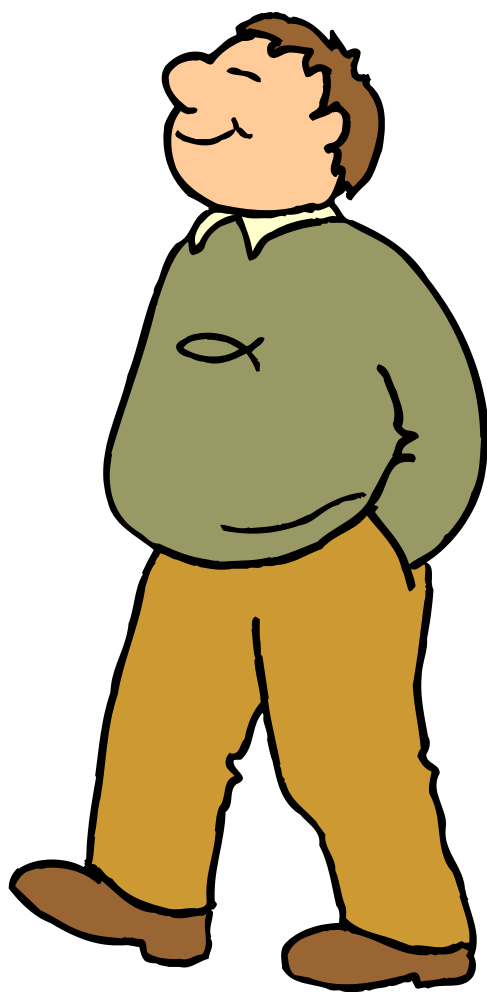


# EVANGELICALISM'S EVANGELICAL EMERGENCY



*Issues facing evangelicalism today*

*A series by David Legge*

preachtheword.com



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# *Evangelicalism's Evangelical Emergency - Chapter 1*

## **"When Hell Freezes Over"**

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*"The evangelistic consequences of Evangelicalism's aversion to the doctrine of eternal punishment"*

I want you to turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 9 please, 1 Corinthians chapter 9 - just one verse - 1 Corinthians 9 verse 16. The Apostle Paul, of course, is speaking, and he writes: *"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!"*. Then over to 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 11, again Paul - to the same group of Christians in Corinth - says: *"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences"*. Then down to verse 14, the last verse we will read: *"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead"*.

Let us bow in a moment's prayer please: Father, we have been deeply challenged tonight - what Tanya shared with us, and her baring her heart to us of the burden that she has for children and adults who are lost; and Lord, for this great work of Every Home Crusade, and what Samuel brought to us, again we see on such a large scale what You are doing in the lives of Your people to enable them to provide the Word of God for lost sinners right across the globe. Lord, we thank You for this, we have already sensed in a very real way Your presence - and, O God, as we come now to Your word, O Lord may that two-edged sword take a dealing with all our hearts tonight, preacher included. How much we need You, Lord; how much we need for a real sense of the divine presence with us now. O Lord, we need to be moved, we need to be challenged, we need to be revived - and so we ask: Lord, come, meet with us now. In the Saviour's name we pray, Amen.

I've taken for my title tonight 'When Hell Freezes Over'. I believe that evangelicalism in general today has an aversion to the doctrine of eternal punishment, and because of that the fallout has been evangelistic consequences: a lack of evangelism in local churches, and a lack of missionary vision that will take the gospel to the four corners of the earth. I think, today, being Evangelical is not the same as being evangelistic. I don't know whether you've considered that or not, but there is a difference between being Evangelical in doctrine - that is, you espouse the fundamentals of the faith, and you can tick the boxes over what you believe - and actually, in a practical sense, being evangelistic.

Let me illustrate it to you like this: often we go to funerals from time to time, and someone in any given church might say to you: 'Well, the man here, he's Evangelical' - but when he gets up to preach, especially in a funeral situation, you realise: well, he might be Evangelical, but he's not being evangelistic. As he preaches the message, he is not seeking to win souls. I heard someone describe themselves recently as 'an evangelical atheist' - that's true! They saw themselves within the Evangelical camp in Christianity, but they had come to the position of being an atheist. Now I know that seems ridiculous, but that's what they claimed - and it does seem to be today that you can be Evangelical, in broad terms, but almost believe anything.

Steve Chalke is a gentleman many of you may not know, but he came to fame for being a

sort of celebrity Christian who appeared on breakfast television, sometimes daytime television I think - but he's also a Christian writer in magazines. In recent days he published a book, 'The Lost Message of Jesus', in which he cast doubt on the Evangelical doctrine of penal substitution - that is that our Lord Jesus Christ, when He died on the cross, was in our place, that He was our substitute and He bore the wrath of God for us and exhausted it there, and because of that we are saved. Indeed he says in that book, he infers that the doctrine of penal substitution is 'a form of cosmic child abuse, a vengeful Father punishing His Son for an offence He has not even committed' - staggering, isn't it? A person like Steve Chalke can class themselves 'an Evangelical', and yet not believe that our Lord Jesus, when He died on the cross, was taking our judgement, the wrath of God for our sins.

Now hell is no exception to this rule. For many in Evangelicalism, hell has frozen over. Now it should be no surprise to us that unbelievers no longer believe in hell, indeed some social commentator has said that 'hell ceased to exist somewhere after the 1960's' - and it doesn't take you long to work out why that was, the great excesses that were taking place around that time, various social and sexual revolutions, and people didn't want to be responsible any more to a just and holy God for the behaviour that was marking their lives. But it appears that within the church of Jesus Christ now, hell is freezing over.

Now this is manifest in doctrinal terms through the doctrine of annihilationism - now don't be afraid of that word, it simply means: the belief that lost people who have not believed the gospel, trusted in Christ, when they die are incinerated into non-existence - they cease to be. A variant of that belief of annihilationism is called 'conditional immortality', it's a little bit different: it just believes that when you are born as a soul, you're not immortal but you have to get immortality through belief in the gospel - and the gift of God is eternal life, and so you live forever. So people who never trust in Christ just die and cease to be, and people who believe the gospel, well, they go to heaven and live forever. Now whichever particular favour - whether it's annihilationism or conditional immortality - you espouse, both of those beliefs are a denial of eternal punishment, the eternal conscious punishment of lost souls.

I have a great regard for the writings of John Stott - some of his commentaries are, it has to be said, second to none - but he was one of the first major evangelical figures to comment on this issue, whether or not hell is eternal. It was in 1988 in his book 'Essentials', which was a liberal evangelical dialogue with a liberal Christian, David Edwards, it was in that book that he cast doubt on whether or not hell was eternal torment. In 1993 he said that he had held that view for around 50 years or so, though he had only made it public in 1988. Stott wrote these words: 'Well, emotionally, I find the concept intolerable and do not understand how people can live with it', the concept, 'without either cauterising their feelings or cracking under the strain'. Now I can sympathise with what he says there. Stott, however, supports annihilationism, and yet he cautions - again I quote - 'I do not dogmatise about the position to which I have come. I hold it tentatively...I believe that the ultimate annihilation of the wicked should at least be accepted as a legitimate, biblically founded alternative to their eternal conscious torment'. He believes we should consider this possibility.

F. F. Bruce is another name who would be known to some of you, he was in what has become known as the Brethren movement, and he was a Professor of New Testament in Manchester University. He wrote a letter to John Stott in 1989, he wrote these words: 'Annihilation is certainly an acceptable interpretation of the relevant New Testament passages. For myself, I remain agnostic', that means he doesn't know, 'eternal conscious torment is incompatible with the revealed character of God'. I'll repeat that, he says: 'eternal conscious torment is incompatible with the revealed character of God'.

The British Evangelical Alliance produced an 'acute report', they called it, and they stated within that that this doctrine, annihilationism, is - again I quote - 'a significant minority evangelical view that has grown within Evangelicalism in recent years'. The Church Of England's Doctrine Commission reported in February 1995 that 'hell is not eternal torment'. The report entitled 'The Mystery of Salvation' states, again I quote, 'Christians have professed appalling theologies which made God into a sadistic monster. Hell is not eternal torment, but it is the final and irrevocable choosing of that which is opposed to God so completely and so absolutely, that the only end is total non-being'.

Someone said many years ago that whatever is propagated in the halls of our universities, it's not long until it becomes the conviction of the common man on the street - and for that matter, that applies to the church. When American church historian Martin Marty, who was a professor at a University of Chicago Divinity School, was at Harvard University he was preparing for a lecture on the subject of hell. He consulted the various indexes, scholarly journals dating back over a period of 100 years to 1889, and he failed to find one single entry on the subject of hell - and his conclusion was this: hell disappeared, and no one noticed. Someone has said that the 19th-century tried to conceal the facts of life, but the 20th century has attempted to conceal the facts of death.

Now, whether you are a theologian who consciously believes that hell is not eternal torment, or whether you are a Christian who unconsciously is what we could call 'a practical atheist' regarding hell - that is, you espouse to the doctrine as it is found in the Bible, but deep down in your heart you don't want to believe it - I have to give you my conviction tonight. I have come to the conclusion that most Christians today don't really believe that people who have not believed the gospel are lost, and going to hell for ever. I don't care what creed you claim to be your confession, in your heart of hearts, in my heart of hearts the real question is: do we believe that the alternative to believing in the gospel is hell? Now the answer to that question will have a profound effect on our evangelism - it will!

Charles Peace was a gentleman who was condemned to death row in the United States. As is the practice there, the clergyman led a condemned man to his execution. He would, as he was going, read the Prayer Book liturgy, and as he was reciting it word for word he mentioned 'hell'. Charles Peace tapped him on the shoulder and said: 'Sir, do you mind me asking a question? Do you believe what you're reading?'. He said: 'Of course I believe what I'm reading'. He said: 'If I believed what you believe, I would crawl on my hands and knees to the four corners of the world across broken glass to warn people of such an eternity'. He was right, wasn't he?

John Stott said: 'Well, emotionally, I find the concept intolerable and do not understand how people can live with it without either cauterising their feelings', many have done that, tried to block out the reality of hell - and maybe the intoxicating influences of materialism and affluence in our society, the pleasure craze that is all around us, has numbed us to the reality of eternities truths. There's very few cracking under the strain, that's for sure - but is there an alternative, between cauterising your feelings and cracking under the strain? Yes, there is, and that is taking the gospel! That is meant to be the outlet of the heart that is broken over an eternity of lost souls in hell.

So I want to bring two things to you this evening. The first is: we must rediscover the truth of hell, we must. Dick Dowsett was a gentleman who wrote a book several years ago entitled 'God, That's Not Fair!'. It was done in a certain format, as a correspondence between he, the

author, and a young man who was a Christian, professedly, but was starting to doubt whether or not people who didn't believe the gospel would be lost forever. In that book he makes this statement: 'When people in the Old Testament times said that they could not conceive of a God who would do this or that, the prophetic reply was Isaiah 55 verse 8, God says 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD'. In other words', Dowsett says, 'human hunches do not give us right answers about God, neither can we learn how God would behave by looking at the way that nice people do things'. It's true, isn't it? 'Judge not the Lord by feeble sense', yet we do it. If we're all honest, and we're all human - and I trust we are - we do have a natural recoil of emotions when we think of this great eternity of lostness that will exist for those without Christ. It is true that the easiest thing in the world to do is to deny its reality, it makes us feel better to deny hell - as it does, incidentally, for us to deny the existence of death, to ignore it, to joke about it. Yet it is real, and it is true.

Now of course we must go back to basics. Much of the agony of the prophets of the Old Testament, the apostles of the New Testament, was the lostness, the utter lostness of so many people. The Lord Jesus Christ, we must take His words seriously, 'Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal'. Do you know that there is more material in the gospel writings about hell than anywhere else in the whole of the Scriptures? The Lord Jesus Christ, it's from His lips that much, the majority of that material comes from. We've got to face what our Lord Jesus - gentle Jesus, meek and mild - said about unbelievers and God.

There are approximately 1870 verses recording the words of our Lord Jesus - 13% of those are about judgement and hell. One of the great New Testament pictures that our Lord gives us of this awful eternal place is that of Gehenna. It originally was a place of pagan sacrifice - then good King Josiah sacrificed the pagan priests on it, made it the rubbish dump, the refuse dump of the city of Jerusalem - it became a flaming pit of refuse and decay. The Lord Jesus takes that figure and speaks on hell, a rubbish tip. Our Lord Jesus used that term 'Gehenna' 11 times out of the 12 times that it is found in the New Testament. He said of that place that in that environment 'their' - sinners - 'worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched'. 'Their worm' speaks of the gnawing torment internally, and the fire is speaking of the torment externally - it never dies, it is eternal, perpetual!

Surely God's opinion means something? God in human flesh has taught us that there will not be few in hell but many. 'O, I believe the Sermon on the Mount, that's my Christianity', in that sermon our Lord said: 'Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity'.

What of the cross, if there is no hell? What was it all about? The cross is the great evidence of hell, for there in three hours - whatever an eternity for every sinner means, an eternity in hell - it was compressed into three hours of darkness and laid upon Christ at Calvary. Maybe that's why people like Steve Chalke are trying to remove the curse from Calvary, because if we remove the curse we remove the consequences of our sin, we remove hell - and I think this is the great problem here: a total and utter misunderstanding of God's wrath! God's wrath is a perfect thing, for everything about God is perfect. It is an aspect to His attribute of

perfect justice. Even if it does last an eternity, and the Bible teaches it does, it is not in contradiction to His perfect universe of subjection and harmony with His will. God's justice must be vented, and yet at the same time His love is completely intact.

We must rediscover the truth of hell. It was C.H. Spurgeon over a century ago who told his fellow preachers: 'Shun all views of future punishment that would make it appear less terrible'. J. C. Ryle, the great Bishop of Liverpool, said: 'Beware of new and strange doctrines about hell and the eternity of punishment. Beware of manufacturing a God of your own - a God who is all love, but not holy - a God who has a heaven for everybody, but a hell for none - a God who can show good and bad to be side for side in time, but will make no distinction between good and bad in eternity. Such a God is an idol of your own - as true an idol as was ever moulded out of brass or clay. Beware of forming fanciful theories of your own, and then trying to make the Bible square with them. Beware of making selections from the Bible to suit your taste - refusing like a spoiled child whatever you think is bitter, and seizing whatever you think is sweet. What is all this but taking Jehoiakim's penknife and cutting God's Word to pieces? What does it amount to but telling God that you, a poor, short-lived worm, know what is good for the human being, better than He does? This will not do'.

So what are we to do with hell then? Believe it, yes, but more - and this is my second point - we must allow the rediscovery of the truth of hell to motivate us again to worldwide evangelisation. Nothing short of that will do. Paul expressed it in his own words, 1 Corinthians 9:16, our first verse that we read: 'Though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe', that is a curse expression, 'let me be cursed, if I preach not the gospel'. 'Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord', I know the context is a little different, but it is an application - knowing the reverence that we should hold the Lord in - 'we persuade men'. The love of Christ constrains us, we've got a message of hope! Salvation from hell! A Saviour who died on the cross! That is what drives us to win lost souls and save some from the fire.

We would think it unforgiveable, wouldn't we, if Paul ignored the great commission that Christ gave him, if he didn't say: 'Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel'. Yet what of our commission? We're given the same. Not all can go, of course, but we've all to do something, haven't we? John Wesley spoke of his willingness to travel anywhere to present the gospel to people who were lost, and in March 1748 he wrote these words: 'In plain terms, wherever I see one or a thousand men running into hell, be it in England, Ireland, or France, yea, in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America, I will stop them if I can: as a minister of Christ, I will beseech them, in his name, to turn back, and be reconciled to God. Were I to do otherwise, were I to let any soul drop into the pit, whom I might have saved from everlasting burnings, I am not satisfied that God would accept my plea, 'Lord, he was not of my parish''. Hudson Taylor, when he was 18, wrote to his younger sister and said: 'I have a stronger desire than ever to go to China. That land is ever in my thoughts. Think of it - three hundred and sixty million souls, without God without hope in the world, dying without any of the consolations of the Gospel'.

People say: 'How could a God of love send people to hell? It's not fair!'. Well, is it fair that we have the gospel, and do not go with it? Do we treat the world fairly, give them the equal opportunity to come to Christ? Paul says: 'How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?'. The old urgency that people should hear the gospel and find eternal life has been replaced by other things, hasn't it? In the church at large - and I know you're a bit of an exception here -

political freedom is more important, feeding the hungry is more important, healing the sick is more important.

I always try to encourage people to read Christian biographies - Hudson Taylor is a good place to start. In his missionary endeavour in China one of his young converts was a young man called Nee Yung Fa. He was a Ningbo cotton dealer, and he was converted under Hudson's preaching. He was also a leader in a reformed Buddhist sect - now this was a sect that didn't go in for idolatry at all, but they were searching for truth and for the real true and living God. At the end of one of Hudson Taylor's sermons, Nee Yung Fa stood up in his place and turned to address the audience and said: 'I have long searched for the truth as my father did before me. I have travelled far but I haven't found it. I found no rest in Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, but I do find rest in what I have heard tonight. From now on I will believe in Jesus'. Nee Yung Fa took Hudson Taylor back to his group of Buddhist believers, and he addressed that group and told his own testimony. Then another individual there was converted, and both of them were baptised. The other member of the group asked Hudson Taylor: 'How long has the gospel been known in England?'. How long has the gospel been known in England? 'For several hundred years', he replied with a great tone of embarrassment. 'What!', exclaimed Nee, 'What? Several hundred years, and you have only come to preach to us now? My father sought after the truth for more than 20 years and died not finding it! Why didn't you come sooner?'

I was a pastor for nine years in the Iron Hall, Templemore Avenue, Belfast. Do you know that there are something around nine evangelical churches - that's why it's called 'Temple-more'! - on or off the Avenue. Yet there are countries in this world who don't have one missionary to bring them the name of the Lord Jesus. Has hell frozen over for many evangelical Christians in Ulster? I think it has - even if, openly and consciously, they would never confess that they don't believe in it any more; unconsciously and secretly, practically, they have ceased to be evangelistic - even if they call themselves, ourselves, evangelicals.

Can I finish tonight by quoting an account by Amy Carmichael? She was a missionary to India, and one night in a village in India she wrote these words. Listen carefully: "I could not go asleep. So I lay awake and looked; and I saw, as it seemed, this: that I stood on a grassy sward and at my feet a precipice broke sheer down into infinite space. Back I drew, dizzy at the depth. Then I saw people moving single file along the grass. They were making for the edge. There was a woman with a baby in her arms and another little child holding onto her dress. She was on the very verge. Then I saw that she was blind. She lifted her foot for the next step - it trod air. Oh, the cry as they went over!

"Then I saw more streams of people from all parts. They were blind, stone-blind; all made straight for the precipice edge. There were shrieks as they suddenly knew themselves falling, and a tossing up of helpless arms, clutching at empty air. Then I saw that along the edge there were sentries set at intervals. But the intervals were far too great; they were wide, there were unguarded gaps between. And over these gaps the people fell in their blindness, quite unwarned, and the gulf yawned like the mouth of hell.

