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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Andy Erwin

As we close out the thirty-third volume of the *Gospel Gleaner*, we decided to feature articles pertaining to evangelism and missions. We hope this issue will encourage every reader to keep the mission of Christ alive, outwork the devil, and do all to stand!

The past five volumes of the *Gospel Gleaner* have been sponsored by the West Fayetteville church of Christ in Fayetteville, Tennessee. The contribution this church has made to the *Gleaner* is immeasurable. The circulation has nearly tripled during this time, a website has been built and maintained, and the overall quality of the paper has improved. It is difficult to believe that there would be a *Gospel Gleaner* today if not for West Fayetteville.

The brotherhood should be thankful for their contributions to evangelism and good causes. May they be zealous for good works and may their commitment to the Lord, His word, and His church always grow and never falter.

“And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:32).



A World Vision for Christ¹

George Bailey

The story is told of a wise Indian father who wished to give his property and his possessions to [that] one of his three sons who showed the most prowess and promise. As a test, he pointed to a mountain bold against the sky and sent his sons toward it, asking each to bring back a token to show how far up the mountain he had climbed.

The first one returned with a white wildflower in his hand. The father knew that it grew only above the timberline. The second one returned with a red flint stone, which revealed to the father that he had made it almost to the top. The third son was gone for a long time and returned empty-handed. “Father, where I went,” he explained, “there was nothing to bring back, but I stood at the summit and looked out upon a valley where two great rivers join the ocean.” The proud father said to him: “It has been the ambition of my life that one of my sons should see what you have seen. You have nothing in your hands, but you have a greater thing – a vision in your soul. This is the greatest of all!”

I recently returned from a 50,000-mile trip, which took me through our forty-ninth State of Alaska, across the mighty Pacific, through most of the Oriental countries, then through the two countries “down under,” Australia

and New Zealand, then back home by way of the Fiji Islands and Hawaii. Two years ago, I made a trip through many of the European countries including the major cities of Russia. It has been my good fortune to have been on four continents and to have seen thirty countries of the world.

Now I stand before you, as it were, empty-handed. Where I have gone, figuratively speaking, there was nothing to bring back, but I have stood at the summit and looked out upon a valley where the great rivers of human need and soul starvation join the ocean of life. I have nothing in my hand to show for these travels, but I trust I have something better – a vision in my soul. This is the greatest of all!

The Understanding of This Vision

We must have vision. It is most important in this matter of saving the world, for “where there is no vision, the people perish” (Prov. 29:18). If there is no vision in the church, we can expect no salvation in the world. But, what is vision? How do we get it? What kind are we to have? What are we to do with it? Do we have to have it? Could we get along all right without it? These are six vital questions.

This is the vision. Vision deals with “an appearance; that which comes into

¹ Copied from the *Great Preachers of Today* series of sermon books (1961).

view; a spectacular sight.” Vision is not a mere *vain imagination*; it is more a *valuable inspiration*! It is not just a *thing of fancy*; it is a *thing of faith*! Faith and vision are closely related. There can be no faith without vision, and there can’t be much vision without faith. Ours then, is a *vision of faith*.

In vision, things are seen; in faith, things are seen. One cannot get such a vision without carefully and prayerfully observing the Bible and without just as carefully and prayerfully observing the world’s need for the Bible.

The more one earnestly studies his Bible, and the more eagerly he studies man’s need for it, the more he will see spectacular sights. Things will come into view. He will see four things: (1) He will see a lost world; (2) He will see a saving gospel; (3) He will see that the world is lost without the gospel; and (4) He will see that he will be lost unless he has a part in taking the gospel to the world.

Examples of This Vision

In the Bible, we have several examples of vision. Ours is somewhat like that the men of the New Testament had. Paul had a vision (Acts 16:9, 10). In that vision, he saw a man in Macedonia crying, “Come over and help us.” He didn’t doubt that vision, nor was he indifferent to it.

Before that, Paul had a vision on the Damascus road (Acts 9:3-8). What a vision that was! How revealing! In that vision, the Lord called him to become

His chosen vessel. It was a vision of believing in Christ, a vision of belonging to Christ, a vision of behaving like Christ, and a vision of bringing others into Christ. This vision enabled Paul to see things, believe things, and do things for Christ (Acts 26:18). Regarding it he said, “I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision” (Acts 26:19). Had Paul not been obedient to that vision, thousands would have been deprived of the gospel and he himself would not have been saved.

Peter had a vision (Acts 10:17-19). Other nations were involved in that vision. In fact, our salvation was at stake in that vision, for through it the gospel was brought to the Gentiles.

Ananias had a vision (Acts 9:10-12). All of these men were challenged by what they saw, and, being inspired by these visions, they fought a battle for God and helped save a world for Christ.

What about our vision? It, too, is one of believing in Christ, belonging to Christ, behaving like Christ, and bringing others into Christ. Through it we, too, are called to be chosen vessels for the Lord, “meet for the master’s use” (2 Tim. 2:21). It likewise involves other nations. It is a world vision! In it we must see men – not in Macedonia alone – but also in Finland, Fiji, Indonesia, Vietnam, the Belgian Congo, Spain, and other lands, crying, “Come over and help us.”

How could we be indifferent to that vision? Will we be as obedient to ours

as Paul, Peter, and Ananias were to theirs? Will this vision cause us to see things, believe things, and do things for Christ? If not, we will rob the world of much that could be given and ourselves of much more that could be gained!

The Scope of This Vision

In Luke 15, Jesus so vividly shows the glory of seeking and saving the lost. There was a lost coin *at home*, and there was a lost sheep *away from home*. In each case, a most eager search was made.

The woman who lost her coin at home immediately lighted a candle, swept the house, and searched diligently until she found it. The man whose sheep was lost out in the wilderness immediately left the ninety and nine at home and went after the lost until he found it.

There are people *who are lost at home*; there are others *who are lost away from home*. We must become interested in the lost wherever they are. We must begin by (1) lighting God's candle and (2) sweeping the houses of our own communities, searching diligently until we find the lost there. We must also (1) leave the ninety and nine here in the states, (2) go into the wilderness abroad, and go after the lost until we find them.

To have a world vision, we must have a *world outlook*, a *world understanding*, a *world interest*, and a *world concern*. How could we have a world vision, however, when we haven't

even caught a vision of what is around us yet? Some haven't even gotten an Abilene vision yet! Or a Dallas vision! Or a New York City vision! Some haven't even gotten a vision of the United States yet!

This vision must start at home but must not be parked there. Mission work must begin at home but cannot stop there. Our concern for others' salvation must begin where we are, but it must not be limited to that one little segment of the world's population. We must come to *see* the whole world *through the eye of Christ*; we must come to *think* of the whole world *through the heart of Christ*; and we must *rise to action* for the salvation of the whole world *through the teachings of Christ*.

Let us not be so selfish as to withhold the gospel from any nation, and let us not be so prejudiced as to withhold the gospel from any race. Christ views the earth as "one world," not a world of "great nations" and "small nations," of "superior races" and "inferior races," but a world lost in sin! A world for which Christ died! A world that needs the gospel.

Let us have this world-wide outlook and see all people – not as Americans, Orientals, Europeans – not as white, black, yellow, or red – but as human beings created in the image of God, who, because of sin, stand in need of a Saviour. Let us not withhold the gospel from those outside the United States on the flimsy pretext that "there are plenty

of heathen at home.” Usually, those who say this do very little to reach the lost in their own communities. This vision carries such a tremendous responsibility.

Responsibility of This Vision

If the world is not lost in its present condition, our religion is vain; if it is lost, we had better get busy, and we had better get busy in a hurry, or our religion will be vain anyway! Through “the church the manifold wisdom of God” is to be made known to the world (Eph. 3:8-11). If we can’t see the Lord’s message to us, then we’ve become blinded to the vision God would have us see. If we can’t see – that’s what a vision is, seeing – that the salvation of the whole world lies on our shoulders, then we had better restudy the Bible and get a better vision!

