

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1983

Addresses: Pastor's Conference WMU Convention

PASTOR'S CONFERENCE

For release 7:55 p.m., Sunday, June 12

TRIED BY FIRE A PERSONAL TESTIMONY

By Mark W. Stone

Mark W. Stone, 49, is a Southern Baptist evangelist, Virginia Beach, Va. Formerly pastored churches in Texas and Virginia. Graduated from Gardner-Webb College, Boiling Springs, N.C.; and Baylor University, Waco, Texas; and attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.

I would like to share with you my personal testimony, and I pray the Lord will never allow me to take this experience for granted.

I do count it a privilege to share that which God has done in my life. Let me just preface it very briefly that what I share with you today, is my personal testimony. I will have to use the personal pronoun "I" quite a lot. I did not want you to feel as though what I am sharing is something that *I* did. It was nothing that *I* did, but what Christ was able to do through me, by my allowing Him to take over for me. I want you to know that I was not the great spiritual giant through this whole thing. There were times while I was in the hospital I doubted; there were times that I got depressed; there were times that I questioned—I just went through the usual wrestling period that every Christian goes through when he finds himself in a circumstance that he cannot handle. I was not a great saint who lay there in bed looking pious and holy and smiling every time someone came into the hospital room to see how great my faith really was. I went through it, but it was through those struggles that helped me mature, to some degree, in my Christian faith. It is only through struggles that we mature. It is only through those times of wrestling, times of questioning God that we find ourselves adding to the fiber of our lives the things that help us to grow. So, I thank the Lord for those times of struggle, and I thank the Lord for the valleys. Now, I don't look forward to the valleys that I have to walk through. I don't pray for them. I don't get up in the morning and say, "Lord, I need a valley today." I say, "If I have to walk through the valley, then You help me, Lord." I really have a deep concern for the emphasis that is made on radio and on television by some preachers and evangelists that talk about walking on the mountain top all the time and say that everybody can be healed.

Now, I believe in healing. I believe in instant healing, and I believe in progressive healing. I believe God can do anything that He sets His mind to do. But, God wants His name glorified, and some of us can glorify the name of God better in sickness than we can in health; God does not heal everybody. God will help you through your circumstance and will give you the courage to face what you are going through, and there are times He will deliver you to give glory to His name. However, some of the greatest Christians I have ever known are Christians who have been through adverse circumstances and did not escape; they did not cop out—but coped with! Think what would have happened

if Fanny Crosby had not been blind—we would not be able to sing some of the great hymns that we have. If God had healed Helen Keller immediately, then we would not have had that great witness of hers to help people who are deaf and dumb. The thing that we pray for is that whatever we find ourselves in, whatever circumstances we face, ask God to show you how you can bless His name through it. And, then leave it up to Him whether He wants you healed or not. I just don't think I have the audacity to tell God what He ought to do. Some will say that is a lack of faith, but it is not. I cannot look at it the way God sees it because He sees it as a whole; I see it as a part.

Second Corinthians 12:7, the Apostle Paul had just had a tremendous experience with the Lord. The kind of experience that he could have packed all of the coliseums that he went to by just sharing his testimony, but I find no place in the Bible where he shared it, other than this instance; so, he kept it pretty much an intimate personal thing.

God gave Paul an opportunity to see heaven. So he begins in verse seven talking about boasting, and because of the surpassing greatness of the revelation, Paul was given a thorn in the flesh. Paul prayed three times that God would deliver him from this thorn in the flesh, but God said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient, for power is perfected in weakness." This was God's response. He told Paul, "I will not heal you, but My grace is sufficient for you. I am going to leave that thorn in the flesh to keep you humble, and to give glory to My Name, but in your weakness, Paul, I will give you strength." This is Paul's testimony. In verse ten, Paul states that he is well contented to endure those things for Christ's sake, for, "When he is weak, then he is strong."

I am thankful that God did not heal me immediately after I was burned. My thorn also remained. I am thankful that mine was not an instant miracle. He could have done that! But, He allowed me to go through all the pain, the suffering of recuperation from burns over 65% of my body, that I might learn some things about suffering and pain. Then, I can share with people when I go to the hospital and minister to those who are also in pain and suffering. I believe that they understand that I understand, to some degree, what they are going through.

My accident happened in March 1957, while I was a student at Baylor University, in Waco, Texas. I was married and had a little girl who was almost a year old. We had left South Carolina after I graduated from Gardner-Webb Junior College (at that time) in Boiling Springs, N.C. I went to Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and I had finished a quarter in the spring of 1957. As a student, God was just blessing us tremendously. My wife and I wanted to move on the campus of Baylor where we had friends living in the quarters provided for the married students. We had the opportunity of moving into one of the Baylor homettes. This was in March of 1957. We spent the first part of the week cleaning up the apartment, painting it, etc., so we could move. I was pastoring a small church close to Gatesville, Texas, in a little town called Pidcoke. I was also working part-time and attending Baylor as a full-time student. God allowed me to go through something on that Thursday that was to be a testing period in my life. I don't feel God *caused* it to happen, but He *allowed* it

to happen. He used the accident to test. Many of us do things in ignorance, and we have to suffer the consequences; then, we have the nerve to blame God for what happened!

In the afternoon, we were to have dinner with friends several houses away from where we were to live. I asked Nancy to take our little girl, Cheryl, over to their home and I would follow shortly. I am thankful that God did not allow my wife and little daughter to go through the physical pain and suffering.

I was told that a good solvent to clean the floors with was gasoline, so I went over to the service station and got a bucket full of gasoline and came back to the apartment to clean the floors. A lot of paint had been dropped as we painted. I was not experienced with natural gas, and was not aware that a pilot light was on the water heater in the kitchen. We had not been in Texas that long, and I was unfamiliar with natural gas. I started cleaning the floor under the water heater, and when the fumes of the gasoline reached the pilot light of the water heater, it ignited and exploded. I was kneeling right in front of the water heater when it happened, so gasoline was ignited and the bucket next to me completely caught in flames. I was doused with the gas, and became a human torch. I was completely engulfed in flames and I knew that I had to get out of the house.

One of the miracles that took place was that I was able to run through the kitchen, through the living room, through the side door, down three steps, jumped a three foot fence, and rolled in the grass and put the fire out. I did all of this with my eyes closed. The best I can recall, I don't remember opening my eyes at all. The doctors later on, upon examining my eyes, remarked that it looked as though someone put their hands over my eyes.

One of the neighbors brought a blanket to cover me, but the flames were already out. I was conscious all the time. I was given some medication for pain later on in the emergency room. When I woke up that night, I was swollen, hair singed, skin charred, smelled of smoke, and had severe burns mostly from the waist up. My hands were burned very bad, especially the left one. If God had not gotten me out of the house, or if I had run into a wall and knocked myself out, I would have burned to death while in the house.

So, the beautiful thing about it is that God was there. There are some things that I learned about that I want to share them very briefly with you. And, when I say I learned it, I did not learn it immediately, but as I look back on it and relived it, it was confirmed through studying the Scriptures and I saw how God was working.

The first thing that happened was that I became aware of the reality of Satan. Even then, I, as a young preacher had preached about Satan, and I believed he is a personal devil; I believed in demons, and I believed all of that because I believed the Bible teaches it. I still do. And, I have never had any problem believing it.

As I ran through the living room of that house, I was completely engulfed in flame and, as far as I knew, the house was on fire. Nobody was in that house. While running, I heard the most hideous, the most Satanic, the most demonic laugh that I have ever heard in my life. I cannot describe it—it was the most horrible laugh that I have ever heard; and I heard it verbally. I heard it with my ears. It was not a figment of my imagination. I heard the laugh of a demon. I know what he sounds like, and I know how horrible and how heinous his voice really is. I know that demons work in the forces today. But, I would not have believed that if I had not gone through this experience. Because of this, God has given to me, and when I say God has given to me, please understand, this is not a unique thing to me; I am not the super pious guy who walks around discerning spirits. I am not that kind of guy. In fact, I am very suspicious of people who come to me and say, "God told me to tell you . . ." Have you ever had anyone say that to you? I don't mean to be unkind, but God knows how to get in touch with me. These people who have visions all the time scare me. When I say that I believe demons are working in the forces today, I can feel when there is a spirit of a demon. I do not know how to explain it. From this

experience of hearing the demon laugh, I have an alarm system that goes off in me when I am around anybody who is either possessed with demonic power or oppressed. I do not know how to explain it. The first time I noticed this was driving to Washington, D.C., some years ago. Driving on the right hand side of Interstate 95, I began feeling all kinds of goose pimples coming all over my body—like chills, and I did not know what was causing it. And, then I looked around and saw a black van passing me; there was no way to see inside the van. The windows were completely black. The van had an emblem or insignia on the back which was indicative of those who worship Satan. I knew immediately who was receiving glory from that.

Satan is the most powerful angel that God ever created. I have never seen supernatural power more prevalent in the world than we find today. I think it is biblical, and it predicts that Satan will let loose with powers and miracles that will even fool the elect. Satan is in control of many things today. We ought to respect our opponent; don't play around with him! You do not have what it takes to beat him—the Lord does!

At this point, on the ground, at age 23, I knew I was a dying man. What does one think about when he is dying? I had thought about death; I had preached about death from the scriptures, and I had given all the good cliches from the Bible indicating that you do not have to worry about death that, when it comes, you just cross from one threshold into a new existence, and all that. But, every time I finished preaching about death, I always wondered how I would react when it came to me. And, there I was, burned 65% of my body and felt that I was going to die.

I want you to know that this is the greatest experience that I have ever had in my life. It was the most serene experience that I have ever had in my life. It was the most peaceful experience that I have ever had in my life. I felt all this knowing that I was going to die.

The first thing that I thought about on the outside of that house was my family. When I opened my eyes, kneeling over me was my friend, David McHam. Somehow, he was the first one to get there. By that time, a large crowd had encircled me, and I looked at David and said, "David, I want you to do something for me. Don't let Nancy come where I am, and I want you to take care of Nancy and Cheryl for me. Take care of my family." See, my first thought was about my family—that which is earthly—that which meant the most to me.

Do not waste your life by not spending time with your family. Now, being in Evangelism, I am home more than when I was in the pastorate. I do everything that I can to be with my family, because I know how important it is. You, men, will work yourself to death to make provisions for your family—two cars, two television sets, carpet on the floor, etc., and you do not have time to enjoy spending time with your family. And, when you are dying, you realize what you have missed.

I was not thinking about my automobile, or my degree from Baylor, or anything like that. Even our Lord, before He died, thought about His mother. You will, too. You will think about that thing which is most important to you on this earth.

After I saw that my family would be provided for, I had no more thought from that point on about anything pertaining to earth. My next thought was about the Lord. I want you to know, I believe in once saved, always saved. I believe that once you put your heart and life into the hands of the Lord, you do not have to wait until you die to see if you are still secure. When you know you are dying, that is no time to play around; either you know you are saved, or you do not. I *knew* I was going to be with the Lord. I would be with the Lord, Jesus; I had no doubt about it. I am sure I was not the best guy that day. I am sure when I awoke on the morning of the accident, I was probably grouchy. I might have nagged my wife a little bit. I might have fussed at that guy that pulled out in front of me in his automobile. I was not perfect in the Lord, but I knew in Whom I believed. That is the greatest feeling in all the world! You can put your life into the hands of the Lord, and you do not have to worry about it.

My worry was not about my salvation. I had no worry about my destination. You know what my thought was? I closed my eyes and I said, "Lord, I haven't done enough for you. Give me one more chance to do something for you before I die." I was not asking for another moment, another hour, another week, or another year to live. I was asking for one more chance to do one more thing for Him. Here is a young man, burned, and on his back, and I was not aware of pain or physical discomfort. But, how would God allow me to do something for Him with my being in that condition?

I remember when I opened my eyes, I did not see multitudes of people standing around. I only saw three or four boys standing over me. They were young boys and they were black. I said, "Boys, are you a Christian? Do you know the Lord?" And, I remember their looking at me and nodding at me in an affirmative way and said they were. But, I do not know if they were Christians or not. I have no idea, but their answers satisfied me. At least I could go home to be with the Lord immediately, and the last thing I could remember was witnessing for the Lord. This, I could lay down at the feet of Jesus, and say, "Lord, I did not do much for you, but the last thing I did was tell someone about you. I did not do enough for you while I was alive, Lord, but You gave me a chance to do something for You before I died."

Occasionally, I think about that experience, and sometimes I think about being in heaven, and one of these days, I am going to be in that place prepared by the Lord, with the golden streets, etc. I am going to go up the streets looking in the mansions and see some of the great saints like Amos and Samson, Simon Peter and Paul. I then envision someone calling to me, "Mark, preacher!" When he comes to me and puts his arms around me and squeezes me and says, "If it were not for you, I would not be here," crying for joy. I would push him away for a moment and say, "Sir, I don't know you." He says, "I know you don't, but I know you, preacher. I was one of those little black boys that stood over you when you were burned. I did not know who you were, but I remember as I was standing over you, you looked up at me and asked me if I were a Christian and if I knew the Lord. I did not know what to say, and I said 'yes'. Later on, I gave my heart to Christ." I do not know of any greater rewards in heaven than for someone to come to you and say, "I would not be here, if it were not for you." Have you got someone up there that will say that to you?

So, I closed my eyes and said, "Thank you, Lord. I am ready to go." I had no fears or pain. I was so happy. I was excited about getting to see the Lord. I began to sing out loud. I did not know who was standing there. I began to sing "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me; I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see." When I finished singing, I said, "Lord, I am ready."

I do not know how death takes place, but God gives you a shot of some spiritual venom that goes into your blood stream which disconnects you from everything here on earth, and you want to go to be with the Lord. He does that for Christians whom He is ready to take. Have you ever stood by someone saying, "Do you see it?" "No, what do you see?" "I see Jesus." When they say that, they start to smile. You cannot see it, but they can. "Do you hear it?" "No, what do you hear?" "Do you hear those angels and choir? It is the most beautiful music I have ever heard in my life. Listen!" You cannot hear it, they can. The Lord gave them a glimpse of what it is all about and they do not want to stay here.

I do not know how the Lord comes to get His own. I do not know if it is Gabriel or Michael; oh, I think He comes Himself. You remember Stephen, when he was on trial and he looked up and said, "I see Jesus standing on the right hand of God." Usually, it is "sitting" on the right hand of God. Dr. Humphries, one of my Baylor professors, used to sit back in an old cane bottomed chair, white shirt and black tie, and in his black suit, and he told us that the reason why Jesus was standing was what you do yourself when someone comes into your home—you

stand to greet them. The Lord stood to greet Stephen and said, "Stephen, come on home and be my guest." I was expecting the heavens to split open. I was expecting to hear Jesus say, "Mark, come on home. Be my guest." I looked forward to hearing Him say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." I wanted it so badly.

Then, God spoke to me, not in a verbal voice like the demon's, but in a still small voice of Jesus that you are now hearing. It is that same still small voice that spoke to me as a Junior boy in the First Baptist Church of High Point, North Carolina, when He told me He loved me and wanted to be my Savior. It is the same still small voice that spoke to me while I was a senior in high school, sitting in the balcony of the First Baptist Church of Florence, South Carolina, and He said, "Mark, I want you to preach." I left that balcony during the invitation, walked down the aisle and took my pastor, Dr. Edward Byrd, by the hand and said, "God has called me to preach." That is the still small voice of which I refer. He said, "Mark, you are not going to die. I have something else I want you to do. Mark, it is not going to be easy. I am not going to heal you immediately. It is going to be rough. You are going to have a hard struggle, but I want glory in it. You are going to experience pain that you will hardly be able to bear. Suffering will descend upon you as a storm in the night. There will be times you will even wish you could die. You can question Me, but do not doubt Me. You might not understand Me, but trust Me. Endure, and hang in there. When you come through it all, I will open doors for you that you cannot imagine. I'll turn your tragedy into blessing—for My glory!"

Well, He has kept His promise. It has been worth it all if you see, through my experience, God's faithfulness, His love and His ability to turn bad into good.

It has been my honor and privilege to be found worthy to be tested. He is Lord!

