

## THE POWER OF GOD

*Edward Hill*

*Rev. Hill, Los Angeles, California, USA, is the Pastor of Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church.*

This has been a foretaste of heaven.

I tell you — if your bell is not ringing, your clapper is broken.

Having lived in a two-room log cabin just twenty-three years ago, in the sandy hills of Texas, I never dreamed in all of my log cabin days that I would see you, before kneeling with you at Jesus' feet.

I have no excellence, education, nor theological training to commend me to you.

My major was not theology; and in America, the more I hear some theologians talk, I am more and more grateful that my major was agriculture.

Approximately seven centuries or more before the birth of Christ, there was a prophet who tried to tell the people of God what he saw concerning their future. Over and over again — yea, more than any other — he spoke of God's love, judgment, mercy, and the coming signs of not only Israel but the nations of the earth.

It is in the 52nd chapter that I hear Isaiah roaring with both a sound of optimism and yet warning. He says to a nation who seemingly was determining to leave God and his laws: "Awake! Awake! Shake thyself. Arise, put on thy strength. It is I."

Up and down these halls, in every room and from this podium his voice has been saying, "Wake Up! Wake Up! Put on thy strength."

Let me review where I have heard him say, "Awake!" and the instructions he has given.

*Wake Up! Wake up to the authority of God's Word!*

There can be no uncertain sound regarding the Bible's being truth without error; and the preacher who departs from the Scripture is not liberal — he is lost.

*This Congress has declared, "Awake to the knowledge of the consequence of a lost soul."*

A lost soul is not a second-class passenger on the same train with the saints. My Bible says that a lost soul is damned already.

A lost soul is separated, dead, miserable, no life, no eternal life, no joy in the Lord, no forgiveness of sin. He is headed to a real hell with real fire to live forever.

Wake Up! Wake Up! Wake up to the destiny of your lost children and of your lost neighbors.

*Not only have we been awakened to the consequence of a lost soul, but we have been awakened to the numerical extent of man's lostness.*

In spite of thousands upon thousands of missionaries and millions upon millions of dollars spent, the statistics chill us regarding the lostness of man: church membership dwindling in America, churches closing in Europe, churches staggering in Australia, crawling in Asia.

Of the approximately 450 major known groups in the world, 60 of them have 0% Christians; 195 or more groups have less than 5% Christians. *Wake Up! Wake Up!*

In those countries where we have greater percentages, we have less than 40% active in worship, less than 10% in prayer, and less than 2% who have won a soul to Christ.

*This Congress has awakened me — and I trust you — to the great need we have as evangelicals to demonstrate our love and show forth evidence of our conversion through appropriately meeting the social and physical needs of people throughout the world.*

The social concern, or what has been called the social gospel, gives great problems to many, but not to me. For I have never seen it as an "either/or" choice. The following analogy may help.

In my country baseball is a favorite sport. The game requires that one hit the ball that the pitcher pitches and then tries to run to first base before the ball can be picked up and thrown by the opposing team. If the person makes it to first base safely, he or she is then expected to run from first base to second, then to third from second base and then to home plate. It is only when they reach home plate that they have scored.

Now there are some things that you cannot do in baseball: You cannot score on first base. You cannot get to second base across the pitcher's mound. You cannot take a trip to third base and score.

You must touch first base first, then second base, then third base, *and then home.*

In the Gospel, there is a first base. First base is "reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ." The Bible says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, you must be born again."

"Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness."

To this we will all agree. But many evangelicals have said in deeds that when you touch first base, you should then quit the game, go to the bench and wait on the rapture. But you cannot score that way! For there is a second base in the Gospel.

Second base is where, "men reconciled to God, formed a visible brotherhood." Second base is where no east, nor west, nor north, nor south is seen. Second base is where the unbelieving world ought to look at our behavior and call us Christians.

There are those who suggest that this, really, is the only essential base. Thus, many try to get to second without going to first. But in the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, you will not have strength to form a brotherhood on second until you have touched first.

It is at first base that we gain the love, forgiveness, compassion, and understanding. It is at first base that the desire to love others is generated.