"Then I saw, like a little picture of peace, a group of people under some trees, with their back to the gulf. They were making daisy-chains. There was another group. It was made up of people whose great desire was to get more sentries; but they found that very few wanted to go. Once a girl stood alone in her place, waving the people back; but her mother and other relatives called, and reminded her that her furlough was due. Being tired and needing a change she had to go and rest for a while; but no one was sent to guard her gap, and over



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and over the people fell, like a waterfall of souls.

"Once a child caught a tuft of grass that grew on the very brink of the gulf; it clung convulsively and it called, but nobody seemed to hear. Then the roots of grass gave way, and with a cry the child went over. And the girl who longed to be back in the gap thought she heard the little one cry and she sprang up and wanted to go, at which they reproved her; and then sang a hymn. Then through the hymn the pain of a million broken hearts rung out in one full drop, one sob. It was the Cry of Blood".

Charles Wesley said:

'I want an even strong desire,  
I want a calmly fervent zeal,  
To save poor souls out of the fire,  
To snatch them from the verge of hell,  
And turn them to a pardoning God,  
And quench the brands in Jesus' blood'.

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## *Evangelicalism's Evangelical Emergency - Chapter 2*

# **"Tiny Tears"**

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*"Evangelicalism's emotional detachment from the pain and peril of this lost world"*

**G**ood evening to you all again, it's good to be with you once more this Saturday evening. Psalm 126 please, just two verses from it, and then John's gospel chapter 11 and one verse from it. Psalm 126 verses 5-6: *"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him"*. Then John chapter 11 please, verse 35: *"Jesus wept"*.

Last night, if you were here, we looked at the title of 'When Hell Freezes Over' - Evangelicalism's modern aversion to the doctrine of eternal punishment, and the evangelistic consequences of that. I'm not going to repeat anything really, apart from the two major points - and that was: we found first of all that we must rediscover the truth of hell; and then secondly we saw that we must allow the rediscovery of hell to motivate us again to world evangelisation. Tonight I'm taking as my title 'Tiny Tears' - and, as you can imagine, I'm not going to talk about a child's doll, but I'm taking that as a title because I believe that Evangelicalism has come to have an emotional detachment from the pain and the peril of the lost. Very few tears are shed for those who are without Christ.

An evangelist tells the story of visiting Francis and Edith Schaeffer in their Switzerland home in L'Abri. After dinner one night the conversation ranged over several profound theological subjects, and suddenly someone asked Dr Schaeffer: 'What will happen to those who have never heard of Christ?'. Everyone around the dinner table was waiting for some great theological answer, a weighty intellectual response - and none came. Instead, he bowed his head and wept.

You see, that is the reaction that the reality of hell - that we considered last night - requires of us: to bow our heads and weep. Yet it is so lacking. I know it is lacking in my life, and I imagine that you're no different. R. Dale once said of D.L. Moody that 'he had the right to preach about hell, because he so clearly did so from a weeping heart'. Do we have weeping hearts when we attempt to speak to others about their need of Christ?

I stumbled across a website on the Internet on the subject of mental health, and it was talking about tears and weeping. It said that crying is our first language - as babies we cried to let our parents know that we were scared, or hungry, or tired. It was our way of saying 'I need help right now'. It listed two purposes of crying: one, it announced that something is hurting us; and two, it is a mechanism to release the pain of whatever is hurting us. One, it announced that something hurts - does it hurt to us to know that people are lost? Do we shed tears to release that pain because of the hurt that it causes?

Albert Smith, a Christian writer, said: 'Tears are the safety valve of the heart when too much pressure is laid on'. M. R. DeHaan said: 'A tear is the distillation of the soul, it is the deepest longing of the human heart in chemical solution'. Herbert Lockyer said: 'Tears are liquid prayer'. So we might well ask the question: why it is then that the church seems to be suffering today from 'dry-eyed syndrome'? Whether it's in the pulpit - and I'm as guilty as any

- or in prayer meetings, or in private: if tears are an expression of our emotions, therefore it can only be the conclusion that we reach that Christians have become emotionally detached from the pain and the peril of the lost. We have allowed our tear ducts to become cauterised by the spirit of the age, whether it's materialism, pluralism, atheism, post-modernism - eternal realities are no longer real enough to make us want to cry over them!

Now when we look to this book, we find that all the great men of God in it - and indeed in Christian history - who saw a great work done for God, were broken spirits with wet eyes. Men and women whose hearts were broken! Jeremiah compared his weeping as a fountain, a river of tears - the expression insinuates that his whole head had become water because of his weeping for the nation. We come to the New Testament, and Paul the apostle four times described himself as 'serving the Lord with all humility and with many tears'. But of course there is no greater example than the Man of Sorrows Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ - a life, I believe, that was saturated in tears, though we only read of a number of occasions. We read of Him weeping over a sinful city in Luke 19: 'And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it'. We read of Him tonight in John 11:35, and He is weeping over sin's wages - for the wages of sin is death, and a very close friend of His, Lazarus, had died. He is weeping over what sin has done to humanity. We read of Him in Hebrews 5 and verse 7, weeping over sin's sacrifice: 'Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared'. He was weeping in Gethsemane over the sacrifice that He was about to pay for our sins. He wept.

It seems today that if the church in general isn't freezing in intellectualism, it is frying in emotionalism - and yet even with those two extremes, there are few, it appears, who weep over lost souls. We are more moved at times over a dead dog lying in the street, or a child lost in the woods, than we are about millions of people heading to hell. If we're going to see revival in Ulster, and if we're going to see it in Ireland, and if we're going to see people thrust into the harvest field from this place, we are going to need to see brokenness! Like the brokenness of the prophets, like the brokenness of the apostles, like the brokenness of Christ Himself, like the brokenness of our forefathers - they knew it! We need to discover again the weeping way of our Lord: that they that sow in tears, shall reap in joy. 'He', or she, 'that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed', the word of God, 'shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them'.

This was the way of Murray M'Cheyne, an old Scottish Presbyterian minister. His old sextant had the privilege of showing some tourists around his church in Dundee, and his manse. Some of these American tourists asked the sextant to show them how his old master used to study and preach. So he took them into the manse, into his study, and he said: 'Now sit down and put your head in your hands on the desk, put your face in your hands and let the tears fall - for that is the way my master studied!'. Then a little bit later on he brought them into the church, and he went up into the pulpit and said: 'Now lean over, lean way over, stretch out your hands to the congregation, and now let the tears fall - that's the way my master preached!'.

It was the way George Whitefield sought to win souls. One who knew him well said he hardly knew him go through a whole sermon without weeping. His voice was often interrupted by tears, sometimes so excessive as to stop him. He said: 'You blame me for weeping, but how can I help it when you will not weep for yourselves, though your immortal souls are on the verge of destruction? For aught you know, you are hearing your last sermon, and may nevermore have an opportunity to have Christ offered to you'. What a great soul winner

George Whitefield was.

It was the way Colonel Clark of the United States preached. R. A. Torrey, the evangelist, recites - I'm just giving it to you as he gives it to us - 'One of the mightiest soul winners I ever knew was Colonel Clark of Chicago. He would work at his business six days every week, and every night in the week all year round 500-600 men would gather in that Mission Hall. It was a motley crowd: drunkards, thieves, pickpockets, gamblers and everything that was hopeless. I used to go and hear Colonel Clark talk - and he seemed to me one of the duller talkers I have ever heard in my life. He would ramble along, and yet these 500-600 would lean over and listen, spellbound, while Colonel Clark talked in his prosy way. Some of the greatest preachers in Chicago used to go down to help Colonel Clark, but the men would not listen to them as they did to Colonel Clark. When he was speaking, they would lean over and listen, and be converted by the score! I could not understand it. I studied it, and wondered what the secret was - why did these men listen with such interest? Why were they so greatly moved by such prosy talking? I found the secret: it was because they knew that Colonel Clark loved them, and nothing conquers like love. The tears were very near the surface with Colonel Clark'. What a statement! The tears were very near the surface with Colonel Clark. 'Once in the early days of the mission, when he had been weeping a great deal over these men, he got ashamed of his tears. He steeled his heart and tried to stop crying, and succeeded - but lost his power. He saw that his power was gone, and went to God and prayed, 'O God, give me back my tears'. God sent him back his tears, and gave him wonderful power with God and with men'.

Do we not need to pray: 'O God, give me back my tears'? If ever we had those tears! Is there more that we can do than just ask God to give us tears back? Well, I think there is. That mental health website I was looking at describes how, when we grow into adulthood, we are pressurised by others to bottle up our tears, not express ourselves - whether we think, as men, that it's not manly, or it shows weakness in some way. Of course, as you probably know, that's not a healthy thing - the best thing, at times, is just a good old cry. It's not spiritually healthy not to be able to shed a tear. They suggest on this website, on a human level, that to get yourself crying you need to sit there and watch a soppy movie or something like that, or watch Bambi - and everybody seems to cry when Bambi's mother gets killed. Those are crocodile tears, aren't they? That's not what we're looking for, we're not looking for theatrical tears - and so often we can think of things that hurt us in our minds, and we can start to blurt, and it's got nothing to do with lost souls that are dying.

It was Dr William Chapman who suggests a way whereby we can stir up concern and brokenness in our hearts. He simply says: 'Take your New Testament and go quietly to a quiet place, and read a sentence like this, 'He that believeth not is condemned already''. Chapman says, 'Think about that for 10 minutes. Put your boy over against that verse. Put your wife there, your husband, your little girl. Then take another verse, 'He that hath not the Son of God hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him''. He says: 'I know that a soul thus burdened generally gains its desire'.

Charles Finney, who saw great revival in the United States, urged seekers after concern to look, as it were, into a telescope into hell - now if you want to do that, Luke 16 is the best place to start, for that's where the Lord Jesus gives us a telescope into hell. 'Hear their groans', he says, 'Turn the glass then upwards, look into heaven and see the saints there in their white robes, hear them sing the song of redeeming love - and ask yourself: is it possible that I should prevail with God to elevate the sinner there?'. 'Do this', Finney says, 'and if you're not a wicked man, you will soon have as much of the spirit of prayer as your body can

sustain'.

Now Paul had that. Turn with me quickly to Romans 9 to illustrate this. Verse 1: 'I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed', damned, 'from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh'. He spoke of it again in Galatians chapter 4 and verse 19, though he was speaking to believers, he was expressing the travail that was in his soul. He says: 'My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you'. There is a birth process, birth pangs that need to be experienced by the church and by the child of God, if people are going to be born again at home or on the mission field.

When we read the words of Paul, it's as if the heart of Christ dwelt in his own bosom. Let's face it, none of us in and of ourselves have any love that is worth anything in God's eyes. The love we are talking about here is agape love, it is a supernatural love, it's something that is a fruit of the Spirit. It is the heart of Christ in our bosom, as it was for Paul - and it will transform human relationships, it will pay the price that David and Rachel have done in their family to go and tell others, it will love the unlovable. It will enable us not to be indifferent any longer, for it is the heart of Christ!

Now how do you know someone else's heart? We celebrated 10 years married, but I know there's a lot of people here many more years married - but you know how it gets: you learn to second-guess one another, don't you? You grow to know the person, you know their heart - the only way to get the heart of Christ is to be intimate with Him, to spend time with Him. His burden becomes your burden. That's what Laodicea was asked to do, individuals in it that is, in Revelation 3 and verse 20: 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me' - that's communion. I speak reverently, but what the Lord is describing is you sitting down and - we would have a cup of tea with each other and share burdens from our hearts - and He wants to do that with us! The only way to get it is meeting with Him.

We need brokenness over lost souls, and the only way we can get it is communing with our brokenhearted Saviour. Winners of souls must first be weepers for souls. John Henry Jowett said: 'We can never heal needs we do not feel. Tearless hearts can never be heralds of the passion. We must pity if we would redeem. We must bleed if we would be ministers of the saving blood. The disciple's prayer must be stricken with much crying and many tears. The ministers of Calvary must supplicate in bloody sweat, and their intercession must often touch the point of agony. True intercession is a sacrifice, a bleeding sacrifice'.

Tiny tears have been a mark of the church for too long. Evangelicalism's aversion to the doctrine of eternal punishment, and its evangelistic consequences, has born within us an emotional detachment from the pain and peril of a lost world. George Bernard Shaw was no Christian, but he spoke the truth when he said: 'The worst sin towards our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them'. If true soul winning is to be revived, if missionary endeavour in our country is to be revived, we must rediscover true spiritual brokenness - that they that sow in tears will reap in joy - for tears are God's glue that makes the gospel stick, tears are the oil that lubricates the wheel of world evangelisation: tears at home for missionaries abroad, tears of preachers, tears of Christians for their lost souls in their families and friends.

Someone has said: 'Tears win victory. A cold, unfeeling, dry-eyed religion has no influence

over the souls of men. Either you don't really believe in hell, or you are culpably callous' - there's no in between. You either don't believe in this place, or your heart ought to be broken for those who are going there.

I benefited in my teenage years from a group called 'Young Life' - they used to be called 'The National Young Life Campaign' - they have a very distinct hymnbook. There's a lot of hymns, soul winning hymns, in it that I don't find in many other hymn books. One of them - you might know it, some of you - goes like this, and I'll leave you with these words:

'With a soul blood-bought and a heart aglow,  
Redeemed of the Lord and free,  
I ask as I pass down the busy street,  
Is it only a crowd I see?

Do I lift my eyes with a careless gaze,  
That pierces no deep-down woe?  
Have I naught to give to the teeming throng,  
Of the wealth of the love I know?

As I read in the Gospel story oft,  
Of the Christ who this earth once trod,  
I fancy I see His look on the crowd,  
That look of the Son of God.

He saw not a number in might or strength,  
But a shepherd-less flock distressed,  
And the sight of those wearied, fainting sheep  
Brought grief to His loving breast.

Dear Lord, I ask for the eyes that see  
Deep down to the world's sore need,  
I ask for a love that holds not back,  
But pours out itself indeed.

I want the passionate power of prayer  
That yearns for the great crowd's soul,  
I want to go 'mong the fainting sheep  
And tell them my Lord makes whole'.

And here's the chorus:

'Let me look on the crowd as my Saviour did,  
Till my eyes with tears grow dim,  
Let me look till I pity the wandering sheep,  
And love them for love of Him'.

Amen.

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## Evangelicalism's Evangelical Emergency - Chapter 3

# "Mis-gourded Zeal"

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*"Evangelicalism's preoccupation with lesser passions than reaching the lost"*

I want you to turn with me to the book of Jonah please, the book of Jonah - now don't be embarrassed to look up the contents at the front, some of these Old Testament Minor Prophets are hard to find, even if you're well-schooled in the scriptures! I remember recently having a visiting preacher to my previous church, and he asked us, I think, to turn to Jonah - and I had a Bible with me that was not my normal Bible, it was unfamiliar, and Jonah was contained on just one side of the page. Could I find Jonah? I was conscious of all the people behind watching me flick through - 'There's the Pastor, and he can't find Jonah!'. So don't worry, look up the contents, don't be embarrassed - it's a hard one to find at the best of times.

I want to speak to you this morning under the heading of 'Mis-gourded Zeal' - you've heard of the statement 'misguided zeal', but I have entitled this message 'Mis-gourded Zeal', and it will become clear why I have chosen that.

Verse 4 of chapter 4 of Jonah: *"Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry? So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city. And the LORD God prepared a gourd", or a plant, "and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?". Your margin, if you have a marginal reference Bible, renders it: 'Art thou greatly angry?'. "And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death. Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night" - or the margin says the gourd was 'a son of the night'. "And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?".*

On Friday night under the heading 'When Hell Freezes Over', we looked at Evangelicalism's aversion to the doctrine of eternal punishment, and the evangelistic consequences of that. We saw that we, as a church, generally speaking, must rediscover the doctrine of hell as eternal punishment - and we must allow that rediscovery to motivate us again to worldwide evangelisation. Last evening, under the heading 'Tiny Tears', we looked at Evangelicalism's emotional detachment from the pain and peril of the lost world. It's one thing to believe in hell intellectually, it's another thing to be moved emotionally by this great truth.

This morning we're looking at 'Mis-gourded Zeal', Evangelicalism's preoccupation with lesser passions than reaching lost people. The tragedy of the story of Jonah, I think, is often misunderstood. Jonah was a spiritual man, he was godly man, he was in touch with God - in

touch enough to know that God was asking him to do something. Many of us have problems regarding guidance from time to time, and we would love a red telephone to glory to know what to do - well, here was a man, though he may not have had that red telephone, he knew what God was telling him to do. He was walking with God.

Nineveh was the capital city of Israel's prime enemy, Assyria. God said: 'Jonah, I want you, on your soul and heart, to carry a burden for the people of Nineveh, for lost Ninevites' - who, incidentally, probably are modern-day Iraqis - 'I want you to carry a burden for the Iraqi people'. Now, many Bible commentators and preachers, understandably, have portrayed Jonah as, at times, a petty-minded bigot - a racist, an anti-Gentile, a prodigal prophet who just had scant regard for God's will in his life, and he turned his back on God. Some have even called him a coward! I want to say that I disagree with those interpretations of Jonah, because I think it underestimates and belittles the great dilemma that this prophet of God had. It's too simplistic to call him any of those names.

What was the dilemma? Well, Assyria was the rising power, the superpower of the day - and Jonah knew, because Jonah knew the word of God, that Assyria was destined to destroy Israel, or to attempt to do so at least. Twenty years before Jonah, the prophet Isaiah foretold that Assyria would spoil Israel for her sin. Add to that fact that the Assyrians were notable for their brutality - you could call them the Nazis of the day - he was afraid, terrified of what would happen to his own kinsmen and kinswomen of the nation of Israel if Assyria was to survive, and if they were to come down and invade Israel.

Now, we know that Jonah came from a border town, and he may well have witnessed the savagery of the Assyrians. No doubt Jonah initially, when he was guided of God, was overjoyed at the thought that God was wanting him to go and pronounce judgement, that God's wrath was going to be poured upon the Ninevites. But Jonah's dilemma came because of one fearful thought that he had: he knew God - here's a man who not only knew God's will, but he knew God - and Jonah's one fear was that God was merciful. If you look at verse 2 of chapter 4 you see this, he expresses it: 'He prayed unto the LORD', after the Lord spared the Ninevites and there was great awakening, 'and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying', was this not what I was afraid of, 'when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil'.

Jonah knew that if these Ninevites cried at the eleventh hour, God would have mercy on them. Now that's something we rejoice in today, isn't it, if we're saved? The long-suffering mercy of God - but you see here is the dilemma of the prophet, and you find it in the Old Testament Scriptures time and time again. The prophet was a man of the people and a man of God, he was a man for the nation and for Jehovah - and so there were times when the nation was going away from God, and God was calling the prophet in another direction, and the prophets felt torn in two - their heart was broken with the people and God going in two different directions. This is where Jonah is. This is a mighty man of God, and here Jonah - with a heart for the nation and a heart for God - chooses not to go with God, to let the Ninevites get what they deserved, and to actually take upon himself the judgement from God for being disobedient to His command.

