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## Editorial on Evangelism Why?

In the last couple of issues of YPS we have been looking at the personal motivators behind evangelism. In this article, I would like to look at some of the other reasons for reaching out with the gospel, including why such urgency is required, what the core message is, and who the main communicators of the message are.

### Individuals are in danger of the judgement of God

Do we really believe that God is righteous and that people have broken His laws and are therefore guilty? As believers, we know that physical death is the outcome of the principle of sin in every living being, Ezek. 18. 20; Rom. 6. 23. Sometimes we live as if the second death is not the ultimate judgement of God against unrepentant sinners, Rev. 20. 14. The second death is the point of no return for the lost soul. Eternity will be spent separated from God and all that His grace supplies to those who believe. If I could envisage hell and the lake of fire for what it is and see the cost price of redemption that was borne by our Lord and Saviour, it would make me so much more passionate about reaching needy souls with the gospel. It would be a good practice to spend some time on a regular basis contemplating the work of redeeming grace and the prospect of being eternally lost. It is said that William Booth wished all his Salvation Army officers could hang over hell for twenty-four hours prior to their commissioning. He felt this would stir them to a deeper commitment to evangelism. Doing this would certainly change my attitude to the value of my salvation and keep me conscious of the danger that unsaved souls are in.

### Life is short and unpredictable

Life is fragile and individuals leave this life for eternity every minute. While I have been writing for the last five minutes, approximately 540 souls have

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passed into eternity. That equates to 155,520 souls a day, 56.8 million souls a year leaving this life never to have another opportunity to get saved. Scripture teaches that the 'Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins', Matt. 9. 6. It is clear that salvation is only available on earth and that the day we live in is 'the day of salvation', 2 Cor. 6. 2. Therefore, we need to awake to the great danger that mankind is in and the 'great salvation' that is readily available through faith in Christ.

## Time is running out, for the Lord is coming

The apostle Paul wrote, 'And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light', Rom. 13. 11-12. The vast majority of believers seem to have ignored scriptures like this and are spiritually

sleepy and seemingly unaware of the danger that our fellow-travellers to eternity are in. Our salvation comes to its full and final fulfilment at the return of Christ for the church, 1 Thess. 4. 16-17. This will open the door to God's judgement on the world. Believers will be saved from the wrath of God, 5. 9, but the ungodly will be left for tribulation on earth, 2 Thess. 2. 8-12, and judgement at the second coming of Christ to earth, 1. 8. If we really believe all of this truth, we must then react to the words of Romans chapter 13 and 'cast off the works of darkness' – i.e., finish with everything that is characteristic of this sinful world system. It is essential that we are protected with the 'armour of light'. A Christ-like lifestyle is essential if we are going to be good witnesses of the Lord and bear the light of the gospel in a dark world, Phil. 2. 15.

In summary, a genuine awareness of the coming of Christ and the impending judgement of God on the world will result in Christians seeking to be more like the Lord Jesus and more effective in their witness for the Saviour.

## MAYBE YOU ARE

# in a cult

BY RICHARD COLLINGS CAERPHILLY, WALES

The above suggestion was made to a young person who was talking to some friends about the assembly and its activities. What is surprising is that those friends were not unbelievers but other Christians, so why would they consider an assembly to be a cult? As I was not present at the time of the conversation, I can only second-guess what might have prompted such a response, but let me offer some possible reasons.

Most mainstream Christian churches are easily identified by a denominational name. People are familiar with Baptists, Pentecostals, Methodists, Anglicans, Independent evangelicals etc., but assemblies do not subscribe to such names. In addition, many believers belong to a church that either has a national headquarters or is affiliated to some form of federation of churches, even if

within that affiliation each fellowship is free to act according to their own convictions. As these scenarios are so common, they are perceived to be the 'norm', and any company of Christians not adhering to this standard is viewed with an element of suspicion.

A close study of the New Testament will reveal that each assembly of God's people is accountable to no one except the Lord Jesus, a truth that is very clearly emphasized in the seven letters addressed to the seven churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. The word of God makes no allowance for any form of centralized church government. No assembly is answerable to any servant of God; its only authority is that which is laid out in the apostles' doctrine as recorded in the New Testament. Furthermore, the only name any

assembly should be linked with is that of our Lord Jesus, He said, 'Where two or three are gathered together **in my name**, there am I in the midst of them', Matt. 18. 20 [my emphasis]. Sometimes other believers refer to the assemblies as 'the Brethren', but no company of God's people should be willing to adopt this name. All believers are brethren in Christ, irrespective of where or with whom they gather; we are brethren because we have all been born of God – He is our Father.

As we read Paul's letters to the various churches, it becomes apparent that there was a definite practice of inter-church fellowship. The letter he wrote to the Colossians was also to be read by another assembly, and the churches of Macedonia were held up to the church at Corinth as being a worthy example to emulate in giving material aid to relieve suffering believers elsewhere, as recorded in 2 Corinthians chapter 8. However, this unity between churches did not forge them into a denomination, and we should not seek to make assemblies a denomination today.

