

Present Day Evangelism Evaluated in the Light of the Bible

by Paris Reidhead

New Testament evangelism emphasizes the importance of a personal revelation of Christ, surrender to His sovereignty, and the fullness of the Spirit for true belief and repentance.

Duration: 55:57

Scripture: Romans 15:15

Topics: "Evangelism"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the topic of present-day evangelism in light of the Bible. He starts by referring to Romans chapter 15 and the testimony of an evangelist about his ministry. The preacher emphasizes the New Testament plan and pattern of evangelists, pastors, and teachers for the perfecting of the saints. He questions how the apostle Paul could have fully preached the gospel from Jerusalem to Illyricum without modern means of communication, highlighting the sovereignty of Christ in the foundation of the New Testament Church. The sermon concludes with the example of the rich young ruler who was unwilling to submit to Jesus as Lord and the importance of abandoning oneself to Christ for eternal life.

Transcript

Our theme this evening is one that is suggested by the songs we've been singing and the testimony we've heard, present-day evangelism evaluated in the light of the Bible. Where do we go from here? Will you turn, please, to Romans, Chapter 15? This is the place of our beginning when we have the testimony of an evangelist concerning his ministry, concerning that which the Lord had given him to do. I believe that if we start at this point, it will be suggestive and will lead us on into all that the Lord has for us.

Now the point that I suggest that we begin reading is verse 15, though actually it's verses 18 and 19 that I wish to have you see more clearly. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, is putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. I have therefore, whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God, for I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and around about unto Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation. But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of they shall see, and they that have not heard shall understand. For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.

Now may the Lord impress upon our hearts the sweet truth of his word concerning the testimony of this man, who used double negative to emphasize the thing that he was saying. I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me. It is the most emphatic way that he could say, I am only saying that which has actually happened.

I am taking my stand today and affirming before you that these things of which I now speak are in fact that which has transpired. I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me to make the Gentiles obedient. Will you turn to Acts chapter 26? We are studying tonight not only principles that are eternal and unchangeable, but we are studying the response of an individual to those principles.

And therefore it is to verse 15 of this, or perhaps even earlier, verse 13 of this 26th chapter that I bring you. Paul is testifying to his experience with the Lord. At midday, O King, I saw in the way a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me and saying in the Hebrew tongue, So, so, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the prince. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? He said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of these things which thou hast seen and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee, delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Now this was that which the Lord said to him, and this is his response after thirty-five years, Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision, but showed first unto them of Damascus, at Jerusalem, throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. Thus, as you have the testimony of the apostle here in Romans fifteen, you see and understand that this man knows whereof he speaks. He met a man in Jerusalem, and he met the Lord Jesus Christ, and he is preaching Christ.

He is proclaiming the Lord Jesus as the answer to the need of the Jews and the Gentiles alike. He is not speaking from hearsay. He met the Lord.

We see this meeting. We see that the Lord Jesus Christ was presented to Paul in his resurrection authority, and we understand from this event what was involved in believing on Christ. It was not simply assenting to what he had heard.

Some weeks ago I spoke to you from this theme, pointing out that for many months previous to this time Paul was fully acquainted with the gospel. He knew the scripture. He had listened to the arguments of Christians.

He had stood by as they testified to seeing Christ alive, hearing him preach during the days of his ministry, then seeing him die and meeting him after his resurrection. Nevertheless, this made no impression upon the apostle. It was upon Saul of Tarsus, the hater of Christians and the persecutor of the church.

All of this had its place, all of this had its purpose in the economy of God, but it was not until there was a personal revelation of the fact that Jesus Christ was alive that he was prepared to believe. Now, the fact is that believing was a great deal more than assenting to what truth had been sown in his mind and heart. Unquestionably this was the case.

He had assented immediately to everything that he had learned concerning Christ. Perhaps this is the reason he was prepared and able to preach effectively concerning Christ shortly after his conversion because he had spent so much time as a lawyer refuting these people. And when he knew that Christ was alive, all he had to do was to reverse the brief and use their arguments, for they were true now that he had seen the Lord.

But remember this, the arguments, the testimony from the Old Testament, the multiplied witness of those that had met Christ did not meet his need. It was necessary for him to have a revelation of Christ, the fact that Jesus Christ was alive from the dead. This was imperative if he was to know the Lord.

