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### **The Excitement of Holiness Evangelism**

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The first four years of my Christian life were a search for that something more in my life. Reading through the book of Acts and walking with Jesus through other scriptures convinced me to keep searching. Many options were presented to me. It was only after I had heard that Jesus wanted to sanctify me and to continue His powerful ministry through me that I trusted His Holy Spirit to fill my life. Now after almost 50 years of witnessing His power working in and through me, I am more excited than I have ever been about the living Lord Jesus Christ doing Jesus things through me, thereby building His church and extending His Kingdom.

My concern is that we not separate Evangelism from Holiness, for we will either be all out for souls and now and again preach of a second crisis or we will become so concerned with our personal holiness that we will neglect to reach the lost for Christ. This paper is a call back to Holiness Evangelism, which always has been part of the great commission that Jesus gave to His church. Also it will help to bring back into focus the need for seeing that the experience of entire sanctification is as important as the new birth; they are both part of the discipling process.

What a privilege it is to be involved as part of the Body of Christ in what is known as The Great Commission. Matthew recorded it this way, “*Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age’.*” (28:18 – 20)<sup>1</sup>

In these words of Jesus both His grace and love are revealed for all nations in the world. He did not merely make a statement but called men and women to be involved in taking this message to their world. He wants everyone to hear this message, and His grace makes it possible for anyone to respond, but more than that He desires that all of those who do respond

will come into a love relationship with the Father, the Holy Spirit and Himself. John A Knight expresses it well when he says, “The gospel is a person, not a book (not even the Bible). Christ does not have a gospel, nor preach it merely. He is the gospel. He is the “good news”. Our message is not a principle, nor a perspective, but a Person.”<sup>2</sup> Peter discovered this same truth. Jesus had become both His Lord and Christ after he too had been filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:36). He testified that the coming of the Holy Spirit had purified his heart (Acts 15:8-9) and that God’s will is that they be holy, doing holy things in the unholy world (1 Peter 1:14-16). The Good News is that the living King Jesus wants to bring all people into His kingdom by grace through faith and that He wants to reign as King in and through them now. Once made King He would perfect their intentions to serve Him, and they would be excited about holy living.

As Jesus continues His ministry through His new body, the world will see the power of His rule already at work in this world and everyone will be given opportunity to also enter His Kingdom now. No one deserves to be invited into the Kingdom of God, for all are sinners. Jesus came to solve the sin problem in all men. That is why Jesus wants them to hear this message because He is man’s only hope. Man out of fellowship with God is lost in this world and the call of Jesus is to this lost world. Man outside of God’s power in his life is under the control of a principle of self-first, a problem which can only be solved through the impartation of God’s love through the infilling of God’s Holy Spirit. Leading many into this experience of having made Jesus king in their lives and witnessing the changes that He has brought about convinces me that Holiness Evangelism can change the face of Africa and transform the communities for Christ. Holiness Evangelism keeps both works of grace before the people and they soon understand what is meant by full salvation. This is the message that must be preached to the whole world, not merely a born anew experience but also the experience that brings the expulsion of the sin principle from their lives through the infusion of God’s love into their hearts. Jesus, through ‘Spirit given’ and ‘Spirit empowered’ ministry gifts, wants people to see the power of His Kingdom at work. Clear and balanced teaching about the gifted ministries is so important as Jesus pointed out in the great commission. Jesus had a preaching, teaching, and a healing ministry and we can do no less.

Some ways that can help to get Holiness and Evangelism teachers and preachers to think and to practice Holiness Evangelism are found in the Great Commission.

