfully supported this church with my tithes and offerings, but my life does not measure up to its mem-

bership standards. I have come to the conclusion that only two characters could ever pastor this local congregation successfully, either an angel or a donkey. The angel would not have to have money for food, and the donkey could secure his food by the side of the road."

With that, he turned and left the meeting.

—Morris Chalfant





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## EASTER

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# EASTER: RELIVING THE MYSTERY

by Robert E. Webber

*Professor of Theology, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Ill.*

A venerable stone church with several huge maples in front and a sprawling cemetery behind, sits proudly on the south side of Pike 309 in Montgomeryville. Rumor has it George Washington once worshiped there.

For most people it is a typical evangelical Baptist church. But for me, it is special—my father was the pastor and it was there I worshiped as a teenager.

Worship from Sunday to Sunday was quite typical—a few hymns, prayers, Scripture reading, and sermon. But at least twice a year—Christmas and Easter—worship leaped out of second gear into overdrive. I remember Easter especially.

Easter was not simply a single day at Montgomeryville. It always included at least Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday itself. What made these days memorable was the style of worship. We moved out of the usual verbal communications alone to act out the events.

I have long since forgotten the sermons, but I can still remember marching with a palm in my hand, standing before the large, wooden cross, and getting up early for the open-air sunrise service before an empty tomb.

This dramatic reenactment of the death and resurrection of Christ was done out of instinct—as though we knew Marshall McLuhan was right: “The medium is the message.” When we not only told the story but acted it out, the message took on new life.

Years later, when I began to study worship, I discovered that our acting out of the Easter events at Mont-

gomeryville was rooted in traditions that go back to the Early Church. Traces of those traditions are found in the New Testament.

### Easter in the Early Church

In the church of the first centuries after Christ, every Sunday was a “little Easter.” The Easter season itself (not unlike that at the church of my childhood) was a special event in which the living, dying, and rising of Christ was not only told in words but also acted out in a participatory drama.

The earliest evidence of an Easter celebration in the New Testament is found in the words of Paul written to the Corinthian community about A.D. 55: “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. 5:7). The clue to how Easter may have been celebrated in the primitive Christian community is found in the word *Passover*, for the earliest Christians were Jews.

Jewish worship passed two emphases on to early Christian worship: First, worship was rooted in an event. The Passover service, for example, celebrated the Exodus, when God brought the Israelites out of Egypt and made them into His people. Second, celebrating that event in worship made it contemporaneous—the original power of the event evoked feelings among contemporary worshipers similar to the response of the original participants in the event. The event was celebrated and made contemporary by telling the story and acting it out.

It was natural that the early Christians would adopt a worship style similar to the Jewish one. For exam-

ple, early Christian worship was built around Word and table—a twofold way of enacting revelation (God spoke) and Incarnation (God became one of us). Dramatic reenactment was especially seen at the table where the action of taking, blessing, breaking, and giving the bread and taking, blessing, and giving the cup reenacted the Lord's last supper. The idea of acting out the full story sprang from the nature of the Lord's Supper, where the actions were as important as the words.

Perhaps the best insight into Easter worship as story told and acted out comes from the writing of a woman named Egeria. Her *Diary of a Pilgrimage* contains a firsthand account of Easter in Jerusalem in the late fourth century. The diary, together with liturgies from that period, provides us with an inspiring picture of Easter in the Early Church.

In those days, preparation for Easter began seven weeks before the date. There was an emphasis on personal identification with the suffering of Jesus. These ancient Christians were convinced that the resurrection could not be adequately experienced without traveling the way of death themselves. They desired to fulfill Jesus' admonitions of Mark 10 in a literal way by taking up the cross and going up to Jerusalem with Him (v. 33). They wanted to drink of the cup that He drank (v. 39) and to be baptized with His baptism (v. 39). (Our Lord's 40-day fast in the desert suggested the 40 days of Lent.)

While this 40-day experience em-

phasized fasting and prayer, it was not done in the spirit of legalism or ritualism. The intent was to prepare for Easter by reliving the mystery. Fasting and prayer were not ends in themselves—they led the participants into a deeper experiential appreciation of the mystery of salvation through a subjective identification with Christ. By hearing the Word and by acting it out—not just for a day, but over a period of time—the message took hold more firmly.

### Holy Week

According to Egeria, what we call Holy Week was known as the “Great Week” in fourth-century Jerusalem. This week of the climactic events of the arrest, conviction, crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is the most extraordinary week in the Christian calendar, the week in which the redemption of the world happened, in which the re-creation of the world began.

Egeria describes the day-to-day events of the Great Week:

- On *Palm Sunday*, all the Christians assembled at the top of the Mount of Olives. Grasping palms and branches in their hands, they sang, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,” as they walked slowly to the church in Jerusalem. The bishop of Jerusalem, symbolizing Christ, was in the midst of the crowd. When night fell, evening prayers were celebrated, concluded by a prayer in front of a cross erected for the occasion.

- On *Monday*, they continually sang hymns and antiphons, and read passages from the Scriptures appropriate to that day in Holy Week. Egeria reports that these readings and songs were continually interrupted with prayers.

- On *Tuesday*, they did the same except for this: “The Bishop takes up the book of the Gospels, and while standing, reads the words of the Lord which are written in the Gospel according to Matthew at the place where he said ‘Take heed that no man deceive you’” (Matt. 24:4).

- On *Wednesday*, everything was done as on Monday and Tuesday except that the bishop read the passage where Judas went to the Jews to set the price they would pay him to betray the Lord (Matt. 26:14 ff.; Mark 14:10 ff.; Luke 22:3-6 ff.). Egeria reports that “while this good pas-

sage is being read, there is such moaning and groaning from among the people that no one can help being moved to tears in that moment.” (This and similar comments throughout her account suggest the powerful effect that reenactment can have on the worshipers’ feelings.)

- On *Thursday evening*, Communion was celebrated. Then all went home to eat their last meal until Easter, and later returned to worship all night as a way of reenacting the gospel accounts of Thursday night. “They continually sing hymns and antiphons and read the Scripture passages proper to the place and to the day. Between these, prayers are said.”

- Early on *Friday*, after worshipping all night, the Christians proceeded to Gethsemane, where they read the passage describing the Lord’s arrest (Matt. 26:36-56). Egeria reports that “there is such moaning and groaning with weeping from all the people that their moaning can be heard practically as far as the city.” They then went to the place of the cross where the words of Pilate were read (Matt. 27:2-26; Mark 15:1-15; Luke 23:1-25; John 18:28; 19:16). Then the bishop sent the crowd home to meditate, instructing them to return about the second hour so that everyone would be “on hand here so that from that hour until the sixth hour you may see the holy wood of the cross, and thus believe that it was offered for the salvation of each and every one of us.”

- On *Friday night*, they acknowledged the cross as the instrument of salvation. A cross was put on a table and the people passed by “touching the cross and the inscription, first with their foreheads, then with their eyes; and after kissing the cross, they move on.”

- On *Saturday*, worship was conducted at the third and sixth hours. After nightfall the Easter vigil was held. Although Egeria says little about this service, we know from other sources that it was a dramatic reenactment of the Resurrection. It included a service of light that celebrated Christ as the Light of the World, and the annual baptismal service in which people were baptized into Christ’s dying and rising. (The Early Church practice of baptism by

immersion was a graphic enactment of burial and resurrection.) And the glorious service that occurred on Sunday morning (after the all-night vigil) celebrated the resurrection of Christ through readings, antiphons, preaching, and the Eucharist.

Consider the involvement, the total immersion in the death and resurrection of their Lord that the worshipers must have experienced. For weeks they had prepared for this service. Then, throughout Holy Week, they had been exhausted by the intensity of following after the events in Jesus’ life that led to His death. Now, after another night of vigil and anticipation, the moment of Jesus’ resurrection came. Because these people had entered the tomb with Him, they were able to experience His resurrection—in a way that would never happen apart from the dramatic journey they had taken.

Finally, Egeria tells us that Easter did not end on Easter day. It was followed by eight days of celebration. The worshipers’ fast was over. They identified no longer with death, but with resurrection and life. For eight days the Christians gathered in worship. These festive services were in sharp contrast to the sober preparations for the Passion. They extended the resurrection side of Easter even as fasting had prepared for the crucifixion.

### Traditions for Today

For us today, the principle of reenactment can guide the development of Easter traditions in our local churches.

First, regaining a full tradition of Easter—one that stretches back 40 days through Lent and forward 50 days to Pentecost—will help us mark time Christianly. Frozen foods, central heat, electric lights, and other modern marvels have robbed our lives of their daily and seasonal rhythms. A week in the office in bleak January is indistinguishable from a workweek in budding April.

But this is hardly the biblical experience of time. Biblical time is marked by weekly and seasonal feasts and fasts and by a history full of significant events and signs of hope. In Holy Week the world leans into the future when Christ will return to establish His kingdom over all the earth. Thus, this week of weeks not only celebrates the past

(Continued on page 41)

# MEMORIES AND FELLOWSHIP

by Harvey J. S. Blaney

**C**hristmas and New Year's Day have just come and gone, stopping for only a few hours and then fading into the past. How often we wish we could keep them—especially Christmas—for a longer time, but they are soon stored in the reservoir of life's memories. Like all other events they are subject to the passing of time. Even our religious experiences, of faith in a timeless God, of worship and emphasis upon eternal things, are involved in the temporal process. The redemptive acts of God as recorded in both the Old and New Testaments were enacted according to a time schedule. God's self-revelation to man has always been in keeping with the before and after of man's existence, even though God himself is eternal.

The Incarnation is perhaps the best example of this phenomenon. God the Creator was at the same time God the Redeemer when He took upon himself human nature in the birth, life, and death of Jesus of Nazareth and thus in this respect became subject to time and space. God the holy and eternal One shared the experiences of man the sinful and temporal one, in order that man could partake of God's holiness in a personal relationship.

Worship in the Christian Church has to a large extent been the commemoration of this great demonstration of God's love for man, calling to mind in repeated acts of celebration what took place nearly 2,000 years ago. The Crucifixion has become central in terms of its religious significance although Christmas has yielded celebrations that surpass all

the others. Use of the terms "Christ is born," "Christ is crucified," and "Christ is risen" endeavors to keep Christ contemporary.

One preacher was heard to remark that some Christians never get beyond the Crucifixion in their veneration of Christ—they never go on to the Resurrection. They worship Christ crucified but not Christ resurrected. And we might add that they never go on to Pentecost. The commemoration of the life and death of the historical Jesus comprises their entire worship—the celebration of past events and experiences.

The story of King Hezekiah of Judah comes to mind. "He did what was right in the sight of the Lord" (2 Kings 18:3).<sup>\*</sup> Among other things, "He broke into pieces the bronze snake Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it" (v. 4). God had told Moses to erect the snake on a pole and "anyone who is bitten can look at it and live" (Num. 21:8). God's people had made an idol of it and were worshipping the bronze snake rather than God.

Is it possible that some Christians today celebrate events in the life of the historical Jesus at the expense of what followed His death, that it becomes a kind of idolatry? The Babe of Bethlehem, the Old Rugged Cross, plus the teachings and miracles of Jesus are sacred memories and stir deep religious emotions. But they are memories, having had their places in the great plan of redemption. Of themselves they provide no present, personal contact with God, or even with the crucified Lord.

There has to be, there must be, there is more. And Jesus told His disciples what that more is.

He said that He would rise from the dead after He was crucified—and the Gospel writers recorded the event for all to know. He was soon recognized by His physical appearance, yet He had changed. There was a spiritual quality about Him that transcended the physical. He operated within time and space, yet He was subject to neither. Physical barriers did not hinder His movements. The Incarnate Christ had become the resurrected Christ.

But this was not the end of His earthly mission. He had told them that two additional occurrences would take place in quick succession—or perhaps three. He would leave them so that the Holy Spirit would come to be with them always; and He himself would return to them. It is significant that the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit and His own return were spoken in the same context (John 14). The Jesus of history became the object of reverent memories, but from that time the disciples had access only to the resurrected Christ in association with the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps the best way to follow through on this whole process is to examine the experience of Saul of Tarsus, later to be known as Paul the apostle. He was a Jew, a devoted, honest worshiper of Jehovah the God of Israel. His zeal had driven him to crusade against the movement Jesus had initiated and everything He stood for; it was a dangerous challenge to his own faith and

that of his people. But as he traveled the open road, farther and farther from Jerusalem, the focus of the conflict, the calmer his mind became. As he reflected on the teachings of Jesus he began to see that much of it came from the Scriptures that had been the foundation of his own religious life. It may have been the interpretation placed upon them that he found hard to accept.

Suddenly things began to happen. A voice accosted him, seeming to emanate from a sphere of brilliant light, which blinded him. And he stumbled to the ground. "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? . . . I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:4-5). Saul's mind had begun to clear. Perhaps he had been wrong all the time. And suddenly he knew it. The strange stories of Jesus being raised from the dead and seen by His disciples were true after all. One encounter with the risen Christ was more convincing than all the expressed claims and miracles of the Stranger of Galilee. He realized that he had been confronted by the Christ of the Resurrection.

He now saw Jesus as his own Messiah, described by the prophet Isaiah as the Suffering Servant and by Daniel as the Son of Man. The hopes of his own people—God's chosen people—were being fulfilled in a way far different from what he had expected, and he had almost missed it. The Crucifixion took on real significance as having a place in God's great plan of redemption, and his contact with the Risen Christ forced him to acknowledge the truth of what he was experiencing.

The Resurrection gave significance to the Crucifixion, an event no one could deny, without which the life of Jesus from birth to death would have been futile. All of His followers would have been like the two disciples on their way home to Emmaus saying to each other, "We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel" (Luke 24:21). Later Paul himself wrote, "If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless . . . your faith is futile; you are still in your sins" (1 Cor. 15:14, 17).

