

# ***Listening and Praying for People who are willing to Change - 3***

## ***Session 3 - Presuppositions common to the Church today***

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### **1 - Overview of the Course Structure**

#### ***Listening:***

- 1 – Persons in relation to God and to one another.
- 2 – Living the Union with Christ by the Spirit
- 3 – Presupposed matters for citizens and Christians in Australia
- 4 – Listening to one another: listening for one another.

#### ***Praying:***

- 5 – Access to God through Christ in the Spirit
- 6 – Secret prayer, requested prayer and corporate prayer
- 7 – Presupposed matters for Christians in Australia about prayer
- 8 – Praying according to the will of God – led by the Spirit

#### ***Doing it:***

- 9 – Praying with faith
- 10 – Working together.

### **2 - The Use of the hour we have together:**

- [a] To acquaint you with the main things
- [b] To direct you to the reading outside of the sessions
- [c] Reading is mainly found on the website **www.davidboan.net**.  
Linked to this site is **www.thegraciousgod.net**. It carries larger files, particularly of audio material in mp3 and mp4.
- [d] To be constantly interrupted by what you ask and want to talk about.

### **Last session we left with the understanding that:**

**When people have done things in the past, they have, of course, acted. So we saw that we may presume they have decided to do so. We outlined the importance of following people's decisions. Further, we saw that the gift of repentance was decisive for shifting and establishing a freedom to take place from past actions, habits and commitments.**

***This section raises for us the fact that people do not arrive into our presence and relationship as neutral. Folks arrive committed to certain ideas, both from their education, their Christian culture that surrounds them. We ignore these at our peril. Where people are not clear in their knowledge of relationship with God causes most of their problems.***

### **1 - Corruptions that make it difficult to appreciate grace in our generation**

For it is of no use to start our thinking as if our community – whether we mean the local assembly, the church of the town, or the wider culture of Australia – is at a neutral place. It is already a going concern. It finds itself committed, acting on the basis of certain presuppositions that are expressed in practical living. There are 'fruits' to be observed in persons and their life styles.

This is especially our concern within the local assemblies of the church of the town. For there are common spiritual practices that indicate that the world's assumptions have been accepted. In stating these things we stand with our brethren; our aim is not to criticize but to restore; to draw us back to the beauty of God's grace and His dealings with us in Christ. Here we list some things that you will encounter when you begin to engage people deeply about their own life.

1. Confusion between contract and covenant:

Sometime the evangelists of today present the gospel message along the lines that :

- [a] All of us are sinners – which is true.

- [b] We are liable to the wrath of God - which was true but not know

- [c] We need to know that Christ has died for our sins – usually presented to us as a penalty being paid

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by Christ for us.

[d] We need to lay hold of this wonderful gift; you will not be saved unless you make your own personal decision for Christ as your Saviour.

The trouble with [a-d] is that it is a topical sermon for centred on the audience. It attempts to be relevant by concentrating on the advantages of the message for the audience. That is, it seeks to attract their interest through self-interest. In this way it confirms in their heart that they are the true focus of life and the centre of it all. Life is self-referred. This is to preach the gospel in an unevangelical way.

[1] The apostles started with the announcement of what God has done, namely the resurrection of Christ. A stupendous announcement that declared Christ was God's Son and invited anyone to now interpret his death not as a tragedy but as a wonderful saving act.

[2] Using the conceptual tools of the OT, they then went on to say something of his person and work and what God has done for Israel through their Messiah. They spoke of God enthroning Jesus and that He, being alive will return to judge the world. They made clear that there was a time of grace, a window in which men and women may know that God is not counting their sins.

[3] This was of course a thoroughly gracious way to reveal that we were sinners and were liable to the wrath of God – gracious because at the same time it invited us to accept that we were liable no more. It engendered in the audience not a fear of judgment but a reverence for God's person as holy and self-consistent; He had not winked at our sin but dealt with it to His own satisfaction.