To whom was the Lord speaking these words: “Repentance and remission of sins should be preached . . . among all nations” (Luke 24:47)? “This gospel of the kingdom SHALL be preached IN ALL THE WORLD for a witness UNTO ALL THE NATIONS” (Matt. 24:14). “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel TO EVERY CREATURE” (Mark 16:15).

In these passages, the Lord was not merely giving His permission, but His commission! This is not *one way* to do it, but the *only way* to do it. These are the marching orders for the church. They involve going. You can’t spell “gospel” and leave the “go” out;

neither can you tell it and leave the “go” out.

The Lord said, “Go . . . speak” (Acts 5:20). “As ye go, preach” (Matt. 10:7). He meant just that. To one man it was said: “Arise, and go” (Acts 8:26). Verse 27 says, “He arose and went.” Apparently, he saw more in the Lord’s bidding than we see. The Lord showed him his *responsibility*; he, in turn, showed the Lord his *ability* to respond. That’s what responsibility is – simply the ability to respond.

There is not only a “going” but a “sending” as well. Either *go across in person* or *come across in purse*! “How shall they preach, except they be sent?” (Rom. 10:15). Some went; others sent!

At the Sea of Galilee, Jesus one time said to His disciples, “Let us go over unto the other side of the sea” (Mark 4: 35). He now is saying to us, “Let us go over unto the other side of the seas of the earth.” The disciples then took Jesus across that little sea; will the disciples now take Him across the big seas? Perhaps God is also saying to us, “Get thee out of thy country, . . . and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee” (Gen. 12:1). There are other lands God wants to show us; are we willing to go to these lands, that we might see the need that God will show us?

The Possibility of This Vision

“Where God guides, God always provides!” God has given some pretty big assignments, but never one too big to

be carried out. Ours is a world-wide one, but don't think for a moment that it is an impossible one. It can be done!

One of Israel's kings said to his people: "Ramoth in Gilead is ours, but we be still, and take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria?" (1 Kings 22:3). We, too, could say, "The world is ours for Christ, but we be still, and take it not out of the hands of Satan!" Let's not be still, but rise up and take it.

May I suggest six things, each beginning with the letter *F*, that either are or can become ours? The *faith* can be ours; do we have it? The *feeling* of responsibility should be ours; do we share it? The *facilities* are ours; do we see them? The *finances* are ours; are we using them? The *fruit* can be ours; will we reap it? The *finishing* must be ours; what will we do about it? We not only need *initiative*, but we need *finishitive* (if that isn't a word, let's coin one) as well. If you don't see that these six things are ours, you just don't have a world vision for Christ!

In rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and in reconstructing the city, Israel had a most difficult task, yet not an impossible one. There was a vision that enabled them to see it through. It was said, "The city was large and great" (Neh. 7:4). It could also be said that the challenge and the cost were great. The *city* was great, the *challenge* was great, and the *cost* was great, but those three Cs were offset by three other Cs. Their *conscience* regarding it was just as

large as the city; their *conviction* about it was just as large as the challenge; and their *courage* was just as large and great as the cost.

Our Faith in This Vision

Why haven't we had more faith? Have we not had a big enough vision? Have we lost sight of the fact that God is our partner? God's word will not return unto Him void (Isa. 55:11). "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days" (Eccles. 11:1). "Where is your faith?" the Lord once asked (Luke 8:25).

Has our faith been too much in *the sower of the seed* rather than in *the seed that is sown*? We hear much today about the great dangers facing the church. There are great dangers, and we must ever be aware of them. I believe that our greatest danger is not institutionalism, but I believe that danger is professionalism of the ministry. It is something that all preachers must forever guard against. I have to fight it. Personally, I do not like to visit the hospital simply because I am a preacher, and the patient will be hurt because "the preacher didn't go to see him." I would much prefer to go simply as a Christian. Let us not put more faith in the sower of the seed than in the seed sown.

Or, is our faith *in the mere fact of sowing* rather than *in the future of the sowing*? Have we thought so much about the *obstacles overcome* rather than *the opportunities that will come*? Have we become so conscious of *the*

expense involved rather than *the expense that could evolve* from the sowing? Maybe we have thought too much about *how much we have spent* rather than *how many we have saved*.

Where was the faith of the one-talent man? The difference between him and the other two men was a matter of vision. One *criticized* while the other two men *visualized*. One chose a *microscope* (which deals with distance). Maybe we, too, have the wrong “scope”? This will affect one’s vision. To have the harvest, we must sow the seed. We can’t cast a stale crust of bread on the waters and get chocolate cake and ice cream in return! Ten cents *worth of assistance* is much more valuable than ten dollars *worth of argument*.

One great mistake the church has made has been lack of faith in the sowing. The harvest will come. We are not told to baptize every creature, but we are told to preach the gospel to every creature (1 Cor. 1:17; Mark 16:15). If we don’t reap (or baptize) right away, we begin to lose faith in the sowing. We must be content to let others reap the harvest for which we have sown. We must be willing to sow for the harvest we may never see, believing the seed will eventually grow and the harvest yielded. “One soweth, and another reapeth” (John 4:37).

The faith of Joshua and Caleb is so greatly needed today. The majority had lost faith, but these two men would not give up. They threw out a challenge to

their faithless brethren by saying, “Let us go up at once, and possess it [Canaan]; for we are well able to overcome it” (Num. 13:30). Oh, for a spirit like that today! There was an urgency in that; there is an urgency today. “At once” or never! There is no time to lose. Souls are lost; faith of others is being overthrown; false doctrines are making great inroads; Satan is going into all the world – why can’t we? Denominationalism is going everywhere; where have we been?

Like Caleb and Joshua, I know “we are well able to overcome” the world for Christ. We are well able *numerically* – we have the people; we are well able *physically* – we have the strength; we are well able *educationally* – we have the training; we are well able *doctrinally* – we have the truth; and we are well able *financially* – we have the money! Are we well able *spiritually* and *enthusiastically*? This is the question.

The Excitement of This Vision

Brethren, what are we waiting for? Maybe we haven’t seen the joy and excitement of taking a whole world for Christ! We think so little about souls being saved because we think so little about souls being lost!

In the Bible, we are challenged by the little word “behold” that occurs so frequently. Don’t ever overlook that word. You perhaps have read it a thousand times without stopping to consider its full meaning. The word suggests “wonder, amazement, something

out of the ordinary.” It says, in essence, “Here is something terribly exciting, and here is something to get terribly excited about.”

Let me give you a few of the many passages in which this little word is found. “Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29)! That’s something to get excited about! “Behold what manner of love the father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called” His children (1 John 3:1)! That’s something to get excited about! Behold the white fields of harvest (John 4:35)! Behold open doors (Rev. 3:8)! Behold! Behold! When we read all of these passages in which the word “Behold” is found, may we observe with excitement what the Lord is saying.

In Russia, our guide was a 20-year-old Jewish girl who had never read a Bible in all of her life, until we gave her a copy, which she then read one night until three o’clock in the morning. Questions began to come from a hungry, unlearned soul. She became quite interested. We saw overcrowded church buildings filled with people whose faces reflected hunger and deep thirst for the God their government repudiates. “Send us a Bible when you go home,” they said to us, over and over again.

I saw in Russia people greedily grabbing and snatching the tracts we had to give away, so eager to read anything about religion they could get their hands on. In the Far East, a little

12-year-old Chinese boy served as my guide through a place of statues depicting Chinese myths and belief in Buddha. It was “Buddha this” and “Buddha that” until I asked if he had ever heard of Jesus. “Yes, sir,” he replied, “I heard of him for the first time in the movie, ‘Ben Hur.’” He was so eager to hear more about Jesus whom, he said, “Must have been such a great man.” In Bangkok, one man asked, “When was God born, and what shape does he have?”

It was my experience on this 50,000-mile trip to speak to some who did not believe in Christ and who had little or no conception of God. I saw people in Buddhist temples and shrines falling prostrate, so that nine parts of the body touched the floor in worship before their pagan gods. Orientals often stop along the road and toss pebbles to arouse the gods that could not hear nor satisfy their thirsty souls. I smelled the odor of incense being offered to gods that could not smell. I beheld the glory and magnificence of untold beauty built into shrines, temples, and god-shelves that cost millions to erect.

