

The Plague of Dry-Eyed Calvinism in Missions

by Walter Chantry

The plague of dry-eyed Calvinism in missions is a result of prioritizing doctrine over action and compassion, and can be overcome by seeking to understand the truth of God with our hearts as well as our heads.

Duration: 38:48

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 2:1

Topics: "Missions Work", "Gospel Outreach"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of Christians not remaining silent about the truth of God. He refers to 1 Thessalonians 2:4, where Paul states that the gospel is not only a revelation for personal peace, but also a trust given to believers to guard and present to the world. The speaker challenges Christians to actively spread the gospel and make serious efforts in missions, both at home and abroad. He highlights the need for consistent prayer for missionaries and shares the example of missionaries like William Burns and the apostle Paul, who were driven by a deep love for the gospel and a sense of responsibility to share it.

Transcript

If you open your Bibles at this time, please, to Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians, Chapter 2. Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians, Chapter 2. Here, as in many other places in the New Testament, Paul evidences his great burden for mission. He expresses to the Thessalonians the manner and spirit in which he had come to them to plant a church in the name of Jesus Christ. First Thessalonians, Chapter 2. And I will begin at verse 1 to read.

Will you follow, please? For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance then unto you, that it was not in vain. For even after that we had suffered before and were shamefully entreated, as you know it, Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention. For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile.

But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God which trieth our hearts. For neither at any time use we flattering words, as ye know. Nor cloak of covetousness God is witness.

For of men sought we glory, neither of you nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome as the apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherishes her children. Though

being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

For ye remember, brethren, our labor and prevail. For laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. Ye are witnesses in God also, how wholly and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe.

And ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory. If I may skip those verses, which are not unimportant, they are quite important to Paul's discussion, and look at the last two verses of the chapter. Paul says, For what is our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ and his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.

On Sunday morning we tried to suggest that the greatest need in missions at this hour is for missionaries to know and preach the whole counsel of God, as Paul knew and preached the whole counsel of God. For surely only a proper and a full presentation of the truth of God to the world will bring men to Jesus Christ. John chapter 8, our Lord Jesus Christ said, If ye continue in my word, ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

Romans 10 we read that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. So the greatest need of the hour is for men who will preach the truth of God, who will present the word of God as it is in the scriptures, who understand it and love it and preach it as the scriptures present the gospels themselves. For this will save sinners.

We read Paul's own statement in Romans chapter 1, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. But what will the understanding of the whole counsel of God do for the man who is the preacher himself? We know that the whole counsel of God is essential for the world's ears if the world is to be saved, and if churches are to be planted in the lands far off. But what will the knowledge of the whole counsel of God do for the man who is sent to preach? We see in Paul, and in Paul's statement in Thessalonians chapter 2, what the whole counsel of God did to him, what a burden it gave him for missions, what a burden it gave him to go and to preach to people who had not heard, what a burden it gave him to even fight against the persecutions that he faced.

He went to Thessalonica after he had been shamefully treated in Philippi, after he had been persecuted. He went and he boldly preached the word of God, desiring to plant churches in every city. To the very end of his life he desired to go elsewhere and to preach the glorious truth of the gospel.

It was the knowledge of the whole counsel of God, the knowledge of the doctrines of the scriptures that gave him just this burden, but the doctrine that we call Calvinism can be very deadly. It can be very deadly. When men accuse those who believe the truths that were advanced by the Reformation, the truths that we call Calvinism, when people accuse those who believe the doctrines of being heartless and cold and without missionary zeal, they are not fighting against shadows, they are not fighting against straw men, for there is nothing so dead and lifeless and doctrinally devastating as a precise church that has neatly arranged all of its truths by logic, carefully fondles each doctrine while the world passes by its doors on the way to hell.

