



EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

THIRTIETH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

by

D. James Kennedy

A.B., M.Div., M.Th., D.D., D.Sac.Lit., Ph.D.,
Litt.D., D.Sac.Theol., D.Humane Let.

“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

—Matthew 5:11–16

Sir Harry Lauder. There probably aren't ten people in this sanctuary that have ever heard of him. He was a comedian. He would have said he was a humorist. He was actually the “Bob Hope,” fifty years before Bob Hope. Though he is not known today, if you had lived about a hundred years ago, you would have known of Sir Harry Lauder. Most everyone did. Now, what does that have to do with the Presbyterian General Assembly?

Harry Lauder was a Scotsman. Though he golfed with kings and princes and millionaires, he was a Scotsman. More than that, he was a Christian, and more than that, he was a bold witnessing Christian. Can you imagine a Bob Hope like that? He wasn't afraid to express his faith in any kind of a situation. One time he was staying at a hotel and he was looking out his window. Let me put it in his words

I was sitting in the gloamin', an' a man passed the window. He was the lamplighter. He pushed his pole into the lamp and lighted it. Then he went to another and another, and another.

Now I couldn't see him. But I knew where he was by the lights as they broke out down the street, until he had left a beautiful avenue of lights.

Ye're a' lamplighters. They'll know where ye've been by the lights [ye have lit] . . .

I think that is about the most beautiful description of the Christian life I have ever seen. You are all “lamplighters,” and they will know where you have been by the lamps you have lit. Jesus said: **“Ye are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14)**. That is the story, in part at least, of the Christian life.

Wouldn't it be interesting if the whole world were blacked out, and then people's lives were run through at hyper-speed. Every time they led someone to Christ, a light would go on in that particular part of the globe, and then another one, and another one, and another one, and we would know where they have been by the lives they have lighted for Christ. At the Final Judgment, that may indeed be exactly what happens.

I know some people who are quite wealthy and they travel around the world frequently. I know other people who witness for Christ everywhere they go. They leave lives that once were in darkness lighted for Christ. But, this particular couple I am thinking of—alas, I am afraid there is no such burden or passion in their hearts at all. If we ran fast forward through their lives—though they traveled all over the world in various different directions—I am afraid the world would be as dark when they left it as it was when they entered it.

They will know where we have been by the lives we have lighted for Christ. Are you a lamplighter for Jesus Christ? I am sure there are many here who are faithful lamplighters for Christ, though, I was just told by one who certainly ought to know, that forty-two percent of our churches don't report one single profession of faith in an entire year—a whole congregation as dark at the end of the year as it was in the beginning.

Dr. Curtis McDaniel, our Executive Minister at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, had a suggestion for shortening the General Assembly. It is very simple. You are not allowed to go to a microphone and speak unless you have led one person to Christ in the past year. You can speak twice if it is two, three times if it is three, and so on. It would shorten the assemblies considerably.

DISCIPLING BELIEVERS

It might be a good idea for us to focus on that—discipling believers and evangelizing the nations. Equipping the saints and evangelizing the nations are great to emphasize, if they are more than words and are daily practices in our lives. Unfortunately, many of our saints are not equipped to evangelize at all. They are like soldiers going to war, and we've failed to do one thing—we have never given them any bullets to fight that war.

Yet, that is the way it is with many people in our churches. There are churches full of people who are completely impotent when it comes to winning souls for Christ. Somebody said: “Well, we don't have to specifically equip them to evangelize. If we just preach the Gospel faithfully, they will learn how to do it.”

I was converted through the radio preaching of a great preacher. In fact, in just the last month I read someone who said: “He was the greatest expository preacher of the twentieth century.” I don’t want to get into an argument about that, but I do know he was a powerful preacher. His name was Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse. He died about thirty or more years ago. But, when Barnhouse spoke, people listened.

One young man, who was twenty-three at the time, was awakened suddenly from his sleep, when the alarm clock radio came on. Dr. Barnhouse was speaking, and he was saying something like this: “Young man, if you were to die tonight and stand before Almighty God, and He were to say to you, ‘What right do you have to enter into my heaven?’ what would you say?”

I just rolled over and went back to sleep. Don’t you believe it. He startled me wide-awake, and I listened. For the first time in my life I heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As I said, he was a powerful preacher, and I accepted Christ.

