

“Baptists and Evangelism”

by
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Baptists are a Great Commission people. We have been infected with the gospel of Jesus Christ and evangelism is in our blood. It is the heartbeat of who we are.

Without a “hot heart” for soul we would die and our death would be deserved.

Baptists seek to live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We receive our marching orders from Him. Two passages in particular lay the foundation for who we are and what we are about:

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20, *NAS*)

He [Jesus] said to them ... but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. (Acts 1:7-8, *NAS*).

Jesus said go and so we go. Jesus said witness and so we witness.

Deep within our soul is the conviction that heaven is real and hell is real and Jesus is the only difference. This “soul conviction” does not mean that we do not love and respect those of other faiths or those who have no faith at all. Because of our unrivaled commitment to religious liberty we would willingly die for their right to believe as they choose. However, it is because we do love them that we go, witness, share and tell. We cannot escape the words of our Lord who said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me” (John 14:6). We are

haunted again by our Savior's warning, "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?" (Mark 8:36).

It was exactly this kind of conviction that launched the Modern Missionary Movement through a British Baptist named William Carey (1761 – 1834) as he spent his life in India. Reflecting upon our awesome task he wrote,

"As our blessed Lord has required us to pray that his kingdom may come, and his will be done on earth as in heaven, it becomes us not only to express our desires of that event by words, but to *use every lawful method to spread the knowledge of his name*" (emphasis mine).

This same hot passion burned in the heart of the American Baptist Adoniram Judson (1788-1850) and his wife, Ann. It sent them both to serve and die on the mission field in Burma. This burden for souls stirred the heart of Luther Rice (1783-1836) and set him criss-crossing America to raise support for those who were evangelizing around the world.

Southern Baptists, in particular, recognize that we may be out of step with many current trends in theology. So be it. We reject outright as unbiblical heresy any theology that weakens the missionary/evangelistic mandate. We stand against the modern and post-modern mindset which says,

"The task of the missionary today ... is to see the best in other religions, to help the adherents of those religions to discover, or to rediscover, all that is best in their own traditions ... *The aim should not be conversion* ... an attempt to establish a Christian monopoly ... The ultimate aim ... is the emergence of the various religions out of their isolation into a world fellowship in which each finds its appropriate place ("Rethinking Mission: A Layman's Inquiry after 100 Years" in Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, p. 456; emphasis mine).

No, we look for encouragement and motivation from another Baptist, the great British preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1842). Challenging the pastors of his day he said,

“The minister who is sent of God has spiritual children, they are as much his children as if they had literally been born in his house, for to their immortal nature he stands under God in the relationship of sire No minister ought to be at rest unless he sees that his ministry does bring forth fruit, and men and women are born unto God by the preaching of the Word.”

Spurgeon also had a needed and pointed word from parents in this context, and one certainly needed among Baptists today.

“It is very grievous to see how some professedly Christian parents are satisfied so long as their children display cleverness in learning, or sharpness in business, although they show no signs of a renewed nature When a man’s heart is really right with God, and he himself has been saved from the wrath to come, and is living in the light of his heavenly Father’s countenance, it is certain that he is anxious about his children’s souls, prizes their immortal nature ... If you are professing Christians, but cannot say that you have no greater joy than the conversion of your children, you have reason to question whether you ought to have made such a profession at all.”

Spurgeon knew evangelism in the church starts at the top, with those God has called to pastor. Spurgeon also knew that there was no better place for evangelism to begin than in the home. The people called Baptists well understand that our very reason for existing is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. We are also very much aware that there are many things we can do to glorify God in this life and in the life to come. However, there is one thing we can do now to bring our Lord glory that we cannot do in eternity. That one thing is to share the gospel and tell a lost soul about a Savior whose name is Jesus. And so we go, share, witness and tell. We use the Roman Road, Steps to Peace with God, the Spiritual Laws, Wordless Book, Good News bracelet, Win School, E.E.,

C.W.T., F.A.I.T.H., and many other means as well. Why? Because we know and understand that lost people matter to God, and therefore, lost people should matter to us. Former SBC President Dr. Paige Patterson puts it well, “More than 6 billion souls populate our globe. If the biblical message is true, then hell is a tragic conclusion for those who have not come to God through Christ. The potential of forgiveness and eternal life with God demands that all avenues of evangelization be pursued. The urgency of the task is the most compelling of any assignment the believer has been given.” This assignment is ours and this assignment we will endeavor to fulfill. We must, for the eternal destiny of men and women demands it. Our Lord demands it.