

[c. 1940s *A Hint for Personal Workers*. The Christian Literature Association. From a collection tracts likely written by Clark. Additionally, this tract is mentioned by Herman Hoeksema as likely Clark's in Hoeksema's "The Clark-Van Til Controversy," pg 3.]

A Hint for Personal Workers

IN EXPLAINING the claims of Christ to a man lost in sin, the personal worker should have a clear view, not only of the ultimate punishment of sin, but also of the present extent of man's depravity.

A man must be made to see his miserable condition before we can expect him earnestly to desire salvation. No one who thinks he is well goes to a physician for medicine. And the best way of convincing a lost soul that he is in desperate need, is to contrast his fallen nature with the righteousness of God.

Sin, however, is worse than a disease. It is true that the Scriptures sometimes speak of sin as a sickness, and of salvation as healing and health. But the Scriptures more fully reveal man's condition when they speak of sin as death, and of salvation as eternal life. In dealing with a sinner, therefore, it is necessary to remember that he cannot be left alone to recuperate, but that, dead in sins, he must be raised to newness of life.

Scripture is very explicit in teaching that all men are born dead in sin, and are incapable of doing any spiritual good. Proverbs 21:4 says, *the plowing of the wicked is sin*. Plowing is here taken as an example of ordinary daily occupations, and the verse means that no matter what an unregenerate person does, he is sinning. Genesis 6:5 says, *And God saw... that every imagination of the thoughts of his (man's) heart was only evil continually*. These and similar passages illustrate the Biblical view of the carnal mind as it is stated in Romans 8:7, *For the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*.

Some earnest Christian workers, not well instructed in the Scriptures, unintentionally pollute the Gospel by denying the awful sinfulness of man. They say that the will of man is, free, that he can accept Christ and please God, if only he uses enough will-power. They claim, in effect, that while most of man's nature needs to be regenerated, his will is unaffected or only slightly affected by sin, and so does not need the almighty regenerating power of the Holy Ghost.

These Christian workers will tell a sinner that if he first puts faith in Christ and his promises, God will then regenerate him. Thus they make the human will the initial cause of regeneration. Thus they teach that before regeneration, a sinner can have faith in Christ; that man is not dead in sins, but only partly so; and that the part that is not dead, with some cooperation from God to be sure, can save the other part. But the Lord has given us very explicit information on this point, and if the Gospel is not to be polluted, we must see exactly what the Bible says!

John 1:12-13 says, *to them gave he power to become the sons of God... which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*.

John here excludes man's will, as well as the rest of his sinful nature, as a cause of regeneration. Man cannot of himself will to exercise faith in God. Faith in God is a good act, not a sinful act; and the unregenerate cannot perform good acts — even their plowing is sinful. The Scripture uniformly presents faith in Christ as a gift of God: a gift, be it noted, that he does not give to all men.

Faith is worked in man by God's almighty power. Paul placed tremendous emphasis on this fact by the way he piled up words in describing the exceeding great power of God in giving man faith. Ephesians 1:19 says, *the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe according to (or, by means of) the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead.*

This section in Ephesians teaches that faith and salvation are wrought in men by a power as almighty as that which raised Christ from the dead. The reason is clear: men are also dead, and need to be raised to life.

Now, a dead man can do nothing — except putrify. And that is exactly how much any man contributes to his regeneration. Faith in Christ is an action of the new life, and one must be alive before one can act.

A baby may begin to breathe almost as soon as it is born, but its breathing does not give it its life. On the contrary, its life enables it to breathe. Similarly, faith is the first action of the regenerated soul; the new life is the cause of the act; the act is not the cause of the new life.

The Christian worker, then, must pray that God will regenerate the hearts of his hearers; he must depend neither upon his own powers of persuasion nor upon the sinner's will. He must faithfully present Christ crucified *according to the Scriptures*, being assured that the word of God will not return void, but will accomplish that whereto God sent it.

Let us, then, give all the glory to God, and not divide the glory with a sinful human will.

The Christian Literature Association

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