But Saul, as well as Christ's disciples, learned that the Resurrection was not the final act in what God was then doing to inaugurate a new

dispensation of salvation. There was more to come. Jesus had said that the Holy Spirit would come. And the Spirit did come—upon the 120 in the Upper Room and upon Saul while still in Damascus. Just three days separated Saul's two great transforming experiences: his encounter with the risen Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit upon him under the ministry of Ananias. Two such momentous experiences in so short a time, and with such effective results, were enough to confuse the thinking of any man, and there is little wonder that he went off by himself to ponder what had taken place before going back to Jerusalem to meet those who had been disciples (Gal. 1:17). And it does not seem strange that he never seemed able to distinguish between the resurrected Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Christians are justified "in Christ" (Gal. 2:17) and "by the Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:11). They are sanctified, sealed in Christ and the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 15:16; Eph. 1:13; 4:30; Col. 2:11). Believers have joy, faith, love, and fellowship both "in Christ" and "in the Spirit" (Phil. 2:1; Rom. 14:17; Gal. 3:26; 1 Cor. 12:9; Rom. 8:39; Col. 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 13:14). Both are said to be the quickening power (2 Cor. 4:14; Rom. 8:11), both are the source of new life (Gal. 2:20; 5:16-22), and both are also said to be the assurance of eternal life (2 Cor. 1:22; Col. 1:27).

Incidentally, there is no conflict between the concept of Christ's presence in the Holy Spirit (or vice versa) and His being seated at the right hand of God in heaven. In both cases the concepts are spiritual, not physical. God's right hand is not a physical object but the symbol of His authority and power. Especially in the Psalms God's right hand represents His labors on behalf of His people. In both Christ and the Spirit we experience God, present and active. Paul knew God as Jehovah in his Judaic faith, as crucified resurrected Lord, and as Holy Spirit. He did not profess to be able to explain this multiple presence of God, and on one occasion he wrote of the mystery of God's dealings with Israel (Rom. 11:25). To him Christ was the revelation of a mystery hidden for ages (16:25), and the mystery of God's will (Eph. 1:9). It was a mys-

tery revealed but not explained. We do not need to fully understand the great mysteries of salvation from sin, but they become realities in personal experience, supported by the Bible and the testimonies of the great multitude of Christians through the centuries.

Just as the Resurrection was necessary to confirm the significance of the Crucifixion, so the coming of the Holy Spirit was essential to the ministry of the resurrected Christ. Paul would say that one cannot accept the Resurrection without at the same time acknowledging the validity of the work of the Holy Spirit. He wrote, "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ" (Rom. 8:9). It is God the Holy Spirit who makes effective all that God the Son made possible. It is the Holy Spirit who convicts of sin, brings forgiveness and cleansing, who leads into all truth, and indwells the believer as Christ's promised Comforter, "who will be with you forever—the Spirit of truth" (John 14:17).

The doctrine and experience of the Holy Spirit are at the very heart of Wesleyanism. We hold the birth and death of Jesus in sacred memory and "cling to the Old Rugged Cross" for the hope of salvation. But Jesus would be only the memory of the world's greatest moral and religious leader were it not for His resurrection and His continued presence by the Holy Spirit. Through the Spirit we have fellowship "with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). The Spirit is more than an accessory spiritual force emanating from Jesus Christ, more than a mystical sense of the presence of God. The Spirit is the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit—God present and active in His church and people. The Spirit's redemptive presence in the world is permanent. There is no scriptural evidence to suggest an additional personal revelation of God. The Holy Spirit is His highest revelation. The popular assertion that divine revelation reached its highest level in the Incarnation not only stops short of Pentecost but, in so doing, also tends to linger in the realm of sacred memories that demonstrate little of the vital, transforming presence of God.

Modern biblical liberalism holds no place in the teaching and preaching of the holiness movement. God grant that it may always be so. At the same times we have disassociated ourselves from the modern charismatic movement with its emphasis upon certain physical manifestations as evidences of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. The fact is that our churches are charismatic in the true sense of the term, but we have failed to take note of the outstanding results when a group gives prominent emphasis to the Holy Spirit, even though the concept of charisma has been greatly abused. Paul found some people in the church at Philippi preaching the gospel with ulterior motives, and he did not like it. But his restrained response was, "What does it matter? The important thing is . . . Christ is preached" (Phil. 1:18). He did not condone the error, but he saw God's Spirit at work and believed that through prayer and the "help given by the Spirit" things would work out advantageously. We do not need to accept tongues speaking in order to acknowledge the work of the Holy Spirit when spiritual and moral results are evident. Saving grace may be evident where error in theology or biblical interpretation are also present, for He has chosen fallible humans to spread the gospel, many of whom are poorly prepared and inadequately informed.


We find ourselves as a church somewhere between the two extremes of humanistic liberalism and pentecostal fundamentalism, while we are being strongly influenced by

a popular evangelicalism, much of which has stopped short of Pentecost and is not in sympathy with the distinctive holiness message that is our inheritance. There is little virtue in being different for the sake of having an individual identity. But being distinctive is something else. The Church of the Nazarene was raised up to spread scriptural holiness throughout the world. Recognition of the work of the Holy Spirit is essential, theologically, biblically, and experientially, in making effective what Christ provided on Calvary. Our challenge is to present this message intelligently and fervently, persuading people that the twofold nature of salvation—forgiveness and cleansing—is God's answer to the twofold nature of sin—practice and perversion. The remedy must conform to the disease.

The study of church history shows that in the second or third generation of most religious movements the original character begins to be lost, not only by adjusting to changes in society and culture but also because those who carry on the movement seldom demonstrate insight and devotion equal to that of its founders. Is this what is taking place in the holiness movement today? Can it be taken for granted that pastors are preaching the message of Christian perfection and that our young people and new converts are adequately acquainted with our Statement of Faith and the meaning of second blessing holiness? It is more difficult to pastor a Nazarene church today than it was 50, or even 25, years ago. It takes more study, a

better understanding of the Bible and theology, keener insight into the nature of humanity and its need of salvation from sin, a new definition of worldliness, the heart of an Isaiah, and the wisdom of a Solomon.

Brethren, God has called us to His kingdom for such a time as this. The loudest Christian voices being heard today are not preaching the transforming power and baptism of the Holy Spirit, and too many of our people are being nourished on a spiritual diet lesser than God has furnished, a diet that provides little and produces less. (In spite of the many excellent restaurants available today, home in a family setting is still the best place to eat.)

Our church has recently celebrated its founding, and we have been inspired, looking back to our roots and seeking to keep fresh in mind the memories of our early days and founding fathers. But memories can never be present realities. There is no life in the remembered past, no fellowship with those who can only be recalled to mind. The past is theirs. The present is ours. And we have the resources available to build as nobly as they, provided we demonstrate full dedication to the risen Christ and give sufficient place to the Holy Spirit and His part in the salvation process. "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). Let us pray! 

\*Scripture quotations in this article are from the New International Version.

## EASTER

*(Continued from page 38)*

but also anticipates the future. It is the source from which all time proceeds.


Second, when we act out Easter as well as tell about it, we employ means of communication that both build on the strengths and repair some of the damage of the television age.

One strength of the television age is the restoration of visual communication. We remember what we see and hear so much better than what

we merely hear. Of course, the written word will never and should never become passé, but the communications revolution of the 20th century is restoring visual and action-oriented communication to its rightful place.

The curse of television has been to encourage passive attitudes and short attention spans. We have become content to sit and watch a stream of 30-minute sitcoms and 30-second commercials rather than to become engaged with ideas or to build relationships (as we do when we invest hours in a challenging book or practice the art of conversa-

tion—or even play parlor games). But participatory worship, especially the reenactment of Easter and the other great Christian events, can help fight passivity and restraint and restore fervent faith.

We can enhance our worship by rediscovering the power of dramatic participation. Drama is no substitute for preaching and teaching. But it is another way of proclaiming the message. It not only says but also does. And it draws us into action. Dramatic participation in worship, like my adolescent memories of the Montgomeryville stone church, has staying power. 



# PREPARING THE WAY OF THE LORD

by Joe Seaborn

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**A**mong students of John Wesley, many would second William Wakinshaw's observation that "it is supremely as a preacher that he will be had in everlasting remembrance."<sup>1</sup> That, in part, is traceable to the fact that Wesley preached over 800 times a year for over 50 years. Probably to a greater degree, it stems from the fact that Wesley's preaching left his lips with laserlike intensity and reached its target in tact. If truth was to be used to its fullest advantage, Wesley believed, it must fire the heart of the hearer with the same explosive certainty as it did the heart of the preacher.

One recurring theme in Wesley's theology was the assumption that God's grace called for an echoing human response. For the preacher, that response meant the composition and delivery of a sermon that created maximum opportunity for God's convicting grace to motivate and move the heart. The function of the sermon was to set the stage, to construct a framework of persuasion within which divine action could most effectively occur. Wesley never mistook the persuasiveness of the preacher for the action of the Spirit, but neither did he overlook the fact that the preacher had considerable work to do to prepare the way of the Lord.

Wesley was relentless in his call for excellence in preaching. Since God's action was always perfect, the reciprocal human response was to be perfect. Wesley was realistic enough to know that human response often falls short of perfection, but he never blurred the ideal. In preaching, too, he was convinced that only the pure in heart shall see God. In order to achieve quality in preaching, Wesley set forth several suggestions.

**WORD-PAINT IN RICH, DEEP BURGUNDY.** Whatever else may be true of Wesley's sermons, they clearly made a difference in people's lives. Among colliers and highbrows, they cut swift, sudden paths to the hearts. In large measure, this came about because Wesley's sermons were composed and delivered with people's needs clearly in mind. Wesley learned the difficult but pivotal skill of balancing the 1st-century message with 18th-century living. He neither became too absorbed in the ideals of Scripture nor too overwhelmed by the flagrant sins of his people. His sound sense of biblical truth ran in tandem with his clear knowledge of the bold sinfulness of many of his hearers. And it is precisely here that Wesley's preaching finds one of its primary distinguishing marks: Wesley zeroed in on the spiritual and physical rough-and-tumble of his people's lives and offered answers. As Thomas Nelson worded it, "He made my heart beat like a pendulum of a clock. I thought he spoke to no one but me." This man, he worried, knew the very secrets of his heart.

Wesley preached to clearly answer the question, "So what?" If his aim was repentance, he moved logically, relentlessly in that direction. Convinced as he was that obedience to God was the highest and most wholesome way to live, Wesley used every vacant field and every street corner that would draw a crowd to tell the old new story. He branded as that "useless and mischievous" preaching that focused only on the suffering of Christ or salvation by faith but did not go on to indicate how that same faith could lead to holiness.<sup>2</sup> If

preaching was to “take,” it had to be weighted with life-changing directives.

**USE CRYSTAL-CLEAR VOCABULARY.** Wesley believed that the preached Word ought to be worthy of God’s anointing. As a human composition upon which God’s grace might bloom, the sermon must rate as the best piece of plain, direct, and simple art that the preacher could muster. High-blown jargon never did rank very high in Wesley’s opinion. He criticized Dr. Middleton as “no model preacher. His diction is stiff, formal, affected, unnatural. The art glares and therefore shocks the man of true taste.”<sup>3</sup>

Nor was Wesley happy with a window-rattling, jack-hammer type of preaching that muffled the message beneath the preacher’s ranting and raving. To more than one person he wrote, “Don’t scream. Speak with all your heart, but with a moderate voice. I often speak loud, often vehemently, but I never scream. I never strain myself.”<sup>4</sup> A stained-glass voice and flailing limbs did not do much for his sense of propriety either. “Nothing more grates the ear than a voice still in the same key. Never clap your hands nor thump the pulpit. . . . Your hands are not to be in perpetual motion; this the ancients call the babbling of hands.”<sup>5</sup>

Wesley yearned to have his preachers tell the full-orbed message of redemption enhanced as much as possible by the elegantly plain language common to their day. “I am,” he concluded, “for plain sound English.” Wesley would have agreed with Jung, “Eternal truth needs a human language that alters with the spirit of the time.”

**KEEP A NEEDLE-POINT FOCUS.** A scanning of Wesley’s sermons shows that his messages do not suffer from miscellany. With a logical and lovely cogency, they begin, continue, and end in focus. “On Sin in Believers” is about sin in believers. “The Almost Christian” concerns persons who almost become Christians. Line upon line, paragraph upon paragraph, the sermons enjoy a clear focal point.

Wesley’s serious commitment to meeting his hearers’ needs helped him keep to a single purpose for each sermon. “Take care,” he urged his preachers, “not to ramble, but keep to your text, and make out what you have in hand.”<sup>6</sup> Sure, Wesley believed in the anointing of the Spirit, but he believed in it after one had done his homework. And part of that homework involved sending forth a focused truth so that the Spirit could make a focused application with greatest ease. Wesley probably knew days like most of us when his sermon cup ran over and spilled out in all directions, but he also knew that on average sermons go best when all things have been done decently and in order.

**LET YOUR MESSAGE BE AN ECHO OF YOUR LIFE.** One reason people hung onto Wesley’s messages was that he spoke about issues intensely personal and real to himself. The theme of holiness that became a hallmark of his ministry, had first been a hallmark of his life. Nobody ever challenged him for preaching truths that he himself had not lived. The power of his preaching came, to a great degree, from the integrity of his private life. There was “something finer about him than anything he ever said.”

## THE CHRISTIAN CALENDAR

Third Sunday in Lent . . . . .	March 6
Fourth Sunday in Lent . . . . .	March 13
Fifth Sunday in Lent . . . . .	March 20
Palm Sunday . . . . .	March 27
Maundy Thursday . . . . .	March 31
Good Friday . . . . .	April 1
Easter Day . . . . .	April 3
Second Sunday of Easter . . . . .	April 10
Third Sunday of Easter . . . . .	April 17
Fourth Sunday of Easter . . . . .	April 24
Fifth Sunday of Easter . . . . .	May 1
Sixth Sunday of Easter . . . . .	May 8
Ascension Day . . . . .	May 12
Seventh Sunday of Easter . . . . .	May 15
Pentecost Sunday . . . . .	May 22
Holy Trinity Sunday . . . . .	May 29

Wesley expected lives of integrity from his preachers as well. “No one must be allowed to preach or exhort among our people whose life is not holy and unblamable.”<sup>7</sup> When an early Methodist preacher climbed up on a stump and took a text, most of his message had already been spoken. While the men and women of early Methodism emerged from the crowds to sound forth the message of redemption every now and then, most of their preaching was done in the times between the sermons. Living as they did in regular houses amid the heather of the English countryside, they had multiplied opportunities to set forth an example of holiness superior to anything they could have talked up in a crowded open meadow. When Wesley took to field preaching, he shuddered briefly at the thought, “I submitted to be yet more vile.” But perhaps our attention to the novelty of field preaching hides the more profound truth. Wesley really had made a shift that placed him squarely and regularly in the gaze of the people, and it was there that his credibility made giant strides forward. The reception of his message followed suit.