And so God, understanding that the Jews require a sign as well as that the Greeks seek after wisdom, met Saul of Tarsus on the basis of the demands of his nature and his being and gave to him a revelation of the sovereignty of Christ. Now, the response of the apostle characterized the belief of the New Testament period. It was an utter abandonment to the sovereignty of the risen Lord.

The belief in the resurrection of Christ was synonymous with a submission to Christ's sovereignty. This you must understand. You don't really understand, none of us do, the meaning of belief on the Lord Jesus Christ until we see it in the frame of reference with which Paul presented it from his own experience.

To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ was not simply to consent to the scripture that proved he was Messiah. It wasn't simply to consent to the testimony that said he was raised from the dead. To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ included this, but it was more than that in that it involved a total abandonment to the person of Christ.

Everything, all of his past with the honors that he'd earned, all of his present with the position that he held, all of his future with the prospects that it offered, everything was abandoned to Jesus Christ, the crucified, buried, risen, ascended, glorified Son of God as soon as Saul of Tarsus knew that he was raised from the dead. And his word of response was, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Now this is believing on Christ. This is what Paul meant when he spoke to the Philippian jailer.

Abandon everything to him. Surrender your past with all of its sin, your present with all of its possessions, your future with all of its prospects into the nail-pierced hand of a man who conquered death and who lives and reigns. This is what he meant by believing.

This is what Paul did when he believed. This is what the message was that went out to sinners everywhere. Jesus Christ is God.

This one born of the Virgin Mary is God. He lived and walked and talked and died and rose from the dead as God. And now as God you must receive him, as God you must submit to him, as God you must obey him, for he is God, very God of very God.

Now we understand that Paul had a good beginning. There was a revelation of himself. There was a revelation of Jesus Christ.

There was an understanding of the demands of Christ and a glad, hearty, permanent abandonment to all the claims of Christ upon him. He began well. We understand, therefore, that he never afterwards changed this message at all.

He never made it any easier for anyone else. He never tried under any circumstances to ameliorate it. He didn't want to water it down.

He didn't want to dissipate the claws, the clinch in it. He was perfectly prepared to submit it on these terms as long as he preached. This makes his ministry all the more effective and all the more marvelous, because in his heart there was absolutely no thought of minimizing the claims of Christ.

Years ago out on the west coast a man came before the Fuller Seminary students and he said something like this. Now, students, when you go out in evangelism and pastoral work, whatever it may be, when you're talking to sinners, don't talk about sin. Don't talk about surrender.

Don't talk about the lordship of Christ. Just talk about believing on Jesus. And after they've said that, then explain to them what they've done and tell them what it means, and then gradually lead them into the implications of it.

Well, the students had a great deal more insight and courage than the man that spoke to them, and they with one accord began to challenge him with the intrinsic dishonesty of what he was doing and demanded that he recall these suggestions as far as they were concerned and that thereafter it be understood that as far as they were concerned, this type of approach be branded as the heresy that it obviously was. That our Lord Jesus Christ in his ministry never minced matters, never compromised, never equivocated. He with the glad, bold, hearty affirmation declared that it was necessary for him to be lord of all of the family relationships, as there in Luke 14 you read it, he was to be lord of all career ambitions and he was to be lord of all personal possessions.

And unless one was prepared to receive him on these terms, they couldn't be his disciple and even matriculate in kindergarten and learn how to have life. Now this we've got to understand about New Testament evangelism. They presented it straightforwardly.

They had no second, third, fourth class of entrance. It was all at the main gate and they paid full price. This was the testimony, this was the message, take it or leave it, here it is.

A rich young ruler came saying, what must I do to have eternal life? And our Lord said, sell all you have, give it to the poor, come follow me. Now the essence of that was, receive me as Lord and allow me to tell you what to do. Recognize that I am God and submit to me as you would submit only to God and allow me to tell you what to do about your family, about your possessions and about your future.

Allow me to be the only thing that I can ever accept from you, which is the homage and the worship and the submission and the abandonment, yea, the belief that will give you eternal life. The young ruler wouldn't do it. Our Lord watched him go sorrowing, but he watched him go.

He couldn't call him back, he couldn't change it, there wasn't anything that he could do to alter it. This was what the Father had given him to say and this he had to say. And so this, you must understand, accounts for the basic foundation of the New Testament church.

Everyone in it had, at the very threshold, submitted to the sovereignty of Christ. Now, unfortunately, I was at a school some years ago and was simply preaching the truth as it had been in Christ. I was nothing new, nothing novel.

