

# WHEN THE WORLD IS ON FIRE

And Other Evangelistic Messages

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## CHAPTER TEN

### 10. A New Evangelism

There is a growing interest in the immense subject of evangelism. Christians everywhere are asking eagerly for the secret and note of victory. To some watchers the sky is red with promise of a newer, a better day than this world has ever known. There are others who are far from hopeful, if not altogether pessimistic.

There are those who declare that, spiritually, the times are out of joint:

- the Church is fast losing the distinguishing characteristic that constitutes the guarantee of victory;
- that she is far behind the times,
- is speaking a dead language,
- fighting the new and awful battles of this age of contending giants, equipped only with the antiquated weapons of a previous conflict;
- playing with the immense problem of human redemption and world saving, while agonizing wails of despair and piteous pleas for help come from the dark gulf of human need.

These questioning, doubting, hesitating, half despairing souls are just as certain as their hopeful, optimistic brethren that something ought to be done, that something must be done.

Honest students of the religious life of the age know that the Church is not doing the work she ought to do.

- She is not increasing in spiritual power.
- She is not reaching the great masses as she must do, or fail at last.
- She is not holding men, particularly young men, and especially in our great cities.
- She is not grappling with the problems of young life as she must.
- She is not dominating the cities, or even holding them, as is imperative in this age of intense urban life.

We need and must have a "new evangelism."

When it comes it will do the work of the old Gospel of power. It will save society because it will save the individuals who make up society. It will transform and transfigure as divine movements have always done. It will capture the realms of society, of literature, of art, of music, of sociology, of philosophy, of politics, of business. It is written, "**The kingdom of this world**

**shall become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ."**

There is a desperateness of human need, of alienation from GOD and righteousness, of wrong being and wrong doing, of corrupted lives, of bitter lies, of heartbreaking sins, of heartaches, of failures, of homes blighted by the power of alcohol, of lives degraded by the fiends of appetite and passion, of sin-seared consciences, of weakened wills, of curses that have followed in the wake of selfish living, of moral pestilences, of spiritual leprosies, of lives darkened by giant wrongs, as well as by what the nearsighted ones have called petty sins, of industrial unrest, of social iniquity. What a tale of human need! This need must be met.

**GOD is calling, "Awake! Awake! Put on thy strength, Daughter of Zion!"**

The Church in many places is more than half asleep on the lap of the Delilah of worldliness. She is doing something, but the battle must be pushed to the gates. We must pray, work, and live for the greatest revival the world has ever seen, or we shall come short of what GOD expects of us. GOD's works must be done. Longing, dying men must be lifted until they can see the face of JESUS CHRIST. Our cities must be captured and held for righteousness or the beginning of the end is at hand. White harvest must be gathered in.

In our search for new paths we must not forget that there are some absolutely necessary "**old ways**" that have been allowed, in large measure, to become choked by undergrowths of thorns and briars. These must be opened.

There are same revivals that are necessary before the "new evangelism" can sweep in power and victory over the world.

There must be a revival of prayer for the conviction, the conversion, the salvation of lost men and women.

There never was a great soul-winning campaign without agonizing prayer for the unsaved. When parents are praying for their children, and children are praying for their parents; when wives are praying for their husbands, and husbands are praying for their wives; when Sunday school teachers are praying for their scholars, and young people are praying for their associates; when the whole church is praying for the salvation of the unsaved, then the time will be short until you hear the "**sound of a going**" in the tops of GOD's trees.

I will not attempt to explain the philosophy of the case. If the religious history of the world teaches any lesson worth learning, we know that "**the day of His power**" comes after the "**morning watch**" of prevailing prayer.

There must be a revival of evangelistic preaching.

There is a great deal of evangelical preaching in our day, but comparatively little real evangelistic preaching. By "evangelistic" preaching I mean that which seeks directly to win men to make the choice of JESUS CHRIST as Saviour and Lord now.

The pulpits of our day spend too much time in the edification of saints. They should speak more

frequently and powerfully to sinners. The saints would need less nursing if they were devoted to the work of making more saints. The saints must be taught, but sinners must be converted also.