For release 8:45 p.m., Sunday, June 12

THE PRIORITY OF THE SERVANT OF GOD

II Samuel 7:18-29

By Charles F. Stanley

Charles F. Stanley is pastor of First Baptist Church, Atlanta, Ga. Formerly he was pastor of churches in North Carolina, Ohio and Florida. He received degrees from University of Richmond, Va.; Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Tex.; and Luther Rice Theological Seminary, Jacksonville, Fla.

INTRODUCTION

The primary cause of frustration, feeling like a failure, and fruitlessness in the ministry is misplaced priorities. For most, the problem of misplaced priorities is not ignorance, but pressure—the pressures that come from every direction demanding a portion of your time and a piece of you emotionally. To add to the problem, the better you are at what you are doing, the greater the tug for your attention. So, on the surface, it may appear that the ministry is not only a call from God to service, but a battle within for personal survival. That will be the case unless the vital issue of priorities is settled, not merely by the calendar, but by commitment.

The priority of the servant of God is not only evident in the life of Christ and the apostle Paul in the New Testament, but beautifully demonstrated in the life of David in the Old Testament. In II Samuel 7, the Bible says that the Lord had given King David "rest on every side from all his enemies." But He was troubled because he lived in a house made of cedar, while the Ark of God dwelt within "tent curtains." So he discussed this with Nathan the prophet. That same night, God spoke to Nathan and gave him a message for David. Nathan delivered the message. In verses 18-29, we find David's response to God's message.

It is in verse 18 we find the key to victory over frustration, feelings of failure, and fruitlessness in the ministry: "Then David the King, went in and sat before the Lord."

God is far more interested in my attention toward Him, than my achievement for Him. My worship of Him weighs far more than my works for Him. The priority of the servant of God is His relationship to Jesus Christ, never his service for Him. When the relationship is right, the service will be satisfying both to Christ and the servant. When these (relationship and service) are reversed, we have misplaced priorities which will ultimately be accompanied by frustration, feelings of failure, and fruitlessness (wheel-spinning, labor that will not last).

RECOMMENDATIONS

As we study verses 18-29, we discover what David did as he sat before the Lord. I want to recommend his pattern to you. It works! In fact, even though you are already serving the Lord, and in the eyes of the world, successfully so, it could change your life!

1. REVIEW THE PAST (18-22)

David reviewed his past. "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that Thou has brought me this far?" As David reflected upon his past he was humbled by what God had done for Him. He acknowledged that God knew the real David. "Thou knowest Thy servant, O Lord God!" As he reviewed the past, he no doubt recalled his nights on the hillsides with the sheep, his valiant victory over Goliath, the years of running from King Saul, the many fierce and bloody battles of war, and now, that he was King.

It is always humbling to review our past; where we have been in our spiritual walk, what God has saved us from, how often He has rescued us in turmoil and temptation. Revising our past makes the grace of God more than a theological doctrine. It becomes a joyful, but humbling reality.

2. REFLECT ON GOD (22-24)

Listen to David, "Thou are great, O Lord God." In our hurried and pressured 20th Century lifestyle, how little time we give to reflecting on our Lord. We preach about Him, sing about Him, pray to Him, but reflect on Him far too little. The rewards of this one activity alone are innumerable. (Some of them I will mention later in the message) David reflected on God's greatness, His grace and His goodness to Him personally.

3. RECALL HIS PROMISES (25-28)

It is encouraging to recall the promises of God. David prayerfully reminded God of the promise He had made to him. "Thou has promised this good thing to Thy servant." How much frustration, fear, and worry we could eliminate if we would but sit before the Lord quietly and recall those precious promises He has so vividly in the past.

4. REQUEST THE DESIRES OF YOUR HEART (29)

In the 37th Psalm, verse four, David says, "Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart." This is the voice of joyful experience speaking. As he sat before the Lord, David said, "Now therefore, may it please Thee to bless the house of Thy servant that it may continue before Thee." What could make this activity more powerful and productive than what has preceded it: Reviewing what God has done for us before; reflecting on His greatness and power; and recalling His promises.

REQUIREMENTS

Because of the powerful results of sitting before the Lord in both the life and ministry of the servant of God, a commitment to do so means warfare. Satan will initiate every pressure possible to persuade you that if you want to be a success in your ministry, you do not have time in your busy schedule to "just sit before the Lord." It's just another one of his deceptions.

There are requirements and they are not always easy. That is why it must be the priority or else the urgent will crowd out the essential.

1. SEGMENT OF TIME

It takes time to "sit before the Lord." But it will be the most important time of the day. David has learned this lesson well. "My soul, wait Thou upon God, for my expectation is from Him." (Psalm 62:5) "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage and He shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say on the Lord." (Psalm 27:14) If we are too busy to give Him our undivided attention in worship and praise, not only are our priorities misplaced, but we have missed the whole point of our relationship and our call. But this may be the area where the greatest battles are fought - on the battlefield of time. If we will but stop and think who it is that wants to fellowship with us and bless us, we will make time for Him. Time is not the problem, it is our priorities.

2. STILLNESS

What a challenge to an active servant of God. Sitting still, what a waste of time and energy! But listen to what David said, "Be still and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10) Our priorities are "messed up" because we do not really know God. If we really knew Him we would yearn to sit before Him and glean from His presence.

"Be still - and know." It is our poor understanding, our lack of knowledge, due to the fact that we will not be still long enough to know the real God of the Bible.

3. SECLUSION

Jesus knew the importance of sitting before His father—alone. "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." (Mark 1:35) "Seclusion" is not to imply that we should never sit before the Lord with others. But our Lord deserves to have us all to Himself, our full, undivided attention. We can do both.

4. SILENCE

"In quietness and trust is your strength." (Isaiah 30:15) There is a renewal which takes place when we sit silently before the Lord for which there is no human explanation. Often I have come in weary and worn, maybe even a little discouraged and sat silently before the Lord, reviewing the day, reflecting upon Who God is, recalling those specific promises, only to leave renewed, energized, confident, motivated, and excited. Silently in His presence He changes us. Sitting before the Lord is not only a priority, it is the most effective preparation possible for your next decision or task.

5. SUBMISSIVE

What good would it do to sit before the Lord with a spirit of pride or rebellion. To do so would be to enter the presence of the Lord in the spirit of self-centeredness and self-seeking, all to no avail. You will note that the spirit of II Samuel 7:18-29 is one of humility. "Who am I, O Lord God?" Only the submissive spirit will listen to the Lord and the writer of Proverbs says, "Blessed is the man who listens to me." (Proverbs 8:34) Peter admonishes us, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you at the proper time. (I Peter 5:6) A submissive spirit is the key to properly placed priorities. It implies that we are available for Him to do the arranging.

REWARDS

Any person called of God and committed to Him will have a sincere desire to walk after Him and to serve Him faithfully. The true servant of the Lord will be diligent in investing His time wisely and expending His energy in the most productive fashion possible. He will be priority conscious. Therefore when we say the servants first priority is his personal relationship to the Lord and suggest "sitting before the Lord," it is natural to ask, "What can I expect as a result of sitting before the Lord?" As we discuss some of the rewards, I believe you will agree that this indeed should be the priority of the servant of the Lord.

1. PERSPECTIVE CHANGES

One of the first rewards of sitting before the Lord is a change in the way you look at things. As you reflect upon Him, you begin to see your circumstances in the light of Who He is—a loving forgiving, caring, omnipotent Heavenly Father who is

personally interested and involved in everything that interests or concerns you. You will begin to see things from His viewpoint. Mountains become mole hills, problems become opportunities of spiritual growth, the impossible becomes an exciting challenge.

The Apostle Paul said, "... we have the mind of Christ." (I Corinthians 2:16) Sitting before the Lord, that becomes a joyous reality.

We also begin to view ourselves differently. Servants of the living, sovereign God who has exchanged our life for His life (Colossians 3:4), filled with His Holy Spirit, endued with His power, adequate for any and everything, freed to be the whole person God has ordained us to be.

My friend—if there were no other rewards for sitting before the Lord—this one alone would be worthy.

2. PRESSURES DISSIPATE

"Pressure" is a part of the lifestyle of the servant of God. Some pressure is good, if it is from God and motivating. Most pressures we would feel are of our own doing or the work of others. Jesus said, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28) Notice he said, "Come unto me."

Nothing, neither in experience nor in a bottle can so release the pressure, stress, and tension we feel like sitting before the Lord. These emotions are killers and Satan will use them to divide our mind, drain our energy, and render us ineffective.

Sitting before the Lord after a pressurized day is a liberating experience. It is as if the Lord Jesus, our Friend, pulled the plug on our emotions and the pressures, stresses, tensions all drain away and we can relax. Are you living with a load that God never intended you to carry?

3. PEACE PREVAILS

The true servant of God is committed to obeying the principles of the Word of God. This may mean conflict and sometimes a head-on collision with others. Conflict, like pressure is a part of serving the Lord. We will never be able to totally eliminate either. Satan will see to that. But what are we to do with it? Let it eat us alive, drive us out of the ministry? Wreck our homes?

Sitting before "The Prince of Peace" Quietly and alone will vanquish all fear and anxiety. The hymn we sing to others becomes a joyous refrain in our own heart, "What have I to dread, what have I to fear, leaning on the Everlasting Arms." Christ is our peace. (Ephesians 2:14) As we sit before Him, His peace will rule in our hearts. (Colossians 3:15) "The peace of God which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:7)

4. POSITIVE ATTITUDE

A negative attitude can make your life miserable and greatly hinder the work of the Lord. And yet it is the prevailing spirit of so many. "It won't work!" "We've tried that before!" "They are against me." "Things just never seem to work out for me." "I never get the breaks!" "I guess my ministry will always be small," "My church just doesn't have the vision." etc., etc., etc. To feed a negative attitude is to court failure.

"For as He thinks within Himself, so He is," (Proverbs 23:7) is the warning of Proverbs. We find none of this attitude in the Apostle Paul who was constantly being harassed by the negative. His response, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13) "Thanks be to God who always causes us to triumph in Christ Jesus." (II Corinthians 2:14)

Sitting before the Lord, your negative, self-belittling, paralyzing attitudes will be exchanged for a positive faith attitude, not merely positive "mental" attitude, but a positive faith attitude. In Him, I am. In Him, I can. In Him, I will.

5. PERSONAL INTIMACY

What a tragedy to go through life serving a God you do not even know. Some marriage partners spend 30 or 40 years living under the same roof, but never really get to know each other on an emotionally intimate level.

Personal intimacy; herein lies the greatest benefit of sitting before the Lord. We get to know Him. And that should be the goal of every servant of the Lord. The more intimately we know

Him, the more biblically correct will be our view of ourselves and others.

We will not labor in the bondage of "perfectionism" which David Seamands calls "the most disturbing emotional problem among evangelical Christians." (Healing Damaged Emotions, pg. 79) He says, "it walks into my office more often than any other single Christian hang-up." In essence, the perfectionist feels, "I never quite measure up." "God is never really pleased with our performance." "I ought to do better." "I ought to have done better." "I ought to be able to do better." The tyranny of the "oughts"! You never arrive, but you must never stop trying. The result: anxiety, guilt, and condemnation. What a yoke of bondage!

The perfectionist has a distorted view of God. His God is a task master, ever driving. That is not the God of the Bible. Sitting before the Lord builds intimacy with the true God of the Bible, thus protecting us from attitudes that can damage us for life.

6. PURIFYING PROCESS

As we sit before the Lord reviewing God's grace toward us in the past, reflecting on His goodness and love toward us daily, remembering His precious promises towards us, a purifying process takes place.

In His Holy, but loving and accepting presence, those actions and attitudes that hinder our fellowship with Him and hamper our work for Him will rise to the surface for confession and release.

A sustained, satisfying relationship that is fulfilling and exhilarating is best preserved by systematically sitting before the Lord. It helps us to keep "short accounts" with sin. Bitterness, resentment, an unforgiving spirit will not find place or time to mature in the life of one who is "sitting before the Lord." Purification is a prerequisite for spiritual power. It is a process that brings great reward to the servant of God.

7. PASSION TO OBEY

Is your obedience to God motivated by oughts, fear, duty, or love? Many of God's servants are laboring and losing. Laboring for God, but from the wrong motive, thus losing. Losing the joy now, and their reward later.

As we sit before Him, enjoying His presence, atuned to His spirit, absorbing His love, gaining His perspective, encouraged by His acceptance, we develop a passion to obey.

No longer "have to", but "want to." Not demand, but desire. Not trying, but trusting. We will see our call not as laboring for Him, but love toward Him. What a difference.

Sin's pull and power in our life suffers humiliating defeat as we sit before the Lord. We lose our passion for the temporal and increase it for the eternal. We exchange our passion for the earthly, for that which is heavenly. Colossians 3:2, becomes a way of life. "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth." We begin to experience a victory never before known.

8. POWER TO SERVE

The servant of God has been called to a supernatural task—the Great Commission. With the call came a promise of supernatural power, "And ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you." (Acts 1:8) "Clothed with power from on High," (Luke 24:49) The promise is unmistakably clear. But how do we tap into this supernatural power? How is it released in and through us so that what we do has the mark of the supernatural?

God does not give power apart from Himself. We are "indwelt" by the Holy Spirit who is our power. Herein lies the source of our power—Christ within us.

To the discerning spirit the absence of power is evident, its presence is obvious in any work of the Lord whether managing, teaching, or preaching. The servant of God has two choices: to serve in His own strength or in the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit.

Sitting before the Lord in the spirit of humility, surrender, dependence, and faith, visualizing the task before us as com-

pleted by the power of the Holy Spirit within us—the assurance comes. In the hour of service, when it is needed, the power will flow by Him, through us for His glory.

CONCLUSION

A. Fruitlessness, feelings of failure, and frustration in the ministry, are unnecessary if you will but rearrange your priorities.

B. Do you want God's best for your life? Your ministry?

C. If you will begin "sitting before the Lord" with expectation, reviewing the grace of God in your past, reflecting upon His greatness and power towards you, recalling His precious promises to you—the rewards will be yours to enjoy.

For release 9:05 a.m., Monday, June 13

SPIRIT ANOINTED PREACHING BEGINS AT HOME

Ephesians 5:25, 28, 31

By Fred Lowery

Fred Lowery, 40, is pastor of New Pisgah Baptist Church, Spartanburg, S.C. Formerly he was pastor of churches in South Carolina, Alabama and Florida. His education includes the B.A. from Samford University, Birmingham, Ala.; the master of divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, and the doctor of ministries degree from Luther Rice Theological Seminary, Jacksonville, Fla.

Spirit Anointed Preaching Begins at Home
Ephesians 5:25, 28, 31

On a scale of one to ten, from disaster to fantastic, where is your marriage? There is not a subject more important than home and marriage. As ministers, we have known for a long time about the rapid deterioration of the American home. However, we have recently been made aware that church leaders and pastors are no longer immune to family breakup and divorce.

Recently, a young woman came to my office and poured out her heart revealing the typical situation of a marriage coming apart at the seams. To complicate things, her husband is pastor of a large and respected church. This minister has been unwilling to seek help and has bodily threatened his wife if she told anyone about their problems.

All of us would agree that we need revival in America. We are morally bankrupt and spiritually backslidden. We would agree that our churches are in need of revival. It is my opinion that we cannot have national revival or church revival until we have genuine home revival.

Revival is dependent on honesty and openness concerning our situation, our needs, and our sins. Too long, we have pretended to live above everyday problems and therefore, refused to deal with such problems in our own homes and lives.

Imagine a typical Sunday morning when everything seems to go wrong. By the time you get in the car and begin to blow the horn to hurry your equally frustrated family, your blood pressure is high and your nerves are on edge. On the way to church one child is crying over leaving her purse and the other two are fighting over who sits by the window. By this time you and your wife are exchanging words of criticism and blame as you drive into the church parking lot. The moment you get out of the car a big smile comes and "Good morning, Mr. Jones, isn't God good!" And the kids are saying, "When did this man change?" What line did this grouch cross?

We all have problems and it may well be that the typical pastor's house will have more problems and greater pressures.

