

Is Your World Too Small?



David Wilkerson February 1, 1981

Phillips Brooks, a great preacher of the 19th century, said, "Sinners have no right to condemn Christianity - because it hasn't been tried...."

I agree! I don't think any human on earth has yet discovered the power and glory that is available in Christ, here and now!

In John 12:35, we find an outright challenge to our smallness. In one single verse, Jesus calls us to forsake our narrow little circle and be transformed into the glorious kingdom of liberty and usefulness. Over and again Jesus calls to us, "Your world is too small; ask for greater, more meaningful life." Here it is:

"He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John 12:25).

I. What a paradox - hate life to find it! Despise it to discover it! It doesn't sound reasonable.

Yet, the key to abundant life is right here in this seemingly insignificant and confusing statement. This is His challenge to our small world! Understanding what He means here is the door to a life-giving revelation. Jesus also said:

"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26).

Certainly Christ cannot mean hate in terms of a classic dictionary interpretation: To loathe or detest; to dislike or reject. God's Word says,

"He that hateth his brother is a murderer..." (1 John 3:15).

"Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them."

"Honor thy father and mother."

It is not life that is to be hated, because life is a gift from God. It is not people we hate; that is unscriptural.

We must learn to hate the way we are living life. We must hate what our preoccupation with families and loved ones has done to us. Is your life all wrapped up in just your children, husband, wife, or parents? Are all your joys and problems limited to this small circle?

God is simply calling on us to widen our circle of living. Life must be more than simply draperies, bills, kids' schooling, parents' welfare, family relationships. Martha was addicted to a life of trivia; Mary wanted to grow! Mary wanted to expand her horizons. Jesus approved of Mary's approach to life.

You cannot grow until you hate your present immaturity. You don't have to forsake your duties and obligations to

family and friends; but you can become so bound by duty, it can stunt your growth. One day you must wake up. A holy anger, a holy hatred, must arise in your soul, and you must cry out, "Oh, God! I hate what I have become. I hate my temper tantrums. I hate how irritable I am at times. I hate my moodiness. I hate how small I have become. I hate it! I hate it! I hate it!"

Think of the most spiritual person you know - that spiritual giant who never panics, who always seems so kind and secure, so committed to God, so pure and holy. He will tell you of a time he came to this crisis, of how he hated his world with its pettiness, its jealousy, its bondage. He learned to hate what he had become so much so that he determined to change. He got hungry - desperately hungry!

You will never change what you are until you hate what you've done to yourself. You can't want more out of life until you get bored and sick of what you have now. You've got to get so sick, so disgusted with your life as it is now until you tell yourself, "I want more out of life. I will no longer live in such trivia, such weakness, such bondage! I want to be liberated." Hate your present life so much, you will cry out to God, "Lord, translate me into Your glorious kingdom of power and victory! Give me the life of joy that so many others are getting."

"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Colossians 1:13).

II. It is when you learn to hate what you have become that you begin to hunger and thirst for what he offers.

And what is it that our Lord offers? He offers death as a way of discovering life.

"Let him take up his cross and follow me..."

If the way of the cross is the way to a greater life, we must understand it well. If our abundant life depends on it, we'd better get it.

First, let's deal with the misconceptions of the cross. So much has been written - almost always complicated. We seem to think the way of the cross is some kind of narrow, shameful walk with the crowds rejecting and mocking, spitting and scoffing. We feel we are imitating the walk of Christ if we, too, are buffeted and rejected by sinful man. We think of persecution as the way of the cross.

Certainly, His way is narrow. We will be persecuted for His sake, and we must separate ourselves from wicked man. But that is not the truest meaning of the cross. We focus only on the suffering of Christ. We magnify and admire our Lord for being so mild mannered to those who cursed and spat upon Him. We talk about His courage in a dark hour. We talk about His sweating drops of blood. We talk about the nails, the thorns, the agony. But others have died in even more cruel circumstances for the cause of Christ.

Could you have been there that day Jesus was pushed and prodded by the mob toward Golgotha, you could have heard in a whisper the true meaning of the cross. You would have heard Jesus saying over and over again, "Your will, Father; not mine! I live and die only to do Your will." That, my friend, is the meaning of the cross - to do the will of God!

There is only one cross - with one meaning - for Him and for us! Your cross is not some kind of physical ailment or thorn in the flesh. It is not a bad home situation. It is not a sickness or disease. It is not some kind of endurance test. It is not a burden of any kind - physical, spiritual, or otherwise. You hear people say, "It's my cross. I'll bear it." These I call "martyr crosses.

Your cross and mine is one. It is the same cross He bore - with the same meaning. The cross is doing the perfect will of God. Jesus said,

"Let him deny himself and take up his cross...."

It has nothing to do with self denial, suffering, or hardship. His yoke is easy; His burden is light. He paid the price. The meaning is so simple, we miss it. It is this: If you are to be my disciple, you must give up your own will and take up mine. Taking up the cross is simply taking up the absolute will of God. It is to be totally abandoned to do things God's way.