I went on to seminary, graduated and began to preach. One time I was invited to Boston to preach in one of the great churches there. The pastor of the church asked me, “Do you see that lady in the front row?”

I said: “Yes. What about her?”

He replied: “She is the widow of Donald Grey Barnhouse. I wondered if you had ever met her.”

I said, “No, I have never had the pleasure.” After the service, he introduced me, and I accepted her invitation to go out and have coffee with several other people. She told me she was getting ready to leave Philadelphia and move to St. Petersburg, Florida. Now, for those Yankees among you that have never had the pleasure of being in St. Petersburg, Florida, it is called the City of Green Benches—at least it was until recently. I understand they’ve painted them. Anyway, that is where all of these old people sit around waiting for final exams. I said to Mrs. Barnhouse, “They are just sitting there like ducks. You will have a marvelous opportunity to sit down there and share with these people the answer to the question.”

She had been sitting for decades under the preaching of one of the most powerful preachers of the twentieth century, and yet she said to me: “I wouldn’t know where to begin.” Folks, there are thousands of Mrs. Barnhouses in all of our churches all over the country.

Paul tells us that God has given a pastor/teacher to equip the saints to do the work of ministry. That is our job. Are you equipping the saints? If you never make it back to your church after this assembly, how many lay people would you leave disciplined, trained, and evangelizing for Christ? I have often thought that at that great final day, in the Great Assize, when the tomes of judgment are opened, and the books are read, and the rewards are given for faithful service and witness for Christ, that many people will be saying to their pastors, “Pastor, why didn’t you train me to witness?” What are you going to say, pastor? Why are you depriving your members of not only fantastic joy in this life, but of everlasting rewards in the life to come?

In the twelfth chapter of the book of Daniel, we read, “. . . and they that turn many to righteousness [shall shine] as the stars [of the heaven] for ever and ever” (v. 3). We have a lot of stars—we have movie stars, TV stars, basketball stars, football stars, rock stars, and all kind of stars—mostly shooting stars. Your people can be heavenly stars forever, but it is up to you. God gave you to them to equip them to do that. Are you doing it?

I am so thankful that one of the pillars, stalwarts, and founders of the PCA, Kennedy Smartt, was gracious enough to take a very timid, shy pastor—not dry behind the ears—and take him out with him until he overcame those fears and learned to do what he had always, as a Christian, wanted to do. He was able to confidently and graciously share the Good News of Christ with others, and God has been pleased to bless that. I am part of an evangelistic ministry that was birthed in the PCA by one of the pillars and founders of the PCA. Now, having been taught by another minister in the PCA, I learned what it means to equip people to share the Good News of Christ and the tremendous potential of equipping others.

EVANGELIZING THE NATIONS

I was just told by someone who works in a ministry that raises funds for work in Asia that he just came back from China where, in one province, thirty thousand people are completing their training in Evangelism Explosion. Thirty thousand! He also told me of an island right off the coast of China where eighty percent of the entire population had been won to Christ through people trained in EE—which is nothing but another way to spell the Gospel. Are you equipping your people?

I have had people say, “Well, I don’t like EE.”

“Fine, I’m not thrilled with everything in it myself. If I could have done any better, I would have, but you improve it.” The question is: How are you training your people? You say, “Oh well, I... I... I’m not training them at all.” I like the way I train people better than the way you *don’t* train people. I can say that for EE.

By the grace of God, just last year, I heard that 1,750,000 people came to profess Christ as Savior through the work of EE. Now, if you have a better way of doing it, do it! Pastor, you are there to equip your people to do the work of evangelism. I thank God for churches like Briarwood, where we are meeting, and where Dr. Frank Barker and Rev. Harry Reeder have been faithful in equipping their people to proclaim the Gospel and train others, also. Their people have gone out in various countries and shared the Gospel

It is amazing to see how people, when they overcome their fear, can be turned on to fantastic things. We had a group of twenty people, ages twenty to seventy-five years old, who were invited to come to the African Bible College last year. They were nothing special. One of the group, a lady who really had no past experience, studied and studied, and in just a couple of weeks she learned the whole presentation, because she wanted to go to Africa . . . and she went.