And one of the professors, aged and honorable, came to me and said, oh, how my heart thrills to hear this. It's what we heard every place I went when I was a boy. This was our message.

And yet, one of the professors came to me at the conclusion of the week and said, you know, I really feel that there's been a misunderstanding. I want to clear it up as far as I'm concerned. I thought I heard you say that to really be a Christian you had to accept Jesus as Lord and submit to his Lordship.

I thought that was the deeper life message, the Keswick message. And I said, well, I'm sure you didn't misunderstand. This was exactly what I meant to convey.

And if this is what you have gathered from the preaching, then you have gathered correctly. Because I firmly believe that this is the message we present to sinners, that this is the essence of sin, revolt against God's rule. This is what constitutes a sinner, one that is determined to govern his own life.

Self-will, self-rule is always to be viewed as the very heart of sin. And certainly no one can be saved from the penalty of playing God while he's still determined to do it. Now, I said, you understood correctly.

We may not agree, but we are at least on grounds of understanding. Well, he said, I'm going to have to think this through. I'm going to have to see it again.

But isn't it strange that what was the message of salvation in the early church is a deeper life message in the twentieth century? And could this account for the pernicious spiritual anemia that seems to pervade in so much of evangelical Christendom? I think perhaps it does. You've heard me cite the statistics repeatedly, and that is that such men as R. G. Lee of Memphis, Tennessee, and our own Dr. Tozer have cited that in their estimation, ten percent and twenty percent of the members of evangelical churches give Bible evidence of regeneration. I do not know whether this is the case, but I do know that they are wise men whose observations are based upon years of experience and no calumny against the church or the day, but rather an expression of grief and of pity.

But we see now--I'm bringing it to you in this form--that as we consider evangelism in the light of the Bible, we must understand the testimony that was presented concerning Christ in that first century. Jesus Christ is God. The essence of sin is revolt against God.

To return to God is to submit to Jesus Christ as sovereign ruler of every area of the life. This is the essence of repentance, the evidence of faith. Now going on from there, let's understand the next thing that characterized New Testament evangelism, and that is that it was a church matter that the individual should be led into an experience of the fulness of the Spirit.

We understand this concerning the apostles, the twelve, the hundred and twenty, the five hundred. We understand that on the night of the resurrection, our Lord Jesus came into the upper room and said to those gathered, Peace be unto you. As the Father has sent me, so send I you.

And then it says he breathed in--in breathe--in this fashion and said, Receive the Holy Ghost. Now it's my firm conviction that this night of the resurrection, the Spirit of God came into these apostles, indwelling them. Previously, a few days earlier, the Lord said to these, The Spirit of God is with you and he shall be in

you.

And on this night, he said, Receive the Holy Ghost. Now some of our great teachers have suggested that he was giving instructions for Pentecost, but the Greek is a very exact language, and this is an aorist imperative. And the only possible way that it could be extended for forty days and still be the same commandment is to be qualified with many strict adverbial modifiers.

And there are no adverbs there to indicate that this commandment was to be obeyed at any other time. It's therefore my conviction that the very night of the resurrection, our Lord told those gathered with him to in breathe and that thus the Spirit of God indwelt them, and I believe that simultaneously indwelt all of those who had believed and to whom he would reveal himself. So that on the day of Pentecost, when the hundred and twenty were gathered, waiting there ten days in one accord, one place, one mind before the Lord, waiting before him, holding his promise before him, that occasion we call Pentecost was the upon-baptism of the Church, where the Spirit of God came upon those into whom he'd already come previously with an anointing for service for freedom and for life and for ministry.

Now this happened at that point as a point of beginning. We find that on another occasion in the house of Cornelius, Peter began to preach, and as he was speaking, the Spirit of God fell upon Cornelius and those believers, those who believed, gathering with him, and they had identically the same experience transpire as occurred on the day of Pentecost some years earlier. I believe there's a reason for this.

I am sure that Peter would not have been prepared to have accepted the Gentiles on equal basis with the Jews if he had not beheld the Spirit of God poured out upon them exactly as he had been upon the company in the upper room on the day of Pentecost. But it also establishes this, that God can meet the needs of his own in any way he chooses, and if someone should dogmatically assert that there's only one way to be filled with the Spirit, then we come back to the experience of Cornelius and say, well, our rules, as lovely as they may be, are made to be broken by the God of sovereignty who made them, and therefore it's his privilege to meet any heart in any manner that he will. And someone says to me, well, you know, I was filled with the Spirit on the day I was saved.

