

## The Law Of The Harvest

by Norman Grubb

Life in the Spirit is bound to have one hallmark— the nature of God being reproduced in the personality handed over to Him. Such a handing-over implies total immersion in and possession by the Spirit of God—to be conformed to His image. God’s nature has one essential characteristic—total self-giving. He pours Himself out in an everlasting stream of blessing on all His creation. He is “the eternal will to all goodness.” He finds Himself in losing Himself.

Now if that same Spirit indwells me, He must of necessity turn me in the same direction. The Spirit that took the Savior to Calvary for the world, and “drove” Him to offer Himself without spot to God, must drive me out of self-pleasing into self-giving, out of indulgence into sacrifice, out of security into service, out of care for myself into concern for others.

This “drive” incidentally, is the *glory* of the Gospel. It means that we do not tell the unwilling, the fearful, the self-pleasing, or the soft—which we all are in the flesh—to be this or that for God, to deny themselves, to give up things or to endure hardship, which they cannot and do not want to do. But we bid them only to frankly acknowledge all weakness and unwillingness, and to commit themselves to the control of God’s Spirit. That is all. They need not even be totally willing to do this. But encourage them to do it anyway. For if they do, a Person comes in—an Almighty Person, the Third Person of the Trinity. He is mightier than our wills. His nature is the nature of God. And if once we give Him honest possession, He sets to work to change us. He melts down our opposition, changes our wills, and sets them on a new bearing, to will the will of God and to love to will it, till it becomes a consuming passion within us, and we would die rather than disobey God.

He changes our outlook. Having at last found a foundation to life, a heart satisfaction, a light to the mind, a way for the feet, we find ourselves joining the ranks of those who have a contribution to make to the world, not merely a merchandise to make of it. We pass from being *getters* to being *givers* by the inner redirection of the Spirit.

We are aglow with the joy of the Lord, our own needs having been met in Jesus; and it dawns on us as on the starving lepers who found the good things in the deserted camp of the Syrians: “*We do not well; this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: . . . Let us go and tell . . .*” (2 Kings 7:9).

Moreover, a sense of responsibility comes upon us. We have been in great danger and knew it not; we were slaves and had given up hope of liberation. Now freedom, food, clothing, and a welcome home is ours. And not only ours but the world’s, if they but believed it. Some know it and mock. Thousands about us do not know, because of a false idea of what the Good News is. Millions still have never had a chance to hear. We are debtors. We owe it to our next-door neighbor as well as to the most distant of our brothers. By increasing stages a new passion inflames us. The glory of it dawns upon us: that such as we can be not merely inheritors of eternal life, but *transmitters* of it. These lips can bring heaven to a hell-bound soul. We are captured by a new commission—and we are changed.

But in order to carry this out, a price has to be paid. In a world that shows its true nature by baring its teeth if brought into too close quarters with God, it is never easy to speak of Christ. It is abnormal, even fanatical. Ice has to be broken, common places by-passed, the circumference of vague religious comment pierced till the center of personal challenge is reached. Time has to be used which normally is frittered away in gossip or a hobby. Concentration is necessary when it is customary to relax. The Spirit has begun to lead out along the way to Calvary.

Our burden grows heavier. What can be done for the souls in our business or neighborhood, or in the town in which we live? Time is given to prayer and fellowship with other Christians.

Missionary visitors give us a yet wider vision. There is a *world* in need. How can the Gospel be taken to every creature? Can I go myself; leave home, daydreams and loved ones; risk life, health and security? To the few, the call comes plain, and the great step is taken into a life set apart to be lived among strange people, to wrestle with ignorance, disease, and superstition. To the many, there is not the actual call but instead a necessary sharing in it; money is given, loved ones painfully yet gladly offered, and the simplest everyday things in life become touched by the marks of the Cross—the wardrobe, the meal table, the expenditure on pleasure and luxuries—so that more may be given to the spread of the kingdom. The home itself may become threadbare as parlor or drawing room, once kept like a new pin for special occasions, is used for meetings.

So the self-giving Spirit of God takes up His abode in us and produces these radical changes. They become our very nature, derived from, as C.T. Studd once wrote, "The Holy Spirit of God, one of whose chief characteristics is a pluck, a bravery, a lust for sacrifice for God, and a joy in it which crucifies all human weaknesses and natural desires of the flesh." The evidence that the third Person of the Trinity is dwelling in me is certainly not just ecstasies, exalted feelings, and the gentler graces of love, joy, and peace; it is also the sterner characteristics of God's soldier, a passion to sacrifice for the world's salvation, a courage to witness, and a steadfastness in affliction.