Another feature that distinguishes assemblies from many other church groups is the absence of a figurehead, be that a vicar, priest, or pastor. It may seem very strange to your Christian friends to learn that in the assembly where you belong there is no one person who takes the lead, or decides what happens, or is responsible for all the preaching. Peter teaches us that every believer is a priest, and that, as such, each has a responsibility to act in a priestly way, offering 'spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ', 1 Pet. 2. 5.

With political correctness gaining ground, not only in the world but also in religious circles, assemblies of God will become increasingly marginalized because of their commitment to the Bible's teaching on the gender distinctions relative to church doctrine. The silence of women, the requirement for sisters to wear a head covering

in the meetings and the headship of the men would all be considered strange, and perhaps even cultish to some who have never been taught about such matters. How vital it is for all of us to be very certain as to what the Bible has to say about these important issues. If you are unclear about them then speak to your elders and ask them to explain to you why women are not permitted to teach, why only the men are allowed to pray audibly, and why women are to cover their heads and men are not to have a head covering when the church meets.

Perhaps one of the primary reasons why others may consider an assembly to be a cult is based on the fact that while they feel free to go to meetings in any church, you do not. In the course of a month, they may attend events at a number of different churches, even though those churches do not share similar convictions about matters of doctrine. If we gather in an assembly because we see that it follows the teachings of the New Testament, we would not feel at liberty to go to other places, and this may be difficult for our friends to understand. However, let us ensure that we do not consider ourselves to be superior to these other Christians and may we show love and care for them knowing that they are our brothers and sisters in Christ.



CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST

# EGO (3)

BY **STEPHEN GRANT** BRIDGE OF WEIR, SCOTLAND

'I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me', Gal. 2.20 NASB

Paul's letter to the Galatian churches tells us of a problem that threatened the early church because it divided Christians from Gentile and Jewish backgrounds. The apostle Peter had received special revelation from God on this sensitive issue and had taught, 'In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him', Acts 10. 34-35 NKJV. However, Peter changed his stance, 'for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy', Gal. 2. 12-13 NKJV.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul addressed the issue and showed that Peter had changed, due to fear of disapproval from the Jerusalem saints. He was prioritizing himself and his reputation and, by so doing, was protecting his ego.

For Peter, and any Christian, to act in this way is a denial of the work of the Lord Jesus at the cross. Paul explains that we have been crucified with Christ. He makes it a personal statement since it is all about ME, 'I have been

crucified with Christ'. This has to do with the death of ME, I and MYSELF. We need to learn the following truths.

## This has already happened!

It is a completed act in the past with continuing effects. Crucifixion is not something that we do, but is something that Christ has accomplished for us!

## I did not do this – God did!

The passive voice indicates that we did not crucify ourselves, God did it to us.

Paul is referring to a spiritual experience which took place when Christ became my substitute and paid the price for my sins. As a result, as far as the law of God is concerned, I died and therefore the law is satisfied and has no claim on me.

Before my salvation I was dead to God but alive to self. Now I am dead to self and alive to God.

## It is not about me!

'I' is ego in the New Testament Greek language. It is no longer about me (my ego). That is all dead and gone. As a person, it is no longer 'me' and all about me; it is Christ and all about Christ. When I was saved, the Lord Jesus took up



residence in my heart by the Holy Spirit, Rom. 8. 9-11, and so a good definition of a Christian is a person in whom Jesus Christ lives. Now the reality of His life will keep showing up in my thoughts, desires, and obedience. By residing within me, He is affecting all of my life.

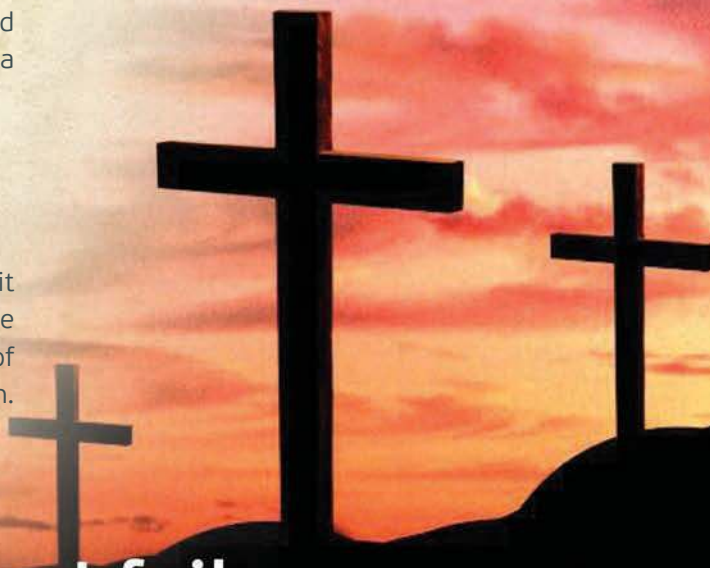
### Living in this body!