For a little while men may, out of political expediency or social courtesies, hold hands on second base; but if they have not been to first their fellowship will soon tear with the least pull.

Our Gospel also has a third base. Brothers must not hold hands on second until Jesus comes. They must proceed to third where, "motivated by Jesus' love — filled with agapē, the hungry are fed, the naked are clothed, the wounded are bound, the untouched are touched, the broken-hearted are healed, the captives of unjust circumstances and discrimina-

tion are set free, the far-off are brought close, and those without shelter are sheltered."

But do not stumble at this point as many have. For many have said that it is at third, and third alone, that we should concentrate all of our efforts. Thus, many churches and many preachers have recently emphasized the need of community improvement — and community improvement alone. "This, and this alone, should be our objective as a church," has been recently stated by many church leaders. They tell us to ignore the Gospel, which requires personal repentance and personal acceptance of Jesus as Lord, and proceed to third and build for man a "Utopia" here on earth. They say if this is done revolutions will cease and world peace will come.

If this were true, then the city of Beverly Hills, California, would be the new heaven on earth; for in this city, there are fabulous homes, streets of granite, flowers of beauty, skyscrapers, fabulous restaurants, excellent schools, golf courses and country clubs, no unemployment to amount to anything — and the average income in Beverly Hills is \$50,000 a year. But yet, this city has a psychiatrist on every other corner, and produced more hippies than any other community.

*Don't ignore first, nor second base.* For if you do, man will not have the moral stamina nor the spiritual capacity to stand on third without forgetting God.

If you preach to me, tell me first of the need for salvation. Persuade me, second, concerning the need of a brotherhood; and for God's sake join hands with me to build a better community. But, please, don't leave me in your message on third base.

For a little while houses and lands will suffice; but like Abraham, my soul looks for a city "whose Builder and Maker is God." In your message, don't leave me at third. *Take me home.* For no matter what you build on earth, no matter how firm your foundation, God has written on it, "*Temporary.*"

Therefore, the Gospel must have a home base. The Gospel must tell all men that by and by they have got to move, and there are only two places to go: heaven or hell — and heaven requires reservations.

*Wake Up! Wake up to the dangerous satanic-inspired polarization of cultures and graces.*

For a long time in my country the cry to unite was largely ignored by white evangelicals; and, tragically long after integration was settled in sports, politics, and public schools, the ears of evangelicals began to open. But by then, Satan had successfully turned the hearts of many Negro people from the call of integration to the call of "Blackism" and separatism.

This call pleased many whites for it gave them the opportunity to be comfortable with their bigoted and prejudiced concepts of other people.

It also gave many so-called "Black leaders" platforms and news coverage that they neither deserved nor could obtain other than through violent, militant acts. So today racial polarization in the United States is as much of a problem as it was twenty years ago — particularly in the hearts and souls of Black young people.

Call it what you want — "nationalist spirit, cultural recognition, in-

tra-development of a people," — but the very thought of separation of races on the basis of color or language will continue to be a poor witness to the unbelieving world and the bulwark for those in whom racial prejudice dwells.

There is no biblical explanation for the man who testifies of his first-base conversion but is hostile to a second-base interracial fellowship.

*Awake! Awake! Wake Up! Wake up to the reality of a real, living devil, who is in our world and at work. Believe it or not, we live in a world increasingly being filled with cults, witches, and "isms" that ought to be "was'ms."*

Too long the reality of the devil has been told as a fairy tale.

The reality of Satan's work can be seen abundantly destroying the minds of young people, creating faulty theology, cold churches, blasphemous babblers on university campuses, and frustrated preachers. *Wake Up! Wake Up! We have a devil on our hands!*

*Wake Up! Wake up to the hostility towards the Gospel!* Unfortunately, the welcome mat is not spread to Gospel preachers in many parts of our world. Many of our brethren will face persecution and suspicion even for their presence here. In my own country, among my own people, the Gospel preacher faces danger and death.

