

Life begets Life!



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Awe and wonder, mixed with thanksgiving and relief, fill the hearts of parents when their precious little baby is delivered. Yes, there are 10 toes and 10 fingers! And with the baby's delivery, the task of parenting has only just begun. A little baby is the only thing out of which the Lord can make a man or a woman of God. Yes, life begets life!

Even little babies know how to lie! They will cry as if they are in pain when all the time what they want is attention. All of us have sinned because we were born sinners. However, at the new birth there is another delivery: *“delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of*

sins” Colossians 1:14. So, when in later life the son or daughter is born again, for the godly parent, there is no greater joy!

Life begets life! The normal expression of life; whether physical or spiritual, is that life reproduces itself. In a local church, both the pastor and the congregation are vital in the transmission of life to people who are spiritually dead. However, the reality of those people who are genuinely born-again in any church, tells us more of the congregation than it does of the pastor!

The Pastor: God said to Ezekiel, *“I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; thou shalt hear the words of my mouth and warn them from Me.”* Ezekiel 33:7 The prophet Habakkuk was also called of God to be a watchman. The radical message needed on Habakkuk’s day is the warning that needs to be heralded today. It will not cut the

mustard when a mild-mannered man stands before mild-mannered people and tells them how to become more mild-mannered! To sprinkle homiletic lavender water over the congregation may please some people, but it will not bring them to a new Life in Christ!

To announce the presence of sin: *“When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man”* Ezekiel 33:8. Before a doctor can prescribe a treatment, he must first make a diagnosis of the problem. Why is it then that in a user-friendly church they endeavor to discreetly avoid giving offense by eluding the themes of sin, repentance and Hell?

As with Habakkuk, so today, the solemn pronouncement that, *“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23) is the vital foundation message of Gospel preaching. The renowned, late Charles Haddon Spurgeon, explained how the pulpit

can easily become a coward's castle when the theme of personal sin is omitted!

To denounce the practice of sin: *“Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways ...”* verse 11. When speaking of the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus said, *“And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment ...”* John 16:8. Only when people are thoroughly convicted of their sin, will they gladly respond to the *“Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”* John 1:29. The theme of repentance is an essential element of saving faith! Space does not allow reference to the absolute necessity of repentance as recorded in the Old Testament; in the ministry of John the Baptist; in the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ; in the preaching of Peter on the Day of Pentecost; of the Apostles, and of the messages of the risen Christ to the seven churches.

To pronounce the punishment of sin: “*Why will ye die ...?*” Ezekiel 33:11. When did you last hear a sermon that warned the people of the reality of Hell; that terribly awful place of eternal darkness?

I once heard an interview of a man who had volunteered to help psychologists research the result of a person who had been shut up in a room of absolute darkness and silence for three days and three nights!

Within the first hour, this man told how he became totally disoriented. When walking across the room, he measured the distance by counting his steps. With no knowledge of the passage of time, he measured how long his beard had grown and tried to calculate whether it was time to go to bed.

In total darkness and silence for three days and three nights, he became an emotional and

physical wreck. Eternal darkness and torment are forever! It is an obligation for every believer to warn Christ-rejectors of their urgent need to personally know the Lord Jesus; for He alone can rescue the perishing!

In his day, the Apostle Paul as always spoke about Jesus and was never intimidated from boldly proclaiming, *“for I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins [a vicarious death] according to the Scriptures [a verified death] that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day [a victorious death]”* 1 Corinthians 15:3,4

The People: However, many believers are blessed to hear the Gospel proclaimed by a faithful pastor. But sadly, when he preaches it is as if he were fishing in a fish-and-chip shop. The fish have already been caught!

"When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men...He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists and some pastor/teachers"
Ephesians 4:8,11. God gave the church the gift of evangelists and pastor/teachers. It is for the *"perfecting of the saints to the work of the ministry"* Ephesians 4:12.

A very well-known evangelist and pastor who had led thousands of people to Christ including myself, expounded these verses to his Sunday morning congregation. After the service, an emotional deacon approached him and said, "Pastor, did I understand you correctly when you said that we ourselves should become pastors and evangelists?" "That is not what I said," replied the pastor. "That is what the Bible teaches." "Then why do we pay you?" replied the deacon. "You pay me to give me the privilege to train you

to do my job. And if I fail there, I might as well sell potatoes, because I am a failure as a pastor!”

Dorothy and I have sometimes heard people say, “God has given you the gift of an evangelist, but I do not have that gift.” The important reason why these gifts are given is seldom understood. Accordingly, they believe that their exclusive part in the task of evangelism is fulfilled when they support a pastor/teacher, a missionary or an evangelist. This often results in an evangelical smorgasbord where people take their pick of the ministry delicacies that are being offered.

Even in the prevailing humanistic, agnostic and socialistic atmosphere in England, unconverted people were attracted to the above-mentioned church. Why was this? It was not to hear some special preacher or musical presentation or even to find friends.

It was because members of the congregation had permeated their professional and work responsibilities with a glowing testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ. On the day of Pentecost, it was the laity, filled with the wonder of the resurrection of Christ that infiltrated the multitudes and talked of Jesus, resulting in thousands of people being attracted to hear Peter preach.

Speaking to His disciples, the Lord Jesus said: “*Ye are the salt of the earth*” Matthew 5:13. Salt creates thirst, and thirsty people will readily respond to the source of water. The Lord Jesus said, “... *I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely*” Revelation 21:6.

We might ask why there is so little spiritual thirst in our day. The answer is that there is not enough salt permeating society!