Let me mention four words that spell trouble for your marriage:

1. Dreaming: "unrealistic expectations"

God brought us together and we are working for God,

therefore, everything will work out. God will take care of it. Folks, I'm not worried about God but about you and me. We can make a mess out of anything. Marriage must be worked at daily, incessantly and involves discipline. Nobody gets a happy marriage as a wedding gift.

2. Drifting: "unsolved problems"

All of us have heard couples say "We've just drifted apart." We don't know how it happened or when it happened but we are becoming like strangers living under the same roof. Problems do not solve themselves and people do not drift toward one another. Drifting happens when we get away from priorities, neglect our responsibilities, and just fail to take care of things on a day-to-day basis. One man said, "You know, when we got married it was ideal, and then it turned into an ordeal, and before long I wanted a new deal."

3. Denying: "unconfessed sins"

Someone has said that the three hardest words to say in the English language are these—"I am wrong." This is especially true in marriage. It is difficult to swallow pride and say "I am wrong," "I am sorry"—please forgive me for hurting your feelings or being indifferent to your needs. The smartest one in a marriage is the one who can say "I am sorry" the quickest.

4. Deceiving: "undestroyed pride"

It is in this area that Satan has won so many battles in the homes of church leaders and staff members. We deceive ourselves and think "not our marriage—we don't need help—things will always work out." What would the church think if we admitted that we were having some problems within our marriage? So, rather than to risk any embarrassment, we put up a front, cover our problems, and exist in a religious kind of deceit.

This same philosophy says, "The barn is on fire, let's slap a coat of paint on it. The tire is flat, let's drive faster. We have a cancer, let's cover it with a band-aid."

We have talked about the negative, and now we move to the positive. What is marriage?

I. Marriage Is A Divine Institution

God set up marriage as a divine institution. It is the will of God that a man fall in love, marry, rear children and have a happy home. The home was set up before the church and is the primary and basic institution of life.

Man is to build his life around three homes: (1) The home where he lives, (2) The church home where he worships, and (3) The heavenly home where he will spend eternity. One's success in life is determined by his relationship to these three homes.

Life is not determined by materialism. It is not determined by humanism. It is not determined by what we know or think we know. It is not determined by what we have or think we have. It is determined by what we are! And, home is the place that reveals what we really are.

II. Marriage Is A Divine Plan

Based on God's infallible word, marriage is to last a lifetime. God joins two people together in a holy commitment and they become one flesh and only death is to break that relationship. However, America has gone a long way from God's ideal.

Today, women are traded like automobiles and in most states one out of every two marriages end in divorce. A jewelry store in California displays a sign "We rent wedding rings."

Our young people are entering marriage with a parachute philosophy, "If it doesn't work, I'll just bail out."

I am afraid we have held up divorce as a glamorous alternative, a fantastic way out of a bad situation. But divorce speaks of failure. It is short of God's ideal. It leaves in its wake multitudinous problems, wounds, scars, and broken hearts.

Buckle your pew belt! I'm going to make a statement many of you will not agree with. Divorce is often the devil's alternative for two people who absolutely refuse to get right with God and with each other.

Two people reach a point where they refuse to swallow pride, refuse to say I'm wrong, I'm sorry, and opt for the easy way out. It is easier to call a lawyer than to call upon God.

"But there was no hope," say these people and many pastoral counselors would agree. But to throw hope out the window is to throw God out.

God is a God of miracles and He specializes in the impossible. There was a time in my life and in your life when we were dead "in trespasses and sins." Dead, not comatose—dead, cadaverous, funeral. But God resurrected us.

God can take a marriage, where love is dead and bitterness has turned to hate and resurrect that marriage. God can rekindle dead love. He only needs a tiny spark, a willingness on the part of people to call on God.

To those already divorced, our message is one of love and forgiveness. You will carry emotional scars and reap painful consequences but God loves you and forgives you and we do too.

III. Marriage Is A Delicate Subject

One can get into more trouble talking about intimate marital problems than any other subject. Therefore, it is important that you understand what I'm saying and the spirit in which it is given.

Like the couple who had been married for fifty years, and for forty-nine of those years, they had fussed and fought and squabbled and thrown things at each other. Finally, on their golden wedding anniversary, the couple's children got together and decided to give them a very special gift—a trip to a psychiatrist. So they broke the news to Mom and Pop. They immediately launched into a battle as to whether or not they were going. After the battle had raged for thirty minutes, they finally decided to go and then they had another fight as to who was to sit where in the car; another squabble going into the doctor's office as to who was to sit in what seat, who was to speak first. The brash, young psychiatrist, fresh out of school, sat and watched this display for awhile. Then he got up, walked around his desk, picked the little old lady up in his arms and planted one long Hollywood kiss on her. When he finally let her up for air, he turned to the old gentleman and said, "Now, Pop that is what she needs at least three times a week!" The old man said, "Fine, I'll bring her by every Monday, Wednesday and Friday."

IV. Marriage Is A Devoted Husband And Father

Devoted first to God, second to family, third to church and fourth to your job. Those are biblical priorities and cannot be reversed without terrible consequences. The father is the spiritual leader in the home. God has put every man on notice that he is being held accountable for the spiritual welfare of his entire family.

The devil, in a very subtle way, has convinced many pastors that if they would look after the church, surely God would look after their families.

I grew up in a pastor's home and my dad gave his best to the church but he seldom had time for his children. The sad thing is that he thought he was doing what a pastor ought to do.

The same people who expected Dad to be at church every night were the first ones to criticize the preacher's children when they were less than perfect.

This is true for all church leaders. God does not want us at church every night.

Mary had a little lamb

It would have grown to be a sheep

But joined a Southern Baptist Church

And died from lack of sleep.

Every family needs a devoted husband and father and this devotion is expressed in:

1. **TIME** Your wife and children spell love T-I-M-E. Spend quality time with your children. Get down on the floor with them and play their games. Take your girls out on dates and your boys camping. Likewise, the wife needs quality time with you. There are times that she does not want to share you with the kids, the

church, the sermons, the television, or the newspaper. Every couple needs time together. I date my wife on Friday nights and on occasion we allow deacons to double date with us.

2. **TALK** You must make time to talk with your family. Let them in on your world and you find out about their world. Find out what's bothering them and what they are excited about. Realize that your wife is perfectly capable of carrying on meaningful conversation with you in every area of life. She needs to talk and she must know that she has your undivided attention. She also deserves answers to her questions, not occasional nods. Your wife should be your best friend and friends know when to talk and when to keep quiet. Just remember how very important words are to women.

The average woman needs to hear the words "I love you" at least three times a day. True love shared and expressed is what marriage is all about.

3. **TOUCH** A woman needs and wants to be touched. A gentle touch as you open the door for her and help her into the car. A touch of understanding as you realize what a frustrating day she has had with the kids. A touch of special attention when you are out publicly and especially among friends. It gives her tremendous security when you make her feel special in the presence of other women. Of course there is the physical part of marriage, representing the total giving of ourselves to each other, and again gentle touching is so important.

4. **TENDERNESS** A man needs to be tender with his wife and his children. He needs to handle them as one would handle an expensive, fragile vase, so valuable it could not be replaced. It is so sad when men are grouches, critical and abusive of their families. If you are sweeter to your secretary than your wife, you are a sorry outfit.

A tender man continues to court his wife. He looks for ways to remind her just how special she is to him. He always remembers those special days and selects that "right" card and gift for his wife. That means he doesn't buy her some appliance for her birthday like a new vacuum cleaner. One lady told me that her husband gave her a chain saw for Christmas.

The tender husband has usually discovered the importance of flowers. Sending flowers at the right time will do more to lift the spirits of your wife than just about any other single thing. At our house, three roses mean "I love you" and are always appropriate.

5. **TOUGHNESS** A woman wants and needs a man who is both tough and tender. She needs a strong shoulder to lean on, a strong hand to discipline the children, and a strong spirit to face the daily frustrations of life. She wants and needs a leader. God made her that way. Anytime I deal with a situation where the woman runs the home, I find both the man and woman miserable. Men have been given the responsibility and the ability to provide strong and effective leadership in the home.

V. Marriage Is A Devoted Wife And Mother

Every family needs a devoted wife and mother and this devotion is expressed in:

A. **SWEETNESS** There is nothing more attractive and magnetic than a sweet wife and mother. She is sweet to her children and to her husband. She knows what to say to the husband. A woman needs to hear the words "I love you" over and over again, but the man needs to hear the words, "I respect you," "I appreciate you," "I admire you" and "I am proud of you." Every man likes to feel that he marches at the head of his wife's parade—that he is the most important man in her life.

B. **SILENCE** The Bible says that a woman is to have a quiet and gentle spirit. That does not mean you are not to talk but that you know when to keep quiet. Let me make some suggestions:

1. Do not compare your husband with other men.

2. Do not nag.

The Bible says that "a nagging woman is like a dripping faucet."

3. Do not exaggerate.

4. Do not criticize.

5. Do not dominate the conversation.

6. Do not correct your husband in public.

C. **SUBMISSION** The Bible clearly teaches that the woman is to submit to the leadership and authority of the husband. God established the man as the head of the home and there can only be one head. Anything with two heads is a monster. Now, this does not mean that decisions are not made together but in case of a tie, someone has to cast the deciding vote. God gave man that responsibility. He also has given man the ability to lead in the home.

D. **SHARPNESS** The woman is to be attractive for her husband and family. For many women, the only time they look decent is when they are going out somewhere. Around the house they look like an accident looking for a place to happen. The husband works all day with secretaries who are all dressed up and then comes home to his wife who looks something like this:

Has on a red shoe and a green shoe!

Her dress looks like an unmade bed!

Her hair looks like a cocker spaniel that got caught in an electric fence!

Now, that is not much to come home to. Ladies, I believe in cosmetics. I have seen absolute miracles. We have to look at you, be as kind to us as you can. Get all the help you can get.

VI. Devoted And Disciplined Children

The Bible says that children are to honor their parents and to be obedient to them. Likewise, the parents are to discipline their children consistently and in love. God never intended for the police or courts to tell your children what to do. The police and courts take over when parents fail. All children need and desire discipline. God made them that way. A child is like a gas let loose in a room—it will go to the furthest limits. Children are constantly searching for those limits and must find them for their own security.

I am thankful for every spanking that I ever got. My dad would look down at me and say, "Son, this is going to hurt me more than it is you." I would think, that is the most stupid statement ever uttered from the lips of mankind. And, I did not believe him until many years later. The first time I ever spanked my little blue-eyed girl, I realized that my dad had told the truth. It takes more love to discipline than to let them go. It takes more love to say no than it does to say yes.

TRY FAMILY DEVOTIONS

The single most important thing you can do in the home to prevent some problems and to make it through the others is to have consistent family devotions. This will take discipline and flexibility on your part but the dividends are well worth it.

Remember, as ministers of the gospel, our homes lend credibility to our message. If it doesn't work at home, we limp into the pulpit on Sunday. We preach with power and effectiveness those things that have proved themselves in the crucible of our own lives. God help us to be ministers at home, then at church, and finally to the world.

For release 9:40 a.m., Monday, June 13

SERMON FOR THE PASTORS' CONFERENCE

By Ronald Burke Long

Ronald Burke Long, 45, is pastor of Glenwood Hills Baptist Church, Lithonia, Georgia. Formerly, he pastored three churches in South Carolina. His education includes Columbia Bible College, Columbia, S.C. and the B.D., Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry degrees from Luther Rice Theological Seminary, Jacksonville, Fla.

I sometimes find myself, as do most of you, caught up in a "Pac Man" type of situation. "Pac Man," that video game which has taken this nation by storm, involves four ghosts named Inky, Pinky, Blinky and Clyde, who continually chase a little man through a maze of dots. The Pac Man, trapped within the walls of the maze, occasionally eats a power booster, and in a brief surge of courage and power, turns to chase the ghosts, only to find himself running away again before obtaining his victory. For the most part, the Pac Man spends his life running, lest he be caught and eaten alive by the ghosts. Sometimes we feel like the little man in the "Pac Man" game, as if Inky, Pinky, Blinky, and Clyde are right behind us and closing fast, eager to gobble us up. So we move to another church, only to discover that the four ghosts are there . . . waiting, ready to unite their forces and determine for us what we are to be, and what we are to do. The God called preacher must look beyond these critics and realize that our calling has come not from "Inky," "Pinky," "Blinky," and "Clyde," but that it comes from the Holy Spirit of God.

Every great movement and every great moment in the Church has emphasized the power of preaching. This principle is seen at Pentecost where there was the greatest single outpouring of the power of God in history, and over three thousand souls were saved. Men of different ideas, different languages, and different cultures were saved. They were not saved because of "programs," not because of "lifestyles," not because of "cultivation," but because of Spirit Anointed Preaching. All of these things have their place, but are no substitute for Spirit Anointed Preaching. If you want men to hear you, then . . . preach! Preach! Preach!

Christian preaching was born in the middle of tension and controversy. The message preached in the New Testament was offensive to the Jews and absolute nonsense to the Gentiles. The preachers of the New Testament were men that knew what it meant to be imprisoned. They were men that knew what it meant to be scourged, stoned, laughed at and even martyred because they were preachers. But it was through preaching that it pleased God "to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1:21). So they preached, preached, preached!

But the mood has drastically changed since the New Testament days. We find little similarity between the New Testament church and the church today. One of the major differences apparent in the church of today is the lack of emphasis that is placed on preaching. There are many people, including some theologians, who consider preaching to be irrelevant. Those with this viewpoint claim that preaching is not effective in today's society. The "proclamation of the Gospel" has been replaced by discussion groups, sensitivity sessions, the renewal of liturgy, and awareness groups, all of which are designed to help create a new personal lifestyle and, in their minds, bring about social reform. While these methods have not produced positive results, their advocates have been so successful in their efforts to downgrade preaching that some preachers now dread preaching. They know that Sunday will eventually come and they will have to preach. The preachers who hold to this position view preaching as a burden simply to be tolerated so that they may do the other, in their sight, much more important work to which they have committed their lives. If we are to experience revival in our day, the preacher must be renewed in his calling, for the preacher is called to preach. Preaching must again regain a place of prominence within our churches, and within the hearts of our pastors. You can rest assured that it must first be in the heart of the preacher if it is to be in the heart of the people.

Preacher! The sound of the word puts adrenalin in my blood. Never will I forget the first time I heard someone call me "Preacher." I was a young man of 19 years, not understanding much about preaching, or even about what I was preaching, but I did understand that there was a fire burning in my soul to preach. The first time that I was introduced to preach, the speaker said, "And our preacher for today is Ron Long." The only word I heard in the introduction was the word "preacher." I never want to lose the excitement I feel when somebody says, "Hey, preacher." That's who I am. I am a preacher. I am a

preacher because I was called to preach. I didn't just simply volunteer. This is a realization that every Spirit Anointed Preacher must come to. This is the emphasis of Paul in Eph. 3:7-8.

Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power. Unto me who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

It is necessary that the preacher completely understand that he has been called of God to preach. It is not my choosing—it is God's calling. It is not your choosing—it is God's calling. We've got volunteer firemen, volunteer library workers, volunteer soldiers, but there are no volunteer preachers; you do not volunteer, you are drafted.

The Apostle Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, made it quite clear to the church at Ephesus that he had been called of God to preach. Before his conversion, Paul was an able man—he had many abilities. He had the ability to exhort people, to excite people, and to show people that he was an educated man. Even before his conversion, he had training, he had a good vocabulary, he had attended the best schools, and had even sat at the feet of the best teachers of his day. He had all of this, yet he wasn't a preacher. He wasn't a preacher until God "made" him one. God did not look down from heaven and say to Himself, "Well, since this man has all of these abilities, because of all that he has within himself and has been to seminary, I'm just going to let him be a preacher." No! God does not let you—because of what you are—become a preacher. You are what you are because God has MADE you a preacher (v. 8). Through nothing less than the sheer grace of God, He has CALLED you to preach.

Living in the secular society of today we must realize that we've been called to preach. There will be occasions when the knowledge and certainty that you've been called of God to preach will be that which keeps you preaching. It's an alarming fact that many State Conventions are now having to make funds available to financially support men who have been fired from their churches. These are men who have been caught in the middle of church conflicts and told that they cannot preach there any longer.

