

# LAUSANNE CONSULTATION ON JEWISH EVANGELISM (NORTH AMERICA)

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Theme: *Jewish Evangelism Against All Odds*

*Encouragement Proclamation of the Gospel to the Jewish People*

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## I. Introduction

- A. "Jewish Evangelism Against All Odds"! This theme struck me as having the possibility of opposite nuances. On the one hand it may suggest an affirmation of boldness "against all odds," as with David confronting Goliath. On the other hand it may suggest seeming insurmountable opposition in the face of "all odds." In the light of these tumultuous days, I take the later scenario. In other words, there is the suggestion of spiritual weariness as a result of relentless opposition from the world in general, Judaism, and Christianity! Paul himself had warned the Galatians, "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary" (Gal. 6:9). Later, from either Athens or Corinth, he similarly warned the Thessalonians, "Do not grow weary of doing good: (II Thess. 3:13). Yet with some proximity to this second exhortation, Paul himself appears to have felt this weariness at Corinth when living in the house of Titus next door to the local synagogue. Plainly his ministry was having great effect with the conversion of Crispus, leader of the synagogue. But obviously there was considerable turmoil as a result, and Paul felt physically threatened since he faced opposition from "great odds." He was evidently fearful, yet the Lord Jesus drew near to Him in a vision so as to give assurance: "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city" (Acts 18:9-10). Hence a very significant principle is presented here that I believe offers great encouragement when we sense that we labor "against all odds."
- B. Yes, there is an onslaught from the world, which is to be expected. Yes, there is the opposition from Judaism, which is also to be expected. And then there is the opposition of Christianity as well, which sadly, is also all too often encountered. This is an area with which I have personally been challenged. Some instances have surfaced with the recent publication of *Future Israel*. The first contract I signed was with a well known Anglican publisher of academic works in England. As the editing process continued, I became uncomfortable. First the manuscript would have to be considerably shortened, I felt emasculated. Then one comment received from my editor was that a particular thought might not please Colin Chapman, who lived up the road from that person. At this I asked

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for release from my contract. This being granted, I contacted David Brickner and sought his advice, frankly confessing that I might be thought to be crazy in turning down such a publishing opportunity. However he suggested *Broadman & Holman* who accepted the manuscript with a limit of 416 pages! How glad I was with this result. Their whole approach was so encouraging. However *Future Israel* especially addressed, somewhat critically, those of Reformed and Calvinist convictions. And let it be understood that I delight in this soteriological stream concerning the sovereignty of grace, and so happily nominate myself to be reformational. However my eschatology does not align with the mainstream of amillennial eschatology within Reformed thought. As a result, one Reformed scholar wrote on a blog site that he felt like flinging *Future Israel* across the room, and that it took him near three weeks for him to regain his sanctification. Further, he likened me to the Rev. Jeremiah Wright and suggested that on account of my pro-Semitism, I was guilty of reverse racism. Yes, we all have our confrontations with the world, Judaism, and Christianity.

- C. However we return now to this response of Paul: "Let us not lose heart in doing good" (Gal. 6:9; II Thess. 3:13). So let us honestly consider as to what degree we ourselves, so faithfully embroiled in Jewish evangelism, are yet subject to this "weariness." Paul found the solution at Corinth in one incomparable source, the drawing near of the Lord Jesus and our drawing near to Him. This I believe ought to be our only and ceaseless encouragement when it is evident that we confess to being "weary in well doing," that is laboring "against all odds."

We approach this under the title of *Encouragement Gospel Proclamation*, but especially its recovery. We do this from both subjective and objective approaches. *Subjective Gospel Proclamation* concerns the spiritual state of the proclaimer, his arousal to gospel proclamation to the Jewish people. This will be our major thrust. *Objective Gospel Proclamation* then comes as an inevitable result, that is the encouragement of the Jewish people through our own personal gospel excitement.

### II. Subjective Encouragement Proclamation of the Gospel

- A. The Problem of Waning Personal Gospel Encouragement.