When it came to the results of preaching, Wesley believed in hard work with all his heart, but he never got his credits confused. His exultation was consistently biased. “Behold,” he would say. “Behold what God hath wrought.” He was wonderfully cavalier about that. Biblical preaching was nothing more nor less than God’s grace blooming upon the spoken word.<sup>8</sup>

## NOTES

1. A. Skevington Wood, *The Burning Heart* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1967), 147.
2. John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 12:140.
3. John Telford, ed., *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 4:231-32.
4. *Ibid.*, 6:166-67.
5. Quoted in Oscar Sherwin, *John Wesley, Friend of the People* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1961), 94.
6. Wesley, *Works*, 8:317.
7. Telford, *Letters*, 4:3.
8. Wesley, *Works*, 8:98.

# THE PRERETIREMENT YEARS: A TIME FOR FINANCIAL PLANNING

by Rev. Paul D. Fitzgerald, ChFC, CLU

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**P**sychoanalysts often identify the preretirement stage of life as the years from age 56 to age 65. During this time of life, many parsonage families become "empty nesters" and become very aware that the years have passed quickly and that retirement is on the horizon. For far too many parsonage families, their first serious efforts at financial planning for retirement begin during these years. There is great truth in the principle that it is "never too early to begin planning your retirement finances."

Most of us are encouraged by the news that ministers generally live longer than any other professional group. However, the reality of this longevity requires us to do a more careful job of financial planning than any other group. The following questions are those that are most frequently asked or should be asked in the process of preretirement financial planning.

## **1. HOW MUCH MONEY WILL I NEED IN RETIREMENT?**

Most of us will need to plan on living on less money in retirement. Fortunately, many expenses will also be reduced. Needing to maintain only one automobile, reduced needs for new business attire, and entertainment expenses can significantly reduce expenses.

As a general rule of thumb, a goal should be established of having a minimum of 70 to 75 percent of your preretirement salary coming in at retirement. Your calculation of preretirement income should include the rental value of the parsonage provided during your ministry.

Planning to live on less should begin three to five years prior to retirement. Finding corners that can be cut that will not reduce the quality of life can be a probable and beneficial adventure in preretirement planning.

## **2. HOW CAN I PROJECT MY RETIREMENT INCOME?**

Generally, retirement income will consist of the following items: your denominational pension benefit, supplemental tax-sheltered annuity benefits, Social Security benefits, interest and dividend income from personal savings, and postretirement income. Your denomination's pension board can assist in estimating projected benefits from your retirement plan. In addition, most denominational pension boards permit voluntary tax-sheltering of substantial amounts of cash income. Many ministers find that during the "empty nest" years, they are able to substantially contribute to their tax-sheltered annuity plan, which not only reduces their taxes but also

provides for the tax-deferred compounding of interest on the assets. Benefits from both the denominational pension plan and the tax-sheltered annuity plan can be declared as housing allowance at retirement and substantial amounts received as tax-free benefits.

Your local Social Security office can assist you in estimating your future Social Security benefits. It is very important that you check the accuracy of your Social Security income records every three years. If no questions are asked within a three-year period, the record becomes a permanent and unchangeable part of your Social Security history. By calling the Social Security Administration number listed in your phone book under the directory of government offices, you may request a form to check your record at no charge.

You will also want to carefully check with Social Security or your denomination's pension board to determine the amount of income you may earn prior to age 70 without jeopardizing your Social Security benefit. It is important to remember that the fair market rental value of any parsonage provided plus utilities paid counts toward the Social Security earnings test.

Some ministers are fortunate enough to have extra sources of income from their own assets. These may have come from an inheritance or from personal savings and consist of investments in stocks, bonds, real estate, and other assets. All of these need to figure into your retirement planning schedule.

If your planning indicates a significant gap between retirement needs and income, you need to carefully plan how you are going to cope with this retirement gap. If the gap is too large, you or your spouse may need to continue working, at least on a part-time basis, beyond the time of your retirement. A minister often has opportunities to increase income at retirement by continuing to serve as a supply pastor in a smaller church or by turning other skills and hobbies into paying propositions.

## **3. WHAT ABOUT UNFORSEEN EMERGENCY EXPENSES?**

Few of us in our retirement years will not face a financial emergency. As a part of preparation, you should attempt to have from \$10,000 to \$15,000 in an interest-bearing account that is accessible to you. It should be predetermined that the purpose of these funds is for a real emergency. Small consumer loans and credit cards may be convenient sources of emergency funds, but

they carry a very high cost. Your adequate emergency fund can eliminate this additional expense. The basic rule should be that this fund is to be used only as "a last resort" and every effort should be made to replace the fund with monthly additions.

#### **4. WHAT ABOUT THE IMPACT OF INFLATION?**

Inflation is a significant problem for retirees on fixed incomes. Although Social Security has a cost of living factor in it, its future may be subject to some question in the light of the federal deficits and future Social Security tax increases to support the system.

As a practical matter, long-term inflationary trends are very difficult to project, but their reality cannot be ignored. The practical implication is simply to put as much money aside as possible for retirement income before you retire. Few ministers have ever said that they had "too much" retirement income.

#### **5. HOW CAN WE PROJECT OUR LIVING EXPENSES IN RETIREMENT?**

Planning for retirement living expenses begins with the fundamental financial planning step of establishing adequate records to determine how you are spending your current income. Only by the careful maintenance of records can you discover expenses that can be reduced in retirement. For some, the maintenance of adequate records may seem easy, but for many others it seems to be a time-consuming and frustrating task. As frustrating as it may seem, without this basic information, which categorizes your living expenses prior to retirement, it is nearly impossible to predict your living expenses after retirement.

#### **6. WHAT ABOUT INSURANCE NEEDS AFTER RETIREMENT?**

Insurance needs change significantly with age. It is not surprising that surveys confirm that one of the retiree's primary concerns is having a major illness with inadequate hospitalization benefits.

It is important that you understand the two levels of coverage provided through Medicare: hospitalization insurance and medical insurance. The medical insurance

portion is optional, and you pay a monthly premium for it to Social Security. Medicare does not pay for everything, and the plan has undergone and will continue to undergo many changes.

As a participant in your denomination's medical plan, you may be able to continue your participation after retirement. Many other "medi-gap" policies are available and generally are offered by mail. Care should be taken in enrolling in these plans. While some of them provide adequate coverage, many others provide very little coverage but charge a relatively high premium. Due to fear tactics, many elderly people have been talked into taking out multiple supplemental policies. These policies may effectively cancel each other out. Other policies may be designated for specific illnesses only, such as cancer, and others only pay direct cash payments to the person who is hospitalized. Generally, those on limited incomes should purchase medical coverage that will provide indemnity in the event of any illness rather than protection from a specific illness.

Life insurance needs also change. The primary purpose of purchasing life insurance in its many forms is to protect your dependent survivors from the loss of income between the time of your death and the time your income would have ceased at retirement. The purpose of income protection no longer exists. If adequate cash resources are available to provide for final expenses and burial, then little if any life insurance may be needed. Careful examination should be made of whole life insurance policies that may have been taken out long before retirement. Check to see if the monthly premiums must be paid until death or if it could be converted to a paid-up policy with no future obligations. Also check to see if dividends have been accumulating in the policy that could be withdrawn to meet retirement needs. In addition, if substantial cash values are built up in the policy, these may also be withdrawn on a tax-free basis to supplement retirement income. Continuing large insurance premiums during retirement years can be a significant drain on your finances.

Careful rethinking of your insurance needs with the assistance of a trusted insurance adviser is an important part of your retirement financial planning.

#### **7. WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT HOUSING IN RETIREMENT?**

The reality for most ministers is that they will live in a parsonage throughout their ministry. While the parsonage is a significant part of their income, it is left behind when they move and finally left behind when they enter retirement. You will need to carefully plan your housing arrangements in the light of the amount you have been able to save and set aside for this purpose. It may mean renting, purchasing a mobile home, or moving into a retirement community. Some ministers have been able to purchase small homes during their years of active ministry and rented them and paid for them with rental incomes. Still others have had conscientious churches that have placed "retirement equity funds" into their TSA account to assist with retirement housing.

The minister does have a significant tax advantage in retirement housing in that the denomination's pension plan and benefits from the TSA account may be designated as tax-free housing allowance.

*(Continued on page 60)*



"Our Father, who art in heaven . . ."

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# THE MINISTER'S WIFE

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## EVER SO HUMBLE

by Nina Graves Beegle

*Pastor's wife, First Free Methodist Church, Kansas City*

**T**he nerve of those church people!" I fumed, slamming another book into the bookcase. "How could they stand there and smile and welcome us into this dump as though it were the Sheraton-Ritz? They ought to be ashamed!"

"Just slow down, honey, or you'll be sick in bed again, and that only makes matters worse."

John was right, of course. He had already played the nursemaid role our first night in this old parsonage. With few groceries on hand, he had concocted a soup out of several jars of junior baby food for my jumpy stomach. Now I was acting the infant before he'd even had time to meet most of his new parishioners.

It wasn't the first dump we had moved into, nor the first time I'd been sick on moving day. But that only made it harder to take. As we had trudged up the weather-beaten steps of the front porch that first day, our three-year-old daughter chirped, "Whose rickety old house is this, Mommy?" Even she was more perceptive than our welcoming committee with the grinning faces. It hurt to tell her it was ours.

Remember the pictures from the 1800s of long, narrow, two-story general merchandise stores with wide front porches where old men smoked their pipes and played checkers, and women carried on their social life? That was it. Our home. Its upper floor was used for church dinners since the outside stairs and access precluded use by the pastor's household.

But back to my unpacking fury. While I clattered dishes onto shelves I built a little daydream in which I glared at the church members with the gargoyle grins and said what I really felt like saying: "You move into this poor excuse for shelter, and we'll take your home. That would take care of your complacent grins, wouldn't it?" I'd never say it, but I had seen their homes and knew my comparison valid, whether or not my urges were right.

A two-year-old Christian when my husband acknowledged the call to preach, I was thrilled with the prospect of being his partner in such a high and holy calling. In my naïveté I was expecting the experience to be something like a reenactment of Acts, chapters 1 through 8. And like Peter in the Gospels, I was ready to lay down my life for the Lord and His kingdom.

There was nothing lacking in my dedication or my love for Jesus when I was catapulted into this new life about which I knew little. But it soon came through like ants at a picnic that most of the people in our congregations thought the pastor's calling included great sacrifice on his and his family's part; little on theirs. The long working hours, the lack of privacy, the interruptions of our family life, the low salaries, the expectations, and the in-church politics all gave me some low moments. But I found ways to cope and come out on the top. The huts,

shacks, and coops into which I was to herd my brood and try to transform into homes—those were not among my victories.

When I married John I had a file folder full of magazine pages depicting my favorite kitchen, bedroom—every room in my castle. Though I was willing to settle for much less than those dream pages, the shame I felt over the parsonages I was forced to live in remained no matter how much I prayed and consecrated—or painted or pounded or papered.

It wasn't that I lacked creativity or ingenuity. The problem was akin to making a Rembrandt out of my preschooler's coloring book. I painted big blue flowers on the antiquated bear-claw bathtub, and it was charming. I tore the good ends off ragged, old sheets, dyed them, ruffled them, and made cozy curtains. But the sagging porch and roller-coaster floors were beyond my genius.

And then there were the cockroaches. A dinosaur couldn't have frightened me more than my first cockroach as it boldly darted from the cupboard like a cruise missile. It was on target, and I was enemy territory. My screams deterred it not a bit. We sprayed, bombed, and poisoned, but it and all its relatives had squatter's rights.

After a year of painting, papering, patching, and exterminating we were still fighting cockroaches—though my attitude toward the people had undergone some small improvement. Meantime, I was poking around in the church one day and found some old board minutes that told me the antiquated store building we were now living in was designated a "temporary" parsonage 30 years before. Apparently no one had squawked for 30 years, and year after year the church board found it convenient to vote the old pile of timber back in for each succeeding pastor.

I also learned that cockroaches can cause insomnia. Because there were not enough bedrooms for our six children, two of them had to sleep in the semifinished, crumbling basement. Every wakeful hour I prayed that the creepy critters would crawl away from my children, not on them. And I slipped in the same request for myself now and then. When I finally fell asleep the ubiquitous roaches invaded my dreams. They were the devil's advocates, attacking my nerves. It was time to do something.

I told John I thought we should try to find another place to live. I would go to work to pay the rent.

"I don't think we should do that," he said. "They might resent the implication that we think what they've furnished isn't good enough."

"That's no implication," I said. "That's the arrow smack in the middle of the target."

I prayed, "O Lord, the people in this church may think we don't need anything better, but I think You do. Help



me to know what to do before I fall to pieces. And speak to my husband. I know You care."

It was as though God had been waiting for me to ask. The very next week my husband called in the home of a new family and found them preparing to move. What an attractive house, he thought, and said so.

"We've really enjoyed it, and we hate to give it up," the family said. "Go back and look at the built-ins in the master bedroom—and the big floor-to-ceiling picture window."

Fantastic! A little dream house, my husband observed. And a light went on in his head.


"Do you mind my asking how much the rent is?"

"Not at all," they told him, adding, "Are you looking for a home? We can give you the landlady's phone number. She's looking for good renters."