Even so, preacher, you must stand with the full understanding that it does not matter what a church does if God has called you to preach. That calling does not rest in the hands of some unsaved or carnal church members. It is a calling from a much higher authority. It is the calling of God within your heart that will keep you preaching. So preach—preach—preach! You have been "called" to preach; you have been "made" a preacher. The Holy Spirit confirms the fact that you are a preacher. You are not a puppet dangling on the strings of some carnal Christian. You are not a "Pac Man" running from Inky, Pinky, Blinky, and Clyde. You are a preacher by nature of your calling, so preach—preach—preach!

Not only have I been called to preach, but secondly, Paul gives me, in verses 8 and 9, the content of my preaching.

Unto me who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ. (Eph. 3:8-9)

We have been called to preach, and have been given the content of our preaching. The God called preacher must stand to preach, and it must be the thrill and the heartbeat of his life. But as well as the calling to preach, he must know the Holy Spirit directed, Holy Spirit given content of his preaching. What are we to preach? Paul said we are to preach the "unsearchable riches" of Christ. Where do we find these riches? In the Word of God. From the beginning to the end, Genesis to Revelation. Preacher, we are instructed to preach the Word. The Word! Nothing less than the Bible, the Word of God. For the Bible is the Revelation

of God—or God's self disclosure! Therefore we must begin to place emphasis upon the expository preaching of the Word of God. Dr. Steven Olford states that one of the greatest needs of the hour is the need for expository preaching. The soul winning churches of our convention have pastors who preach the Bible, the Word of God. Our own beloved Dr. W. A. Criswell, an expository preacher who has both thrilled us with his preaching, and through the years been an inspiration and encouragement to so many of us to be expository preachers, once said, "The preacher with the Word of God stands in a great towering fortress, but if he stands in his own spectacular, he stands in a paper tower." If you want to stand "in a mighty fortress," preacher, then stand as the God-called man of God, preaching the content of the whole Word of God.

We can see quite vividly that the decline of life in churches throughout history has always matched the decline of expository preaching. The impact of the Reformation came through the expository preaching of Martin Luther. It was the forceful expository preaching of George Whitfield and John Wesley that brought about the first evangelical awakening. If there is to be a great awakening in our day, there must first be an awakening in the heart of the man of God to stand with the authority of the Holy Spirit of God on his life, to take the Bible as the authoritative Word of God, and to preach—preach—preach!

Those who come into our churches do not come to hear the theological trends of today. They do not come to hear some pseudo-intellectual express his personal doubts about the credibility of God's Word. Sinful man does not need to hear your humanistic pep talks that have a form of Godliness but deny the power thereof. He needs to hear a word from God. "Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took him out: and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said, Is there any word from the Lord? And Jeremiah said, There is . . ." (Jeremiah 37:17). Preacher, *there is* a word from God. The only way you will get that word from God is to get it from the *Word of God*. Are you committed to getting that word from God? Or does everything else take precedence?

Joseph Parker, the 19th century expositor of London's City Temple, was once asked the question, "What is the nature of your hobby?" Pausing briefly, he then replied, "Preaching." The enquirer persisted, "but I mean in addition to preaching." Parker's answer was, "Preaching, nothing but preaching. Everything in me ministers to preaching." When asked to express his views on preaching during one of his Yale lectures of 1912, another great preacher, John Henry Jowett, said "I have had but one passion, and I lived for it—the absorbingly arduous, yet glorious work of proclaiming the grace and love of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." G. Campbell Morgan expressed himself about preaching when he said, "I have no hesitation in affirming I can preach. I would do it as a recreation if I were not permitted to do it as a vocation."

There are those today that claim that God is silent, that He's not speaking. God has already spoken, and every word that will ever need to be said has already been said. He put it in a Book, and that Book is the Bible. God has commissioned His men to be mighty preachers of the Word of God—to preach in the power of the Word of God—and the content of our preaching is to be His Word.

God called me to preach when I was 19 years old. I was a young man who was confused, not having any understanding of preaching, and having not a single preacher in our family. No family background prompted my calling to preach. There was no earthly reason that I was to be a preacher. I find myself in somewhat the same position as Joseph Parker, the great English preacher, when a worshipper asked him, "Why did our Lord choose Judas to follow Him?" Parker replied, "I've got an even greater question, why did God choose Joseph Parker?" I don't know why, nor will I ever understand why, this side of glory, that God chose me to preach. I only know that out of pure grace, He called me. I echo the sentiments of Spurgeon, when he constantly cried out, "Why me, Oh Lord?" I don't know why

God's called me. I know that He has! I know that He's called me to preach and He's given me the content of my preaching.

In the first church I ever pastored, a preacher who was in a great deal of inter-personal conflict within his church, said to me, "If my church fires me, I can go back to my job at the factory. They told me I could have my job back anytime I wanted it." Well, beloved, if my church was to fire me, I do not know anything else under God that I could do but preach. God's called me to be a preacher, and I would have to find some place to preach. He's given me the content of my preaching. He sent me forth with an anointing to preach . . . to preach . . . to preach. My prayer this morning is that every preacher here will leave this Pastor's Conference with the confidence that you have been called by God and been given the content to preach . . . to preach . . . to preach.

For release 10:25 a.m., Monday, June 13

A RUN FOR THE FINISHER Hebrews 12:1-2

By Morris H. Chapman

Morris H. Chapman, 43, native of Kosciuska, Mississippi, has been pastor of First Baptist Church, Wichita Falls, Texas since 1979. Formerly he was pastor of First Baptist Church, Albuquerque, New Mexico. His education includes Mississippi College, Clinton, MS and the M.Div. and Doctor of Ministries degrees from Southwestern Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas

"Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12: 1-2).

The writer of Hebrews says there is a race to be run. He is writing against the backdrop of the Greek and Roman games of the first century . . . the Olympic games on Mount Olympus, the Pythian games in Delphi, the Isthmian games in Corinth. If a man expected to run well, he had to train rigorously for months. He would discipline himself. He would deny himself certain earthly pleasures. He would push himself to the limit. Under the hot summer sun, against the howling winter winds, he would run, run, run! He would run until the cadence began to hammer into his heart something he had known all along in his conscience, "You're born to run! You're born to run!"

As we train for the race which God has set before us there is a pounding in our hearts that will not let up. "You're born to preach! You're born to preach!" With each passing year, my own Mother's prayer reverberates in my memory. After five years without bearing a child, my Mother prayed, "O Lord, give me a child and I will give him back to you." With great care and wisdom Mother said nothing about her prayer while I was growing up. At the age of seven, I was saved. At the age of twelve, God called me into His Kingdom's service. Finally when I was sixteen years old, my Mother told me about her prayer, but not until God had sounded "the Call" and set the course. On a Friday night at a Royal Ambassador camp in central Mississippi, I came to so want to do the will of God I thought my heart would burst. When the invitation was given, this twelve-year-old boy walked down the aisle of the auditorium. I remembered little about what the preacher said. (Have you noticed how often that testimony is given? Frightening, isn't it?) Well, when I arrived at the front of the room, one of the counselors greeted me and led me to an inquiry room, and he began to inquire. "Name? Address? Church? Son, what is your decision?" I responded that

God was calling me into special service. He said, "Wonderful! I have some little boxes to check to indicate what God is calling you to do. Is God calling you to be a preacher?" I said, "No, Sir!" Although I was old enough to realize that preachers worked only on Sunday, the thought of preaching was terrifying! He asked, "Son, is God calling you to be a Minister of Education?" I said, "No, Sir. If I ever finish high school, I do not want to have anything else to do with education." He questioned, "Son, is God calling you to be a Minister of Music?" I said, "No, Sir." I did not think I had any music in my bones. By this time the counselor was getting a little exasperated and he said, "There is a little box here to check if God is calling you to be a missionary." I said, "No-o, Sir." Most of what I had heard about missions included Africa and I did not think my courage was up to facing the wild beasts of the jungle. Finally, in utter dismay, the man said, "Son, there is only one more box." I said, "What is it?" He said, "Other," I said, "Check it!" To the counselor's great relief, that night I gave my heart to being "other" for Jesus Christ.

In time, I came to know that I was "born to preach." Paul said it this way: "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel" (I Corinthians 9:16). We are running a race! In order to run the race, we have to be born into a family of runners, the family of God. A part of the family has gone before us and is now in heaven, "a cloud of witnesses," cheering us on, testifying that the race can be finished, the victory can be won! They are the heroes of Hebrews, chapter eleven. Their names already are in the Hall of Faith.

By faith, they "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." They were scourged and imprisoned. "They were stoned, they were tempted, they were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented . . . they wandered in deserts, and in mountains and in dens and caves of the earth" (Hebrews 11:33-38). They staked their *all* on promises God would not fulfill in their lifetimes. But now Jesus has come, now that this promise of God has been fulfilled, my soul cries out, "Lord, but what have I done for Thee? Where is my conviction? Where is my courage? What price have I paid in serving one who gave His all for me? Dear Lord, there is a race to be run. I am not worthy to run; but Lord, make me willing to run. Teach me how to run the race!" The writer of Hebrews has the instruction manual. Notice, there are three elements of the race: first, *the preparation for the race*; second, *the performance in the race*, third, *the preoccupation of the race*.

PREPARATION FOR THE RACE

" . . . Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us . . ." (Hebrews 12:1).

(1) *Lay aside every encumbrance*

Scuba divers dive with a lead belt around their waists. They want to sink deep into the ocean blue waters. But a runner wants to run with the wind. He strips down to nearly nothing. He wants to be as light as he can. He wants nothing to slow him down. When the writer talks about "weights," he means any encumbrance that may slow him down. We are not to be weighted down with "encumbrances"—things not necessarily wrong in themselves, but things that are wrong because we are in a race.

Anything that slows you down, that keeps you from reaching the goal is wrong for you. Whatever the encumbrance, lay it aside. You may be the only one who recognizes the "weight" you are carrying. Your legs may be pumping. Your body may be in motion. Yet you are only running in place. Nobody knows it but you. There is little purpose in your pilgrimage. There is little power in your preaching. You are very nearly immobilized. The devil has you right where he wants you. You look good. You sound good. But you are running a half-hearted race. What

began as a sprint has turned into a stagger. Once there was boundless energy, now there is boring fatigue. You are weighted down. Perhaps you have already determined that your next step will lead you to the sideline. You are going to give it up. The load seems too heavy. The burden seems too much to bear. Hear the words of Jesus, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me . . . For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). Listen, lay it aside. Let Jesus pick it up. Lay aside the encumbrance that has dragged you down and almost driven you out of the race.

(2) *Lay aside every entanglement*

Not only are we to lay aside every encumbrance—the things that slow you down—we are to lay aside every entanglement, the things that trip us up. ". . . Let us lay aside . . . the sin which doth so easily beset us" (12:1). "Easily beset" means anything that "entangles" us, wraps itself around us, trips us up. Today you may be struggling. You have made friendship with sin. You try not to think about it, but deep down in your heart you know that it is going to trip you up and when it does, it will cost you dearly. Is there any sin that you cherish?

King David was a great man! The Bible says he was "a man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14). Yet David lusted after Bathsheba. Then he actually committed adultery. He tried to cover his sin by deceiving Bathsheba's husband. David made him drunk and later had him killed. Then he tried to carry on his royal duties in the usual way. But David nearly died when sin was in his life. He declared, "Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me" (Psalm 32:4). "My sin is ever before me" (Psalm 51:3). David sinned and it cost him his health (Psalm 32:3-4). He sinned and it cost him his joy (Psalm 51). He sinned and it cost him his family. He sinned and it almost cost him his kingdom. You see, sin dims the eye and our spiritual vision becomes clouded. Sin deafens the ear and God's voice becomes muted. Sin dulls our taste and we no longer hunger and thirst after righteousness.

David cried out to God for help. "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me . . . Restore unto me the joy of my salvation" (Psalm 51: 2,10,12). David desperately wanted once again "to hear joy and gladness" (Psalm 51:8). If we are not careful we will get entangled in this world's pleasures, in this world's possessions, in this world's popularity, and though we love Jesus, we will lose our joy!

As David prayed for cleansing, he prayed, "Lord cast me not away from thy presence" (Psalm 51:11). Why? Because ". . . In Thy presence is the fulness of joy . . ." (Psalm 16:11).

There is a story about Billy Bray in the book entitled, *Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians*. When Billy Bray got saved, God left him with no inhibitions whatsoever. People made fun of him and laughed at him. They said, "Why, Billy Bray, you are so happy and you are so joyous all the time. But suppose you discovered that you are not saved at all and you are really not a child of God and suppose you die and go to hell?" Billy Bray said, "Well, I suppose if I die and I discover that I am not a Christian and I go to hell, Jesus has been so real and so wonderful and so precious to me in life I will just have to shout all the way to hell. When I get down to hell I will have to run up and down the streets of hell shouting, 'Hallelujah, praise the Lord.' The devil will come over to me and say, 'Billy Bray, we cannot stand for that down here. We will just have to send you to heaven, we cannot put up with that!'" That is the joy of our salvation and the joy of serving the King of Glory. For God-appointed, God-anointed preachers to have that joy in running the race, we must lay aside every encumbrance, and lay aside every entanglement.

PERFORMANCE IN THE RACE

". . . And let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1), The Greek word for "race," literally meaning "Athletic contest," is AGON from which we get our English

word "agony." The race we are running is not without agony. Sometimes there is conflict in ministry. Sometimes there is conflict in marriage. We plead with God, "Why?" Why is the race so difficult, so exhausting?" Because God knows the race is not easy, He says, "run with patience." The word "patience" comes from two Greek words which mean "to remain under." God is saying that we are to "endure in spite of the pressures!" Don't give in! Don't give up! After all, a diamond is nothing more than coal under pressure! If we are looking for an easy way to serve Jesus, we can forget it! But no matter the opposition, God forbid that we should ever lose heart; that we should fail to endure under the pressure; that we should ever let our voices be silenced; that we should ever be puppets of the world rather than prophets of God; that we should ever be ruled by convenience instead of conviction; that we should ever love the praise of men more than the praise of God. Let it be recorded this day that we shall stand in the gap and speak a word for Jesus until He comes or until He calls us home.

PREOCCUPATION OF THE RACE

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2). You ask, "How can we remain everlastingly under the pressure?" I'll tell you; by "looking unto Jesus." Our race is going to end in a photo-finish. The Greek word for "looking" is APHORAO which means "to turn your eyes away from other things and fix them upon one thing." We are to run the race with our eyes fixed upon Jesus, refusing to look at those things which distract us, discourage us and intimidate us. Why can we look to Jesus?

(1) *He is our Example (Author)*

We can run because He has run for the joy that was set before Him. We can endure because He has endured the cross and scorned the shame. We can finish because He has finished and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Jesus is our Example. There was none like Him before. There has been none like Him since, and never shall be another.

(2) *He is our Enabler (Finisher)*

Jesus empowers us! An English professor went up to Dwight L. Moody once and said, "Mr. Moody, I listened to your sermon today. There were seventeen grammatical errors that you made. Seventeen of them I have written here." Moody replied, "Sir, I do the best I can for Jesus. Do you?"

One of these days the race will be over. I want it to be "a run for the Finisher," the One who died for me. And, oh, how my heart shall rejoice if only Jesus will put His hand on my shoulder and say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25: 21).

For release 11:10 a.m., Monday, June 13

THE ANOINTING FOR REVIVAL TODAY

Luke 4:18-19

By Jim Hylton

Jim Hylton, 46, has been pastor of Lake Country Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas, for six years. Formerly he was an evangelist for eight years and pastor of First Baptist Church, West Plains, Missouri.

You could have heard a pin drop that day as Jesus Christ stood in His home synagogue to read the Word from Isaiah 61:1-2. Hearing a pin drop was not the need of that congregation, however. Hearing the Word of God out of which flows both eternal and abundant life was their need. Today is much the same in the First Average Church. You can hear a pin drop in carefully orchestrated services, but, oh, how little of the Word is heard in the heart that will revolutionize life.

When Jesus finished reading, eyes were fastened on Him as if contact glue had cemented their vision to Him. Today it is again much the same. Eyes still look on Christ, but usually only on the Christ of history. Too often we fail to behold the Christ of revival, who is the Christ manifested in glory now.