There were 160 students in the Bible College. The group from our church took them out each day—morning, noon, and night—and they witnessed to people. In Africa, there is no television, no radio, and no motion pictures—not much of anything. These students, along with members of

the group, would go out and find a couple of people and start talking to them. Soon a couple more joined in. A little bit later there were half a dozen, and a dozen, and maybe twenty people would gather around, and they would share the Gospel.

The people were incredibly open. In one week those twenty nondescript people with no special training at all, except they had been taught how to share the Gospel of Christ with others and were at different levels of ability and experience, led 1,800 African adults and over 200 children to Christ. This was just because they had been set free from the fears that paralyze and silence people whom we, as pastors, have not equipped.

Ah, my friends, they will know where we've been by the lamps we have lighted. I would encourage you to be the light of the world, to equip your people, to disciple them, to share with them how to do it, to take them out with you. That is the way they overcome their fear.

BASIC PROBLEM: FEAR

I had read all of the books in seminary about the various ways of sharing Christ. It didn't make any difference. I was silent, when I should have been sharing. Why? Because none of those books touched the basic problem, which is fear. If you don't witness, I will tell you why you don't witness. You are afraid. I know, because I used to be the president of "Chickens Anonymous International." But, Kennedy Smartt shook the feathers right off this chicken and enabled me to do it.

I know I am not a lone voice speaking to you if you are not engaged in either witnessing, or if you are a pastor and not equipping your people to do it. There are other voices speaking. The Word of God is speaking to you. The Holy Spirit is speaking to you. Your conscience is speaking to you. The testimony of the Church down through twenty centuries is speaking to you, telling you that we need to, indeed, evangelize our world for Christ. So again, pastor, "Why didn't you teach me how to witness?" What will your answer be for depriving those people of the greatest joy they can have as a Christian of leading others to Christ? What a marvelous thing it is.

I remember seeing a beautiful young lady, probably about twenty-eight or thirty, give a testimony in which she was describing a situation where, just a week before, she had led the first person in her life to Christ. She was a light. She was beautiful; she just beamed with the excitement of having the privilege and the incredible, unspeakable joy of bringing another person out of everlasting death into the light of eternal life. Are you depriving people in your church of that joy? Ah, dear one, we are to be the light of the world.

I want you to finish this statement: The greatest influence of Calvin and the Calvinistic tradition and its most uniquely significant contribution to Western Christianity is... what? What is the greatest influence of Calvin and the Calvinistic tradition upon Western civilization? What would it be? If I had all of you write down your answer to that question, I have a feeling there would be many wrong answers. The question again: What is the most significant contribution of John Calvin to Western civilization? It is this: The development of a biblically reformed world-and-life view structured along the lines of the principle of sphere sovereignty.

You say, “What does that have to do with what you just talked about?” Nothing, except that is the other track that the Gospel train is supposed to run on. Jesus said that we are not only to be the light of the world—we are to be the salt of the earth. It is called many things—sometimes the “Great Commission,” and the “Cultural Mandate”—that we are to impact our culture for Christ in every facet of it, while we are here in this world. It is the “Cultural Mandate.”

Gordon Spikeman said that culture is just another name for the duty mankind has to develop the raw materials of this world, as found in nature and in man, himself, to demonstrate the great possibilities in creation the Creator has put there. It is to make them serve the purposes God intended they should serve. The “Cultural Mandate,” is simply the redemption, not only of men, but all of the works of man, which are called culture, and all of the things man has created and has, so that this impacts every facet of man’s life in this world. That is the Cultural Mandate we are to perform as well as the Great Commission.

Those are the two tracks that every church, every pastor, every Christian should be aiming to fulfill. This was the great goal of Calvin. Greg Singer, noted historian, stated that Calvin was not only a theologian and educator, but he was a social statesman. He said that one as devoted as Calvin to the whole counsel of God could hardly fail to have a well-developed “sociology” (even though the word was not used for three hundred years after that). Calvin, indeed, endeavored as a reformer and the dominant influence in Geneva, to take Geneva and realize in that city the ideal Christian commonwealth, which ideals he found in the Scripture. John Calvin transformed the city of Geneva into a Christian commonwealth. Knox referred to it as the greatest school of Christ since the time of the apostles.