Churches may be found in abundance that fly the flag of John Calvin, have the five points of Calvinism carved in every pew of the church, but we have no members in that church that have wept tears of the sinners that are lost. Many of the churches are filled with men who are doing nothing to win the loss of the Christ, doing nothing to tell the neighbors of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let me ask you the question this evening, Christian, because our church is becoming proud of its orthodoxy and its position in Calvinism, its position with the Reformers of days gone by.

Why is it that modern mission has, to a large extent, left the foundations, the doctrinal foundations that were laid by Brainerd, that were laid by William Carey and Henry Martin and the others of the great missionaries, who were drenched in the truth of the Reformation as they were expressed in the Westminster Confession and the London Confession of Faith? Why has the missionary movement, to a large extent, been taken over by those who are not in agreement with those great standards? Why is there a departure from the mainstream of Protestantism in our generation, in missions and in other evangelical works? Well, I'll tell you, it is not because men have laid a plot to capture missions. It is not because there is some great conspiracy to outdo the Calvinists and to take the organizations away from them. It is because the Calvinistic churches of today are cold and hard, and there are no warm-hearted Brainerds to be found to go to the ends of the earth and to preach the gospel.

Thank God for the warm-hearted Arminians, who have gone and have taken the scriptures to other lands, for where have the Calvinists been in the last fifty years? For there are few, sorrowfully few, who understand the doctrines of the scripture as the Reformers understood them, and yet have the burden for missions that Paul and Brainerd and men who followed in his train had. The Calvinists of today have plenty of heady material, plenty of notions in their minds, but unfortunately there is little understanding in the heart of Paul. In that great first chapter of Ephesians in which he speaks so marvelously of the doctrines of God's sovereign grace, he speaks of election and predestination and effectual calling and justification and so forth.

His prayer for the Ephesians is that the eyes of their heart might be opened. No doubt they knew with their head that what he was saying, but Paul said, oh, that the eyes of your heart might be opened, that you might understand in the heart and not only with the head. The very men today, who are in the tradition of the Reformers of old, to press their logic upon others, never saw with the heart the very truth of which they speak.

Now I'm not just speaking of Calvinists of other churches. Brethren, it must be true of you and of me, for we dare not yet say that we are in the tradition of David Brainerd, for we have not wept with his tears. We dare not claim that we believe what Henry Martin believed.

While we do not sacrifice, while we are not moved to the manner of life which he knew, what these men believed prompted them to a flaming love for God, and it prompted them to an aching love for all men, all men throughout the world. Because you can parrot the creed of William Carey, does not make you the man of God that William Carey was. The pews of our own church are filled with men and women.

Those who have sat here for years have never gone to anyone in a serious and consistent effort to win them to the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only have you not gone to the neighbors who live across the street, but some within our very church have never seriously labored to bring their own children to the Lord Jesus Christ. Wept here is to see their own lost children who give evidences of depravity and sinfulness and rebellion against God.

Oh parents, when have you even wept over the sinners in your own home? So we speak of foreign missions, having no burden for the sinners in our own town. Something's wrong. Something's desperately wrong with a Christian that has no burden for missions, no burden to witness, no burden for lost souls.

Something's wrong with the Calvinism of the Calvinist who has no such burden. The glorious, pitiful truth that there is a merciful God who sovereignly saves helpless men should never produce religious freaks that have great big heads but no feet to carry the gospel of peace, and no hands to take the scriptures to others, and no lips to speak that gospel to those that work with them and labor with them. In their daily calling, you say you believe what Brainerd did, and again I ask you, where are the tears and the prayers? You say you're a Bernzeit, yet you don't witness? You may believe with your head what these men believed, but there certainly is no kindred heart unless you find yourself with a great burden.

You say you understand the doctrine which Paul believed better than the missionaries, some of them who were going to the farm fields. Do you understand it with your heart, so as to pray, to labor, to seek the salvation of the lost? Something's wrong if a Christian is silent. It's a bad symptom.

It's a bad symptom. To say that you understand the truth of God, will you look in verse 4 of 1 Thessalonians chapter 2? As we were speaking on Sunday, we could look at this text and see the application of the truth that we were speaking then. Paul says, as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak.