At the time I was saved, all I can say is, bless your heart, so was Cornelius. If you're satisfied, so am I. But I want you to understand that as true as this is, it is equally true that this was not generally the case. For we find, for instance, there in Samaria, where Philip preached, great miracles attested the ministry of Philip.

The lame were healed, the devils were cast out, and following their conversion, they were baptized. But I said that though this was the message of believing in Christ, an utter abandonment to his sovereignty, a total commitment to his lordship, and I believe at this time of baptism they had been regenerated and thus were partakers of the Holy Spirit in life, and would we be pleased to use the word, indwelt by him, the life-giver. But they were not ready for their service, and so we find this is now a church matter.

And up to the city of Samaria comes Peter and John. This is still part of evangelism. Do you recall what it was that John preached? Repent, for there comes one after me, preferred before me, he it is that shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

And John's message of good news was, repent so that you won't be burned up with the chaff, but that's a by-product. You can know God, you can be filled with the fullness of God. Now we find that this is what's happening.

Philip has preached, he's preached repentance in the name of Christ, miracles have been done in the name of Christ, and these have believed and been baptized, but it's not finished. Peter and John come, and they minister to them, instructing them, teaching them, opening the word to them, praying for them, and laying their hands upon them, if you please, that they might be filled with the Spirit. Thus it is seen that it was normal, it was expected, no other instances, but apparently there was nothing to indicate that this was unusual.

We do see, however, shortly after this, that on the road to Damascus, the Lord Jesus appeared to Saul of Tarsus. Now have you contemplated this? If the Lord could have given to Saul, or did give to Saul of Tarsus, this glorious revelation of himself, could he not also have filled Saul with the Holy Spirit as he did Cornelius? And obviously the answer is yes, of course he could. Well, is there any reason why he may not have, did not do so? And I suggest this reason.

Saul of Tarsus would have been, from that time on, utterly apart from the Church. He'd have had no sense of submission to or identification with the Church. He would have gone on in the same level.

But what did he do? He led this, had this man led into the city of Damascus. There he abode three days. And you recall, and I love this, it's just like our wonderful Lord, to send to Saul not some prominent preacher, but a certain disciple.

Oh, how my soul thrills at that. Somebody that wasn't even registered as an elder, just a certain disciple. And this man, who was to be the instrument of great blessing to the ends of the earth, was sitting there in blindness when a certain disciple came named Ananias.

Isn't that wonderful? Oh, the fact that the Lord wants us to understand that we're members of one of another. And so Ananias came in and told him all about himself. He said, Brother Saul, you remember what he'd said to the Lord? Oh, Lord, this man's persecuting the Church.

We know about him. It's all right. You go.

He's a chosen vessel unto me, and I've appeared and told him what great things he must suffer for my name's sake. You go, Ananias. And Ananias came in, Brother Saul.

The Lord has appeared to me. The Lord's told me all about you. And he sent me to pray for you, that you might be healed, you might be filled with the Spirit.

And Ananias came and, I'm sure, stood behind where Paul was seated, just laid his hands on, identifying himself with Paul, identifying Paul with the Church. And Paul is learning now that he's part of a body of believers. He's not just Saul the soloist.

He's just one of the members of the choir, you see. And he's there, part of the body. Ananias prays for him, scales fall from his eyes, and he's filled with the Holy Ghost.

Well, we find that this is what happens up a little later, when Paul goes, and there's a group of believers. They've heard about John's baptism, and they believed on the Lord, because John said, he's coming after me, and he's preferred before me. And undoubtedly, they'd heard of his burial, resurrection, but they'd only heard of John's baptism.

And so, they were baptized. I don't think there's any question but what they were born of God. No, not mine, not the slightest hesitation.

I'm sure Paul didn't teach baptismal regeneration. He was satisfied they knew the Lord. They'd been baptized, and they believed on him savingly.

And so, he said, now look, you're baptized now in the name of the Lord Jesus. And so, after their water baptism, then he did just exactly what Peter and John did in Samaria, and what Amos did for him. And he instructed them, and he taught them.

Now, all of this is part of the good news. This is part of it. You see, the difference between Saul and us would be, or Paul and the New Testament and ours, we've been leaving people on a plateau called forgiven, as though this were the saved.