The rest of the story is like Fantasy Island. The church folk actually seemed delighted with our move into a nice neighborhood and gave us a housewarming with the gift of a beautiful lamp. The old store building was rented out for other purposes, bringing in enough to pay the rent on our new home. It was the "exceeding, abundant" that we often hesitate to ask for and seldom think of. Having said that, you are sure to wonder if the cockroaches went with us. That was not part of the "far above all I could ask or think" because I did think about it and asked the Lord to show me how to avoid it. He did.

It would be presumptuous to imply that all my prayers were answered so affirmatively. They weren't, of course. And the parsonage situation has improved greatly over the years in most churches. But I learned that in many other areas of parsonage life I could allow myself and my family to be victimized, or I could seek divine wisdom and find nice, unhurting ways to de-victimize us. I never pushed or took an adversary role.

In a church situation where I had to seek employment to keep us afloat financially, I typed up a statement of our income and outgo and shared it at a gathering with the ladies of my church. They agreed emphatically that it was necessary and then went home and shared our plight with their husbands. The church supported us prayerfully as I looked for work. I was able to get a good-paying, part-time job at the university that allowed me to get my children off to school before I left and to be home and rested when they returned. The church frosted that kindness cake by giving my husband a small raise in salary.

I've learned that a clergyman's wife can implement change, but she must be a little like a snake charmer. She doesn't move quickly. She doesn't make big noises—just tootle-de-toots a bit, persistently. She looks them in the eye. She moves in rhythm with them. And she does it all ever so humbly. 

## SPRING PRAYER

by Maxine Dowd Jensen

*Mountain Home, Ark.*

**L**ord, it's spring again. The forsythia glows yellow once more. The perfume of my lilac bush envelopes me and tempts me to remain in my lounge chair on the deck. But thank You for giving me two reasons that draw me back to my study and my work.

Thank You for the robins I've discovered. They're working diligently to prepare a nest for their babies, and soon four bright blue eggs will be snug inside. Perhaps, as last year, I'll watch at least one baby teeter on the edge of the nest, take the tentative first step to the tree limb, try to snuggle down in the crook where the limb joins the trunk of the tree, and, finally, ascend into the air.

Help me, Lord, to be as brave when I try my wings in new ventures. Surprise me with my ability to soar as he did.

Thank You, too, for the cardinals who sometimes stand on the win-

dowsill of my study window, urging me to observe the daily growth of their offspring. I notice the round-about route they use as they come to the nest and the quick, direct way they leave it.

Make me wise enough to protect my own children, sometimes in similarly indirect ways. Aid me in knowing when to leave my little ones to their own stretching of wings.


Make me grateful for the minor—and major—contributions of my husband, even if he doesn't always seem as attentive and cooperative as does Mr. Cardinal.

Encourage me to remember the day I crept out my front door and looked directly at the young red-bird who had successfully made it from the nest onto a branch of the arborvitae beside my walk. Though the wind gently shook the slender branch, the tiny bird was

steady. His gaze at me never wavered. The white rim above his beak and extending down the sides looked very like the milk mustaches I've seen on the lips of my own "babies."

Lord, help me to teach my children how to face life. May I instill courage within them so they will remain firm when the winds of life buffet them.

And, Lord, may I also recall the gray mourning dove who built her nest in my hanging basket. She sat so faithfully among my cascading petunias, and finally left the two defective eggs that would not hatch. May I remember her if, someday, I lose a child. Help me to look forward, not back.

Thank You, Lord, for this, another springtime—for all its promises and for all its lessons. Especially, I thank You for Your gift of birds. 

# *CORPORATE MUSIC FOR CORPORATE WORSHIP*

by Terry L. Baldridge

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**C**orporate worship is what happens when we gather together as a body of believers to praise our Creator. The adjective *corporate* implies that individual persons have assembled or joined themselves for a common purpose. This unity suggests that the worship experience itself is shared and that everyone participates. We often describe our weekly services as times for God's people to unite and celebrate what He has accomplished in and through the body during the week. We are admonished in Scripture not to neglect the assembling of ourselves for this purpose.

The 19th-century Danish religious thinker Kierkegaard suggested the analogy of worship as drama. The people of the congregation are the actors—the active participants in the work or service of worship. Gathering together Sunday after Sunday, however, does not in itself necessarily insure that corporate worship takes place or that unity occurs with each member actively participating in the drama of worship.

Traditionally, the aspect of our worship most conducive to active participation has been congregational singing. Yet it is this part of our services that has been most often neglected. The desire for "better" music has, in some instances, practically pushed congregational singing out of the service. In an attempt to make worship more meaningful, the Council of Laodicea (343-381) outlawed congregational singing, relegating this responsibility to trained musicians. Fortunately, there have been those who saw the fallacy of this practice and sought to restore corporate music into corporate worship. Men such as John Huss, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and John Wesley saw the necessity for the people to participate in worship.

A similar dilemma occurred in early 19th-century American churches. American church choirs, organized only a few years earlier for the sole purpose of leading congregational singing, began usurping the privilege of singing from the people. The desire to perform more elaborate music led to choir specials—in many instances to the exclusion of congregational participation in music. This development led to a countermovement during the second and third quarters of the century,

known as the "Church Music Reform."

When the Temple worship was established, the Levites were chosen to be priests and to sing praise to God. But Christ made it possible for all to be priests—not only in the offering of sacrifice and the forgiveness of sin but also in the singing of praise to God. In the light of this, participation in congregational song and a creation of a new congregational music. Beginning with Christ and the singing of the disciples and early Christians; to John Huss and the singing Moravians; Martin Luther and the congregational song of the Reformation; John and Charles Wesley and the heritage of Methodist hymns; the Second great Awakening in America and the development of revival hymnody; the mid-19th-century revival and the development of gospel hymnody; the holiness movement in the late 19th century and holiness song; and even the "Jesus Movement" of the 20th century and the development of a folk hymnody—all have resulted in a renewal of congregational singing.

Worship should involve several elements. Although it centers around celebration—celebration of what God has done in the past, is doing in the present, and will do in the future—it must not stop there. The purpose of our celebration is to equip us for edification and proclamation. New Testament worship focuses on these two elements. We are instructed to encourage and build each other up so that the world will see love in action and be filled with a desire to become a part of the body. This, in turn, enables the new believer to celebrate with the body, edify the members, and finally proclaim this love to others. The worship cycle is therefore continually building the body, both in strength and numbers.

One important way to accomplish all three elements is through congregational singing. We sing hymns of praise and consecration as we celebrate, hymns of testimony and encouragement as we edify, and our enthusiasm for these two aspects witnesses to others as we sing of God's love and mercy. Nineteenth and early 20th-century congregations were often known for their enthusiastic singing, and nonbelievers were attracted to the services through corporate music.

Is corporate worship what it should be today? We have so much music in our services, but how much of it is corporate music? Has this highest form of worship music been forced to move over in deference to "special" music? If the members of the congregation are indeed actors in the drama of worship, the place and purpose of music becomes clear. Congregational singing is presupposed if the church is actually engaged in the action of worship. Could it be that we are so strongly influenced by the TV church that we have forgotten what constitutes real corporate worship? If our assembling together is to be a corporate worship experience, we need to be sure that the body of believers actively participates in a corporate manner. What better way to accomplish this than through congregational singing.

In principle we recognize the value of the congregational song, but rarely do our services exemplify this. We go to great lengths to ensure the success of our special music. We hire ministers of music and then measure their success through their personal performance proficiency and their ability to organize and provide special music for us. Even our sanctuaries are architecturally designed and furnished to meet two basic criteria: (1) the amplification of our special music, and (2) the comfort of our people as they listen to this music. We do not realize what we are doing to congregational song, both through emphasis and the physical properties of the sanctuary itself. Padded pews and plush carpet dampen and deaden any congregational participation that takes place—especially singing. When the music of a particular church or service is reviewed, the focus is usually on special music with congregational singing seldom mentioned. Many churches are musical churches but not singing churches. Although special music may tend to attract more people in today's society, it is congregational music that unites the people. People of all ages and backgrounds are joined in a common act of worship through singing.

Special music should be used in support of congregational music, not in competition with it. If those involved in special music were made aware of their privilege and responsibility in leading, supporting and enhancing congregational singing, a new excitement in worship music would develop. Congregational music itself would then become special. The solution seems to be in shifting our emphasis so that corporate music is special both to worship leaders and to the congregation.

In our attempt to make congregational singing special, the emphasis should be placed on the text to be sung. If our efforts do not enhance the spirit of the hymn, we will end up with meaningless involvement on the congregation's part. There are several ways of adding a special element to corporate music.

1. Discuss the impetus for the hymn. Under what circumstances was it inspired?
2. Read a portion or all of the text in unison or responsively.
3. Read a passage of Scripture upon which the hymn is based.
4. Incorporate hymn singing into a sermon. Have the congregation sing individual stanzas as they relate to a particular portion of the message.
5. Have someone testify as to why the hymn has been meaningful.

6. Stop in the middle of a hymn, as suggested by John Wesley, and ask the people if they are really thinking about what they are singing.
7. Sing the text to a different tune—one that is familiar to the people. In singing a well-known tune from memory, the focus is suddenly on the text in front of you.
8. Have different portions of the congregation sing a stanza or line of text. Using ladies and men, or perhaps children separately often enhances our awareness of the text. Some hymns incorporate a call-and-response pattern that would allow the choir and congregation or segments of the congregation to answer each other.
9. Have a section or all of the choir sing a descant to part of the hymn.
10. Use instruments to enhance the hymn. Alternate piano and organ, or incorporate an instrumental solo obligato or instrumental ensemble.
11. Use modulations to create excitement. Short interludes leading to a modulation can be effective.
12. Have the congregation sing in unison with the accompanying instruments playing an altered harmonization.
13. Use a soloist or small ensemble on a verse. Care should be exercised not to take away from congregational involvement.
14. Use unaccompanied singing! Once the congregation catches the excitement of corporate music, the beauty of the human voice, God's created instrument, singing unaccompanied is unsurpassed in richness.

As worship leaders seek to be creative in this area, other ways of making congregational singing special will surface. Perhaps one method of focusing on corporate music would be to have a congregational special. A good place for this would be immediately preceding the sermon. This would allow the congregation to be actively involved just before the pastor speaks, and having the people stand for this hymn would also allow a change in physical position. If a sermon hymn directly related to the theme of the message were chosen, the attention of the people would be focused on the subject of the sermon.

There is so much potential in corporate music. The power of God's people praising Him through singing is often an untapped resource. There is no need for us to compete with the world or even the TV church when it comes to special or entertainment music. We have a much higher calling. Let us make full use of congregational music as we gather for corporate worship—in celebration, edification, and proclamation. If past spiritual revivals have brought a revival of congregational song, perhaps we should start by praying to that end. In the meantime, however, we can begin working toward a renewal in church music. Who knows, it might even enhance a spiritual renewal. Let us all examine our goals and priorities in church music and strive to cultivate an awakening that will reestablish the priesthood of the believer in song. As we gather to worship corporately we should do what we can to ensure that the people actively participate in the drama of worship. This can best be accomplished by emphasizing corporate music for corporate worship.

# FISHERS OF MEN—AND EMPTY NETS

by C. William Ellwanger

*Professor of Practical Theology, Kankakee, Ill.*

Unnumbered tiny villages line South America's east coastline. The jangada's canvas sails can be seen slooping in the salty Atlantic as far as 40 miles from shore, heading homeward, laden with the day's catch. Families watch, from four o'clock until after sundown, from unnumbered tiny villages that line South America's east coastline. They wait for their *o pescador*, the Brazilian fisherman who plies the waves in sun and storm with one goal—he will catch fish.

The fisherman is a hard and ruddy man. His hands would not grasp a pencil easily. His feet would chafe in shoes. His skin is tough and bronzed through years of work in the wind and storms. His courage is tested repeatedly by tides and hazards of the open sea. He looks expectantly for fish daily in the roughest of seas.

There is another not unlike the *pescador*. He also leaves possessions, family, and kin. He, too, rises early every morning to prepare for the day. And he, likewise, ventures deep into the sea of life with a single-minded purpose.

He is God's servant. His sea is the world. His primary preparation is prayer, devoted conversation with his Father. The fish he seeks to catch are men. He looks for them daily in both calm and rough seas.

God's fisherman is also a hardy man. He has been tested and toughened by the winds of afflictions he has faced himself and as a helper to others. The lessons he has learned are of great value. Not unlike the fisherman, his helmsman is a reliable friend who will not allow his vessel to sink or spin out of control—the Lord Jesus.

A trusted fisherman would not leave his art. His heart is in the sea. There is no other secular pursuit in all the world that would call him away from fishing. He loves the salt breeze on his face, the smell of the ocean air, and the music of the sea gull. He enjoys the tug of fish on his lines and the feeling of full nets, the capture of fish, the gold of the sea. These things are deeply interwoven in the warp and woof of his very being!

This is no less true of God's fisherman. He, too, would never leave his task, until the last catch is made. No other thing holds such personal reward and contentment as doing his Father's business. He is attached to His service by bonds of love. He loves the One who sent him to fish. He loves the Word of God, the divine lure that attracts men to Christ. No pleasure is as great as the tug of fish on the line, bringing a repentant sinner to the Savior. No, he cannot leave his task, for his heart is in the sea of never-dying souls. Christ once came along the seashore of Palestine, promising to make people into fishers of men. Peter and other disciples followed, and fished. There is now no turning back!

But are we really fishing? In spite of that compelling sense of commission felt in the early days of Christian ministry, the minister is prone to allow well-intentioned extras to demand

more of his energy than the call of Christ to rescue men from their sins.

Instead of seeking men, he seeks success. In the place of fishing, he goes fiddling. Loaded down with multi-roles he falsely believes his profession requires, he becomes at once a business manager, clerk, executive officer, recruiter for church offices, social butterfly, head of protocol, and, incidentally, fisher for souls. His priorities become jumbled. He dabbles in men's leagues and eats cookies at women's teas. He graces civic gatherings, intoning professional invocations. He preaches sermons he himself did not prepare. He visits people for whom he has not taken time to pray. He becomes a stranger to his family. He is so busy doing church work that he has little time to do the work of the church—to follow Christ and fish. He seldom goes to sea. His self-indulgent life-style keeps him safely on the sandy beach.