[4] This was a revelation of God's own covenant righteousness; that He had kept His word to his people and through their Messiah had worked a salvation for the world. A response to this righteousness of God would be to trust it as true; what was announced was treated as fact. If such a response was found in a person then it meant God was trusted; such faith was seen in God's sight as righteousness – the proper reciprocal response to His righteousness. A response of faith He first found in Christ, the true man, and now being evoked by the Spirit as the word of the salvation went forth.

[5] Further, the apostles waited to see what such an announcement as they were making evoked in their listeners. They did not instruct them what to do for themselves; they were looking for what God was doing in them!

[e] The way we do it [the response we must make] is to confess all our sins to God.

[f] Repent of our past life – decisively turn from it

[g] Believe in the gospel.

The understanding conveyed is that if we do this [e-g] we shall be safe from God's wrath, and we shall receive the Holy Spirit.

[h] We are often told to signal this by making some public, outward act – put up our hand, come forward, wait behind, be counselled etc. Such an act, when done is seen by the evangelist as a sign that we are God's and that we have responded to the gospel message.

The trouble with [e-h] is that:

1. It often leads to confusion about emotional response and inner spirit responses. It makes it very difficult for the listener to know whether he is emotionally responding to the 'motivational speaker' or whether he is becoming aware of an inner registration him in his spirit of God calling him. It can confuse the word of man with the word of God.

2. The strong appeal to self interest, instead of setting out to revealing God's love and his provision of grace can blur the evocative power of the revelation of the love of God for the listener.

3. If the listener makes the response asked for by the evangelist, it engenders in the listener, as their first move in relating to God that it is all "contract". 'If I do this God will receive me.'

4. Repentance and faith are presented as pre-requisites which, if satisfied, cause the Gos-

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pel's reception – whereas they are results of the gospel preaching to which we are called since, in the grace of God, the kingdom has drawn near [Mark 1.15]. The apostles saw that men and women were cut to the heart and, as a consequence of this inner conviction, found them asking what should they do. In reply to that question they said 'repent and be baptised' [Acts 2]. Notice the repentance and baptism were not the cause of their acceptance with God, nor the initial response. They were actions people should take that followed the conviction of God that the apostles saw was already evident.

5. Confession of sins is also resultant, not causal. We do not gain God's forgiveness by the confession of our sin. It is the reverse, since the Gospel makes clear that He is not counting our sins against us, we learn of the seriousness of our sins through the death of God's only Son, and then, on the basis of trusting His word that He is "not counting" we are then, because released from a fear of judgment, are drawn to make a clean and thorough confession of our sins. Confession of sins is the result of believing the gospel; not a cause for being acceptable. So when Christians confess their sins to God it is precisely because they know that He is not counting them; in this way they may be honestly acknowledged.

### **2. The notion that my decision makes me a Christian.**

It is a "contract" gospel setting: God has done this; you must take it. And because you have taken it then your decision makes you a Christian. Everything hangs on whether you have closed with god, whether have you responded. And responded as the outcome-based evangelist says you must.

The difficulty is that:

1. Instead of understanding that the initiative if God in making known a revelation of His gracious act in Christ for to us through the preaching of the gospel draws from us the response that He is, by the Spirit working in us.

It is true that I must make a response to the gospel. Yet insofar that I must make it for myself nevertheless I cannot make it by myself.

This pre-venient work of the Holy Spirit not only prepares me to receive the gospel; His work of drawing me is done as the revelation of God's gracious Person is made through the preaching.

2. The evangelist has begun our relating to God in such a way that I have been led to rely on my decision for the certainty of my position with God. Well then I am lost. This is not a certainty – my decisions can be shaken, particularly as harder questions press in on me later as I mature. This often manifests as an insecurity – a doubting of my assurance of salvation. This insecurity drives certain questions that constantly re-appear among contractually based folk: "Can we lose our salvation? Can our failings lead to loss? If we backslide is that fatal?"