Even as I prepare this manuscript, the Supreme Court of the United States is preparing to rule on the legality of allowing manger scenes to be displayed on court house lawns. It will be unfortunate if they rule it is not legal to depict the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ on public property. Yet the real need is for the life of Christ to be conveyed to the consciousness of the people inside the court house. As Christians we will not win the case, however, the Supreme Court rules, until we become so Christ conscious that our consciousness spreads like a fog into every sector of our society. Christ on the court house lawn is not enough. He must go into the court house and crowd it with His presence. Revival is the realization of the reality of the revealed Christ.

It would be safe to assume that Jesus often read in the synagogue. Custom called for the reading of the Word. Usually someone stood in the congregation and read. Jesus must have read as no other person ever read, for He was what He read. As the Word who was in the beginning, Who was with God and Who was God, He read of the anointing that had come upon Him. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19).

When Jesus said, "Today this was fulfilled in your ears," it was like a thunderclap had broken the silence. No longer was the reading of that scroll just the Word of God, but it had become the Living Word of God. It is exactly the same today as the Spirit of Truth comes upon the Word of truth and it becomes the Living Word. It is not just reading the Word, but the Word reading us. Not just studying the Word, but the Word studying us. Not just carrying the Word, but the Word carrying us. The Living Word is still revolutionary. But it is this living dimension that must occur today if revival is to come! Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever, is revival. When He comes to our services, we must be prepared to receive His revealed presence. He does not come to be contained in the covers of Bibles. He gets up and lives to all who will believe!

I. A CONSCIOUS ANOINTING

When Jesus went to the Jordan River to be baptized with the baptism of righteousness, He consciously received the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Though John was reluctant to baptize, Jesus insisted He was fulfilling all righteousness. Jesus was not there to get more of God; He was God. He was not there hoping to get a Word from God to begin His ministry. He was the Word. Jesus was affirming His righteousness of being all the Word declared Him to be.

As He was raised from the waters of baptism, He was anointed with the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. From that time forward, "Jesus being full of the spirit was led by the Spirit" (Luke 4:1).

If Jesus did not begin His ministry until He consciously received the mantling power of the Holy Spirit, how can any of us assume effectiveness in ministry until the same endowment from on high visits us? Jesus did not become a Charismatic that day. In fact, He did not become anything. He received the power to be and to do what He already was. As Christians, our need is not to get more of God, but to allow God's power to clothe us and bring forth all of Christ's life already in us!

The symbol of Christ's anointing was the most sensitive of all God's creations, a dove. Jesus consciously received the Spirit coming upon Him! Having been identified as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" by John the Baptist, He was receiving the power of the Holy Spirit to be all He was

called to be. Even the power of the resurrection was upon Jesus before His crucified body would require it.

Our call of God can never be realized without the same anointing gracefully falling upon us to bring forth the life of Christ already within us. "Christ in you, the hope of Glory" is brought forth in Glory by the Holy Spirit (Colossians 1:27).

Some call the anointing of the Holy Spirit by another name and often erroneously attach some required sign to it to support its validity. R. A. Torrey, for example, always called it the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit." His grandson, Archer Torrey who ministers in Korea, told me his grandfather stayed in "Holy Hot Water" all his life over the term "Baptism of the Spirit," but he never changed. I believe his term was wrong, but his experience was right. Jesus called it the anointing of the Spirit. That is the preferred biblical term we should use. But it is better to keep the experience right and have the wrong term than to have the right term and miss the experience of the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. The filling of the Spirit grants the needed inner quality of life, producing love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control. The anointing of the Spirit grants the needed ability to minister to the need of others as Jesus did.

II. A CONCENTRATED ANOINTING

The strategy of Jesus to preach is partly revealed in His confession of the anointing that was upon Him. "He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor." Jesus never planned to preach to everyone. He would only preach to those who would hear. Only those who were poor in Spirit could hear Him and He concentrated His message on them.

When Jesus gathered the disciples together and taught them how to minister, He gave them the same guidance for their ministries. In the first class He conducted with the twelve in Luke 9, He told them what to do and how to do it. "He gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick" (verses 1, 2). "And whatever house ye enter into, there abide and from there depart. And whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them" (verses 4, 5). Again He instructed the 70 in the same way in Luke 10:10. "But into whatever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the dust of your city which clingeth to us we do wipe off against you; not withstanding be ye sure of this, that the Kingdom of God is come near you."

Many a man today has assumed a role Jesus never assumed. The gospel is a broadcast so that all must hear, but then it becomes narrow cast to only those who will receive it. Good news is only for the poor.

Churches today that like the Laodicean church say, "I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing and knowest now that you are wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked" are churches that exhaust the preacher while the poor in spirit often go without the Word being ministered. More people reside on this planet at present than lived from the time of Adam until 1975. With the burgeoning population, another 2 billion will join on this journey to eternity between now and 2,000. The present rate of evangelism will leave the world mostly lost rather than won to Christ. By 2,000 only 2% of the population will ever profess to know Christ. All who reside on this planet will stop off and HELL IS NOT JUST FOR THE WEEKEND.

Never in the history of the church has such an opportunity awaited us. The gospel must be taken to all. The broadcast to find out who will hear must be made. The narrow cast to concentrate on the poor in spirit must be made well.

III. A COMPREHENSIVE ANOINTING

The abundant life that Christ gives cannot be realized until the soul is set free from every bondage and fetter. Our new birth is a

birth occurring immediately in the spirit, progressively in the soul, and ultimately in our bodies.

Saved immediately in our spirit, we are to receive with meekness the engrafted Word which is able to save our souls (James 1:21). As Jesus revealed His comprehensive ministry, He acknowledged that a ministry to the whole person must occur.

Our soul can be likened to screens which contain our mind, will, and emotions. Plugs and blockages in the soulish screen result in all kinds of mental, physical, and emotional disorders. In the ministry of the Lord Jesus the plugs and blockages are popped out of the screen, allowing the ministry of the Lord Jesus to flow in and the ministry of the Lord Jesus to flow out unchecked to others.

I remember as a boy on the farm in South Missouri pumping a well that had not been pumped for a long time. A small snake had crawled up in the crook of that pipe. Apparently the snake hoped to get water just as I did. When he ran out, I was somewhat discouraged but kept on pumping. Behind the snake came some bugs, some dirt, and rusty colored water. I kept pumping, and soon clear fresh water poured out.

Jesus is in us a well of living water waiting to spring up and flow out. But when the well starts flowing, some first evidence dirt and debris must be flushed out.

1. The Healing of the Broken Heart

Repairs needed for the broken heart can only be made ultimately by the Lord Jesus. Healing the broken heart is Christ's first ministry to the new Christian.

Dr. Charles Solomon of Denver suggests his counseling ministry has revealed that 98% of all mental malady comes from feelings of rejection. His statistics are probably too low. Everyone has at one time or another suffered rejection.

Not long ago a pastor friend highly respected in his own state came to a conference with this acknowledgment. "I am empty. I am defeated. And I am suffering from acute pain in my knees making it very difficult to effectively preach at times because of the pain." He said, "If the Lord does not meet me here, I can't go back to the demands of my ministry."

In the very brief time my schedule allowed, we quietly sat in our chairs and waited for the Lord's ministry to his heart. As we prayed, he began weeping and said, "I see it. I have hated my mother through the years. She rejected me when I was a baby because when she carried me she gained excessive weight. In return I developed a hatred for her." The Lord revealed his broken heart and the rejection he had experienced. The Lord then healed that broken heart by ministering His own acceptance of him in the beloved. In a few weeks I received a letter from him indicating that all the pain and discomfort in his knees was gone. Of course that was a psychosomatic problem removed by removing the broken heart.

In the hallway of our hearts many memories exist that must be changed. Memories, like pictures, can be seen down each hallway. Some pictures are so bad they are turned to face the wall, and the conscious mind blots them out so they can't be recalled. Some pictures are crooked and can't be clearly seen. Some are so ugly they must be painted again with the brush strokes of Christ's grace, forgiveness, and cleansing. By allowing the Lord's ministry to us, we can have Christ stand with us at each interval of life and minister His response in our memories. Each picture in the hallway of the past can be repainted by the Lord Jesus and each memory straightened.

2. The Granting of Deliverance to the Captive

Setting captives free from demonic bondage was demonstrated almost immediately by the Lord Jesus as He went to Capernaum and freed a man from captivity. Verse 36 points out "And they were all amazed and spoke among themselves saying, What a word is this! For with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits and they come out." The freeing power is available to all, yet is always conditional. Jesus said, "If you continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." Freedom is not guaranteed unless we continue in His word. When Jesus said to

the Jews they could only be free by continuing in His word, they said, "We are Abraham's seed and were never in bondage to any man. How do you say 'You shall be free'?" (John 8:31-33). It seems incomprehensible that the Jews could tell Jesus they had never been in bondage. When were they not in bondage to some occupying force?

In II Timothy 2:26 the servant of the Lord is told to minister to people so that they may experience "repentance by acknowledging the truth and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil who are taken captive by him at his will." Countless Christians are held captive today like the Jews in Jesus' day but would flatly deny they were captives.

Two books which will greatly help you to get a picture of the problem we face would be *THE ADVERSARY* by Mark I. Bubeck, published by Moody Press, and *WHAT DEMONS CAN DO TO A SAINT* by Merrill Unger, retired professor at Dallas Theological Seminary. We must not only know what demons can do to a saint, but what saints can do to a demon.

"The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" (II Corinthians 10: 4-5). But weapons unused are no better than no weapons at all.

As a church we have entered into a spiritual detente with the enemy in the way the U.S. has accepted a political detente with the communists. We have said, "Give us 'Amazing Grace' on Sunday morning, and we'll give you rock music with subliminal messages masked on the back during the week. Let us build a hospital, and we'll let you kill unborn babies in clinics and hospitals." A spiritual detente does not result in unilateral arms reduction. It results in the enemy "stealing, killing, and destroying" as Jesus described in John 10:10.

Through the ranks of God's ambassadors there are countless hostages. Christians who want to witness consistently find their fear of rejection returning because they have a gun in their back. People who are able to read a newspaper with interest and yet are always falling asleep when they try to read the Bible ought to recognize they have a gun in their ribs. Tempers that flare and go out of control ought to cause us to recognize that people have a gun in their ribs. Thoughts of lust and perverted sex ought to cause us to recognize that people have a gun in their ribs.

Jesus came to preach deliverance to the captive and when He is permitted to minister today in revival, He again ministers freedom to every captive.

3. Recovering Sight For the Blind

As the light of the world, Jesus came to bring sight to all who will receive light. Blindness spiritually is the greatest hindrance to revival in our day. Jesus described the Pharisees as those suffering from blindness. "Let them alone; they are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matthew 15:14).

Ditch dwellers of our own day can be accounted for easily when we see the astonishing amount of blindness and darkness that surrounds the church. "Walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ. . . . Be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:17-20, 23-24).

Two sources of wisdom vie for our attention continuously. James 3:13 asks the pertinent question, "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good life his works with meekness of wisdom." Two sources of wisdom are directed toward us daily. These identifiable sources are clearly described in James 3:14-18. If we have bitter envy or strife in our hearts, we are to glory not, for it is a lie against the truth. That wisdom is earthly, sensual (appealing to our reasoning) and is demonic. The wisdom that is from above, in contrast, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be taught, full of mercy

and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

Accepting collect calls from the phone line with wisdom from beneath results in blindness. Monthly phone bills become staggering. Spiritual dullness and deadness come along with the blindness. When the earthly, sensual and demonic wisdom infiltrates the church, people begin to brag about their bitter jealousy, strife, and confusion. The darkness that has settled on many results in glorying in strife and confusion which is a "lie against the truth."

When sight is granted to the blind, it is always pure, without mixture of error, peaceable, resulting in the peace which passeth understanding, gentle or easily approachable, easy to be entreated or teachable, full of mercy or kindness and good fruits, the fruits of the spirit, and is without partiality, not creating divisions, and preferring to be Baptist to being Christian, without hypocrisy or pretense.

Recovery of sight to the blind must come if we are to be the seeing leading the seeing instead of the blind leading the blind! "For you were once darkness, but now are you light in the Lord; walk as children of light. For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light; for whatever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore, he saith, awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Ephesians 5:8-14).

4. Setting at Liberty the Bruised

Just as we can live by every word that comes from the mouth of God, we can die by words that come from the mouths of men that lead us into deception. A young man named Joseph Stalin, disillusioned with the church, found the words of Carl Marx and led millions to death spiritually and thousands to death physically. To bless is to speak well of another. To speak evil of another is to curse them or to bruise them.

Right through scripture there is the contrast of living under blessing or curses. Two mountains identified in the land of Canaan picture our life in Christ. Gerizim: mount of blessing. Ebal: mount of cursing (Deuteronomy 27:12-13). Those two land marks offered marked contrast in the conditions God's people lived under. They either lived on Gerizim, being blessed, or on Ebal, being cursed.

In the book of James we are shown the staggering power of the tongue. "If any man offend in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body" (James 3:2). Proverbs 18:21 is even stronger. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof."

James shows us further, "But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, who are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be."

Many men of God have had their lives impacted with the words of men speaking evil of them. Their ministries, marriages, and families are bruised under the weight of words. I know few men of God who have taken decided stands on issues in our day, holding uncompromisingly to God's word, who have not been labeled a "Jim Jones." Such words of criticism and slander constitute bruises, or as James 3 identifies, curses.

Jesus came to set us free from the avalanche of words men's mouths spew forth. We are come under the blessing of God's Word as we hear that Word and obey it as the Lord instructed His people in Deuteronomy 28.

In the power of the tongue there is also the right to confess what is believed in our hearts. "With the heart we believe unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10). Salvation literally means deliverance. With our mouths we can confess our legal rights in Christ to be free from the bruises of men's words and be freed.

IV. A CONTINUING ANOINTING

Jesus gave the Word to the people in His home synagogue and then interrupted their position before it. Their reaction was to take Him to the edge of the cliff to throw Him off. Passing through their midst, He went His way with a continuing anointing upon His life and ministry.

Jesus did not pay a price to be the Lamb of God. He was the Lamb of God; that is why He paid the price. We will not pay a price today to have revival. That is already paid in full by our Lord Himself. Revival is a gift from God like every other expression of God's grace.

Receiving the anointing of the Lord upon our ministries and upon our churches will result in revival. When that anointing comes, a price is not paid to get revival, but is paid because of revival. All who pay the price of living in revival are never conscious of having paid a price, for they have ample funds with which to pay.

A Canadian Baptist pastor named Arnold Dallimore has spent a lifetime researching the ministry of George Whitefield, the man the Lord used most to bring the first great awakening. Had there not been a Whitefield anointed with the Holy Spirit, there would not be an American today. A spiritual revolution spawned the American revolution. In his two volume work on Whitefield, Dallimore writes his purpose for the book going forth. I close with his observations and the prayer that the Lord will do it again in all our lives.

... "this book goes forth with a mission. It is written with the profound conviction that the paramount need of the twentieth century is a mighty evangelical revival such as that which was experienced two hundred years ago. Thus, I have sought to show what were the doctrines used of God in the eighteenth-century Revival, and to display the extraordinary fervour which characterized the men whom God raised up in that blessed work. Yea, this book is written in the desire—perhaps in a measure of inner certainty—that we shall see the great Head of the Church once more bring into being His special instruments of revival, that He will again raise up unto Himself certain young men whom He may use in this glorious employ. And what manner of men will they be? Men mighty in the Scriptures, their lives dominated by a sense of the greatness, the majesty and holiness of God, and their minds and hearts aglow with the great truths of the doctrines of grace. They will be men who have learned what it is to die to self, to human aims and personal ambitions; men who are willing to be 'fools for Christ's sake', who will bear reproach and falsehood, who will labour and suffer, and whose supreme desire will be, not to gain earth's accolades, but to win the Master's approbation when they appear before His awesome judgment seat. They will be men who will preach with broken hearts and tear-filled eyes, and upon whose ministries God will grant an extraordinary effusion of the Holy Spirit, and who will witness "signs and wonders following in the transformation of multitudes of human lives.

