

**A Voice from the Past:**  
**DISCOVERING THE GOSPEL<sup>1</sup>**

**LANCE B. (DOC) LATHAM<sup>2</sup>**  
(1894-1985)

**I. Introduction**

There is something within the heart of a man which constantly presses to make a perverse addition to the sole basis of our salvation, the work of Christ on the cross. Constantly pressed by the sin of pride, the mind of the natural man is ever reluctant to admit its sinful, helpless condition.

Many who understand the gospel refuse to come to Christ because they will not admit that they lack a shred of goodness, righteousness or desirability within themselves that God can accept.

Religious leaders try to add baptism, church membership, faithful living, personal sacrifice or some other human work to the work of Christ to the hope of salvation for the believer. Such philosophies may have filled the coffers of religion but have confused the issue of salvation and thus damaged countless souls.

One who discovers the gospel will instantly realize that the sole basis of his salvation is the work of Christ on Calvary's cross. Saving faith depends alone on the value of Calvary. All other possible sources for the assurance of salvation are counterfeit.

**II. Invitations to the Unsaved**

<sup>1</sup>This article is taken from a chapter by the same name from *The Two Gospels* (Rolling Meadows, IL: Awana, 1984), 43-47.

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The *gospel* is the *good news*. It is not a new set of obligations or duties to be performed—new strivings—more agonizings—but rather an announcement of *what has been done* for us. We do not present the *claims* of the gospel. We present a wonderful *free offer* by God Himself to the sinner who *believes*.

To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:19).

We find the fearful need for salvation in Rom 1:18 through 3:20. The Lord came “not to call the righteous, but sinners.” For unless the person seeking salvation realizes his desperate need, he will not flee “for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” (Heb 6:18).

Then there follows the need of a *scriptural invitation*. A great passage in Rom 3:18 through 4:8 has often been called the core of Romans and of the entire Bible—this is the *one place* in the Bible where the way of justification is set forth and explained (it is *defended* in Galatians). And there are many *instances* of salvation in the Gospels and the book of Acts.

Let us look closely at a few of the “invitations” listed at the beginning of this chapter.<sup>3</sup>

### A. “Give Your Heart to Christ”

As William Reid so well says in his *Blood of Jesus*, “Give your heart to Jesus’ is law rather than gospel.”<sup>4</sup> Salvation is not my gift to God, but His

<sup>3</sup>Latham here is referring to the invitations he listed on p. 41 of *The Two Gospels*. They include: “Give your heart to Christ,” “Give your heart to Jesus,” “Surrender all,” “Pray the penitent’s prayer,” “Turn the direction of your life over to God,” “Put your all on the altar,” “Make Jesus Lord of your life,” “Confess all your sins,” “Forsake all your sins,” “Take Jesus into your heart,” “Ask Jesus to come into your heart,” “Make the great commitment,” and “Follow Jesus.”

<sup>4</sup>William Reid, *Blood of Jesus* (np: Liberty Bell Press, 1969).

gift to me. This also applies to like invitations such as, “Give your life to God,” “Give your heart to Christ,” “Surrender all,” “Put your all on the altar,” and “Ask Jesus to come into your heart.”

On what Scripture does this invitation rest? We find in Prov 23:26, “My son, give me thine heart.” Surely there is no justification for an invitation so generally given in this one verse! It is addressed to “*my son*,” an already established relationship, with no reliance on Calvary.

### B. “Forsaking All Your Sins”

This means that the sinner must promise to live perfectly from now on. I read in Rom 8:7:

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

God accepts us as *ungodly, as we are*, when as sinners, we trust in Him and His redeeming work on Calvary. Then, *once we are justified*, “He shall save *His people*, from their sins.”

### C. “God Be Merciful to Me a Sinner”

This is commonly used in rescue missions, and doubtless God saves many, in spite of such an incomplete invitation. And do you notice what usually is added, “And save me for Jesus’ sake.” We quote the faithful note in the Scofield Bible regarding Luke 18:13:

Greek *hilaskomai*, used in the Septuagint and N.T. in connection with the mercy-seat. As an instructed Jew the publican is thinking, not of mere mercy, but of the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat. His prayer might be paraphrased, “Be toward me as thou art when thou lookest upon

<sup>5</sup> Ed. note: There was no bibliographic information given in the article for this work.

the atoning blood.” The Bible knows nothing of divine forgiveness apart from sacrifice.

#### D. “Surrender All”

William R. Newell teaches us, “to preach *full surrender* to an unsaved man as the way of salvation will just make a hateful Pharisee out of him.”<sup>5</sup> And, from Dr. Ironside’s tract, “Another Gospel”:

When anyone comes promising salvation to those “who make full surrender” of all that they have to God, and who “pay the price of full salvation” he is preaching another gospel, for the price was paid on Calvary’s cross and the work that saves is finished. It was Christ Jesus who made the full surrender when He yielded His life on Calvary that saves us, not our surrender in any way to Him.<sup>6</sup>

The great conclusion of Rom 3:19-28 is, “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by *faith* apart from the deeds of the law.” Apart from our living! The matter of my *continuing in sin* is not brought up until Romans 6, after the matter of my justification is well settled. I am justified freely by His *grace* through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, as stated in Rom 3:25, “through faith in His blood.”

#### E. “Believe in Jesus”<sup>7</sup>

Ask any Roman Catholic, “Do you believe in Jesus Christ?” and he will answer, “Of course.” Is this man therefore saved? The real question is, “Where is your hope?” Are you *depending* upon Christ and what He has

<sup>6</sup>Ed. note: We were unable to obtain bibliographic information for this tract.

done at Calvary alone, or is your hope in penances performed, masses, baptism and so forth? This is not faith in Christ and His work; this is faith in *your* own works, faithfulness to church, and therefore cannot *save!*

Hebrews 6:18 describes people with saving faith as those “who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”

The climactic exhortation in Rom 12:1: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice” is addressed to *believers*, those already saved. The basis for that appeal is “the mercies of God,” the wonderful possessions we have in Christ presented in the previous chapters of Romans. Having this apply to unbelievers getting saved robs God of the great victory that grace, and grace alone can win.

## F. “Make Jesus Your Lord”

This is just another variation of the “surrender all” invitation. Surely we must recognize *who He is*, or we will die in our sins (John 8:24). But this is vastly different from making Him your Lord in your life, in other words, promising to obey the rest of your life. This latter is preaching “works.” His mercies, with all His graciousness to us, *will lead* us to making Him Lord, and that out of a heart of love and appreciation of Him.

We feel that those who propose this way of salvation change the obvious meaning of Rom 10:9 to justify this:

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Ed. note: Latham is here rejecting an unbiblical profession of faith in Christ. One who says he believes in Christ, yet believes that more than faith in Him is necessary to be saved, doesn’t “believe in Him” in the biblical sense. Compare John 11:25-27.

This *cannot* be made to say, “make Him Lord of your life.”

<sup>8</sup>Ed. note: The author does not give his understanding of Rom 10:9-10. He seems to imply that he understands confessing with one’s mouth the Lord Jesus as *recognizing* His deity (see the first paragraph under “Make Jesus Your Lord”). Dr. John Hart has written an article on Rom 10:9-10 that is slated for publication in the next issue of *JOTGES*.