Can the cross be so simple, and its doing be so complicated? Not at all! Only two demands are made at the cross:

1. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37).
2. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:39).

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:40).

In other words, all I will ever ask of you stems from the doing of these two things!

If absolute love for God be so important, He must show us how. This has been the cry of all true saints:

"I really don't know how to love Him." We think of our love for God as something we do for Him, like praising or worshipping or going into the secret closet to talk to Him. We think that loving Him is being holy, kind, witnessing to the unsaved. Not so! God is love, and to be truly God, He has to spend it.

Loving Him is letting Him be God in us and through us! Love is something He does for us! We shy away from this concept as if it were selfish, but it is not! We love Him most and best when we permit Him to flow through us, doing and being all He says He is.

See that Christian on his knees, crying, fasting, and praying? See the big tears? Hear him begging God to accept His praise and worship? Listen to him say over and over again, "Lord, I love You! I love You!" Is that love? Not when all He does is talk! Not when He addresses God as some kind of isolated, untouchable Being in need of nothing but praise. What if my wife met me once a day to admire me, do all the talking, and go live her own life?

Our God needs to love! He needs people to appropriate Himself, to draw on His power, to use His resources. Let me show you the one who is loving God with all that is in him. He is the one who, in simple childlike faith, lays hold of the precious promises and puts them to work in his everyday life. It is not love to ignore all He has promised to be and do through us. It is not love to go through life harried, lonely, worried, depressed, carrying our own load. Love is getting into God and using His glorious power.

I know many people who think they are great lovers of God. They fast and pray half the night through. They refuse to look on anything sinful. They are into self denial. They are sincere. They study God's Word diligently. They are compassionate and honest. But they never do enter into God's life of victorious, overcoming rest. They are so busy fighting the devil, they have lost sight of the fact that the devil was already defeated at the cross.

Some Christians only have a "closet" relationship with God. They really know how to touch God in prayer. But they don't know how to live God. They have no nitty-gritty faith. They have no crisis confidence!

And what about loving your neighbor as yourself? Here is where our world becomes so small. God asks us to do His perfect will, not to enforce a law on us but to release a new life-stream in us. But we don't ever really know what to do with all these promised resources.

Here is the simplicity of what Christ is trying to get through to us: (1) Hate what you are, then come and find My new life for you. (2) Reject your old lifestyle; take up My perfect will. (3) That releases in you all My resources, if you will simply accept it as a fact. (4) Then go out and help lost humanity with what I've given you.

The story of the good Samaritan is God's way of showing us how to love our neighbor. Did you ever stop to think that the Good Samaritan is a type of the Christian who is living the abundant life? He was the only one with the resources to help the hurting man who was left bleeding and dying by thieves who robbed and beat him.

The priest was certainly compassionate. Perhaps he wept over this hurting man. But he had to pass on because he was so poor, so penniless; he had nothing to work with.

The Levite probably made a decision to run down the road and find someone else to help. He would find someone going the opposite way and say, "Please, about two miles on your left is a bleeding man, a victim of armed robbery. See what you can do for him."

But the Good Samaritan had what it took! While the priest and Levite walked, he rode horseback. He had wine with

him; he had oil; he had bandages. He knew where the nearest hotel was. He had resources! Healing oil. Tourniquet. A stallion. An unlimited bank account. "Whatsoever thou spendest, I will pay." Listen to the Good Samaritan at the inn. "Take good care of him; forget the cost; I'll foot the bill."

This is what God is trying to show us - that we have all the resources we need to live fully and to love completely. We face the world not as spiritual paupers but as sons of a King, riding in splendor and equipped to help any suffering neighbor.

Loving your neighbor is having what it takes to help him. It has nothing to do just with sympathy, advice, kindness, and friendliness. You don't help a starving man by telling him how sorry you feel for him or that you will fast and pray for him. But you help him by feeding him!

Do you really want to obey the Lord's commandment to love your neighbor as yourself? Then get something to give him. You can't love your neighbor until you have what it takes to help him.

III. We have tried to keep the Holy Ghost captive to our small world.

"I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh" (Act. 2:17).

We have preached the outpouring of the Holy Spirit too exclusively. He said upon ALL flesh - not just believers, but non-believers as well. Jesus associated with sinners. He ministered to them. He claimed to be their Physician. Why can't the Holy Spirit be associated with sinners? Why can't the Holy Spirit touch sinners as did Christ?

The Holy Spirit was not given only to purified, sanctified saints. He was poured out for the whole world. He is to be denied to no one. He comes to convict of sin. That means He must be working in the sinners minds. He seeks to lead sinners into all truth, to comfort those who need it most.

He was not poured out just to the 120 in the upper room. That mighty rushing wind blew over the entire earth, upon all humanity. It shook not only that room; it shook the earth! All of Israel, Africa, Europe - all the known world.

"I will shake all nations..." (Haggai 2:7).

"Whose voice then shook the earth.. Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven" (Hebrews 12:26).