A recent volume titled *Standing with Israel* is authored by David Brog, a Jew who writes in defense of contemporary Christian Zionism. As a lawyer, former chief of staff to Senator Arlen Specter, and later staff director of the Senate Judiciary Committee, he encourages skeptical Jews to rethink their doubts about philo-semitic Christians. There is much in this book that calls for high commendation. One chapter considers "motives," in which is described the driving concern whereby so many Evangelical believers in Jesus

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Christ are passionately interested in the Jewish people and their modern rise to national prominence. Brog's estimate of these evangelicals is directed by an understanding of Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, John Hagee, Gary Bauer, Ralph Reed, Tom DeLay, Tim LaHaye, Hal Lindsey, as well as such agencies as *Bridges for Peace* and *Moral Majority*. However it is significant that there is no mention of well known evangelistic agencies such as *Christian Witness to Israel*, *The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry*, and *Jews for Jesus*.

But more to the point, it becomes plain that this author seems quite unaware of the deepest of all motivations that has driven so many Christians, with unapologetic, fervent evangelistic concern, to also support the national cause of Israel and individual Jews wherever they are encountered. It is that supreme desire that the Jew might savingly believe in the Lord Jesus as his Messiah, his Savior from sin and wrath, that he might, through faith in His atoning blood and substitute righteousness, discover the fulfillment of his Jewish heritage in being joined to Him and as a result live for Him. Perhaps, not unexpectedly, Brog has no real conception of this essential, driving passion such as was the case with the apostle Paul (Rom. 9:3; II Cor. 5:14). Concerning Christian philo-Semitism he writes that, "[f]or most Christian Zionists, no one motive stands alone. Each individual combines these motives—the theological, the moral, and the strategic—in a personal mix with their own particular emphasis."<sup>1</sup> Could it be said of Paul that in his ministry, "no one motive stands alone?" It is unthinkable! And sad to say, the reason for this lack of discernment here may not be Brog's alone. He frankly understands "that most evangelical Christians *do*, in their heart of hearts, want to see Jews accept Christ."<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless he seems to be employing "acceptance of Christ" according to that loose, cliché terminology to which he has been exposed, that has become endemic within modern evangelicalism. The vagueness here tends to suggest "acceptance" of an ideal, of a mere admirable or heroic figure. There is similar popular usage in the expression, "receiving Jesus Christ into our lives/hearts" supposedly based upon John 1:11-12 where to "receive Him" in fact means to "welcome Him" through faith,<sup>3</sup> as the divine atoning Lamb of God. Actually the gospel is not the act of our receiving Jesus into our hearts; this indwelling comes as a fruit of the Gospel whereby, having believed in Christ crucified (Isa. 45:22), the Spirit of Christ then dwells within us. The gospel is the open invitation to look outside of ourselves to Jesus uplifted, on a Roman cross (John 3:14-16; I John 3:23-24; 4:13).

Then Brog makes an astonishing comment that ought to be cause for serious reflection.

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<sup>1</sup> David Brog, *Standing With Israel*, pp. 67-68.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 188.

<sup>3</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 97.

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Not one of the Jewish leaders interviewed for this book can remember a time when one of their Christian allies attempted to convert them. . . . [A]fter more than three years of attendance at evangelical churches and conferences as an open Jew, I have yet to be subjected to a serious effort to convert me to Christianity.<sup>4</sup>

This honest comment here, so tragic in its implications, ought to be cause for solemn consideration by earnest Christians. Straight away we make it crystal clear that we do not countenance social indifference toward the modern travail of the Jew, whether as Diaspora or the Nation of Israel. We spurn that bifurcated approach which separates merciful, material interest in the Jew and his national status from spiritual interest in the saving of his soul. But we also spurn that reverse bifurcated approach that here appears to separate spiritual interest in the saving of a Jew's soul from merciful, material interest in his individual and national status. And this being the case, we now consider what it is that causes evangelicals, in Brog's scenario, to be primarily concerned about the Jewish body rather than the Jewish soul. Surely if David Brog had met the apostle Paul, in our contemporary situation, it is inconceivable that he would not have been seriously confronted, through the instrumentality of Scripture, with the gospel. For this reason, we turn to two vital matters in this regard that address a most vociferous professed love for Israel that nevertheless restricts biblical gospel witness at best to a muted whisper.

