

Even So Send I You

By George Davis

The Word (Jesus) left the grandeur of heaven, "was made flesh, and dwelt among us," (John 1:14) coming down to fallen humanity as the visual and manifest Life of God--"the Word of Life." "We beheld his glory," said John, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

John described the Truth Jesus brought and his involvement in it as follows. "That which. . .we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, (to look closely at examine) and our hands have handled (feel after--see also Acts 17:27) of the Word of life. For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." (1 John 1:1-2)

Jesus came to put life on display. In Him "the life was manifested"--that very life that transcends time--"eternal life"--the life He shared with the Father before the world began. Jesus selected twelve men, "disciples," to share that life. They would heed the call, "follow me." They "left all," and followed Jesus into the most intense and personal hands-on-training imaginable. They lived with Jesus, went where He went, slept where He slept, ate what he ate. Their eyes followed His every move. No man ever spoke like this man! He shared things that seemed dangerously radical--contradicting everything they had ever been taught. An inspiring sense of peace, grace and purpose attended His every word and deed. His words were like fire! Only He had the words of eternal life and somehow they knew it. They beheld and examined truth, which both frightened and excited them. For three years they listened, watch and wonder as heaven came to earth in the person of this young man from Nazareth. They may not have understood it at the time but they had been enrolled in Christ's developmentally appropriate school, wherein they would fully participate in the Word of Life.

In time Jesus sent the graduates of this school, known as apostles, who had been baptized by the Spirit, to be witnesses and examples of the life and fellowship they had shared together with Christ. While it is true that they were sent, to bear a verbal witness, they were also sent to demonstrate the life they had seen--to "show that eternal life." For the "word of Life" was not just to be heard (preached) but manifest so

as to be "seen" and "handled" as well. And when shared, was communicated dynamically by the power of the Spirit--God working with them with signs following.

From that day to this there has been a degrading impairment of the gospel; whereby it has been cheapen in quality and become largely ineffectual in dynamic. Being reduced to the mere telling of a story, which, after hearing one may raise their hand as an acknowledgement that they are "accepting Christ." Many times leaving the participants unchanged--"conversion" without transformation. What was once a living, life-changing testimony; heard, seen and handled, is now, for the most part, heard only. Accordingly, it is said, only 4% of such converts follow on to know the Lord. We will consider a few of the reasons why.

The need to see and handle the "Word of Life"

The primary means by which men learn is assimilation. We especially see this in little children. You can tell them something one moment and they will have forgotten it the next. Many a frustrated and haggard parent has agonized over their child's aversion to lecturing. Their very best lectures have gone unheeded. In fact, by all indications, they were not heard at all. Why is this? Why won't they listen to reason? Answer: little children do not learn by lecturing but by modeled behavior. They learn by a gradual and often unconscious process of assimilation or absorption. They learn inadvertently--constantly mimicking everything that they hear and see. They learn what is good and acceptable by what they see around them. For good or bad, what they see exemplified before them every day will determine their values. It is in the course of life where they learn character or the lack thereof. As parents, when what we say is contradicted by our actions, our children most always opt to do as we do. If what they see and what they are told are inconsistent, they will usually chose to mimic rather than obey. Habits are formed in the context of life, not in the classroom. However, even in the classroom the teaching techniques proven to be most effective are those incorporating the aid of all the senses--dealing with visual or concrete things--things seen and handle.

I had something of a reminder of this, many years ago, when I took Hebrew Class. Our teacher was a young Jewish woman, an orthodox exchange student from Haifa. I will never forget the first day of that class. She came into the classroom speaking Hebrew. She walked up to different ones of the class, talking as though she were in a Jewish market place. Not one word of English was allowed. She would point to objects in the

room, calling them by their Hebrew names and then continue talking as though we understood every word she said. I remember the embarrassment I felt when she came up to me asking what seemed to be a question and then paused quietly, shrugging her shoulders, waiting for an answer. It was Greek to me. We could not resist the temptation to translate into English. She would not allow this either. She kept talking in Hebrew as a Jewish mother would talk to her little children. And then little by little those strange sounding words became intelligible. It was an awakening! Soon the whole class was communicating, however haltingly, in this new language. It probably sounded like baby talk to her, but we (the babies) were more than a little impressed with ourselves. What impressed me most was the entire experience. This is how I learned to talk as a young child! I learned by the everyday sights and sounds of family!