God never intended that the outpoured Holy Ghost become the exclusive property of the believer. We have cornered Him and put Him in a pure, holy little vessel. We have lived and ministered as though the Holy Spirit is appalled by sin and will not go near it, as though He has come only to keep saints pure and preserve them until Christ returns.

We who believe do not own the Holy Spirit! We do not direct Him. We can't limit Him in any way.

"He bloweth where he listeth [willeth]..." (John 3:8).

The Holy Spirit is Christ's leading evangelist. He is already at work everywhere Christ sends us. Don't ever be surprised when you go into the worst hell spots on this earth to find the Holy Spirit already outpoured and people already under conviction - hunger and thirst everywhere, before you even get your Bible open.

There are no wicked safety zones immune to His power and presence - not Russia, China, Poland - nowhere on earth. He enters homosexual havens. He is there at every junkie shooting gallery. He is there in every brothel. He hovers over every massage parlor. He does not shy away from the sight of anything evil or wicked. He came not to stamp out the evil but to help mankind to be lifted out of it.

He comes uninvited. He breaks forth at the most unexpected times. The sinner takes his pleasure, wipes his mouth, enjoys its lingering taste - then suddenly the Holy Spirit moves in, unannounced, unwanted, unexpected. But He cares not for bars or doors; He cannot be shut out. No power in hell or on earth can shut Him off.

The Holy Spirit is never shocked by what He sees. He knows what men are capable of doing. He sees murder, rape, fornication, adultery, drunkenness, drug addiction, but it never chases Him away - not even in disgust. No person is too evil or too far gone or too difficult to touch. He is not afraid of the dirt, filth, and sleaziness.

He was not outpoured simply to bless the blessed; He came to bring life to those who are dead in sin. He came to work in the Christian; He came to work on the sinner! He is right now working on people already given up by society and the church.

He cannot be shaken off. His presence makes the sinner unexplainably miserable. Even when the sinner is doing his own thing, totally involved in his pleasure, the Holy Spirit keeps calling him, deep within his subconscious mind, back to God. He becomes the sinner's shadow, trailing him everywhere he goes. He is the hound of heaven; He gives the sinner no peace. He continually pricks the man's conscience. He brings to his memory every past word of truth ever heard; He is a memory jogger.

The Holy Ghost is the Baptizer, but He is more than that. If all He is to me is an experience of ecstasy, if all He is to me is a release, if He controls only my tongue, if He only makes me feel happy - I'm missing the true purpose of His coming. He has come to reconcile the whole world to Christ. He has come to lead every disciple into the total fullness of life in Christ. He has come to reveal to us the unlimited resources at our disposal. He shows us the Father, His power and His leading.

We must now preach that He is everywhere and working on everybody. He is no respecter of persons. He does not respond only to hunger; He comes to those who haven't even called upon God's name.

"...I am found of them that sought me not..." (Isaiah 65:1).

The Holy Spirit is the very breath of God, breathing down the necks of sinners. He comes not to the sinner to condemn, rebuke, or moralize; He comes to convict. The Holy Spirit can be as present in a bar room as He is in a church. There is probably more of His Spirit at work in a sinners' hideout than in a seminary. Why? Because where sin abounds, God's grace much more abounds.

The sinner can be convicted by the Holy Spirit as easily in a gay bar or an X-rated movie house or a shooting gallery as in a church. He is right there where the sinners are at all times. He takes no breaks. He never sleeps. When they awaken, He is still there, patiently waiting for them to come to the end of themselves so they can reach out and be healed.

The Holy Ghost will enter the sinners' dreams; He will give them visions. Don't think that all dreams and visions are given to Christians. Sinners have probably more than anyone else.

"They will dream dreams, and see visions...."

He will manipulate their dreams, implanting messages on the subconscious mind. Some of the dreams are real and they keep recurring. The vision is like a supernatural altar call. The Spirit shows them what they could be, what life could be like if they gave it to Christ. Pictures keep flashing in their minds that won't go away, visions of what life could and should be for them.

"Your sons and daughters shall prophesy...."

It doesn't say these prophets are trained ministers or experienced Christians who are into the deeper things of God. Any sons and any daughters shall prophesy.

This explains clearly the mission of the Holy Spirit on earth: to come upon people and turn them into prophets. A prophet is one who tells a supernatural story because he has experienced a supernatural deliverance. The Holy Spirit is doing this miraculous work right now all over the world. He is healing and turning homosexuals into prophets for Christ. Addicts are prophesying about their miracle of healing. Prostitutes, alcoholics, and street people are all walking away from the slavery of Satan and are turning to Christ, and they are prophesying. What miracle stories! He is turning sinners into prophets!

The Old Testament prophets did not experience the miracle these new prophets have. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Joel all talked about the miracles of deliverance that were to come, but they didn't get it. They must take their seats and listen humbly as these new prophets tell how Christ the Lord set them free.

If you are going to flow with the Spirit, you must expand your small world. Take off all limitations. Move into the miraculous and go after your liberty now!

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