



CROSSWAY SHORT
CLASSICS

*The Lord's Work in
the Lord's Way &
No Little People*

FRANCIS A. SCHAEFFER

*Foreword by
Ray Ortlund*

The Lord's Work in
the Lord's Way
&
No Little People

The Crossway Short Classics Series

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&
NO LITTLE PEOPLE

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 **CROSSWAY**[®]

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The Lord's Work in the Lord's Way and No Little People

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Foreword

DO WE TREAT GOD AS REAL, or do we treat God as hypothetical? Is God, to us, our living and glorious helper moment by moment? Or is God, to us, an orthodox concept that simply exists while we keep making the important things happen in our own ways? This is a searching, unsettling question. Let's not answer it easily. Let's answer it honestly. Everything else in Christianity, everything else in the whole of our lives, hangs on our personal reality with the living God.

Francis Schaeffer knew that. He was gripped by that. He spoke about it persuasively. For example, in "The Lord's Work in the Lord's Way" he said:

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The central problem of our age is not liberalism or modernism, nor the old Roman Catholicism or the new Roman Catholicism, nor the threat of communism, nor even the threat of rationalism and the monolithic consensus that surrounds us [nor, I would add today, postmodernism or materialistic consumerism or visceral sensualism]. All these are dangerous but not the primary threat. The real problem is this: the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, individually or corporately, tending to do the Lord's work in the power of the flesh rather than of the Spirit. The central problem is always in the midst of the people of God, not in the circumstances surrounding them.

Who else is telling us where our central problem really lies—not out there with them but in

here among us? Schaeffer also said in his “No Little People, No Little Places”:

The Scripture emphasizes that much can come from little, if the little is truly consecrated to God. There are no little people and no big people in the true spiritual sense, but only consecrated and unconsecrated people. . . . We are talking about quietness before God as we are in his place for us. The size of the place is not important, but the consecration in that place is.

Who else is telling us where our longing for significance can really be satisfied—not in prominence that human eyes can admire but in dedication that God alone can honor?

Francis Schaeffer compelled the attention of my generation by walking forward in the conviction that God was present right then and there.

And that is why reading Schaeffer can energize us today. He brings us back to God as real, not hypothetical.

We Christians believe in God. But it is still possible for us to treat him as distant, in the background. At a practical level, we can treat God the same way the world treats him—as if he's not here in ways that actually help us. And if we Christians do treat God in so insulting and worldly a manner, can we then be surprised if our world doesn't find us compelling? The reason for their indifference toward us might be that we are treating our Savior with the same indifference.

But God has not forsaken us. We are living in a time of doctrinal rediscovery, and it looks like the beginnings of revival. In late twentieth-century America, our atheological pragmatism was building our own mega-churches by our own mega-methods for our own mega-glory. But now we

are getting back to building healthy churches of all sizes by the power of the gospel message itself. Consider these evidences of God's grace, all of which have either been created or renewed in recent years: The Gospel Coalition, Together for the Gospel, the Acts 29 Network, Reformed hip-hop and spoken word poetry, The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, and more, all surging forward by the power of theological clarity and conviction. All of this is good—very good.

But doctrinal faithfulness alone is not enough. Even more, doctrinal faithfulness with moral integrity is not enough, because Christianity is more than lofty ideas with upright conduct. It is not less, but it is more. We can have both right doctrine and right living and still keep our proud superiority unhumbled, our hidden sins unconfessed, our selfish agendas undisturbed. But real Christianity is looking away from ourselves to

Christ as if everything vital depends on him, because it does:

The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal. 2:20 ESV)

The same holds for every church, bound together as a community not only by their beliefs and their behavior but also by their shared experience of our Lord himself:

We are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (2 Cor. 6:16 ESV)

And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and

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continued to speak the word of God with boldness. (Acts 4:31 ESV)

There was a time, early in his ministry, when Francis Schaeffer saw how Christians can drift away from the Lord, even while aligning with doctrinal and behavioral expectations. The shock of the ugliness and hypocrisy and posturing he saw in his denomination nearly destroyed Schaeffer's own faith in Christ. He was so shaken around 1951 that he felt, in all honesty, he had to go back and rethink everything from the ground up. Gradually, he found his way back to honesty and beauty with the Lord. Out of his crisis came new insights into authentic Christianity that eventually took the form of sermons like "The Lord's Work in the Lord's Way" and "No Little People, No Little Places." He lived daring to believe that God was the primary reality at L'Abri

in Switzerland and wherever his ministry took him around the world. And my generation, at that time in college, was captivated. His lectures were brilliant and his persona magnetic. But it was all traceable to his life with Christ in prayer, in faith, in repentance, leaning into the Lord for whatever each moment required.

