

## THE GROWTH OF BELIEVERS AND WORLD OUTREACH

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### C. E. KIRKWOOD

The initial fact that strikes me as I give thought to this subject is that the Bible Fellowship Church has a responsibility of world outreach. Located as we are for the most part in the industrial East and numbering less than 50 organized congregations may tend to produce the feeling we are not as obligated as other larger and more numerous church groups. Yet any Biblical study and a proper growth in grace will make us aware of this responsibility.

It is a fact that popular evangelicalism does stress the act of making a decision and lead many to believe that because they have "ACCEPTED THE LORD" - the goal of spirituality has been reached.

The work of feeding the flock of God, the purpose of which is that they have to grow is heavily upon us today. "But grow in grace" - "That ye may know the hope of your calling" these are but a few of the many Scriptural injunctions that come to mind.

After traveling through our Fellowship in some capacity over a period of years I must confess that there is not that spiritual growth and awareness of the Believer's responsibility that one might desire. I don't say this to condemn but to help.

I feel there are several reasons for this lack of growth -- and as a result a lack of compassion, soul-winning effort and Missionary interest --

1. The Church in general and our Bible Fellowship Church in particular is suffering because of a lack of EXPOSITORY PREACHING.

The TEXTUAL sermon is the most popular among us today. The textual sermon is one in which the text becomes the theme and the parts of the text are the divisions of the sermon and are used to suggest the line of thought. But Broadus states: "In treating the details of a textual sermon it is not necessary to confine ourselves strictly to views presented in the text. Any one of the topics may be developed and applied according to its own nature or according to the designs of the sermon. Textual preaching often fails because of the liberty it allows the preacher in the use of material outside the Bible."

The TOPICAL sermon is one in which the subject alone is derived from the text. But it does offer the preacher opportunity to deviate from strict Scriptural emphasis.

EXPOSITORY preaching -- The expository sermon is the kind in which the subject -- the divisions -- and the details are all derived from the portion of Scripture being expounded. What is expository preaching? -- "Exposition is the technique of developing and presenting extended passages of Scripture in a practical manner, designed to produce growth and spiritual maturity within the congregation."

Many essential passages of Scripture are never touched upon by Pastors that spend the average and more than average term of service in a local Church.

It is with sadness that I say it appears many Churches do not care for this type of preaching and don't demand it. The heavy emphasis upon administration and organization tend to make the pulpit weaker and weaker. I say with sadness and sorrow that the diet of preaching being offered in many of our Churches is the weakest it has been in my association with the Bible Fellowship Church. You can be orthodox and fundamental and still not declare the whole counsel of God. God, give us stronger preaching.

2. I believe we are not maturing as we should because there is a misplaced emphasis in our midst. We are not aware of what should hold TOP PRIORITY in our local Churches. Activity is fine and much to be desired. Programs are needed and helpful. Organizational meetings are a necessity - BUT unless they are created to meet a need and not initiated because one of our sister churches is doing it and growing therefore we must do it - then they detract and hinder proper growth. I have found that our spiritual and willing people are becoming so over-loaded in our Churches - they are beginning to suffer spiritually. Sometimes their word is no longer to be counted on - They have to miss Prayer meeting because of some responsibility they have on another night - they can't sit through a meeting without being called on for some extra-curricular activity. Some solution to this problem must be found to help our spiritual believers and avoid a spiritual draught in the lives of many.

I am not here today to offer one, but I hope and pray one is forthcoming soon or we are in for more trouble.

3. I believe there is a lack of growth and development because many of our members are NOT receiving the spiritual blessings and advantages of special and protracted meetings.

Why have we cut down on Deeper-Life Meetings, Missionary Conferences, Evangelistical Crusades, etc.? Is it not because we are often too embarrassed by the poor attendances they produce? Somehow we must restore these to their proper place and GET our folks burdened and acquainted with the great spiritual privileges they afford. I believe all of us are more than aware with the weakness of our facilities at Mizpah Grove - BUT I say it can be, it has been, it is today, a great source of spiritual blessing and has been used to help develop the lives of many. During my days as a District Superintendent, I kept a rather feeble record of the number of our Official Board members attending and participating in Camp Meeting - I was so ashamed and embarrassed about the results, I told no one.

I will stop along this line - and mention its relationship to world outreach. I am going to be personal and remind you ALL of our BFC missionaries we are supporting and have sent forth come from TEN of our churches. The strange thing about it is that most of our Pastors COME from the same TEN churches. WHY, WHY? WHY?

This bears a careful analysis and it will be most revealing. It should cause us much concern and heart searching.

Could it not be that many of our congregations are centering their attention in a MISPLACED evangelism?

Isn't it a fact that in many of our churches we have a little family reunion every Lord's Day?

I believe that stronger expository preaching -

I believe that when we learn what should have priority and give it priority -

I believe that a well rounded program will result in growth and a Biblical awareness of our world-wide responsibility - This begins at our front door and then goes worldwide.