One need of the age, and to me it is a supreme need, is the voice of the prophet of GOD.

The pulpit must speak far GOD to the men who do not know Him, and seek to get men to see JESUS CHRIST and surrender to Him.

There must be a revival of evangelistic visitation.

The call of modern times is too largely the social performance. There must be a change. The dangerous trend must be checked. We must learn to do what the fathers did. They did not go from house to house to talk glibly of insignificant trifles, but to win the people to present, positive faith in JESUS CHRIST and then to build them up in the faith. That is an old path in which we must walk. We may not do the thing in just the same way the fathers did, but we must do it in same way.

The "new evangelism" is not an attempt to find a new source of power, nor a new substitute for the old Gospel. Ultimate sources of power are permanent. The thing that is necessary to meet the need of changed conditions is a new path for old power. It is adequate and inexhaustible. GOD is not dead. His arm is not short. His power is not abated. He is today the Almighty. We must know Him. We must harmonize with the Spirit of His power. Then too, there is no substitute for the old Gospel.

- There is only one incarnate Son of GOD.
- There is only one Garden of Gethsemane.
- There is only one mountain that is called Calvary.
- There is only one empty tomb in all of the cemeteries, mausoleums, burial places of all the world.

It is that Syrian cave where the body of the Son of GOD was lovingly, yet hurriedly - with no funeral panegyric or pomp - interred. Gethsemane, Calvary, the open tomb - these form our message to a dying world.

There must be the old enthusiasm and singleness of aim that has everywhere characterized great soul-winners.

I like that word "enthusiasm." It has the hiss of steam in it. There can be little progress and less victory without sanctified enthusiasm.

All conquering souls in all ages have been marked by the boldness, the drive of their holy zeal. The fathers did not have the education and culture of their sons but they displayed an earnestness, a sincerity, a devotion that carried conviction wherever they went or spake.

They were men of one purpose as they were men of one Book. They believed their own message and made everyone else believe it. They had holy boldness, the majestic faith, the abandon, the convincing unction of the old prophets.

Wherever this spirit and consecration of the fathers is found, you will be sure to find men who, with education or without it, with others or without them, are cleaving their way through the opposing ranks of Satan, subduing hearts and lives for the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Educated workmen ought to be the best kind of workmen, but no combination of circumstances can be too hard for a GOD whose name is Almighty. If the "new evangelism" is filled with the old spirit of consecration and concentration, it cannot fail.

Pentecost is as possible today as when Peter preached the plain Biblical sermon that won three thousand souls to the Master in a single day. The same need exists. The same power exists. If the two can be drawn together over a path which you have discovered, you shall witness the same marvels of grace.

GOD does not change but men do. That makes readjustment an absolute necessity. While the source of power remains unchanged, changed conditions often demand a new path for the old power.

About the most unprofitable and pitiful thing in the world is the common experience of getting into a rut so deep and monotonous that life is shorn of its novelty and power. We must get out of ruts and find a way to become receiving and sending stations for the power of GOD.

That is the problem of the day. GOD needs us and the world needs us. If the Church and the ministry fail to be evangelistic, the failure will be a sight to make angels weep. The superlative failure comes when one fails to meet the end of his creation and the divine call.

What would you think of a flour mill that never ground a barrel of flour; of a telegraph office that never received or sent a message; of an ocean liner that never sailed away from the harbor; of a great telescope that was never pointed towards the heavens? But they would not be failures half so great as the church that is not evangelistic or the Christian who does not win men to JESUS CHRIST.

We shall not succeed as we ought until we discover some new paths through the deep, dark obstacles that lie between the life of this age and the CHRIST ideal. Changed conditions demand some new paths for the old power in which we glory. Changed conditions call for a change in methods and machinery. He would be a very foolish man who would attempt to gather the golden harvest of the prairies of the Dakotas with the sickle, the cradle, the hand rake reaper - all of which were good enough for the age that produced them.

What would you think of the man who insisted that the Iowa farmer should plant all his corn by hand and cultivate it with a hoe; who insisted on making watches as watches were made one hundred years ago; who would refuse to take a jet plane to New York because his grandfather came to Illinois in the 1830's in a prairie schooner drawn by oxen?

