

□ Billy Graham Offers 3 Keys to Christian Power in the Age of Crisis

The word that most adequately describes this age is *crisis*. Political convulsions, national upheaval, racial unrest, rebellion against the existing order and outright revolution are becoming almost normal. We know that tomorrow's headlines will probably bring some new crisis to our attention.

Many people are asking, "Where is history heading?" A careful student of the Bible will see that God controls the clock of destiny. Amid the world's confusion, God's omnipotent hand moves, working out His unchanging plan and purpose; and the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, "For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet" (1 Corinthians 15:25).

Jesus Christ is coming to earth again. It is Christ who is in control, and He will determine the outcome. If the Bible is clear on any point, it is this: "To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time" (Heb. 9:28).

What is to be the attitude of the Christian toward the fact of Christ's coming? One man said to me, "Well, the Lord is coming soon; so what is there to do about anything?"

Such a fatalistic attitude is not the one taught by the Lord Jesus Christ. When He told His disciples of His return to earth, He said, "Do business till I come" (Luke 19:13), and "Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing" (Matt. 24:46).

Dwight L. Moody once said, "I look upon this world as a wrecked vessel. Its ruin is getting nearer and nearer. God said to me, 'Moody, here's a lifeboat. Go out and rescue as

many as you can before the ship sinks.'" If the end seemed about to come in Moody's day (he died in 1899), how much closer must we be to the climax of history?

If there was ever a time when we should man the lifeboats and go out and rescue as many as we can, it is now. That is why we proclaim the gospel in the strategic centers of the world wherever we can.

We believe this is a day of glorious opportunity to proclaim the saving grace and power of Christ, and to declare the gospel against the opposition of every false ideology.

George Whitefield, the great English evangelist, said, "I am daily waiting for the coming of the Son of God." But he did not sit down and do nothing. He burned out his life in proclaiming the gospel of Christ.

The prophet Daniel lived in a pagan nation and under the worst possible conditions. He knew that God's judgment was about to come, but he did not fold his hands and wait for it to strike. He opened wide his windows toward Jerusalem and prayed. And he walked with God.

It would not seem that the reign of Ahab and Jezebel in Israel would have been a good setting for the ministry of a great prophet of God. But Elijah walked with God during that dark period, and he used the treachery of cowardly King Ahab and the clever strategy of the evil Queen Jezebel as a backdrop against which to reflect the glory and power of God.

Crisis times are times when Christ should be proclaimed. Although there has never been a worldwide revival, I believe we may be on the verge of one now. The Spirit of God is making His power felt throughout the world. From Africa, Asia, Latin America and North America, from the islands of the sea and from Australia, there are reports of the activity of the Spirit of God. This is a glorious time to be alive.

I have found that people everywhere, all over the world, will respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ if we present it simply, with Christian compassion.

There are some who are in deep despair. I receive many letters daily from people who are discouraged, depressed and ready to give up. They are yielding to the pessimism of our times, to the mood and spirit of our day. A man in England wrote, "It's too late to do anything about the world."

That isn't true. All is not lost. We still have the Bible, and "the word of God is not chained" (2 Tim. 2:9). We still have the Holy Spirit. We still have the fellowship of believers. We still have the prayers of God's people. We still have an open door to most of the world for proclaiming the gospel.

There is much to be gained. Remember, Jesus said: "Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes" (Luke 12:43).

I would like to give you three keys that will open doors of usefulness and power for you. The first is the key of humility—humility born of honest self-evaluation. It is essential for all people to realize their own weaknesses, sins and failures. The Bible says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). The word for sin here is hamartia; it means "missing the mark, failing, falling short."

To confess that we are sinners is the most difficult thing for us to do, because we are so proud. We want to feel that we can be good and honorable and decent without any help from God.

But God has declared, "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10), and since "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23), that means me.

The Bible tells me that I have sinned.

My conscience tells me that I have sinned.

My reason tells me that I have sinned.

Every part of my nature points an accusing finger and cries, "Guilty! Guilty! There is none righteous!"

John Bunyan said, "When I saw John Bunyan as God saw John Bunyan, I did not say I was a sinner; I said that I was sin from the top of my head to the soles of my feet."

Great prophets were used of God because they were humble. They saw themselves as God saw them and realized the truth about themselves. When you confess with Isaiah, "I am a man of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5), you will stand on the threshold of a victorious life. When you face the fact of your own inadequacy, your own failure, your own sinfulness, you have taken the first step toward gaining a glorious and wonderful personal victory that will carry you through the days of crisis that lie ahead.

The second key is the recognition that God's standard of a holy life is not attainable by human effort. God is first of all concerned with what you are. What you do is the result of what you are.

There is no way that we by ourselves can generate sanctification. Our sanctification is Christ. There is no way we can be holy. Our holiness is Christ. This caused Paul to write: "not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith" (Phil. 3:9).

The third key is reliance on the Holy Spirit. To paraphrase Galatians 5:16—"Walk by means of the Spirit." In Romans 8:14 Paul writes: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."

You cannot live the Christian life by yourself. The Holy

Spirit must live in you and express Himself through you.

Paul said, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). "Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:11).

Sin shall no longer rule or dominate you when you are allowing the Holy Spirit to live Christ's life through you. It is living by faith, living by trust, living in dependence upon God.

If we look to our own resources, our own strength or our own ability, as Peter did when he walked on the water, we will fail. During these crisis days, we must remember that many stumble along the road of life. We must rescue as many as we can before catastrophe strikes.

God is at work in the midst of crisis. In the midst of the problems, pessimism and frustrations of our day, God is doing His own work. Let us realize that there are certain things we cannot do. Let us be faithful in the things He has called us to do.

Will you surrender totally to Christ? As you look forward to the day when Christ shall return, be up and about your Father's business—give of your income, spend time in prayer, be faithful in worship, tell others about Jesus Christ—and you will discover the usefulness, the optimism, the confidence, that belong to God's children.

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