

# The Calvary Road

By Pastor Tod Brainard

There has been a resurgence of interest in a short book entitled *The Calvary Road* written in 1950 (reprinted in 2004) by Roy Hession. Hession borrowed much from Keswick teachings of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries to write his booklet. In it he expressed his beliefs in a .deeper experience of the Lord Jesus. or .victorious life.. A little history is in order. With the release of Hession's book in 1950, copies made their way to Far Eastern Asia where missionaries began to digest the book. After a few months, several missionaries were teaching the book to their people and special prayer meetings were initiated for the purpose of .**emptying self of all known sin**, a key principle in Hession's book. Several missionaries went into bouts of depression because of failure to receive the .victorious life. That would be the sign of the filling of their lives with the Holy Spirit. There was confusion and divisions that arose as some claimed to have received .the second blessing. while others had not yet reached the plateau. Hession taught that the Christian was **capable** of eradicating all known sin through confession and repentance. In other words, it was possible to reach a certain measure of spiritual perfection, a level very close to the eradication of the sin nature. He believed that the Christian must constantly empty himself of self and all known sin before he could be filled with the Spirit to be victorious. Still further, Hession taught that a Christian could lose his salvation and in order to be saved again, must **reapply the blood of Christ**. to once again be restored to faith in Jesus Christ. His theology was not original for Pelagius, Arminius, John Wesley, the Keswick movement, the Salvation Army and Pentecostalism have all believed and taught this false doctrine.

The late missionary, Dr. Gerald Johnson, related this account to our founding editor, Dr. Dayton Hobbs, concerning what took place in Japan and Southeast Asia in the early 1950's with the arrival of .**The Calvary Road**. theology or Hessionism. In 1952, Dr. Bob Jones, Sr. received word of what was happening on the mission fields of Japan and Southeast Asia with this wave of .second blessing theology and he traveled to East Asia to meet with the Bob Jones graduates who were serving as missionaries there. As a former Methodist, Dr. Bob Jones, Sr. understood this second blessing doctrine well and was greatly opposed to it. When he arrived he told the missionaries that what they were teaching and practicing from Roy Hession's book amounted to heresy. He warned those who had been ordained through Gospel Fellowship Association that any who continued with the heresy of Hession would be removed from the association. Because of Dr. Bob Jones, Sr.'s great act of courage, the heresy that had spread among Fundamental missionaries was extinguished. In the preface to the 1973 edition of **The Calvary Road**, Hession wrote that through **revival**, believers are coming to experience ....*the blood of the Lamb... to cleanse us from all sin....* Hession had an infatuation with the blood of Christ that went beyond the bounds of Scripture. Hession referred to his understanding as .the disposition in the Blood. (Pages 29,30). The blood of Christ is indeed the foundational truth of the forgiveness of sin provided by Christ. However, Ephesians 5:25-27 is very clear that sanctification is carried forth in the believer's life through the .*washing of the water by the word*.. The daily cleansing of sin in the believer.s life is handled through the washing of the Word of God, thereby walking in the Light (which is a synonym for the Word of God) and confession of sin ( I John 1:7-9). His understanding of .the disposition in the Blood implies several things: 1) it implies that the blood of Christ only covers sin insofar as the believer

confesses all known sin; 2) it implies that any unconfessed sin is not covered by Jesus' blood sacrifice and therefore must be exposed and identified; 3) it implies that revival is an experience equal to a second work of grace beyond initial salvation as the believer comes to experience the power of the blood to *r e a c h u s i n c l e a n s i n g p o w e r*. (page 31). In other words, the blood is limited in its efficacious work for it can only reach us as individuals confess every sin. In addition, in his preface to the 1973 edition, Hession references Psalm 102:13 and Nehemiah 2:13 (very little Scripture is used by Hession to back his beliefs) in relation to revival and his vision for the Church. These verses obviously pertain to Israel, yet Hession applies them to the Church.