The gospel is not only something which God revealed to us for our own peace, but it is a trust given to us. It is a trust given to us to guard in all of its beauty and all of its fullness. We are to preach the whole counsel of God and all of that gospel and not part of it.

But it is also a trust not only to guard as to its accuracy. It is a trust given unto us to present to the world. And it is the commandment of God given to you, Christian, to go and to preach the gospel to every creature.

So you personally and individually cannot with your own strength speak to every creature in the world because the commission has been given to the whole church to preach to every creature, yet it is your responsibility to do all within your power to spread this glorious truth which has been revealed unto us. Tell me, what serious effort are you making, Christian, in missions at home? What serious effort are you making to win souls for Christ? What serious effort are you making in praying for missionaries? Oh, I imagine your prayer life, apart from church, is no. For our missionaries, it is a very sad thing.

Do you really pray consistently when the missionary writes home and tells you of men to whom he has been witnessing? When they tell you of difficulties on the field, do you pray daily? Do you earnestly ask God to bring the gospel of grace into the hearts of the people of Colombia? Do you earnestly ask God to raise up a church in Arabia? Are you frequently on your knees to ask God to bless the people in Nigeria? Oh, it is not just the missionary's task that you send. To preach to those people, but it is your task to pray to God that they might be saved. It is a bad symptom when Christians are prayerless for the souls of men.

It is a bad symptom when something spiritual is wrong, when individual Christians are not active in seeking the salvation of God. Read in John chapter 1, verse 43, the salvation of Andrew when he met the Lord Jesus Christ. He had finally found the Messiah.

And though he did not understand doctrine very fully, and where did he told someone else that he had found the Messiah, the day following, Jesus would go forth, look at me in verse 40, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, followed the Lord Jesus Christ. The first thing that he did was to find his own brother Simon and said to him, we have found the Messiah, which is being interpreted Christ. And he brought him to Jesus.

In verse 43, the following day, Jesus was going to leave to go into Galilee. And he found Philip and said, follow me. Now Philip was up at Sata, the city of Andrew and Peter.

Philip found Nathanael and said to him, we have found him of whom Moses, and the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. Nathanael said to him, can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip couldn't answer the question, but he said, come and see. Come and see.

He invited someone to come to Jesus. Jesus that he had come to love and to know. So, you Christians, if you have really found Christ, you should be doing something to bring the Lord to Christ.

It is the reflex action of a man who has really come to life, and he who does not witness, and he who does not do something specific to bring the Lord to Christ, must ask whether he himself has ever really seen the grace of God of which he says he is a recipient. David, when he prayed in Psalm 51, prayed in this fashion, Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. The reflex action to having righteousness within the heart, for the tongue to sing of it.

O Lord, open down my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise. A man who has no burden for visions, no burden for evangelism, does nothing himself to see the walk of conversion. A man who must ask himself if he has ever seen the grace of God in his heart, not simply in his head.

Missionaries of days gone by, and the Apocryphal Paul himself, went to preach the gospel because they had a flaming love for God. Verse 4 again of 1 Thessalonians chapter 2, Paul said, I have been put in trust with the gospel, and so we speak. Paul, why did you have such a great burden for visions? Why is it that you went and you sacrificed so much, and went through so many difficulties, to bring love into the household of faith? First, because I was entrusted with the gospel.

The God whom he loved had entrusted him with the task. And out of obedience, he went and he preached. The Apocryphal Paul saw himself as the chief of sinners.

He saw himself as the lowest worm upon the face of the earth. He saw himself as the great rebel against Jesus Christ, who tried to stamp out that name from Jerusalem and all of the coasts around the bow. Paul, he hated the name of Christ.

He was a rebel against it. Paul, but that day when he saw himself laying in the dust, he said, who art thou, Lord? Not only did he see the glory of Jesus Christ, but he saw the utter wretchedness of his own heart. He saw that he was a rebel against heaven, unworthy of the least of God's favor.

