

— Guest Editorial—

SUBSTITUTING PROGRAM FOR POWER

Dr. R. P. Shuler,

"Methodist Challenge"

I try very hard to accommodate my thinking to the trend of my times, except when I know those times and the trends that attend are evil. But I do concede that modern thinking has gone off and left me. When I heard of a young educational director of youth who explained that the efficacy of prayer was psychological and that faith resulted in a reaction within ourselves, rather than calling for a supernatural bestowal, I confess that I balked. Such explanations of prayer belong to Christian Science and the "science of mind." They have little merit in Christian discussions. If there is merit in prayer, and I certainly believe there is, it results from a relationship between man and God. The supernatural is imperative!

The fact is, there is altogether too much program in the modern-day church and not enough power. We are altogether too much concerned with the formal side of religion and too little attention is given to the pentecostal experience. We talk of being converted in areas and in matters that concern, psychology, sociology and ideologies galore, when in fact we have never had a change of heart or a renovation of life, which the fathers referred to as the New Birth. Modern youth organizations major on politics, racial and industrial relations and social adjustments, all of which have their place in our thinking, but none of which can with adequacy surplant the command of Jesus, "Ye must be born again."

Our modern Christianity, so called, is too mechanical, too humanistic, too dependent upon the adequacy of the intellect. All this we should have in the every day processes of life. But it is sure that as a substitute for the power of pentecost in the cleansing of a sinful heart, they fall far short. I read this morning where Khrushchev said that as a boy he went to Sunday School, memorized great portions of the Bible and won a prize for knowing the gospels by heart. But all this did not make Khrushchev less than a bloody murderer as he sent his engines of war to the streets of Hungary to grind human bodies to death. Whatever he did in excelling in knowledge, his heart was still black and full of deadly sin.

I am not speaking here of the depraved, selfish, evil power of sinful men. Elsewhere I have discussed the fact that such power corrupts men, and when it is absolute, it corrupts them absolutely. There is nothing more dangerous than unregenerate power. Unleash the hounds of godless power and humanity pays the price in horrible disaster. What I am pleading for is the power that was released at Pentecost, which shook the thrones of the Caesars, toppled the crowns of the totalitarian despots of the first century and made a cross of wood stronger than the human boasting of the ages. What the church needs today is that power.

The church of these apostate days, very little akin to the power-filled company that filed down from the Upper Room at Pentecost, has everything except the one thing that it most needs and without which its boast sounds like brass. It has education, money, social standing, influence with the Pilates of our day—everything except the mighty spiritual Niagara that would light and lift a lost and wrecked humanity. Substituting program for power has been fatal.

We are the shorn Sampson of the most threatening hour of human history. No longer do we lift the gates of the city and carry them on our shoulders. Our eyes are gone and our strength with them. All because we have put our trust in chariots and horses, when the living God alone can save us.

I am sorry for the young "experts" who come out of our schools with the notion that the God who heard Elijah on Carmel has entrusted His battle against Baal to human reactions, depending on the fires that are kindled by psychological adjustments.

The tall prophets of yesterday have become the sex counsellors of today!

Christ All In All

J. Paget Wilkes

The little word all appears often in the Bible. Notice its significance some of those times.

"All things are now ready" (Luke 14:17).

The Lord tells us that a particular invitation was sent a second time to those who had already been bidden. We, too, have been bidden long enough, but God graciously sends us another individual and particular invitation. At such a meeting as this, for example, his second call comes to our hearts, and he says, "Come; for all things are now ready." Yes, all the salvation you need, not merely forgiveness and the pardon of your sins, but all the purity, the power, the liberty, and the joy you need. It is all ready, procured, provided! You have not to work for it or struggle for it: everything is ready. Come, then, and satisfy your soul. If you will not partake, it is not God's fault. He sends out his servant at supper time, and bids you come.

Dissatisfied soul, all is ready and finished. Christ has not to die again. Oh, believe it! It is so easy for God to bless us. It costs him nothing now, for he has given us his Son, and with him, shall he not freely give us all things? The only hindrance is on our part. Some people pray as though God had to be coaxed, persuaded, and induced to bless! That is wicked praying—born of unbelief. Let it then be now, for that is the only time either promised or possible: because if you wait for God to bless you next week, month, or year, when you get there it will be now. "Come; for all things are now ready."

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt. 22:37).

It does not say thou shalt serve, follow, worship, or obey the Lord with all the heart, but we are to love him with all the heart. Is not this a blessed and reasonable command? Does not every true Christian feel in his heart that this alone can satisfy both God and himself. Love makes all easy and a delight. A man who is in love finds no service hard or difficult for the one he loves.

This is God's claim—he is not satisfied with our worship, our service, and our obedience, if there is no love behind them. There is nothing higher in religion than love. No ecstasy, or revelation, no emotional experience, are of any account compared with love. Let us seek, then, more eagerly than ever, that God shall have the love of all our heart. This is both the wedding garment and the banquet. This is the blessing.

"He . . . that forsaketh not all that he hath . . . cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33).

When the Lord Jesus had been talking of this wonderful banquet, telling men that all things were now ready, we read that a great multitude followed him. "That is just the kind of religion we like," they might have said "all for nothing—a feast—and all ready." But the Lord turns around and says to them, as it were, "Unless you forsake all that you have, you cannot be my disciple." Note, he does not say, "You must not or may not," but you "cannot." You may if you can, but you will find that you cannot. It is impossible to be his disciple without forsaking all that you have—all your ambition, all your love of money, all your desire to get on in worldly things, all yourself—righteousness, your self-satisfaction, self-

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