#### RONALD C. MAHURIN

One of the famous unwritten beatitudes says, Blessed is the man who does not aim to accomplish anything for he shall not be disappointed. This attitude does not seem to prevail among us for there are some among us who are disappointed with the present status quo. We have heard these disappointments expressed on many levels. The local church expresses disappointment for the lack of growth. Our denominational leaders have expressed their disappointment and concern, and in some cases, great concern for the lack of growth and even decline. Missionary leaders and educators are not satisfied with our present rate of growth and influence in the world. And perhaps you too would like to be considered one among the many who is concerned with the growth and world-wide influence of the Bible Fellowship Church. Many have been the speculations as to why we are progressing so slowly. Some have blamed the doctrines of the church, some the church name, some, education, still others, the lack of education. I would imagine that the D.S's, Pastor's, Official Boards, Teachers, all have fallen prey to the speculations and considerations to some degree or other have been found responsible for the lack of growth we would hope to see.

Someone is being overlooked in all of this however. Do you know who? I hope you do! For I have yet to hear someone confess, this church, or this school, or this missionary endeavor is not growing because I am not growing. We need to sit with the disciples of old this morning as they sat with the Lord in the upper room and ask the question that was upon each of their minds that day, Lord, is it I? We are all too willing to cast the stones of speculation at others. May God give us grace to face this question honestly, Lord am I growing in Grace? For if there is no personal growth, it is foolish and vain to speak of world outreach.

The material that should be covered in reference to the growth of the believer is inexhaustable. Therefore, we shall confine our remarks to those areas of growth in the believers' life which most directly affect his worldwide outreach. These areas are conveniently located in II Corinthians Chapter 5.

If you are growing in grace, as you must to effectively reach today's world, you must, for one thing, possess the (I) Certainty of Personal Salvation. This is summed up in Verse 21 "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." God's so-great salvation must be a know-so proposition if you hope to ever effectively reach those about you. It is important that you be able to say, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." John 9:25. A man once commented to a Bible conference speaker, "Isn't it a blessed thing to be safe in the arms of Jesus?" To the man's surprise, the minister replied, "Yes, but I am safer than that!" "Impossible" the astonished friend replied, "How can anyone be safer than in the arms of Jesus?" "It is simple," said the preacher. "I am as safe as an arm of Jesus." This is what Paul said to the saints at Ephesus when he declared, "For we are members of His body, and of His flesh, and of His bones." Ephesians 5:30. And until one has positive assurance of this position of security, his world-wide outreach will be without enthusiasm or abundant fruit. But where do we get this assurance? What is the basis for this certainty? The answer lies not in some vision, not in a certain feeling, not in church membership, not in religious rites or ceremonies, but (1) in the Word of the Living God. In I John 5:9 we read, "If we receive the witness of men, the Witness of God is greater, for this is the Witness of God which He hath testified of His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in Himself, he that believeth not God, hath made Him a liar because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life, he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God that ye may know that ye have eternal life and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." John said the same thing in the Gospel that bears his name. Chapter 20, Verse 31 "But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through His name." (2) In addition to the witness of the Word of God to personal salvation, there is the witness of the Holy Spirit of God. Romans 8:14. "For as many as are lead by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God." Romans 8:16. "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God."

(3) In addition to the witness of the Word of God, and the witness of the Holy Spirit of God to personal salvation, there is the witness of the transformed life. II Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. All things are passed away. Behold all things are become new."

In this matter of the growth of the believer, there must be a certainty of personal salvation. Secondly, if we are to affectively reach our world, there must be, in the growth of the believer, the conviction of pressing responsibilities. II Corinthians 5:18-20 "And all things are of God who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

What a responsibility is ours! He has given to us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, delivering unto men how they can come into favor with God, how they can come into harmony with Him. We are Christ's personal representatives, His ambassadors. And if we are to effectively reach our world today, there must be this conviction of pressing responsibilities.

Our conviction (1) must include the truth that all men are lost. Paul emphasized this in verse 14. "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead," adding in verse 15, "And that he died for all." The Word of God has much to say about the lostness of man: John 5:12: "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." John 3:18 "He that believeth on him is not condemned but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John 3:36 "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him."

When Hudson Taylor was on his way to China as a missionary, the captain of the vessel questioned him one day about his purpose in going. Eventually he asked, "Taylor do you really believe that the heathen will be lost if you do not go to China? Hudson Taylor replied, "No, I do not think the heathen will be lost if I do not go to China. I think the heathen are lost. That's why I'm going to China." This same conviction, that men are lost, must burn in every Christian's heart before he will ever be effective in his world outreach.

(2) Secondly, our conviction regarding our present responsibility must include the truth that Calvary's sacrifice is sufficient. Paul had that confidence and said in verse 15, "He died for all". The Apostle John held this conviction, I John 2:2 "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Jesus' own guarantee was, Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. Thank God, there is no impossible case! No one is too bad to be saved. No one is too good that he need not be saved. Any poor sinner who will trust Christ will find that provision has been made for him and that Heaven will be his eternal home.