First is the understanding of “Go and make disciples”. Jesus must not be seen to be speaking purely as a soul winner. He was not thinking only as an evangelist but as a teacher who was enlisting learners. They would be incorporated into His Kingdom as followers of His teachings. They would bring themselves under His authority as their leader. Baptism was the sign that they were ready for a deeper relationship with the Father, and the Holy Spirit and Himself as their Lord and Master. This was an outward sign to all that Jesus was now their Lord and that they were now totally committed to Him and His teachings. Being baptized in the Name of the Spirit meant that they were opening their lives to be filled with the Spirit of their master and Lord. Ralph Earle points out from the Greek that the verb is not *didasko* (teach) as it is in the King James version but rather as it is in the New International Version *matheteuo* (make disciples).<sup>3</sup> Paul Bassett adds to our understanding by writing the following about early Christianity, “No one understood baptism to be an abstraction or simply a testimony – it was a way into spiritual reality itself: the early Christians understood baptism as a saving moment. And they understood baptism, taken in its entirety, to be a sanctifying moment as well. It symbolized the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the believers at Pentecost.”<sup>4</sup> After they were baptized the priest would lay his hand on the head of the baptized one praying for him to be filled with the Spirit. Oil was then poured on the head symbolizing the entrance of the Spirit in fullness into the baptized. This meaning of baptism should be re-emphasised preparing the disciple for the fullness of the Spirit. Baptism must be included in the discipling process for that will help to bring the concept of Holiness Evangelism back into the mainstream of the church’s teachings.

Secondly, the church must look at the Great Commission from the context in which Jesus spoke these words. It is incorrect to see Jesus as a master wielding a whip and driving His disciples to go to all nations. It is equally wrong to place Jesus into a sergeant major position barking out orders to His deployed troops sending them out to do battle and to claim converts for His Kingdom. It is also incorrect to say that all we need to do is to announce the message and that God will draw those to Him that He has chosen to save. The context out of which Jesus spoke is far more appealing

than that. He makes it a joy and a privilege to serve Him. Bruner calls it “*the Resurrection Mission*”<sup>5</sup> and so it is. Why the disciples sudden motivation to respond to the call and to obey the commission of Jesus? Simply because they had witnessed that He was now alive, risen from the dead. Also He announced that all authority in heaven and all authority on earth had been given to Him. They worshipped Him because they knew His presence and His power to be that of Jehovah God. They were excited to wait for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and He came on the day of Pentecost. No longer was Jesus just the Son of the living God, but now He was both Lord and Christ. He was alive in them and His Spirit was continuing His ministry through them. Jesus was alive, His presence in them made them holy and His power in them enabled them to do Jesus things. He was with them as He had promised. This was their motivation, the Power of the Spirit of Christ was working in and through them, and it is still the same today. This is the very heart of the Great Commission: Jesus is alive in His church and continuing His holy ministry through His united holy Body, His disciples.

Thirdly, Jesus has gifted teachers within His body, and they must be taught to teach others who in turn will teach others and the process must go on and on. Holiness Evangelism must be taught, not only when requested and not only during Pentecost meetings in the church but as part of the ongoing life of the church. They must be taught that the nature of the church is to be His Body worshipping in the beauty of Holiness and that they are God’s called out ones, a Holy fellowship. They are the Holy Body of Christ doing Jesus things, Holy things, which are the fruit and the result of the Spirit of Christ living in them. Purkiser writes, “The third gift on the Romans list is teaching – *didaskon* - this is instructing and grounding others in the truth.”<sup>6</sup> They must be taught the meaning of the sacraments; even the sacrament of the Communion is more than a mere remembering of what Jesus did on the cross. It is a grace moment to relive one’s commitment in His presence and to respond afresh to His love. It is aligning one’s life to His reign in their hearts. It is the discipling process in action. This sacrament was instituted directly by Christ Himself and comes under the command to teach all things whatsoever He has commanded.

This is God’s grace moment for the church in Africa to return to its roots of Holiness Evangelism.

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version* (NIV).

<sup>2</sup> John A Knight, *All Loves Excelling*, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Ralph Earle, *Word Meanings in the New Testament*, p.28.

<sup>4</sup> Paul M. Bassett, *Volume One, Holiness Teaching*, p. 90.

<sup>5</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew, Volume II, The Churchbook*, p. 1072.

<sup>6</sup> W T Purkiser, *The Gifts of the Spirit*, p. 28.