

EVANGELISM

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I wish I could remember the poet who wrote the following:

***He wasn't much for stirrin' out,
It wasn't his desire;
No matter what the others did,
He was sittin' by the fire.***

***Same old habit, day by day,
He never seemed to tire;
While others helped to build the church,
He was sittin' by the fire.***

***And when he died as all must do,
They said he went up higher;
But if he's still doin' what he always did,
He's still sittin' by the fire.***

The church is in an evangelism crisis. We have blended a “whatever” generation with a biblically ignorant generation, and come up with a generation that could care less about snatching people off the pathway to hell. It is a generation that wants to live within the sound of church and chapel bell, but not within yelling distance of souls that are falling through death into eternal damnation. There's little excitement today about sowing the seed of the kingdom, because there is no excitement about seeing the need of a spiritually starved generation of people. When challenged about their lack of evangelistic fervor, we receive only the reply, “Whatever.” When a generation arises that is ignorant of what the Bible says concerning the damnation of those who do not obey the gospel, then they have little concern for preaching the gospel. Where are those who have a passion for the lost?

These are times for serious repentance on the part of the church. In many ways we have lost our identity. While seeking to impose on ourselves some legal identity by the performance of acts during our assemblies, we have forsaken

the identity by which Jesus said the world would know that we are His disciples. Our identity was to be manifested by our love. That love was to extend to believers, as well as to unbelievers. A love that will not take us to our lost neighbor's house will certainly not take us to heaven. Paul had it right. ***“For the love of Christ compels us ...”*** (2 Co 5:14). We will not bring the world into Christ unless the love of Christ compels us to take His name into all the world.

We have a bookshelf full of “feel good books” that seek to motivate us to do this or that in order to feel good about ourselves. But there is a limit to feeling good when the feeling does not come from doing that which I know I should do in saving the lost. So where are the books that emphasize the wrath, terror, judgment, fear and condemnation of a just God who will send people to a fiery hell because they did not obey the gospel. Or worse, where are the books that tell me where I am headed if I am just “sittin’ by the fire ...”? Again, Paul said it right, and probably correctly translated by the old versions, ***“Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men”*** (2 Co 5:11). If I understand the fact that the Bible teaches that those who do not obey the gospel will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord Jesus, then I understand that Jesus is more than a sweet teacher meandering down Judean pathways with His disciples. I read 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9 frequently. It talks about a Jesus of vengeance when He comes again. As Paul, though we knew Jesus according to the flesh, we want to know Him as He now is as King, Head and Judge over all things (2 Co 5:16). He is coming with vengeance on all those who do not obey the gospel of His death for our sins. He is coming with vengeance on a “whatever” generation that has lost its passion for lost souls.

It's time for an evangelistic paradigm shift. And believe me, such shifts come with great pain, the pain of repentance. Our laughter must be turned into mourning. We must remember the words of Jesus, “Blessed are those who mourn.” We must start mourning over our sin of laziness in order to be blessed.

I write these words in order that no one misunderstand the motives of all of those who are sincerely concerned about world evangelism. We are serious about accomplishing the only reason for the existence of this world. That reason is

that we search throughout the population of the world for those who want to prepare themselves for eternal dwelling in the presence of God. We are in the business of populating heaven.