I believe that our risen Lord is opening a door, in this present generation, to historic revival. His investment in us is striking, as I have noted. Obviously, he is building for the future. He has a plan, he is working his plan, and it is shaping up to be significant. We might reach a tipping point of gospel advance over the next twenty years or so, when there are so many stories of humility and repentance and redemption and newness of life that our nation can no longer ignore the presence of the Lord. Then the heart of America will crack open, and millions will run to Christ.

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But we can still forfeit our historic opportunity. I doubt that we will prove to be doctrinally reckless or morally slipshod. But, through Francis Schaeffer, I do want to warn us—especially us Christian leaders—against being so good at what we do that we lose our longing for what only God can do. May these newly republished sermons by Schaeffer arouse that very longing to such a degree that we cry out to our Lord with one voice, “We will not let you go unless you bless us.” He will surely answer that prayer.

Ray Ortlund
Renewal Ministries
Nashville, Tennessee

Series Preface

JOHN PIPER ONCE WROTE that books do not change people, but paragraphs do. This pithy statement gets close to the idea at the heart of the Crossway Short Classics series: some of the greatest and most powerful Christian messages are also some of the shortest and most accessible. The broad stream of confessional Christianity contains an astonishing wealth of timeless sermons, essays, lectures, and other short pieces of writing. These pieces have challenged, inspired, and borne fruit in the lives of millions of believers across church history and around the globe.

Series Preface

The Crossway Short Classics series seeks to serve two purposes. First, it aims to beautifully preserve these short historic pieces of writing through new high-quality physical editions. Second, it aims to transmit them to a new generation of readers, especially readers who may not be inclined or able to access a larger volume. Short-form content is especially valuable today, as the challenge of focusing in a distracting, constantly moving world becomes more intense. The volumes in the Short Classics series present incisive, gospel-centered grace and truth through a concise, memorable medium. By connecting readers with these accessible works, the Short Classics series hopes to introduce Christians to those great heroes of the faith who wrote them, providing readers with representative works that both nourish the soul and inspire further study.

Series Preface

Readers should note that the spelling and punctuation of these works have been lightly updated where applicable. Scripture references and other citations have also been added where appropriate. Language that reflects a work's origin as a sermon or public address has been retained. Our goal is to preserve as much as possible the authentic text of these classic works.

Our prayer is that the Holy Spirit will use these short works to arrest your attention, preach the gospel to your soul, and motivate you to continue exploring the treasure chest of church history, to the praise and glory of God in Christ.

Biography of Francis A. Schaeffer

FRANCIS AUGUST SCHAEFFER (1912–1984) was one of the most influential Christian thinkers of the twentieth century. Born in Pennsylvania to a working-class family, Schaeffer experienced only a nominal form of Christianity until early adulthood. It was then that, after reading the Bible for himself, Schaeffer became powerfully persuaded that Scripture sufficiently explained reality and was a totally trustworthy guide. The relevance of Christianity for all areas of life, intellectual and experiential, was arguably

the dominant theme throughout Schaeffer's ministry.

After his education at Westminster Theological Seminary where he studied under Cornelius van Til and J. Gresham Machen, Schaeffer took his family to Europe, serving as missionaries. Eventually Schaeffer and his wife Edith would establish L'Abri, a community serving travelers and spiritual seekers nestled in the mountains of Switzerland. At L'Abri the Schaeffers ministered to thousands, especially university students looking for both spiritual enlightenment and warm community.

It was through his writing that Schaeffer became known around the world. He published dozens of volumes connecting the truth claims of Christianity to all parts of life and society. These works include his famous trilogy of apologetics—*Escape From Reason*, *The God Who Is There*, and *He Is*

There and He Is Not Silent—as well as influential books on living in light of the gospel, such as *True Spirituality* and *How Should We Then Live?* Schaeffer's writing was crucial to the formation of evangelical thought. His emphasis on the intellectual coherence of Scripture, the inferiority of competing worldviews, and the necessity of joining gospel proclamation with gospel-shaped lifestyles influenced generations of evangelical theologians.

