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The Great Commission

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Entire sanctification is the prerequisite to evangelism without which all the other good equipment and ideas are ineffective. I firstly wish to thank Dr Edward Lawlor for his book, *The Covenant Supreme* and Dr Harold Ivan Smith for his book *The Quotable Bresee*. They have been of great help as I was compiling this paper.

Definition of Words

Entire Sanctification: It is the crisis experience that happens after a person has become a Christian.¹⁸¹ The Holy Spirit sets him apart for a holy purpose (sanctifies) when he gives himself fully to God. The Holy Spirit cleanses a consecrated Christian from original sin. He helps him to love God completely and to love others as himself. He gives a Christian power to live a life that pleases God. It increases the desire to grow in grace.

Evangelism: It is the work of telling the good news (gospel) about Christ to people who are not Christians.¹⁸² Its purpose is to bring these people to faith in Christ.

Prerequisite: According to the South African Student Dictionary, a prerequisite is something that must happen or exist for something else to be possible. Webster's Pocket Dictionary says it is a requirement or condition for further action.

Part of our mission statement as Africa Region Nazarenes talks about us as a Christian holiness family. Mentioned as one of the purposes of the church is winning the lost which is one of the main reasons for Christ to see His disciples after the resurrection. He entrusted His deathless cause to

¹⁸¹ Truesdale, Albert and Lyons, George. *A Dictionary Of The Bible In Everyday English*. Missouri: Beacon Hill. 1986. p89

¹⁸² *ibid.* p95

a band of men and women, giving them a prophetic promise,¹⁸³ “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The responsibility of propagating the message of the gospel was put squarely on their shoulders. Christ knew the “burden was too heavy and the toil too great for human hands. He also knew when the doors open for the Holy Spirit, the work would move on with divine ease.”¹⁸⁴ He told them to tarry until the Holy Spirit has come. Nothing short of the burning heart was going to meet the needs of the dying humanity.¹⁸⁵ “It is not by might nor by power but by the Holy Spirit” (Zechariah 4:6) that we can have the burning heart. The disciples applied their surrendered hearts to the everlasting fire.

Of all the covenants mentioned in the Bible, the one that has the promise of Christ regarding the coming of the Holy Spirit stands supreme. To those left behind on the Ascension Day this covenant meant everything. Without it the brightest star had gone. Without it they were a deserted company and they were *without hope*. But with it the world for Christ was assured.¹⁸⁶ This promise was Christ’s contract to give them power to witness. Every man would acknowledge Christ because of it. But everything was centred around the second crisis, entire sanctification.

From experience we know that “without the help of the Holy Spirit, it is impossible for us saints to convey to the sinner a single spiritual truth”.¹⁸⁷ What is needed is that we be as the disciples were, filled with the Holy Spirit. The atmosphere under which the church best fulfils its mission in the world is the atmosphere of Pentecost. The greatest need of sinful humanity today is to see Jesus. He can be seen only as we who see and know Him bear witness. When He blesses us with a clean heart, He gives us love and passion for Christ. With it comes the passionate desire for the salvation of others. The Holy Spirit opens the channels of communication between God and man, and His power works through him in convicting

¹⁸³ Lawlor, Edward. *The Covenant Supreme*. Missouri: Beacon Hill Press. 1952. p15

¹⁸⁴ Smith, Harold I. *The Quotable Bresee*. Missouri: Beacon Hill Press. 1983. p47

¹⁸⁵ *ibid*, p 25

⁶ *The Covenant Supreme*. Missouri: Beacon Hill. p11

¹⁸⁷ *ibid*, p47

and converting others.¹⁸⁸

As a sending church, whether we are in Africa or any other part of the world, we would do better if we concerned ourselves more with entire sanctification. All others would fall into place because then, we would only produce people with burning hearts for souls. The moment the promise was fulfilled, the disciples' part of the covenant was also kept. They lost no time in witnessing¹⁸⁹ because the Holy Spirit enabled them. He created an incredible yearning to win the lost for Christ. They kept on in spite of the opposition and persecution they suffered. "The Holy Spirit became their defence, their power and their glow. He turned cowards into heroes, He touched stammering lips and they burnt with a divine eloquence, He gave them power which persecutors could not withstand."¹⁹⁰ Men and women literally changed their world as they were empowered by the Holy Spirit. I agree with Jerald Johnson in Harold Bonner's book, *Proclaiming the Spirit*, when he says, "We have a generation to serve and our service must result in changed lives."¹⁹¹