Where is there time for Christ in the minister's hectic schedule? When does he pray? Worship? Intercede name by name for his congregation? When does he study the Scriptures? When does he nurture his own soul?

Is it possible to prepare wholesome spiritual food to satisfy the hungry in his congregation when he does not taste the food he serves? Can he challenge others to live a holy life when his own is less an example of holiness than of hastiness, running incessantly morning until evening from one trivial task to another? No! One cannot lift another to spiritual heights he himself has not attained. No! One cannot effectually worship God on a crowded freeway! Holiness is a product of devotion, and devotion requires time, and time encourages quietness of soul, meditation on God's Word, and warm communion with the gracious Lord of heaven and earth. All else pales into comparative insignificance, for God is far more concerned with what we *are* than with what we *do*!

Yes, minister friends, we must go down to the sea again, to the lonely sea and the restless tide. We must at times return to the call that the Lord first gave us—to follow Him and fish for men, to leave the shore for the ship, to set aside those less-important, time-consuming tasks that tend to substitute shamefully for His plan for us. Many of us, to be honest, must admit that we are seeing little success in our primary calling in the ministry. Few sinners are being saved; few fish are in the net. Are we rescuing men or repelling them? Are our lives a lure to help persons find the Savior or a delusion of Christian service?

Christ guaranteed success when he said, "Follow me, and I will *make* you fishers of men." Fellow fishermen, it is time to return to the first call of the Lord lest, when our day ends and we head for home, God should discover that our nets are empty! He looks with disgust upon our pompous churchmanship as a frivolous waste of His time.

# THOSE IMMOBILE MEMBERS

by G. Roger Schoenhals  
*Seattle*

**L**ike every pastor, I appreciate people who affirm and support me in my ministry. I enjoy talking with them and planning with them. They make my work fun. May their number increase!

But I also have folk in my church—and so do you—who don't quite go with the flow. They don't actively oppose things, but neither do they contribute much of anything. I admit it, sometimes I am tempted to view these people as a liability. If I'm not careful, I find myself spending more time with those who are going my way.

Early in my 18 months of ministry here at North City, the Holy Spirit spoke to me about my impatience with these unperforming parishioners. He used the words of Paul in 1 Thess. 5:14 (RSV).

The apostle singles out three kinds of immobile members. First, he identifies the idlers. These are the folk who sit at the crosswalk in neutral gear, staring at the green light. The motor's running, but the tires aren't turning.

I feel like honking my horn or like driving around them and leaving them behind. They're going nowhere fast, and I want to move forward. They frustrate me.

But Paul says, "Admonish the idlers." Address yourself to them. Minister to them. Challenge them to get their lives in gear. Exhort them to get involved in the adventure of serving Christ. Go slowly enough so they can follow you down the roadway of spiritual growth and ministry.

The writer labels the next group as "the fainthearted." Some people are always running out of gas. They get excited about an idea or a program only to peter out on the freeway. Things don't work out just right, a word of discouragement enters their ears, the job is too de-

manding or too menial—there are a lot of reasons for losing heart.

Paul counsels us to care for these people. Instead of yelling at them or criticizing them, we are to encourage them. It's as though he wants us to come up behind them and gently push them to the "station" for a fill-up.

The third point of Paul's sermonette to us relates to the weak among our flock. These are those with feeble spiritual springs. They are easily overloaded. It only takes a small chuckhole to cause a breakdown.

Weak people need a lot of help. Persistent help. And that's what Paul puts before us. Instead of letting these weaklings alone, we are to pick them up when they fall and help them on their way. Or to use the automobile analogy again, we should see ourselves less like race drivers and more like mechanics.

So the Word of God tells us to "admonish the idlers, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak." And then it says, "be patient with them all."

Patience. That's really what it all boils down to. The kind of patience that our Heavenly Father has with us.

I remember sitting on the bank of the Colorado River, down in the belly of the Grand Canyon. As I watched the river quietly flow at my feet I had the sudden insight that I was in the workshop of the Lord. He was carving himself a canyon, and He wasn't in a hurry.

And God the Creator is patiently at work in our lives, carving himself a monument to His grace. And He is also working in the hearts of those we have been entrusted to feed and lead. Who are we to drive over or around these slower sheep?

These words of Paul have slowed me down several times. They have helped me remember that people are more important than program.



# PROS AND CONS OF BUYING A CHURCH COMPUTER

by Rick Upchurch  
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**C**omputers are being used more and more in every aspect of life. The computer is no longer a big business tool. In fact, chances are good that one or more laymen within your congregation own a personal computer. The question is not whether the technology is available to the local church but whether the computer can facilitate your ministry. To answer this question simply, here are some reasons why the church should, and why it should not purchase this "high tech" tool:

1. YOU SHOULD NOT purchase a computer if the general consensus of the church board and the congregation is negative. This might seem obvious, but many pastors ignore it, to their peril. They soon discover that their people don't see them as trying to do their job more efficiently but as being more interesting in administrative details than with people.
2. YOU SHOULD NOT purchase a computer if you will be the only one working with it. You will find the

amount of time required just to learn the programs and enter the information detrimental to other areas of ministry. Second, if you are the only one who knows how to use the computer, you will effectively cripple the very structure you put into place when you leave, because no one will know how to secure the information you accessed so easily.

## PRINCIPLES FOR A SUCCESSFUL BUILDING PROGRAM

by Marcus J. Clements

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**I**'d rather move than go through a building program! is the thought, if not the expression, of many pastors when facing a major program of building and all the things that come with it. Their feelings are justified when we see what has happened to pastors and laymen in some churches during building programs. It is often a time of frustration, misunderstanding, and division. But it doesn't have to be! A building program can be a means of bringing the church together in a common goal of expanding to meet God's command to evangelize our community. So what are the principles for successful building? From experience I name a few:

1. Be sure of your motive for wanting to build. Do you want a new building just to be modern, or do you need it to better serve God and your community?
2. Be sure the project belongs to the membership, not just the board and pastor. A favorable vote by the church is not enough involvement to make them feel a building project is their "thing." The church board and the pastor

must use their leadership positions to make everyone feel that they, too, are a part of what may be the boldest project undertaken in their lifetime.

3. The church should not expect the pastor to be the contractor and carpenter. While many pastors possess building skills, the church will suffer if he stops "being the pastor" for several months while working on the building. The budget should provide for the service of professionals in this area. Pastors should be allowed to do what they are called to do.
4. Recognize that the pastor may not be a building "pro." A pastor who does not possess building skills is no less a good pastor. Most of our laymen would much rather see their pastor ministering to the needs of the community.
5. No one is right all the time. Unfortunately, churches have been split over such trivial things as carpet colors, baptistry designs, or room furnishings. It is hard to imagine Bresee, "Uncle Bud," or

3. YOU SHOULD NOT purchase a computer just because someone in the congregation is willing to pay for it. If you or your staff have no vision for the benefits of a computer, it will soon be pushed back into a corner to gather dust.

4. YOU SHOULD NOT purchase a computer if you are apathetic. Your enthusiasm, or lack of it, can make

# USEFUL BUILDING PROGRAM

many of our early godly people being overly concerned about such matters. "Keeping the glory down" must remain our top priority.

6. Keep others first while building. It is easy to turn inward as we spend so much time and money on ourselves. It is still an exciting phenomenon that God honors those who help others. I was involved in one building program where the church determined that all construction would stop until their General Budget and other obligations were paid to date. God honored their efforts as they gave a record amount in their Easter, Thanksgiving, and Alabaster offerings while building a large new building considerably under budget.
7. Be sure there is a proper ratio of "chiefs" to "Indians." Proper supervision and responsibility should be clearly defined before building begins. The day-to-day supervision should be narrowed to preferably one and no more than two individuals. Differences of opinion should be dealt with in

committee meetings, not on the job site.

8. Remember that new buildings alone will not make a church grow. Some of our fastest growing churches have some of the worst facilities while many beautiful buildings sit relatively empty as testimonies that if buildings become priority over people, all we have is a building with high maintenance costs. We must provide the best facilities possible for our worship, but the most attractive thing to a sinner filled with the frustrations of this world and condemned to an eternity without hope is a hand extended, a heart full of love, and a people who are not too busy to say, "We care."
9. Be sure there is a proper mixture of faith and responsibility. A prudent church board will have proper financing arranged while recognizing that we can't build without some measure of faith. God never promised to bail us out of unsound business decisions, but at the same time He has always honored those who trust Him for the impossible. 🙏

or break any program, including the useful application of this "new-fangled" tool.

5. YOU SHOULD purchase a computer if you can do so without going into debt. A computer is a valuable tool, but the payment upon a computer loan can be an area of contention over the months of initial setup and data entry.

6. YOU SHOULD purchase a computer if you and others in the congregation and on the church board can conceive of ways to use information that will be available to you instantly. Once information has been entered, you can immediately formulate individualized letters to select groups within the congregation (e.g., personalized letters, including

names and details to, say, all the ladies in the church who have daughters, or any other criteria, without having to look up the information by hand or type each letter separately). You can keep your newsletter's mailing list up to date between mailings, even if they are weekly. You can even prepare graphs of financial or attendance statistics for presentation at committee or board meetings.

7. YOU SHOULD purchase a computer if you will help with the initial data entry and the ongoing process of data update and report generation. This aspect of the computer can be particularly time-consuming, however. An assistant, either paid or volunteer, can bring your time commitment within reasonable limits.

8. YOU SHOULD purchase a computer if you are consistently running in the 100s for morning worship or Sunday School. Any less than that reduces the data to a level that, while a computer might be nice, the work could be done by hand without too much trouble.

9. YOU SHOULD purchase a computer if your church is growing. A computer will not *make* a church grow. However, a computer can facilitate growth by providing adequate information to you and other staff members for more effective ministry.

Whether or not you purchase a computer, the time in which we are ministering requires new ways of looking at Jesus' admonition, "By all means, save some." 🙏

## COMPETENCY IN MINISTRY

by Chevis F. Horne

**W**hen I speak of being competent, I mean more than being efficient. We may be ecclesiastical technicians, use skills and tools well, know how to get the job done, and not be competent. Yet, this is not to decry tools and skills. They are important. A carpenter cannot erect a building with bare hands. He needs tools. Just so with the minister. But skills alone will not make him competent.

In addition to skills we need a sense of well-being, of fulfillment, a feeling that what we do matters, and a sense of adequacy.

Often we do not feel competent. We feel lonely, depressed, empty, washed-out, and inadequate.

Carlyle Marney operates a retreat for ministers known as "Interpreter's House" at Lake Junaluska, N.C. He says that ministers suffer essentially from five things: "A loss of nerve, a loss of direction, erosion from culture, confusion of thought, exhaustion. They become shaken reeds, smoking lamps, earthen vessels . . . spent arrows."

How do we avoid becoming shaken reeds, smoking lamps, spent arrows? In short, how do we become competent? I am bold to suggest six things.

First, we must be able to say "my gospel."

That is what Paul did. He didn't mean, of course, that it was a possession like a manuscript he had written. Just the opposite was true. The gospel owned him. It had given him a new Lord, putting his life under a new management. He used this term in an effort to identify with the gospel. The gospel was something that had happened to him, and he knew that whoever and whatever he might become could never be divorced from his encounter with the risen Lord. Christ had spun him around in his tracks, forgiven him freely, and declared

him just before a righteous God. It was all so wonderful. His identity was tied up with that experience, and he didn't want it to be different.

The same thing happened to John Wesley. He was converted at 8:45 in the evening. He felt his heart strangely warmed as he trusted Christ alone for his salvation. He was given the glad assurance that Christ had forgive his sin, even his. Before that he had often felt empty, and preaching was a chore, with his words falling upon listless ears.

Afterward he was eager to announce the good news of God in Christ. He felt power in his life, and his words fell upon the souls of men like rain upon thirsty fields.

While our experience will not be just like Paul's and Wesley's, we have to know the grace of Christ in forgiveness and reconciliation. We have to know that Christ has forgiven our sins, even ours.

The gospel does not in any way depend upon how I feel about it. The Christ event is as objective as a range of mountains, but it can become a subjective reality within me. When that happens, the grace that was in Christ becomes forgiveness and healing within me. I come alive, feel living hope, and I know I have a powerful word to speak. I can then say "my gospel."

Second, we need to lay hold of a power beyond ourselves.

The truth is that our human resources are not sufficient for our task. We easily become exhausted before the job is done. But one of the great promises is: there is power beyond us that is made available to us.

I am often confused about the modern charismatic movement, but I am a charismatic at heart. I still remember the day when I realized that next to Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit is the greatest reality in the New Testament. The Holy

Spirit is available to us and gives vitality and power. We are often weak when we could be strong.

Wheeler Robinson's definitive work on the Holy Spirit, *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*, was born not of academic interest but of experience as the title suggests. He was critically ill and completely exhausted. He envisioned a huge balloon, mightily borne, with a long rope dangling from it. The balloon could easily carry him, and the rope was within his reach. If only he had strength enough to take hold of it. It was out of that weakness that he experienced the vitality and power of the Holy Spirit, and his great book was written.

Often we are like a stranded barge. We have important cargo on board, but we are stuck in the sand. We cannot move. But the incoming tide can lift the barge without effort. So we must learn to hope for and expect the incoming tide of God's Spirit.

Third, we must believe in the importance of our work.

We frequently hear people say that the modern pastor is confused about his role. I don't believe that. I can clearly define my role. The problem is that our role has been diminished. It often doesn't seem important to us and to others. When sophisticated people speak about the professions, they may not even mention the ministry.

It is for us to believe in the importance of our work when often our culture does not. Especially is it important for us to believe in the significance of preaching.

Paul said, "It pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe" (1 Cor. 1:21, RSV). If that is true, and I believe it is, what could be more important than preaching? We have been given a word of such vast importance that neither we nor those who hear us can live without it.