THE LORD'S WORK
IN THE LORD'S WAY

*“If we live in the Spirit, let us also
walk in the Spirit. Let us not be
desirous of vain glory, provoking one
another, envying one another.”*

Galatians 5:25–26

I

FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS the theological school from which I graduated sang at its commencement exercises “Give Tongues of Fire.” The first verse reads like this:

From ivied walls above the town
The prophet’s school is looking down.
And listening to the human din
From marts and streets and homes of men:
As Jesus viewed with yearning deep,
Jerusalem from Olive’s steep,
O, crucified and risen Lord,
Give tongues of fire to preach thy Word.¹

1 From the hymn “Christ and the City” by Marcus D. Buell, 1910.

This verse pictures Jesus standing on Olivet, looking over Jerusalem, crying for its lostness. As students go out from studying at Farel House here in Switzerland, it is our desire that they will look down over the world, be filled with compassion, and speak with tongues of fire into the world's needs.

Because the world is hard, confronting it without God's power is an overwhelming prospect. But tongues of fire are not to be had simply for the asking. The New Testament teaches that certain conditions must exist. In short, they come down to this: we must do the Lord's work in the Lord's way.

J E S U S ' S P O W E R

Speaking to his disciples and to the church at large, after his resurrection and before his ascension, Jesus said:

The Lord's Work in the Lord's Way

All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. (Matt. 28:18–20)

There is no source of power for God's people—for preaching or teaching or anything else—except Christ himself. Apart from Christ, anything that seems to be spiritual power is actually the power of the flesh.

Luke's record of Jesus's pre-ascension statements has exactly the same emphasis: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and

in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The force of the Greek is, “ye shall receive power; then ye shall be witnesses.” A specific order is involved: *after* having the Holy Spirit come upon them, the disciples were to witness.

Though we today are immediately indwelt by the Holy Spirit when we accept Christ as Savior, being indwelt is not the same as having the fullness of the power of the Holy Spirit. The disciples had to wait to receive the Spirit at Pentecost. Christians today are to follow the same order: to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit at salvation and to know something of the reality of the power of Christ through the agency of the Holy Spirit—and then to work and witness. The order cannot be reversed. There are to be many fillings.

Doing the Lord’s work in the Lord’s way is not a matter of being saved and then simply working hard. After Jesus ascended, the dis-

ciples waited quietly in prayer for the coming of his Spirit.

Their first motion was not toward activism—Christ has risen, now let us be busy. Though they looked at the world with Christ's compassion, they obeyed his clear command to wait before they witnessed. If we who are Christians and therefore indwelt by the Spirit are to preach to our generation with tongues of fire, we also must have something more than an activism that men can easily duplicate. We must know something of the power of the Holy Spirit.

RECOGNIZING OUR NEED

How do we receive something of the power of the Holy Spirit? Though there are great differences between justification and sanctification, we can almost always learn important facets about the

latter by considering the former. For example, the story of the Pharisee and the publican who was at the point of conversion is instructive. Before a man is ready to have Christ as his Savior (that is, be justified), he must cry out like the publican (with at least some comprehension of what he is saying), “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13). A person cannot be a Christian without first recognizing his need of Christ. And as Christians, we too must comprehend something of our need for spiritual power. If we think we can operate on our own, if we do not comprehend the need for a power beyond our own, we will never get started. If we think the power of our own cleverness is enough, we will be at a standstill.

Teaching about the Holy Spirit and his indwelling must never be solely a theological concept. Having the proper concept—that we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit when we are saved—we must

press on, so that the Spirit's indwelling can bring forth results in our lives. If we want tongues of fire, our first step is not only to stand by, complacently thinking the right theological thoughts. We must have a genuine feeling of need.

Furthermore, this feeling of need is not to be once and for all. A Christian can never say, "I knew the power of the Holy Spirit yesterday, so today I can be at rest." It is one of the existential realities of the Christian life to stand before God consciously recognizing our need.

The publican illustrates that justification requires humbling. Christians must humble themselves to know the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. To the extent that we do not humble ourselves, there will be no power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The Lord's work in the Lord's way is the Lord's work in the power of the Holy Spirit and not in the power of the flesh.