Everyone knows that the great newspaper, such as places before us the news of the world as we eat breakfast every morning, would be impossible with the press and methods of Benjamin Franklin.

What would you think if Chicago, or New York, or Los Angeles, or Detroit were to hold fast to

the old hand pump fire engine which served its day and generation one hundred years ago; or try to supply its millions of people with water by sinking a pump in every backyard?

Does anyone think that a grocery store could be successfully run in New York on the methods that do well enough for the crossroads establishment in the mountains of Tennessee? Great manufacturing establishments compete with their rivals and distance them by throwing out their old machinery and replacing it with that which is up to date and the best that human engineering, ingenuity, and skill can produce.

Any other policy means a failure at last, because it means inferior products for a market that is overcrowded with the very best. We must not forget that methods have divine sanction only as long as they can be worked successfully. It would be utter folly to force the methods of America on India or Africa.

The church in the congested slum districts of a metropolis must not be bound hand and foot with a program that was good enough for a rural Pennsylvania fifty years ago.

If your method will not work where you are, no matter how well it worked in your last place, you may be sure that GOD wants you to throw it away and invent something that will work.

But the work must be done. Souls must be won to JESUS CHRIST and eternal life. The world must be captured for the King. The white harvest must be gathered in. Boys and girls must be kept from going away from CHRIST and the Church. The working man must be made to believe that the Church wants him and cares for him as CHRIST cares for him. If the old methods will not do the business, away with them, and invent others that will.

We are in danger in two particulars. It is an easy matter to say that the old revival methods are played out; that the very people who most need the Gospel will not go near the church during the series of revival meetings; that people are not interested in the things that interested their fathers; that it is worse than a waste of time to hold formal, "protracted meetings."

Let us have done with unkind words concerning men who are reaping the harvest just because they do not use "orthodox" machinery. It is not well to speak slightingly of "decision cards," "inquiry rooms," "seasons of silent prayers and decisions," when the men who are using these methods get results while critics are lamenting their failures.

As long as a man is true to the fundamentals of the Gospel he must be allowed to do his work, his own work, in his own field, in his own way.

Different fields perplexed by different problems and presenting diverse characteristics must, naturally, be worked differently. The people on the boulevard and those in the slum district need the same Gospel but it is next to impossible to carry that Gospel to them in the same way.

The same methods will not work successfully year after year in the same field. We live and work in an age that demands novelty, freshness, variety, the heart throb of a living man. A true man must be himself. He ought not to be bound by the method of another. David cannot win if he is cumbered with the untried weapons of Saul. The only thing we have a right to insist on is that the work be done, and done decently and in some sort of order.

In this age of doubt and uncertainty, of fear and perplexity, there is in the minds of men a conviction that JESUS CHRIST is a complement of needy souls.

The pendulum of thought is swinging towards supernaturalism. Men believe in GOD. They want a revelation of Him. The boulevard will respond to a sane call to repentance. The slum knows its need. Men are hungry for GOD, for light, for truth. Men may not care as much for dogmas and creeds as once they did, but they can be captured by loving sympathy. They want to see the face of a Saviour who has power to save. You must win them to yourself and then lead them to the One for whom their souls long.

The complex, perplexing, disheartening, gigantic problems of our immense cities demand new departures. They are full of young people who are away from home and all but dying of loneliness and heartsickness.

They teem with hard-boiled working people:

- who have come to think that religion is with capital and against labor;
- with discouraged people who have failed so frequently that they are certain that neither GOD nor men care what becomes of them;
- with people from foreign lands where they have learned cordially to hate both the church and the state;
- with poverty stricken unfortunates who think of themselves as ground beneath the iron heel of a cruel destiny;
- with weak willed men who have surrendered to the demons of appetite and passion;
- with vast armies of men and women who are so overcrowded, overstrained, overworked that they have little time, strength, nerve for the things of the higher life;
- with women who cannot properly care for their children because they must coin their life blood into bread.