Wrongly, of course, he chooses divine vengeance upon himself rather than talking to Iraqis about the Living God - and he decides to run away to a Spanish holiday resort, Tarshish on the coast of Spain, to get away from God. Now you know the story, I don't need to tell you about it - the great fish is sent by God to discipline and chasten, and that's what God does to



us when we are disobedient, even for understandable reasons. The great fish swallows him up, three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, and God spews him out of the fish, and God gives him a second chance and tells him to go and preach repentance to these people. He preaches with the hope, tongue in cheek, that God wouldn't grant them grace and mercy but would judge them in the end - and there is a citywide repentance, a great awakening! Jonah gets exceedingly angry, we read it in verse 1 of chapter 4: 'It displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry', and in verse 2 he more or less says, 'God, this is what I feared, that you were going to do this!'.

Well in verse 4 of chapter 4 we see that he hasn't lost out all hope that God would judge these folk. He sits down on the east side of the city and makes a booth, and sits under the shadow till he might see what would become of the city. He's still hoping that God would send fire and brimstone from heaven and judge them! While he is sitting there, we read in verses 6-11, God caused during the night a gourd, a plant, to grow up to shelter and shadow him. It says that Jonah was overjoyed at the fact that God had provided this thing for him. Then in the morning God sent a worm, and that worm ate away at that plant, and Jonah got so upset that God had given him this plant, and now God was taking it away. Jonah was more upset about the destruction of his precious gourd than he was about the peril of lost Ninevites.

God had to teach him this lesson, verse 10: 'Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?'.

Now my message, really, this morning is very simple, and that is: we as Christians, we as the church of Jesus Christ today in our generation, can have gourds. What am I talking about? Well, there can be things in our lives and in our churches that we cherish at the expense of the eternal destiny of lost souls. Things that can prevent us, hold us back from the great commission that Christ has given us. We can be more zealous about conserving and preserving, protecting those things, than we are about saving never-dying souls! Those things can even be God-given things, good things, just as the gourd was.

Now I want to give you six suggestions of the gourds that we might have within the 21st-century church, at least here in Ulster - things that are preventing us from reaching the lost, things that we esteem more highly, perhaps, and if we lost them we would be more upset than about millions of people going to hell.

Here's the first: comfort, the gourd of comfort. In Amos chapter 6 and verse 1, the prophet there said: 'Woe to them that are at ease in Zion'. One of the greatest problems the church has in the West today is the enemy of materialism and affluence. Now don't misunderstand me, I don't want us all to go into the bad old days when nobody had anything, no shoes on their feet or anything like that - I'm not talking about that. Every good and perfect gift comes down from God, but we need to be very careful that we don't start to worship God's gifts and not the Giver.

Affluence and materialism have become a great problem. Campbell Morgan, many years ago, said: 'Persecution is only Satan's second best weapon, his first is materialism' - that was in his day, it's a lot worse today! In the prophet Haggai's day the people were dillydallying over rebuilding the Temple, and that was God's commission on their lives. They didn't understand why their crops were starting to fail, and their businesses were going down the pan, and God

told them: 'Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of my house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house'. In other words they were materialistic, they were more concerned about their own houses, their own domestic lives, than the house of God.

Is that where we are today? It was the zeal of God's house that ate up the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe, prophetically speaking, we are in the period of Laodicea. One of the things that marked ancient Laodicea in Revelation chapter 3 was affluence and wealth. On a human level, in Asia Minor, there was no better place to live than Laodicea - you've heard what they said: 'We're rich, we're increased, we're blessed' - and yet in God's eyes they were poor, they had the poverty of riches. The enemy, Satan, took them by stealth through materialism.

Now some of you, I'm sure, were watching the Olympics over the summer, and you'll know from all the media coverage of it that China has been undergoing a consumerist, a capitalist revolution of some kind over the last number of years. Now that has caused a great problem to the church of Jesus Christ in China that has literally mushroomed during the years of severe persecution. The church is now having to grapple with what has affected us for years: materialism, affluence. Lee Tian, a famous Shanghai pastor, said these words: 'Consumerism makes you think you don't have to suffer to follow Jesus. It makes you think you can have lots of things and Christ as well. In reality you end up with lots of things, and most of the time you don't even realise Christ has gone'. A very well-known Christian Chinese leader said: 'It could be that consumerism is a more effective killer of Christianity than communism ever was'.

William MacDonald put it like this: 'Luxury living abounds on every hand. While souls are dying for want of the gospel, Christians are wearing crowns instead of bearing a cross. We become more emotionally stirred over sports, politics, television, than we do over Christ. There is little sense of spiritual need, there is little longing for true revival'. We would be - let's face it - we would be more concerned, I would be more concerned, if my home comforts were lost from me than I am about souls that are being lost every moment for all eternity. Am I wrong?

'Could a mariner sit idle if he heard the drowning cry?  
 Could a doctor sit in comfort and just let his patients die?  
 Could a fireman sit idle, let men burn and give no hand?  
 Can you sit at ease in Zion while the world around you is damned?'

Comfort is a great gourd. Another is self-preoccupation. What does that mean? Well, I suppose it's connected a little with comfort, we like to pamper ourselves, don't we? Amusing and entertaining ourselves - there's a very interesting book that has come out in recent years by a man called Neil Postman, who is a humanist professor and media theorist, and do you know what he entitled the book? Let me tell you what it's about first of all: it's about how television, essentially how television has affected all our lives. Do you know what he entitled the book? 'Amusing Ourselves to Death' - a humanist! Do you know how the word 'amuse' is made up? It's made up of really two words: 'a', which means 'no'; and 'muse' which means 'think'. You put the two together, and it means 'no thinking' - putting your brain out of gear. Now it wouldn't be so bad if amusement and entertainment was only harming ourselves, but Paul said: 'No man lives unto himself, or dies unto himself'. John Dunne said, 'No man is an island' - and it doesn't just affect us. 'Who cares if I spend my life amusing and entertaining myself, it's not doing anybody any harm!', if you are a Christian it is, for it is a gourd.

We can be fiddling while the world burns - you've heard that expression, haven't you? 'Fiddling while Rome burns', it means to occupy oneself in unimportant matters, and neglect priorities during a crisis. The origin of that statement, 'fiddling while Rome burns', is the story that Nero played his violin while Rome burned during the great fire of AD64 - now it might not be true, because apparently fiddles weren't invented then, but the sentiment is true - and it is certainly true of the church! The church is fiddling while the world burns! Our selfish preoccupations, we'd be more distressed and devastated to lose them than the fact that lost people are bound for hell.

Comfort, self-preoccupation, here's the third one: isolation. Now we believe in separation, the child of God is to be holy - in the world, but not of the world. But the fact of the matter is, our separation very quickly can become isolation, and we get out of touch with what's going on in the world. The Lord Jesus prayed: 'I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the world. Ye are the salt of the earth. Ye are the light of the world'. We're not to go into a wee corner in a holy huddle and become sheltered from what's going on in our world, because do you know what happens then? We become detached from the pain that sin is creating, and we get so sheltered that we don't know what's going on!

Often petty legalism can add to this. Now I don't want to go into this in too much detail, but you know that there are people around that whenever, particularly a young person, wants to do something for God, they have all the man-made laws and reasons why they shouldn't do it. Now that's a big problem in Ulster. I believe my Bible like anybody else, and I stick to it as close as I can, but we've got to get away from man-made rules - and that's often what they are. D. L. Moody was greatly used of God, but he had a hard time from some of the religious folk when God was using him. One of the criticisms he came under was that he had appeals at the end of gospel meetings. Do you know what Moody's answer to that was? 'I prefer the way I do it to the way you don't do it', isn't that brilliant? I prefer the way I do it to the way you don't do it. We need to start doing something, whatever the naysayers do and say, because people are lost! That's the issue, not the gourds of our isolation!

Comfort, self-preoccupation, isolation, and then fourthly: denominationalism. I'm holding nothing back this morning! You see, I believe that denominationalism comes from human pride. Now I'm not saying that organisations and denominations were not Spirit-born acts of God in the beginning, but division and sectarianism in the church of Jesus Christ was never ever in the mind of God - never. That men should separate themselves from one another in the one body that is Christ, and put a man's name, or an organisation's name, or a sacrament's name over their building and keep themselves to themselves, was never in God's intention. The only place in the Bible I find anything like that is in the book of 1 Corinthians, where Paul said: 'Some of you say, 'I am of Apollos, I am of Paul, I am of Cephas, I am of Christ', is Christ divided?'

It was never of God's intention, but human pride conceived of it - but here's the problem evangelistically speaking: many folks in their various sects and organisations (and people can do it in independent churches as well) they are so busy conserving their own corner with a partisan spirit of competition, that the energies they should be investing in winning souls is put into conserving the little corner of their own vineyard at the expense of others! That's what's happening: time, prayer, money, energy, sweat is going into keeping our flag flying, and the world is going to hell! Everybody is afraid to say it...

Mark 9:38 is a wonderful verse: 'John answered the Lord Jesus, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us'. Do you know what the disciples' gourd was? Their little group, their group of disciples - and boy they had reason, if anybody had, to be protective of it, because they were twelve who were commissioned by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. But here was a man outside their little camp, and God was using him - and in fact, if you look back at Mark 9:28 you find that the disciples, when they were faced with the demon-possessed boy, they haven't the power to cast out the demon. They said to the Lord in private, behind closed doors, 'Why could we not cast it out?' - and here was a man doing what they couldn't do, and they were criticising him because he wasn't one of their number!

Now that's a problem today, when we allow our group to become a gourd - do you know what happens? God goes and uses somebody else. I say, before it's too late, let all our gourds of denominationalism, and whatever 'isms', perish, and let Christ and His gospel alone arise and the one true church!

A fifth gourd is theological extremism. You see there are theological gourds - now I don't wish to be controversial for controversy's sake - but there is a strain of reformed theology and Calvinism that has all but paralysed evangelism in some quarters of the church today. Let me say that some of the godliest saints and some of the greatest evangelists were Calvinists, and I'm not entering into that debate just now - but let me say this categorically: there is something systemically wrong with any theology that mutes the call of the gospel, whether it's Calvinism or universalism. Young people are being instructed today that they can't tell a sinner that God loves them, they can't tell a soul that Christ died for them - and that can only stifle true evangelism.

In 1786 William Carey had laid on his heart the burden for world mission, and he laid it before a ministerial meeting in Nottingham in England. The eminent Doctor Ryland stood to his feet and said: 'Young man, sit down. When God is pleased to convert the heathen, He will do it without your help or mine'. That was a lie from the pit of hell if ever there was one, because God has ordained that He should do it with the preaching of foolish men. It'll not happen any other way. God can, God can have exceptions to that rule in miraculous ways, but the norm is that we preach the Gospel and seek to win souls. The Bible does not teach a falsified view of God's sovereignty that nullifies man's responsibility, both are in this book.

The tragedy is the effect upon gospel preaching today. T. DeWitt Talmadge, in a sermon, put it like this - not referring to Calvinism - but he said, this is many years ago, over a hundred years ago: 'The present attitude of things is like this: in a famine struck district, a table has been provided and it is loaded with food enough for all, the odours of the meat fill the air, everything is ready, the platters are full, the chalices are full, the baskets are full. Why not let the people in? The door is open, yes, but there is a cluster of wise men blocking up the door, discussing the contents of the caster standing mid-table. They are shaking their fists at each other. One says there is too much vinegar in the caster, one says there is too much sweet oil, another says there is not the proper proportion of red pepper. I say, Get out of the way and let the hungry people come in! The door is blocked up by the controversies of men with whole libraries on their backs, disputing as to what proportion of sweet oil and cayenne pepper should make up the creed. I cry 'Get out of the way and let the hungry world come in!' - that's what we need!

The gourd of comfort has become a problem, self-preoccupation, isolation, denominationalism, theological extremism, but sixthly and finally there is the political and

cultural gourd - and boy, we know about that in Ulster. For years the gospel - whether you like it, or I like it, or not - was wrapped up in a Union Jack, and God is exceedingly displeased with that I believe.

Hudson Taylor, I encourage you to read his biography, he went to China at a time when Britain was at war with China. Maybe you didn't know that. It was like a missionary going to Germany in World War II. If that wasn't stigma enough, when Taylor got out there he took the monumental decision of becoming a Chinaman to Chinamen to win Chinamen. He shaved his hair, that's the way they all wore it, and he kept the big long ponytail - the traditional ponytail that all Chinamen had. He dyed it black, his hair wasn't black, and he almost blinded himself in the process of doing it. He continually went about wearing Chinese dress, and even the Chinese now at this time believed that a British man's dignity was seen in the way he dressed differently - so Taylor's actions not only deeply shocked British people at home, but it was shocking to the Chinese. He had gone native, and as far as the British were concerned he had lost all credibility, he lost much of his support, and many went to the extent of labelling him a traitor to the British Empire! But he set all of his liberty aside, and became enslaved to their customs in order to win souls for Christ.

Is that not what Paul did? 'To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak. I am made all things to all men; that I might, by all means, save some'. Now listen: Jonah was a good man, let's not miss that. Don't you be all hard on Jonah, he was a good man, he was even a godly man - but even though he was good and godly, he didn't understand the mind of God toward lost people. He had the truth - and you can have the truth - and yet he wasn't in tune with what God was doing among the lost world.

Now the encouraging thing was that God used him anyway, but the tragedy is that - though God used him - Jonah didn't enjoy the blessing. Now please conceive this for just one moment as we close: here is a good man, a godly man, a righteous man, and he's in the middle of revival, and he's not enjoying it! Isn't that sad? You know that can happen. During the Lewis revivals - I'm sure you're very familiar with them - did you know that there were several ministers in Lewis who opposed Duncan Campbell in his preaching. It was chiefly to do with his understanding of the baptism of the Holy Spirit - I happen to think his terminology was wrong, though his experience was right - but surely the revival was welcome, and surely they needed more of the Holy Spirit, but these men couldn't get past their doctrinal gourds.

Peter Brandon, the evangelist, tells the story of how he went to do a mission in a Gospel Hall in England. He doesn't name any of these places, but he tells the story straight. He was staying there for a few days, and he had a few messages to do - as we would say - and he went into the greengrocers in the town. The woman remarked right away, she said: 'You don't belong here, you're a stranger, what are you doing here?'. He said: 'Oh, I've come to preach in the local church, the Gospel Hall'. As soon as he said 'Gospel Hall', she said: 'Well, I'm glad you're coming to the Gospel Hall and not to the Church of England down the road!'. He said: 'Oh, why is that?'. 'Well, there was a preacher came a few months ago, and he was there for a couple of week's mission - and he got everybody in the church to pray and fast for two weeks'. She said, 'Nobody came into my shop to buy any groceries or any drink! I nearly went out of business!'. She said: 'When the mission started, oh', she said, 'it was terrible! A friend of mine that I've known for years with a drink problem came in after one of the evening meetings and said, 'I know if I died tonight, I would end up in hell'. He was half demented!', she said. This is what she said: 'The presence of God, you could feel God everywhere!'. Peter Brandon told the story, not me. He said he went to the Gospel Hall for his meetings, and he says they were a group of lovely believers - and he remarked to them: 'I believe you've had a

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real visit of God in the area over the last while?' - and they didn't know anything about it.

'Pass me not, O gentle Saviour,  
Hear my humble cry:  
While on others Thou art calling,  
Do not pass me by'.

I say this morning, this is my message: let our gourds perish, not the lost. Whether it's comfort, self-preoccupation, isolation, denominationalism, theological extremism, political or cultural gourds - God does not need them, and maybe God needs to curse them as He did to Jonah's - even our good gourds! What is it that hinders us? Verse 11 says 120,000 children, probably, children alone were perishing in Nineveh - and that's what mattered to God. Do you know what Jonah is, the whole book? It's the Old Testament version of John 3:16: 'For God so loves the world'. As we come to the Lord's Table this morning, we all need to say:

'O teach me what it meaneth,  
That cross uplifted high,  
With One, the Man of Sorrows,  
Condemned to bleed and die!  
O teach me what it cost Thee  
To make a sinner whole;  
And teach me, Saviour, teach me  
The value of one soul!'

Amen.

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Transcribed by Andrew Watkins, Preach The Word - October 2008  
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## Appendix A

# "The Cry From Hell"

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I want to preach to you this morning on the subject "The Cry from Hell". We're turning to Luke chapter 16, Luke chapter 16 - the very well known passage that is often preached as a gospel message. The story about the rich man and Lazarus. I've been seeking the Lord in the last week, as is my custom, for the message that He wants me to bring today, and I feel, very much, this message burning upon my heart. Luke 16 and verse 19:

*"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores. And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."*

Let's bow in a moments prayer, as we seek God's blessing: Lord, we have been singing, and we make it our prayer, 'Jesus fill now with thy Spirit, hearts that full surrender know, that the streams of living water from our inner men may flow.' Lord, we pray, breathe Thy breath upon us, come and meet with us and speak by Thy Holy Spirit we implore Thee, oh our God. In Jesus name, Amen.

The two verses that I want to take as my text this morning are verse 27 and 28, "Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment".

The cry of hell. Not all of you this morning will hear that cry. Not all believers hear the cry from hell. We read within the word of God about faith. The word of God says that without faith it is impossible to please God. And often when we hear the word of God preached, preachers often talk about the 'eye of faith'. That simply is an expression to describe how we in our minds eye, trusting that the word of God is true, can see forward into time and talk and think about the things that are written within the word of God. How we from our hearts, and if I can say this, even imagine the things that will come to pass and even the things that are in the realms of glory, that we cannot see with the naked eye. We know the Lord Jesus Christ by the

eye of faith, don't we? "Him having not seen, yet we love", we have never seen the physical shape and body of the Lord, we have never touched him, yet we know Him, perhaps - or we ought to know Him - more intimately than those that we know best down here on earth.

There is the eye of faith. But what I want to talk to you this morning about is not the eye of faith but the 'ear of faith'. Not the ability to see things that are eternal, to see things that are biblical, that the Lord has spoken of, that have been, that are, that will be to come. But the ability to have your ear put to the ground of God's eternity and be able to hear the cry of hell.

Can you hear it? That ear of faith needs to be cultivated. It is cultivated through the word of God, reading the word of God we hear the cry from hell -- but if, my friend, you are not reading the word of God, you will never hear that cry! That ear of faith is cultivated through prayer and through meditation upon the word of God, through studying it, through thinking of the implications of what our blessed Lord Jesus Christ says, claims and teaches. The Lord Himself said in Matthew 11:15, "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear".