(3) Thirdly, our conviction must include that Christ is dependent upon us. Verse 18 "and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." To whom is given the responsibility of telling men how they can come into favor with God? Someone has sung, he could have called ten thousand angels. But was it to the angels he gave this ministry? No, to us, to every Christian. Before you can become completely successful and effective in your outreach for God, you must realize that the business of sharing God's personal plan of salvation with lost men is your business, is your duty, is your responsibility, your obligation to God. Someone has said, "God has wonderful things to display if He could only get the showcases!"

(4) Finally, our conviction must include the truth that we belong entirely to God. Verse 15 "And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." (II Corinthians 5:15). We are not our own after we have received Christ as our Savior and Lord. We read in I Corinthians 6:19-21 "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

(III) Thirdly, if we are to effectively reach our world, there must be evidence in the growth of the believer the compassion of enlightened minds. We find this truth in verses 11 and 14 of II Corinthians 5 "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...." "For the love of Christ constraineth us..." Recall if you will the words of the Apostle, "And I saw a great white throne and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them and I saw the dead small and great, stand before God and the books were opened and another book was opened which is the book of life, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them, and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Revelation 20:11-15. "But the fearful and unbelieving and the abominable and the murderer and whoremonger, and the sorcerer and the idolators and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone which is the second death. Those of us who know how terrible is the judgment of God upon those who turn their back on Jesus Christ, must do everything within our power to compassionately woo and win these lost to Him before it is too late. Do not allow anyone to say what the Psalmist said, "No man cared for my soul."

I have read of a railroad conductor who rose in a testimony meeting and said "More than thirty years ago, I was a conductor on a freight train going up into Arkansas. Late in the afternoon, we came in to a little way station; I received my orders which gave me a clear tract to the next station, eighteen miles away. I gave my engineer the signal that we were cleared and we were on our way. Just six miles down the track we rounded a curve and came upon a trestle approaching a river bridge. My engineer saw a fast moving passenger train coming to meet him. He reversed the brakes and tried to avoid the inevitable collision of the two trains, but it was too late; the wreckage of the two trains plunged to the sands below. People were killed, many were injured. Night came on and a relief train was sent out, but while we waited for it, I saw a group of men coming toward me with a rope in their hand. They put the rope around my head and tightened it about my neck and said, "Sir, you were in charge of one of these trains. We demand to know if you are responsible for the death and crippling of these people?" I saw desperation in their faces. I took out of my pocket a little piece of paper. I said, "Gentlemen, here are my orders, I obeyed them."

Sometimes at night, continued the conductor, I see that scene all over again. I hear the screams and the groans of the dying. I cannot sleep. I get up and go across the hall to the living room where I switch on the light. Over the mantle in a frame is a little piece of paper, faded with age. I would not part with it for any price. I stand before it and bow my head and say, "Thank God, I was not responsible for the wreck! Here are my orders." This seems to give peace to my troubled heart and I go back and lie down to sleep.

How about you, dear Christian friend, are you obeying your orders? If people you know and love wind up in Hell, can you say that you have faithfully and compassionately warned them and have followed the soul-winning orders given to you by the Master?

The Bible has much to say about the compassion we need. Psalm 126:5, 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."

Jeremiah 9:1, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people."

Real compassion will accomplish a ministry when all else fails. People are still impressed with someone who loves them.

(IV) Finally, if we are growing in grace and seek to effectively reach our world, there must be the confession of personal helplessness. Chapter 5 of II Corinthians and Verse 20. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." We are only ambassadors, all of our authority is received from the one who sent us. Nothing can be done in our own strength. Jesus, in comparing the relationship He has with His servants with that of a vine and its branches said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me and I in him the same bringeth forth much fruit. For without me ye can do nothing." Oh that we might realize that the sum total of all that we can do in our own strength is nothing. We are in a strange battle when we fight in the army of God. II Corinthians 10:3-5 informs us "Though we walk in the flesh we do not war after the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds: Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." The one who has called us to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ who has given us everything that we need to so fulfill that command. For example, (1), We have the Word of God. Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the hearts. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? Desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby. This word of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein and I shall make thy way prosperous and then thou shalt have good success. (2) We have the assistance of prayer enabling us to grow. Call upon me and I will answer thee and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not. Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh, receiveth, and he that seeketh, findeth, and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.

Last, but certainly not least, (3) we have the gift of the Holy Spirit to encourage us in growth. This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord. And ye shall receive Power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."

With such tremendous battles before us to fight for Christ, it is a great comfort to be able to claim as ours the same guarantees God gave Judah during the Assyrian invasion: "Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him; for there be more with us than with him; With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles."

Do you want to so grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ that you might be a part of an effective witness to the world in which we live. These are a part of the requirements:

1. Certainty of Personal Salvation.
2. Conviction of Pressing Responsibilities  
Men are lost and we must reach them  
Calvary's Sacrifice is Sufficient  
Christ has called us to be witnesses unto them. We belong  
entirely to him.
3. Compassion of Enlightened Minds.
4. Confession of Personal Helplessness.