

The King's Highway

An Advocate of Scriptural Holiness

"And an highway shall be there and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness."

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REVIVALISM AND EVANGELISM

A "Crusade for Christ." Message by
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The terms in the caption of this writing are not synonymous, neither are they synchronous. The major objective of a revival is for the church, as the term itself implies, and the revival is always a pre-requisite for evangelism. The one must precede the other; and that has been the order in which they have obtained across the centuries, and that order cannot be reversed. It is the divine order, as recorded all through the Bible. Every great spiritual movement has been preceded by a new awakening of the church, or, rather, it has been begun by the awakening of the church. Pentecost preceded the conversion of the multitudes; and that order has followed in the history of the church from then until now.

Great evangelism is always the fruitage of a great revival. Pentecost was the revival from which came the evangelism, resulting in the conversion of the thousands. The revived church "went everywhere preaching the word." "Great grace" must be upon the church before effective going and giving in evangelism can be realized.

What was essential for the program and progress of the church in the first century, in its spiritual content, is essential for the program and progress of the church in this twentieth century. Every essential spiritual element for the evangelism of the world is recorded in the first and second chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. The modus operandi may vary, but the heart motivation ever remains the same, and there can be no lack in that inner motivation without a corresponding failure in genuine results. The life of the church is absolutely essential to any effective method of evangelism. A powerless church can never promulgate a productive program. Therefore, revivalism must precede evangelism.

Revive the Church

In our evangelistic proposals in the program of the Crusade for Christ, first consideration must be given to the church as it now exists. A revival must be begun within the membership of the present church. That such a revival is needed no intelligent mind would question for a moment. It is universally acknowledged by every leader in Methodism. The heart of every true pastor is yearning for the answer to this imperative need. Every thoughtful layman in Methodism is sobered by the seriousness of this need in our great church.

When one-half of the membership of the average church is absent every Sunday from the regular services of the church, there can

be no sane denial of the deep-seated need. The facts of this condition face us, and we are haunted and chagrined by them, but we cannot deny them. Any program which would ignore these stubborn realities will result in inevitable failure.

The securing of a million new members into the church, with its present status quo, spiritually, will not mean a real asset to the church, but will, in the long run, become a liability. The church will not be awakened by such an increase in quantity, and these spiritual children will be neglected and die of starvation unless they be the offspring of a revitalized church. The church must first be revived, and without that we shall go no further in genuine Christian realities.

Some Essentials

There are certain essential prerequisites which must obtain if we reach our evangelistic goal in the Crusade for Christ in a fashion that shall have lasting results.

In the first place, there must be a return to the time-honored mass appeal in the church and to the church, setting aside periods of two weeks or more of special sessions of intercession and renewed consecration on the part of the church, with the preaching of the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit, which will lead the church members to a fresh realization of their responsibilities and opportunities in this challenging age. No other type of revivalism will be a substitute for this; and, without this, our evangelistic efforts will be shallow and futile.

In the second place, our program must include and involve the whole leadership of the church from the top to the bottom, and beginning at the top. If each bishop in Methodism would select some representative church in his area, and in that church he himself would be the evangelistic voice for a period of at least two weeks, using for that period the near-by pastors in calling upon the unawakened church members, it would result not only in the reviving of that individual church, but would set an inspiring precedent to the whole church at large.

Then following this period, let every district superintendent in Methodism select some representative church in his district, and in that church be the preacher for at least two weeks, using all the near-by pastors in making personal calls. What a tremendous influence this would add to the leadership of the district superintendent in his leadership of the men of his district in the matters of evangelism.

These precedents by the bishops and district superintendents would start evangelistic fires throughout our entire church.

Then let each pastor in Methodism do the preaching for a similar period either in his own church or exchanging with another pastor, using the membership of his church to the fullest extent in doing personal work.

Moreover, let it be understood by all of us that the major item of success in our report at the annual conference would be the results scored in these campaigns. Any Methodist preacher who thinks he cannot do this type of preaching and thus be a leader in this supreme phase of the mission of the church needs to have his credentials of heart renewed.

The program as outlined will not be easy; it will cost the sweat of blood in intercession and preparation. But our Crusade will not register for the glory of Christ and the enriching of the spiritual life of the church unless it is preceded by a genuine crucifixion of ourselves.

Finally, any program of evangelism which is only for one year will not go to the roots of our needs. We cannot build great spiritual churches in a one-year program. Any program worthy of our heart's devotion should be begun with the idea that it will be continued indefinitely, for it will take us at least ten years to begin to realize the full fruitage of such a program.

Putting this program first in all our churches as an established fact, we will soon begin to realize the other by-products of a spiritual restoration, such as new life in the mid-week prayer hour, new recruits in the Sunday school, a renewed significance in the Sunday evening service, and the whole of the church will be revitalized.

Our greatest need now is not more quantity, but higher quality.

FAITH FOR DESPERATE DAYS

He gives us faith in the desperate days,
When the drifting clouds begin,
And the fog of a veiled uncertainty
Creeps up on the soul within.

He gives us peace in the desperate days,
When men's hearts fail for fear;
When the mart is pillaged by hands of blood,
And the breadwinner's heart is sore.

He gives us joy in the desperate days,
Though many a face is lined
With furrows plowed by the shard of pain,
Ere the warrant of death be signed.

He gives us hope in the desperate days,
The hope of the midnight cry—
Oh, our heads lift up, and our hearts are glad
As the Coming One draws nigh!

—O. L. Gibbs.