Karl Menninger in his rather recent book *Whatever Became of Sin?* has an epilogue, which he calls "The Displaced Preface." In this epilogue he tells about giving a series of lectures at Princeton Theological Seminary that were amplified into the middle part of his book. He found the students at Princeton highly intelligent, sensitive, and idealistic. Yet the role they had chosen had seemingly diminished in importance, and many of them were wondering if they had not chosen the wrong profession. Menninger sees no one having a more important role than the clergyman. So he urges: "Preach! Tell it like it is. Say it from the Pulpit. Cry it from the house-tops."<sup>1</sup>

W. E. Sangster once wrote: "On his way to preach the gospel the most modest man may whisper to himself: 'Nothing more important will happen in this town this week than the work I am now doing.'"<sup>2</sup>

We need to feel that way about preaching when often our role is seen as diminutive.

Fourth, we must have a healthy self-image.

The poor self-image is the undoing of many people. I believe it is the center of, or a responsible factor in, practically every emotional difficulty we have.

Ministers are not immune to unhealthy self-images, and here is the source of much of our incompetency. How often we see ourselves as being unworthy, guilty, or inadequate.

Rather than coming to grips with our poor self-image and doing something constructive about it, we mishandle it. We seek frequently to escape the problem by accepting an image of not being really human, of being suspended somewhere between divinity and humanity. Our congregations are often willing to see us that way, and we are willing frequently to be seen that way. In a sense it is a safe place. We are protected from the pain and hurt of intimacy. But if it is a safe place, it is also a lonely place. Thus the loneliness of a lot of ministers. And it is a false position. The truth is we are very human, having no more divinity than any other ordinary human being. Therefore a lot of us break under the tension between who we really are and who we appear to be.

Some of us go to the other extreme. We are too eager to let people know how human we are. We curse, tell dirty jokes, drink alcoholic beverages, and do other things to take the false halo from our heads. We overly expose ourselves. There is a thin line between being healthily and unhealthily human. We can so easily step over that thin line and disrobe ourselves too much. There is not only physical nudity but also emotional nudity. And when we disrobe ourselves

too much, we embarrass our people and injure ourselves.

How shall we see ourselves? As being thoroughly human persons who have been forgiven by great grace and to whom God has given the mission and word of reconciliation. Then when the pedestal is knocked from beneath us, as often it is in our time, rather than falling on our faces and becoming cynical and bitter, we can fall on our feet and thank God we no longer have to be supported by our own humanity and the grace given us.

Fifth, we should have a person-centered ministry.

Our essential purpose is not to erect edifices, raise budgets, and build strong organizations, but to build people. The only way to justify any or all of these things is to use them to help people grow up and become mature in Christ.

We must know that people are the most important realities in our churches. We are to love, care for, and serve them. They are to come first. And whenever a person really needs us, we should leave whatever we are doing—be it reading a book, preparing a sermon, or engaging in prayer and meditation, and get to that person. This kind of ministry will pay rich dividends across the years.

Here is a youth who, having passed through dangerous and turbulent years, has come into fine manhood and says to you: "You helped me through those bad years." Here is a couple, once on the brink of separation and divorce, who are now happy again. They say to you: "Through your concern and counseling you helped save our marriage." Or here is an old person to whom you have given time and attention, and he says to you: "You have been a steadying hand during these weak years." When you hear such things, you know you would not exchange your vocation for any other, no matter how lucrative and prestigious.

Sixth, there must be a place and time for renewal and replenishment.

When we keep on giving and giving with no replenishment, it is little wonder that the inner springs dry up and we feel empty and washed-out. We cannot continue to give unless we receive. We cannot remain fresh unless we are replenished. Let me suggest two things.

First, we must have time for prayer, meditation, and reflection. Jesus prayed regularly and met every crisis of His life with prayer. If He couldn't get along without prayer, how can we?

Yet, if we should be perfectly honest, most of us would have to confess that we are woefully inadequate here. Our "busyness" crowds out our time for prayer and meditation.

Prayer does many things. But of greatest importance, it gives a vantage

point from which to view life. Maybe in real prayer we come nearer seeing the world as God sees it than at any other time. It is as if God says: "Come stand beside Me and see the world as I see it."

If prayer allows us in some sense to stand beside God, it also allows us to stand beside our fellows. Real social sensitivity is borne out of prayer. We become aware of the pain and hope, suffering and longing, of those caught up in this pilgrimage with us.

Prayer makes us aware of the world of spiritual and intangible reality without which our lives cannot be fulfilled. Great power is laid within our reach.

Second, we need a retreat for sharing and study. We need to read good books, meet great minds, and share with others who are on a journey of truth. If we don't, we will be like the preacher of whom one of his members said, "My pastor can dive the deepest, stay the longest, and come up the driest of any man I have ever known."

While competency demands more than skills, as I have indicated, we can't be competent without them. We need a place and time where old skills can be resharpener and new ones acquired. Unless we take advantage of continuing education we shall be among those pastors—too many of them one suspects—who with Sunday approaching go to the sermon barrel, take out an old sermon, dust it off, preach it in worn-out and hackneyed platitudes, to a congregation that has moved beyond the one to whom the sermon was first preached. The gospel and our people deserve better, and to make this lazy approach to preaching is immoral.

If I were a layman, I would want the congregation to love and respect my pastor, giving him great freedom. But one thing I would want to be mandatory: that he get away each year to some university, seminary, or Bible conference for serious study. I would want to give him no choice here except where he would study. And I would want his program of continuing education written into the church budget.

Let me conclude by saying: No other work is more important than the work we have been called to do. In a real sense we create the moral underpinning and lay the spiritual foundations for other vocations and professions as well as life in general. And we have a message of hope and salvation for our bewildered world. Therefore, let us strive for competency.

## NOTES

1. Karl Menninger, *Whatever Became of Sin?* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1973), 228.
2. W. E. Sangster, *Power in Preaching*.

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# THE PREACHER AT THE BATTLEFRONT

by Ray Lassell

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Fifteen years ago, sitting in a seminary class of preachers-to-be, Professor J. Edwin Newby, with a saddened countenance and tear-filled eyes, gently said, "Being called to preach will lessen your chances for heaven nearly 50 percent." I often wondered about that statement. My faintest fantasy never conceived the monumental obstacles, battles, and pitfalls the devil had planned to destroy God's preaching timber. But after 14½ years of preaching experience later, I, too, stand quite sadly solemn. Many who sat with me that day are no longer in the battle and many more have been affected by the ravages of Satan's attack.

Notice the preacher in the mire. Samson was one. What power he had! What anointing! But then he trifled in Delilah's bed. When he awoke from his illicit pleasures, God was gone. The anointing was lost, and he became as other men. He, of whom the audience once stood in awe, had become the laughing-stock. Once armies feared him, then a lad led him. Once he graced the loftiest pinnacle of respect, but he fell to the deepest degradation. When Jezebel set out after Elijah, he ran. He found it more expedient to run than to be ruined. When Potiphar's wife laid her trap, Joseph ran, leaving his coat behind rather than losing his integrity.

David's diary seems to scream the remorse of that night on the housetop with Bathsheba. Try to live down that night! The wise man wrote, "Their reproach shall never be removed." Somehow I get the feeling he had this incident in mind. But Samson got back. David got back. Peter, who backslid, cursed, and

sinned, returned. Jesus said, "Feed My sheep. Preach My gospel. Here are the keys to the Kingdom." It's out of the mire, and back into the choir.

Then there is the preacher for hire. It's Judas. His mind is on money. He not only minds the money but also has become money-minded. He whines over finances. He sets his price. In the shuffle, he sold his conscience for 30 coins. He forsook his priorities for a purse. Follow him into the night as he betrays the Savior and then commits suicide. Of course, there were contributing factors that influenced Judas toward the precipice. There had been difficult years in the beginning when, as treasurer, Judas wondered where needed money would come from. There was so little money in the coffers. Transportation had been borrowed and rooms rented. But now it doesn't matter, because for Judas, it ends in a hangman's noose, a hole in the ground, and an eternity in hell.

His downfall started so innocently—raising finances, paying bills, burning mortgages, building programs, selling bonds, trying to meet the budgets, hoping for a better move, ecclesiastical pressure. How easy it is to sell the Lord and find you, too, have committed genocide to your conscience and anointing. Like Samson, you're going around in circles, grinding at the mills of humanity, doing what the human wants you to do. You used to be an agonizer; now you're just an organizer.

Did you ever stop to realize that no one in the Bible who went down over money ever got back? Balaam, who loved his wages; the rich young

ruler; Judas; and others. Love of it is the root of all evil.

Look at the preacher who has gone sour. He's bitter. Maybe it was a tough pastorate, perhaps a political clash. Things may not have been smooth at home. Maybe he set his own standard higher than he could live. He's lost confidence in leaders. He's developed a problem complex. No one else is "living it." No one else is "paying the price" these days. He becomes so sour and bitter that he becomes vocal.

Then there is the preacher who has slipped below par. He fails to study enough and his preaching takes on a tameness, lameness, and sameness. He's beating the air. It's a sermon, but not a message; speaking and not preaching. He's going through the motions. A church may eventually become the length and shadow of its pastor. It's like looking in a mirror. Perhaps we ought to check our reflections.

Finally, there is the preacher on fire. He's a faith builder. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word. The preacher must be a faith builder. You can't be on a "downer" and build faith. You can't build others' faith if your own faith is down. You can't encourage when you're discouraged. Before Pentecost, Peter was either in the fire or by the wrong fire. But at Pentecost, Peter got on fire, and they never were able to extinguish him. God, give the ministry a personal baptism of Pentecostal fire that will blaze a trail in the pulpits of our land. May we be fire blazers and faith builders. Perhaps you, too, have fallen in the mire, or gone sour, or are living spiritually below par. Let God set you on fire.





## EPHESIANS 1:15-23

(Continued from page 17)


amples have been. If one inquires now as to the relationship between these themes, the question is answered fairly readily on the basis of the interpretative groundwork done earlier. The aspects of God's saving work referred to in verses 18-19b, especially the third (v. 19a), rest upon and are made possible by the triumph and exaltation of Christ described in verses 19b-23. That is to say, the first half of the passage deals with the content of salvation; the second with the power that makes it possible. A sermon incorporating both aspects might look as follows (the main points of the two earlier proposed outlines or some version of them becoming the sub-points in this).

(I) *The Experience of Salvation* (vv. 17-19)

- A. New Hope (v. 18a)
- B. New Heritage (v. 18b)
- C. New Power (v. 19a)

(II) *The Power Behind Salvation* (vv. 20-23)

- A. Christ's Resurrected Lordship over Death (v. 20)
- B. Christ's Exalted Lordship over the Powers of Evil (v. 21)
- C. Christ's Appointed Lordship over the Church (vv. 22-23)

These are three ways in which the preacher might treat Eph. 1:15-23 with something approaching exegetical legitimacy. To strive and labor toward that goal, however faltering but with increasing sensitivity, must surely be the abiding objective and ambition of every workman with the Word. 

### NOTES

1. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians, A Verse-by-Verse Exposition* (London, 1961), 11-12. Notice his recent reaffirmation of this position: "Henry Chadwick reviews the main arguments propounded against the Pauline authenticity of the document, and finds them inconclusive. There is, in his judgement, 'no sufficient ground' for regarding Paul as incapable of producing Ephesians, and in his short commentary on the letter 'the author is called Paul without either apology or question-begging.' The present commentary takes leave to follow his example" (*The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians, The New International Commentary on the New Testament* [Grand Rapids, 1984], 239-40. Henceforth Bruce: NICNT).

2. G. B. Caird, *Paul's Letters from Prison, The New Clarendon Bible* (Oxford, 1976), 11-13.

3. "A third possibility, then, is that the teaching of this Epistle is Pauline, but its compilation and publication were entrusted by the apostle to a disciple-colleague and amanuensis . . . The author is faithfully representing the apostle and adapting his teaching to the present situation . . . Our proposal of Luke as the one who gave the document its final form takes account of various links between the Gospel and Acts and this Epistle" (*New Testament Foundations: A Guide for Christian Students*, Vol. 2, *The Acts, the Letters, the Apocalypse* [Grand Rapids, 1978], 230). Martin's survey of opinion on the authorship of Ephesians (227-33) is useful.

4. The debate about Paul's imprisonments cannot be reviewed here. For a survey of the options favoring the Ephesian view, see R. P. Martin, *New Testament Foundations*, 216-22, though his positive assessment of the Ephesian theory

does not strictly affect his dating of the Ephesian Epistle, which he bases on other grounds (231-32).

5. Bruce, NICNT, 230.

6. R. H. Fuller, *A Critical Introduction to the New Testament* (London, 1966), 66.

7. Martin, *New Testament Foundations*, 231.

8. The matter is treated in some detail in R. W. Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic and the Word of God* (New York, 1966), c. 10. For a briefer conspectus see R. P. Martin, *New Testament Foundations*, c. 19.

9. Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic*, 257, 279.

10. For analysis of the fine shades of meaning see the theological lexicons and dictionaries.

11. C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge, 1953), 145.

12. On the relationship of the phrase "having the eyes of your hearts enlightened" (*pephotismenous tous ophthalmous*) see B. F. Westcott, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (London, 1906; Grand Rapids, 1979), 23-24. He says the construction is "obscure and perhaps confused" (23); and opts for linking it with "to you" (*humin*), the case being determined by "so that you may know" (*eis to eidenai humas*) with which it goes closely.

13. The Semitic (and therefore Paul's) mind did not sharply distinguish purpose and result. See Moule, *Idiom Book*, 138, 142. The meaning here is unaffected in any case.

14. Unless indicated otherwise, translations are the writer's.

15. See Moule, *Idiom Book*, 67-69, 75-76.

16. For fuller exegesis of the phrases in question see the standard commentaries. An especially sensitive treatment may be found in J. Armitage Robinson, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, 2nd ed. (London, 1907), 40-41. See also Westcott, *Epistle to the Ephesians*, 24-25; Bruce, NICNT, 270-71.