I know that not all of you will hear that cry this morning, but I pray that one or two will hear it. Maybe some of you hear it already -- do you hear what the cry from hell is? Christian friend, I believe that the battle today in Christianity, one of the great battles, is the battle for the heart. Solomon says in Proverbs 4:23, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life". Your heart is the seat of affections, it is the place where your feelings are felt, where the ear of faith beats, where it hears, where the drum is of that hearing. It is the place where the eyeball and pupil of the eye of faith can be seen -- there is the place where you feel your Christianity -- in the heart!

Can I ask you, do you feel your Christianity? Oh, I know that some of you, the heckles are up now - 'feeling your Christianity'? Now listen, I know that our Christian faith is not a belief that is feelings-based. But let me say this: that our Christianity ought not to be feeling-less. There is a grave difference, and God deliver us from a feeling-less Christianity that is cold, that is unmoved, that has no heart, that cannot be touched. If Christ is touched with the feelings of our infirmities, ought we not to be touched so with those of our brothers and sisters and those in humanity who are damned? Do you remember what the prophet said? Ezekiel 36:26, "A new heart also will I give you, a new spirit will I put within you. And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you a heart of flesh". And God the Spirit was changing and telling the Jews, 'Your religion is now to turn from being religion of the head, to a religion of the heart'. A religion of rules, to a religion of reality! Do you know that? Can you feel your Christianity my friend? Now I know when you get saved you base it upon fact -- Christ died for me, I have put my trust in Him and His word tells me that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. There is the Scriptures; then there is fact about what the Scriptures say; and then comes, and my friend must come, feeling. You've got to have it.

Do you feel for the lost? Do you feel, do you hear, do you see their torment? I know you've heard about the story of the young boy, Burns, as he was walking down the street in Scotland, hand-in-hand with his mother. And as she was looking in the shop window, you heard him say, "Mother, mother can't you hear the tramp, tramp of Christless feet into eternity?". He had the ear of faith. Do you have it? In Isaiah 66 and verse 8, Isaiah makes this account, "As soon as Zion travailed she brought forth her children". And only a heart that is soft, only a heart that is breaking, only a heart that is after God's own heart can hear the cry from hell.



What is it? Is it 'Lord, be merciful onto me a sinner'? Is the cry, 'Lord, forgive me'? Is the cry a sound of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth? Is it a cry of worldly, sinful men and women cursing God to His face in God's hell? Is it the intellectual, questioning the justice and the fairness of Almighty God for them to be in such a place? No! It's not. It is not the cry of repentance, it is not the cry of penitence, it is not any of these cries of torment, although some of them may be there. The cry that we hear before us today can be summed up in two words, in verse 27, verse 28: "Send!", "Send!, Lest!".

Read those verses again, "Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment". It's amazing isn't it? That the cry from hell is exactly the same as the cry from heaven. Isn't that amazing? "Send!", "Send!", "Whatever you do Abraham, if you can't bring that water to my tongue, if you can't send Lazarus across the great gap, I know the realities of hell too much to know that now I am damned and I cannot be saved, but whatever you do Abraham: send somebody home!".

God sends us. Do you remember what He told Isaiah? In Isaiah 6, when Isaiah was touched by his sinfulness, his inability before God, and God said, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?". The triune Godhead it is His clarion cry, "Send!". It is the cry of Jesus Christ to His disciples as He ascended to heaven to His Father again, He said, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost". But does it not stagger you, that it's the cry of the triune Godhead, it is the cry of the Lord Jesus Christ after His crucifixion for the sins of men and women of this world, but it is also the cry of the damned. "Send somebody home! Send someone to my five brothers, to my sister, my mother, my father, my child -- send them - so that they won't come to this place!".

Silence is often said to be a sin, when we do not tell others about the Lord Jesus Christ and when we're walking along life's pathway, whether in work -- whatever we do, outside, inside - - when we do not speak a word for Christ, when we have an opportunity, and that is so. But the sin of silence is not the only sin -- there is the sin of deafness. Deafness to the groans of a damned soul. Deafened by materialism, deafened by selfishness, deafened by worldliness, by neglect of the means of hearing, word and prayer and fellowship. But oh, however it has come, there is a deafness within our souls to that cry from hell, that we will go and send someone to save.

I wonder is there anyone here that wants to hear that cry. If you do there's three things that you're going to need. The first thing is: you will need compassion. That simply means that you will need to feel as the Saviour felt. See, when you look at the lost and you see them -- do you see them as the Saviour did, as sheep without a shepherd? Do you look at them like He did in Matthew 23:37, "Oh, Jerusalem", can you see the tears tripping Him? "Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee. How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and ye would not". Do you feel like that at times? Are you moved, are you touched by their waywardness, by their sinfulness, by the disease of sin that is in them destroying their life and destroying their eternity? Does it move you to tears? Does it move your heart?

We have compassion on a drowning child, don't we? And we can watch, and we can see it in trouble, and we can't do anything about it, perhaps. And we're watching, and as the head goes below the water time after time, and again, and then it ceases to come up and it goes down for good," and it drowns. And then we see at the funeral a little casket, small, dainty, pathetic. And we weep. But my friend, do we have compassion enough to hear the cry from

hell? Which is a greater cry! Which is a greater plea! "Send someone, whatever you do -- you have a chance, you're on Earth now, you have years before you to live -- will you do something!" That's what they are all saying now, on Lord's Day morning in hell, if you could put a megaphone in that's what you would hear! "Send, send!"

You need compassion, but secondly you need travail. We don't hear too much about this today. We find it in the person of Paul the Romans chapter 9, if you want to turn to it. Romans 9 and verse 2 and 3, where he says this, concerning his kinsmen according to the flesh within his own society of the nation of Israel. He says, "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart, for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh". Do you see what he is saying? 'I almost wish that I could be damned, that I could take their place, that I could go to hell and they could be set free, in order that they might be saved'. We need to travail like Jacob, until we prevail with God. We wrestle with Him, wrestle before Him, until we have a name like his name, that says that we are a prince, because we prevail with God and we prevail with men.

I read recently the biography of 'Praying Hyde'. Some of you may have heard this story before. But Praying Hyde was on the mission field and he stayed on the mission field until he could do no more, through health. He was sent back home and he was sent to the doctors. When he went into the doctors, the doctor examined him, sent him away, and then he came back to get the results of what was wrong with him. The doctor sat him down and he said, "Mr Hyde, do you have any pains in your heart?" He said "Yes I do". He says, "Mr Hyde, your heart has displaced itself. Your heart ought to be here, but it has moved over in the cavity of your chest, and that can only happen through one thing -- agony." He was called 'the apostle of prayer' and his prayers led to thousands being taken into the kingdom of God, into the church of Jesus Christ in the land of India. But he was a man that travailed. He was a man that lost his health for God.

Do you know what the cry is today? A 'save-yourself Christianity'. Whatever you do, don't harm yourself. Be careful. Watch that you don't overdo it. Don't become too fanatical. But my friend, if you've heard the voice from hell, you know what the Lord Jesus Christ meant when He said, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake will save it". Have you lost your life for Christ? You know this is the irony of the Scriptures, and we find it right throughout the word of God; that He turns the ideals and the philosophies of the world upside-down. If you run around in this life trying to get as much yourself, make as much for your name, and do everything down here; the reality is eternally speaking that you will lose everything. And if you lose everything down here, your reputation, your name, your bank balance, whatever God calls you to lose -- if you lose it, you'll save it up there!

It's still pains me that I don't feel the cry from hell enough. And I remember talking to an evangelist friend of mine and saying, "I know this verse, that them that weep, them that travail in tears shall bring their sheaves back with them in joy". I said to him, "How can I weep for souls? I don't want them to be crocodile tears, I don't want to work something up within my soul that's not real. How can I weep for souls? I don't want to be weeping for a dead loved one and pretend that I'm weeping for souls". Do you know what he said? "David, when Jesus Christ the Son of God weeps in you for souls, you will weep". When Jesus indwelling us, the hope of glory, the indwelling Christ begins to move, begins to weep for souls by His Spirit within us. That is the philosophy of prayer, isn't it? That He puts within us the desires of His heart, that He might bring them to a reality in our lives.

Can a child be born without pain? You know it's the same thing in the spiritual as in the natural, that's why Paul said in Galatians 4:19, "My children, my children of whom I travail in birth pangs again until Christ be formed in you". Do you have compassion? Do you travail?

The first message from hell was this: "Send!". The second message is this: "Lest!". And there are two things that I want to say with regard to this little word: "Lest". "Lest" speaks of consequences: "Lest they come to this place of torment". It speaks to me, as I read that verse, as a preacher of the Gospel, as a Christian, it speaks to me of Ezekiel 33 -- and you can turn to it now. Ezekiel 33 and verse 8, and you will see there God's prophet speaking of the watchman. The watchman was to stand on his turret, and he was to look across the horizon, and whenever he heard the tramp, tramp of the horses hooves, or he heard the trump of battle of the enemy, he was to shout a warning, he was to put his trumpet to his mouth and blow and warn them of the judgement that was to come. God told Ezekiel, "Listen my boy, if you don't warn them, I will require their blood at thy hand". Then you get these clever-clogs that come and say, "Oh, but that was the Old Testament, that's not applicable now". If you look to Paul in Acts chapter 18 and verse 6, he preached the Gospel and it says, "and when they opposed themselves and blasphemed", it says, "Paul shook his raiment and said unto them 'Your blood be upon your own heads, I am clean. From henceforth I will go onto the Gentiles'".

Paul believed it -- do we have blood upon our hands? Do we? Do we put the trumpet to our mouth and cry? Do we feel like Paul, "Woe is onto me if I preach not the Gospel"? I read an atheist once who said this, "You Christians -- you see if I believed what you believe about hell, I would crawl on my hands and my knees across broken glass to the four corners of the world to warn people of it". I read a poem once, that spoke of the consequences for you, if you don't tell people that they need Christ, it's called "My Friend":

"My friend I stand in the judgement now,  
And feel that you're to blame somehow.  
On earth I walked with you day by day,  
And never did you point the way.

You knew the Lord of truth and glory,  
But never did you tell the story.  
My knowledge then was very dim,  
You could have led me safe to Him.

Though we lived together on this earth,  
You never told of the second birth.  
And now I stand this day, condemned,  
Because you failed to mention Him.

You taught me many things, it's true,  
I called you 'friend' and trusted you.  
But I've learned now that it's too late,  
You could have kept me from this fate.

We walked by day and talked by night,  
And yet you showed me not the light.  
You let me live, and love, and die,  
And knew I'd never live on high.

Yes, I called you 'friend' in life,  
And trusted you through joy and strife.  
And yet on coming to the end,  
I cannot now call you 'my friend'."

There are consequences for us and there are consequences for them. Can you hear their cry my friend, this morning, can you hear it? "Send someone, please send someone! Lest my loved ones, my children, my countrymen -- Lest they come onto this torment!". You know, this is the cry of God's heart. And if I am to be faithful to God's word, I will preach this message until you feel that cry in your bosom. Did you know when you tune a stringed instrument, two stringed instruments - one's in tune and you tune the other to it. And you pluck a certain note on that stringed instrument, without touching the other it will resound and echo the same note in unison. If you hear the cry of hell in your heart today, you will hear it because it's in the heart of God.

I want to finish today, by reading an account from Amy Carmichael, she was a missionary in India. She writes this of her experience one night, and I'm quoting it. In a village of India, Amy Wilson Carmichael wrote:

"I could not go asleep. So I lay awake and looked; and I saw, as it seemed, this: that I stood on a grassy sward and at my feet a precipice broke sheer down into infinite space. Back I drew dizzy at the depth. Then I saw people moving single file along the grass. They were making for the edge. There was a woman with a baby in her arms and another little child holding onto her dress, and she was on the very verge. Then I saw that she was blind. She lifted her foot for the next step - it trod air. Oh, the cry as they went over!

Then I saw more streams of people from all parts. They were blind, stone-blind; all made straight for the precipice edge. There were shrieks as they suddenly knew themselves falling, and a tossing up of helpless arms, clutching at empty air. Then I saw that along the edge there were sentries set at intervals. But the intervals were far too great; they were wide, there were unguarded gaps between. And over these gaps the people fell in their blindness, quite unwarned, and the gulf yawned like the mouth of hell.

Then I saw, like a little picture of peace, a group of people under some trees, with their back to the gulf. They were making daisy-chains. There was another group. It was made up of people whose great desire was to get more sentries; but they found that very few wanted to go.

Once a girl stood alone in her place, waving the people back; but her mother and other relatives called, and reminded her that her furlough was due. Being tired and needing a change she had to go and rest for a while; but no one was sent to guard her gap, and over and over the people fell, like a waterfall of souls.

Once a child caught a tuft of grass that grew on the very brink of the gulf; it clung convulsively and it called, but nobody seemed to hear. Then the roots of grass gave way, and with a cry the child went over. And the girl who longed to be back in the gap thought she heard the little one cry and she sprang up and wanted to go, at which they reproved her; then they sang a hymn. Then through the hymn, the pain of a million broken hearts rung out in one full drop, one sob. It was the Cry of Blood."

"Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment."

Our Father, we thank Thee that we know that Thy heart, is a missionary heart. For the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Lord may our hearts-strings resound in sweet melody to Thy heart, that we may go and seek the lost, rescue the perishing, care for the dying -- and tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save. Lord, do business with our hearts today and speak as we cease to speak. And take us to our homes with Thy blessing now, in Jesus name, Amen.

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Transcribed by Andrew Watkins, Preach The Word - April 2000  
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## Appendix B

# "O Sleeper Arise!"

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**T**urn with me if you would to Jonah chapter 1, and our text this morning is verse 6, the verse that we finished on. You're all, I'm sure, most of you, familiar with the story of Jonah - it reaches the point where the storm is breaking up the boat, and the crew is calling upon their pagan gods to save them. Then in verse 6: *"The shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not"*.

The thought that is in my mind this morning is: does the lost world not have the right to ask the same question of all of us as Christians today - 'What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not'. I just wonder would the shipmaster's mud of accusation stick to the church of Jesus Christ in some quarters today? When we consider for a moment that out of all those who were sailing on the ship, Jonah ought to have been the one who was most awake - yet not only was he sleeping, but the Bible says that he was fast asleep. The howling winds, treacherous breakers, and screaming sailors didn't arouse him out of his blissful oblivious sleep to their awful reality.

Now if we see many things in the prophecy of Jonah, which we do, if we were to study the four chapters of this book, one thing that we can clearly see for sure - even only reading the first six verses of the first chapter - is the deadly effects of sin upon the life of the believer. In fact, there is no anaesthetic that can knock you out like sin. Jonah's sin was disobedience, that was his problem, and we read in verse 6 and see that that sin made him numb to the present need of those who were around him. It is a question worth pondering, whether Jonah ever slept as soundly as when he was on the boat to Tarshish. What I mean by that is: it's reasonably easy to stay awake spiritually when you're surrounded by God's people doing all the right things, but it's hard to resist slumbering and the deadening influences of the world around you when you exist in a purely secular realm.

I can't say this for Jonah, but I'm sure of it for the Western world today: wealth is a pillow which has cradled many of us into a spiritual doze. The materialistic comfort in which most of us live today in the West, the general affluence and lack of personal need in our own home and domestic situations, has turned, I believe, much of the Western church into a sleeping giant. We are fast asleep when we consider the world's need around us. It's no surprise that when we pamper the flesh, the body will fall asleep. You cannot be soft on the flesh and expect your spirit to be sharp. Of course we cannot ignore the fact that it's not just the church's fault, or believer's faults, but Satan has his own desire behind all of this - trying to hypnotise the church to the need that there is around in our world. Satan is directing behind the scenes, and he knows that a Christian unconsciously will not thrive, if he is asleep to the awful need of the world. If he can lull God's watchmen asleep, he will take the city with ease.

The fact of the matter is that the devil cannot send us to hell, we are saved for time and for eternity, he cannot have that - however, we are as good as dead if he can get us to fall fast asleep concerning the need of those around us. There can come a time when we are so numbed by the standards of the system around us, tempted by the comfort offered to the flesh and tantalised, perhaps, by the gifts that the devil would offer to us, that we find

ourselves in a position of likewise being rebuked by the shipmaster of this world who, although he himself does not know God, knows better than we do the slumber that we have slipped into! He says to us: 'What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not'.

Let me leave three short thoughts with you concerning this verse, and the call of the world to all of us in the church, those especially who may be asleep. The first is this: we are generally asleep to the great need of the lost - we are generally asleep to the great need of the lost. Of course, the story goes that Jonah himself was asleep when all other hands were on deck - verse 5: 'Every man cried unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship to lighten it. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep'. When every man's hands were on deck, Jonah was asleep. When every other man was doing his best to lighten the ship, the one who was the very one who could solve the problem was asleep!

How like the church that is at times, when we consider those in the world who are unregenerate men, who perhaps have more compassion on the physical needs of the masses than we as believers in Jesus Christ have upon the spiritual needs of the souls that are around us who are lost and starving spiritually and on their way to hell. I thought about it for a moment this week: there are charities, volunteers, government agencies, who know nothing about the love of God in Christ, know nothing about the great eternity and hope of heaven, the horrors of hell - they don't even believe that there is an eternal soul living within the breast of a man, yet they would do more for a dying dog than some Christians would for those who are lost!

How is it that we are so careless about the souls of men and women? If, after the service, a young husband came running in through the back door crying: 'Fire! Fire!', and his house with his wife and child in it, consuming in the flames, would we not all to a man roll up our sleeves, grab anything that would hold water, and run to the need? If a starving family came to your door in real need, would you not give them so much as a sandwich or a glass of water or milk to quench their thirst? You mightn't be able to support them for a lifetime, but you would do what you could at that particular moment - what your hand found to do, you would do it with all your might, because you realise the need that there is! But why is it that many of us do not do this spiritually when we know the spiritual realities: we know of the love of God, we know of the great eternity, a hope of heaven and the horrors of hell, yet at times we sit ignorant to it all in our own selfish existence!

The people around us are not crying for physical water to quench their thirst, they may not even know that they need spiritual water - but the fact of the matter is that we are the ones that have that water, who have that bread of life, and who do not give it to them! C. H. Spurgeon said: 'O could you once see with your eyes a soul sinking into hell; it were such a spectacle that you would work night and day, and count your life too short and your hours too few, for the plucking of brands from the burning'. I wonder have you ever seen a drowning man? Have you ever seen a child caught in a house that was burning down? Have you seen a child mown down on the road? Have you ever seen a man shot dead on the street? I dare to say that if you've seen any of those things, you'll never ever forget them! Oh that we could just see, for one moment, a lost soul, and imagine what it is to stand being exposed to the wrath of Almighty God, to have the sweat of hell break upon your brow, to hear from the lips of Eternal Love: 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire'.