Indeed, this book goes forth with the earnest prayer that, amidst the rampant iniquity and glaring apostasy of the twentieth century God will use it toward the raising up of such men and toward the granting of amighty revival such as was witnessed two hundred years ago."

For release 1:50 p.m., Monday, June 13

LOVE'S LESSONS: MANDATE FOR MISSIONS

By Charles W. Campbell

Charles W. Campbell, 58, served 27 years as a missionary to Argentina. In 1981 he became an editor with the Baptist Spanish Publishing House, El Paso, Tex. He received a Bachelor of Science degree from Tulane University, New Orleans, and graduated Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, in 1953.

LOVE'S LESSONS: MANDATE FOR MISSIONS

Text: Luke 7:36-50 "I have somewhat to say unto thee."

Objective: Challenge more Spirit-filled preachers to respond favorably to God's call to missions.

Proposition: Spirit-anointed preaching will result in producing more Spirit-filled preacher-missionaries.

Probing Question: How do you get more Spirit-filled preacher-missionaries?

- I. **HAVE THE MIND THAT HAS BEEN TAUGHT HOW TO MEASURE LOVE**, vs. 41-43
"Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?"
 1. Have the capacity to recognize the greatness of sins committed, v. 41.
 2. Have the decisiveness to receive the forgiveness of sins, v. 42.
 3. Have the judgment to differentiate in the degrees of love, v. 43.
- II. **LIVE THE LIFE THAT HAS BEEN TAUGHT HOW TO MODEL LOVE**, vs. 44-47
"Seest thou this woman?"
 1. Spontaneously communicate gratitude for forgiveness, v. 44.
 - a. Tears that fell on Jesus' feet.
 - b. Unashamedly loosens hair to wipe Jesus' feet.
 2. Fervently express affection in a worship relationship, v. 45.
 3. Generously demonstrate unreserved commitment, v. 46.
 4. Repeatedly declare the grace of continued forgiveness, v. 47.
- III. **HAVE THE HEART THAT HAS BEEN TAUGHT HOW TO MINISTER IN LOVE**, vs. 37, 38, 48-50
". . . she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head . . . hath not ceased to kiss my feet . . . but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment." (vs. 44-46)
 1. Remembers that Christ is a friend of sinners.
 2. Makes Christ accessible to people in need, v. 37.
 3. Expresses unashamed commitment to Christ, v. 38.
 4. Nurtures the salvation experience, v. 50.
 5. Assures of continued forgiveness, v. 48.

LOVE'S LESSONS: MANDATE FOR MISSIONS

Text: Luke 7:36-50

Introduction:

Would you dare pray the prayer, "Lord, burden me deeply over the low preacher response to missionary service"? In 1981 and 1982 the FMB appointed each year a record 44 career missionaries with the primary assigned task of preaching. This total of 88 for the two years amounted to a fraction of the hundreds of requests from foreign mission fields. As we continue to measure ourselves in the various areas of Bold Mission Thrust, we should recognize this serious imbalance of so many here in the USA and so few to man the posts of service on the mission fields.

Nothing yet devised can make an impact like a Spirit-filled man of God bringing a solid, scriptural sermon with a burning heart. There will never be a substitute for that.

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." (1 Cor. 1:21)

One cold morning as I walked toward my center of work, God powerfully impressed me with being occupied with *pleasing Him*. My heart overflowed with the love of God and I was deeply convicted with His will for my life. I know you have been touched in a similar way.

We desperately need Spirit-anointed preaching in all areas of mission work. Perhaps the necessity is greater on the foreign mission fields. You have given us a very difficult assignment: preach the gospel to everyone by the year 2,000. While the FMB seems to be on schedule with the total number of missionaries under appointment, we are alarmingly weak in the area indicated. Our report card, for the discerning preacher, is not as good as it could be. In *Quote* magazine I read about a little boy who brought home for the third time a bad report card. His father read it with a shudder and signed it with a large "X." —"Why did you do that?" "I don't want the teacher to think that a boy with grades like that has a father who can read and write."

I hopefully believe that Southern Baptist preachers are ready to address themselves to this overwhelming need. In my estimation, there are among you some of the greatest pulpiteers of all times. By far, the mass of pastors are willing to accept the responsibility for this report card. One has said, "*An empty vessel makes the greatest sound*," and we all know that a lot of promotional noise will not resolve this problem. Another has said, "*Nothing has done more for homecooking than the taste of a vending machine sandwich*." Most of the people who really care reject the *vending machine preaching*.

According to the book, *Rhapsody In Black*, about a great black preacher by the name of John Jasper, you have to be a great man to be a great preacher. When questioned about how he could be so effective in his preaching, John Jasper said, "I just let God fill my mouth . . ." —What do you do when He doesn't? "I just get up there and mess around until He do it." Robert Murray McCheyne said, "*A holy minister is an awful (powerful) weapon in the hands of God*." Spirit-anointed preaching is an event. When God's man has God's message in a heart that burns white hot with His love, you can be sure that the people will have an encounter with God.

The premise that I would propose to you, my Southern Baptist pastor and friends, is that the low preacher response to the call of God to missionary service will be resolved on the local church level. Whether it be the actual case or not, I don't know, but the local church pastor is the key person in bringing believers face to face with God's will for their lives. I firmly maintain that *you can be that key person*, in God's will, to provide the man-power needed. *Like father, like son*. Spirit-filled preachers and Spirit-anointed preaching attract their likes.

If missions is to be made whole, take up its bed and walk, there must be healing at the heart of the local church. More money and more missionaries is not the way to address the problem. Have we not been lingering around the pool of Bethesda all these years and we have yet to be healed? GOD HAS SOMEWHAT TO SAY UNTO US.

The Lord has taught us clearly how to measure love. While the Bible teaches us to count the cost, it very resolutely instructs us to be motivated by love. Your sensitivity to need can be deadened. The inspiration that is derived from response is an *up and down matter*.

Jesus said to Simon, "Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?" —Simon answered and said, *I suppose that he to whom he forgave most*. And he said unto him, "Thou hast rightly judged." (vs. 42, 43) The closer we walk with Christ, the more we sense our need to be cleansed of sin and our heart fills with gratitude and love for the Master because we are forgiven. Walking in *the light* usually points out the *sin of indifference*, a lack of concern and caring about the unsaved in the world. This was one of the great sins that I most deeply felt convicted about in one of those mountain-top experiences that God gave me. It happened in a very rustic associational campgrounds in southeast Arkansas. Dr. John Abernathy had shared with pastors and missionaries how God had worked in North China. The Holy Spirit did the rest. The joy that flooded my soul in the time of release was nothing compared to God's love flowing in and bursting to flow out of my limited heart capacity.

There is the *sin of pretense* in areas of faith. We have too much difficulty with being totally honest with ourselves when

before others. If it was a lie for Ananias and Safira to take away from the amount received from the sale of that property, pretending to have laid all at the apostles' feet, then how much more do we fall into that trap of Satan? It greatly concerns me that I can so calmly allow the statistics to be shuffled or glossed over so that the report seems to cast me in a better light than the facts call for. All things done in a local church should not be classed as evangelistic outreach. Neither do we well by considering everything spent outside of the local church setting as missions. Great sums of money given to the Cooperative Program and increasing amounts to the missions offerings does not necessarily indicate that such a church is a missionary church. It could be that very little is being done in the area of missionary education. How many are in training and now on the mission fields?

The most missionary church that I know about in Argentina is that small congregation in *El Trebol*. Although it is more than fifty years old, it only has about fifty or sixty in regular attendance. Although it is self-supporting, its financial ability is limited. Natalio Broda, father of the General Director of the Baptist Spanish Publishing House in El Paso, knew how to enlist the young people in the Lord's service. Fourteen pastors have come out of that congregation. One has been the Director of the Home Mission Board and also President of the Convention. What made the difference? Natalio Broda loved the Lord.

All of this introspective analysis of what's wrong is of no value if we keep wallowing in the slough of despond. The Holy Spirit wants to lead us to look up to our crucified and risen Lord and accept the forgiveness that He stands ready to bestow on us. The blessed good news is that in Christ there is forgiveness and overflowing love. Like life, love is of many kinds. There is the love that ennobles and casts a radiance upon life. There is a love that drags the lover down into the mouth of hell. There is a love that many waters cannot smother. There is a love that is disguised sensuality. What kind of love, then is God's love? It is a love that sacrifices in order that we be forgiven. Sacrifice is the surest test of love. We should measure love as we measure her twin brother, life. Life is measured by loss and not by gain. How much do I love the Lord? In the same measure that I am forgiven am I able to love.

A few years ago, the New York Times carried a story about an anti-draft demonstration at Princeton University. Although there have been many such demonstrations, this one was unforgettable because of the news photo that accompanied the story. It was of a young man, healthy, stockily-built, privileged and tanned. No doubt he had spent a season on the ski slopes and then spent time on the beach in some exotic place. This young man was carrying a placard with the slogan, "*There Is Nothing Worth Dying For.*" In a certain measure we are producing Christians that are virtually doing the same. He who says there is nothing worth dying for is saying there is nothing worth living for. (See *Quote*, Mar. 15, 1983, p. 139)

God has somewhat to say unto us. Which one will love Him most? The answer is very clear, the one that has been forgiven most.

The Lord has taught us clearly how to model love.

"Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head." (v. 44)

There was no other way for her to communicate the gratitude she felt. I can picture her having come to Jesus with the purpose of worshiping Him with deliberate dignity, but she burst into tears that ran so profusely that they ended up wetting Jesus' feet. In her haste to try to make amends she impulsively loosens her hair and proceeds to dry Jesus' feet. No matter what the people would say or think, her intention of saying "Thanks" to the Lord, that had forgiven her so much, was the most important thing at hand.

Not only did she weep at Jesus' feet, but she worshipped at Jesus' feet. Her developing attachment to the Master was profusely expressed by a shower of kisses.

"Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet." (v. 45)

Those same feet that would be pierced on Golgotha were the object of that fervent response to Jesus' gift of forgiveness.

"My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment." (v. 46)

Not just ordinary oil but costly ointment was used. That vial of ointment that women wore around their necks was the only thing available to pour out in symbolic love to the Lord. Again we find her at Jesus' feet.

The pastor model which I would have desired to be like, was Dr. W. Marshall Craig. I only knew him a short span of time at Gaston Ave. Baptist Church in Dallas. He certainly was not of a handsome build, but his pulpit ministry backed up by his pastoral ministry, totally captivated me for the Lord. I never doubted his love for me and all that large congregation had a similar feeling. So, just as Jesus said to Simon, "Seest thou this woman?", the Lord was able to say to me, "Look at your pastor."

"And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment." (v. 37)

Can it be any plainer? Our goal is crystal clear. Preach the gospel to every person by the year 2,000 A.D. In an issue of *Missions, USA*, (Jan-Feb, 1983) there is a quote from Andrew Broaddus, "Christianity is essentially a missionary religion. It must spread, by law of nature; it must be active or becomes chilled at the heart."

We must have the heart that purposely nurtures the salvation experience of the new convert. Jesus did so when He said to the woman at His feet, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." (v. 50) In a world where so many are taught a salvation by works, what a joy to preach with a warm heart the message, "For by grace are ye saved through faith" plus nothing! But the saved will work. The Bible says, "Believe on the *Lord* Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved . . ." Can He really be your Savior without being your Lord? Just as the woman needed to express the working out of her salvation with fear and trembling, our ministry in love will work toward *that* in each life to which we minister.

"I have been a Christian and a pastor for all these years, and no one ever really disciplined me." In God's grace you were victorious and have a vigorously strong relationship with the Lord, but don't expect everyone to be able to do the same. It is not our prerogative to call someone into missionary service, but we can so disciple each one so that the Lord will be able to touch their hearts with that call to service.

Not long ago a couple of families went out to eat in a nice restaurant in a foreign city (Cd. Juárez, México). The immaculately dressed waiter brought their food to the table by the large picture window that looked out on the street. As the two families began to eat, one of the men looked up and noticed some bedraggled and hungry-looking kids peering in at them. He tried to continue eating, but finally got up and pulled the curtains closed, saying, "I can't eat with those kids staring at me." Our window to the world ought to be a ministry like that woman's ministry to Jesus.

Jesus understood her and accepted gladly her worship. She then becomes the special object of Jesus' commendation, when He used her as a model for Simon's benefit.

"Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." (v. 47)

It is most significant to remember that the One who had sacrificed so much by means of the incarnation; sacrificed so much by walking toward His coming crucifixion, was glad to use this woman as an example. Remember that He had walked the searing dusty roads of Galilee and felt the aches in His stomach brought about by a 40-day fast. The hot desert sun had beat down on His back and sweaty exhaustion had come when the path was long. Jesus' loneliness of being unique among His fellow human beings was alleviated by this manifestation of lavish love so beautifully expressed by the woman. He was to feel

the ripping pain of the whip and the humiliation of nakedness. The sadness of rejection, even by those who knew Him best, was an acute affliction that awaited Him. Most of all, the weight of our sins that literally caused His heart to burst wide open with intense pain, both in Gethsemane and on the twisted Roman tree, were supreme evidences of love. His cry of anguish to the Father, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" (My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?) is that which most stimulates me to love Him. How He could bear for me that awful separation from God, the Father, is beyond my comprehension! Is any kind of love, but that lavish kind enough for One who has forgiven us so much?

I well remember what Tom Neely said once to Glorieta. He was talking about people who lose their glow. Those mentioned were boys and girls who become Christians at about the age when they are in the Third, Fourth, and Fifth grades; others were the newly-appointed missionaries. The question posed was, What happens to such folk? Why do such boys and girls lose their glow of salvation? Why do newly-appointed missionaries lose their glow after being on the field a while? Pastor friend, have you lost your glow of having been set apart under the leadership of the Holy Spirit by an alive local church? Does God need to shine up your glow? Just as Jesus used this woman to teach Simon, he wants to use you to teach some one else. Some do manage to go on being a wonderful model of God's unending love.

Albert Schweitzer said, "*The tragedy of life is what dies inside a man while he lives.*" How many churches tend to lose sight of their purpose of existence? Yonder in the Northeast of Argentina, I became interim pastor of an almost totally German-speaking Baptist church. Wonderful people, but they were not faithful to their scriptural motto that was up on the wall behind the pulpit, "Wir predigen einen gekreuzigten Christus." (We preach the crucified Christ). There they worshiped in an area where there was literally a sea of darker faces and sin-darkened lives. Even with my Spanish, most understood enough Spanish to make a good living, they began to respond. With just two Sunday afternoons a month of preaching and a little effort, nineteen of their own were baptized in the span of two years. I am still writing to two young boys that I believe God has called or will call into the gospel ministry. God knows I am not the best of models for them, but there is no one else, to my knowledge, that they can look to. God desperately needs you to be the model so that some future missionaries can be taught the lessons of love.

The Lord has taught us clearly how to minister in love. What does it do to our hearts when we read, "For God so loved the world . . ." ? His is the heart that forever reaches out to those in need. Christ is the friend of sinners. That's how he got in Simon's house; that's how that woman found her way into His presence.

The occupant of the darkened room is old, blind, diabetic, and her two legs have been amputated at mid-thigh. She is difficult to look at and most would prefer to pray for her but not minister to her. A woman had brought her three daughters along on the visit to see the frightening old woman. However, they seem not to be afraid. The six-year-old, eager to say something cheery, said, "I can say the Twenty-Third Psalm!" and she haltingly begins: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want . . ." The old woman beams and responds beautifully, "Why, that baby has done more for me . . . more for me . . ." Because God understands and loves such a person, He expects that we minister in love. His love is eternal, even to the old, blind, diabetic, and double-amputee imprisoned on a rumpled bed. His heart is always open and so should ours be.

Bill Tanner said on the occasion of the last approaching Thanksgiving season, "In my feast, I won't forget their famine. I will share the bounty of my table." This coming from the head of our Home Mission Board is a tremendous declaration of our need to minister in love. However, in the area of manpower, especially preacher manpower, how are we sharing our bounty? Isn't it ironic that one of the greater problems that has come forcefully to our attention has been that of pastors and staff

personnel that can't work themselves back into the circle of service? What a tragedy is in our midst! I have reason to judge neither the person nor the church involved. But how long will God bless us when our over abundance has created a problem of sizeable proportions. Wherever the fault may lie, we are commanded to minister in love. In fact, it is not ours to decide the matter of fault. God help us value, care for and channel the tremendous manpower that He has placed in our midst.