### **Brokenness**

In Chapter One it is clear that Hession does not understand true conversion. He sees salvation and sanctification as two separate acts. Furthermore, he does not understand positional sanctification and practical sanctification. Positionally, the believer is HOLY, hidden with Christ in God,. (Colossians 3:3). But the Christian still has the old sin nature including self-will. This sin nature will continue in the body until death. **We cannot empty the old nature.** What Hession does not understand is that Christian perfection is **not perfection of conduct.** Rather, Christian perfection is a perfect relationship between man and God, perfection of motive and love (I Cor. 10:31; I John 4:17,18; Matt. 22:37-40; I Cor. 13). Enoch .walked with God. Whether Enoch's relationship with God was perfect or not was known only to God. Others saw its fruit in Enoch's life, but the fruit did not convince others of his perfection of relationship with God, for man judges the outward appearance and finds imperfection. Yet Enoch walked with God right into heaven without dying. Hession seems to believe that one cannot walk in newness of life unless we are continually confessing and emptying ourselves of self. his definition of brokenness.. Now, do not misunderstand me, the Christian is to confess sin to God. God is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. The problem is that Hession and the Keswick teachers of his day taught that we ***maintain brokenness by emptying ourselves of self*** through continued confession. While it is true that we are indeed selfish and willful, does the New Testament teach us to **empty ourselves of self**? If by self, Hession is referring to the .flesh. he is not preaching a Biblical concept. The flesh is corrupt. We cannot fix the flesh nor can we empty ourselves of the flesh. Romans teaches in Chapter 6:6, ***.Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin. )*** (NASV). We, therefore, are ***.to reckon ourselves (the flesh, self) to be dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey the lusts thereof.*** (Romans 6:11-12).

There is no teaching of sin eradication, but rather crucifixion of the flesh and sin's removal from power (the reign of sin) in our mortal bodies. **He breaks the power of canceled sin, He sets the prisoner free.,** as the hymn says. There is indeed a big difference in that understanding. **.For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.** (Romans 6:14). We are no longer slaves to sin, but slaves to righteousness (Romans 6:16-18). The error of Hession is the same error upon which Methodism, the Holiness movement, and the Salvation Army was founded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The promises related to contrition and brokenness are linked to **salvation,**

not a **second blessing**. - ***the Lord... saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*** (Psalm 34:18). To apply this to some additional work of revival and appearance of a **second blessing** is to rewrite Scripture to fit a human belief system, not a Biblical system. For excellent studies on the doctrine of sanctification (holiness) and the false doctrine of the **second blessing**, read *Holiness: The False and the True* by H.A. Ironside and *The Doctrine of Holiness in These Times* by Chester Tulga. **21<sup>st</sup> Century Hessionism**

Hessionism is the profound belief that daily brokenness (emptying of self the flesh and all known sin in order to obtain or gain something in return) is the secret to revival and the **victorious life**, and that sanctification cannot come unless we live out a **daily** emptying of the flesh and all known sin. Yet, we read in Galatians 2:20, ***.I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*** As Paul says, ***we are to .reckon (lit. continually consider) yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but ALIVE unto GOD through Jesus Christ our Lord.*** (Romans 6:11). Paul did not say we are to be broken everyday, he says we are to continually consider ourselves to be two things: 1) DEAD indeed to the reign and rule of sin, **but** 2) ALIVE UNTO GOD. Hessionism also accepts a new definition of GRACE; it calls it REVIVAL. How did the early Christians miss this definition? How did Grace, God's favor against human merit, become **revival**, with no context of revival being given? ***The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.*** (Titus 2:11). The grace of God is the way God **saves** and **sustains** us. There is absolutely no excuse for any Christian to live a life of defeat and failure for, **....where sin abounded, grace [not revival] did much more abound.** (Romans 5:20). Paul warns the believer in II Corinthians 6:1-10 that the Christian **not receive .the grace of God in vain.** In other words, God supplies His grace in the day of your salvation (vs.2) and continues to supply His grace in Christian living (vs. 4-10).