Oh, that we could hear their cries just now, just at this moment in hell, the multitudes that fall into a bottomless pit - would it not awaken us? Would it not waken us out of any slumber that we may be in, whether it is the slumber of disobedience or any particular sin? Men are perishing, children are dying, hell is filling, yet you are sleeping! And I am sleeping. Let's put some figures to it to make it real for all of us, if it is not real already. The world population is impossible to equate, but yet scholars tell us that it comes to roughly today 6.204 billion people. Among those 6.204 billion people, there are 140,000 missionaries. 64,000 of those missionaries come from the United States. Foreign missions funds are distributed in this manner, and listen carefully: 87% goes for work among those who are already Christian countries, so-called, who have received the gospel - 87 percent! 12 percent of funds go for work among already evangelised but non-Christian nations, and 1 percent of the funds for missionary relief goes to work among still unevangelised people, unreached people groups. You can break it down even further to say that 74 percent of missionary funds and personnel goes among nominal Christians, Christian countries so-called; 8 percent among tribal areas; 6 percent among Muslims; 4 percent among nonreligious/atheists; 3 percent among Buddhists; 2 percent among Hindus; 2 percent among Chinese folk religions; and 1 percent among Jewish people.

I ask you: has the great commission not been turned on its head? The Lord Jesus Christ, as He was leaving His disciples and ascending to heaven in Acts chapter 1 and verse 8, said: 'But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth' - yet there is only 1 percent of missionary resources spent on the Jewish people. Staggering, isn't it? We could go on, and the facts of the matter would show us that the church at large in the West is generally asleep to the great need of those who are lost!

The second off-shot of that is that we have not yet arisen to meet the need. The shipmaster says: 'What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise' - get up! Get doing! Have we arisen to meet the need, not only in the world, but in the district that God has placed us? Hudson Taylor, the great pioneer missionary to China, said these words - and I believe he was right - he was home on furlough and he was sharing a new revelation he believed that God had given to his heart concerning the great commission, it was simply this: that we should not here at home be seeking God as to whether His will is that we should go, but we should be seeking God as to whether His will is that we should stay! Because to stay is the exception, because Christ has told us all to go into all the world and preach the gospel! As one Christian singer put it: 'Jesus commands us to go, but we turn the other way'. Jesus said, in Matthew chapter 9 and verse 37, to his disciples: 'The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few' - there is so much work to be done! So many souls to be won! And the question that the shipmaster of the world asks us is: 'What are we doing?!'.

I could only get American statistics of those involved in missions who are senders, and there are a lot of people who should be involved in missions who are not, but of those who are involved: 98 percent are senders, and 2 percent go! It seems a little imbalanced, doesn't it? We often say, we qualify it, and have a little loophole and get out clause for we Christians who are fast asleep, and say: 'Well, you may not be able to go, but you can give and you can pray'. Isn't that what we say? But the question is: why can't you go? What is stopping you going? Some of you are retired, some of you are students and have the opportunity of a year out, some of you are in your middle-age and you're wondering what your existence here is all about - and I'll tell you, no-one but no-one at the judgment seat of Christ will regret laying down their lives that others should hear the gospel. The world cries in spirit to us: 'Arise!'.



I know that all cannot go, but I know that there's a lot can go and won't go. You don't have to go to darkest Africa, there is a district around us here that really needs the gospel of Jesus Christ. I was giving out tracts with some of the men at the 1st of July parade a couple of weeks ago. We were standing in an Open Air just after the tract distribution, and we watched the parade go by, and what an awful spectacle of sin and false religion it was. Hugh Martin, one of our oversight, turned to me and said: 'You know, this is our community' - this is our community. And I can honestly say, out of the majority of those folk, I didn't recognise one face because we are not touching them! I praise those who are involved in Open Air work, those who are involved - quite few in number - in door-to-door work, and I do not underestimate what you do, and God has blessed it recently, and thank you so much for all that effort. But for the majority, the large number of us, we are not touching those who need the gospel - we hardly even meet them! We are fast asleep in the bottom of our boats, blissfully oblivious to their pain, to their crying, to their torment!

What are we going to do for those who will move into the district around us? What are we doing now? How will we reach them? The Bible clearly teaches, as far as I can understand, in the New Testament that the work of atonement has already been done at Calvary - and that work has to be finished in the sense of the ingathering of souls. Although the atoning work is done, the ingathering work is not done, and it is our job to do it! Christ has provided the way, the salvation, the life, but we are to distribute it among the people. It is through us that the Holy Spirit will save men, we are His ordained method to go and preach the gospel. Preachers, evangelists, teachers, missionaries, Sunday School teachers, door-to-door visitors, children's workers, you could go on and on and on again and again - but if the medicine of the gospel is ready and made, it must be taken to those who need it! What is wrong if we, somehow, in some way, are unwilling to distribute it among those who are desperate and dying?

Now the conclusion of that is very simple: there should be none in any local church doing nothing. How could you possibly do nothing in the light of such need? There is nothing that will drag the work into the quagmire of inertia as much as hangers-on, who drain church energies and resources when there are dying souls around our doors that need Christ! It's time that we woke up, every one of us, to the great need - to hear them cry: 'Awake! Arise O sleeper, call upon thy God! Help us!'

I read recently a sermon by T. Dwight Talmadge, who was said to be the American Spurgeon a couple of centuries ago now, and this sermon was on the text of Luke chapter 6 verse 17. It says of Jesus: 'He came down with them and stood in the plain'. He was using this as an analogy of how we need to come down off our high-brow mountains, and reach the people where they are on the plain. This is a few of the paragraphs from that sermon that I want you to listen to very carefully, he says: 'Is there not some way of bringing the church down out of the mountain of controversy and conventionalism, and to put it on the plain where Christ stands? The present attitude of things is like this: in a famine struck district, a table has been provided and it is loaded with food enough for all, the odours of the meat fill the air, everything is ready, the platters are full, the chalices are full, the baskets of fruit are full. Why not let the people in? The door is open, yes, but there is a cluster of wise men blocking off the door, discussing the contents of the caster standing mid-table. They are shaking their fists at each other. One says there is too much vinegar in the caster, and one says there is too much sweet oil, another says there is not the proper proportion of red pepper - and I say' - 200 years ago - 'Get out of the way and let the hungry people in! But the door is blocked up by controversies and men with whole libraries on their backs, disputing as to what proportion of

sweet oil and pepper should make up the creed. I cry 'Get out of the way and let the hungry world come in!'".

Now listen, I'm standing here and I don't have all the answers. People are harder today, it would seem, than they have ever been - especially in this district. I don't know, don't come and ask me how to reach them, what we can do, I don't know what to do - but I'm sure that we need to start thinking, and after we start thinking we need to start doing - 'doing' being the imperative, because there are souls that are dying!

D. L. Moody was criticised in his day for his altar calls. One man came to him after the meeting and said: 'This is terrible, getting people to raise their hand and so on, it causes false professions'. D. L. Moody turned to him and said: 'Well, sir, I prefer the way I do it to the way you don't do it'. Wasn't that a good answer? Oh, we can criticise, can't we? But what are we doing to arise, to meet the need of those around? One thing we can be doing is in this text, and I don't have any answers really today, but what I have is found in this verse: 'What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not'. We need to sufficiently call upon our God to have mercy on us and those around us!

The tragedy of verse 5 was that every man cried to his own god, yet Jonah was the only one who had the true and living God yet he was silent in prayer - there wasn't a prayer uttering from the lips of God's prophet. Where are our prayers for the lost? Now listen, I'm not talking about prayers for the sick saints who are going to glory, I'm not talking about even our loved ones who are unsaved that mean so much to us, but what about the millions who are unknown to us in this world, who have never heard the name of Christ - who, even if we did know them, would be totally and utterly unlovable! What about their souls?

I know it's hard to pray for some folk, it's hard to pray for some places, some countries, even our own - but I just wonder are there any Abrahams left who will intercede for Sodom. Could there have been a more iniquitous city, and yet in Genesis 18 Sodom, the stench that was ascending unto God, God was going to come down and see what was going on among them and then judge the place, but there was a man of God on his knees pleading for Sodom. I know he was pleading for the righteous among Sodom, but yet he saved Sodom by his intercession. Jesus also said to His disciples: 'It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves'. I don't know what we can do, I have a few ideas, but I don't know what we can do at times to reach those who are lost in our world - but let's please do one thing, each one of us today make a covenant before God, and as a church, to get back to prayer. To arise and call upon our God, to arouse ourselves and rise to the work, there's no greater work that will send us out and send others out than the work of prayer. Jesus Himself said to His disciples: 'The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth labourers into His harvest field'. At least let us be asking the Lord: 'Lord, what can we do? Lead us, show us, guide us!'.

Can we all examine our hearts today, and ask ourselves: have we lost something? Whatever that thing may be, one thing I am sure of in my own heart and others is that we have somewhere along the way lost consciousness of the need of those who are lost. We've got so caught up in ourselves that we cannot see the need. Where and how we lost it, I don't know, but I'll tell you one thing: we need to get it back. If we are going to serve this generation well, and indeed survive to the next one, we need to hear the cry of those who are lost: 'Arise, call upon thy God'.

I'm going to finish by quoting an historian who was an historian of the early church, and he wrote expressing the common opinion of the Roman pagans concerning the followers of Jesus. Now this is in the early church, listen very carefully to their description of the situation that they saw among those who were newly saved in an environment of persecution and martyrdom. He writes: 'They were intensely propagandist. While ever unseen, they were at work. Every member was a missionary of the sect and lived mainly to propagate a doctrine for which they were ever ready to die. Thus the infection spread by a thousand unsuspecting channels, like a contagion propagated in the air it could penetrate, as it seemed, anywhere and everywhere. The meek and gentle slave that tends your children or attends you at table may be a Christian. The favourite daughter of your house who has endeared herself to you by a tenderness and grace peculiarly her own, and which seems to you as strange as it is captivating, turns out to be a Christian. The Captain of the guards, the legislator in the Senate house, may be a Christian'. Here he asks this question: 'In these circumstances, who or what is safe? What power can defend the laws and majesty of Rome and the peace of domestic life against an enemy like this?'

A propagandist church, the church that is like an infection in its district and community in such an imperial city as Rome - a gospel that, even though the people had to hide for their lives, was like a contagion propagating the air; that was penetrating and smiting all those around in households, even right up to the very Palace of the Caesar! He asks rightly: in these circumstances who is safe? Who is safe from the gospel today? It seems nearly everybody! What power can defend the laws and majesty of Rome and the peace of domestic life against an enemy like this? Oh that we had such a bad reputation in our world today! But our reputation, perhaps, is bad because the world can justifiably say to us: 'What meanest thou O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not'.

Let us bow our heads: Our Father in heaven forgive us, forgive us for not hearing the need, for not feeling the pain, for being so caught up with ourselves that at times we are totally oblivious - even, God forgive us, even proud, looking down upon those who are not like us. But yet, Father, they need Christ - there may even be one in this place who needs Christ. Father, help us to do more to reach them, and we pray for guidance to know what to do in this age where people at times seem so unreachable, but yet perhaps the unreachableness is because of our unwillingness to reach out and touch them. Lord, we pray for every head bowed, maybe You're calling someone to the mission field; maybe You're calling someone out of inertia, out of a rut; maybe you're rekindling a flame in their heart that had gone out weeks, months, years ago. Lord, we pray that none of us would be like that crowd of old men standing at the door, preventing folk coming in to get the beautiful dish of the gospel that is prepared for all. Lord, if there are things in our hearts, on our minds, that have made us intransigent, that have brought us into the realm of disobedience and sin; Lord, let us not be like Jonah. O, our Father, help us, melt us, mould us, make us after Your will. Give us a burden, and help us, O God, to awake out of any sleep that we may be in - to arise, arouse ourselves, and first and foremost to call upon our God that no more should perish because of our inertia. Hear us, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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 Transcribed by Andrew Watkins, Preach The Word - August 2003  
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## Appendix C

# **"The Compelling Commission"**

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**I** have brought this message to you, I believe the Lord is bringing this message to you, today from Luke chapter 14. We'll take time to read most of the chapter from verse 1: *"And it came to pass, as the Lord Jesus went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched him. And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy. And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go; And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day? And they could not answer him again to these things. And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper"*.

We want to really concentrate primarily on the parable that was the final section that we read this morning, from verse 15 right through to verse 24. But the other verses right throughout the reading of this chapter, particularly at the beginning, are the context in which we find this parable and are quite poignant to the meaning behind the parable. The title of the message this morning is 'The Commission to Compel', the commission to compel, or if you like 'The Compelling Commission'.

In verses 1 to 6 you find the Lord Jesus healing a man on the Sabbath day, and the Pharisees have a problem with it, because the Pharisees opposed the helping of the poor during the Sabbath. We see in the Lord Jesus the example of helping the afflicted amidst opposition of the religionists. It didn't matter that the religious people opposed what the Lord Jesus was doing in healing this man, He went ahead and did it because it was right. This was characteristic of the Pharisees, to oppose an action such as this on one little point of the law; because often, right throughout the Gospels, we find them opposing not so much the law of God but the breaking of their human convention - even at the expense of lost souls. The Lord on many occasions rebuked them, and told them that by their commandments, the commandments of men that they had added to the commandments of God, they made the word of God and particularly the Spirit behind the word of God of no effect - and here you have an example of it here. They oppose the breaking of human convention at the expense of lost souls.

Then as we move on to verses 7 to 11, we observe the Pharisees themselves jostling for position. You find this right throughout the Gospels, that the Pharisees and religionists often jostle for position in the synagogue and in their particular party. To them, we see, position was more important than the poor. So first of all they opposed the breaking of human convention at the expense of lost souls; and also to them position was more important than the poor.

Then we look in verses 12 through to 14, and the Pharisees only invited their friends to their homes - people whom they were like, people who they were comfortable with. But the Lord Jesus exhorts them not to do this, not to invite those who you would expect to be invited to your home, but invite those who you can't get any reciprocation from, invite those who cannot invite you back. Do to others, others who cannot do back to you.

As I was reading through this passage of Scripture I really felt convicted, because there are so many times that I myself, and I feel we as the Evangelical church here in the North, we oppose the breaking of human convention - man's written or unwritten rules - at the expense of souls that are lost. There's a catchphrase going about in evangelicalism today and I think it's very true, it's called the 'comfort zone'. We all live within our comfort zones, don't we? We exist even as Christians comfortably, and in a way that we feel not threatened, and we don't really put ourselves out to any extent - especially to see other people won to the Lord Jesus Christ. Immediately someone comes along and pushes us a little bit out of our comfort zone, we get uncomfortable and we react against it.

As I looked at verses 7 to 11 and observed these Pharisees jostling for position, I was convicted about evangelical reputation. What I'm talking about is this: worrying more about what other churches, other Christians, preachers, think about us, rather than lost souls who are going to hell and need Christ. Then in verses 12 to 14 I saw the principle of grace outlined by our Lord Jesus, not the principle of law that the Pharisees abided to. The principle of law says that 'if you do this, I will do this for you', 'if you invite me to your home I'll invite you back', or 'if I invite you to my home, I expect to be invited back to your home'; but the principle of grace that the Lord is outlining here is: invite people to your home who can't invite you back to theirs, because they don't have one; who can't invite you back to a meal because they can't put a meal on; they have no money, they're the poor, they are the blind, they're the helpless, the outcasts of society. They have no talents to impart to you, they have no education to offer, they have no money to donate - invite them, Jesus says.

Really we could sum up all these verses, and these three particular incidents - verses 1 to 6; 7 to 11; and 12 to 14 - in an overarching theme right throughout it all, it's simply this: how often the established religion in Jesus' day and even in our day ostracises itself from those who really need help. Have you got it? How often those who say they know God are at greater than arms length from those who need God! I wonder if a police photo fit was taken upon these descriptions that we have of the Pharisees today, I'm only asking the question: would we find that our particular modern version of evangelicalism is the picture that would emerge? In our attitudes and in our actions, could it be that we have the face of modern day Pharisaism? That we spend our time so much bickering, and talking, and fighting over little insignificant rules of men and issues of taste, that we don't realise that there are poor people falling into the pit who need our help! Too busy looking over our shoulder about what this brother will think, about what this denomination, this church, this movement thinks of us - our evangelical reputation - that we forget about our Lord Jesus Christ who deliberately made Himself of no reputation to win the lost.

My friends, I want to take you to this parable finally, to really analyse this theme that we have before us in verses 15 to 24. The Lord Jesus tells of a host who invites all his friends to a great supper. You know the great supper, and we don't want to spend too much time on the parable itself but apply it more today, the great supper speaks of the gospel, doesn't it? What a great supper the Gospel is! We know from other stories that there is enough in the Father's house and to spare for everyone, it's a great meal! It's a big dinner, if you like, it's succulent - and as someone has said before: it's a feast, it's not a funeral. It's something to enjoy, it's something to be satisfied in, something to fill the deepest longing of our heart. For tired souls who come in after a day's toiling in the field, it's a great supper, something that you're fed with, it's something where you replace your energies and the fuels that you have used. For those who are tired through life's sinfulness and tragedies and burdens, the Lord Jesus says in the Gospel: 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'. It is a great supper for the tired, it's a great supper for those who are thirsting, those who are hungry. You remember the words of our Lord in John 6: 'I am the bread of life, he that cometh unto me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst'.

It's a great supper for the tired, for the thirsting, for the hungry - and the greatness of the supper can also be seen, probably primarily seen, in the fact that everything is ready. The Master, the host has made it all, it's all finished - and all that has to be done is for men and women and boys and girls to come and eat and to enjoy. That's the gospel, isn't it? Paul said: 'Now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation', because of the cross the Lord Jesus finished the work, and He testified it Himself, 'It is finished' - there's nothing more to do. All we are to do is to come and to believe in the Gospel, and to enjoy all of it. The blood to cleanse has been shed, the Spirit to sanctify and to emancipate from sin has been given at Pentecost, and all the Lord does now is welcome us all to come, to eat, and to live. He says: 'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out'. Prophetically He says in the book of Isaiah 55 verse 1: 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price'. It's all prepared, it's all ready, the only thing that has to be done is for the invitation to be given for sinners to come and to eat and live!

Now it is in the light of this great supper of the Gospel that we have as believers and as the church of Jesus Christ that I want to bring this warning parable of the Lord Jesus to us, for us to beware that we are not wearing the clothes of Pharisaism when we come to spreading the Gospel. I know, and let's get this out of the way first, that there is a dispensational application to this passage, and I would say that it is the primary application of it - that the Pharisee's

friends that the Lord is speaking about is the religious establishment of Judaism of the day, and specifically when He talks about bringing in the halt, the blind, and the maimed, He is talking about bringing in the Gentile heathen who have been ostracised from the commonwealth of God and all the promises of the Gospel hitherto. That's what it's talking about, but you know sometimes I feel that some of you, you get so taken up with the dispensational application that you fail to see that there is a practical, personal, present application in the passage. In other words, there's a spiritual principle behind this that we can apply to our own lives today.