I think it essential to emphasize this, for in countries where Christianity is at least the nominally-accepted faith, it is easy to miss it. It was the natural accompaniment of conversion in the early Church. Only "*through much tribulation*," they were plainly told, could they enter into the kingdom of God. The model converts of those days were born in the midst of "*much affliction with joy of the Holy Ghost*." The companies of believers who adhered to God's Word in its purity through the centuries ever had the marks of the martyr upon them.

The faithful followers of Christ today can trace their descent in a straight line through great bodies of believing Christians who, cost what it might, never acknowledged any authority but that of the Scriptures, nor any Head of the Church but Christ.

Converts in many mission fields still have the same experiences; and believers in several of the modern totalitarian states have had to choose between denial of Christ and the concentration camp.

But we, in our more "fortunate" circumstances, do not get conditions of suffering like that forced upon us. We are obviously not called upon to look for trouble and seek martyrdom, but rather to thank God that our lines have fallen in more pleasant places. But this is the point. The inescapable pressure of the Spirit comes also to us, if we are really His to the limit, which will not allow us to live our lives on the comfortable level of such a word as "*God has given us richly all things to enjoy*"; but rather on that which says: "*All things are lawful, but all things are not expedient*"; "*Though I be free from all, yet have I made myself servant to all, that I might gain the more*"; "*I endure all things for the elect's sake*."

Enjoyments there will be, many and continual, for all life has joy and zest in it when it is mediated through Christ; but a conscious binding sense of dedication will be upon us, a voluntarily-accepted yoke of holy servitude. We are prisoners of the Lord, bound in spirit, even as Paul deliberately renounced certain of life's normal privileges, in a kind of voluntary extremism, that he might better preach the Gospel. So will we, according to the measure of our faith and light, gladly give up some of the lesser good to gain the greater. We shall

be a people with a purpose, even as the athlete denies himself, the scientist devotes himself, and the soldier risks himself.

In what the Scripture calls "God finding an intercessor," the Holy Spirit sets men apart, when they allow Him to, for special ends, and lays on them the burden that has to be borne, the price to be paid, the travail to be endured, and even the death to be died, to bring that special end about. Such persons are rare, for God in a past emergency wondered that there was no intercessor (Isa. 59:16). It is costly to be an intercessor, reaching far beyond the ordinary prayer-life of request and supplication, for there is expenditure of heart's blood and agony of it. "*He poured out His soul unto death,*" we read, "*and was numbered with the transgressors, and bore the sin of many*"; and so, it says, "*He made intercession for the transgressors.*"

The reward of the intercessor is as great as his travail. *He fulfills the law of the harvest.* He goes through the processes of death which are laid on him by the travailing Spirit who groans within him with groanings which cannot be uttered; and by so doing, the upspringing of the harvest, resurrection life for the world, is as sure as that spring and summer follow winter.

Now he is no longer in the *school* of faith, but the *life* of faith; for this death and resurrection process is not for his own sanctification, but for the world's need. God has, at last, found a servant on whom He can lay the kind of burdens the Savior carried, not only for himself and for his own growth in grace, but for others. He shares in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. This is the third and final meaning of the Cross in the individual life; the Cross first borne by *Christ alone* for our sins, then shared by us *with Christ* for our sanctification, and now borne in turn *by us* for our neighbor's salvation. It is the outworking of the Cross referred to by Paul when he said, "*So death works in us, but life in you.*"

In this life of an intercessor there are positions that are gained by faith, and once gained need not be lost unless we foolishly let them go. The same is true in the elementary stages of faith: once a person is saved he knows it, and glories in it, and abides in the certainty of salvation. In sanctification it is the same. There is the travail, the complete surrender, the battle of faith, and the full assurance of faith. Then the believer can abide at ease in union and communion with his Lord, unless he deliberately forfeits his inheritance. And so it is in the Christian harvest field for which the gaining of these positions of faith are but the preparation; for their real meaning has been to "teach our hands to war and our fingers to fight." It is not to give us some static experience of imparted grace, but to give us the dynamic knowledge of how to wield the weapons of faith so that God can now do *through* us for others what He previously did in us for ourselves. We have learned, in the school of faith, how to wage a good warfare on the battlefields of the Spirit, and now we can use our knowledge in our life of faith.