### B. The Solution to Arousal in Personal Gospel Encouragement.

#### 1. *Gospel encouragement in the free grace of Romans 3:9-26.*

Surely we want to see Jews aroused to fervent love for Jesus the Messiah. However, the first need is arousal in our own souls for the gospel of the wonderful free grace of God. It is so abundantly clear; Paul zealously desired the salvation of the Jews, apostle to the Gentiles that he was. Hence on every occasion when evangelizing Gentile territory, he first declared the gospel in the local Jewish synagogue; he never retreated from this priority. Having arrived at Rome, He first desired that the brethren there, together with himself, might "move to jealousy my fellow [Jewish] countrymen and save some of them" (Rom. 11:14), through the good news of Jesus, "the hope of Israel" (Acts 28:17-20). But how are the Jews to be saved? The answer is not difficult to discover since in Romans 3:9-26 we have the definitive gospel declaration. First, it is based upon the most devastating revelation of the sinful human predicament in all of Scripture that concerns "both Jews and Greeks," v. 9. They are all sinners, extensively, without exception, vs. 10-12, and at the same time they are all sinners individually, thoroughly, in every part of their being, vs. 13-18. So both Jew and Gentile "are all under sin," v. 9, that

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

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is hopelessly captive to thorough corruption and consequent condemnation. If Gentiles find it disturbing to hear of this bad news, then it is to be expected that Jews will respond with no less a degree of aggravation. Surely it is for this reason that Paul repeatedly found himself physically assaulted by his Jewish audiences. So today the Jew also needs to learn of his fundamental alienation from God (Isa. 59:2), even if he finds this message offensive (Rom. 9:33). Such an approach is of the very essence of the prophets, and yet they were killed for it (Matt. 23:37). This in no way means that support for Israel today, at a material and national level, has no place. Neither would we, in witnessing to a neighbor who becomes offended by the gospel, nevertheless not care for their property and not continue to be socially compassionate.

However in Romans 3:21-26 Paul continues, based upon the inclusive and individual terms of sin in vs. 10-18, to declare the gospel of free justification that is applicable to “all [who] have sinned,” obviously both Jews and Gentiles. Here then is the gospel that the Jew needs to hear; it is the gospel by which he may be saved (Rom. 11:14) through faith alone in Jesus as Israel’s Messiah. However, it is first the gospel of the Lord Jesus that has astonishingly saved me! It is the gospel that David Brog has not heard about from multitudes of Christians with whom he has interacted. And one wonders to what extent this withheld gospel that these Christians nevertheless personally profess, that of “accepting Christ” as Brog perceives it, in reality parallels Romans 3:9-26. For if those who proclaim a gospel of “accepting Christ” understood this to be the glorious saving message of Romans 3:9-26, then is it likely that they would refrain from commending it to a friendly Jew? In such a situation, surely Paul’s passion for the gospel would not allow him to contain himself. Here his gospel message is essentially about the righteousness of God that not only condemns men based upon holy wrath, but also saves them with integrity according to pure grace through the blood atonement of Jesus, the Christ. Yes, this gospel does bring about intimacy of relationship between God and the alienated sinner, but only through terms of reconciliation established through redemption provided by the Lamb of God.

Hence in reaching out to the Jew, the gospel must first personally constrain or compel after the apostolic model, for as Peter and John replied to their captors, “we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20; cf. 9:19-20). They were men driven by the power of the gospel, come what may. If this unstoppable, burning desire is not present in a Christian, then there is something lacking in his comprehension of that apostolic gospel. So it would be unthinkable for Paul to withhold the gospel from Jewish acquaintances because it might offend them and spoil a beautiful friendship. Rather he would fervently, personally commend the truth of salvation through faith in Jesus, the Messiah, so that

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fulfilled Jewishness might result. Here then is the biblical dynamic that thrusts the Christian forth and at the same time, for all of its offensiveness (I Pet. 2:7-8), has an engaging savor about it (II Cor. 2:14) that is designed to arouse jealousy in the heart of the Jew.

### 2. *Gospel encouragement illustrated in the hymnody of abounding grace .*

To further illustrate our present poverty with regard to a lack of gospel compulsion, in better days, the constraint of the gospel (II Cor. 5:14) caused many to express their enthusiasm in words that are rare today. Consider Thomas Olivers who writes,

The God of Abraham praise, whose all sufficient grace  
Shall guide me all my happy days, in all my ways.  
He calls a worm His friend, He calls Himself my God!  
And He shall save me to the end, thro' Jesus' blood.

He by Himself has sworn; I on His oath depend,  
I shall, on eagle wings upborne, to Heav'n ascend.  
I shall behold His face; I shall His power adore,  
And sing the wonders of His grace forevermore.

Now listen to Charles Wesley's expression of reverent, fervent exuberance. He is overcome that the God-man should save such a sinner as he.

