

THE LAST WORD...



Jamie Buckingham

All my life I have been subject to people who told me to hurry up. Parents said it. Coaches hollered, "Hustle!" Sergeants bellowed, "Hup, two, three, four." People at intersections blew horns, and preachers shouted at me from the pulpit to "get busy and do something for God."

Later, when I was introduced to charismatic Christians (those baptized in the Holy Spirit), I found this same sense of haste, only now accented by supernatural manifestations. Since my clock was already wound to the breaking point, these strange new people seemingly validated my definition that a fanatic was one who had lost his way and redoubled his efforts. I recall one of my fellow seminary students asking one of my slower, wiser professors if he thought Pentecostals would get to heaven (along with us Baptists). He chuckled and said, "Yes, if they don't run by it."

Satan thrives on haste, while the Holy Spirit delights in patience. The only time Jesus pictures God in a hurry is when He is running to meet His lost son who is returning from the far country. Even in raising dead Lazarus, Jesus seemed to be in no hurry.

Perhaps Pascal had something when he said, several hundred years ago, "All troubles of man come from his not knowing how to sit still." It was this same concept that caused Will Rogers to say that one of his ambitions was to step out

into the middle of a busy street, hold up his hands, stop all traffic, and tell everybody who wasn't going anyplace to go home.

I have reached the conclusion that most hurry-up people are out of the move (will) of God. They are like fish out of water, flopping and wiggling on the bank, showing all the signs of life and activity, but going noplacement. These outer manifestations are caused, not by inner life, but by removal from the source of life. Only when you drop the fish back into the water does he assume his casual but creative posture.

Deadlines are of the devil. So are prophecies that say, "Do it now," and people who impatiently insist on some particular, immediate manifestation when they pray for others to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. None of this is of God. God's very character is patience.

Far too often it is the person conducting the ministry who needs to see, or hear the evidence, rather than the one receiving the ministry. In their insecurity, these ministers feel others will think they are failures unless there is some immediate, outward manifestation as a result of their preaching or praying. (I'm thinking of preachers who are constantly badgering their audiences to shout back at them, or well-meaning persons who insist their subject speak in tongues when they pray for them). When the Holy Spirit minis-

ters, we can trust God to bring to pass the right manifestation at the right time. Bob Mumford likens such ministry to a time bomb. Through prayer, preaching, or the laying on of hands, we start the mechanism. God, in His time, will trigger the explosion.

I have learned that any time I am put under pressure by deadlines, I fare much better if I back off and wait. Occasionally I will receive a phone call from someone in a distant city, inviting me to come to speak. Sometimes, when I tell them I'll have to pray before giving an answer, they reply, "But we need to know now." In such cases, I say, "Do you want my answer or God's? I can give you mine by consulting my calendar and my children. But God's answer often takes more time. And unless God tells me to come, you don't want me, for I'll do more damage and cause more confusion than you can straighten out in a year."

No man can do God's work. Only God can do God's work. Much of the havoc in Christian circles today has been caused by men who were eagerly running about doing God's work. But Jesus does not call us to DO, He calls us to BE. Activity for God (even soul-winning) is a grand escape from having to be what God wants us to be.

The gifts of the Spirit (doing) are effective only if they produce the fruit of the Spirit (being). Paul says that tongues, prophecy, even miracles (gifts) performed without love (fruit) are worthless. Yet for many people, it is much easier to speak in tongues than it is to love thy neighbor.

Recently I've been reading Norman Grubb's magnificent biography, *Rees Howells, Intercessor*, in which he relates the secret this tremendous man learned of "abiding" in Christ. It's a lesson all God's chillun need to learn. The reason many so-called Spirit-filled Christians either go into some fanatic orbit, or burn out trying to reenter the world, is that they have not learned the secret of resting, abiding, in the Lord.

When James Garfield, who was later president of the United States, was principal at Hiram College in Ohio, a hurry-up father enrolled his son. The father then came to Garfield and asked if there was a shortcut that would get his son through college more quickly and out into the world of moneymaking. Garfield said,

"Certainly, but it all depends on what you want to make of your boy. When God wants to make an oak tree, He takes 100 years. When He wants to make a squash, He requires only two months."

God is perfecting His church in these latter days, calling His people into deeper levels of maturity than ever before. Simply doing God's work is no longer sufficient. Now we must BE God's people. (As David du Plessis says, "There can be no New Testament church until there are first New Testament people.") BEING precedes DOING.

When the Hebrews came to the edge of the Red Sea, they began to act like cattle who, walking heads down before the winter wind, come to a strand of barbed wire. There, on the banks of the sea, they milled and mooded—murmuring against Moses who had led them thus far.

"Don't just stand there," I can hear one young Zionist shout at Moses, "do something."

But Moses had heard God speak from the burning bush. He knew the very essence of God was caught up in His name, "I AM," the first person present of the verb "to be."

"No, my active friend," Moses said. "You're wrong. What you should have said was 'Don't just do something, stand there.' Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord" (Exod. 14:13).

As long as the people were busy doing, they couldn't hear or see God. But when they stopped doing, and started being, then they saw the sea part.

"Now," God said, "do." And they walked through to the other side.

One of the Psalms we sing in Believers' Meetings in our church begins, "This is my rest forever, here will I dwell." Another closes with the words, "Be still and know that I am God." The Holy Spirit tells us in Hebrews that believers should "enter into His rest," and Jesus says, "Abide in me and I in you." Are you resting in Jesus? Are you abiding in Him? Do you know the joy of doing nothing, of being still and listening to His voice in the silence?

Sometimes we can't hear God's answer to our prayers because we never shut up long enough to listen.

Don't just do something—stand there!

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