And we've divided it up. We shouldn't have divided it up. And we've gotten great harm because we've divided it up.

There's not a thing in the Word, my dear friend, that indicates that God ever intended us to have a big thing down here in front of the pulpit called saved, and another thing up here called filled with the Spirit. And all he wants to do is get the fish out of water and get them up here on the saved platform, and then the few eager ones can go around the stairway and climb up to the sanctified level. This isn't what God intended.

And the consequence of that is, the great bulk of the people in our churches, the great majority of them, have had at some time an assurance of sins forgiven, but they've only heard a portion of the good news, a portion of the great salvation. And they've heard about pardon, they've heard about escape from hell, and so they've come in. But you know, everything in this Bible that has to speak about the church and about witness and ministry presupposes being filled with the Spirit of God as the normal Christian life.

Worship all depends upon that. Witness all depends upon that. What did our Lord say? He said to these disciples after his resurrection, you know, Dr. Simpson put it, the Lord wasn't afraid they wouldn't get busy, he was afraid they would, because all the energy they'd have with which to serve him was that which they'd use to serve themselves.

And so now he said, you go into Jerusalem and tarry there. After that, the Holy Ghost has come upon you. Then you remember, just as he took leave of them, he said, it's not for you to know the times of the seasons which are in the Father's hands.

These are hidden in his heart. But after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you, ye shall receive dunamis, and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And thus witness and testimony presupposes being filled with the Spirit.

Now let me say it again. Every relationship to the church, every function in the Christian life, all ministrations from the believer presuppose being filled with the Spirit. This is the normal Christian life.

This is the place of beginning. Not some goal toward which you spend a lifetime in pursuit. This is the threshold.

This is where we begin. Now, let's go back. We've seen what happened when Paul went out.

He didn't only proclaim a message. He did. But he said, I didn't want you to have me come to you just in skill, in the wisdom of men's words.

You know, we give great honor and preference to men that are skillful in use of words. Alliteration is a great merchandisable product in our day. And the skill of words and clever turn of the phrase, all of these are things that men seek after.

But Paul said, I didn't come to you with this. This wasn't my stock in trade. I determined that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men.

So I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. Well, in what did it stand? He said that your faith might stand in the demonstration of the power and the Spirit of God. He wanted them to see and to know.

So what is his testimony? I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed through mighty signs and wonders by the power of the Spirit of God. So what is Paul saying? Word, deed, mighty signs and wonders. This was that which he used.

Now, many times when I would go into a tribe or a village in Africa where, to my knowledge, no missionary had ever preceded me, my heart used to break that God had asked me to finish Paul's work and he'd taken away all the equipment with which to do it. This just didn't seem fair. I wouldn't mind going where Paul went and having to finish up the task he didn't get finished, but it did seem unsporting of the Lord to take away all the equipment and the enabling that had been Paul's and send me out with a Bible that was about the size of a Sunday school quarterly, because when I went, all I had was how great, you know, the great I was, how great the Lord used to be and the great I will be, how great it was going to be in the tribulation.

But right now we were living in kind of a desert and there wasn't much to offer. And I could stand and say, now, read from the book of Mark, you know, and they'd say, well, is this Jesus still alive? Why, yes, he's still alive. You mean to say he's still? Yes, he's still.

Well, now, why doesn't he do that? Oh, I used to avoid the book of Mark because that got me into a lot of trouble with these people. They were going to bring their sick people to me. And I knew all these things had stopped, you know, at the day at the destruction of Jerusalem and the completion of the canon.

God just withdrew all of this, just took it all. Oh, that's what I'd been taught. That's what I'd been taught.

But that isn't what God's word taught. My heart used to ache and yearn and long. Oh, Lord, I don't mind being out here enduring all of the powers of hell and darkness and disease.

But oh, Lord, it's such a such a unfair thing to have taken away everything that you gave Paul and the others to use. And now you send me out. They had a shovel and all.

I've got a pair of chopsticks and I've got a mountain to move and no tools to move it. It used to just break my heart. Then God began to deal with me and show me that this wasn't his his mind or way or will or word.

He'd never change. He was Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever. He was willing to be and to do as he'd ever done.

That he hadn't changed, but people had changed. First, the message to sinners had changed. Instead of it being, accept him as a sovereign that'll reign in all areas of your life, it had become, accept him as a hell insurance policy that'll let you go out and live the way you want to and just take him to keep from burning.

