

Why So Few Lasting Results?

by Colin Peckham

The sermon emphasizes the importance of repentance and a deep understanding of the implications of following Christ in order to achieve lasting results in evangelism.

Scripture: Isaiah 6:5, Matthew 16:24, Luke 13:3, Acts 3:19, Acts 4:31, Romans 2:4, 2 Timothy 3:12, Hebrews 12:14, 1 Peter 1:16

Topics: "Repentance", "Evangelism"

Description

Colin Peckham addresses the issue of evangelization producing short-lived results, emphasizing the importance of repentance as a foundational step often overlooked in modern preaching. He highlights the necessity for individuals to have a deep conviction of their sinful state and the need for genuine repentance before accepting Christ. Peckham also points out the undisclosed conditions of following Christ, stressing the inevitable changes in lifestyle and the conflicts that may arise with worldly pleasures. Additionally, he warns against unholy familiarity with sacred things, calling for a return to a reverent fear of God's holiness in evangelistic efforts.

Transcript

The problem of evangelisation which produces not lasting results is reaching gigantic proportions. The gospel is being preached. Christians are attending special classes, are trained in the principles of soul-winning and are mobilised to counsel seeking souls. All this is done, yet so many of the seekers who walk up the aisles after an invitation, are 'still-born'. No long after the campaign, we are often amazed and saddened that so few of these converts are still following the Lord. Where does the problem lie? May I suggest a few reasons?

The Unemphasized Command

The lost chord of most evangelistic preaching today is repentance. It is a fatal omission. If one seeks to follow a Holy Lord whilst never having repented of an unholy life, it will lead to frustration, embarrassment, disillusionment and disgust at the message of the gospel and its presentation. The message that must come home to all men is that man is a doomed and damned sinner, deserving only the awful wrath of a holy God whose hatred of, and anger against, sin is eternal and terrible.

The fatal error many a Christian worker makes, is to mistake an intellectual admission of being a sinner, for the deep conviction, wrought by the Holy Ghost, that he is utterly holy and under God's dreadful wrath

and judgement because of his sin. So often, when the seeker admits to being a sinner, the worker mistakenly and gladly rushes on to urge him to receive Christ as his Saviour, which he does without any real conviction of sin. This is a suicidal short cut. The foundation is not yet laid. The seeker must not only admit his guilt intellectually, but have a Spirit-wrought consciousness of his lost and hopeless condition without Christ. Without this, although he may agree with all that the worker says, saving faith cannot be exercised. His lost estate must be spiritually perceived and a heart repentance must be obtained as a prerequisite to any act of faith.

The mess which we preach is not 'simply believe', but 'repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ'. We have become curse with a desire to count heads when God sees and counts hearts.

The Undisclosed Conditions

In our desire to make the gospel-call attractive and acceptable, we often overemphasise the positive aspect for the gospel-to our great loss. 'Come to Jesus' we say, 'come and He will give you rest, peace and joy.' All this is true but much more is involved than just that, there are conditions to be met.

If one comes to Christ, there are inevitable changes of lifestyle that must follow. The mind must be enlightened and the heart must be prepared for these changes. Time will have to be set apart for the reading of God's Word and prayer. Your life cannot be lived as you please, Christ demands obedience to his revealed standards. All activities and pleasures must be placed on the altar for God. You are no longer your own. Your plans, ambitions, personality, abilities, talents-all, all are His. Few are made aware of these things at their conversion.

Such changes inevitable bring one into conflict with our egotistical society. You are not different. You have been separated by God for Himself. You cannot plunge into worldly pleasures as you did before. You can no longer enter into questionable amusements. Your interests are set in heavenly places. The Word of God rings in your ears-'Abstain from all appearances of evil', and, 'Love not the world neither the things that are in the world. if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in Him.'

Continued obedience to God in these things inevitably brings persecution and ostracism. The 'world' rejects those who by their separated holy lives are a living condemnation of their own way of life. they withdraw from them, and the Christian must then endure the discipline of loneliness and the pain of reproach. 'As the Father sent Me even so I send you', said Jesus-and He ended His earthly life on a cross. the Bible promises us: 'Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.' These things are all the inevitable consequences of yielding allegiance to a crucified Lord. If therefore we beckon those in the world with a sugar-coated pill, promising them joy, peace and rest, without informing them of the implications of commitment, we are guilty of deceit. Then they, when they discover that they have been talked into a profession by these slick salesman techniques, will turn and become harder than ever before.

The Unholy Familiarity

Unholy familiarity with that which is holy, is the curse of much evangelical Christianity. We have become so familiar with it all that it no longer has a humbling, subduing effect upon us. We no longer 'tremble at the Word' (Isa. 66:5). The awesome majesty and blinding purity of the One Who dwells in light unapproachable, are merely linguistic descriptions written in God's book.

Oh for a revelation of the holiness and glory of God to our souls. Then we would not trample easily, jokingly, the courts of God; then our flippant light-hearted jokes, even of scriptural things, would freeze on our lips; then 'the sinners in Zion' would fear and seek God.

Because of the light-hearted atmosphere in which so much of our evangelistic work is done, the work in the hearts of those with whom we have to do is superficial and short-lived. May the Lord send us a soul-subduing, sin-convicting, God-consciousness in our evangelistic meetings. It is the presence of God which moves a soul. It is only in the presence of God that we can make spiritual advance. It is in Him that 'we live and move and have our being.' 'Without Me', said Jesus, 'ye can do nothing.'

Back to God, I say. Back in contrition. Back to His presence. Back to our knees. Let the fire fall on our own hearts, lest we dare go forth with false fire and bring condemnation upon our souls. Let the fire burn out-with our souls. Let the fire burn within us and cleanse ever carnal hindrance, that we may be channels through whom God may pour His own convicting and saving Presence into seeking hearts. God needs such soul-winners-people utterly at His disposal, wholly yielded to His will, motivated and filled by His Holy Spirit. Thus shall we do exploits.

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