Three years ago the Black Panther Party meeting in Berkeley, California, declared that unless the Negro preacher was taken out of the pulpit, Negroes would not become Communist nor anti-American. Therefore, at that meeting, they labeled Christianity as "the enemy of the black man," and the Negro preacher as "the chief agent of the enemy"; and a mandate was given that they should be assassinated.

Three years ago a list of more than one hundred preachers was made. Unfortunately, the despicable act which killed Mrs. King — which was intended for Dr. King — may be only the beginning of a great bloodshed. And if they succeed in taking the leadership of Negroes from Christian leaders, then Belfast will be a Sunday picnic, compared to the bloody confrontation in America. *Wake up! Wake up!*

*Wake up! Wake up to the prayer needs; awake! awake! to our educational needs; awake! awake! to our need of all resources; awake! awake to the urgency of our task.*

At midnight one night the clock mechanically made a mistake and struck thirteen times. A little boy frightened by it ran into his grandmother's room screaming, "Grandmother, Grandmother, it is later than it has ever been before!"

My brothers and sisters, we need to do some screaming; for it is later than it has ever been before — *it is late.* Thus, know, "In the last days, perilous times will come. Men shall be lovers of themselves more than lovers of God . . . . In the last days, fathers shall destroy sons, and sons, fathers . . . ."

*It is late!*

*"Wickedness in high places . . . ."*

*It is late!*

*"The love of many shall wax cold . . . ."*

*It is late!*

*"The minds of men will be carnal . . . ."*

*It is late!*

Confusion, chaos, wars, turbulence: *It is late!*

But not *too* late! For God has reserved the last chapter for himself. John said he saw it.

*As a follow up of Lausanne '74, there must be the Lausanne call of '75.*

If while we have been here, we have seen the need of one million missionaries, then we must call for them in 1975.

If while here, we have seen the need for ten billion dollars, then we must call for it in 1975.

If while here, we have seen the need for every pastor to take a leave of absence from his church and go into the unreached areas of our world and preach the Gospel, then we must do that.

It is late; and yet not too late. If we have seen these needs and do nothing or make no call, then we make mockery of our very presence and we dishonor our God and his Christ.

Our future must not be business as usual, but rather unusual business. We must be fishers of men rather than keepers of the aquarium.

Now, with all of these calls to "Wake Up!" — calls sounded up and down the halls of this great Congress — I am sure that you are heavy-laden. I am sure that you are weary.

I preached this text at our church; and one of the sisters said, "With the pastor hollering, 'Wake Up' so many times, how can anyone get any sleep!"

I am sure that you — along with me — are overwhelmed. We feel our own inadequacies. We know that within us there is neither strength nor resources, power nor knowledge to match these mountains. Indeed, our task makes our efforts look like grasshoppers. But we need not limit our plans to our strength.

So as I close I must tell you that there is a power available to us. There is a power that can change the minds of men.

There is a power that can make enemies, footstools and stumbling blocks, stepping stones.

There is a power that can make a straight line with a crooked stick.

There is a power that turns harlots into missionaries.

There is a power that can turn cursing and swearing men into Gospel preachers.

There is a power that can open red seas, furnish manna from on high, cause walls to fall by marches, and confound enemies.

There is power available to us.

He who has called us and sent us has not, and will not, leave us; but rather, he is ready to empower us.

For this power, we need not wait.

We can move now for the power of God seldom descends upon those whose feet have not touched the water.

Let's go — for he promises that he will not forsake us nor leave us. He promises that as we go there will be strength for the day and courage for the battle.

It was in the thick of the fight that the sun stood still.

It was in the thick of the fight that the fire fell on Mount Carmel.

It was in the thick of the fight that the Red Sea divided.

It was in the thick of the fight that the prophet saw horses and chariots surrounding the enemy.

Wait no longer!

Look for no other signs!

Put out the fleece no more!

Awake!

Move!

Make plans equal to his strength, not yours!

Let our vision be a challenge to God's resources, not ours.

If we do, the world will begin to see that in our God there is no match to his power.

"Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard that the Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding."

"He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might, He increaseth strength."

"Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles: they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:28-31).