Likewise, Jesus came speaking the language of heaven! He also, at first, was not understood. But in time, especially after the awakening brought by the Spirit, it all began to become very clear. By God's Spirit, what was once a mystery, dawned.

In time, the apostles were sent to "show" the life, which Jesus modeled before them--a life now dwelling in them. In John 20:21, we read of this commission. [Then said Jesus to them again, "Peace be unto you: as my Father has sent me, even so send I you."](#) The Father had sent Jesus to manifest Himself. Jesus sent the twelve, in the same manner, as Paul later witnessed, [". . .that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh."](#) (2 Corinthians 4:11) The life that was once manifest in Christ was now to be manifest in them. What they had heard, seen and handled, what they had experienced, they declare. They were samplers bearing the essence and flavor of Christ. The life of Jesus was manifest in their mortal bodies, just as Christ manifest the father. Therefore, Jesus said, "He that has seen me has seen the Father." Paul wrote, "for me to live is Christ."

Unlike my experience in the Hebrew class, the early believers learned more than a language. More than a message was handed down. They had encountered life--eternal life. They had seen and handled the Word of Life. They had tasted it. They drank deeply at the well of living water. They had savored Christ. In both word and manner of life, this is the witness they bore. They became examples in such an unpretentious manner as a parent would to a child.

In his declining years John wrote to the late first century community of believers among whom he was such an example. He often addressed them as "little children." He understood that Christ had been formed in him. The life of Christ, manifest in his mortal body, served as a standard or pattern to others. John understood that as little children learn by hearing, watching handling, so these were learning by the life of Christ manifest in him. Just as he had learned from Christ.

Paul acknowledged this very truth as preparatory to his release into ministry. God had called him for a specific purpose. However, before he could preach Christ, something must first be accomplished "in" Paul. The Christ whom Paul would preach must first be revealed "in" him. "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that (in order that) I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." (Galatians 1:15-16).

When Paul referred to Christ being revealed "in" him, as a requisite to preaching Christ, he not only referenced his road to Damascus conversion, where he was called "by grace," but also his long fourteen-year preparation in the wilderness and in Tarsus where he awaited the call to action. Where he refused the counsel of flesh and blood and sought the approval of heaven. Paul could not go forth to preach Christ one moment before Christ was thoroughly revealed in him. And that took time in the wilderness.

When, by God's grace, Paul was sent forth, it was to bring to others the Christ that had been formed in him. Hence Paul wrote to the Galatian believers:

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.
(Galatians 4:19)

Because Christ was revealed "in" Paul he could travail that Christ should be formed in others. He could export only what God had wrought within him. What he had seen and handled of the Word of Life Paul could show to others. The life of Jesus must first be manifest in his mortal body. In 1 Timothy 1:16 we read, "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." We see an order in Paul's word's ". . .in me first. . ." Jesus Christ must show forth in all long-

suffering. Where? "In me first." The work that God had accomplished in Paul was to serve as a pattern to them that should thereafter believe.

Much like a child who learns in the context of life, the early church lived together under the watchful and caring eyes of those who had walked with Jesus, who had seen and handled the "word of life"--those manifesting the life of Jesus. They exported more than just a message they shared "the living Word," proceeding from the living Christ within them. And those who received that Living Word did not receive mere information but Life Everlasting.

Their preaching was not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. (1 Corinthians 2:4) They brought a message well beyond anything merely verbal, but a powerful, visual show of life, seen both in the life of the messenger and the dynamic of Christ working with the messenger. They demonstrated the resurrection of Christ--offering proof that He is alive from the dead. They bore the savor and likeness of Christ everywhere they went. So much so that one of them wrote, "for me to live is Christ..." He also wrote, "we are the fragrance of Christ. . ." (2 Corinthians 2:15).

Dear brothers/sisters, we must have Christ revealed "in" us--being conformed into His likeness, that we might be the message, (2 Corinthians 3:3) demonstration and "fragrance of Christ" to a dying world. I know this might sound strange to some, but we are called to be Christ-scented love-letters to the world.

My theological credentials may be impeccable, my doctrine irrefutable, but what fragrance do I emit? Christianity is Christ and therefore first and foremost a matter of His essence. What is the essence of our Christian lives? Forgive my crudeness but how do we smell to others? Do we reek of Christ? Do those around us smell a life-giving perfume or an "odoriferous emanation" as in the old Right Guard commercial? What is it that I bring? What likeness do I bear? What is it that I export to those around me? These are questions I often ask myself. For if it is "I" they see, then God's message is not complete in me--Christ's life is not fully manifest in me.