Christ the Intercessor, after His early years of personal training, went out to do His intercessory work at the command of the anointing Spirit, and gained His position of faith, the right to be Savior, after three years of obedience unto death. Again and again He referred to the pressure on His spirit during those years; "*I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished.*" To His disciples, in His early ministry, He said: "*My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work.*" To His Father, just before Calvary: "*I have finished the work You gave Me to do.*" To the world, with His last breath: "*It is finished.*"

In Hebrews we are told that it was through His sufferings that Christ was perfected as pioneer of our salvation and author of eternal life to all who obey Him. He is still the Intercessor, no longer in the heat of battle, but enthroned in triumph. Then He was pouring out His soul unto death, but now He is dispensing the fruits of His victory: "*able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession*

*for them.*" On the basis of that battle once fought, that life once poured out for our transgressions, He can now lead captivity captive and give the gift of His Holy Spirit to men.

We also, in our lesser spheres, can do the work of an intercessor. At the root of every golden harvest field of souls reaped by the Spirit of God there lies a life or lives which have been intercessors, lives lived under a deep and enduring sense of urgency, clear direction, and absolute dedication to the task. They have had to carry this specific burden in prayer night and day. They have had to go and live long years amongst strange tribes. They have had to give and give and give again out of their sometimes dwindling resources. They have had to stick to their tract distributing, open-air meeting, sick visitation, or whatever it may be, large or small; for the intensity of the devotion, not the size of the commission, is what matters to God.

And then comes a time in such a single-hearted ministry when the break occurs, sometimes in the lifetime of the intercessors, sometimes after, and it seems as if heaven's windows are open and God's storehouses unlocked, and the blessing just flows. It is the Pentecost after Calvary. Such a truth can be seen in the lives of the great intercessors. Abraham's whole life as stranger and pilgrim, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, was such an intercession, and God's covenant to him has never failed through the centuries; Israel was always able to ask for God's intervention on the ground of His oath to Abraham. Moses paid the price for Israel's redemption, and Joshua enjoyed the success. David had the same covenant blessing for a successor on his throne. And, supremely, of course, there is the Savior, who bought the Church with His blood.

Understanding the spiritual law of the harvest helps us to fulfill our ministry strategically and intelligently. We see where we are going, faithfully witnessing a good confession in a difficult place. We understand that if we pay the full price of our calling and realize that our labors and lonelines, our setbacks and disheartenments, our heart agonies and pleadings with God and man are the necessary dying process of the seed, then we shall go on and go through. Though our faith may flicker, it will not fail, because we are fulfilling certain unchangeable laws of the Spirit under His guidance and inspiration.

While we can never get beyond the Cross, there certainly is a sense in which even the Cross can be given a wrongful prominence. It is no longer meant to be in the foreground but in the background of the scene; it is not the superstructure but the foundation of the building. It is life, not death, that is our message; a living and returning Christ, not just a crucified One. As C.T. Studd said:

*Take my life and let it be  
A hidden Cross revealing Thee.*

But, at the same time, there has to be constant attention called to our foundations, and emphasis laid upon the fact that there *is* no other foundation to the kingdom of God than the Cross of Christ.

We know this very well as our entry into life, and our way of deliverance from inner bondage. We see it finally as *the law of the harvest*. We never get beyond the Cross, either in time or eternity, for we have learned that release of life and power on the spiritual level can only come about through death on the natural level. "Self-control," which is the Cross in action, "releases energy on a new level." This remains true in the tiniest as in the biggest things of life, and it takes us back to the essentials— which if you grasp, you have grasped "the secret of the Lord"— that every battle of life concerning ourselves, our circumstances, or our neighbors, is first fought and won *within*.

The battleground is ourselves, and the victory is Christ's Cross in its inner operation. If we turn our attention away from our reactions, our resentments, and our proposed activities, and die to them till we are inwardly free from self, then God's voice can be heard, His way seen and His outlook accepted. Then we can receive, believe and act on it. Resurrection life has begun within ourselves, and will forthwith express itself through look and word and deed. What is won *within* is won without, what is lost within is lost without—the secret is the Cross.

In 2 Corinthians Paul wrote a triumphant letter on the secret of the Cross applied to daily life. It glows with glory. It rings with triumph. Yet almost every chapter refers to the intensity of his sufferings, his endless trials, his "*fightings without and fears within.*" Paul's human weakness is seen and he describes how he learned by experience the great secret. He had learned how to live by dying, how to fight by yielding. He summed it all up by saying that he knew and desired to know no other way than his Master's, who "*though He was crucified through weakness, yet lives by the power of God*"; adding that "*we also are weak, sharing His weakness, but with Him we shall be full of life to deal with [this or that thing] through the power of God.*"