



Faith Pulpit

Why Evangelism and Missions

Why should evangelism and missions be high priorities for believers and local churches today? True, they are the proper things to do, and they carry an air of respectability as they are mentioned frequently in our circles. This is all well and good; but are we really burdened for the unsaved, and do we weep for those around the world who have never trusted Christ as Savior? And who is going to tell them about their Savior? What kind of strategy do we have individually and corporately to reach those close to us and those around the world with the gospel message? You see, if evangelism and missions should be high priorities, then each of us have a responsibility in these areas. Why, then, should they be important to us?

1. The Love of God

God Himself has given us an example which ought to motivate us to spiritual outreach ministries. The Bible's golden text tells us that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). God's love motivated Him to make provision for our salvation through the death and resurrection of His own dear Son. When the impact of what it cost God to save us really impresses itself on us, then we will have a glimpse of love in its finest expression of compulsion.

The apostle Paul also speaks of what God has done in love for us when he states that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" and that "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:19 and 21). If God's compelling love to provide salvation for sinners led Him to sacrifice His own Son in order to accomplish this shouldn't we be motivated by His love as well to tell sinners of that provision? Within the context of Paul's already-quoted statements, we find that God

“hath committed unto us the word of ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:19 and 20). Isn’t it interesting that we have no problem finding people today who are feeling good because of God’s love, but finding people who are thus burdened for sinners is much more rare.

2. The Lostness of Man

Scripture tells us that “if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost” (2 Corinthians 4:3), and our Savior—in telling us what His mission was—said He had “come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Just what is lostness?

Among other things, it speaks of man’s broken relationship with God. And it points to that awesome and terrible end when our Savior will “profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:23). Hear the solemn warning of our Lord: “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28).

We need to return to a careful study of what the Bible teaches about the final destiny of those who do not know Christ as Savior. And we need to let it be a motivating force which compels us to reach the lost with the saving message of Christ. When the Apostle Paul thought about the lostness and ultimate destiny of his unsaved Israelite family and friends, he exclaimed: “I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh” (Romans 9:2 and 3). We need to hear the words of Jude, our Lord’s half-brother, as he exhorts us: on “some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 22 and 23).

3. The Marching Orders of the Church

A further reason to be burdened for the lost and to bring them salvation’s message is one of obedience to the command of our Lord. All of the four gospel accounts coordinate with a record of the Great Commission. And the Book of Acts begins with this spiritual mandate. We have our instructions to evangelize, baptize and teach them “to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20). What are we waiting for? Paul, in speaking to the Corinthians, said: “some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame” (1 Corinthians 15:34). What would he say to us if he were here today?

Each of us can be thankful that someone was concerned enough – motivated by God’s love and our lostness – to take the command of our Lord seriously and to speak to us about our need for the Savior and His great provision for us. Can we do less for those about us and around the world? If we do not evangelize, who will?

Where does one begin? It must start with a renewed determination that reaching others will be a priority in our own lives and in the lives of our local churches. We must not let anyone or anything dim that determination, and then we must think of ways by which we can implement that priority. When this happens, the opportunities for witness will be there!

Stir me, oh, stir me, Lord, I care not how,

But stir my heart in passion for the world,

Stir me to give, to go, but most to pray;

Stir, till the blood red banner be unfurled.

O'er lands that still in heathen darkness lie,

O'er deserts where no cross is lifted high.

Stir me, oh, stir me, Lord, till all my heart

Is filled with strong compassion for these souls;

Till Thy compelling word drives me to pray;

Till Thy constraining love reach to the poles

Far north and south, in burning deep desire,

Till east and west are caught in love's great fire.

Stir me, oh, stir me, Lord, Thy heart was stirred

By love's intensest fire, till Thou didst give

Thine only Son, Why best beloved One,

E'en to the dreadful cross, that I might live.

Stir me to give myself so back to Thee,

That Thou canst give Thyself again thro' me.

Stir me, oh, stir me, Lord, for I can see

Thy glorious triumph day begin to break;

The dawn already gilds the eastern sky:

Oh, Church of Christ , arise, awake, awake:

Oh! Stir us, Lord, as heralds of that day,

For night is past, our King is on His way.

-Mrs. A. Head

Dr. George Houghton

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