Sadly, when many of us do try to present the Gospel to neighbors, relatives and work colleagues, we are like bald-headed barbers trying to sell hair-restorer. A life that is overflowing with the love of Jesus does not say, “You need what I’ve got, come to my church.” Rather, when people are exposed to salt, they will say, “You’ve got what I need, where can I find water?”

Some people might think: “I know I’ve been born-again. I know His indwelling life has radically changed my behavior patterns. I really do believe the Lord Jesus is my Savior. But to be honest, I don’t sense my testimony is creating spiritual thirst in my neighbors and friends.

What can I do? It is not by first taking a course on personal evangelism, although that may come later. But the secret is in **withdrawal and return:** *“God is Spirit: and*

*they that worship Him **must worship Him in spirit and in truth***” John 4:24. When my priority is to worship God, the value system of the priorities of pleasure and financial pressures, take second place.

Habakkuk knew this demand on his life when he said: *“I will stand upon my watch, and set myself upon the tower [the withdrawal] and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer [to warn] when I am reproved”* Habakkuk 2:1. In the place of withdrawal from the lawless, violent, and sexually immoral society in his day, God gave Habakkuk an astonishing message of which you may be very familiar with when he penned: *“The just shall live by faith”* Habakkuk 2:4.

But before this life-transforming message was written, Habakkuk first issued a somber warning: *“Behold, his soul, which is lifted*

up is not upright in him ... he is a proud man” Habakkuk 2:4,5.

Pride is the antithesis of faith: The self-confident man who feels no need of the help of another. Pride is independent of the sufficiency of the indwelling Christ to accomplish the task and the essence of unbelief.

Faith is affirmed by an act that counts eternal truth as fact! The Lord Jesus said, *“Without Me ye can do nothing”* John 15:5. Faith is neither credulity nor presumption: The corollary of this truth is found in the testimony of the Apostle Paul: *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”* Philippians 4:13. **That is faith!**

After listening to a sermon or to a Bible teacher, what do you do with the knowledge you have gained? Does it become intellectual

fodder, or do you internalize, by your faith and obedience? If what you hear is not personalized in a place of private prayer, it will quickly dissipate. But when truth becomes part of your spiritual digestive system, you will want to share it. Remember: **What I keep, I lose! What I share, I keep!**

“But His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary from forbearing, and I could not stay”

Jeremiah 20:9. In the early days of our ministry in England, Dorothy and I followed the witness of vibrant Christians into business-houses, hospitals, colleges and universities. They invited their business associates and colleagues to join them for coffee and to listen to a visiting Christian speaker. Day after day, we had the privilege of leading people to Christ in their secular world.

From that ministry, churches across the UK invited us to conduct series of evangelistic services. By way of preparation, I suggested the preliminary ministry of: Three days when I would expound biblical principles of evangelism, and two days when I would explain how these principles would be put into practice. This would involve each church member, praying daily for the conversion of five acquaintances: Neighbors, friends, as well as unconverted family members. To be followed by a loving contact and an invitation to their home. There, they would personally share how and when they were born-again, and all that the Lord Jesus meant to them in their daily life.

**Some people go to church to get saved,
and other people will not go to church until
they are saved!**

To quote further: “For the past 12 months, 35 church members had weekly met in prayer groups to seek God’s blessing on their friends. Contacts were made; friendships were cultivated, and by the time we commenced our meetings, there was a great spirit of expectancy!

“Morning coffees and afternoon teas were held in the homes of the women members of the church. These were attended by neighbors and at these, over 20 ladies found new life in Christ. One lady who was a known alcoholic, and had been receiving treatments, was wonderfully born again. Uncharacteristically, out of the routine of this fellowship, another lady had already been converted and baptized even before the meetings began!

“After all the meetings, the 52 converts were invited to church for a ‘follow-up’ tea. Among them were people converted in the

homes, in the businessmen's breakfasts and luncheons. Around the informality of our teatime, each was urged to share in an informal, 'Say so Session!'

"One glowing testimony followed another as people spoke of their new-found life in Christ. One elder's wife, a hostess at her tea party, interrupted the flow of testimonies by saying: 'For many years I have approached visiting speakers to ask for help because I lacked assurance of my salvation. But today, as I listened to these testimonies, I realized that it was not assurance I needed; it was Life, and I have just been 'born again!'

Later, when the lady's husband returned home from work; upon seeing her radiant face he lovingly inquired: 'My dear, whatever happened to you today?' to which she replied: 'Today, I was born-again!!!'

Why not seek the Lord, for His Life to abundantly reach others through you?

Lord, speak to me that I may speak,

In living echoes of Thy tone.

As Thou hast sought, so let me seek,

Thine erring children lost and lone.

O teach me, Lord, that I may teach

The precious things Thou dost impart.

And wing my words, that they may reach

The hidden depths of many a heart.

O fill me with Thy fullness, Lord,

Until my very heart o'erflow

In kindling thought and glowing word,

Thy love to tell, Thy praise to show.

O lead me, Lord, that I may lead

The wandering and the wavering feet.

O feed me, Lord, that I may feed

Thy hungering ones with manna sweet.

O use me, Lord, use even me,

Just as Thou wilt, and when, and where,

Until Thy blessed face I see,

Thy rest, Thy joy, Thy glory share!

Spiritual Check-up

- * In my place of private prayer, does Bible truth go seven inches lower from my head to my heart by my act of obedience, faith and worship?
- * Do I see people as living souls for whom Christ died, and am I available to reach them with His love and life? [Love does not let people fall into the fire.]
- * When did I last have a conversation with somebody outside my family and friends with the purpose of leading that person to Christ?



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