I was shocked to learn that in Japan less than one-half of one percent of the people have any belief at all in Christ. In Korea, the “most Christian nation” in the Orient, less than two percent of the people hold belief in Christ. I tell you, these things should make us restless. The world needs the gospel so much!

The Acceptance of This Vision

Such a vision calls for quick action! Let each of us say, “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day” (John 9:4). “Wherefore I will not be negligent” (2 Pet. 1:12). “I am not ashamed of the gospel” (Rom. 1:16). Let us all say, “This will we do, if God permit” (Heb. 6:3).

You and I were “allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel” (1 Thess. 2:4). Is the gospel safe in our hands? Can we be trusted to take it to the whole world?

To accept this vision, there must be three things: perception, preparation, participation. The *more vision* we have, the *more provision* the world will have. “Be strong, and do it,” the Lord is saying (1 Chron. 28:10).

In order to stamp it indelibly in your hearts, may I suggest five things, each beginning with the letter *P*. These deal with the assignment this vision calls for. It is (1) a *preaching* assignment; (2) a *personal* assignment; (3) a *previous* assignment; (4) a *pleasant* assignment; and (5) a *possible* assignment.

May I comment further on one of these five, namely, the pleasantness of the assignment that it is ours. Everyone likes to have the honor of breaking good news to someone else. What a thrill it is to inform a man that his son is on his way home from overseas! How wonderful to break the news to a man that he has fallen heir to a fortune. Who is there among us who would not

like to have the joy of informing a man that his wife has just given birth to a son? How it must brighten the day for a doctor to be able to tell a patient that he doesn't have the dreaded disease he expected and feared!

I tell you, however, preaching the gospel to the lost should be much more pleasant than any of these just mentioned. The blessing of God is attached to it. There is the promise of the Lord's presence beside those who carry it out (Matt. 28:20). The Lord will be working with them (Mark 16:20).

So pleasant was this work in the hearts of early disciples, that even though persecutions came, they rejoiced “that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of Christ” (Acts 5:41).

The Result of This Vision

What will the next generation say about our reaction to this vision? Will they be able to say concerning us: “They took Christ even as He was” (Mark 4:36)? Or, “They went forth and preached everywhere” (Mark 16:20; Acts 8:4)? And, “Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world” (Rom. 10:18)? And, that “the gospel was preached to every creature under heaven” (Col. 1:23)? Will they be able to say of us: “They so spake that a great multitude believed” (Acts 14:1)? That “every man heard in his own language wherein he was born” (Acts 2:6, 8)? And, that “they ceased not to warn

every one night and day with tears” (Acts 20:31)?

In Acts 14:7, we have this record: “There they preached the gospel.” (May this generation be able to post for succeeding generations these words above every city of every nation in the world!)

The Key to This Vision

We can’t meet this vision with Diotrophes who want all the pre-eminence; nor with John Marks who turn back when the going is rough; nor with Judases who consider it waste, the money being spent for the Lord’s cause. We cannot meet the challenge of this vision with the Pharisees who do nothing but sit on the sidelines and referee. Now it is all right to be a coach, and it is all right to be a trainer or a participant, but be anything but a referee – we have too many of them already! We cannot meet the challenge of this vision with the one-talent men who bury their talents; nor with Laodicean churches which are complacent and see no need (Rev. 3:16, 17); nor with priests and Levites who pass by unconcerned about the needs of starving people by the wayside (Luke 10:31, 32).

But we need Simon Peters who will say, “Such as I have, I give” (Acts 3:6). We need Isaiahs who will say, “Here am I, send me” (Isa. 6:8); individuals, though as poor as the widow, who will give all they have (Mark 12:41, 44); Macedonian churches that beg to give, though in deep poverty (2 Cor. 8:1-5); Jerusalem churches that have

evangelistic fervor (Acts 8:1-4). We need Philips, Pauls, Stephens, who will become “all things to all men, that they by all means might gain some” (1 Cor. 9:22). We need those who are willing to die that others might live. We need Barnabases who will be quick to encourage those who are engaging in good works (Acts 4:36).

A 23-year-old boy, once walking along the shore of one of the Japanese Islands, was washed into the sea by high waves. Help was called, but while those on the shore were arguing about trivials, the boy drowned. Sad as the incident is, there is something far worse. People have been washed into the sea of perdition, and many will drown while those on the shore are arguing about trivials. This is no time to be divided!

May I challenge you with the following statements! I firmly believe these statements to be true and a definite part of the challenge that is ours in a world vision for Christ.

- (1) We’ll never bring *all the world into Christ* until we bring *Christ into all the world!*
- (2) We’ll have no faith in the *mission before us* unless we have faith in the *Master behind us!*
- (3) We’ll never get others to obey *the great commands* until we obey *the great commission!*
- (4) We cannot expect the *world to react* to the Word till *we act* on it!

- (5) We'll never get excited over *sowing the seed* till we get excited over *seeing the need!*
- (6) We can't *make Christ mean anything to others* till we *make Him mean everything to us!* Let's not *jeeringly* say, "*Look what the world is coming to,*" but *joyfully* say, "*Look what has come to the world!*"
- (7) We will have *more conversions* when we have *more convictions!*
- (8) We'll never get *others to see the joy of claiming Christ* till we get *ourselves to see the joy of proclaiming Christ!*
- (9) We'll never be *challenged by seeing through our task* till we *recognize the challenge of seeing our task through!*
- (10) We'll never really *consider the lost* till we *stop considering the cost!*
- (11) We'll quit trying to *save money* only when we really start trying to *save men!*
- (12) We'll be in a *better position to help* when we are in a *better disposition to help!*
- (13) We won't have to *pay the penalty in the reaping* if we are willing to *pay the price in the sowing!*



NASHVILLE SCHOOL OF PREACHING AND BIBLICAL STUDIES

**A MINISTRY OF THE CRIEVE HALL CHURCH OF CHRIST
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE**

Mission Work Begins in the Home

John T. Polk II

After He was raised from the dead, Jesus left His disciples with this mission: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16). It’s easy to think of “every creature” as always being out of our own country, but this is as misguided as people who turn to the thief on the cross for their salvation and ignore Jesus’ cross in the middle (Luke 23:33). In other words, it is too easy to mis-apply a term and miss the point. Jesus’ salvation begins with His cross, and world evangelism begins at home! It always has.

Noah’s Salvation Included His “Household”: When the world was destroyed by flood in Noah’s day, “the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while *the* ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water (1 Peter 3:20). Those “eight souls” were the new beginning of civilization on all of the earth. “Then the LORD said to Noah, ‘Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen *that you are* righteous before Me in this generation’” (Genesis 7:1).

If Noah had not influenced his sons to obey God, none of us might be here today!

Abraham’s World-wide Blessing Begun With His “Household”: The LORD promised: “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Genesis 12:2-3). “For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him” (Genesis 18:19).

If Abraham had not taught his son of promise, Isaac, to honor God’s Promise, Jesus could not have come to save us, for “to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ” (Galatians 3:16).

The Ideal Virtuous Wife Cares For Her “Household”: “She also rises while it is yet night, And provides food for her household, And a portion for her maidservants” (Proverbs 31:15); “She is not afraid of snow for her household, For all her household is clothed with scarlet” (Proverbs 31:21); “She watches over the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness” (Proverbs 31:27). The

“virtuous” wife makes her “household” job #1 and everything else is secondary! Her “household” begins with her husband and then children, not vice-versa!

For a younger widow, full-time homework would help keep her from learning “to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not. Therefore I desire that *the* younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully” (1 Timothy 5:13-14).

The First Gentile To Obey The Gospel Led His “Household”: “There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout *man* and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always” (Acts 10:1-2). When Peter came to Cornelius’ house, “Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends” (Acts 10:24).

Thus, Peter said he would “tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved” (Acts 11:14). This pattern seems to have been followed by other Gentiles (Acts 16:15; 31-34; 18:8). Before He was a Christian, this good man already knew his obligation to provide for his wife and children! How is it that people in the world, before they become Christians,

feel more spiritual duty toward their “households” than people who become Christians?