I've put it simply into three statements that I have taken literally straight out of this passage. The first is this: the people, often, that we relate to will not come to Christ. I'd like you to write these down if you have a pen and paper, the people that we often relate to will not come to Christ. Now what do I mean? Well, specifically in this context we're talking about the Jews. Remember that the Lord Jesus is in a Pharisee's home, and he only invited his friends, he didn't invite the poor, the blind, the halt, and the lame along to his home - he only invited those who he knew, those who he related to. They were the people that you would have expected to be in a Pharisee's house at this time: they were religious. But you know, as we go into the Lord's parable, the description of these people are given in three examples. There's the man who said: 'I've bought a field and I can't come to your great supper'. Then there's the man who said: 'Well, I've bought some oxen and I've got to go and try them out'. And then there is the other man who said: 'Well, I've got married and I cannot come'.

When you narrow it down, these people aren't just religious, but they are wealthy enough to buy land, wealthy enough to buy five yoke of oxen, and they are respectably married. They are the 'hoy-polloy' if you like, they're preoccupied with business, with wealth, with family and relationship commitments that they have. We could narrow it down: they are proud, they are business minded, they're occupied with pleasure. If we were to take a common denominator out of these people, we would say they felt that they had no apparent need of this supper. If they really felt they needed the supper, they would have gone to the supper - but they don't need it! Friends, I hope you would agree with me today that the Western world, and particularly Ulster, the affluence that we have in this part of the world, the wealth that people have, the luxury, they really feel in the depths of their soul that, humanly speaking in this life, they have no need of the Gospel. They don't need God to provide bread for their table, they can provide bread for their table themselves. They don't need God to pull them out of a particular hole, they can go and get some benefits to do that, or they can work by the sweat of their brow and get it themselves. We live in an atmosphere of materialism, and this is why I'm asking the question: could this be the reason why the people we often relate to are not coming to Christ? Because we relate as Christians more, it seems, in the modern day to the middle and upper classes than the Christians of previous generations did to the working classes.

You only have to look at where our church is situated today, and the type of people that come along to our church, and we're trying to share the Gospel with people around this church, and we feel like Isaiah in chapter 53 verse 1: 'Who has believed a report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?'. It seems that no-one around here will listen to our Gospel. Now I'm not saying that we don't take the Gospel to people who we relate to, perhaps they are the primary ones - to the Jew first and then to the Gentile and to the Greek - we have to go and ask those people, but if we keep going and asking and relating to them and witnessing to them and they do not come, does that mean that we forget about all those people who we don't relate to and who are more likely, the Lord Jesus says, to come to the great supper? For these people are themselves predisposed to the invitation, the circumstances in their life have

been so difficult that they are almost driven to God, if someone would just come along and invite them to this great supper.

In verse 21 we see that God is angry with those who are well off, those who are religious, those who have need of nothing and do not see or want God or the need of Him - God says that He is angry. He was angry with the Jews, and that's why in the book of Hebrews 3 verse 11 He swore in His wrath that they would never enter into His rest. I'm just asking the question now...the people we relate to, often they will not come to Christ.

The second point I want to make to you from the parable today is this: the people we don't relate to would come to Christ if we invited them. Have you got that one? The people we don't relate to would come to Christ if we invited them. If you look at this passage, the host of this great supper said to his servant: 'Go out quickly', and it implies an urgency. It's as if the banquet's going to go cold, and the food is all going to be wasted and destroyed and have to be disposed of. He's telling him: 'Go out now, these people haven't come that I have invited, and before the food gets cold go out and get people to eat it'. Friends, I don't need to tell you that we are most probably and certainly, I would say, living in the end times. The banquet of the Gospel is going to grow cold one day, for the day of God's grace is going to close and there will be no more opportunities in heaven to reach the lost, to reach the people in East Belfast, it will be past! There is the need, and if you could only hear God's voice saying to us now: 'Go quickly! Go quickly! Before it goes cold'.

Don't go to the wealthy, don't go to those who have great professions, don't go to those who have a stable family unit, verse 21: 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind'. Go to the streets and the lanes, the places where the common people dwell - not in the courts of the temple, but the red light districts of the city, the slums, the estates, go out there. Go to the poor, those who are poor in spiritual riches, those who are poor in spirit, and who are humble people and already know their sin and know their great need. Go to the maimed, go to the halt, the incurables of society, the needy people, the people that the self-righteous and the religious have passed by and said that they have no message and no help for. Those who the Pharisees cursed, remember they cursed them! Remember the Pharisee in the temple and the publican? The Pharisee said: 'I'm glad that I am not like this man', and the publican beat his breast and said: 'Lord, be merciful unto me, a sinner'. Are we the Pharisee? 'I'm glad we're not like them'? Go to the blind, those who are powerless to help themselves and to do anything about their predicament.

Can I just move your gaze for a moment, not just to this specific incident of the parable of the Lord, but to His whole life and indeed His life's pattern. Do you know that when you go through the Gospels and you see that when the Pharisees rejected the Lord, who did He turn who? He turned to the multitudes, do you see it? When the religious people rejected Him in the temple, He turned to the multitude on the way to the feast - the people who were coming to worship. When the rich people refused to hear Him, it says that the common people heard Him gladly. When the rulers of the temple and society crucified Him on the cross, and He was hanging there in His dying breath, He was able to turn and bless a penitent thief. Our Lord's pattern was to come to the outcast, the lowly of society.

My friends listen to me today, for this is a message that is breaking my heart and speaking to my own heart, and I surely haven't got it made and I feel very convicted this morning - but I want you to be convicted with me too. It says of David in the Acts of the Apostles: David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep. I think, and I fear, that



many of us are serving a generation that died 70 years ago. I'm not talking about changing the Gospel, I think you know me better than to think that I would imbibe liberalism or modernism or 'trendyism', but I'll tell you this: there are people going to hell and we're not reaching them, we're not even coming within a mile of them.

How will we serve our generation? You know, I feel so often - I don't want to be too critical, but I'm looking at my own heart and I see so much that it's just all coming out - we are a reactionary people as evangelical Christians. We adopt pendulum Christianity - in other words, the charismatic movement all they talk about is the Holy Spirit, we know that that's wrong, that they don't talk about the Lord Jesus enough. They get into all sorts of excess that is not of the Holy Spirit at all, so we fling the pendulum swing to the other way and we don't talk about the Holy Spirit at all, we hinder His work in our lives, we don't believe in the fullness of the Holy Spirit and the unction of God upon our lives. But we can do this also as we seek to serve our generation, because there are churches around us that are preaching a social gospel, that are having Daffodil Teas and Jumble Sales, we feel that we can't do anything for unbelievers in case we're seen to be having a social gospel.

My friend, I was reading on my holidays - not this one, I have so many but who's counting them! - on the one a wee while ago when I was away in the Mediterranean a book, and I would advise you to read it, it's called 'Revival Man' the story of Jock Troop from the Tent Hall in Glasgow. Now there's a lot of stuff about Glasgow that I didn't understand, and I had to give it to somebody from Glasgow to tell me what it meant, but you know right throughout that book I was convicted - and you know about this man. He came to preach in the Coalmen's Mission, I don't even know if he preached here - he did preach in Templemore Hall on one occasion - but do you know what he did? Every Sunday morning in life, the Lord's Day, he had a breakfast for the down and outs in the city of Glasgow - he came and fed them all, the place was packed! It was during the war, and he would have at lunchtime on the Lord's Day, he would have a lunch for the service men who were serving in the war. He was helping people that needed help, but he was giving them the Gospel, he was showing them the love of Christ, but he was showing them the love of Christ that constrained him in the Gospel!

You can read about Mueller and the orphanages, a brethren man - so those of you who are brethrenistic minded, this is a brethren man! He helped the children who had no parents, why? Because the love of Christ constrained him, and many of those children could testify how they came to Christ because of Mueller's love. We could name a hundred men like Barnardo, General Booth of the Salvation Army, now I'm asking the question: that was another generation, what about our generation? What are we going to do to love them? Not just preach at them, but to love them for Christ, to bring them to Christ and win them and woo them through His love in us! As I was thinking about this - and I stand to be corrected, I'm sure I will if I'm wrong - but when I thought of this, I couldn't think, and I haven't researched this, I should have but I couldn't think of one incident in the Gospel where the Lord Jesus came directly and specifically to a religious man. You're all thinking now! In John 3 Nicodemus came to Him by night, the rich young ruler came to Him and asked 'What must I do to inherit eternal life?', but who do you find the Lord Jesus going to? John chapter 4, a woman who we wouldn't touch with a barge pole today, because she had too many problems. Zacchaeus is up a tree, he is a tax collector and a publican, and Jesus says: 'Come on down, I'm going to your house today for my dinner'. Do you see it? Why? Because He said: 'I'm not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance'!

When I was in Scotland last week I heard of an Assembly, I don't know who they are or what they are, but they stopped doing their door-to-door work because there were people who

were coming to church and they had too many problems for them to deal with. Don't say: 'Oh dear' - could we deal with them? Could we handle them? I asked the question of myself as I meditated about all these things: if we aren't seeking out the people who Jesus sought out, are we doing Christ's work? Can we say that we're doing Christ's work? If the people that Christ came closest to, the publicans, the harlots, the sinners, the drunkards, that He was accused of being a friend of, a winebibber, a friend of publicans - if those are the very people that we're the farthest away from! They that are whole have no need of a physician.

Now listen: it's nice, it's not nice, it's difficult, but it's challenging to take up the sayings of the Lord Jesus and actually analyse them and ask ourselves do we really believe them. The Lord said in John 4, after there was that encounter with the woman at the well, 'Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest'. Now is that true or false? Is He right or wrong? Are we going to dispensationalise that now? Are the fields white to harvest? What fields? The fields that Jesus sent us to: the halt, the blind, the poor, the maimed - and the question we need to ask is not: 'Does that verse fit in with my life?', but 'Are we in the right or the wrong field?'. We're in the middle of a field as we speak. I was down here for a wedding rehearsal on Thursday night, and some of the men and women were taking the Holiday Bible Club leaflets around the district, and you know some of them said to me that they really got their eyes opened on Thursday night. To see the degradation and the depravity, and the scars of sinfulness around the homes and the families and the children in this district - and it's our district! It's our harvest field!

I read a story yesterday, it was reported in The Times Reporter of New Philadelphia, Ohio. It said that in September 1985 there was a celebration at the New Orleans Municipal Pool. It was for all the lifeguards, because in the year that had went by there wasn't one person that had drowned. So there were two hundred people invited to this swimming pool, and 100 of them were certified lifeguards. They had a great night celebrating this fact of this success, and then at the end of the night there were four lifeguards that went around everything, fishing things out of the pool, and they found the body of a fully clothed man floating on the top of the water. A man died with 100 lifeguards around him because they were too busy celebrating what they had in the past.

The people we relate to often will not come to Christ; the people we don't relate to would come to Christ if we invited them; and thirdly and finally, they won't come unless we go out and get them. They won't come unless we go out and get them. I'm not talking about bringing them to church, unless we've suddenly turned into papists and we believe that the church will save people - it's not the church that we want to bring them to. Now if the Lord brings them here, and we can get them here, praise God - and I would long to see many more people in the Gospel meeting under the sound of God's word. But let us not be standing up in the meeting and praying that the Lord would bring them in, for that's our job! We need to ask the question: when was the last time not that we asked someone, but that we compelled someone to come - not to the meeting, but to Christ?

I hear all this rot - and I don't care, really, today whether you're a Calvinist or an Arminian - it doesn't matter when there are people going to hell. I hear some people say: 'Well, that's the Holy Spirit's job'. That's right, the Holy Spirit is the only one who can save men and women, but the Holy Spirit has chosen you as His ordained instrument to go and win them for Christ. You know, the Holy Spirit has been blamed on more people going to hell than, I think, anybody - because the Holy Spirit has inspired this parable, and the Lord Jesus says: 'You go quickly, and you compel them to come in!'. He says: 'Go to the highways', do you know what

the highways were? The broad, well trodden ways of the world, go out there! The host says: 'If you go out there I anticipate that you won't be rejected', do you know why? Because this supper is so great - God has provided so much in salvation that He will not tolerate people not enjoying it! He wants people to enjoy it, and if those who are invited won't come He's going to get people to come who will eat of His great supper!

Luther said: 'Such were His preparations that He must have guests, if He makes them even of the very stones, He'll have guests' - so don't hesitate, don't be afraid to go out! These people might feel that they cannot approach the Iron Hall because of their unworthiness, but they won't be unwilling! If they can see the love of Christ in us, if we show the love of Christ toward them, they will see God's love. We are to go, the Lord says, as ambassadors urging them in Christ's stead, knowing the terror of the Lord, to persuade men to be reconciled by God - men and women who are already in life's calamities, who feel they're living a hell on earth and are looking everywhere and anywhere for a solution and for an answer. But here's the question that Paul poses to us today: how shall they hear without a what? Preacher! How will the whore hear? How will the alcoholic man that can't get out of his bed hear? How will the person that's selling the last piece of furniture to go to the bookies - how will they hear? The off-scouring of the world, the rejected of church and society?

He says: 'Go further, go to the hedges', and I think the hedges here are speaking of how the ceremonial law of Judaism separated Jews from Gentiles, but also separated the unclean. The Lord's saying: 'Go to the hedges, the places where these people are: the neglected, the outsiders, the distasteful, the heathen'. Oh, praise God, I don't know if we've lost it somewhere, but let's get it back: that this is a Gospel of grace we believe in! The only thing that we want a person to have when they come through that door is not a hat, not a suit - in the Gospel now I'm talking about - but the knowledge in their heart that they're a sinner, for that's what they need to come to Christ - that's all the qualification they need! It's a gospel of grace, grace that is greater than all our sin, grace that embraces those who are at the hedges of sinful immoral society, the most distant, the most lonely! Do you and I really believe in the power of the Gospel to be able to reach and to touch and to save even people like that?

The Lord says: 'Go to the highways, go to the hedges' - look at verse 23 - 'and compel them' - an urgency of love! It's not talking about forced by weapons, but the literal Greek word is a word for force, but it means 'compel them by the force of your love, compel them by the truth of your message, compel them by the power of your prayers, the deeds of your charity, the argument of your reason, and the counsel of your wisdom'. Compel them! They may say, and I've heard it, 'I haven't got the right dress' - what do you say? Do you know what the Lord says? You tell them that's no excuse, for the Lord wants you to come and eat of that dinner. My Master won't accept any excuse, it's your type of person that He invites - do we take no excuses from these people? There is a bountiful banquet for them, and all that it lacks is guests! The Lord says that if we obey what He is outlining here we'll have so many guests that we'll not have room for them, and we'll need to build a bigger building! There's no preparation to be made, it's all done, only for sinners who will come and say: 'Just as I am, without one plea'.

You know, if people had heeded the preaching of Noah the Ark wouldn't have been big enough, isn't that right? But I'll tell you, the Lord says that no matter how many people heed and will heed the preaching of the Gospel, this banquet is big enough for them all. There is room in the mercy of God, there's room in the merit of Christ, there's room in the church of God, there's room in heaven. I heard recently of a person being saved with a chequered

background, like the woman at the well in John 4, and do you know what an old pharisaical pompous so-called Christian said? And he is a Christian, do you know what I heard him say? 'She's fit for heaven, but not for the church'. Now friend, if that's your theology, you need a new Bible - for Jesus had room for her.

I close with the words of verse 21, what did the servant say? 'It is done' - and oh, that we in the Iron Hall, and I as David Legge, could say to the Lord on the day of judgement: 'Lord, You sent me to the maim, the halt, the blind, the outcasts of society - it's done! I didn't wait for a second command, it's done. I realised my responsibility, and I realised that You were angry with those who You invited and didn't come, and how much more would You be angry with those who hindered people that wanted to come from coming'!

The last sermon that D.L. Moody preached was on this parable - November 23rd 1899, and he called it 'Excuses'. In Kansas City he was standing as a sick man, so much so that he had to hold onto the organ to steady himself, he thought he was going to fall. Just before that great sermon he said to his students at the school in Chicago: 'Never, never have I wanted so much to lead men and women to Christ as I do at this time. I must have souls in Kansas City!'. And as he stood and preached, his heart was throbbing unnaturally in his breast, but there were 50 souls responded to Christ, and the next month he died. At the very end of his life he was compelling people to come in, why? Because the banquet is growing cold, and if we went to them and invited them they would come.

Let's bow our heads together, and I plead with you please: don't let this be just another Sunday sermon. What are we doing to reach the lost? Young people, if there's something in your heart burning, a desire to win the lost, don't you let anyone quench it. Older folk, that desire that was once there, where has it gone? This place that used to be a beacon for the people, among the people, what's happened to us? Have we got respectable? Are we out of touch? Oh, that we would hear the cry of human hearts for the Lord Jesus.

Father, help us, help me, help me to get beyond the facade of the pulpit, and to get down to where the people are. Lord, help us all to follow the Master and be among them to win them, that the common people would hear us gladly, that we would be able to feed them with the living bread as the Lord Jesus did, that we would see the crowd as our Saviour did - till His eyes with tears grew dim, till we see in pity the wandering sheep, and love them for love of Him. Amen.

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## Appendix D

# **"A Spirit Of Apathy"**

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**W**e're going to open our Bibles at that second reading that was given today in Romans 9. Romans 9 and verses 1 to 3, and we'll just read over these verses again just to remind us of what we'll be thinking of today. I want to say first of all that what I have to say is directed towards the young people, but not primarily - it's directed toward us all, it is a lesson to us all, it's something that we need to learn, and it's something that we need to follow in these three verses.

Paul says in verse 1: *"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh"*.

Let's bow our heads, just for a moment, and ask the Lord's help this morning: Our Father, we thank Thee this morning for Thy goodness to us, we thank Thee for Thy faithfulness and Thy loving kindness. Our Father, we think Thee this morning for our young people. We thank Thee, our Father, for those of them whom Thou hast saved. Father we pray that Thou wouldst build them up in their most holy faith, from strength to strength, and conform them more and more, daily, into the image of Thy Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Lord we thank Thee for Thy truth, and we thank Thee Lord that it far exceeds all age groups, all maturity. Lord, we pray this morning that as we would open it, and as we would seek to learn from it from, that, our Father, Thou wouldst help us - that Thy Spirit would be here in a very real way. Lord, whatever it is that Thou wouldst have us learn this morning, we pray that our hearts would be open to accept it in grace. For we ask all these things in Jesus' name, Amen.

There is a kind of unwritten rule that preachers have, it's a bit like a preacher's code. It really says that if a preacher shows deep concern or anxiety about something in his message, or - if you like - if he has a hobby horse, something that he keeps coming back to and emphasising with strength and zeal, that it shows that that preacher has a lack of that thing in himself. Now, I am guilty of that this morning, because I am the first to admit that what I am about to speak about, I am greatly lacking in this subject.