It becomes a question of whether

- it is Calvin who transformed Geneva;
- it is Knox who transformed every facet of the whole country into a school of Christ;
- it was the Puritans that, indeed, made that part of America into a Christian commonwealth here on this continent;
- or it was Abraham Kuyper, who labored indefatigably, producing over two hundred large volumes of works and editing a daily paper in the capital of the Netherlands, Amsterdam (He started the free university there and did scores of other things). His enemies thought he had twenty hands, he worked so diligently to transform the whole of Holland into a Christian commonwealth. He wasn’t afraid to get his hands dirty, and he changed that country.

More recently, Francis Schaeffer talked about the need for Christians to be involved in the culture and not let the culture go to Hell, because they had left it to unbelievers. How we love to rejoice in the great things our great Calvinistic forebears accomplished in every sphere of society—how they were able to get rid of slavery, how they changed the insane asylums, how they uplifted the estate of women, how they so incredibly blessed the condition of children, and one thing after another, after another in America.

Eight out of the ten members of the first abolition society were not merely Christians or Calvinists, they were clergymen laboring to end the curse of slavery in America. In England, it was a Christian who had done the same thing, but a few years before. These were people who realized that redemption was a redemption of the whole of creation, that Christ came into the

world to destroy the works of the devil, and those works are not only in individual hearts and minds, but are in the fruits and labors and the developments of people.

We live in a country where Christ gets little or no glory from today's culture. We see that the whole counsel of God is going to include a well-developed sociology, a transformation of the institutions of men. If we are going to see the redemption of the earth, it is going to involve not merely people, but the works of their hands as well. How different this country would be. Do you realize that in 1850, virtually every daily newspaper in America was run by evangelical Christians? The editorials frequently quoted the Bible. Columnists talked about the Scripture and about theological questions. Every week a sermon of a noted cleric was printed in the papers. Who can name one daily newspaper in America that is run by Christians on Christian principles quoting Christian texts? I'm afraid we have abandoned our culture, and we have left it for unbelievers.

I remember twenty years ago, a member of my church said: "Well pastor, do you think Christians should be involved in politics?"

I said: "Of course not. We ought to leave it to the atheists; otherwise we wouldn't have anything to complain about." Surely we Christians would rather complain than do something, wouldn't we? Well, that may be laughable, but it is also tragic, when we see what has happened.

The basic working principle of such a cultural view is called a "weltanschauung." The German word Weltanschauung is a "world-and-life" view. How many of you have a Weltanschauung? I have the opportunity of a continued advanced study leave and vacation each year, which extends our summers away from the church considerably. During that time my wife and I attend a different church almost every week. We have been to a lot of churches in the last five years or more, and I said to my wife recently, "In all of those churches, I do not remember hearing one word about the culture in which we live—not one."

I recall when I was first converted, I went to a church, and though I attended only two weeks, they asked me to teach the young adults Sunday school class. I didn't know anything about the Bible, other than the Jews came to Egypt and lived in the land of Goshen. Gosh, that was pretty interesting. It occurred to me that all I was reading about Naboth's vineyard and Ahab might have taken place on Mars, for all I knew. A year or so later, when I got to know a little bit more about the New Testament, I really wondered, one time, if all of that actually happened in earth history, or whether that all took place on a cloud somewhere, with no connection to this world. I say again, do you have a Weltanschauung?

How often do people hear of the application of Christianity to the culture in which they live six days a week? I think there are many Christians and pastors who don't really have a world-and-life view? They only have a life view and that is as far as it extends. It doesn't really impact our culture.

You may remember back in the 1700s the beginning of a movement called Pietism. It began in Germany with Philip Jacob Spener, a very pious, godly man. He believed that in the midst of

all of the action that took place in a rather formalistic Lutheran church in Germany, that there was something missing, and that was the pious inner heart of the Gospel. He stressed the importance of palingenesis—we would call it the “new birth”—being born again. He felt that was essential to the Church and it was missing.

So, he emphasized this matter of piety, of the new birth, and of sanctification, of prayer, and of devotional reading of the Scriptures. He felt that rearing your family using those concepts was very, very important—very vital. But, his grandchildren and great, great grandchildren, as is so often the case, distorted the whole pattern, so that it now became not merely the warm, living, vital center of the life of the Church, it became the totality of the Church, and they did nothing else.