17. A. Leonard Griffith, "Seeing the Truth," in *Ephesians: A Positive Affirmation* (Waco, Tex., 1975), c. 3.

18. Bruce, NICNT, 272.

## GOD'S AMBASSADORS

(Continued from page 20)


money. You're only in it for the prestige. Nobody sacrifices time, money, comfort, and especially his reputation purely for the good of others . . ."

Explain the accusations along with the setting of the new church in Thessalonica. Fill in the facts concerning the riots, the people involved, and why it was important to establish a church in that community.

Then introduce the theme—these men were God's ambassadors, His representatives.

In verse 4 they are not defending themselves so much as they are really appealing to their converts' recollection of the facts. Paul is telling them, "Remember, we are men approved by God. We are men who have been entrusted with the gospel. We are men who are living to please God."

In two sentences you can state the sermon.

As we look at the truth of God's Word, may we realize that we, too, are God's ambassadors. We are His representatives, acting in His behalf. And we realize that those with whom God entrusts His gospel are tried and proven, proven that they may be entrusted with that gospel, and proven that they may live to please God and not men. 

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## MONDAY MORNING DEVOTIONS

(Continued from page 6)

For Monday, May 23, 1988

### JESUS IS LORD



Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11, RSV).

The Holy Spirit's presence in the church confirms the exaltation of Jesus and bears witness to His Lordship. The big day is over, and it is Monday. On such a day, what does it mean for me to say, "Jesus is Lord"?

For one thing, it means the recognition of His sovereignty. I think of the great declarations of Ephesians 1 and Colossians 1 in which Jesus is recognized as Lord and Sovereign of our whole universe. Can we believe that He is the cosmic Christ? He is the mighty King, Master of everything—His name is wonderful!

And it is wonderful to know that He is bigger than what's the matter. He's got your whole world and my whole world in His hands.

To me, "Jesus is Lord" means the acceptance of His authority. We cannot call Him Lord and not do the things He says we are to do. I think of this in terms of a lifelong listening to the words of Jesus with serious intent to obey. Jesus lived by His Father's words. His words are spirit and life to us as well (John 6:63).

A prison chaplain spoke in chapel about the conversion of a tough young convict. The chaplain first made him kneel down. He could not run—no chance for flight. Then he made him fold his hands. His weapons were gone—he could not fight. Then he made him bow his head to bring his pride and self-will under the Lordship of Jesus.

This day I bow my knees, fold my hands, and bow my head before Jesus my Lord. And I rise to live in the Spirit in the power of the Resurrection!

For Monday, May 30, 1988

### WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION



Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12-13, RSV).

On this holiday Monday at the beginning of the summer season, let's talk about these fascinating verses. Actually, I want to tell you how a changed understanding has brought them to life.

I believe that the salvation we are to work out is not our personal saving relationship with God but rather the health and wholeness of the church. The one at Philippi was about to come apart by conflict and division. To

work out their salvation meant to do whatever needed to be done to bring oneness and healing to the fellowship without waiting for Paul to come and do it for them. They were to work it out for themselves.

What needs to happen in your church to "save" it, that is, to bring unity and wholeness and health and growth to its life? No one from outside can come and make it well—Paul would say, "In the spirit of the obedience of Christ, go ahead and work out what needs to be done!"

The attitude with which this "salvation" is to be worked out is one of "fear and trembling." I was surprised to learn that in the New Testament, that phrase always describes relationships between persons and not between persons and God. (I hope you will look up the references.) Our fear and trembling are not toward God but toward each other!

If I am in reverence and humility before you, it is because I know that the presence of Christ is in you and the presence of God is between us. The Christ in me will not ignore or be rude to or put down or insult the Christ in you. Together, we can work to bring health to the body of believers.

And we can know that we aren't alone in our working. God is at work, willing and working out His good pleasure.

So, what we need to do, let's do it. God is with us, and we'll be saved yet!



### THE SACRIFICIAL SHEPHERD

(Continued from page 13)

bilities that incorporate the ideas of salvation, nurture, and especially life from verses 9-10. These, in turn, could be linked to the larger themes of the book as a whole.

John's loose, flowing style and the allusive nature of the sheep/shepherd metaphor open up a variety of preaching possibilities for these verses. However, the concept of a sacrificial Shepherd and the mutuality of the relationship of Christ and the Church must not be overlooked. The Good Shepherd has laid down and does lay down His life for us. We enjoy His care; we enjoy intimacy with Him; we are obligated to join Him in laying down our lives for the other sheep.



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# TODAY'S BOOKS for TODAY'S PREACHER

**Charles Wesley on Sanctification: A Biographical and Theological Study**, by John R. Tyson, Francis Asbury Press of Zondervan Publishing House (PA031-075-1314, \$15.95).

In a day when music in the church tends to drift more and more toward the world's influence, and the lyrics seem to center in the emotions rather than Scripture or traditions of faith, it is refreshing to read of Charles Wesley and the music he gave to the church.

It is obvious that Dr. Tyson has made an excellent study of the published and unpublished works of Charles Wesley, and he shares interesting insight into the personality and ministry motivation of the "younger Wesley."

The concepts of the theology of Charles Wesley is taken from notes of his journals, excerpts from his sermons, and an abundance of his hymns.

The book stirs one's appreciation for Charles Wesley's influence upon the Methodist's doctrine of sanctification. The difference in emphasis from John worked to bring unity and strength to their movement. Charles' view was more of a futuristic realization of the restored image of God, while John's was a more practical and instantaneous emphasis upon perfection in love.

The introduction of the book gives a fresh look at the person of Charles Wesley and the conclusion, a fitting summary of his theological stance. The "in between" of the book at times becomes routine and somewhat tiring. Over all, I'm glad I read it. It did refresh my spirit.

—Jim Tracy

**Renewing Our Ministry**, by Dr. David L. McKenna, Word Books, 164 pages (PA084-990-5001, \$11.95).

The publisher has suggested that this book might have been subtitled *Megatrends in the Ministry*. This book accurately assesses where the ministry is today, and where it is headed.

Dr. McKenna has a real grasp of the ministry and its problems and privileges. He emphasizes the importance of a God-called ministry and the commitment that must accompany it. His chapter on "Respecting Our Differences" is most interesting. He compares styles of pastoral leadership to past presidential leadership of our nation. He recognizes pastoral burnout and its symptoms. There is a solution for some of these very contemporary problems facing the ministry in today's world.

Dr. McKenna is currently president of Asbury Theological Seminary. Prior to that he was president of Seattle Pacific University and Spring Arbor College. He is a minister and is in tune with today's ministry and the church. Where is the church headed in the final decade of this century? What implications does cross-cultural explosion have for ministries today? What can we expect in the church in this fast-shrinking world, and what is the role of pastoral leadership? These are all dealt with in perceptive fashion.

In this contemporary setting he still reminds us that there is no higher calling than to preach the gospel of peace. There is no greater joy than to bring sad and sinful people glad tidings of good things. This

book should be read and studied by every pastor who desires to stay abreast of his calling and mission to today's church and its ministry in this present age.

—Leon F. Wyss

**Fourteen Messages of Hope**, by Friedrich Rest, Baker Books, 73 pages, paper (PA080-107-7338, \$3.95).

The subtitle for this book is *Thoughts for Funerals and Other Occasions*. It is written especially for the man in his first pastorate who is looking for a resource book for funeral messages.

The subject of the first chapter is Psalm 23 and the last chapter is developed from the Lord's Prayer. These two chapters are developed more fully than the other chapters and seem to be most beneficial. Several chapters are sketchy and would be more helpful had they been developed more.

The author has an interesting idea regarding funeral messages given during special seasons such as New Year's, Christmas, and Easter. His goal is to develop seasonal themes in the funeral message. For instance, when developing a funeral message around New Year's, he uses the theme "What the Future Has in Store." During the Christmas season, he suggests the theme "The Prince of Peace."

As a pastor, I welcome all the help I can get regarding funerals and other special occasions. This book helps meet some of those needs.

—Charles Pickens

# EXEGETICAL METHOD

(Continued from page 31)

3. Assembling of the wicked—criticizing sacred things as a self-defense mechanism
- C. The way of the righteous is one of positive value and joy (v. 2).
  1. Delight in the law (*torah*) of the Lord  
*torah* defined and explained  
it is synonymous with the revelation of God's will  
it brings full joy and life as ordained by God
  2. Sufficiency of the law (as revelation of God's will)  
contrast with the insecurity of ancient man—no clear declaration of the divine will as a guide for life  
ancient man had recourse to omens, oracles, magic  
modern man apart from God turns to witchcraft, the occult  
diligent study of God's revelation fulfills our needs (Deut. 8:3)
- D. The way of the righteous described (v. 3).
  1. A firmly planted tree with an abundant water source; this represents stability of life, is not blown over in storms.
  2. Produces fruit in season—suggests quiet growth and development; the righteous fulfill the purpose of God.
  3. Leaf does not wither—lack of water; the righteous will not be cut off before accomplishing God's purpose.
  4. In all he does, he prospers—because God is God, it is impossible that anything can fail that we do in obedience to His will. Note the danger if this is distorted into a calculating belief in recompense where one feels entitled to success (gospel of health and wealth); the principle is that a sound tree cannot bear evil fruit; this is a summary statement concerning the righteous man; it departs from the illustration of the tree.

Transition to Point II—The clear-cut, black-and-white nature of wisdom teaching is reflected in the contrast between the two illustrations representing the righteous and the wicked.

## II. The Way of the Wicked (vv. 4-6)

- A. The way of the wicked described (v. 4).
  1. Denial of any comparison—there is a difference!
  2. Who are the wicked? Antonym of the righteous.
  3. The chaff of the Old Testament threshing floor described—worthless, meaningless, unstable. It is without root below or fruit above.
- B. The way of the wicked is one of negative conditions (v. 5).
  1. Collapse—they cannot stand in judgment (any judgment of life or eternal judgment)  
the wicked retires and sits in shame and guilt; he cannot hold his own before the face of God
  2. Expulsion—from the congregation of the righteous
- C. The way of the wicked is distinctly different from the righteous (v. 6).
  1. God is personally involved in the life of the righteous  
the word *know*—includes intimate knowledge and caring  
God regards with favor the course of his life

2. By contrast, the way of the wicked disappears along with the person
- D. The way of the wicked described in one word: "perish" (v. 6). Perish is used in many senses: hopes and plans are frustrated; creatures get lost and die; achievements come to grief here—a road comes to an end or ruin (dead end)

**Conclusion**—This psalm visualizes eternal reality. There are only two ways. These two ways part forever. We choose now, in this life, which way we shall travel. Jesus spoke of these two ways in Matt. 7:13-14, "enter by the narrow gate . . . the wide gate . . ."



## FINANCIAL PLANNING

(Continued from page 45)

Retirement housing plans also need to involve a great deal of common sense. At retirement, it may seem appropriate to retire in the community of one's last pastor, but hindsight may show that this was not the best idea. Living next door to married children may seem appealing if you enjoy the grandchildren, but it may also limit personal freedom. Climate may be a significant factor, but moving to a new area may be difficult if you do not make friends easily. No one can make these decisions for you, and careful planning can bring you greater peace of mind in making this important decision.

### 8. WHAT ABOUT OUR WILLS?

An updated will is always an important part of a minister's financial plan whether it is before or after retirement. Rethinking your will at retirement is important because conditions change. There are many unhappy stories resulting from ministers and their spouses who do not think about changing an obsolete will or ignore making a will at all. Good stewardship demands that you protect your assets and make certain that your resources are left as you desire.

Be sure to check that the executor of your estate can be recognized as an executor in the state in which you retire. Make sure that the language empowers the executor to determine what should be done if it is not covered specifically in the will. The executor should have the power to pay all claims of the estate. Your spouse and your executor should know where your will is kept. Copies of the will should be given to your executor and to your attorney. Any changes in your will should be made by your attorney to make sure they will be legally recognized.

Proper financial planning for retirement may seem like a major task—and it is. But then, nearly 30 percent of one's lifetime is spent after retirement, and doesn't 30 percent of your life deserve adequate planning?

By answering these questions, you can plan and anticipate a meaningful period of life after your active years of ministry. Planning comes right down to you as an individual. No one will do the planning for you. You must do it yourself. Planning is a process that should be ongoing. You and your spouse should frequently review your plan to determine how well you are meeting your plan's objectives and to revise those objectives in the light of your real-life situation.



# SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS



## THE PM ON KP

Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion was once the subject of a segment of "See It Now," a 1950s news format show.

Edward R. Murrow, host of the popular program, relates what happened following the filming of the segment:

I went to say good-bye to the Prime Minister, who had returned to his quarters after the interview. I knocked twice on the door, and when I received no answer I pushed it open. I wanted to call the cameras right away, but I knew no viewers in America would ever believe that we hadn't staged it. There was the Prime Minister of Israel washing cups and saucers at the sink.

**SOURCE:** *David Ben-Gurion: In His Own Words*, Avram Ducovny, editor, Popular Library Edition, Fleet Press Corporation, 1968.

**TRUTH/CONCEPT/DOCTRINE ILLUSTRATED:** Humility

**SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES:** Matt. 23:1-12; Luke 18:9-14

—Submitted by Phil Lindsley

## LIVING BELOW YOUR MEANS

Curly was a pig farmer. He was different. Curly never washed—either himself or his clothes. Some folk reckoned that when he went to bed, his trousers would stand in the corner.

When you visited Curly, he was always glad to see you. His front door was always open—it was broken, and he was always "too tired" to fix it. If you walked in, you had to be careful. There was a huge open fire in the room. Curly was too tired to cut wood, so two or three logs stuck out of the fire. As they burned down, Curly just shoved them in farther. You had to be careful where you walked. If you sat down, you had to be careful. There were always chickens on the table and chairs. Instead of using fly

spray he would roll up a newspaper, ignite one end, and move the flame gently across the ceiling to rid it of flies. He didn't need to worry about keeping the floor clean; it was dirt.

Curly's wife had long since left him and had taken their son.

When Curly died, they found that he had thousands of dollars in government bonds. Though his house was worth little, the land was very valuable. Curly was, in fact, a very wealthy man!