You remember, a few gospel services ago, I gave to you a few stories about tragic things that happened in the United States of America. You remember I told you about a mailman who was doing his morning rounds, and as he was going from building to building a sniper from the top floor of one of the buildings shot him in the shoulder. He crawled into a building lobby, and to his absolute amazement he was ordered out of the building for the reason that he was dripping blood on the carpet!

You remember I told you about in Oklahoma city, a pregnant woman was walking along the sidewalk when suddenly she felt the pangs of birth coming upon her. She lay down on the sidewalk and she gave birth. An old lady walked by and stopped to help her, a taxi driver stopped at the side of the road, you remember, and pulled his window down, looked out, then pulled it back up again and went away. That old lady, seeking to help her, ran into a nearby hotel and asked could she borrow a towel to keep the woman warm - but she was refused.

You remember I told you about in Dayton, Ohio a woman drove her car headlong off the harbour right into the Miami River. A dozen people, this time, stood at the side of that harbour looking over the railing, and watched as the car sank to the bottom. They watched as she got out of her car, and stood on the roof and waved her hands and shouted that she couldn't swim! But she drowned.

You remember I told you that so many incidents like this have happened in the state of Chicago, that the Chicago Sun Times - the local newspaper - has opened a file in their library and they have titled it with one word - do you remember what it was? 'Apathy', apathy.

Dr. Lawrence M. Gould, the president of Carlton College, said these words - and I want to listen to them. Listen to them carefully, he said: 'I do not believe that the greatest threat to our future is from bombs or from guided missiles. I don't think our civilisation will end that way, I think it will end and it will die when people no longer care'. Arnold Toynbee (sp?) has pointed out that 19 out of 21 civilisations have died from within - not by conquest from without. There were no bands playing, there were no flags waving, there were no shouts of victory when those civilisations decayed - it simply happened slowly, it happened from within when there was quiet, when there was darkness, when no-one was aware.

Someone has said that the epitaph of our society today should be this: 'This civilisation died because it just didn't want to be bothered, it didn't care'. We can all testify to that, can't we? But as we sit this morning, snug and warm within these four walls of a church building, I don't know about you but I feel that - like a trickle down effect, like a filtering - the attitude of the world with regards to apathy has come into the church. We have assimilated a spirit of apathy.

Young people, I'm talking to you - but I'm not just talking to you, I'm talking to the young marrieds, I'm talking to the middle-aged people and even the older people. The spirit of the age, if it be apathy, has affected all of us. Like Horatius Bonar - we could say that the words that he said have never been truer, because he looked at the church and he said: 'I looked for the church, and I found it in the world. I looked for the world, and I found it in the church'.

However, when we turn our eyes to the passage that we read together this morning from Romans chapter 9, we see a totally different person, a totally different picture. We see the person of Paul the apostle, we see a remarkable character - a man, in fact, whose past has been marked in scripture by the testimony of these words: that this man, before he was converted, was full of zeal and persecuting the church. But then we remember, one day, as we read the Acts of the Apostles, one day as he walked along the road to Damascus going on his way to round up a group of Christians and to feed them to lions, as he was on his way - miracle of miracles - he met Jesus Christ. When he met Christ his whole life was turned upside-down, his whole life was changed, he was saved and now you could say that his testimony was this: that he was full of zeal, not persecuting the church, but building the church of Jesus Christ.

He was a wholehearted man when he was a servant of Satan, when he was a servant of Judaism - but now, because of what Christ had done in his life, he was a wholehearted servant of Jesus Christ. He was sold out for God and His gospel! Listen young people, older people: how different we are today from this man Paul! If we are honest with ourselves, we would have to say that most of us don't seem to have a heart of zeal for anything! And if we

do have a heart of zeal, it seems that it's a borrowed heart that we put on, like special clothes for special occasions - we only have an appearance of zeal at times.

But what a change - and try to imagine in your mind's eye for a moment - what a change came over this man Paul. He was a zealous blasphemer, but he had now been changed to an awesome, zealous proclaimer of Jesus Christ! Now think of that: it was just at this time that the church was facing difficulty, the church was facing persecution, and they needed a man - they needed a leader, they needed a man with great ability, with great scriptural knowledge, to confront the persecution that was coming - and God, in His infinite sovereignty and in His infinite wisdom, provided that man.

Paul, to the naked eye, was a mean looking man. He was small, I'm sure, there wasn't anything nice looking about him - but he was far from a mean man. Paul was a man who was proficient in many languages, he was a man who knew the Scriptures inside out - he sat at one of the greatest rabbis, Gamaliel. He was a man who was familiar, not just with Judaism, but with all education, with the philosophies and the learning of the Gentiles. He was a man, that we read about in the Scriptures, who probably became one of the greatest Christians and followers of Christ ever - yet he was a man who said of himself: 'I am nothing'.

What a man this man Paul was! Spurgeon says of him: 'The lion, Saul, had become a lamb. The one who had breathed out threatenings and murderings, now breathed out prayers. He who seemed to burn with enmity became a flame of love for Christ'. You're here this morning, and you're welcome, I don't know why you've come - perhaps you've come with someone, or perhaps someone is singing this morning that's your son or daughter, or a friend - but I want to ask you: have you ever experienced a change in your life like this? When suddenly, like a flash in your life, everything is turned topsy-turvy - why? Because you have met Christ on the road of your life! I wonder has there been a time in your own life where all your motives, all your aspirations, all your desires, everything that you're living for and living in has been totally changed - why? Because Christ, like dynamite, has come into your life and turned it upside-down! Have you ever experienced that? Do you know something? Today, right now, in this place at this very moment, Christ Jesus is alive! He is able to do exactly what he did to Saul, and turn your life upside-down.

What a change there was in this man. What a preacher this man must have been! Can you imagine to hear the apostle Paul, what it would've been like to hear him preach? Just in these three short verses that we read together you see that there are the essential ingredients of a preacher of the word of God. This man had love, he had compassion, and he had an earnestness for the lost. What it must have been to have sat and heard Paul the apostle proclaim the glorious riches of Christ! Now they said that this man was of contemptible speech, but that doesn't mean that he wasn't a good speaker. He mightn't have had a particularly nice voice, he mightn't use words that were frilly and fancy, but this man when he preached, preached words of power. This man spoke lightning words, as it were, that would've went into people's hearts like fiery darts and set them alight for Jesus Christ. Paul was no preacher with icicles on his lips, he hadn't a breath of frost when he was speaking about Christ and God - but this man preached with fervency and power!

Oh that I would be a little bit like Paul as he preached the word of God. Can you imagine what it would've been to hear Paul preach the gospel? It would've been as if he was standing before an open hell, warning people, trying to stop people from falling into that pit - it was as if he was there, he had seen what hell was like, and he was warning people of the love of Christ that could save them from that destruction. Just as they said of the Lord Jesus Christ, you

could have nearly said of Paul: almost never did a man speak like this man! Why? Because he was following the example of his Master and Lord.

Let's look quickly at verse 1 that we read together. He says: 'I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost'. Now, what's he saying here? He's saying simply this: 'What I am about to share with you, what I'm going to say to you, it's the absolute truth. There's no doubt about it, it is true - I mean what I'm going to say'. Then, in order to reinforce this, he says: 'I'm telling you the truth in Christ'. He means: 'I'm in union with Christ, and because I'm in union with Christ I can't tell you a lie'. To bring it home further he says: 'My conscience also bears me witness, I'm telling you with a good conscience'. To bring it home even further he says: 'I'm saying it in the Holy Ghost'.

Now, what he trying to say? He's saying: 'Listen, the words I am about to breathe, the things I am about to say, they are absolute truth - you just don't doubt them, I mean what I'm saying'. Now why did Paul have to go overboard in showing that he meant what he says? Well you know, don't you, that the Jews hated Paul - they detested him! To them he was a traitor, to them he was an apostate, there were even 40 men who had sworn that they would kill Paul because of his conversion to Christianity - and it was because of that hate that was shown towards him that he wanted these Jews that were reading these verses to know that he was telling the truth.

So he goes on to tell the truth, he says in verse 2: 'I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart'. Those words are very strong, they could be literally translated: 'I have great grief, great grief to me is incessant pain in my heart'. What was Paul saying? In Paul's words you can almost feel echoed the anguish of the Lord Jesus Christ! You remember when He came over the Mount of Olives? Do you remember when He stood over Jerusalem with the tears tripping Him, with the sorrow, and the crackle in His heartbroken voice? He said: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!'.

Paul was no uncommitted bystander - do you hear me? Paul was no Sunday morning only Christian, but Paul was identifying himself with the people who he was brought up with, with the community in which he lived, he was identifying himself with Israel. He says he had an unceasing, endless duration of pain in his heart. He uses a combination of words, he uses the word for 'sorrow' and the word for physical pain to emphasise his discomfort and his plight over the nation. Now listen, listen to this! He's saying here: 'I have physical pain' - think of that! 'Physical pain that I can feel in my heart' - why? Because of the sin of his nation.

Like the prophet before him, Jeremiah, he cries out: 'My bowels, my inward parts! I am pained at the very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou O Lord hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war' - that we heard about in our reading. Like Jeremiah, he stands before his Jewish brothers and sisters and cries and says: 'Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow'. Do you know what was wrong with Paul here? His heart, like a hammer coming down upon it, was broken into a myriad of splinters - why? Because his brothers and sisters in Judaism were on their way to hell.

Let me say this morning that Paul didn't believe in annihilation, he didn't believe that once you were dead you were done for, your life would be blown out like a candle. He didn't believe



you would die like a dog in the grave and that would be the end of it. How could Paul's heart be broken if he believed that? But he didn't believe that, Paul believed what the word of God taught: that whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

We can learn so much this morning - young people, listen - from this man Paul. Is your family unsaved, are your friends unsaved, is your mother or your father unsaved, your sons or daughters? Your family, are they unsaved? Well listen, Paul's brothers were privileged as well, they grew up in a land that knew the Gospel, that knew the truth - like our children, like our people. They knew everything, they had the Old Testament Scriptures, they had the prophets, they had the one true God - yet what a tragedy of tragedies: they rejected it all! Today in Ulster, in Portadown, people have grown up - maybe people here - with the Gospel, and yet they sit in their sin still, and have not repented. People, listen, people today in Ulster, in Portadown, need Christ!

For that reason Paul says in verse 3, and listen, let these words burn into your soul: 'I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh'. He goes on, he says: 'For', he's beginning to explain why he has this pain in his heart. He says 'I could wish', now notice he doesn't say 'I would wish' - because it would be impossible for Paul to be cut off from Christ, because if you look at Romans 8 and verse 38 and 39 you'll see that he says that nothing can separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus. But he says: 'I could wish, I wish it was almost possible', that's what he's trying to say, 'that I could be accursed from Christ'.

The word that Paul uses there, 'accursed', is the word 'anathema' that you find in Galatians 1 and verse 8, where he said if any man comes unto you, or an angel even comes to you, and preaches another Gospel let him be anathema - it means let him be cursed, let him be damned. Do you know what that word 'accursed' means? It describes, listen, it describes the delivering up to the judicial wrath of God of one person who ought to be cursed or cut off because of his sin. Now listen: do you see what Paul is saying? Listen - it astounds me to even see what he's saying! He is saying that Paul was willing to bear the curse of God, Paul in his spirit was willing to be accursed for Christ as a believer - he had such a love for his people, for his brothers and sisters in Judaism, for his mother and father and for his wider family that he said these words: 'Ah! If even my destruction could save these loved ones of mine, I could almost go that length to see them saved!'.

Is that not amazing? Do you know what that is? That's a spirit of substitution. Do you know what that is? That's the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, when it says that the just - the one who didn't deserve punishment - the just became the unjust to bring us to God. Paul said that he wished to be damned, he wished to go to hell, that those who were damned and going to hell could get out of hell! Paul was simply a reflection of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Now let me ask you, young people, older people: what do you think of those verses? Now don't sit like on a normal Sunday morning meeting and just listen to the preaching, because that's not why I'm here. What do you think of those verses? This man was willing, if it were possible, to go to hell because of those whom he loved who were going there!

It astounds me that Paul had this constant aching in his breast. Everywhere he went, everywhere he walked, even when he slept he had this constant aching that- look at verse 1 - passed the test of the Holy Ghost. Does our zeal - if we have any zeal - does it pass the test of the Holy Ghost? Or is our zeal, young people, something that comes out on a Sunday? Is it something that comes out at the prayer meeting brethren? Is it something that comes out when the suit comes out? Are our tears, if we do shed tears, are our tears merely crocodile

tears? Listen, my prayer this morning is this: oh, that I would get there! To be like Paul, who was ultimately like Christ - what a love he had for the lost! He was willing to pass under the judgement of God to see their salvation.

Oh, that we would lay our lives down for the lost, that we would find hardship, that we would find poverty, perhaps distance from our family, perhaps pain, pressures, suffering, for souls - for winning souls! Can I ask you this morning: do you love souls? I'm not asking do you go to church, do you support the church, do you do a work in the church - I'm not asking you that. I'm asking you do you have a real love for souls? Someone has said that our love for souls is like the thermometer of our Christian life - if that were so, this morning, what temperature would you be? Spurgeon said that if you don't have a love for souls, he doubted if you were even saved at all.

Listen: do you have a love for souls? If we really had a love for souls, young people, you would be at the prayer meeting. If we had a love for souls the prayer meeting before the Gospel meeting would be full. If we had a love for souls we would bring people with us to the Gospel meeting on a Sunday evening, we would go to the outreach team. Paul had a love for souls, so much so that he could go as far as to say that he would long to be cursed from Christ! If I had a love for souls, do you know something? I would be up out of my bed, and I would be on my knees pleading to God for the souls of sinners, for the souls of the children. I would be fasting before God, waiting before God for those in my family who know not Christ - but do you know what the truth is? I am content to sit in my salvation and watch as they go to hell.

I'll tell you something this morning: some of the petty annoyances that we have, some of the bickering that goes on, it would all stop if we had a love for souls. Do you know why? Because the only sorrow and the only pain, the only annoyance that would be in our breast would be like Paul's: because people are going to a lost eternity! William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army said these words, listen: 'Some like to live within the sound of church or chapel bell, but I'd rather run a rescue shop within a yard of hell'.

But before we think of this, do you know what we need to be? Before we can be winners of souls we need to be weepers of souls, like Murray McCheyne. When a tourist, an American tourist, came to his church many years after he died, he came to the Sexton who was the Sexton there when McCheyne was alive. He said to him in his Yankee twang: 'What was the secret of McCheyne's ministry?'. That now old man brought him down the church to the vestry, he led him through the door, he brought him to a table and a chair. There was a big old Bible on the table, and he plonked it down and he opened it. He said: 'Sit at the table', and that American sat at the table, and he said: 'Now, put your elbows on either side of that Bible', and he said: 'Weep for souls for hours'. That was the secret of his ministry! He wept for souls - and before we can win souls, young people, we've got to have a heart of weeping.

Now listen: McCheyne wept for souls, but 89% of Christians have never ever given out a Gospel tract. Let that sink in. McCheyne wept for souls, but 95% of Christians - 95%! - have never led a soul to Christ! Yet Paul could say: 'I could almost wish that I could be accursed from Christ'. David Brainerd, the missionary to the American Indians, could say: 'I care not where I live, or what hardships I go through, so that I can but gain souls to Christ'. He said: 'While I am asleep I dream of these things. As soon as I awake the first thing that is on my mind is this great work. All my desire is the conversion of sinners, and all my hope is in God'. George Whitefield, the great evangelist of the 1700's, echoed the words of Paul when he said: 'Oh Lord, give me souls or take my own soul!'. Henry Martyn, a young missionary kneeling in

India's corals strands, cried out to the Lord: 'Here let me burn out for God'. John McKenzie prayed a prayer as a young missionary candidate, he said: 'Oh Lord, send me to the darkest spot on earth'. Praying Hyde, missionary to India, said: 'Father, give me these souls or I die!'. John Hunt, missionary to Fiji Islands, on his deathbed prayed: 'Lord, save Fiji, save Fiji, save these people. Oh Lord, have mercy upon Fiji, save Fiji' - and he passed into the presence of His Lord.

Oh, to have the spirit, and the zeal, and the love for souls that the apostle Paul did as he echoed Christ. That man I mentioned, William Booth, for over 30 years the Salvation Army and William Booth in particular were subject to some of the most vile persecution that Christians have ever suffered in modern times. But the General lived to see the day that he was issued an invitation to Buckingham Palace to see his King. His own King, King Edward VII, invited him to Buckingham Palace, and as he walked in in 1904 the King said these words to him: 'You are doing a great work, a good work, General Booth'. Inviting him to write in his visitors album that old man, now 75 years of age, took a pen and bent over his back and wrote these words in this book - and listen to these, young people: 'Your Majesty, some men's ambition is art, some men's ambition is fame, some men's ambition is gold, but my ambition is the souls of men'.

Young people, you've the rest of your life ahead of you. Some of us are older, some haven't much of life left. But whatever you have ahead of you, let me ask you this morning in closing - listen: what is your ambition? What is your desire? Is it to get a good job? Is it to earn money? Is it to get a good education? Don't get me wrong, education is extremely important, but listen: what is all-important in these days is this fact: that men will only be saved from hell in time, when we are here. The reason why the Lord didn't rapture us when He saved us was because He wanted us to seek the souls of men. May we be able to say today, like Paul in chapter 10 and verse 1: 'Brethren, my hearts desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved' - or put it in our context: 'Lord, my hearts desire and prayer for Portadown is, that they might be saved'.

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## Appendix E

# **"At Ease In Zion"**

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**N**ow we're turning in our Bibles to Amos, the book of Amos - I'll give you a wee bit of time to find that, it's a hard one to find. There's Hosea, then Joel, then the book of Amos - and chapter 6. Amos chapter 6, verse one - but before we read the word of God, let's bow in a word of prayer and ask the Lord's help as we come to His word this morning. Let us pray: Our Father, to make our weak hearts strong and brave, send the fire. To live a dying world to save, send the fire. Oh, see us on Thy altar laid, our lives, our all this very day. To crown, the offering now we pray, send the fire. In Jesus name, Amen.

Amos chapter 6 and verse one - I believe that this is the message that God has laid upon my heart to bring to you this morning. Again, like some of the messages I've brought before, it's not a very comfortable message - but God never promised that we would have an easy ride. Amos chapter 6 and verse one: *'Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!'*. It's just that wee sentence: 'Woe to them that are at ease in Zion'.