Obligation To God Begins At Home: “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Timothy 5:8). Seeing that one’s “own” are provided for is job #1 for everyone who has a “household.” How damnable are the males who sire children without a wedded obligation to their mother and the children they produce and the females who birth children without a wedded obligation to their father and the spiritual strength he should include!

God never intended for children to be produced but raised by one parent! The terms “fornication” and “adultery” (Galatians 5:19-21) necessitate the concept of a “wedding” as begun by God. “So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: ‘This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.’ Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall

become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (Genesis 2:20-25). God bringing the woman to the man, and man’s accepting statement formalizing that commitment, is what a “wedding” is. If not, why not?

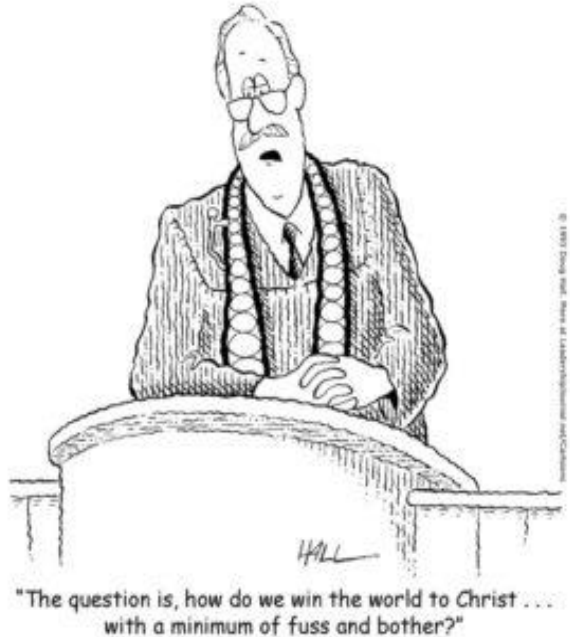
“Good To All” Cannot Overlook The Church: “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10). No one will go to Heaven by doing “good to all,” while ignoring to “do good” to the church, fellow Christians! Some Christians put so much emphasis upon seeing that their good is done to non-Christians, they overlook the fact that Jesus primarily “had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue” (Matthew 13:54).

Just as “mission work” begins at home, so also do the good deeds in the name of Jesus. “And *whatever* you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Colossians 3:17).

Far too many churches and preachers have keenly felt their duty to “the world” to the sad neglect, and failure, of their “own household!” I was asked by a friend, “How’s your work going? I replied, “Great,

we’re baptizing our own children!”

Jesus put this in perspective: “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:24-26) One who “gains the whole world” without involving “his own household” is one who “loses his own soul.” World-wide missions must begin at home and then, “as we have opportunity.” The world will still be waiting for the Gospel.



The World Next Door: Teaching Our Neighbors

Johnny Trail

How well do you know your neighbor? The term neighbor is very generic in this consideration. Our neighbor might include the person that we work with, see in the local store, or live just across our property line. Regardless of our relationship from a societal standpoint, every person that we contact is, in one sense of the term our neighbor. In the parable of the good Samaritan, the neighbor of the one who fell among thieves was, relationally speaking, a stranger (Luke 10:29-37). Thus, a neighbor is any person that we meet no matter how familiar we are with that person.

These things being said, it swiftly becomes apparent that we are called upon to share the gospel with every person that we might contact during our lives. This seems to be what is in the mind of Christ when He gave the great commission in Mark's account. Mark 16:15-16 says, "And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.'"

While many understand the imperative of personal evangelism, questions remain about how to engage people who are outside of the body of

Christ. One might consider these practical suggestions for evangelizing one's neighbors.

Pray for those that you might approach about Christianity. Oftentimes I pray that doors might open and that I might be aware of situations where I can effectively evangelize someone. The apostle Paul prayed for his countrymen who had not obeyed the gospel, and we need to pray for those who are not disciples of Christ. Romans 10:1 says, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved."

Start with a common interest and gradually introduce biblical topics. This is the very thing that Jesus did at the well with the Samaritan woman. She was interested in water and Jesus eventually spoke to her about everlasting water that would forever quench her thirst. John 4:13-15 says, "Jesus answered and said to her, 'Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.' The woman said to Him, 'Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.'"

There is a progression in John chapter four regarding the Samaritan woman's view of Christ. At first, He was a Jewish man (John 4:9), then a prophet (John 4:19), and finally the Messiah (John 4:25). By the same token, people progress in their understanding of the gospel and God's word. It is amazing to think that this all started from a conversation about water!

Plant a seed in someone's life not a tree. Oftentimes, the word of God is compared to a seed (cf. Matthew 13:4; Mark 4:4; Luke 8:11). We live in a fast-paced society where we want immediate results. Sometimes it takes decades to see a person respond in a positive fashion to the gospel. When one does not get immediate results, it should not alarm or discourage them.

Realize that you might be exposing your neighbor to something that is new and uncertain. Oftentimes, the people we evangelize have some religious background that is strong in "pastor"-directed teaching but weak in doctrine that is rooted in Scripture. Most people in protestant denominationalism have been taught that they are saved by faith alone and baptism is not essential.

Be patient with people who have only heard the true teachings of Scripture for the first time. Sometimes people's eyes need to adjust to the light. John 1:5 says, "And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it."

Furthermore, you need to realize that we are living in an age where people are biblically illiterate. It is no coincidence that the last category selected on the gameshow *Jeopardy!* is any Bible-related category. Over the years, brethren have conducted Bible studies with people who knew little or nothing about the teachings found in Scripture. If you can arrange a Bible study with a neighbor, you might use identical Bibles so that they will not have to fumble with finding the book, chapter, and verse answers that you are trying to share with them. In other words, you might tell them the page number to turn to in their Bible if they do not know the books of the Bible rather than create embarrassment.

Next, if you can organize a Bible study with your neighbor, ***find an evangelism tool to become familiar with and use in the context of home Bible study.*** There are many good Bible study programs available by members of the Lord's body. The *Open Bible Study*, *Fishers of Men*, and *Seeds for the Sower* are good programs that one might consider familiarizing oneself with before engaging a neighbor in studying the Bible. If nothing else, you might underline passages in your Bible and write in the margins regarding follow up passages.

Along these same lines, ***when you do not know the answer to a question that is offered during a Bible study, be honest and say, "I do not know."*** One of the worst things we can do is act as if we know the answer to a question

that is unanswered in Scripture or that we lack adequate study to effectively answer. We never want to come across as dishonest because it underscores what we are trying to do. If you are asked a difficult question, you might ask a more mature Christian for a solution or engage in deeper study for an answer.

Finally, *do not be discouraged if your efforts are rebuffed*. Sadly, most people will be lost. Matthew 7:13-14 says, “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way

which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” It is exciting when you share the word of God with someone and they obey the gospel. Conversely, it is heartbreaking when you share the plan of salvation with a person who is not a Christian and they do not obey the gospel.

Following these suggestions will hopefully help the child of God to engage others about the gospel that is God’s power to save (Romans 1:16). Who have you spoken with today about Jesus? Are you praying for those outside of the body of Christ? What are you waiting for?!

The Great Commission

Andy Erwin

The Great Commission serves a two-fold purpose. First, in His final commission, the Lord instructs His disciples on the subject of preaching and teaching so that they might be able to convert the lost and make disciples of them. When we study the Great Commission, we study the Savior’s command and strategy for the conversion of every creature in all nations.

The second purpose of this commission is for the benefit of those who are outside of Christ. If the lost will hear and study the Great Commission, they will learn what they must do to be saved. As this commission instructs the church on those things which we are to teach, it necessarily instructs the lost

on those things they should hear and receive to become converted disciples.

Our brief study of the church’s marching orders will center upon this two-fold purpose. We wish to learn the exact nature of the commands which we are to teach, even the order of this commission, therefore learning the exact commands the lost must hear and obey to be made disciples.

Matthew 28:16-20 (NKJV)

“Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and

on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.”