Instead of receiving the fullness of the Spirit, it was as an experiential reality that would transform your life from the menial and the mundane and the powerless. It was just a matter of assuming that all these things were so. And so I began to realize there in that burning crucible of the mission field that many of the inhibiting things that I had been taught and accepted as so may have been true in the minds of those who taught them, but they weren't verified by the Word.

But you know, we still come back to this, that as much as I know this and believe this, God is waiting for a people that see it and understand that he works through the church. Now let me bring you to the 20th century. What was the difference between Paul and the present? The difference was this.

The church in Paul's day was made up of Pauls, was made up of people with the same basis, the same background, the same relationship to Christ, the same experience. And today what do we find? We find that this is the day when we have spectator sports, when a hundred thousand people will go to a football game to see 22 men rub each other's noses in the grass and kick a little retired pig around and do it and pay a lot of money to do it. This is the 20th century.

Now the same people are willing to go to church and see preachers evangelize and evangelists evangelize. They want spectator Christianity. Now perhaps we pastors and preachers and evangelists have been responsible for producing this, or perhaps it's the product of the age.

But I know this, that if you make astounding claims and are willing to do it, set up a tent with a ministry of miracles, if you've got the finesse and the poise and the psychological approach, that you can pretty well succeed today in this 20th century, even if one didn't. But if one has some anointing of God and some gift of God, then of course it's foregone that it will be. But dear friends, the 20th century is going to be known, if the Lord tarries and allows this century to be seen in perspective, as the day of spectator Christianity, as the day when we've been demanded that we should be spectators and that the few should be the participants.

And I believe that if there's no other reason for the strange withdrawal of anointing and power, it's right on this point. It's almost impossible to break it. You know that for these five and a half years I've been telling you, since the first Sunday I was with you and almost every Sunday since, that the New Testament plan and pattern is evangelists and pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints into the work of the ministry.

How could it be said by Paul that he had fully preached the gospel of Christ from Jerusalem to Illyricum, from Jerusalem to Yugoslavia, without the benefit of rapid transportation, without the benefit of radio or television, any of these things we take for granted. How could it be said? Do you mean to imply for so much as a moment that Paul had personally spoken to everyone in these areas and the answer has to be an unequivocal no? How was it done? It was done by Paul reproducing himself, reproducing himself in others. And everyone that came to know the Lord through Paul's ministry was led into the same experience of the fullness of the Spirit that Paul had, was instructed in the truth, was established in the

faith, was equipped with the message, and so that where he went he didn't just leave converts, he left little Paul Pauls, men that had the same relationship to the Lord and to the Word as he had.

And I believe that when he would leave, he started it and it radiated in enlarging circles of testimony out of the very boundaries of the area that was called civilized. Because of the fact that he had followed this biblical pattern of geometric increase, where he squared it every time anyone came to Christ, he had multiplied the total preaching force by that much. This, I believe, is the pattern that is sadly needed in the 20th century.

Here it's the day of big men instead of the day of the big Lord. It's the day of the big meeting instead of the day of the mighty anointing. It's the day when we'd rather hire somebody to do it for us than to be available to Christ to do it through us.

And I would epitomize my analysis of 20th century evangelism as good as it is, whether it's on the mission field or whether it's at home, as the day when we would like to hire someone to do it for us rather than to put ourselves in the way of having our risen Lord do it through us. And this, I believe, is a satanic delusion that came on the church back with the capture of the church by Catholicism by Rome in the fourth century, the day when the spirit of the Nicolaitans, the idea of the division between laity and clergy, was accepted. This thing that the Lord said he hated and that it has been carried on even with the Protestant Reformation, it wasn't broken.

And down across the centuries, since that time, it hasn't been broken. But when we come back to biblical Christianity, we come back to this, that you're either a missionary or a mission field, one or the other. There's no middle ground.

You're either his, wholly sold out to him, seeking and knowing the fullness of the Spirit of God, a witness for Christ, not in terms of the program somebody promotes, but in terms of the administration of the head of the church through you as a member of his body. You are either that or you're a mission field, one or the other. Now, when we can accept this, this utter obliteration between clergy and laity and the idea that evangelism can be done by some personality coming into the community, it can't.

D. L. Moody wrote to the committee at St. Louis. I've repeated it four or five times from this pulpit. It's a tool.

I'll use it because it emphasizes the truth I'm wishing to convey. He said, I've been 40 years of evangelism. During these 40 years, I've seen tens of thousands come to Christ.