What will it take to get the job done? The harvest is great and the workers are so few. We must redouble our prayer ministry effort and expect the Lord of the harvest to send forth the laborers unto His harvest. We will get the laborers we fervently pray for.

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James 5:16)

If vending-machine sermons will not work, neither will vending-machine kind of praying accomplish much. The Bible says that we should train up a child in *the way he should go* and someone has appropriately added, "*And go there and walk.*"

One day as a British king entered a room, everyone stood. He said, "Please be seated, gentlemen. I'm not the Lord, you know." —No, your Highness, if you were, we would have dropped to our knees.

How well do I respond to this shortage of preacher-missionaries, if I fail to drop on my knees in the presence of the Lord? It has been said that George Washington was only a lukewarm Christian prior to the Revolutionary War. His battlefield experiences changed that. At Valley Forge, with a ragged, half-starved army, when all seemed lost, *he was seen kneeling in the snow* fervently praying for divine guidance. It just may be that our immediate ministry will be to thaw out those snows of spiritual coldness with the fire that God will cause to burn in our hearts and place on our lips.

People receptive to the gospel do not have unlimited longevity. They die! Is there anything as tragic as a rotting harvest, unreaped because workers who were called never went and others who did go did not stay by the task? *Missions is God reaching out to people through His people; God loving people through His people; God seeking people through His people.* Please, don't forget that God has chosen the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe!

I can still visualize him standing at the gate to our yard. Most communicative was the look on his face. His light blue eyes were plumbing the depths of my own missionary call. Victorio Storay had come to know the Lord when he was in his sixties. He told me that his grandfather had read the Bible when still living in Italy. His words still haunt me, "I knew that someone would come. Why did you wait so long?"

The lessons of love are a strong mandate for missions. What is your part in this whole matter? "The Lord has somewhat to say unto thee."

For release 2:25 p.m., Monday, June 13

THE BASICS THAT BIND US Jeremiah 6:13-17

By Ron Herrod

Ron Herrod, 40, is pastor of First Baptist Church, Kenner, La. Formerly, he was pastor of churches in Alabama and Louisiana. His education includes William Carey College, Hattiesburg, Miss.; Th.M. from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, La., and Th.D., Luther Rice Theological Seminary, Jacksonville, Fla.

INTRODUCTION

It is apparent to even the most casual observer that our nation and our world has some gigantic problems. No one will disagree with the fact that there is something seriously wrong in the world today. This has always been the case, but never more so than

today. There has never been a time when there has been so much chaos, when everything has been so topsy-turvy, when there has been so much unrest and instability. Even our beloved denomination finds itself in the midst of political and theological controversy that presents us to a lost world as fragmented religionists rather than a bold and united army for God.

What has happened? What is the reason for the great problems in the earth? Why is the world in this terrible state of political, economic, religious, and moral upheaval? What is wrong?

John gives us a clue in I John 5:19. In Today's English Version, it says "we know that we belong to God and that the whole world is under the rule of the evil one."

Let me suggest some of the basic problems we face.

- (1) The devil is out of his rightful place. The devil's rightful place is hell, but he has become the god of this world and is the usurper of the throne that belongs to another. The Christian is engaged in a constant warfare with Satan. It is inconceivable that one could read the Bible, the daily newspaper and live in a modern world without believing in the existence of a personal devil.
- (2) The Lord Himself is out of His rightful place. God intended Jesus Christ to be King and Lord, to be head over all things to the Church. Some day every knee shall bow to Him and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord, but today He is out of His rightful place.
- (3) The church is out of her rightful place. By the church I mean the company of the redeemed, born-again Christians gathered out of all nations, who by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, have been united into the Body of Christ. Heaven is the rightful place for the Christian Church and we are strangers here and ambassadors for Christ.

But a brief glance at the New Testament will convince any knowledgeable person that the church is also out of her rightful place in this earth. She is to have a place of impact and influence. The early church enjoyed Holy Spirit power and great spiritual influence. In more ways than one, today's church is out of her rightful place.

The Bride is ill. Pray that she will be healed:

So she can hear again—the command of her Lord and the cry of lost souls;

So she can speak again—with boldness and confidence;

So she can see again—the great opportunities before her;

So she can feel again—the moving of the Spirit of God.

We cannot fail but notice that in some places, churches are alive and dynamic and reaching multitudes of people. Super churches are being built in our day, while on the other hand, the majority of our churches are defeated, discouraged, and in some state of demise.

My heart, my life, my very being, is built around the ministry of the New Testament church. I am convinced, more than ever before, that the only answer, the only cure, for the world's ills, is to be found in the person of Jesus Christ as He has shared and proclaimed through strong, local, New Testament churches where people love the Lord and love souls.

The world hears of us through our controversies and debates. It is high time we return to the basics that will bind us as a new people of God.

It sounds as if I am reading from the daily newspaper as I read from Jeremiah, chapter 6. Here the prophet was lamenting the sad state of affairs his world had fallen into and exhorted the people of God to return to the old paths and to walk in them.

As we are committed today to the building of New Testament churches, as we seek to win the world through Bold Mission Thrust, we must walk the old paths and return to the basics that bind us.

1. WE NEED TO GET BACK TO THE BUSH.

Just before he was ushered into glory as the first martyr of the Christian church, Stephen delivered a powerful address in Acts 7. He reminded the people of what God had revealed to Moses

as He saw the burning bush in the wilderness. The story is in Exodus, chapter 3, but here is Stephen's account in the Book of Acts.

Acts 7:30-33

"And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush. When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold. Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground."

Most of you know the story. Moses had been a failure in Egypt and after dwelling forty years on the backside of Midian, God appeared to him from the fire of a flaming bush. God used this experience in the life of Moses to reveal to him His purpose and to call him back into service. What Moses saw that day was profound and I think before any Christian or any church can ever be it's maximum for God, it must see this. God revealed to Moses in that burning bush that day, on the backside of Midian, His holiness and His Shekinah glory. The Lord said to him, "put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground."

Oh, the difference it will make in the life of any child of God and to any church when we recognize the holiness and the glory of God. Most of us today, even in the church, spend most of our time demanding our rights. God wanted Moses to know he had no personal rights. God wanted Moses to know that his only purpose in living was to exalt and to magnify the holy and sovereign God.

I am convinced the greatest single reason that we don't have real revival today is because there is no holiness. Most of our churches and most of our Christians, by the way that we live, are profaning the holiness of God.

Before God is love or anything else, He is righteous, He is holy, God would let the human race go to hell before He would soil His holiness. Every attribute of God depends upon His holiness! His love, His grace, and His mercy all depend on His holiness.

There are hundreds of references to the holiness of God in Scripture. Then Peter sums it all up with this exhortation.

I Peter 1:15-16

"But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

When you get a glimpse of the holiness of God, you will develop three attitudes.

- (1) A hatred toward sin. We have become like the people of Jeremiah's day. We are not ashamed at our abomination. We don't even blush. May every sin—the critical tongue, the unbended knee, the cold heart, the unkind spirit,—break our hearts.

May we say with Ezra, "I am ashamed at blush to lift up my face to thee, oh God, for our iniquities are increased over our head and our trespasses grown up under the heavens." (Ezra 9:6)

- (2) An honest humility toward self. When we get the proper view of the holiness of God, we will have the right view of ourselves. God will not share His glory with you, with me, or with anyone else.

Whoever gave us the idea that we are put here in this world to be Big Shots or VIP's? We are sinners saved by grace, children of God, dead to self and alive unto God's purpose for us.

- (3) A heart for souls. Jeremiah would not be a popular evangelist today. He made one mistake. He was always crying.

Jeremiah 9:1

"Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain

of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"

Psalms 126:6

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

Some program, personality, or persuasion may pump you to witness fervently for a little while, but only an understanding of the holiness of God will give you a continuing heart for souls.

Dawson Trotman, founder of the Navigators, said, "no man can come to Jesus without becoming a fisher of men. If you're not fishing, you are not following." There are really two kinds of Christians, soul-winners and backsliders.

God has put us in sales, not management. We are to be fishers of men, not keepers of the aquarium.

A good outline of the Book of Acts is UP, DOWN AND OUT. Jesus Christ went UP, the Holy Spirit came DOWN, and the Christians went OUT to tell their world about Jesus Christ.

We have too many today involved in church work and too few doing the work of the church. Most Baptists I know spend most of their time going to EBA meetings. That stands for EAT, BELCH AND ADJOURN.

Others spend too much of their time criticizing the methods of the successful churches. Frankly, I like the way they are doing it better than the way most of us are not doing it. I feel sorry for the guys who criticize and minimize the other guys who criticize and minimize.

Others are in the "Super Saint Society." I believe in the Deeper Life but not one so deep that it excludes soul-winning from its activity. Many of us are like the woman who testified of her deep love for her husband and their intimate relationship. She could have spared us the details. All she needed to do was live like she loved him and have children who looked like him.

It is impossible to comprehend how one can know the Lord of Life, one who has been blind and now can see and does not tell other blind men how they can see. A moving missionary story tells of a missionary doctor who operated on a young African boy and removed the cataracts from his blind eyes. As soon as he could see, he ran from the clinic. It was only weeks later when he arrived at the clinic's door with a rope in his hand and on the rope hung 38 other blind Africans.

When Jesus led that woman at the well to drink the Water of Life, and as she returned to tell the men of Sychar about her experience, Jesus said to those Disciples, "my meat is to do the will of Him that sent me." He was telling him that the one will of God is the bringing in of the harvest.

To experience the holiness of God will give you a heart for souls. We have too many hallelujah's without holiness in our day. We must get back to the bush.

II. WE NEED TO GET BACK TO BETHEL.

We have all heard the phrase many, many times, "back to Bethel." This is a reference to the working of God in the life of Jacob. It was at a place called Bethel that Jacob had his greatest experiences with God. The renewing of God's power upon his life was when he came back to Bethel.

Most every one of us have had that Bethel in our life. Is there a need in your life today to come back to your Bethel?

For Jacob, his Bethel was the place of his vows, the place of his altar. When he came back to renew those vows at that altar, it was his place of total dedication.

(1) Total dedication demands sacrifice.

C.T. Studd was a wealthy Englishman, a great Cricket player. He gave up all of that to go to the mission field. Why? He said, "if Jesus Christ be God and died for me,

then no sacrifice is too great to make for Him."

Those of us who are having our personal pity parties over that small, difficult, and insignificant work that we are doing need to hear again that little poem:

Master, where shall I work today

And my love flowed warm and free.

He pointed to a tiny little spot and said,

Tend that for Me.

I said "No, Lord, not that tiny little spot.

None of my friends will see."

And He wept as He sent me back and said,

"Are you serving them or Me?"

I know it is not easy out there, dear brother, where you serve the Lord. I'm out there too. Your situation may be illustrated by the three little boys in a South Louisiana town who were talking. One said "my daddy is the richest man in town. He owns the bank." Another replied, "but your daddy's bank couldn't be in existence without my daddy's cattle." The Baptist preacher's son replied, "that's nothing. My daddy owns hell." "How do you know," they asked. "I heard him when he came in last night. He told Mama the Deacons gave it to him."

As you face that difficulty in your place of service, remember dear brother, everything God brings about in your life is to improve, reprove, or approve you.

Many fall by the wayside because they are not willing to go all the way. There were 5,000 our Lord fed on the mountainside, but only 120 when it was time to pray, and then only 70 when it was time to go visiting. Only 12 were willing to leave their jobs and follow Him, and one of them doubted, one of them denied Him, and one of them betrayed Him. There was only 1 at the Cross, standing beneath the Lord as He died. There is a high cost to discipleship.

(2) Total dedication calls for separation.

The Scripture says "be ye transformed." The word is metamorphosis. It means to be constantly altered by the Word to become more and more like Jesus.

God will not use a dirty pitcher to carry the Water of Life to thirsty souls for very long.

(3) Total dedication means surrender.

An absolute surrender of your life to the Lordship of Christ is absolutely essential for you to be totally dedicated.

Thousands of Christians have been moved to commitment by the 5 missionaries who gave their lives in Ecuador so early in their missionary careers. We will never forget the words of the wives and sisters of those missionaries in response to a journalist's question—"Don't you think they were foolish to go and waste their lives?" Their response was "he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep for that which he cannot lose."

A man went to that site and was taken by a pilot who had flown the missionaries into the jungle on a trip over that particular area. The man questioned the pilot as to the location where Nate Saint died. The pilot said "Sir, when I was in college with Nate Saint, we both responded to an invitation one night in a revival meeting. I heard Nate Saint at the altar, praying, "Lord, I don't care where I go, what I wear, or what I eat, but I give my life to you." The man said, "Sir, that is where Nate Saint died."

John Paton was used greatly of God to bring genuine revival to the New Hebrides Islands. He went to a field where there were no Christians and left a field where there were no pagans, but in the process he slept on the graves of his wife and child so the cannibals would not eat their flesh.

He had been to Bethel.

III. WE NEED TO GET BACK TO THE BREATH.

The same word for breath in the Scripture is the word for the

"Holy Ghost." You can be baptized, licensed, ordained, homogenized and pasteurized. You can believe in the SBC, the CP, a real devil and an inerrant Bible and still not have what it takes, and what difference does it make if you don't have what makes the difference?

We are prone to constantly lament the things we lack in the church today. The truth is we are not lacking in human resources, we are not lacking in theology, we are not lacking in the available personnel. The truth is we are lacking in power. The truth is we need the breath of God to blow upon us. The truth is we need to get back to the old-fashioned power of the Holy Spirit. When the breath of God is blowing upon a church, we can anticipate His unique activity.

(1) He will excite our worship.

The presence of the Spirit of God will be profoundly felt every time God's people gather to worship and praise.

(2) He will lead in the exercise of prayer. Prayer is a part of the breathing of the church. Through prayer, we exhale those sins and weights which hinder us in our work for the Lord and inhale the power of His Spirit.

(3) He will exegete and explain the Word of God to the whole Body of Christ.

(4) He will use us to evangelize the lost and to extend the Gospel witness.

(5) He will show us exactly the excellent will of God.

(6) He will lead us to experience the fruit of the Spirit.

(7) He will exalt Jesus. That is His job.

We need to get back to the breath, the old-fashioned power of the Holy Spirit.

IV. WE NEED TO GET BACK TO THE BLOOD.

It is still true that without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins. It is in the blood that we have power to witness, worship, pray and rebuke Satan.

Salvation is still not in good works and religion. It is only in the blood of Jesus. The world does not want to hear this, but I am praying God will give us a reputation, as a people, who believe in the saving power of the blood of Jesus Christ. Every Jew and every Gentile, every Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist needs to understand the only way to God is through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

May we be known as a people who believe that Jesus Christ and His death on the Cross is still the only way of salvation, the only hope for a lost man. There is no plan B, no alternate. It is the essence of a Gospel. Let us not be ashamed of it in any arena of life.

V. WE NEED TO GET BACK TO THE BRIMSTONE.

It ought to break our hearts that the church lacks an urgent warning about hell in our day. This could be why we approach our faithfulness to God's church so haphazardly. This may be why our people are so casual about the need to be a faithful witness. This may be the reason that selfishness prevails in our approach to giving. This could be why we find such difficulty in recruiting people for the work of the church.

When Gen. William Booth completed the training of his officers for the Salvation Army, he would say, "now I wish that I could dangle you over hell by a single thread for 24 hours. Then you would turn all of Europe upside down for Jesus Christ.

If God told me tonight before I went to sleep, "Ron, I'll give you a dream, a vision of heaven or hell, you choose." I would choose hell, for if I could just catch a glimpse of hell, I would never be the same sorry Christian I am today. We need to get back to the brimstone.

VI. WE NEED TO GET BACK TO THE BOOK.

Which book? There is but one book, of course, we must get back to and that is the Bible, God's Holy Word.