And yet God in his sovereign mercy arrested him in a sinful course. And because of his eternal love, God chose him. Because of God's eternal love for him, not because of anything good that he saw in the sinner Paul, God arrested him and made him to differ from his fellows.

Made him the apostate to the Gentiles to go and to preach. And Paul saw that it was the great mercy of God that had changed him. When he was brought to understand in the scriptures the doctrine of God's

sovereign election, he saw the beauty of God as men can see in no other point of truth.

For the zenith of the sun of God's brightness is seen in his sovereign love towards sinners who rebelled against his king. Why did Paul go? He saw that God would have mercy upon whom he would have mercy, and he would have compassion upon whom he would have compassion. The ninth chapter of Romans, where he writes those very words of God's sovereign choosing of some men to be saved, he writes this at the beginning of the chapter, I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that 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, who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption and the glory and the comfort.

He, like Paul, had seen the great glory of God in his sovereign choice of some sinners unworthy of his favor. God sent his love upon them, and Christ died to secure their salvation, and this God deserved all of his favor and all of his love. And so Paul reacted not with just warm feelings within his heart, but with obedience.

God committed a gospel to him as a trust, and so we speak, says Paul, verse 4, and so we speak. Why was it that the missionaries of old went? We read of William Burns, the missionary who went to China, the man who was briefly used of God in the revival from Scotland before he went to China, that he wished to be a lawyer and not a pastor because of the better living that he could receive in the profession of law. Then we read this account on the day that he was converted.

From the first moment of this wonderful experience, I had the inspiring hope of being saved by a sovereign and infinitely gracious God. And in the same instant, almost, I felt that I must leave my present occupation and devote myself to Jesus and the ministry of that glorious gospel by which I had been saved. So with David Brainerd, when he saw the glory of God's grace, when he saw the beauty of God's sovereign salvation for men, he wrote these words, Here am I, Lord, send me.

Send me to the ends of the earth. Send me to the rough, the savage pagans of the wilderness. Send me from all that is called comfort in earth.

Send me even to death itself, if it be but in thy service and but to promote thy kingdom. Men who see the beauty of God and his wonderful salvation and his sovereign grace and mercy are drawn with a flaming love for him to obey the commandment to go. Why did the apostles go? Jesus said, All authority is given to me both in heaven and in earth.

Who he therefore, because he commanded it and because they loved him, they went and they labored and they died in the ministry of the gospel. Christian, if for no other reason, you must become involved in missions where Christ has commanded it. Jesus said, He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.

Do you keep the trust that's been given into your hands, the very gospel of Christ, to be carried to the very ends of the earth, to be preached to all men? But Paul also had an aching love for all men, which we will note in 1 Thessalonians chapter 2. Notice, if you will, in verse 7. Paul says, We were gentle among you, as a nurse cherishes her children. Verse 8. Being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because you were dear unto us. The doctrine that reached into the heart of Paul quickened in him not only a flaming love for God, but an aching love for all men.

So that he was affectionately desirous of them, so desirous that they might be saved, that he was willing to impart not the gospel of God only, but his own soul in his preaching, that men might be saved and might be converted. For Paul saw that they were no different from himself, except for the difference that God's grace made. When he saw God's wrath upon their heads, when he saw their obstinate wills that would not turn unto God for life, he pitied them, knowing that one day he was riding to Damascus to destroy the church of Christ, when God turned him to build that church instead.

And so he could not feel superior to the masses of men that were lost and outside of Christ, but he felt an aching pity and a love for them, a desire that they too might come to a knowledge of the truth. He had the spirit of our Savior, who stood on the brow of the hill looking over Jerusalem, and cried one day, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but ye would not. But ye would not.

