

# Current Evangelisation

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“THE grace of God which brings salvation has appeared” (Titus ii. 11)—mighty, precious fact!—grace which wins and turns souls to God, and drawing out of all in this scene of man’s fall and consequent alienation from God, which would keep them from Him. Another has written: “They are not human motives that form and fashion and produce the morality of a Christian, any more than it is human power that accomplishes his salvation. It is ‘the grace of God’ that teaches him all as well as saves him.”

In Thessalonians i., the effect of “our Gospel” (v. 5) and of “how” it came to them is very beautiful. This effect is seen in “how ye turned to God . . . and to wait for His Son from heaven.” They were also “ensamples”; and so the work of the Gospel went on. “From you [the converts] sounded out the Word of the

Lord . . . in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad; so that we [the ministers] need not to speak anything."

In this we get a true principle of evangelisation, the free work of God by His Holy Spirit, by which we do well to measure Gospel work to-day. In this the ministers do not draw to themselves; they preach the Gospel, they being exponents of it in their lives, "as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sakes." The effect on the converts is seen in them also being "ensamples," and so the work spread. The converts, won by grace and brought to God, go out to others. The Gospel was preached in its simplicity and purity; the simple and pure effect is seen in the converts.

Nowadays the simple and humble presentation of the Gospel, which was common (say, forty years ago) in many places all over the country, has greatly passed away, and in the place of this humble work large organisations and missions have sprung up, drawing great numbers into large halls. People are always ready for large movements directed to the benefit of man, and these organised on human principles, and addressed to human interests, would hinder the free action of the Spirit. When the Lord was here He often met crowds, but never to own such following (Luke xiv. 25-35). We find Him in Mark vii., in treating a case of

need: "He took him aside from the multitude"; and again in chapter ix., with a blind man: He "led him out of the town," apart from human interests and influences that would weaken the true effect of His gracious dealing with him.

In the "last" and "perilous" times human influences are great and seductive, in the presence of which (see 2 Tim. iv. 2-5) the servant is exhorted to "preach the Word," also "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine," and so bring souls in contact with the direct authority of God in "the Word." The effect of beautiful singing with a "choir," "service of song," and "concerts" is different, and would feed *sentiment* rather than plough up the conscience; also because of verses 3 and 4 showing intoxicating influences, under which they turn away their ears from the truth, the servant is to be apart from these influences, "*but be thou sober in all things*, bear evils, do the work of an evangelist" (new translation). "The work of an evangelist" is much needed, for the need abounds for a clear preaching of the Gospel, presenting the love of God sovereign and absolute, presenting also the righteousness of God revealed in the Gospel, accordingly believers have "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." In Him we see God come down in love; in Him we see man exalted in righteousness and

seated at God's right hand, and the believer has all in Him.

The teacher and pastor would instruct converts and apply truth to the conscience and heart; supposing the converts to be gathered on the principle of God's assembly and so *where* there would be free exercise of the gifts (Eph. iv. 8-13), still "the work of an evangelist"—the Gospel coming to a soul "not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance"—would be to bring the soul to God.

Evangelisation has got much impetus since the revivals of '1859, but the truth of the Gospel, containing "the power of God unto salvation," He being the source of it, has been little maintained. Conversions have been abundant, thanks be to God! Who sovereignly owns the Word in the preaching Who "of His own will begat us by the Word of truth"; but because of the character of Gospel presented conversions have stopped short of the knowledge of redemption, and the converts have been left in the world. Still, while the effect of present Gospel work in these large organisations is most lacking on *converts*—a serious consideration—God may and does use them *providentially* and in a general way, infidelity would be checked. However, the believer, inasmuch as "all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's," should have his eye on Christ's interests. The interests

of souls by this would in no way suffer, but rather the reverse, and the servant in adhering to the path of obedience would neither join nor "forbid" others working on other lines. Help them he may, but not in leaving the path of obedience.

The Christian state, as illustrated by the Father's reception of the prodigal and having him clothed with the best robe, setting forth the believer's positive fitness for his presence in Christ, also the gift of the Holy Spirit's indwelling the believer, being the seal of this state, and also for his knowledge and enjoyment of this blessed portion, is little known among Christians generally.

If this is so, should not evangelists, or any who do the work of an evangelist, be concerned about this great lack in current Gospel work?

The Thessalonians "received the Word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost"; how is it the Gospel to-day meets with so little opposition to converts in the way of "affliction"? Is it not because the Gospel preached so little effects *change of place* or deliverance from the world?

Gospel work, going on from the standpoint of the world, or of "the camp," the divine centre of gathering for God's people, being ignored (Matt. xviii. 20), would scarcely have this effect or rise above the level of man's benefit, and this entails no "affliction."

## RED SEA WORK

Consequent on Pharaoh's power put forth to prevent the people's escape, at Pi-hahiroth (the opening of liberty) they are found in great exercise. In their great strait and affliction "the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord." A very real exercise which souls pass through is here set forth: viz. their being made to feel not only their guilt for sins committed, *but their state as in the flesh*, and conscious of being slaves (sold under sin), "the prince of this world" pressing on them his claims, not yet annulled as afterwards at the Red Sea, and made to feel also their utter helplessness to escape death and judgment, which is rightly theirs prefigured in the Red Sea, but which in wondrous love and grace has been borne for the believer by that Blessed One, of whom it is written "that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, even the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

There is no exercise seen at the Passover. The Passover is very distinct in character to the Red Sea, while both refer to the death of Christ.