Early on, as a new convert, in my zeal to tell everyone I met about this wonderful Savior who had changed my life, I seemed to repel rather than attract. This was frustrating to me. Finally after beating the streets for months and realizing little fruit, I asked one young man who I had just attempted to convert, "Why won't you become a

Christian?" I will never forget his reply. "Why won't I become a Christian?" he answered, "because I don't want to be like you!" Ouch! I was speechless! Although Jesus had redeemed me and his grace was at work in my life, I yet bore little of His resemblance and fragrance. The more I thought on this the more I knew that I also did not want to be like me. Although he did not know it, this young man had been mightily used of God. He had pointed out my desperate need. Was my message erroneous? No. I was lacking in the area of the demonstration and manifestation of the life of Christ.

I am reminded of the words of Saint Francis, "Preach the gospel, and if necessary, use words."

Please don't misunderstand me! I yet make no bold claims in this area. I have not yet attained. In fact, I recognize that it is a sovereign work, well beyond my capability to perform. I know that there is more of Christ to be formed in me, and those closest to me know it as well. Father has set my feet on this path and I see before me the instrument of His shaping. He shows it as a surgeon would uncover His scalpel just before incising, or as a sculptor would his chisel. I see the cross as never before, looming larger and larger. So I share these things as one under the knife, as one whom the master sculptor is yet chipping away at, constantly chiseling to free the image of his Son in me. My part is to stay on the table as the master surgeon, by His word, "quick and powerful," divides soul from spirit. Our human tendency is to run, at the first reflection of the scalpel. Though this process is not pleasant God teaches us to embrace it--to see it as the straight gate--the way to Life. We endure, knowing that ["our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."](#) (2 Corinthians 4:17)

We learn the posture of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who the night before His horrid death on Calvary, yielded to God, saying, ". . .nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." (Matthew 26:39)

Example-Power

In 1 Peter 5:1-3, Peter exhorts the godly elderly toward a genuine and Christ-like care for God's heritage "the flock." He reminded them of the teaching of our Lord that they should NOT exercise lordship over anyone in His body, but instead be examples. I would like to call your attention to the phrase "but being ensamples to the flock" which in the Greek text has a somewhat richer meaning. It should more correctly read "But

contrariwise being samplers, models, generating (1096--ghin'-om-ahee), the flock. The image and essence of Christ, which they bore, inspired the flock. They had so ingested Christ that they presented the "Truth" not only heard, but Truth seen and handled as well. They modeled the Christ "revealed" and "formed" within them. Calling all to a full participation and experimentation in that Truth. They showed the eternal life that was with the Father that was manifest unto them. In this manner, like a marathon torch, the truth was handed down, generation after generation, amid great opposition, surviving one major persecution after another. Then something tragic happened!

The Diocletian Persecution, AD 303–311, which is still referred to by some as the "Era of Martyrs," marked the most ferocious persecution of the Church ever. At first Diocletian issued three edicts, each one more severe than the last. But on April 30, 304 a fourth was issued that far surpassed the rest in severity. Christian gatherings were outlawed. Copies of the Scriptures were collected and burned. Christians were forced to sacrifice to the gods or die. Christian leaders were especially targeted. This proved to be an effective systematic assault on Christ-like leadership. It was a satanic masterstroke. For it all but eradicated exemplary leadership, breaking the beau ideal chain of pattern people, destroying the model begun by Christ and handed down by faithful men.

Philip Schaff described the woeful effect of the Diocletian holocaust as follows.

"All former persecutions of the faith were forgotten in the horror with which men looked back upon the last and greatest: the tenth wave (as men delighted to count it) of that great storm obliterated all the traces that had been left by others."

This stage was set for an altogether new kind of "Christian leadership" to emerge, as shortly thereafter following Constantine declared himself the first Christian emperor, "Pontiff Maximus." Hence the relational and exemplary model of the early church leadership was set aside, shifting to the worldly, imperial, top-down positional model. Which has been with us ever since.