Christian, has your doctrine brought into your heart a love for the souls of men, and made you affectionately desirous after them? If not, there is something sadly lacking in your heart. And in that doctrine that you believe, touching your soul, and not your mind only, behind the commission of the Lord Jesus Christ to go into all the world and preach the gospel, is the great love of God which offers to all men salvation. He is one who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to a knowledge of the truth.

And so he has said to you to go and to preach. John Elliot, a missionary to the Indians in North America, was a man who had a great compassion for souls, he did not go only because Christ commanded it, though that was the first reason. He already had a charge of Englishmen to preach to, in the town in New England where he was stationed, but he saw masses of men who were not being reached with the gospel, and he could not sit still, having a love for them.

His concern for them reached not only to the salvation of their souls, though he labored diligently to preach the gospel, but he also became the champion of their civil rights, as we would call them today. He diligently fought to secure lands for the Indians. He diligently labored to provide schools for the Indians.

He diligently fought to allow the Indians to become members of white and English churches where they were despised and excluded. He was a man who had a heart for the Indians, a man who was moved with compassion, a man who knew himself to be the chief of sinners, a man who was infected with the great love that God had toward sinners, a man who learned to love those who were even unlovely. John Payton, though he traveled all over the world, had but one thought in mind, and that was for the people who knew not Christ in the New Hebrides.

Instead of his life, I continually heard the wail of the perishing heathen in the South Seas, and I saw that few were caring for them. Those who see the great mercy of God in saving undeserving sinners will imitate his love and carry the gospel to the ends of the earth. David Brainerd said on one occasion when he was very ill, Last year I longed to be prepared for the world of glory, and I desired speedily to depart out of this world, but of late all my concern almost is for the conversion of the heathen, and to that end I longed to live.

Just as the Apostle Paul, who said he was in a strait between two things, desiring rather for himself to depart, which was far better to be in the presence of Christ, but for the sake of the Church he decided that he would rather remain in order to preach the gospel unto them. Love to God, and compassion to souls is the heart of Paul's burden for many a day. Brethren, as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the

gospel even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God which trieth our hearts, we were gentle among you as a nurse who cherishes her children, so being affectionately desirous of you we were willing to have imparted unto you not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls.

Has the doctrine of the Scripture produced such fruit in your life? Should not you re-trace the steps that you have taken across the pages of the Scripture again, and meditate in a spiritual fashion upon them, and ask God to write them upon your hearts, not simply upon your minds, for knowledge puffeth up, but all that the truths of God's word might produce in you love, so that above all people would look at you as an assembly and say, surely they are a people that love God. They are a people that have an aching love for all the men that are upon the face of the earth. Brethren, the truths of the Scripture were meant to produce such effects that he who has not the effects, dare not boast that he has the doctrine, which is never found apart from the effects.

Still far away from the doctrine and the practice of brainers, martyrs, and carriers, may God humble us and bring us prayerfully to the Scriptures, asking that our hearts, not simply our heads, might be affected with a flaming love for him and an aching love for all men. Let us pray. Our Heavenly Father, we pray that you would wed in us both the knowledge of the truth and the spirit of truth.

We pray that we might increase yet more in knowledge of thy holy word, understanding the deep things of the doctrines of thy truth. Yet, O Lord, we pray that even those things that we have learned might sink deep into our souls and produce a practical evangelism and a praying love that will help us to see this very town in which we live as doomed and dying and in need of thy grace. That our eyes and our vision might be broadened to every land upon the face of the earth.

That our involvement in missions might be more than just giving money, though we thank you that you have prompted us to that. That we might be an actively, earnestly praying people for the Church of Christ across the world. That we might be a church where many are thrust forth to go and to preach and to give their all that Jesus Christ may be made known.

O Lord, may that mission which was so central to your interest that you were willing to send your only begotten son to accomplish it so grip our hearts that we too might be willing to go to forsake all and to suffer all. That Christ's Church might be built. And thy kingdom come on earth even as it is in heaven.

And that thy name might be praised both now and forevermore. We ask it in our Savior's name. Amen.

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