The Great Commission Is Perpetual

The first matter of controversy which we wish to address is pertaining to the perpetual nature of this command. From time to time someone will say that this passage applied only to the eleven disciples who were with the Lord. We can reject this teaching for the following reasons:

- Mathias and Paul would be excluded from the Great Commission if this teaching were true as neither one was there at that time.
- Paul instructed Timothy to teach faithful men so that they could teach others (2 Timothy 2:2).
- The apostles remained in Jerusalem while dispersed Christians carried the gospel into Samaria and the uttermost parts of the world (Acts 8:1-4) – a command initially spoken only to the eleven (Acts 1:2, 8). If this command spoken initially to the eleven could be carried out by others, then it can be carried out by others now.

- This commission is for Christians of every generation until our Lord returns.

Making Disciples

Matthew 28:16-20, specifically vv. 18-20, has been cited as the basis for our study. We have listed the passage as it has been translated in the New King James Version. However, we also shall be noting how other versions have translated this passage. For example, the Authorized Version or King James Version translates *matheteusate* as “teach” rather than “make disciples.” While teaching is certainly involved in disciple making, it would appear on the surface to be too narrow a definition.

In Alexander Campbell’s *Living Oracles*, *matheteusate* is translated “convert.” On the surface, this also seems to be too narrow a definition. However, in Campbell’s mind, the idea of a conversion was anything but narrow.

Of conversion, Campbell wrote: “The entire change effected in man by the Christian system consists in four things: a change of views; a change of affections; a change of state; and a change of life.”¹

Each change noted by Campbell should be considered carefully and proven by sacred Scripture rather than accepted on the basis of being *his* conclusion. However, when we turn to the Scriptures, we find that each of these

¹ Alexander Campbell. *The Christian System* (Nashville, TN: Gospel

Advocate Company, 2001), 44.

changes is certainly founded upon biblical teaching (see 1 Peter 2:9; Philipians 4:8; Ephesians 2:13; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21).

Having considered this, Campbell's translation of *matheteusate* is more accurate and deeper than we would first suppose.

To keep the Savior's command and *matheteusate* all nations, we must teach those things which would induce lost souls to be converted, thus becoming disciples.

W. Robertson Nicoll understood baptism as the sole "condition of discipleship" according to this passage in Matthew.² We have brethren who appear to be teaching the same thing today, and this is why we want to take the time to discuss this issue now.

A number of years ago I took issue with the idea that as long as a person is baptized for the remission of sins, that person is to be considered a brother in Christ. The question I raised was "What about the Mormons?" They baptize for the remission of sins; are we to consider Mormons as being Christians without being converted from their false ways?

As I studied this question more, I came to realize that each person needs to be taught on an individual basis. If a person needs more help than others to understand the nature of true Christianity or the church, then we need to teach them. If they need to study why

adultery is sinful and repent, then we must be willing to teach them.

To say that baptism is all that is required is to say that baptism is all that needs to be taught – and this could not be more wrong. Baptism is not the only condition for discipleship. While baptism is the culminating act that puts one into Christ and His covenant (Romans 6:3-7; Galatians 3:26-27), apart from belief and repentance, it is empty and vain. Man must obey this doctrine from the heart (Romans 6:17).

One must know the Lord in order to be a disciple. Jeremiah prophesied in the long ago that knowing the Lord would be a condition of entering the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:34); and the writer of Hebrews says the same (Hebrews 8:11). One cannot be a disciple of this covenant without first knowing the Lord.

Who Is a Disciple?

Jesus referred to His disciples as being "scribe(s) instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 13:52).

Jesus also said, "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40).

A disciple is much more than a learner. A disciple is an attached follower. People can cease to be disciples by ceasing to follow Jesus (John 6:66), thus "severing" themselves from Jesus

² W. Robertson Nicoll. *The Expositor's Greek New Testament*, vol. 1 (Grand

Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Printing Company, 1974), 339.

(Galatians 5:4; NASB), thus becoming “estranged” from Christ (ibid.; NKJV).

From Scripture, we learn how the first disciples would come to set the right example of discipleship as they would eventually forsake all to sit at the feet of their Master (Luke 5:11). Decisions like this are not made without some comprehensive understanding of the decision being made.

Truly, a conversion – a change of view, affection, state, and life – is being accomplished. It is no small thing to be made a disciple. And while it would be unreasonable to think that spiritually newborn babes should have the same measure of understanding as that of disciples who have been learning for considerable amounts of time, we should not be so misguided to believe that only a shallow depth of spiritual understanding is essential.

Our teaching must offer the comprehensive understanding needed for souls to make such changes as are required and become motivated to attach themselves to Jesus as His followers.

To say that baptism is the sole requirement would negate the command to believe as it is recorded by Mark (16:16). Also, Luke’s account of the Great Commission, believed by some to be given after that of Matthew and Mark, emphasizes repentance, remission of sins, Christ and His kingdom,

all to be preached in His name beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:46-49; Acts 2:1-11). If such sacred truths are to be taught, they must be heard and received as well.

The Order of the Great Commission

The idea of the Great Commission being taught as a series of commands is not uncommon to the churches of Christ. J. W. McGarvey believed the order followed accordingly:

“Having made disciples by persuading men to accept the teaching of Jesus, and having baptized such into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, they were next to teach them all that Jesus had commanded – all the duties of the Christian life.”³

The view expressed by McGarvey is held among recent writers as well. Homer Hailey writes:

“The order Jesus gave was: make disciples by evangelizing (i.e., preaching the gospel to the lost), baptize, and teach the baptized to observe all that He had commanded the apostles.”⁴

It seems that both McGarvey and Hailey leave the door open for someone to make a case for discipleship before and without baptism. This is not to say that these men believed this to be the case, for they did not, but it does show some inconsistency in the view of the Great Commission being a series of commands.

³ J.W. McGarvey. *A Commentary on Matthew and Mark* (Delight, AR: Gospel Light Publishing Company, n.d.), 254.

⁴ Homer Hailey. *Carrying Out the Great Commission* (Louisville, KY: Religious Supply, Inc., n.d.), 6.

Jack Cottrell is perhaps a little clearer and in better harmony with other scriptures as he writes:

“In terms of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20, baptism is something taught *before* conversion with a view to *becoming* a disciple, while ‘teaching them to observe all that I command you’ *follows* conversion and deals with the details of the Christian life.”⁵

While Cottrell appears to be clearer in preserving baptism as a condition of discipleship than was McGarvey or Hailey, he has not made a definitive statement on the matter. To say that teaching the converted to observe all things He has commanded *after* conversion is illogical at best and still leaves one with the impression that the commission is a series of commands.

Certainly, a great deal – if not most – of teaching remains to be comprehended after conversion; but how shall the lost be converted without observing any of the commandments of Christ? This view is also inconsistent, as we will elaborate momentarily, but do note that McGarvey did understand disciples as “having” been baptized.

To find a definitive statement on this matter, we turn to the prolific and lamented writer, T. Pierce Brown.

“It is my present judgment that there is ONE COMMAND in that commission, and the other parts of it are words

or phrases telling how that command is to be obeyed.”⁶

Brown continues by showing that “Go” is not an imperative but is from the Greek word *poreuthentes*, which is a first person aorist passive participle in the masculine plural, meaning “When you go, or wherever you go.” Literally, “As you go, make disciples.”

Thus, whatever we find ourselves doing in life, whether we are bricklayers or stay-at-home mothers, we must have the heart to carry out the Great Commission – that is, to make disciples. As we go, we must be teaching the lost and converting the lost in such a way that they are compelled to forsake all and follow Jesus.

The Great Commission is not a series of commands; it is one command. We are to make disciples. The Great Commission is a lifelong command. Christians must remain resolved to make disciples throughout the course of their new lives in Christ.

How Do We Make Disciples?

Seeing that the first “step” in this so-called series of commands is not really a step at all and that the “series” is not really a series of commands but one command, how shall we obey this command?

Our Lord has said, “As you go into the world, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the

⁵ Jack Cottrell. *Baptism a Biblical Study* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2002), 16.

⁶ T. Pierce Brown. *Pertinent Principles* (vol.2), (Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications n.d.), 144.

Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you.”