THE CENTRAL PROBLEM

The central problem of our age is not liberalism or modernism, nor the old Roman Catholicism or the new Roman Catholicism, nor the threat of communism, nor even the threat of rationalism and the monolithic consensus that surrounds us. All these are dangerous but not the primary threat. The real problem is this: the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, individually or corporately, tending to do the Lord's work in the power of the flesh rather than of the Spirit. The central problem is always in the midst of the people of God, not in the circumstances surrounding them.

We can sense what this means in practice if we view the statue of Napoleon at the Hôtel des Invalides in Paris. As he stands there with his hand in his coat at his breast, he is a personification of "I did this!" The sculptor has caught the attitude, the

attitude of the great man of the world, the one who says in all three tenses, "I did this; I do this; I will do this." This attitude as shown forth so well in the statue personifies the flesh.

In contrast, we can think of the Lord Jesus himself in the quiet of Gethsemane. As we see there the eternal Son of God who in the incarnation is now also true man and as we hear his words, we perceive no sign of Napoleon's massive egoism. To the contrary, the Lord Jesus said to the Father, "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). Unfortunately, we Christians can and often do take Napoleon's stance, but what a contrast to the Lord Jesus himself!

LED BY THE SPIRIT

In Matthew 3 is a passage that has often been used as a proof text for the doctrine of the Trinity: "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway

out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:16–17).

This is a classical text on the Trinity, but it is not to be a bare proof of the Trinity. The passage teaches much more, especially when we place it in the larger context of the next few verses: “Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil” (Matt. 4:1). As soon as Jesus was baptized by the Holy Spirit, he was led by him. If he was thus led by the Holy Spirit, how much more do we need to be! We must not reduce these passages only to a theological statement, even a true theological statement; we must act on them in our lives. Then he goes on to the garden in a few short years and then to die on the cross.

John the Baptist made two prophecies concerning the Christ. Not only did he say, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), but he also affirmed, "The same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost" (John 1:33). This second prophecy indicates that not only was Jesus himself baptized and led by the Spirit, but he also baptizes us with the Spirit. Are we, when we accept Christ as our Savior, indwelt by the Holy Spirit? Then we are meant to know something of both his leading and his power.

As we see the Lord Jesus dying on the cross, we who are Bible-believing Christians must fight for the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement. Theological liberalism deliberately destroys the atonement's substitutionary quality, and liberalism controls much of the traditional church structures. So we may have to pay a high price ecclesiastically in order to be faithful to the Bible's

teaching. But no matter the cost, let us be faithful. We must stand at all costs for the substitutionary atonement.

The central thrust of the cross is the substitutionary atonement, but this does not exhaust its meaning. The cross also teaches a lesson in humility. As Paul wrote to the Philippians, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus . . . being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:5, 8). This is where the Christian is to dwell if he is to know something of the power of the Spirit. Just as Christ was humbled in the external space-time world, in the hard stuff of history—not merely in someone’s imagination, nor in some idealistic setting that makes his death a utopian statement withdrawn from life—so, too, a Christian should have a truly humble heart in the hard reality of the practical

world. There is to be a practical reality of the seed falling into the earth to die.

One of the pope's titles is "servant of servants." And what a tremendous title it is! But in Rome he has traditionally been carried in a gold-covered chair on the backs of men. I saw him need help trying to stand because of the weight of the jewels and gold that adorned him. Men had to take his arms and stand him upright. I do not know if this is the case today, but in the past when the pope ate, he ate on a raised platform while other people ate below this servant of servants.

We may react against this, but is it not true that a great deal in our own lives manifests about the same level of humility? We speak of humility and crucifixion, but we are like the pope, speaking about being a servant of servants and then being carried on the backs of men. While we talk about

humility and the power of the Holy Spirit, we spend much of our lives in the stance of Napoleon. As soon as we seek the Me rather than follow the example of Christ, we are walking in the flesh rather than in the Spirit.

II

TAKING THE LOWEST PLACE

Christ taught his disciples that they were not to be called “Rabbi” or “Master” (Matt. 23:8, 10) and that the greatest among them would be the servant of all (Mark 10:44). Doesn’t each one of us tend to reverse this, following our natural inclinations as fallen men while ignoring the Word of God? Don’t we like the foremost place? And if this is our mindset, isn’t this living in the flesh, and to that extent leaving the Spirit no place?