Grace is certainly exhibited in revival but the two words are not synonymous. One Fundamentalist evangelist recently wrote in an article on *Brokenness* <sup>2</sup>, that James 4:6 and I Peter 5:5 mean the following: ***.God resisteth the proud [the unbroken], but giveth grace [revival] unto the humble [the broken].*** This translation of Grace is saying something that is not in the text. **Grace is nowhere in the Scriptures the very same as revival.** Grace, God's favor against man's merit, is manifested every moment of every day to the child of God. Revival may or may not be manifested for it is the sovereign work of God. In addition, God does not give revival to unregenerate sinners; He gives ETERNAL LIFE on the basis of His righteousness (Romans 5:15-17). Revival assumes ETERNAL LIFE, not DEATH. You cannot revive that which is dead. You can only give resurrection life to that which is dead. Hession admits this in the preface to his 1950 edition <sup>3</sup>, however, he ironically presents a differing conclusion in his explanation of revival when he says, ***Revival is just the life of the Lord Jesus poured out into human hearts.*** <sup>4</sup> Is that not what happens at the moment of salvation (John 3:16-18; 36)? Hession continues, ***.Jesus is pictured as bearing the golden water pot with the Water of Life. As He passes by, He looks into our cup and if it is clean, He fills to overflowing with the Water of Life.*** <sup>5</sup> Have we not eternal life at the moment of salvation? How can we have more water of life one day and less water of life the next based on whether we are clean or not? Hession is confused doctrinally. What we need is Christ's daily bestowing of His Grace to live the Christian life. Eternal life is not something we run out of over time that has to be filled up. We either have it or we do not!

## Truth Versus Error

Salvation is brought about by the Baptism of the Holy Spirit (one event), the new birth. You get as much of the Holy Spirit of God in the new birth as you will ever receive. He does not come in pieces and in parts. Being filled with the Holy Spirit simply means submitting to the Spirit of God given at the new birth and ***His coming to have greater control of you in every part of your being*** (Ephesians 5:18). Hessionism, as in its original release in the late 1940's and early 1950's, leads to unprofitable fleshly introspection, externalism (perfection of conduct – changed exterior with a corrupt interior), and false claims of reaching a higher plane of spiritual life. The folks, especially young people, who get wrapped up in this line of thinking usually conform outwardly for a period of time only to break away to proceed into the depths of iniquity and sin. Spiritual, as well as physical, depression has often followed this doctrine when it has reared its sanctimonious head. This is not what God would have for us. May God help us to follow the Bible and not men's fleshly ideas about the Bible. *Footnotes*

<sup>1</sup> Fritz Rienecker/Cleon Rogers, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*; Zondervan Publishing House; (Grand Rapids, MI: 1980); p. 361 . 362; *logizesthe* - present middle indicative of **reckon**, *to consider, to figure, to count*. The present imperative could mean *.do this continually, .or .continue doing this*. <sup>2</sup> John Van Gelderen, **Revival Magazine**, 2008 Issue II, p. 15. <sup>3</sup> Roy and Revel Hession, *The Calvary Road*, Christian Literature Crusade, (Fort Washington, PA: 1950), pgs. 4-5. <sup>4</sup> Hession, see Chapter 1 on Brokenness, particularly pg 5 and 6. <sup>5</sup> Hession, pg. 7. Ω *(Continued from page 9 - The Calvary Road) am too busy serving Jesus to spend my time and energy engaging in contemporary dialogue. I think I know what .contemporary dialogue. means. It means that all of those intellectual preachers are busy reading the news magazines so they will be able to comment on the world situation from their pulpits on Sunday mornings. But that is not what God called me to do. He called me to preach the gl o r i e s of Ch r i s t . He commissioned me to tell my people there is a kingdom of God and a throne in the heavens. And that we have One of our own representing us there. That is what the early church was excited about. And I think our Lord may have reason to ask why we are no longer very excited about it. The Christian church in the first century was ablaze with this concept of the risen and victorious Christ exalted at the right hand of the Father. Although it worshiped no other man, it urged the worship of this glorified and exalted Man as God, because He had always been the eternal Son, the second Person of the Godhead. -Excerpt from **Jesus, Our Man in Glory** by A.W. Tozer; compiled and edited by Gerald B. Smith, Christian Publications, 1987, pp.4-6. Ω*