An everyday equivalent of this command would be a parent telling a child, “As you go into the swimming pool, swim, using your arms and legs, doing all the things which I have instructed you.”

The command is to swim. The child could not swim without using his arms and legs. The Christian cannot make disciples without baptizing the lost. The child could not swim without doing all the parent had instructed *pertaining to swimming*.

Should we think the parent was talking about anything or everything outside of swimming? Why should we think the Lord was talking about anything or everything outside of making disciples?

In the context of Matthew 28:19-20, we have two present tense active participles: *baptizontes* which should always be translated “baptizing” and secondly, *didazkontes* which should always be translated “teaching.”

One cannot be a disciple without first being taught. The command is to make disciples *having baptized* them and *having taught* them to observe all that He has commanded *pertaining to becoming a disciple*.

Unfortunately, some will object to this plainly stated command, wishing to hold to the idea of a series of commands, and argue it is impossible to teach all the Savior has commanded before baptism. Such an argument

would be like saying it is impossible to teach a child all there is about swimming before throwing him into the pool!

If we allow the context to be the final determining authority for the meaning of this phrase, we can come to see that we are to teach all things He has commanded as these commands pertain to making disciples of all nations. It has been *assumed* that this phrase is speaking of the continued teaching necessary in the realm of Christian living, and such teaching is necessary, but this passage reveals only Christ’s instructions on how to make and become disciples.

We must teach *all* that Christ has commanded in His plan of salvation. Some erroneously view the teaching which precedes baptism to be mere surface teaching and attempt to minimize the things a lost soul should know in order to be converted. Some are even turning a blind eye to sin and baptizing without penitence on the part of the believer. Some wish to limit *all things to some things* – specifically, baptism and the remission of sins.

Are we to conclude as did Nicoll, that baptism is the sole condition for discipleship? Accordingly, all one would have to be taught is that baptism is for the forgiveness of sins and he can become a disciple.

However, being a disciple involves much more than knowing that baptism is involved in the plan of salvation. We wish not to exclude the importance of baptism – by any means – but neither

do we wish only to make disciples solely unto the doctrine of baptism. We are commanded to make disciples for Christ by teaching all relative commandments – not one specific teaching.

Certainly one cannot be a disciple without being baptized. Baptism holds its place as being part of the Great Commission. Matthew placed an emphasis on baptism as do many New Testament writers; but we must understand that hearing the gospel (Mark 16:15), believing the gospel message (Mark 16:16), and repenting of sins (Luke 24:47) hold equal importance in the Great Commission even though these are not as strongly emphasized by Matthew. Possibly, a case can be made for confession of Christ in the act of being baptized into His name as we are baptized into the names of the Sacred Three (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38).

For us to learn what we must teach to make disciples we must ask, what did the apostles and early evangelists teach in order to make disciples?

- Did they not preach faith (Acts 16:31)?
- Did they not teach repentance (Acts 17:30-31)?
- Did they not teach the kingdom (Acts 8:12; Acts 19:8; Acts 20:25; Acts 28:23, 31)?

- Did they not preach baptism upon the basis of belief, repentance, and confession (Acts 22:16)?
- In short, they preached Jesus (Acts 8:35).
- They preached all the things that He had commanded pertaining to becoming a disciple.
- They preached to convert the lost to Christ.

One could do as Owen Olbricht has done and make a list of everything taught by the apostles and early evangelists in order to convert lost souls. His efforts led to the compilation of a list of at least eight things which a person ought to know before being baptized.⁷

- 1.) There is one true God (Acts 3:13; 14:15; 17:23-31).
- 2.) Jesus is Lord and Christ, the Son of God (John 20:30-31; Acts 2:36; 4:10; 5:42; 9:20, 22; 10:36; 17:3; 18:5, 28).
- 3.) The word of the Lord saves (Acts 11:14; 16:32; 2 Timothy 4:2).
- 4.) Jesus is the Savior (Acts 2:32; 8:5, 25, 35; 14:7, 21; 16:10; 1 Corinthians 2:1, 2; 15:1-4).
- 5.) Without Jesus we are lost and in need of forgiveness (Acts 4:10-12).

⁷ Owen Olbricht. *Baptism: A Response of Faith* (Delight, AR: Gospel Light Publishing Company, 2000), 56-57.

- 6.) We need to repent, that is, to change our lives (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30).
- 7.) Sins are forgiven when we are baptized (Acts 2:38; 22:16).
- 8.) The truth concerning the kingdom of God was preached (Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31).

In Conclusion

We must be sure to convert people to Christ. If we are not careful, we can find ourselves studying with the lost in order to convert them to baptism. Once they have come to accept baptism for remission of sins we can mistakenly feel that our mission is accomplished.

However, being converted to Christ requires more than just understanding what the Bible teaches about baptism. If baptism is the primary purpose of our study with lost souls, something is lacking. Such a study needs a “cross” in it! Moreover, we can find ourselves extending fellowship to others solely on the basis of baptism for the remission of sins. If we are going to do that, why not just throw the rest of the Bible away? If we will do as Christ has commanded and prove to be soul winners by teaching the entirety of His plan of salvation, we have the promise that He will be with us always, “even until the end of the world” (KJV).

Let us put our faith in Him who will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews

13:5), lest we forget the souls who depend upon us to teach them the whole counsel of God and the account we someday shall give.

“Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul” (Ezekiel 3:19-21).



The Survival of a Congregation

Ronald Bryant

The book of 1 Peter is one of the most encouraging books in the New Testament. It gives assurances and specific guidance to the people of God.

Peter wrote: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:3-9).

In this passage Peter listed a number of spiritual assets that belong to God’s people. He praised God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, then exalted “the abundant mercy of God,” through which God’s people

have been “begotten again” (born from above) to a living hope. Peter connected this hope with “the resurrection of Christ from the dead.” He then stated that they had been begotten to an “inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, that does not fade away, and is reserved in heaven” for them. He then assured them that they were being “kept by the power of God through faith for that salvation.” Their steadfastness was a proof of the genuineness of their faith and its objective, the salvation of their souls.

Peter then directed them, “Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’ And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:13-19).

He urged them to be vigilant. He told them to “gird up the loins of your mind,” an expression from the practice of athletes arranging their clothes to avoid being entangled in them when they competed. Casual interest and preparation does not serve them well nor does it honor God. Peter called them to intense devotion and effort.

If they were to survive as the people of God they were to . . .

1. “Be obedient” -- They were to be obedient to the Father, keep His commandments, consistently reject that which formerly held them before they knew God.

2. “Be holy” -- They were to imitate the Father in love and in holiness: “As He is holy, so be ye holy.”

God does not require the impossible! Still, they were to take God as their pattern and be holy even as He is holy. This directive called for conformity, not equality! God is infinite in His holiness; Christians are not (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:12). Survival as the people of God is the focus and the motive. Holiness is finally God-likeness; the conformity of one’s life to God’s will and character.

Peter then directed, “If you call on the Father. . . pass the time of your sojourn here in fear.” If you call God your Father, always live in His presence.

The people of God are to call God their Father; they are to never call upon Him in a casual way. In every aspect they belong to God and are to live with

an awareness that He will finally judge them. They are to view life as a journey to eternity, the whole of which is to be holy, reverent, and obedient to God. The instruction that Peter then gives is pointed and personal: “knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18-19).

He wrote of the inability of all other things – including great riches – to accomplish redemption. He wrote, “You were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold.” It is not possible for all the gold in the world to deliver even one soul from condemnation; nor is it possible for all the sacrificial offerings ever made to remove the offense of even one sin.

The apostle pointed out that the Father foreordained that His Son be the Savior before the foundation of the world. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world “but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God” (1 Peter 1:20-21).

Peter then set forth two essential facts. He declared that they had “purified their souls” and that they also had been “born again.”

“Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one

another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because ‘All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, But the word of the Lord endures forever.’ Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you” (1 Peter 1:22-25).

Here, he enjoined the duty of brotherly love, that which Christians bear for Christ’s sake to one another. It is a duty to be borne wholeheartedly toward all those that belong to God in Christ. This directive was first given by Jesus (John 14:34-35) and then was repeatedly stated in the epistles, most notably the book of 1 John.