As a Christian, my life is not about the old 'me' and feeding my ego. Selfishness ought to be a thing of my past life, which is now dead. If 'I' am still alive, i.e., the flesh, I should not think that I am now living for Christ. Sometimes we make the mistake of thinking that becoming a Christian changed our priorities and focus. Actually, it was more radical than that. Instead of me trying to live for Christ, becoming a Christian is Christ living in me.

### Living by faith in the Son of God

How do I live this new life? How do I enjoy it to the full? Faith is the answer. Just as we live physically in the sphere (atmosphere) of oxygen, we live spiritually in the sphere of faith.

Christ does not operate automatically in a believer's life; it is a matter of living the new life by faith in the Son of God. It is, then, faith and not works or legal obedience that releases divine power to live a Christian life. This faith, stated Paul, builds on the sacrifice of Christ who loved us and gave Himself for us. In essence, Paul affirmed, if He loved me enough to give Himself for me, then He loves me enough to live out His life in me.



**Whenever I try, I fail  
Whenever I trust, He succeeds**



bears his name. James shows that the verbal testimony is consistent with scripture, v. 15. He gives an overall conclusion, v. 19. Gentiles do not need to follow Jewish religious practice in order to be saved. However, he has four advisory prohibitions. These are generally related to social interaction in first-century society. At pagan feasts (1) idolatry and (2) immorality were commonplace. James warns believers to avoid these sins, v. 20. Also, animals were not slaughtered in accordance with Jewish food laws, i.e., (3) strangulation and (4) blood were commonplace. If Gentiles ate such food, they would offend their Christian brothers who came from a Jewish background. In line with Paul's teaching, non-Jewish believers should respect their Jewish counterparts, Rom. 14. 21; 1 Cor. 8. 9.

This conclusion is transmitted to the wider Christian community by open letters and reliable messengers. Clear and consistent communication is vital in the event of disputes and debates.

## Personal problem

The second problem in this chapter concerns John Mark. He is the cause of severe disagreement between Paul and Barnabas. It is not obvious which party is in the right. The narrative gives no verdict. However, Barnabas might have been influenced by family ties, Col. 4. 10. Barnabas displays determination, v. 37, whereas Paul has doubts, v. 38. There is a sharp disagreement between the pair, leading to separation. Sadly, there is no record that they ever meet again. Even in this trouble, God brings blessing. Now there are two missionary teams to strengthen new churches across the region, vv. 39-41. Eventually, there is reconciliation between Paul and Mark – the one-time runaway becomes 'profitable', 2 Tim. 4. 11. God's grace overcomes human failure

<sup>1</sup> TENNEY has a full historical discussion: MERRILL C. TENNEY, *Galatians: The Charter of Christian Liberty*, Eerdmans, 1991.

<sup>2</sup> Often known as the 'Council of Jerusalem'.





# A Plea to a Rising Generation

BY PHILLIP MULLAN BELFAST

What an exciting time of life!

Finishing school,  
Learning to drive,  
Having ever-increasing independence,  
Going out with friends,  
Meeting new people.

Perhaps you are going to university or starting work! There are new freedoms, more money, maybe a student loan, or your first salary – the opportunities seem endless!

We have a tendency as young people to live inside our comfortable 'Christian bubbles'. Going to meetings and conferences, socializing and having fun, shopping, gaming, travelling, dining out and dressing up. Perhaps golfing, playing football or rugby, watching TV, films and the endless online options – Netflix, iPlayer, YouTube and Facebook to name but a few.

Would you let the Saviour interject into your busy life?

'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me', Matt. 16. 24.

What do you know about this?

Christ speaks again, 'He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me is not worthy of me', Matt. 10. 38.

How does your life of ease compare with our rejected Saviour's life? Can I plead with you to lay down the 'toys of this world', the time-devouring pleasures and pastimes, and go after Christ? He went to a cross for you. He gave His life because of your sin. Was this so that you could have a good time and spend your hours playing games? Was it so that you could continue to live a sheltered comfortable life?

'The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: 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', 2 Cor. 5. 14-15.

Let me be clear. You and I should have perished for our sinful rebellion against God. We deserved eternal punishment for our filthy self-righteous pride and sin. But Christ died for us. He has freed us and rescued us eternally. Think about that!

What does His death mean to you? Is it just something you give thanks for on a Sunday morning? His love should grip us. How can we live as though it was nothing?

How can you live for yourself in light of Christ's love? My prayer is that you will take 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 15 as your motto – that from henceforth you will not live for yourself, but for Him who died for you and rose again.

One final word from our Lord; 'Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields for they are white already to harvest' John 4. 35.

What our nation needs is a generation of young men and women who will answer the Saviour's call to follow Him at any cost. A generation who will go out into our communities, our towns and our cities with the gospel of Christ, who will cross social, economic, cultural, and ethnic barriers because of Christ's love.

Broken, hopeless men and women are living and dying all around us while we sit in our full homes and empty Halls with the gospel that they desperately need.

'Lift up your eyes!'