At the Passover the blood is for God's eye—"when I see the blood I will pass over you"—a work needed to meet all that God is in His

holiness, righteousness, great majesty, and truth, and so to lay a righteous basis for Him to take up a sinful people. There is nothing deeper than the truth of the Passover, the blood being for God; but here the people's state, or their "salvation," is not the point presented. They are seen safe from judgment; God here acts as judge, the blood keeping Him out. At the Red Sea, after great exercise, "they see the salvation of the Lord," a work absolutely accomplished for them. "Israel saw that great work," and "Thus the Lord saved Israel." Also "they believed the Lord." The distinct character of the Passover and of the Red Sea is again seen in Hebrews xi. 28, 29. "By faith HE kept the Passover"; here was a work done for God between Him and the Mediator. At the Red Sea "THEY" act in faith, Jehovah acting for them and to save them. The Egyptians, without faith, "assaying to do were drowned." The importance of the truth of the believer's deliverance from the state of man in the flesh is great. The Galatians, in taking up law, failed to see this, and failed to see the truth of *sonship*, the new status through redemption. The law was for man in the flesh as belonging to this world, hence the most touching appeal through the apostle, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, so that He should deliver us out of the present evil world according to the

will of our God and Father, to whom be glory to the ages of ages. Amen"—an appeal still to any who cling to "the present evil world" (new trans. Gal. i. 4). Deliverance for them is effected by His *death*. The work of the Spirit in us, or born of the Spirit, is sometimes confounded with the work of Christ for us. It is through faith in this the believer is brought to God and sealed with the Spirit. The former, while having its own most important place, does not effect this, hence confusion between the state of the prodigal when he "came to himself" and still in the far country, and his state described after his meeting the Father; hence also confusion between the Passover—the people being taken up on the ground of the blood—and the Red Sea, where they are brought to God.

These few remarks are given as only just touching a large subject, in saying anything on which the writer feels it easy to err, still with the desire to lead to exercise as to "the Gospel of God" and its effect on the believer.

In relation to current evangelisation two principles of service may be noticed. In one, gift may be seen exercised with showy results, *but with disregard to separation to God* and His glory and His interests. Samson may illustrate this: exercising great gift he slew "with the jawbone of an ass heaps upon heaps, with the

jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men"; *the use of a bone contradicting his Nazariteship*. The widow with two mites may be seen in great contrast; little gift, indeed very small, no results that would draw forth man's appreciation, *but her devotedness great*, her faith seeing the "temple" in its relation to God, His faithfulness, His unchanging thoughts of blessing towards His people. Her act draws forth the Lord's approval, who sees the heart, and the motive she had in casting in "all her living." This unostentatious act could alone be understood by Him, with men it would go for nothing; but what numbers of God's people ever since have been edified and encouraged by it, in seeing one giving practical expression to "The just shall live by his faith," and her act being the dictate of a heart touched by *grace*, without effort or thinking she was doing anything wonderful. It being the fruit of God's work in her, we readily understand "She hath cast in more than they all." "She that is a widow indeed and desolate trusteth in God." In her we see how "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." Her act of devotedness is found just at the end of Jewish failure and ruin, and just before the Lord pronounces, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate," marking her faith as all the more striking.

She acts, exercising her gift, though small,

not in human zeal or energy, but on the strength of Jehovah's grace, and this unchanging towards Israel, *i.e.* her act of faith is in answer to this. Her heart is at rest above the corrupt state of Israel at that moment, her faith resting in God. The state of Israel, if felt apart from her soul's confidence in God, would be distracting.

While all this is most true and striking, where, it may be asked, in this beautiful picture is there the outgoing of the Gospel in the energy of love to others? for this is what is under consideration. True, the picture does not go so far as to give this, but we see in her the "work of faith," and we see in 1 Thessalonians i. 3 it is this gives true character to the "labour of love." Here we see the secret of true results in the Gospel, as seen with the Thessalonians, who show both their "work of faith" and "labour of love." In other words, in the "labour of love" the servant comes *out from God*, and imbued with the knowledge of God, his service gets a very distinct character. Without "the work of faith"—a maintained thing with the servant—service readily falls to a *human level*. The servant, also true to God's own interests and glory—"Whose I am and whom I serve," says Paul—would not allow "the service of love" to compromise His interests in any way. Again, Paul says, "God . . . whom I serve in my spirit in the Gospel of His Son." Thus the springs

of true service would be fed, the servant, too, being unfettered by organised arrangement.

How fitting in the last times is the exhortation to the servant, "Study to shew thyself *approved unto God*, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed," etc. Their "work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope" (1 Thess. i. 3) was all for His appreciation, "in the sight of God and our Father."

Should we not feel the lack of this principle of Gospel work to-day, and our great failure in rising to God's thoughts in the *Gospel*? that is our failure as *converts* (not touching that of ministers), supposing the Gospel has been brought to us "not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." But "God is faithful." May we take courage in this.

C.