I want to take you on a journey this morning, a journey to Palestine. Twenty-five years before the fall of the nation of Israel, I want us to come and to visit a little city called Bethel. A small city, a small city where there is a chapel, and within that chapel sits a king whose name is King Jeroboam II. A chapel like Balmoral Palace, it was his local home were he went to enjoy a vacation, like our Queen. His priest was a man called Amaziah - if you like, that man was the Archbishop of Canterbury, in our terms. And I want to take you there this morning - twenty-five years before the fall of Israel - and we walk into the front of the chapel, just like this church, and we see right at the front of it this man, King Jeroboam II. And the priest is standing there at the lectern, he's about to lead the service - a majestic service is about to begin - there are instruments, there are singers, there are chanters, there are readers there. And then suddenly, just before Amaziah is about to speak, we all hear a commotion outside the building - a bit like Portadown! - and we all run outside the building to see what is going on, there's so much noise, there's so much commotion - and when we run out we see there: a man. A man standing on his own, with no one with him - and all that we can hear is this shout: 'Woe unto you that are at ease in Zion for judgement is coming and this evil nation that once trusted in God is going to be judged by God Himself!'.

We look him up and down, we don't see anything special, we just see a man - a rustic, hill-open-air preacher - his name is 'Burdened', that's what Amos means, 'burdened'. He wasn't a professional prophet - if you like, he wasn't a pastor or a minister - his father wasn't a prophet, he wasn't the son of a prophet, he didn't go to a 'Prophetic School' - if you like, he didn't go to a Bible College - but the fact of the matter is, as we look at this chapter of scripture today, this man Amos, this man Burdened, was God's man, for God's day, with God's message. And he stands before the people, and he preaches a message, and he preaches against and denounces their luxury. He preaches against their lack of concern, and care, and compassion for the poor. He condemns their expensive houses, he condemns their drinking, he condemns their complacency, he condemns their costly parties and rich living. He condemns the philosophy, where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. He condemns the fact that those who are fiddling the books, those who are getting rich through

false gain, are the very ones who are religious. He condemns the fact that they use religion as a masquerade for their false living.

Do you know what the big problem was? If you read this book, you will see that these very people, the very people who are religious, the very people who are going to all the services, the very people who are taking the name of Jehovah, the name of the Lord - these are the same people that are shouting: 'We are looking for the day of His coming! We are looking for the day of the Lord, when the Lord will come and when the Lord will judge the earth and we will be free from all our enemies', these were the very people that were asking for this - but the message of Amos is this: 'Woe unto thee! Woe unto you that are at ease in Zion, because you are calling for the coming of the Lord, but when the Lord comes it will not be your enemies that will be judged - it will be you!'.

Do you see any parallel? Do you? What do Christians long for today? Christians long for the coming of the Lord! And that's right, and Christians yearn for the coming of the Lord, but so many of the Christians that yearn after His coming and are looking for the glory of His coming, are not ready for His coming! Christian, are you at ease in Zion today? The nation of Israel, there was peace and prosperity, there was luxury that there never was before, everything seemed to be going well, everyone was prospering - yet this man, this rustic preacher, God's man with God's message was standing out there shouting 'Woe!'. That wasn't what the people wanted to hear, that wasn't what the people expected to hear, but he was shouting 'Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion!'.

Did our Lord not speak like that in Matthew chapter 7 and verse 22? Turn with me to it, Matthew chapter 7 and verse 22 - verse 21 to get the context, He says this: 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have we not cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then', the Lord says, 'I profess unto them, I never knew you!'. Just like these Israelites: 'We're going to the meetings, we're going to the services of God, we're performing the services, we're breaking the bread at the shewtable, we're doing everything that is meant to be done - we're singing the songs of Zion, we're worshipping the God of Zion, we're looking for the day of the Lord's coming!'. But Amos says: 'Listen!', like the Lord, he says, 'There will be many in that day that will say 'Lord, Lord, did we not do this in Your name? Did we not even lead one to Christ in Your name? Did we not preach in Your name? Did we not sing, or testify in Your name?', and He will say: 'I never knew you!'.

We find it in Colossians chapter 1 and verse 23, Colossians 1 and verse 23, we read: 'And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight:' - verse 23 - 'If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled'. If you have a pen this morning, ring that word 'if' - 'if you continue in the faith'. 'If', there's a condition! Now I'm not preaching here that you can be saved one day and lost the next - I don't believe that - but somehow, somewhere along the line, we've forgotten about something. We've forgotten that we are to be living in fellowship with God today, and if we don't live in fellowship with God today, we cannot be 100% sure of our situation before Him. Spurgeon counselled preachers never to give a man who is in sin at this moment assurance of his salvation. Never do it! We're to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, we're to make sure that we're in the faith by the way that we live. Let me ask you, Christian or professing Christian, this morning, listen: Are you at ease in Zion today? Are you? Are you at ease in Zion when the church is dormant? The church of Jesus Christ - as far as I can see - is

absolutely asleep! It's the greatest dormant volcano that has ever existed! And I think, as I read the book of Revelation, that we're like the church of Sardis - in fact, I don't even know what church we're like, we're like them all! The church of Sardis, the Lord said of them: 'Thou hast a name that thou livest, and are dead'.

Now let's not pass the buck this morning, we're evangelical - and evangelicals have a name that they live, but do you know what the reality is today? They're dead! Maybe you think I'm being too harsh. They have a name that they live - Baptists have a name that they live, evangelical Christians have a name - but the reality could be, this morning, that we're dead! We could be like Laodicea, we say to ourselves: 'We are rich, we are increased with goods and have need of nothing' - and we know not, the Lord says, that we are wretched, miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked! And He says to us: 'Thou art neither hot nor cold, I would that you were hot or cold, but you're lukewarm', and He says, 'I'm going to spew you, I'm going to vomit you out of my mouth!'.

Are you at ease in Zion this morning believer? Answer the question! You might be saying to me: 'But hold on David, you've forgotten the doctrine of 'once you're saved, you're always saved, you're never lost''. I have not forgotten it! I believe it with all my heart! But we have forgotten the doctrine of perseverance! You might say: 'David - Matthew 16 and verse 18 when the Lord Jesus spoke to Peter and spoke about the confession that he made, and said 'On this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it' - David, have you forgotten about that verse? God is going to build the church and the gates of the hell will never, ever prevail against it'. That's right, but that answer that you may give me this morning is the same thing that the children of Israel said in Amos. They said, 'It's alright, don't worry, we're secure! We're saved - and that's the main thing - as long as we're saved'. And they lived whatever way they wanted, and they were looking for the day of His coming because they were saved, they were secure - and that was their problem.

Do you remember years ago - who were the pioneer missionaries to Africa? People from the United Kingdom, weren't they? Great men of God, pioneer missionaries all over the world - like Carey, Hudson Taylor, all those great men - they were from the Western world, as it were, our little world of Europe, or America. Do you know what the reality is today? The missionaries going to London are coming from Africa! The places we once sent missionaries to are sending missionaries to us! Christ says in Revelation, that He will spew us out of His mouth! Is that 'saved and lost'? I don't think so - but don't ask me what it means - it scares me. But listen this morning: a wee dose of 'saved and lost' wouldn't do us any harm! If we tried to please God everyday! Have you seen the Mormons? Have you see the Jehovah's Witnesses? I know they're working for their salvation, but they live their lives for their ideology - and God help them, it's for the devil and demons, but they're living it out!

I hope I don't think, today, that God hasn't the power and the sovereign will and ability to lay me aside and to raise up another. And don't think today, Christian - don't think today evangelical church, or Baptist church - that God can't lay you aside and raise up another people! Because that's exactly what He did with Israel, isn't it? He promised them, and they were covenant promises, but there were conditions, and they didn't fulfil the conditions, so for a season He has led them aside and He raised up the church unto Himself.

Did you watch the television on Wednesday night on 'UTV Live Insight'? There was a programme about how the decline in church membership is at an all-time low. Did you see it? I've never seen such nut-cases in all my life! Never. And because the church of Jesus Christ is

dwindling - and it is - we are going to all extremes to try and get people in, and we can save people through entertainment - but do you know what we're going to have to do? We have to then keep them by entertainment, because the word of God is not enough for them! But listen, listen: are we at ease in Zion, this morning, when the church is dormant?

Are we at ease in Zion when the world is damned? Are we? Let me ask you a question: who were the people that Jesus came to save? Do you know who they were? Christ Jesus came into the world to save - what? - sinners! He came to save the prostitute, He came to save the drunkard, the gambler, He came to save the homosexual, He came to save the publican, He came to save the terrorist, He came to save the murderer, He came to save the thief - all these evil people He came to save! Now, another question: what kind of people are we the furthest away from? Those people! Those people that God sent His Son to save and to rescue!

I have a friend, and you're going to hear his testimony not too long from now. He's already testified in the young peoples fellowship. But my friend had a life of sin, a life of - if the expression could be used - hell on earth, it was awful! And God gloriously saved him, and now he's fellowshiping, he's testifying, he's serving the Lord - but he still goes through problems, like us all. And he was confiding in me one day, and he was worried about the place where he lived, and about the people who were living round him - he found temptation, he found it hard - and he was asking, and confiding, in some people in the church that I used to go to, and he just said to me in despair, he said: 'David, it's alright for them, they get into their car and they drive away!'. [It's] because we're removed, we're removed.

Another question - and this isn't really a sermon this morning, this is from my heart: do you believe in hell? Do you? Don't give me the answer I'm looking for - do you really believe in hell? I know you know about it in your head, and you learnt about it from Sunday School, since you were at the children's meetings - I know all these things, because I know them as well - but do you really believe? An atheist once said to a Christian - an atheist! - 'If I believed what you believed about hell, I would crawl on my hands and knees, across beds of broken glass and hot ashes, to the four corners of the earth to tell people - to warn people of hell!'. Do you believe in hell, Christian?

Charles Finney, a great American revivalist of the 1800's, [who] brought many souls to Christ, was used as an instrument of God for revival. He said this, that as Christians we need to do something - it's an exercise we need to do. We need to take a New Testament, we need to take our Bibles and we need to open them at every passage that mentions hell. Go through it - say Matthew's gospel, go through the verses that talk about hell - and he says this: 'Take a member of your family and place them in that verse'. He says, 'Pretend that you're looking into hell with a telescope' - this is what he says - 'and put your little girl there!' and then you'll know the cost of hell. Do you believe in hell?

'Oh, but David, people will say that they don't like that kind of hell-fire preaching - they say that they like the kind of Christianity that's personal, that's private, that you can see it just with your life and you don't try and share anything with anybody, or you don't try and convert anybody'. Well, listen to me: do you know those type of Christians? They couldn't care if you went to hell for all eternity. They don't care! But you, Christian this morning in Thomas Street, do you believe in a place called hell? We've forgotten that the Gospel is an offence - Jesus said that the Gospel would be a stumbling block, that it would either be the saver of life to a person, or the saver of death. Now that doesn't mean that we preach it in an offensive manner, or in a rude manner, but the Gospel itself is an offence. Charles Wesley, the great revivalist in England, who as a matter-of-fact stemmed civil war and revolution because of his

preaching of the gospel - that man used to ask his open-air preachers, when they came back from a time of preaching, he asked them two questions. The first one was this: did anybody get saved? If the answer was 'No' to that question, then he asked another question, and he said: well, was anybody offended? And if the answer was 'No' to that question, he would tell the men to go back to their day job, they had not the gift to preach.

Have we forgotten? Have we forgotten what the gospel of Christ is? It's not a wee nice story! It's about sin! It's about a cross! It's about blood! It's about judgement! But it's about deliverance from it all! And we cannot bring people to Christ if they are not brought to the law first of all to see what they really are, to see their sin in the mirror of God's word - and then, when we point them to Christ, then it'll be good news!

Could a mariner sit idle if he heard the drowning cry?  
 Could a doctor sit in comfort and just let his patients die?  
 Could a fireman sit idle, let men burn and give no hand?  
 Can you sit, Christian, at ease in Zion while the world around you is damned?

A wise man in Athens was once asked when injustice would be abolished - when injustice in the world, in society, in workplaces, in education, when civil rights would be established, and when justice would be established and injustice abolished. He said this, listen: 'This will happen when those who are not wrong - those who are not wrong - feel as indignant as those who are'. When those who are not wrong - put it into a Christian context - when those who are in Christ see the need of those who are not in Christ. When those who are under no condemnation, because of the law of the Spirit which has set us free, when we see the condemnation that the child of the devil is under - then we will cease to be at ease in Zion while the world around is damned.

George Bernard Shaw - not a theologian, but a wise man nevertheless - said this: 'The worst sin towards our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them'. Are you indifferent to the lost today? Oh, are you indifferent? Can you not hear the cries from hell today? I hope I can hear them! The cries of my friends, the cries of family, who I never told about those fires! Can you not hear them in your ear today? Do they not drive you out the door to tell people of Christ and His gospel?

I want you to turn to Samuel, 1 Samuel 17 - and we have in 1 Samuel 17 the story of David and Goliath, and you all know the story well. You remember that the little boy David, you remember when the prophet Samuel came to anoint the future King - they all laughed when he went to David, because David was like me - he was short, he was only a boy - and these other men were tall and they were big strapping soldiers, and they expected the next King of Israel to be like them, but Samuel went to this little insignificant shepherd boy. And then later on in the story, you remember that David's father Jesse sent out David to his brothers, who were fighting in the battle - he took with him cheese and bread. And you remember, when he got there David said these words - they were all talking about the Philistine, Goliath, they were talking about how he'd come out to the front of the whole host and army of Israel, and how he'd shouted: 'Send me someone who can beat me! Any of you Israelites come and beat Goliath the great - Goliath the giant!'. And David said these words as he heard them talk about it, he said in verse 29, sorry 26: 'For who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?'. Now think about it, a wee lad, a wee lad chirps up: 'Who is this Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?'. And all the boys look round and, you know, laugh - and after their laughter David turned to each of them one at a time and said, in verse 29: 'Is there not a cause? Is there not a cause? It's alright you laughing,



boys, it's alright you thinking I'm too weak and I'm too small - but is there not a cause? Is the name of God not at stake here? Is there not a battle to be fought and is there not a battle to be won?'

Is there not a cause, Christian, today? Is there not a church that is asleep? Is there not a world, a family, our families that are in hell? They're in hell now! Because they're condemned already! Is there not a cause? And all that it took was this wee fella David, with a heart full of faith - all it took - and he defied the armies of the Philistines, and he cut down the giant. And do you know something today? We have a cause that is better than David's - do you know why? Because our battle is already won! And we are not fighting for the victory, but we are fighting in the victory, and from victory and we cannot lose - if we only would take up the fight and have a heart of faith!

Are you at ease in Zion? When the Church is dormant, and the world is damned, is there not a cause? Do you know something? There is nothing uninteresting about Christianity, nothing. But I'll tell you what there is, uninterested Christians. Nothing uninteresting about Christianity, but uninterested Christians! Christians that couldn't give two hoots! Turn with me again to Acts chapter 17 and verse 16, 'Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry'. When Paul was in Athens he looked around him and - to put it in our modern context - he saw the chapel, he saw the dead Protestant churches, he saw the mosques, he saw the cults, he saw the paganism, and he lifted his eyes to God and to Christ and he cried, because his heart was stirred within him because of the idolatry in his land. Christian will you not stir yourself? Will you not stir yourself to all the idolatry and sin that is in your land? Does it not drive you to your knees? Does it not bring tears to your eyes? Does it not move you, does it not stir you?

If you've ever taken your mother to a football match, or watched a football match, young fellas will know that you're sitting through the football match, or watching it on the television, and your mother's sitting there: 'Now what's that? What's he doing there? And what's that? Why did he blow the whistle? What's that line for there?'. And you're sitting through the whole match explaining that to [her]. And then your team - whatever your team is - then your team scores a goal, and then you jump through the roof because of it, and you're clapping, and you're shouting - and your mother turns to you and she says 'Well what are you doing?'. [You say] 'He scored a goal!', and she says 'Well is that not what he's meant to do?'. Wait till I tell you - there are people coming to churches today, and they are expecting to hear about Christ, they're expecting to hear about the Gospel, they are expecting to be told what to do to be saved, they're expecting all these things - because that's what you're meant to hear, and when somebody shouts 'Hallelujah' or 'Amen' or gets excited, they look at him! 'Sure this is what's meant to happen!'

Will you not stir yourself Christian? Oh, let me look at the crowd, as my Saviour did, till my eyes with tears grow dim. Let me look and see the wandering sheep, and love them for love of Him! All it takes for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.

I want to, in closing, turn you to Hosea, Hosea chapter 12, chapter 10 sorry - Hosea chapter 10 verse 12, Hosea chapter 10 verse 12 - and another rustic prophet, a voice like John the Baptist that we've been learning about in these past weeks, a voice in the wilderness - that means a voice on his own, no one else was shouting his message, because it wasn't comfortable - he says this, verse 12 of chapter 10: 'Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you'.

You're here this morning and you're not saved. You're not saved and you've heard this message week, after week, after week, and do you know what's happened? The god of this world, that is not Jehovah, the god of this world who is Satan, has blinded your eyes. Now take it from me, because it's in the word of God, he has blinded your eyes to the fact that there's a hell! And that at this very moment that you are literally dangling over that place! And each time you hear the Gospel, and each time you refuse the Gospel, you're being put down a little lower to that torment! Do you know what you need to do? You need to today break up that fallow ground, for it is time - now - to seek the Lord.

If there's any farmers here they will know what fallow ground is - I didn't know what it was being a Belfast man - but it's land that has never been broken up for a few months or a few years. It's land that has been left, while another piece of land has been used to grow crops in. And what the prophet is saying here is, 'You have fallow ground Christian, you have ground that hasn't been used in a long time'. That could be the ground of prayer, that could be the ground of fasting, that could be the ground of reading the word of God, of witnessing to people, that could be the ground of going to the Bible Study, the prayer meeting or the outreach, and it hasn't been broken [up] - and what the prophet is saying here is: 'Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy and break up that fallow ground break it all up, go back to it and use it, use it and then when you use it, there will be a harvest'.

Christian, it's time to seek the Lord. It's time. Our land is falling to bits, and the church is following suit, and we need a revival today, but do you know something? He'll only do it through us. Campbell Morgan - not Campbell Morgan - another revivalist in the Hebrides, was at the Bangor Missionary Convention. He was sitting, sitting now, up here at the Bangor Missionary Convention and he was just about to get up to speak at the very last message of the whole convention and the Lord by the Holy Spirit told him - don't ask me how - but told him to get off his seat and go to the Hebrides Islands. He went over to the speaker and he asked the speaker could he be given leave, because he had to go and the speaker said 'Well hold on a minute, you're giving the next message. You can't just get up and leave!'. But he had to, he was compelled by the Spirit - a man under the Spirit of God - and he went. And when he reached the shores of the Isles of Lewis, there was one man waiting for him, and he just said 'I've been waiting on you'. And the other question he asked him was this, 'Are you right with the Lord?'. And that man said that he does not know what would have happened, if he had went all that way and he had been faced with that question, and he was not right with the Lord, and the Lord did not trust him with revival.

Christian, what would you do today if God visited your bedside with a cloud of mercy, and was willing to open it and let it burst and rain righteousness upon you - but you weren't there? I believe that that is what God wants to do, and all we have to do is fulfil what He asks of us.

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