3. For instead of seeing ourselves in relation to God as a children to a Father, we are pre-occupied as to how to hang on to our place in the kingdom of heaven. We lose, or never really know, the joy of a Father who holds us in His hand. Instead of leaving Him to make us safe and assure us of his love by the Spirit [Romans 5.1-11; 8.14] we worry about our place in the family.

4. Insecurity drives us into self preservation and self worry. So we have not the freedom to know our salvation "to" because we are unsure of our salvation "from".

5. Insecurity leads people into the confusion that we can start again, and again etc. This finds its foolish pastoral solution in a circular re-dedication of myself to God, and instead of believing in one baptism for the remission of their sins, people indulge in re-baptism in search of properly starting again.

### **3. The knowledge of how to discern what God is doing, in others and in myself**

1. Discernment by fruit [product] of life checks for false Christians [Matt 7]; fruit of changed life, things that show the life of God in union

2. Discernment by inner spirit; is an internal witness about my own life: receptions within myself which arise in my conscience

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4. Emotionally driven understandings and also sensual tests for what are spiritual phenomenon - the modern demand for signs and wonders

[a] Desire to draw God into the sensual area of our experience

[b] How God acts once, such experiences drive our theology [Wagner] leads to attributing source to wrong things and confusing truth with error [eg of doing warfare praying as the basis of success, when the gospel preaching really is the invasive agent of the enemy places].

### **5. Church life and goals – communally speaking**

[a] Maturity arises out of inner appropriation of the work of Christ. The apostolic goal for the local congregation was 'love from a pure heart, and a good conscience and a sincere faith [1 Timothy 1.5].

[b] Gifts and their usage – the concern of the growth of the kingdom of God was the work of the five-fold ministry. The local assembly was attended to by overseers [bishops], elders and local pastors as concerned with the 'life' of the brethren.

[c] Growth is seen as a matter of numbers; and so programmes and activities are directed towards that goal – often seen as the mission statement of the local fellowship. Often, what is required is an acceptance of the common goal as the basis for being associated with that assembly in the church of the town.

It is the gospel, the word, attended by the Spirit, which will deepen lives. This leads us to see growth as depth of relationship, holy living and faithfulness to the Gospel preaching as an offer of grace. The content of the preaching and the teaching is decisive.

### **6. Issues of faith**

Seen as an attribute you have, or as an act in which we are engaged; believing is seen to be our activity. Faith as a work or a method: which you must do in order to lay hold of "promises" which can lead to an idea that God's promises need to be extracted.

Faith is often seen as a tool which God must respond to, often means that faith is mechanically used – as a method - not heart issue. Faith as faith "for" a projected goal/ instead of faith "in" a person.

Faith is trusting response to revelation made. Faith has to do with reciprocity, where the faithfulness of God is answered by trusting response. Faith is a gift to us in that it is evoked from us by the revelation being apprehended through the Spirit. The covenant idea is central here. Faith should be seen as a moment-by-moment trust exercised.

### **7. Spiritual warfare as a triumphalistic tool.**

This is the idea of prayer as "standing in the gap" between the devil and the people of the earth is the teaching of Dean Sherman, was drawn from a contextual misapplication of Ezekiel. The context was exactly the reverse – God was showing Israel that his grace was such that, when Jerusalem, deserving his destruction, was vulnerable to his wrath, there were gaps in her walls – she was wide open to his destruction, without a leg to stand on. He wanted a man, just any man, who would plead for his mercy. If he did, then God would be merciful. But He found no one did, so He destroyed the city.

Sherman's emphasis puts the focus on the enemy as a basis for engagement; instead of holiness in relation to God and obedience to Him as the basis for disengagement; and then relying on God's word to do the work. Ephesians 6 has the concept of "standing" in the armour of God = Christ. The idea of advance is not found here; it is that Christ has secured the advance "for us" and that we are standing in faith on that finished work. Taking cities for God - the idea, derived from Joshua that the city is the target of God.

### **8. Unbalanced understandings of authority**

There are half-truths in the church that need balancing:

[a] "Covering" { Ruth/Boaz } – as an externally imposed matter which leads to dependency driven relationship with pastors/elders

[b] Anointing upon [authority recognised] and anointing within [union of life] needs to be carefully distinguished.