We don't need more theories about the Bible. We just need the Bible, to believe it, to teach it, to live it.

One of the basics that must bind Baptists is the belief in the infallible, inerrant Word of God; otherwise, we have no authoritative Word, just theological jello.

Baptists have been traditionally a people who profess to believe the Bible. Someone has suggested that Baptist believe the Bible because they don't know what it says.

Leonard Ravenhill rightly said, "someday someone is going to believe this book and make us all ashamed."

Friend, I would no more believe a Bible with one bad verse than I would take one capsule from a cyanide-laced bottle of Tylenol.

But I am convinced that our problem is not one of liberalism. Our problem is one of neglect. It is the problem of preachers, churches, those who are at the seminaries, colleges, and agencies, setting policy and endorsing personnel with little regard for the Word of God.

We are spending too much time defending our beliefs to others who already believe and not enough time proclaiming the Gospel to unbelievers. The great purpose of God for His Word is to lead men to the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. May we renew our commitment to that purpose.

We must get back to the Book in our persuasion, proclamation, practice, and program.

Brethren, we must walk in the old paths. We must return to the basics that bind us.

But whatever else we do, let us walk in the old paths of exalting and proclaiming the name of Jesus. I am glad to be known as a Baptist, but I am much happier to be known as a Jesus man. The people of our world can go to Heaven without being a Baptist, but they cannot go to Heaven without knowing Jesus.

The great conductor, Toscanini, was conducting Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. At the conclusion, the crowd went wild. Toscanini bowed, the orchestra bowed. Still there was stomping and cheering and whistling. In fact, he could hardly hear anything above the din of the noise.

But in a very uncharacteristic, unusual way, Toscanini turned to the orchestra and shouted to them. They bent forward to hear what he was shouting, and he said to the orchestra, "Gentlemen, you are nothing." That was nothing new for them to hear. He was constantly jumping on their case.

But then he shouted again, "Gentlemen, I am nothing." That was quite uncharacteristic for the great conductor who had an enormous ego, and then in the midst of the cheers, they bent forward even further to hear him shout, "Gentlemen, Beethoven is everything, everything, everything."

When I look at how paltry our efforts, how little is our vision, how small is our faith, how tentative is our ministry and witness, I feel like saying, "Ladies and gentlemen, you and I are nothing, Jesus Christ is everything, everything, everything."

For release 3:25 p.m., Monday, June 13

ARE YOU READY TO PREACH?

Romans 1:14-17

By Len B. Turner

Len B. Turner, 35, is pastor of First Baptist Church, Merritt Island, Fla. Previously he was pastor of churches in Texas, Alabama and Mississippi. Turner is a graduate of North Greenville Jr. College, Greenville, S.C.; Mars Hill Baptist College, Mars Hills, N.C.; and received the Master of Divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth.

"ARE YOU READY TO PREACH?"

Romans 1:14-17

Many years ago, in my first pastorate in Weatherford, Texas, I was invited to speak to the Optimist Club one morning. Being a typical Baptist preacher, I arrived at the 7:30 meeting at 7:29½. As most civic club meetings go, I thoroughly expected to have

plenty of time to gather my thoughts and to get myself together. I thought that we would partake of the meal first, they would have their business and then I would bring the message that God had laid upon my heart. You can imagine my astonishment and chagrin, when the president turned to me immediately upon my arrival and said, "Well, are you ready?" I said, "Ready to do what?" He said, "Are you ready to speak to us?" And, I said, "You mean now?" He said, "Yes, we have our speaker first, then partake of the meal, then have our business." Needless to say, I was awed and astonished, however, I was able to deliver the message. And, God taught me a worthwhile lesson that day. The man of God, who is called by God, should be ready to preach, teach, sing, witness, and minister anywhere, anytime, at any price. We must be ready to share the unsearchable riches and truths of our Lord, for our world is hungry for that and they know so little about the gospel.

It reminds me of the young college preacher who was invited to preach in the main church of his college town. The church was extremely formal, somewhat liturgical and was made up of most of the people from the college community. The young man was embarrassed, for he was afraid he would be criticized by his cultured congregation. So he sought counsel from his father, an older and wiser country preacher. In their conversation, he said, "Dad, I feel hampered in that pulpit. If I cite anything about geology, there is Professor A, teacher of this science, right before me! If I use an illustration from Roman mythology, there is Professor B, ready to trip me up for my little inaccuracy. If I mention something in English Literature, I am covered by the intelligent man that teaches that branch! What shall I do?" The sagacious old man replied: "Don't be discouraged! Just preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. They probably know very little about that!" You know, that's very true. Even though we are living in a day of specialization, of the intellectual, of the cultured, and of the pseudo-sophisticated, the average person knows the least about what they need the most, than perhaps of any other time. This is all the more reason that we ought to be ready to preach the gospel.

In our scripture text, Paul was writing to the Roman Christians. The book of Romans is divided into two main sections

- #1—the doctrinal, and
- #2—the practical.

Our text is taken from the doctrinal. The main theme of the doctrinal is the plan of salvation, justification by faith and sanctification through the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul proceeds to prove that the entire human race is surrounded by three insurmountable walls.

1. The wall of universal guilt
2. The wall of sinful tendencies and fleshly lusts
3. The wall of the supposed sovereign election of God of a certain portion of the race to salvation and the divine reprobation of all of us.

Someone once asked Charles Spurgeon how he reconciled the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man, to which Spurgeon replied, "I don't have to reconcile friends." Paul explicitly states the universal sinfulness of mankind, and that because of that, Jesus commissioned Paul to preach His gospel to all nations. Paul's long desire had been to come to Rome, but it had been hindered by unevangelized fields elsewhere. You will notice in verse 15 that Paul says,

"as much as is in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel."

To Paul that was a lot, but the question remains, "How much is it for you and me?" In verse 16, Paul says that he is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, even in Rome, the guilty and haughty cesspool of every foul thing. Paul was ready to preach the gospel. He was ready to preach the gospel because of three key elements in his life. As we examine these, we need to ask ourselves if we possess these same three elements.

I. PAUL HAD CONVICTION

Paul was convinced by the Holy Spirit of God that everything

he believed, that everything he preached, and that everything he taught about Jesus Christ was the truth. He was convicted by that fact on the Damascus Road when God saved him and later, when God gave him the message to preach, setting him aside for that task. Paul was convinced that Rome and all the other places where he preached was filled with sinners and that Jesus was the answer to the problem. Brethren, if you are not convinced by the Holy Spirit that everything that you believe and preach about Jesus Christ is the truth, that those who listen to you are sinners, and that Jesus is whom they need, then you're not ready to preach. If there's any doubt, then you're not ready and you need to get with God.

Verses 15-17 show Paul's conviction, in that he was ready to preach about our Savior and his King. I heard an astute scholar preach once, and he said that Paul saw a beaming light and had a sunstroke, causing him to pass out. That while he was out he had a dream, and we call that his conversion experience on the Damascus Road. Well, I'm not that smart! I believe that he was gloriously saved on the Damascus Road by our heavenly Father and that the rest of his earthly life was under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. That's what made him ready to preach.

Many are saying today that preaching is out of date, that we ought to do away with it, and that it is a thing of the past. The reason they say that is that most of them cannot do it! They are not ready to preach! They are not ready to preach because there is no conviction and there is no conviction because they are not spending time with the Lord. I once heard a preacher say, "We need to get with it." No, my dear brother, we don't need to get with it but we need to get with HIM. When we get with HIM, He will see that the job gets done through us because of the convictions that He brings.

G. Campbell Morgan once heard someone say, "the preacher must catch the spirit of the age." To which Morgan replied, "God forgive him if he does; the preacher's job is not to catch the spirit of the age but to correct the spirit of the age." That is absolutely true, but we must be convicted and have convictions to do so. That is why God's pastors and God's preachers need to give top priority to keeping the baptistry busy, to loving and growing the people and to preaching God's Word.

In my estimation this is the very reason that we need to make sure that we give top priority to evangelism and to maintaining the integrity of the Word of God. We need to stop categorizing and stereo-typing people by trying to label them as liberals, moderates, conservatives, informed-conservatives, ultra-conservatives, fundamentalists, neo-fundamentalists, inerrantists, and mainstream denominationalists, and we had better have as our greatest concern that we are men of God with true convictions.

May we let our convictions be based on the Word of God and may they control our life in the pulpit and out of the pulpit. You see, most laymen, because we tell them about their sins, are going to be looking for ours! John Wesley once said, "There are some men, who preach so well when they are in the pulpit, it is a shame that they should ever come out of it; and when they come out of it, they live so wrong, that it's a shame they should ever go into it." My dear friends, may we maintain our daily walk with God and maintain our integrity as men of God. May we set our standards high as we seek to live by our absolute standard, Jesus Christ. We need to remember the needs of our people and usher them into the presence of God whereby they might experience the glory of God. The Word of God must prevail and we must allow the Spirit of God enough time to anoint what He has already given to us!

When we are ready to preach, we will preach with conviction!

II. PAUL HAD CONCERN

In verse 14, Paul says, "I am debtor, unto the Greek and to the Barbarians." What does Paul mean saying that he owes something to these foreigners? He means that he owes it to God and to these people to inform them of Jesus and of His love! Paul owes them in the fact that he is to demonstrate that love toward them because Jesus lives in him.

If you don't love the Word that you are preaching and the people to whom you're preaching, then, you're not right with God. If you preach, "in the flesh" and use the pulpit to get back at people, then you're living dangerously! You're tampering with the things of God and assuming an unassigned responsibility! Besides this, one of the attitudes of servitude is "*Never defend yourself. God will take care of you if you will get out of the way.*" God did not call you to defend, but to proclaim and to bring "the glad tidings, great joy and peace".

A visitor to a church where Robert McCheyne preached, could find only the janitor there at the time. So, he inquired of the man as to how McCheyne preached and studied. The old man took him into McCheyne's study, then said, "Now, sit down, put your hands over your face and let the tears fall!" They went into the auditorium and up into the pulpit. The janitor said, "Lean over, way over and stretch out your hands toward the congregation. Now, let the tears fall!" That's the way McCheyne studied and preached!

Some preachers contradict all that they preach by having poor relations with their congregation. Why don't we just vow to love, to listen to, and to lead our people. Don't create more tension but let God establish a church of love through us. Let us put on the "garment of charity" and care for those people. Let's feed them with the Word of God, for good preaching is good teaching! If we love our Savior, we will love His people, because Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Lovest thou me? Then feed my sheep."

My wife, Pansy, wrote in my Bible the day I was ordained, "May you always remember that people are not a hindrance to our work, but people are the very reason for our work." In order to feed the Lord's sheep, we must meet people where they are. We must be ourselves and then lovingly lead the people to where God wants them to be. Don't imitate, emulate or copy someone else. I like a statement that Manley Beasley uses sometimes with regard to being real, not being phony or plastic, and that is, "being supernaturally natural."

We are living in a day and time when so many of God's men are jealous, insecure, threatened, and intimidated. Too many ministers have an authority complex where they are always trying to establish an authority that they usually don't have or that they already have. I have discovered that when you have the authority of God upon your life that you will not have to try to establish it, but people will know it and it will be evidenced by the anointing of God. I have also discovered that the man who is always trying to establish his authority usually doesn't have any and has never discovered his true identity in Christ. If we love the Lord Jesus, love the Word of God, love all people (lost and saved) and love the things of God, then we will have the unction of God upon all that we do. I sometimes feel like the old Negro preacher who said, "I don't know what unction is, but I do know when I don't have it." Any man of God knows when he is operating in the anointing of God's Spirit and when he isn't.

I read where Bob Pierce once said while preaching at the great cowboy encampment in Pisano, Texas, "I want everything that hurts, moves and breaks the heart of God to do so to my heart." Those are the exact sentiments of my own heart. I believe you experience what you expect, if you expect God to bless you and you experience something from the Lord, then you will express that if you get a word from God and that word will always be based upon His Word.

Let's ask God to make us teachable.
Let's ask God to make us usable.
Let's ask God to make us blessable.
Let's ask God to make us lovable.
And, He will!

III. PAUL HAD COMMITMENT

Verse 16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Paul had reached a point

that very few men ever do! He realized what total commitment to Jesus Christ means, as well as what it involves!

I remember a time when I was at a low point in my ministry and God led me to this verse. I made a commitment to God, on my knees one day out in Texas, that if He would always give me something to preach, that through His grace and leadership, I would preach it BOLDLY, never backing down from any man! I prayed, "Lord, you always put the words in; you draw them out!" Since then, I have never had a problem with staying true to His Word.

Since then, God has been teaching me some things. These are as follows:

I can only lead as far as I have gone myself.

I am never to ask anything of my people that I am not doing and,

I am to lead by example, not by precept.

When we see someone that God is using, we can know they have had to pay a price—PRIVATELY—to be used publicly. That person has been tutored privately in order that they might be a blessing publicly. God will always bless publicly what we pray privately and we are not prepared to meet people until we have met God. The power with God and the power with people that we so ardently desire will not come until we get alone with the Lord. When we do get alone with the Lord, we will truly discover that God's will never leads us where God's grace cannot keep us. What God expects, He enables and what God calls us to do, He equally equips us to do.

God doesn't call us to go out on a limb and then cut off the limb behind us! The devil treats us that way, but not God. Paul was committed to the Lord and His Word—for men. Listen, friends, don't ever be afraid to preach anything in the Bible. If it's there, it will preach, but always keep your emphasis scriptural.

Paul was committed despite the fact that people didn't like him or the message. Paul was committed despite the fact that he was mistreated because of it. I heard of a young preacher who went to a new pastorate. At a reception in his honor, the church hostess said to him, "I don't see how you dared to attempt the task of pleasing over 700 people." As quick as a flash, he answered, "I didn't come to this church to please over 700 people. I came to please only one—the Lord Jesus. If I please Him, all will be fine." How true that is! We have nothing to prove—just someone to please and his name is Jesus! Don't accommodate your message to them, but accentuate it to Him and it will reach them!

Someone asked me recently, "do you think that you're going to get people to quit sinning and get them straightened out?" It is not my job to get people to quit sinning and straighten them out. Nor is it my commitment. My job is to preach! Just the other day my wife, Pansy, had me spraying for ants around the house with a big spray gun. She said, "you didn't get them for they're still crawling around on the floor." I told her, "that's not my job. It's the job of the man who made the spray. My job's just to spray." You'd better believe I'm going to spray the gospel, because I am committed to preach it.

THERE ARE THREE THINGS THAT WE CAN ALWAYS KNOW BECAUSE OF COMMITMENT.

- 1) God loves you; Jesus died for you; He will save you!
- 2) If you will lay down your life in faith, He will give life to that death!
- 3) Regardless of what happens, you can always say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."—no matter who, what, where.

I heard of a renowned preacher who started preaching three days after he was saved. He was trying to preach in an open air service. He said he couldn't communicate very well but was committed to doing it and did the best he could. A heckler in the crowd interrupted, saying, "Young man, you can't preach; you ought to be ashamed of yourself." The young preacher replied, "I am, but I'm not ashamed of my Lord."

We have a wonderful Savior, therefore, let's proclaim Him to the world. I challenge you, my preacher brethren, to go back to that place where God has assigned you and to proclaim Jesus Christ as the answer to all of the dilemmas that you face. May we never forget that Paul had power in his ministry because he had conviction, he had concern, and he had commitment.

One of my heroes of the faith has always been Adoniram Judson, the great missionary preacher to Burma. Judson preached in Burma for fourteen years without a convert. He lost nearly everything and buried all of his family. Finally, being an old, broken man on his way home, he penned those immortal, inspirational words,

“In spite of sorrow, grief or pain
My course be onward still
We've planted on Burma's plains
But we'll reap on Zion's hill.”

Just after he left Burma, several thousand people were saved. I challenge you, my dear friends, to go back to that place where God has assigned you and to face your task even in these perilous days with your eyes on Jesus, your knees on the floor, your face in God's Word and despite the adversity you face, join with Judson in saying,

“In spite of sorrow, grief or pain
My course be onward still
We've planted on these plains
But we'll reap on Zion's hill.”

May God bless your ministry exceedingly abundant above all that you ask or think.