Authority was no longer coupled with maturity on a personal basis, but was conferred as an endowment in the form of titled offices, which were administered in such a fashion, as a king would dub a knight. The power one possessed was seen as being inherent in the position one occupied. Therefore authority that did not come through official channels was not deemed authentic. Only authorized personal, were thought

worthy of such honor. However this kind of honor can be easily stripped away. Like a sergeant stripped of his stripes, if one is separated from the title or position, they immediately lose all power and prestige as well.

True spiritual authority is rooted in spiritual life not titled positions. This is a difficult concept for religious man to understand. This is why the Pharisees had problems with both John the Baptist and Jesus. The crucial question in their minds was "By what authority do you do these things?" (Mat 7:29) One of the things that astonished the people most was the fact that "Jesus taught as one having authority and not as the scribes." (Matthew 7:29). Christ's relationship with the Father determined His authority. Jesus was never official in the minds of the Pharisees. Had He come submitting to their positional authority, perhaps they would have conferred honor upon him. However, Jesus saw the pursuit of such honor as the chief cause of unbelief among the Pharisees. "How can you (Pharisees) believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only?" (John 5:44) It was not this honor that Jesus sought. Christ-like authority is one of exemplary influence not positional control. It is not man pleasing but God-honoring.

In Christendom today knowledge is on the increase, but there is a deficit of character. The lecturing or sermonizing format of today's Christianity has proven to be ineffective against the tide of the moral decadence of our day. I need only offer as proof of this the general condition of today's church--turning out ultra intelligent "Christians" who know something about everything, but are often graceless, living in bondage to sin, lacking character and shallow in their walk with God. All this for lack of seeing and handling "the Word of Life." As I have said, it is not enough to hear it! It must be heard, seen and handled! For to hear it only has created a religious dichotomy where, like the man in Romans chapter seven, we know to do good but cry out, (Romans 7: 18 -19) Sermonizing does little more than make one a miserable, educated, failure. Hearing is not enough!

So we see that the Church, the *ekklesia*, which lived as a victorious family in its early days, has become a defeated institution that functions like an institute of higher learning, in a classroom format. A Divine cry has gone forth; "remember from where we have fallen." (Revelation 2:5).

I believe that Christ is restoring His kind of authority and leadership back to His body, and that even the uninitiated bystander will say of them, "these speak as those having authority not as the ecclesiastical heads of our day." God is restoring true exemplary leadership, those modeling truth, not only heard but also seen and handled. Those in whom Christ is revealed! There are many in this hour that God has called aside from the mediocrity of "Christianity", as we know it today, to form Christ in them. He is preparing them just as He prepared His Son, Peter, John, Paul, etc, to come forth in power, to travail over the grievous condition of His heritage. Their passion is that Christ might be formed both individually, in each believer, and corporately in the "one new man"--the Body of Christ. This burden is not new to them, for it has grown in intensity, commiserate to the degree that Christ is formed in them. As for now, they are in the wilderness learning Christ.

Like their Lord, they all must pass through the wilderness of testing before they can come out in the power of the Spirit. They must face the three archetypal temptations with which Satan tempted Jesus. If he can't entice them with one he will try to get them with the other two. Some he can derail by enticing them to live by their own logic, their own ambitions, rather than every word proceeding (present tense) out of the mouth of God, (Mat 4:3). Others he entices to tempt God. Lastly he tantalizes with his most effective temptation, the very one by which he fell--the temptation to rise, to rule, to conquer, to subjugate. "I will give it (the kingdoms of the world) all to you, if you will only kneel down and worship me." I fear that many dear Brothers and Sisters have already fallen for this temptation. They have aspired to climb, to rule, to lord over, and in that sense, without even knowing it, they bowed to worship at the feet of him who first thought to set his throne above the stars of heaven. Therefore, many set as reigning pontiffs over God's beloved people.

However there are many, that have not bowed the knee, and many more that have repented. And they are about to come forth, like their Lord did, in the power of the Spirit. They will preach the gospel to the poor, with such preaching as has not been heard since the early Church, with the demonstration of the Spirit. They will bring healing to the brokenhearted, and declare deliverance to the captives--the recovering of sight to the blind. They will come declaring a jubilee, a turning of the captivity of those that have been bruised and tyrannized. (See Luke 4:18),

Those that have passed through the wilderness testing will bring truth, heard, seen and handled. They will bring with them the desperately needed demonstration of Jesus Christ. In that sense they will become irrefutable proof of His resurrection, i.e., "witnesses."

Take heart wilderness-dwellers! The time is at hand!