If you live in Florida you get to be pretty familiar with the phenomenon known as the “hurricane.” You quickly learn that there are two things essential to a hurricane. You have to have winds moving around at a rapid speed and with a circular pattern. At the heart of it you have a warm central stationary spot where there’s nothing really happening. I walked out of my house one time in the midst of the eye of the hurricane and looked up at the stars. It was absolutely still. There was no wind, no howling, and no nothing. It was beautiful, and it is out of the heat of that warm center that those winds are fed.

The meteorologists will show pictures of swirling winds, and then say, “You see, right here the eye is beginning to develop. Yes, my friends, it has become a hurricane.” Then the winds pick up, and it becomes a tremendous power—as Hurricane Andrew demonstrated when it went across Southern Miami ten years ago with enormous winds up to 160-80 miles an hour. Everything changed. There weren’t merely branches and palm fronds downed; there was steel, aluminum, and blocks of concrete all over the streets and devastation everywhere. It changed everything for about 25 miles in diameter, right across the whole peninsula of South Florida.

Piety is a good thing; Pietism is not. In Pietism, finally, all of the winds disappeared, and all that was left was the warm center. The social Gospel 20-40 years ago was big when I got out of seminary, but that was just a bunch of wind with no evangelical heart, no palingenesis, no born again experience, no sanctification—just a lot of to-do about nothing. The problem with the social gospel is: (1), it wasn’t social, it was socialism; and (2), there was no Gospel. In Pietism you have the Gospel, the warm quiet heart, and nothing else. It passes across the state and leaves it unchanged.

TIME FOR REFLECTION

My friends, I think this thirtieth anniversary is a time for reflection. Are we truly discipling and equipping our people to evangelize, to be able to confidently, as well as graciously, share the Gospel in an effective way? How many people do you have trained thusly in your church? Second, are we fulfilling the Cultural Mandate as Calvin, Knox, Kuyper, and all of the rest, down through the Calvinistic tradition, stressed so much, or have we become Pietists? Now piety is a wonderful thing, but Pietism is a negation of the work of the Church, and just as I am all in favor of feminine, feminism is a curse. What are we? Where are we going? What tracks are we traveling on?

I remember a few years ago, Rev. Don Wildmon of the American Family Association, said something very profound. He said:

- “Today 4,000 innocent precious lives of unborn babies were snuffed out . . .
And 300,000 pulpits are silent . . .
- The networks make a mockery of Christians, the Christian faith, and Christian values with nearly every show they air. Greed, materialism, violence, sexual immorality are standard fare. Program after program, movie after movie contains anti-Christian episodes and plots . . .
And 300,000 pulpits are silent!
- Teenage suicide is the highest it has ever been. . . . Christian morality cannot be taught in schools, but atheistic immorality can. . . .
And 300,000 pulpits are silent!
Rape has increased 700% in the last fifty years
And 300,000 pulpits are silent!
- Rock music fills the airwaves and our children’s minds with music that legitimizes rape, murder, forced sex, sadomasochism, adultery, satanic worship, etc.
And 300,000 pulpits are silent.

Are we really equipping our people to evangelize, and are we fulfilling the cultural mandates to change the culture for Christ, to bring glory to His Name? We sing, “This is my Father’s world.” Is it? Would He even own it today?

Is your pulpit silent? For five summers I have listened for a word in different churches, and I never heard one thing about the Cultural Mandate. It is time for reflection and, perhaps, reassessment of where we are going.

PRAYER: Gracious Lord, we confess that all of us have sinned and fallen short of what you would have us to be and that I, like all of the rest, have failed to be what you would have our pastors to be. Grant us boldness, we pray, O Christ. Deliver us from our fear and our timidity, and use us mightily to glorify Your name, that in this country, which was founded upon Christian principles, help us Lord to not let those principles sift through our fingers like sand and leave a godless, pagan world to our children. Even as the governors of Scotland declared this week, Scotland is now a pagan nation. Lord, may the day not come when that declaration shall be made by the Congress or courts of this nation. For Christ’s sake we ask it. Amen.

Sermon delivered by Dr. D. James Kennedy on June 20, 2002, at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

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