No small CHRIST can save our cities. No half-hearted efforts will avail. No vacation plan will grapple with the problem.

This great army of needy, longing, lonesome, heartsick, discouraged, poverty cursed, careless, indifferent, unbelieving men must be won to CHRIST. They cannot be won to the Nazarene until they can hear His voice and see His face. We must win them to ourselves before they will follow after Him. If we are to win them, we must make them understand that we care. The first necessity is to make men feel that someone cares. GOD does. We must, and we must somehow make men feel that we do.

The most observant workers of the age are absolutely certain that the Church must do a great deal more for the children and youth than she has ever done.

**[color=Blue]We must show larger faith in childhood conversion and greater zeal in childhood training. Sunday school evangelism is certain to be a most distinguishing characteristic of the "new evangelism" which is to usher in a far better day, "when the day breaks and the shadows flee away."**[/color]

Scientific investigations thoroughly establish the fact that the period of adolescence is the time of superlative spiritual opportunity. Then the soul looks eagerly for a new life, and mates with JESUS CHRIST as readily as birds mate together in the springtime.

Those are the years of greatest impressibility. Then the life is plastic and may be readily molded according to the will of the Master mind and hand. If we allow those years to pass without effort, we shall witness the death of opportunity that will not come again.

If we do not influence childhood toward faith in JESUS CHRIST, the enemies of the kingdom will influence them away from Him.

It is impossible for a boy or girl to grow to years of maturity and remain unprejudiced. It is the business of the Church to use every power she possesses to direct the young toward faith and a holy life. We have a great army of young people on our hands. GOD will hold us responsible for the way we treat them.

All this means that there must be a great revival of childhood conversion. The religious education of the young must receive vastly more consideration than ever before. Our Sunday school methods and work must be so reorganized as to make discipleship the governing purpose. The teacher must be inspired to believe that his supreme business is to win the boys and girls to an open stand for JESUS CHRIST. Out of my own experience I am convinced that any consecrated Sunday school teacher can win the majority of his class to CHRIST and the church within one year.

Again, in my own experience, across these thrill-packed, miracle-filled years, in the great Sunday school rallies and in the crowded-out children's meetings, with every officer and teacher pledged to help to the very utmost, thousands have been swept into the kingdom of GOD and into the churches.

Special services are necessary.

A protracted soul-winning campaign ought to be held in every church at least once a year. Twice a year would be better. They must never be supplanted by the city-wide revivals.

City-wide revivals must also be considered and consistently projected. I do not greatly care what you call these services. If the word "revival" is "played out" in your community and repels rather than attracts, call the continuous meeting a "mission," a "campaign," "Gospel services," "crusade for CHRIST." Call them what you will, but have the real thing.

Plan for it. Swing the churches into line for it. Clear the decks for it. Pray for it. Sacrifice and work for it. Advertise it. Believe for it. Let GOD lead. Get out of ruts. Do something that has not been done in your town before. Be sane. Treat the people honestly. Avoid tricks. Work as though everything depended on you. Something will come. There is not a church in the land that will not respond in good measure to a sane program for a Gospel campaign. Such meetings ought to be held. Hold them in your own way. Let the church stand by, and the results will be glorious.

These are only some of the suggestions that could be given.

Alive, up-to-date, wide-awake readers of this chapter will readily think of a hundred other things that can be done for the bringing of souls into the kingdom. Life will make its own molds and create its own machinery. The thing that we need to remember is that methods have divine sanction only as long as they secure results. You are bound to win men to JESUS CHRIST, but you are not bound to do it in any special way. You are duty bound to reap the golden harvest, but you are not bound to use any particular person's machinery to do the job.

If the old machinery is outdated and won't work in your field, be brave enough to throw it away and invent new machinery that will. Be afraid of nothing except disloyalty to the Lord of the harvest. The fields are white unto harvest. You must reap them in some way. Better use any machinery than see the grain rot while you sigh for the dear old times that never will come back - and never ought to come back again. Choose for your motto this day as the vast openness of human need rises before you. "I will find or make a way through this forest to the victory and glory beyond."

~ end of chapter 10 ~

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