**SOURCE:** Personal experience. "Curly" was a pig farmer in Leppington, New South Wales, Australia.

**TRUTH/CONCEPT/DOCTRINE ILLUSTRATED:** Some people enjoy living "below their means" spiritually. We are children of God, yet how evident is that by the way we live?

**SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES:** 2 Pet. 3:5-9; Col. 3:9-10.

—Submitted by Chris Northey

## KEEPING THE FAITH

As a POW in Vietnam, Col. Laird Gunnert was beaten and tortured mercilessly. Between "interrogations," he was forced to kneel for hours at a time. In fact, he was never allowed off of his knees.

One day, Gunnert's VC captors took him to an interrogation room he had not seen before. This time the beating he suffered was especially severe. He crumpled to the floor in a broken, bloody heap. He lay there in excruciating pain, too exhausted and too battered to lift his face from the dirt floor.

Opening his eyes, Col. Gunnert saw something on the wall, about four inches from the floor, right in front of his face. As his eyes focused, he saw that someone had scrawled in blood and mud, "Keep the faith, baby!"

Laird Gunnert knew then that he was not alone. Someone else knew and understood what he was enduring; someone who had been there himself—and

had triumphed over these same dire circumstances. Gunnert was heartened. Now he knew that he did not have to succumb to the hopelessness of his situation. He could and would, with the encouragement of his anonymous benefactor, triumph over his helpless estate.

**SOURCE:** Jane Parker interview with Col. Laird Gunnert, U.S.A. (Ret.), on "Something Beautiful," Kansas City's Youth For Christ, TV 50. April 22, 1985.

**TRUTH/CONCEPT/DOCTRINE ILLUSTRATED:** In whatever situation we find ourselves, we can find encouragement in the fact that Jesus Christ has been there before us. Not only has He been there and triumphed himself, but He has also left us a source of strength so that we, like Him, may endure the otherwise impossible.

**SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES:** Heb. 2:18; 4:15; Phil. 2:6-8; 4:13

—Submitted by Mary Craig

## LIVING THE FAITH

Once there was a minister who wore a cross and went to where there was a war. He got permission to risk his life on the front line.

He hopped from hole to hole hugging the soldiers. He never stopped more than 30 seconds.

It was the only way he could get in all the services.

One day he held 246 services that way. He never said a single word.

**SOURCE:** "I" Opener, by Herbert Bocking, © 1974, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.

**TRUTH/CONCEPT/DOCTRINE ILLUSTRATED:** Our actions are often more important than our lip service.

**SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES:** James 2:14-17; 1 John 3:16

—Submitted by Tim King



# SERMON OUTLINES



## MY CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITIES

### A Sermon Series

by Ron Phelps, Yukon, Okla.

#### MY RESPONSIBILITY: TO BE A BELIEVER

John 3:14-17

What does it mean to be a believer in Jesus Christ? What does it mean to believe in what He taught, preached, and exemplified?

#### I. To be a believer is to hold to the biblical truths of the faith.

- A. Know what you believe so you won't be "tossed back and forth" (*Eph. 4:14-15, NIV*).
- B. "No one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy" (*Col. 2:8, NIV*).
- C. "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved" (*2 Tim. 2:15, NIV*).

#### II. To be a believer is to believe in the necessity of salvation for all.

- A. Rom. 6:23
- B. Rom. 3:23
- C. Scripture is clear on those who are excluded from the kingdom of God (*Gal. 5:19-21*).
- D. "But among you there must not be even a hint of . . ." (*Eph. 5:3, NIV*). The emphasis is to know that sin will send the sinner to eternal punishment. God's grace through Jesus Christ is our only salvation.

#### III. To be a believer is to obey Christ's command to be a witness.

- A. Matt. 28:18
- B. Acts 1:8

#### IV. To be a believer is to obey Christ's command to love our neighbor.

- A. The Bible is filled with references concerning our duties to others.
- B. We are called to expose the dangers (abortion, drugs, im-

morality, etc.) to our neighbors (*Eph. 5:11*).

#### C. We are taught to say no to ungodliness (*Titus 2:12*).

- 1. Therefore, we should fight pornography, abortion, smut on TV, etc.
- 2. This passage calls for Christian action and commitment.

What should I do? Realize that following Christ involves not only blessings, but also commitment and responsibility. We can get involved in those around us and in community issues. I can share what Christ has done in my life.

#### MY RESPONSIBILITY: TO BE A FOLLOWER

John 12:26

#### I. I am responsible for following the actions of Christ (*Matt. 16:24*).

#### II. I am responsible for following the attitudes of Christ (*Phil. 2:5*).

#### III. I am responsible for following the habits of Christ (*Phil. 2:1*).

- A. To have the same mind of Christ (*Rom. 8:6-9; 12:2; Phil. 4:8*).
- B. To have the same love (*1 John 3:16*).
- C. Being of the same spirit and purpose (*John 3:16*).

#### IV. I am responsible to follow His example in interpersonal relationships (*Matt. 11:5; Luke 19:10*).

What will we do now, with this knowledge?

#### MY RESPONSIBILITY: TO BE A WITNESS

Acts 1:8

#### I. I have a responsibility to be a witness for Christ.

#### II. We have a responsibility to

send missionaries, pastors, and teachers.

#### III. We are included in Christ's commands to His disciples:

- A. In His prayer (*John 17:20-23*).
- B. In His command (*Matt. 28:19*).
- C. In His instructions preceding Pentecost (*Acts 1:8*).
- 1. We are to be witnesses by our actions. What kind of witnesses are we if we arrive at church late; when we are unprepared for worship; when we fail to sing, stand for prayer, or greet visitors? We witness by the things we do.
- 2. We are to be witnesses by our words (*Acts 4:31*).

The Church will die without witnesses. If we fail to witness, our spiritual lives will cease to be vital or worthwhile.

#### MY RESPONSIBILITY: TO BE HOLY

1 Pet. 1:15-16

**Supporting Scripture:** Heb. 12:14; 2 Pet. 3:11-12; Lev. 11:44; 20:7

#### I. I am responsible to seek holiness because God demands it (*Matt. 5:48; 1 John 1:7*).

#### II. I am responsible to seek holiness because God provides it (*Heb. 13:12; Rom. 7:21*).

- A. I must "count myself dead to sin."
- B. I must "not let sin reign in my mortal body."
- C. I must not "offer the parts of my body to sin."
- D. I must not "allow sin to be my master."

#### III. I am responsible to seek it because God gives me the power to live it (*Phil. 2:13; 4:13; Heb. 13:20; 1 Cor. 15:57-58; 1 John 4:4; 5:4-5*).

## LIFE IN THE FISHER BOWL

I'VE BEEN READING THOSE BOOKS YOU SUGGESTED TO ME, PASTOR FISHER.



TODAY'S ILLUSTRATION ABOUT THE LITTLE DOG CAME OUT OF MINISTRY-DYNAMIC, PAGE 29, PARAGRAPH 3, LINE 8.



R. GREEN

I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE HOW YOU HANDLE THE ONE ABOUT THE MOUNTAIN CLIMBER!



## THE PREACHER'S EXCHANGE

**WANTED:** New and used ministerial library books for Nazarene Bible College Ethnic Extension Training Centers. Books will be used to train ethnic pastors, including Hispanics, Armenians and Arabs, Asians, Haitians, Blacks, Polynesians, and Native Americans. Contact Dr. R. T. Bolerjack, 1111 Chapman Dr., Colorado Springs, CO 80916; Phone (303-596-5110).

**WANTED:** Copies of *Handbook for Caring Christians*, by Evelyn Stenbock, Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1975. Contact Mrs. Evelyn Stenbock Ditty, 3117 S. 39th St., Kansas City, KS 66106.

**WANTED:** *Foundations of Doctrine in Scripture and Experience*, by Harry E. Jessop. Contact Dr. Robert W. Gardner, 15518 E. Gale Ave., Hacienda Heights, CA 91745; Phone (818-336-0723).

**WANTED:** *Twenty-five Years in the Caribbean*, by Lyle Prescott; 1952-53 missionary books: *Blood Brother of the Swazis*, *The Moffets*, *Thy Light Is Come*, *Touched by the Divine*, and *Yesu Masiki Jay*. Indicate asking

price and condition of the book. Contact Darwin L. Pressler, 325 E. Hunter, Logan, OH 43138.

**WANTED:** *J. D. Drysdale, Prophet of Holiness*, and *Successor to C. T. Studd*, both by Norman Grubb; *The Price of Revival*, by J. D. Drysdale; used set of Beacon Bible Commentaries. Contact Brian Powell, 408 Anamosa St., Rapid City, SD 57701.

**FOR SALE:** *Expository Outlines on the Whole Bible*, by Charles Simpson. 21 volumes. Make an offer. Contact Dr. Robert W. Gardner, 15518 E. Gale Ave., Hacienda Heights, CA 91745.

**FOR SALE:** Several new and used books and tapes from my personal library. For a list, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Donald K. Ault, 3458 Plumtree Dr., Ellicott City, MD 21043.

**FOR SALE:** *Preacher's Magazine* dating back to 1955. A few are missing. Contact Elton W. House, Rte. 2, Box 259, Walnut Ridge, AR 72476. Phone (501-886-6436).

What decision will you make? Will you accept this Christian responsibility?

### MY RESPONSIBILITY: TO KEEP MY EYES ON JESUS Heb. 13:1-13

- I. I am responsible to rid myself of all that hinders me (1 Cor. 9:24; 1 Pet. 2:1).
- II. I am responsible to fix my eyes on Jesus, "looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."
  - A. Watch the Lord, not the crowds.
  - B. Watch the Lord, not our neighbors.

C. Watch the Lord, not other church people.

### III. I am responsible to endure the Lord's discipline as Christ did (Heb. 13:5-11).

### IV. I am responsible to strengthen my weak areas and make the path level (Heb. 13:12-13).

### MY RESPONSIBILITY: TO TRUST THE LORD Prov. 3:5-6

Supporting Scriptures: Ps. 37:5-6; Isa. 26:4; Jer. 9:23; Heb. 11:6

- I. I am responsible to trust the Lord, and not my own understanding.

A. Trust with all my heart, not holding anything back—total trust (Prov. 3:5-6).

B. I cannot figure out the ways of the Lord (Isa. 55:6-9).

### II. I am responsible to acknowledge Him in everything.

A. Jesus said to seek first the kingdom of righteousness.

B. Paul said to give thanks in all things.

### III. I am responsible to commit my way to the Lord.

Have you tried to figure it all out—find all the answers and solutions? God doesn't ask you to do anything but to trust Him and believe in Him.



# THE ARK ROCKER

## WORSE-SHIP

**T**hey tell me that the denominational managerial cadre have decided that "we need to do something about worship." In fact, it looks like we're gonna have a sort of pilot luau on it for pastors.

Now, griping about all of that is rather like going down to the fire house and slashing the tires of the truck because it didn't get to the last blaze quickly enough. But the matter still demands some scrutiny, so to help that process along, I present here the last several pages of a longish letter that I got on the topic from your friend and mine, Smerdley.

Smerdley does ask that since he has written so frankly, we keep his letter "semiconfidential." He figures we're experts at that.

"First off [Smerdley says], what's the rush? Don't they realize how far we've come in the last decade? Just think how much easier it is now to convince people that just being together is 'what it's all about.' Talk about being a worshiping community may chase people away, you know. After all, the stats show that folks choose a particular church because they feel wanted there. Folks are naturally gregarious; they are not naturally worshipful.

"First thing you know [Smerdley continues], we'll no longer recognize the moments of 'howdy and shake' as liturgy. We might even fall to passing the peace or saying, 'The Lord be with you,' or to expressing some other equally embarrassing sentiment. Folks won't know whether we really want them there or not if we talk first about God when we greet them.

"And [Smerdley adds], an ordered service presents problems concerning the announcements. It resurrects some concerns that we have learned to meet. I mean, where will we put the encouragement to read the missionary books or announce 'Holiness Movement Night at Wrestlemania' (and tell folks to be sure to be there to cheer the conference superintendent when he throws out the first vertebra)? These things are what give life to the Church and get the new folks in, after all. We can't simply put announcements in the bulletin and act as if everyone reads that thing. Besides, what more memorable encouragement to get into the choir in time to sing in the Easter cantata than an announcement poking fun

at the preacher's unsteady tenor? What more impressive inducement to keep the Parson's Pantry and the Clothes Closet full than a cute take-off on Miller Lite Beer commercials? We're just coming into our own with these things, what with the talent and the multimedia capabilities we now have in even our smaller congregations. Ordered worship stifles all of that. In fact, if it's done as it should be, it forces announcement makers to think in religious language and to put their messages in terms of piety—unless they just go ahead and swim against the stream with the usual pizzazz. Ordered worship just sort of presses you to feel like you have to get God into the picture all of the time, even into the announcements. And that's too much.

"Then, too [Smerdley wonders], what will happen to our music? My people grow impatient with the older music. We're getting along just fine, thank you, singing no more than two verses of anything in the hymnal, and by keeping mostly to choruses anyway. (We like to repeat choruses whenever we sing them.) In fact, except for a few longhairs in the congregation, I don't think anyone has ever told me that he or she really liked a Wesley or Watts hymn. So, I guess that except for an occasional use of 'Love Divine' or 'O for a Thousand Tongues,' in an especially formal service, we just don't sing Wesley or Watts but once every three or four years. You go adding those old hymns, with their ancient vocabulary, and people get to pondering the words rather than enjoying the atmosphere. They may not sing with the pep and volume that we really need to help people feel the Lord's presence. That old stuff tends to get folks preoccupied with their spirituality when what we need for our services is enthusiasm, bustle, good cheer, *gemütlichkeit*. We can't let people get that serious. After all, spiritual seriousness hasn't won half as many folks as our good times in the Lord have.

"Well [Smerdley concludes], these are just two issues that I think those guys who want us to think about worship need to think about. There are lots more where these came from. And they're worth every bit as much!"

Your friend,  
s/Smerd

It will be hard to wait for Smerd's next letter!

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