

Evangelism Is Sorely Needed
by Greg Gordon

A exhortation to press forward in the work of evangelism

THE WORLD IS DESPERATELY LOST!

Evangelism in Webster dictionary is generically defined as: "zealous advocacy of a cause." Oh that the "cause" of Christ be proclaimed from the roof-tops of the world. James A. Stewart said: "Evangelism is still the life of the Church. Evangelism is the Spirit of Christ." The Scriptures state: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." The world is lost, desperately lost! Lost without a goal or guide. The world is so lost that they don't even realize they are lost. Deceived, Ignorant, Dead, Enemies of the Cross of Christ, Given over to Sin, these are just some of the traits of the lost who we once found our conversation in those things that we are not ashamed of!

Thomas Boston an old puritan writes of the lost condition of the world in his book: "Human Nature in its Fourfold State." May we receive a burden for these poor dying souls as we read this excerpt: "The unrenewed man's affections are wholly corrupted, disordered and distempered. Man's heart naturally is a mother of abominations! "For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly." It says in the Gospel of John that "Men loved darkness." The natural man's affections are wretchedly misplaced. He is a spiritual monster! His heart is where his feet should be--fixed on the earth. His heels are lifted up against heaven--which his heart should be set on. His face is towards hell; his back is towards heaven. He loves what he should hate; and hates what he should love. He joys in what he ought to mourn for; and mourns for what he should rejoice in. He abhors what he should desire; and desires what he should abhor. "Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God."

Lost! Lost! Lost! Dear reader will you not catch the burden which is the burden of God to see sinners come to Christ? The world is lost without God and needs to hear impassioned pleading of the "Good News" of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ came to free man from his bondage to sin and iniquity. He came to set us free! What a glorious gospel that saves not just from the guilt of sin but the bondage and reality of sin in one's life!

THE GIFT THAT PLEADS WITH MEN

John Bunyan defined the role of evangelist in these words: "A man, who had his eyes up to heaven, the best of books was in his hand, the law of truth

was written upon his lips, and he stood as if he pleaded with men.” Oh how we need this pleading with men from those that are saturated with truth and have eyes blazing with the reality of heavenly communion with God. The world knows the difference between those that have met with God and those that merely talk with God. May we be those evangelists that speak from an inward reality and experience rather than a mere intellectual assertion of Scriptural truth that will damn people faster than their sins. Evangelism is a “high calling” for it requires you to speak forth the very words of God unto men. Evangelism is a “holy calling” for it requires you to be set apart for the Master’s purposes alone. Evangelism is a “hard calling” for it requires you to leave friends, families and fun! For the propagation of the cross of Christ. The calling of evangelist is not a subsidiary “calling” but rather a very worthy and important ministry. We see in Scriptures it says: “And he gave some, apostles: and some, prophets: and some, evangelists: and some, pastors and teachers: for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” We find the calling of evangelist along side “apostles” and “prophets.” There is a strong misconception that “evangelists” are a lower sort of calling in the Church but rather Scripture shows it to be of utmost importance possibly just as important as “apostleship.”

Think of some men that were used as evangelists in Church history; James A. Stewart shared these examples: “Do not forget that George Whitefield and John Wesley were traveling evangelists until the day they died. John Wesley covered the British Isles on horseback year after year, preaching from five o’clock each morning till near midnight, day after day until he was well over eighty years of age.” Multitudes of pastors and laity have been forgotten under the annuals of time but these two firebrands: Whitefield and Wesley burn on as living epistles. Oh for more evangelists of the stature as these men! They did not fear man nor priestcraft. The evangelist must look to God and God alone for his directions. He is not a denominational man but a free man. He is the gift to the Church and serves the “Lord of the Harvest.”

THE DANGERS ARE MANY

This office of “pleading” to the lost is glorious but dangerous also. James A. Stewart gives some very practical warning against dry, mechanical, formulation of the living, vibrant gift of evangelism: “All true evangelists know that the work of an evangelist is physically and spiritually the hardest job on earth. The evangelist must be careful not to allow anybody or anything to crowd out the one master passion from his life, which is the winning of the lost to Christ. How easy it is to become cold, professional, and mechanical in evangelistic work, preaching the same old sermons over and over again, without the fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit. If one continues long enough in a groove it will soon become his

grave!” The scripture states: “Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.” How many evangelists who one day were preaching life now preach death? The evangelist finds himself on the front lines of the battle with the enemy of our souls who will be more than happy to promote a evangelist that has no “anointing.”

Lionel B. Fletcher, a late British evangelists gives us more careful words of warning: “The evangelist, above everything else, must, guard his life with jealous care. He is engaged in the most delicate work. He is making almost audacious claims. He is leading a frontal attack on the citadel of sin. He is entrusted with the most arduous position in the line of battle. There are foes against him, and there are enemies within his own camp. It is perhaps true that the eyes of the whole world are upon him, more than any other Christian worker.” In light of this dear reader do consider if God has truly called you to this somber work of a evangelist. Consider the serious words of the puritan John Owen: “A minister may fill his pews, his communion roll, the mouths of the public, but what that minister is on his knees in secret before God Almighty, that he is and no more.” Consider also the words of great evangelist George Whitefield as he cried out: “I have prayed a thousand times, till the sweat dropped from my face like rain, that God, of His infinite mercy would not let me enter the Church as a minister, until He called me and thrust me to the work.” Hear perhaps the most sober of all warnings from Holy Scripture: “But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.”

LABOR ON!

Horatius Bonar wrote a hymn that has been a inspiration to countless thousands over time and may it encourage you to press on in your “gift” that the Lord commands you to “stir up!”

Go, labor on: spend, and be spent,
Thy joy to do the Father’s will:
It is the way the Master went;
Should not the servant tread it still?

Go, labor on! ’tis not for naught
Thine earthly loss is heavenly gain;
Men heed thee, love thee, praise thee not;
The Master praises: what are men?

Go, labor on! enough, while here,
If He shall praise thee, if He deign

The willing heart to mark and cheer:
No toil for Him shall be in vain.

Go, labor on! Your hands are weak,
Your knees are faint, your soul cast down;
Yet falter not; the prize you seek
Is near—a kingdom and a crown.

Go, labor on while it is day:
The world's dark night is hastening on;
Speed, speed thy work, cast sloth away;
It is not thus that souls are won.

Toil on, faint not, keep watch and pray,
Be wise the erring soul to win;
Go forth into the world's highway,
Compel the wanderer to come in.

Toil on, and in thy toil rejoice!
For toil comes rest, for exile home;
Soon shalt thou hear the Bridegroom's voice,
The midnight peal, "Behold, I come!"