It would do us a lot of good if we would go back to our inner chambers as lay people, as preachers, as heads of departments and coordinators of all levels, and tarry there until He comes and rekindles our fire. He would sharpen the story that we have to tell to the lost. He would add the charm and the attractiveness that was there with the early church. And of course, He would add to the church daily those who are being saved (Acts 2:47). I want to believe that we Christians have a task of rehabilitating Christianity with holiness. The people we are serving are anxiously reading our lives. They want an excuse to escape their responsibility to God because of what they see in our life. If we clothe ourselves with holiness, we will not have the need or time of defending our reputation as the church because we will be charging forward with the message of the cross.

Many times, because of the need the church is tempted to send out people to the field of evangelism without having the highest qualification for its success. Whereas Christ said it in no uncertain terms that we need to tarry until we receive power from on high (Luke 24:49). Perhaps many of us are

¹⁸⁸ *ibid*, p22

¹⁸⁹ *ibid*, p12

¹⁹⁰ *The Quotable Bresee*. p 47

¹⁹¹ Bonner, Harold. *Proclaiming the Spirit*. Missouri: Beacon Hill Press. 1975. p48

not ready because we have not received the experiential knowledge of the glorious heritage of the entire sanctification, or because we are not willing to pay the price. The apostles waited patiently. It was not easy but it was necessary. Thereafter they had the constant zeal to go out and proclaim the news of the resurrected Christ. Sometimes we forget that people do not judge Christianity through its founder, Jesus. But they judge it through its professors as Bresee says, “The hindrance in the way of the triumph of holiness is in its professors.”¹⁹² Dr Litswele said it well when he said, “We should play our holiness ball so well that people will want to come and see.” Somehow the world has ceased to be our parish. We always need someone to do the groundwork for us. Thereafter we come in, just to maintain the status quo.

The power in the early church was for everyone. It is for us today too. Peter says, “The promise is unto you and your children and to all that are afar off”(Acts 2:39). The acceptance of our heritage, the entire sanctification will bring honour to God and permanent results to our church. Anything less will mean that the flame of the second blessing holiness is dying out.¹⁹³ And that will leave us a sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. Making noise without power. Leaving us with nothing to hand over to the coming generation.

When I grew up, my grandmother would make fire in the centre of the hut we lived in. On cold days she would put logs on the fire to sustain it. After some time she would stir it, feed it with more logs, and remove the ashes. That was the most upsetting exercise to us who were enjoying the fire. During the rekindling, tears would roll down our checks. After that, her fire would keep burning and drive the cold away even on the coldest days. She knew the secret that fire has a way of dying out on you even when you are still busy enjoying it. Perhaps that’s what we need to do with the fire within us. If not, we lose the burden for the lost. May God give us the willingness to pay the price.

It is true that we are living in a changing world. The gospel is facing a lot of challenges. It is challenged by modernism, materialism, atheism, and communism. It is also true that we need to be strategic people. We need

¹² *The Quotable Bresee*. p51

¹³ *The Covenant Supreme*. Missouri: Beacon Hill. p13

some equipment and gifted individuals to reach the lost. However it is also true that it is only as He uses them that they are of any use. There is no hope for us as a church to comply with the command of the Great Commission until we take upon ourselves¹⁹⁴ the responsibility of submitting to the divine condition, tarrying in the city until we are clothed with power from on high.

Experience has proved that our witnessing is enhanced through the experience of being Spirit-filled. May He create in us the spirit of indebtedness that will force us to go out and win the lost at any cost!

In closure, I want to quote Dr Phineas Bresee when he said, “The work, this particular work which God has called us to do must be done. Not something else, not something similar, but the very thing He has called us to do”.¹⁹⁵ At the end of our journey, we will be able to pass to the coming generation the very heart of the existence of our church – Holiness, Multiplication of Holy People, the Great Commission.

¹⁴ *ibid*, p42

¹⁵ *The Quotable Bresee*. p50