But I have yet to find anybody that's come to Christ through my ministry and lived ten years afterward as a consistent Christian, but there was somebody that witnessed to them and prayed for them before I came to town. I conclude, therefore, the important thing is not the coming of D. L. Moody, but the intercession of and the witness by the people that are in St. Louis. Now, I'm not decrying for a moment the place of the honored, anointed servant of God coming into an area, but I am saying that no man brings evangelistic power in his briefcase, nor brings revival in his knapsack, and brings a blessing of God there.

It comes when every member of the body of Christ recognizes that God has no stepchildren. It comes when you realize that God's evangelistic strategy is that everyone upon whom the Holy Ghost is intended to come is to be a witness for Christ. It comes when you realize that you are the prime unit in God's evangelistic purpose.

Now, when you see this, then you recognize that we're dealing with something entirely different. One has to choose, I said, whether they're going to try to get loyal people to promote them, or they're trying to get a great many people to seek the Lord until he anoints them, and each becomes the witness for Christ where God would have them be. Now, it's extremely costly to the individual.

It's much easier to watch a candle burn than to be the candle. You understand that the only way you can be a candle is to let yourself be consumed. The wick burns and the wax disappears, and thus God has given to us this year the lights.

The only light he had to make reference to was the little lamp filled with oil, but there was no possibility of the illumination being given without the wicks being burned, and you are that in God's person. It's the power of the Holy Spirit that casts the illumination, but you're the wick, and so it means you have to become involved with the people, with their problems, with their needs, with their difficulties. What is the prime strategy of evangelism? Recently I saw an article written by Dr. Billy Graham.

He said, if I were a pastor living in a needy community, I would gather a group of men in my church that love Jesus Christ, and I would have those people with me at least two or three nights a week and as many hours as they could spare. I would teach those people everything I knew. I would pray for them until they had any experience with God that I had.

I would seek for God everything for them that I'd ever sought for myself, and then I would ask God to send them out to reproduce themselves in identically the same way with others. He said, this, I believe, is the procedure that I would follow if I were a pastor. Now, I believe that this is biblical.

I believe this is the pattern of the New Testament. I believe that this is the pattern of the Methodist movement, which was in some respects the most nearly biblical of any movement that we've had since the time of the Reformation, when Wesley would gather these groups of twelve under mature spiritual leadership, and they would search the Word and seek the Lord until they were brought to that place of maturity where that instead of having twelve in a group, they'd have twelve groups led by that first company. This is the cell multiplication that has caused the Communists to grow so phenomenally during the last forty years.

They learned it from the Word of God. It is my conclusion, therefore, and I present it to you, that here in a city such as New York with eight million people, we must go back to elemental biblical principles, which are these, that you have understood that to believe in Christ is an utter abandonment to His sovereignty, that you understand that to be a normal Christian is to be filled with the Spirit of God, that you understand that evangelism is not the responsibility of the few professionals, but that everyone who possesses Christ in the fullness of his presence is thereby not only entitled to be a witness, but commissioned, commanded to be a witness for Christ, not under the program of some leadership, but under the control of the risen head. Now, beloved, I believe that when we recognize this, we see this, and commit ourselves to this, that when elders and deacons, pastor and people together, commit themselves to this principle of evangelism, we will not have to criticize what is being done, and that is not my intention.

I am simply pointing out to you that what is being done is woefully inadequate in terms of the population explosion and the world that confronts us. We must have some dynamic principle, and the only principle that has not been tried effectively during the twentieth century is the one to which I call your loyalty tonight, a recognition that God's strategy is that every member of the body of Christ be first under the supreme control of the risen head, and then be fully possessed by the Holy Spirit, and even possessing his fullness.

And thus, the Lord Jesus is able to work, and every Christian is as a brand that will start about him a fire.

It is to this end, therefore, that we've called you, not to criticize, as I say, what is being done, and not to pick faults in it, nor find flaws in it, nor to object to it, for it has among its own strongest advocates its own most serious critics. I believe we're past the time of that. I believe that however Christ is preached, we must be grateful, we must be glad, but I believe that while we can see and know and recognize that however Christ is being preached, some are being helped, that the best that we're doing today is not adequate for the population that confronts us and the responsibility that is ours.