[c] Passivity in people arises from a powerful works-driven communal understanding.

[d] Goal centred, mission based, choice of target areas, all proceeding along with commercially driven ideas

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and agendas of the world

### **9. Ministry to the individual – the balance between traducianism and creationism.**

[a] Digging up the past as a basis for healing in the present. There is a confusion about Ezekiel 18: which speaks of how God does not hold any later generation to account for the sins of the past generation. Each person is accountable for their own sins.

[1] This is a one-sided Traducianism; the teaching that our forefathers drew us into their life decisions. Need to see that Scripture does support the idea that the results of past sins effect the next generation in respect of the

[a] established climate and example and also

[b] transactions with others which now govern our setting for life we must live. Heb 7.10 descendants are included in the ancestor.

[2] Creationism is the other balance – Heb. 12.9 individuality is arising from the creative work of God.

[b] Relying on other people's discernment in a passive way, without confirmation of the thing as registering within ourselves [see 1 and 2 above]. The need to test all things.

[c] Confusion between holy life and deliverance.

Whole idea behind some ministry is that what is accomplished by deliverance is understood as the driving out of an evil constitutes the arrival of the good. In its extreme form it is a sanctification by deliverance - which is not true at all.

See Jesus' teaching on the parable of the house cleansed but not occupied; the expulsive power of the new love and relationship with God holds the life in godliness and purity, free from defiling influences Phil 4.8.

### **10. Christian growth**

A contractual God means that we still fear his wrath and so issues of sin are seen as the main indicator of growth and purity. This dualistic thinking has the result that we think the eradication of the negative is the establishment of the positive.

It can have the effect of setting the understanding and satisfaction of the Christian life as that of watching what the power of sin is doing in our life and taking satisfaction from that. Ultimately, sin still controls our focus. Whereas the issue as one of holy relations and the desire to live within them as pleasing to God. This trains our conscience [Heb 5.] to respond to the joy of knowing God's pleasure on our life, which is the fruit of intimacy with Him.

### **11. Atonement:**

1. Idea that the Father loves us because the Son dies for us.

This sees the Father as a tyrant who will judge us and punish us; and plays off the Father as against the Son. Dividing the Trinity.

Whereas it is the reverse. It is because God has loved us always, and is a forgiving and merciful God that Christ was sent of the Father to accomplish the Father's work for us. Christ died for us because God loves us.

2. Retrospective [salvation 'from'] and prospective [salvation 'to'] views of the atonement need to be balanced. The retrospective nature of the atonement is often presented as the primary matter, whereas it is in fact necessary as only to deal with what sin has made us. It is of course, first in attention, for we were in bondage to the power of sin and also guilty of its deed. Most often the evangelist deals with this aspect: and he must, but not only this aspect.

The prospective view of the atonement dealing with what the desire of divine love is that we should become. Here lies the challenge of the godly life – the matter to which God has saved us. This is the ultimate clear purpose of God for us. The evangelist must present both aspects or his challenge to us remains self referred and self centred.

3. Righteousness as a matter of reciprocal union

Often seen as imputed to us - precious to us not because of what is inherent in it of itself, but because it confers a legal title OR [ if the transference of righteousness is rejected] our salvation is seen as the effects of the righteousness transferred for Christ's sake to those who believe in Him.

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That the perfect righteousness of the Son of God in his humanity is itself the gift of God to us in Christ – to be ours as Christ is ours - to be partakers in as He is partaken in – to be our life as He is our life. He is our righteousness [1 Corinthians 1.30]. This divine righteousness that is in Christ must be recognised as a higher gift than any benefit it can be supposed to purchase.

This is the difference of a righteousness imparted through union as compared with a right, thought of as having been conferred by a righteousness imputed.

The simplicity we have in Christ is that he is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

Your **reading assignments** to consolidate this session is to make your own notes of this session. Master these distinctions which we have made - they will alert you as you listen to others.