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111. THE OBJECTIVE

By D.B. Knox

"The Protestant Faith"

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When Jesus justified to the Pharisees his inclusion of social outcasts and prostitutes within the scope of His ministry, He reminded them of the intense joy in the heart of God when anyone repents and returns to fellowship and obedience with Him (Luke 15:7). and St. Paul was conscious of how the sense of the great love of Christ constrained him to evangelise (2 Cor.5:14ff). God is love and all aspects of our salvation flow from His love. Yet God's love is not a meandering and aimless love, but is directed and purposeful. Christ came to save his people (Mt. 1:21) and it is for them that He prays (John 17:9).

God will accomplish His purposes. Jesus will save His people. He has His people throughout the world and we are sent by the call and commission of Christ to bring them the gospel that they may call upon His name and be saved. This fact should strengthen us in times of despondency as Jesus the Lord strengthened Paul in Corinth by the assurance "Do not be afraid but speak ... I have many people in this city" (Acts 18:10).

Our human hopes about the success of the gospel are subject to disappointment. Jesus felt the temptation of disappointment but He overcame it and was able to rejoice in His limited success by recalling that within God's love and graciousness God's predestinating wisdom controlled those who responded and those who did not. The one who said "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repented" (Luke 15:7) also said "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Yes, Father, for such was your gracious will" (Luke 10:21). He who said "God so loved the world that he gave his only son ...." (John 3:16), also said "you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep hear my voice ..." (John 10:26,27). This doublesidedness is also clearly reflected in John 6:35-40, as well as in Acts 13:48 and 14:1. "As many as were predestined to eternal life believed .... The apostles so spoke that many believed".

Jesus has received all authority, and in this situation He has commissioned His servants to make disciples of all the nations, bringing them into that changing relationship that comes from knowing God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. "All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. (Matthew 24:30).

In His prayer in the upper room Jesus also spoke about the full authority that God had given Him but there is an interesting variation. Speaking of His authority and the reason for it He said "You have given the Son authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom You have given Him". The authority and rule (or kingdom) of Christ is for the purpose of giving eternal life to those whom the Father has given to the Son. Christians are sent in the power of this authority to fulfil its purpose. In other words the objective of Christian mission is to call out those chosen by God and given to the Son. We work therefore within God's purposes and our results will be according to His plan. We are to take up the Saviour's task to give eternal life through the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ to all those whom the Father has given to Jesus (cf. John 17:2,3). If our message is true, the result will be to gather Christ's flock together by calling them with His voice. His sheep will hear and come to the shepherd as our Lord told the Jews: "My sheep hear my voice ... and they follow me and I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish" (John 10:27,28). Christ's sheep are scattered throughout the world. As Jesus stated, "other sheep I have, them also I must bring and they shall hear my voice and there shall be one flock and one shepherd." (John 10:16).

We to whom the word of the gospel has been given as its evangelists are those through whom Christ calls these other sheep. It is our duty to see that His voice, the voice that comes through us to them, is the true voice of Christ, so that this is really all that we are concerned with, to go and to speak Christ's words to those to whom Christ sends us. We may be sure that these

words will be effective and that the sheep will hear, for the nations have been given to Christ for His dominion, though the times and the seasons are in the Father's hands, and are not known to us. But He will bring in His purposes completely and accurately and all the peoples, nations and languages will be under His dominion. Thus in our ministry of evangelism there should be confidence, devotion, assiduity, and endurance, for we are God's messengers, sent to call His elect from the four winds, to gather them together to Christ.

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