Peter reminded them that they had “purified their souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit” and then declared that which they had obeyed was “the word which by the gospel was preached to them (v. 22, 25). The gospel is that by which they had been “born again” (v. 23).

Clearly, the word of the truth of the gospel was given by the Holy Spirit; it was not derived from mankind. In truth, the saved belong to God, were led by the Spirit, were redeemed by the blood, and therefore were to labor to be what God would have them to be, in service and fellowship – in their love one for another.

In essence Peter urged them to realize that they belong to God and to one another and were to live as the people

of God. As the redeemed they were to live in obedience and holiness and were to hold fast to the word of God as their only guide, to this end: to be secure in their relationship with God.

According to Peter, the new birth comes via acceptance of and obedience to the gospel of Christ; it does not come by way of some inner feeling, dream, or experience. Jesus is the Savior, and the gospel is the instrumental cause of regeneration. These had been born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which lives and abides forever.

Peter then urged them to grow up spiritually. “Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Peter 2:1-3). He directed them to lay aside specific sins: malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, and evil-speaking. He then admonished them to “desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.”

First certain, sins are to be laid aside. Yet, there are certain sins which will corrupt heart and life; if they are not resisted and rejected, they will defile the heart and work against the rule of Christ. The first is malice. Malice is a deep-rooted anger and hostility harbored in the heart. Guile is deceit and treachery in words or action. Hypocrisy is insincerity, pretense, duplicity, with an appearance of friendship. Envy is resentment or jealousy over what

another has received. Evil-speaking is words of all kinds that are evil in origin and in result, including lying, slandering, back-biting, and defaming. These are contrary to the command to love, and they oppose the word of God. They are also destructive of unity, peace, love, and hope. These sins can destroy the life of a congregation. They are destructive of the way of Christ.

Peter then addressed their identity as the people of God. “Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, ‘Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.’ Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, ‘the stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone,’ and ‘a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.’ They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy” (1 Peter 2:4-11).

He reminds them of who they are in Christ. Christ is that living stone, the life-giving stone. Because He lives, they shall live also. He is also the chief cornerstone, serving to define the building – the church – and serving to sustain it. As regards its significance and unity, its purpose and fellowship, Christ ties the whole structure together. He alone unites the individual stones of the spiritual building to Himself, and to one another. He was rejected indeed by men but is accepted as precious by the redeemed.

The people of God, individually and collectively, are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people. They exist to proclaim the praises of Him who called them into His marvelous light. They “who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.” Peter admonishes them, “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Peter 2:11-12).

The life of a congregation is determined by the great truths set forth in Scripture. A body of people who do not focus upon these truths and who are not motivated by them will not long survive.

A BIBLICAL FOUNDATION for MISSIONS

Roger Shepherd

The mission of God is expressed in the Old and New Testaments as a central biblical theme. The biblical foundation for missions is Scriptural, beginning with God sending his Son to defeat Satan and redeem lost humanity (Gen. 3:15). The Bible is the basis, foundation, and source of faith in God and His mission for the disciples going into the world and preaching the gospel to all ethnic groups (Isa. 6:8; Matt. 28:19).

“I, without any reservation, accept the inerrancy of the inspired Word of God as a foundation for missions (2 Tim. 3:16–17). The canon of Scripture is a missional phenomenon as it witnesses God’s self-giving movement toward His human creation.”¹ God has only one intention, which is to save humanity! The Bible gives a proper motivation for missions and creates a dynamic for missionaries.

The word *mission* does not appear in the Bible. Its equivalent, *evangelist*, appears concerning the work of a preacher of the gospel (2 Tim. 4:5). The New Testament word “evangelist has its root in the Hebrew verb *basar*, meaning generally, ‘one who

proclaimed good news’ (1 Kings 1:42; Jer. 20:15; 2 Sam. 4:10; 18:26). In Psalm 40:9-10, the *basar* plays an important role in communicating to God’s people: ‘I have proclaimed glad tidings of righteousness in the great congregation.’”² The Greek word *euangelistes* means “one who brings glad tidings of good things and heralds the salvation that is found only in Jesus Christ.”³ Phillip and Paul were evangelists in gospel-deserted areas (Acts 21:8; 8:24–40; Eph. 4:11).

MISSION OF GOD

God is a sending God in the OT “particularized with the call of Abram by a glimpse into the future when God intended through him to bless ‘all the nations of the earth’ (Gen. 12:1–3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4). Israel became an ‘elect nation’ (Deut. 7:6–9; Isa. 43:20–21). God chose them for service, not for boasting. The Jews were ‘a light to the nations’ [Gentiles] and ‘bring my salvation to the ends of the earth’ (Isa. 49:6). Amos records the ‘word of the Lord’ to those very people whom God had ‘brought up out of Egypt’ (3:2).”⁴

¹ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 48

² Denny Petrillo, “The Preacher as an Evangelist” in *Missions Rekindling the Fire*, eds. Roger Shepherd and J. J. Turner (Montgomery, AL: Amridge University press, 2012), 99.

³ Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 257.

⁴ C. Philip Slate, “The Biblical View of Missions” in *Missions Rekindling the Fire*, eds. Roger Shepherd and J. J. Turner (Montgomery, AL: Amridge University press, 2012), 25.

God also gave Moses a two-fold mission. First, redeem the people of Israel from bondage “when you have brought the people out of Egypt” (Exod. 3:12). Moses delivered the people (Exod. 19:1). Today, our mission is to bring people out of sin and back to God (2 Cor. 5:19–6:2). Second, organize the people in worship to God, “you shall worship God at this mountain” (Exod. 3:12). Israel began serving God correctly at Mount Sinai (Exod. 19:2–3; Acts 7:7). Israel continued worshipping God at “this mountain” or Jerusalem until the death of Christ (John 4:20–24). Moses receiving a mission from God serves as a great example to missions today. The mission of God is complete when the saved are congregated in the worship assembly.

One can go back into the message of Isaiah, the Messianic Prophet, and see God’s plan, purpose, and action to redeem humanity (Isa. 46:9–11). God declared from the beginning that His purpose of making known the message of the one true God would be established (Deut. 6:1–8). Isaiah was the prophet chosen to declare God’s message of salvation and punishment to Babylon (Isa. 6:8; 40:8; 46:1, 3). God’s word was accomplished forever (Isa. 14:24; 25:1; 55:11).

God acted through Isaiah to redeem the house of Jacob and Israel. God planned to redeem humanity from one generation to another with plans for every disciple in every generation proclaiming the message of the Bible (Ps. 33:11; Prov. 19:21). The person who believes the Word of God from the heart will be excited

about the Lord’s commission of saving the world (Rom. 1:14–17).

MISSION OF JESUS

Jesus began his mission by giving the OT approval (Luke 24: 44–47). Christ sends disciples with these words “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you” (John 20:21). He sent His disciples to preach and teach all nations (Matt. 28:19–20; Mark 16:15–16). This is what disciples do – “make disciples.”

The Lord gave His disciple a significant mission statement: Go into the entire world and preach the gospel. What makes an effective mission statement for the church? First, it is according to the Scriptures. One notices that Christ pointed the disciples to the Scriptures (Luke 24:45).

Second, an effective mission statement is written to serve as a reminder to the disciples. Jesus said: “Thus it is written” (Luke 24:46, 26, 44).

Third, the mission statement is clear and expressly stated (Luke 24:47).

Fourth, a good mission statement is remembered by every disciple. Who could not memorize the mission statement in Luke 24:47 in five minutes and remember it for the rest of their lives? Yes, only lazy and indifferent disciples.

Fifth, to be effective in the mission field, disciples must have a clear focus. Jesus motivated His disciples to preach the message of salvation to “all the nations,” thus, a world mission (47).