It therefore behooves us to accept the fact that the Bible has a plan, the Bible has a principle, the Bible has a proposal. We've tried everything else. It seems as though we ought to be ready now to try what God has established as his eternal unchangeable program.

It is this that we announce to sinners far and wide that to receive Christ is to receive him as undisputed sovereign at the very first concession to Christ, the first acceptance of him, and then we tell them that it is not simply to submit to him as sovereign and as savior, but it is to present to him their blood-bought bodies that he may fill them with his presence, that in addition to his indwelling presence they may know his anointing presence, that thus they may be equipped to every good word and work and to in the body of Christ. And I entreat you, I exhort you to support this, not because it's mine or because I announce it, but because it is that which is the mature conviction of those who are most concerned about our day and our Christian responsibility in it. And I believe that when our hearts are unified in this and we see it and understand it, we recognize it, then we know that where we go from here is back.

We go back into those basic principles that God is pleased to honor and to bless, and when they're released again, God will be pleased to bless again. All he seeks is a vehicle through which he can pour his omnipotence, and by the grace of God, let you and I together purpose to be part of that vehicle. Shall we bow in prayer? We come to thee, our heavenly Father, to thank thee and to praise thee that thou hast allowed us to live and serve this generation.

We realize that there may have been others more congenial to us, slower with less draft upon our nervous energy and less demand upon our strength, with less of the pressure that makes life seemingly so utterly unbearable at times. And yet, Lord, with all of this we thank thee that thou hast allowed us to serve thee now. For we realize that these are days when the world is confronting problems it's never seen before, meeting issues it's never encountered before.

And yet we believe as thou hast discovered that there's great revealed to man in science that there's great power in the atom, so thou art going to reveal that the individual believer filled with the fullness of God and under the control of Christ is the atom that thou wouldst have released its energy and power. Lord, we are not big as individuals, we're but atoms. But when thou canst release the resurrection life of Jesus Christ through us that are no larger in earth's family than atoms, thou canst display that the energy is not in us, but in him.

And so we pray that this people may see and sense and know and understand that toward which thou art leading us and driving us and pressing us, and that this company that might in some days past have been feel might become force, until standing together in wholehearted commitment to what we believe is thine own unfolded, unveiled, revealed plan and purpose. We can have gathered here and elsewhere where thou dost please and choose, for thou art doing the same among groups all over, people that are in such relationship with the risen head, our Lord Jesus, that they can be a vehicle through which he can pour

himself in his resurrection power and grace. Father, we want to see something done so wonderful that no man can get the credit, no flesh shall glory in thy sight, no name shall be known, only that Jesus shall be glorified.

This is the cry of our heart. We believe thou art pleased to bless the church. The unit of thy working is the church, the local church, the company of believers.

And to that end, we pray thou wilt work here, gather the hearts of elders and deacons, Sunday school teachers, youth workers all together, Lord, in the glorious adventure of obedience to thy word and truth, that together we might come to the place where thou canst pour out thy spirit upon us and that we will not be fractured or burned, but we will be channeled, insulated vessels through which thou canst pour something of the glory that is Christ. To that end, bless, to that end, move, seal the word of this evening and let the Holy Ghost burn in upon the hearts of the people. And, Grandfather, that as we've set before thee now, this call for those that are hungry to meet together in groups for fellowship, to seek one another, to seek with one another all thy best for them, that there will be a glad response.

And so, be pleased to help us that the Lord Jesus may get out of our blood-ransomed lives the glory that is his due. This is all we ask. With our heads still bowed and our eyes closed, just this word of invitation to speak of so great a Savior, so glorious a salvation, and not to give you opportunity to make known your need or to seek him would hardly be fair.

And so, in the name of the Lord Jesus, we stand before you, exhorting you and inviting you to come to him on his terms, an utter submission to his sovereignty, an utter abandonment to him. He wants to be Lord and Savior. Oh, dear sinner friend, if you're with us, won't you come to him tonight? We'd be so glad to have you come down.

Wait for us till we could talk and pray with you. And then, dear Christian friend, further exhortation. Here before me on this table are these little sheets we've prepared that'll enable you to somehow locate yourself and indicate whether or not you're interested in being a part of some group meeting together for such purposes we've outlined.

If you'd be pleased to come and take one, if you haven't received it, we'd be happy to have you do it. They'll be right here on this little table in front of the pulpit. Now, let us stand for the benediction.

Now, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be in abide with each of us now and until Jesus comes again. Amen.

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