And can it be that I should gain  
An interest in the Savior's blood?  
Died He for me, who caused His pain—  
For me, who Him to death pursued?  
Amazing love! How can it be,  
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

Further consider Robert Robinson's exaltation regarding this grace of God.

O to grace how great a debtor  
Daily I'm constrained to be!  
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,  
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.  
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,  
Prone to leave the God I love;  
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,  
Seal it for Thy courts above.

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Yet again there is the joyous cry of Philip Doddridge.

Grace, 'tis a charming sound,  
Harmonious to mine ear;  
Heaven with the echo shall resound,  
And all the earth shall hear.

Perhaps you respond that this is an appeal to emotion. Yes, it is, but it is emotion based upon truth, for “where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (Rom. 5:20). For Paul, this is not a matter for mere cool embrace. Notice how all of these men drew from the deep wells of their souls. Shallow wells bring forth shallow expression. We ask ourselves then, how can we best witness to the Jewish people “against all odds”? Surely it is when the gospel of the grace of God so passionately possesses us as it did with Paul, and Olivers, and Wesley, and Robinson, and Doddridge. Such depth does not come overnight, but it does arouse the attention of those to whom we witness. The primary dynamic here is that of being driven by the power of gospel truth while at the same time embodying that gospel truth. Here is the reason why we have only one repeatable ordinance, the Lord’s Table, which is essentially a gospel remembrance feast that is intended to restore a bland testimony to fresh, awakened adoration of the Lord Jesus. There is no substitute. Here then is the means by which our own subjective encouragement inevitably leads to the objective encouragement of those to whom we witness. For after all, those saved by the grace of God ought to in some measure reflect graciousness. So we attractively reflect and offer such good news. We are to make others jealous of God’s goodness toward us.

### III. Objective Encouragement Proclamation of the Gospel.

So consider finally this jealousy factor commended by Paul in Romans 11:11, 14. It is by personal example that he exhorts us, especially Gentiles, “if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them” (Rom. 11:13-14). If anyone ought to have qualified for feeling that he ministered “against all odds,” then surely it was Paul. Yet when he writes to the great pagan metropolis of Rome, with all of its impressive culture, especially legal, architectural, and military, he boasts, as the chief of sinners, that, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom. 11:16).

In the *Narrative of a Mission of Enquiry to the Jews from the Church of Scotland*, recounting a visit to the Holy Land by Andrew Bonar and Robert Murray M’Cheyene, published in 1845, we read an interesting and shameful comment.

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The professing Christians here [in the holy land]—Greeks, Armenians, and Roman Catholics—are even more bitter enemies to Jews than Mahometans, so that in time of danger, a Jew would betake himself to the house of a Turk for refuge, in preference to that of a Christian. How little have these Christians the mind of Christ.<sup>5</sup>

So the point is well made that too often, for even centuries, the Jews have shunned Christians for good reason. On the other hand, as David Brog seems to comfortably confess, they willingly fraternize with Christians who do not present to them the gospel. In the first instance we have shame; in the second instance we have neglect. In both cases there is a lack of the power of the gospel. Rather, beyond any question, Paul would have us winsomely proclaim the gospel to the Jew by means of our being “living epistles, known and read by all men” (II Cor. 3:2). So we should desire that our evangelistic ministry distinguish itself from any other worldly mode of proclamation, “not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (I Cor. 2:4).

Let me close with a personal illustration concerning the vital importance of this power of the gospel to arouse our tired human spirits. While increasingly sensing a call to study for the Christian ministry, in the 1960's I was employed in London by a large publishing conglomerate, Thomson Newspapers. My earlier chosen career of advertising had lost its previous attraction. One Sunday evening, I caught the London Underground to the St. James station. Then walking up Petty France Lane toward Westminster Chapel, I was quite depressed about going to work the next day. My pace was somewhat slow and tired. Then I heard Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones preach in a manner that greatly aroused and awakened me to some glorious aspects of gospel truth. I recall walking back down Petty France Lane to the St. James station with a much faster pace than before. I also remember musing to myself: “Barry, it does not matter what happens tomorrow! You are a child of God, kept by His grace. All is well with your soul.” Now the circumstances about tomorrow had not changed, but the power of gospel truth had greatly energized me. So it is when we are “weary in well doing.” It is fresh encounter with the gospel that will enliven our witness as will nothing else.

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<sup>5</sup> Barry E. Horner, *Future Israel*, p. 322.