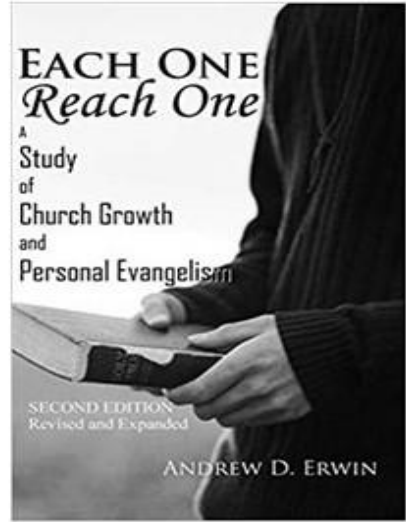
Sixth, the mission statement calls for action, participation, and results from disciples. Christ reminded the disciples that they were being sent forth as witnesses into the world to make disciples of the Lord (Luke 24:48–49; Matt. 28:19–20; Mark 16:15–16).

Therefore, it is taught in the Scriptures that the purpose of the church is to save humanity, edify or build up the faith of the saved, train the disciples in how to work for the Lord, and send them out into the mission field (Eph. 4:11–12). The church that has no purpose ends up traveling a dead-end street every time. Many disciples aim at nothing, and they hit the target dead center every time!

CONCLUSION

The mission of God is the message of the Bible. How do we do missions today according to the examples of God and Jesus?

- First, send missionaries.
- Second, understand that the mission of Jesus is to “make disciples of every ethnic group.”
- Third, disciples have a clear mission statement.
- Fourth, disciples do the mission of God and Jesus with an open mind.
- Fifth, present a world mission vision beginning with all church leaders. As God sent Abraham and Moses, and as Jesus sent His disciples, they send the church.



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The King's Marching Orders

Matthew 28:18-20

Familiarity breeds contempt. Here are words we are all familiar with, yet they represent a point of failure today. Let us examine them carefully:

I. A Great Claim. “all authority”

- A. Jesus did not make this claim before His resurrection. Before this no one prayed or baptized in His name.
- B. His personal ministry was carried on during the Mosaic period of time. Colossians 2:14
- C. He has no successors. Ephesians 1:19-23

II. A Great Commission. “all nations.”

- A. Not just for America or the white race!
- B. J. M. McCaleb's hymn: “The Gospel is for All.” (He was an early missionary to Japan.)
- C. What do we need to carry out this commission? Hearts that care; eyes that see the harvest field; wisdom to plan effectively; workers to go; churches to send; faith to begin; courage to stand through trials and failures.

III. A Great Charge. “all things.”

- A. Water baptism is only the beginning. Those converted must grow.
- B. What must a Christian do to be saved?
- C. Beware of false theories. There are no non-essentials in the doctrine of Christ.

IV. A Great Comfort. “I am with you always”.

- A. A promise of His personal presence.
- B. A promise of His abiding presence.
- C. A promise of His victorious presence.

Every Christian fits somewhere in the Lord's plan. Let us find our place and fill it.

Mike Kiser

A NEW MISSION WORK BEGINS

Dear Readers, Subscribers, and Supporters of the *Gospel Gleaner*,

Friends, I am writing to encourage you to consider helping me during a time of ministerial transition. You have been such great encouragers to me in the past. I need your help now as I have decided to enter the mission field as a fulltime visiting instructor in various schools of preaching around the world. The work will require writing curriculum, visiting schools, and teaching via distance learning. Not only will the work seek to assist these schools in training their students, but also in offering their teachers the opportunity to continue their education with graduate level courses. The goal is to train up to 300 preachers per year and build and furnish facilities for new and existing schools of preaching around the world.

The Summerdale church of Christ in Summerdale, Alabama will oversee this ministry. Contributions should be sent to them c/o:

Summerdale Church of Christ
c/o Andy Erwin Preacher Training Work
PO Box 314
Summerdale, AL 36580

I will continue to live in Fayetteville, Tennessee, and publish the *Gospel Gleaner*. Your contribution will also go toward the publication of the paper. If you can assist me in the ministry of training gospel preachers, I will be greatly honored to labor together with you and God (1 Cor. 3:9). Any support will be appreciated and know that whatever you decide I shall remain,

Your Servant in Christ,
Andy Erwin
Editor, *Gospel Gleaner*
Fayetteville, Tennessee

“Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” (Luke 6:38)

From The Summerdale Elders

Dear Brethren in the Lord,

The elders of the Summerdale congregation are excited to announce the beginning of a new ministry and request your help in this good work. We have decided to oversee Andy Erwin to serve as a missionary specifically tasked to train gospel preachers around the world. In choosing to sponsor him in this good work, we are confident that we have found the man for the job. Andy will teach, write curriculum, build and furnish facilities for preachers, and encourage the ministries of the men he helps to train.

Brother Erwin has served the Lord's church faithfully as a gospel preacher for over twenty years and has been teaching in various schools of preaching since 2003. In addition to his work as a minister and teacher, Andy has written books, debated, and edited gospel papers. He has served as the editor of the *Gospel Gleaner* since 2012. He has also been heavily involved in the work of the Lord's church in Kenya in recent years. In 2020, Andy earned his PhD from Amridge University in the studies of theology and ministry. His dissertation researched the effectiveness of mentoring in schools of preaching.

We ask that you help us send brother Erwin to schools of preaching in Africa, South America, India, and other places around the world. He will also continue his work with the Nashville School of Preaching and the Middle Tennessee School of Preaching in the United States.

A fulltime instructor in a school of preaching in the US on average trains 10–15 students per year. Our work will take part in the yearly training of at least 300 preachers around the world. We will focus on Africa and Guyana at the outset of this ministry. Andy will be leaving for Kenya in November and stay for three weeks. He will also be working with Wayne Pruette, a missionary we have supported for years in Guyana, South America.

The Summerdale church of Christ is committed to training high character men of integrity; men with a strong work ethic; men who are faithful to the Lord, true to the word, and have a profound love for His church. Together with Andy, and faithful Christian supporters, our ministry will seek to promote a specific skill set among preaching students by focusing on six aspects of gospel preaching. We are seeking to train men who can (1) preach (exhort); (2) teach (explain); (3) answer error (debate); (4) write for publication (tracts, books, and articles); (5) minister

to a local congregation as a located evangelist; and (6) win souls through personal evangelism.

We covet your prayers and ask that you consider including this work in your budget for 2022. Would you be willing to make a monthly donation of \$100? If everyone can do a little, together we will accomplish a lot. If you would like Andy to come and provide you and the congregation with an overall view of this great work, please notify us. He is willing to come. If you decide to help us in this work, please send your contributions to:

Summerdale Church of Christ
c/o Andy Erwin Preacher Training Work
PO Box 314
Summerdale, AL 36580

May God richly bless us in this cause and may all glory go to Him!

For His Cause,

Elders, Summerdale Church of Christ

Summerdale, Alabama

Worldwide Preacher Training

Will you consider laboring with us as we train, motivate, and mentor preachers around the world? Because of the value of souls, and the current condition of our world, there has never been a greater need for faithful gospel preachers.

Gospel preachers need to be encouraged, inspired, and motivated to do the work of an evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5). With your help, we can do what we can to make a difference for good in the lives of preachers from all over the world.

Brethren, let us do what we can and do all that we can to train men to preach the gospel. If we are going to make a difference, we are going to have to make that difference together. We are seeking your help of \$100 per month. If everyone can do a little, together we can do a lot.

Billy Lambert
Summerdale Church of Christ
“Getting to Know Your Bible”

The Greatest Need in the Church

Andy Erwin

Can you think of a greater need in the church today than training faithful gospel preachers? The spiritual and numerical growth of the church depends on the gospel being preached. How shall we preach the gospel to future generations if men are not being trained for ministry? Moreover, what *kind* of men are we training? Gospel preachers must do the work of an evangelist to have fulfilled ministries (2 Timothy 4:5). Help us to train hard-working, faithful men of integrity, who love the Lord, His church, His word, and the souls of men.

The work we are asking you to consider will not only impact the church

today, but prayerfully for years to come. We are proposing a work that will build for today and tomorrow in the Lord's church.

We believe the preaching of the cross is not only the greatest need in the church, but that it is also the greatest work in the church. No matter what else we may do, if we are not preaching the gospel, we are not saving souls. Where would you be in your life and relationship with God had not a faithful gospel preacher been there to teach you? Will you see to it that a faithful preacher will be there to teach others?

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