

Has This One Thing Destroyed Your Prophetic Witness?

How Much of This Unhealthy National Climate Manifests Itself Inside Our Churches?

In the thick of such rancor and division and slander, what is happening with us as God's people? As you weigh the words coming out of the mouths and keyboards of Christians, what do our declarations and conversations tell us about our own spiritual health?

Has the church—more particularly the evangelical movement in our land—become famous for Christ or for hate? Based on the words the country hears coming out of our mouths, is the person of Christ the first thing people think of when they hear the word “church”? Or do they picture our political passions and moral outrages?

Have we as believers become more famous for what we're against? For what we disapprove? For the policy positions we fight for? For the government practices we vehemently demand?

In the eyes of many non-Christians watching us, have we become more famous for words and attitudes of antipathy and anger—often spoken toward fellow Americans? Too often even toward one another as fellow believers?

I'm not saying that we constantly express blatant belligerence at others. But if you were to listen to the communication coming out of our mouths in individual conversations as well as the tone of expressions found in our collective social media messages delivered daily into the public square, what might someone be justified to charge us with?

How much of how we present ourselves to our nation as God's people reveals a good deal of “the wisdom from below,” “the

works of the flesh” (even if it is “religious flesh”) and the contamination of unclean hearts?

That’s the question that Christians in our nation need to engage far more aggressively than a single blog post can manage to do. But engage it we must—because solutions must be found.

Let Words of Life and Love in Christ Resound

Time magazine’s front cover story this week is titled “Beyond Hate.” It offers recommendations from some of the nation’s top thinkers who express urgency for Americans to move past the level of hostility that is ripping us apart, unmasked by what we are saying to one another.

In his recent bestseller, *Them: Why We Hate Each Other—and How to Heal*, Nebraska Senator Ben Sasse (a Jesus follower) puts it bluntly: Our cultural crisis isn’t really about politics. Reversing our moral and social decline requires something more radical, he says—a rediscovery of human-to-human relationships, where we start all over again learning to love our neighbors in community.

This requires, first of all, that the people of God—those of us who are alive in union with the risen, reigning Son of God—also must move beyond hate.

How do we do that? The first step is for us to experience together in greater dimensions God’s answer to the “love prayer” of Ephesians 3:

I ask [the Father] that with both feet planted firmly on love, you’ll be able to take in with all followers of Jesus the extravagant dimensions of Christ’s love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God. God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest

dreams! (Eph. 3:15-19, MSG).

Love! Yes, that's the solution! The love that can make America whole is found in the whole Christ—and can be spread abroad only by those who are wholly alive in him.

Awake to Christ; Awake to Words of Life and Love

That's why thousands of us from every stream of the church have been praying and laboring for decades toward nothing less than what we call "a nationwide Christ Awakening movement." We truly believe that by God's grace such a profound spiritual revolution looms on the horizon, offering the one great hope for America.

We believe such a Christ Awakening will involve "the whole church becoming wholly alive to the whole vision of the whole Christ" as "the Spirit of God uses the Word of God to reintroduce the people of God to the Son of God for *all* He is." This in turn will saturate our hearts with Christ and his love to the point that the words spilling out of us will be filled with his grace and truth, with his goodness, and with his gospel.

Dr. Edwin Orr, the great revival historian, summed up his three in the study of awakenings with this simple definition: "It is when Christ pours himself out on his church through the power of the Holy Spirit."

That's precisely what we're praying for. Many anticipate the day when, in fresh and amazing ways, our King will pour love on us by pouring himself into our life together—until by our very *words* we become famous for Christ—as our tongues display "the wisdom from above (which is the truth about Christ), as we "walk in the power of the Spirit" (which is the power of the victorious Christ), and as our hearts are filled with the unbounded love of Christ.

The reclamation of America requires a flood of words about

Jesus and for Jesus and leading to Jesus that saturates and then renovates our whole society—until our neighborhoods, communities, cities and nation become “filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord” (Hab. 2:14) as revealed “in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6c).

Without a doubt, the body of Christ can become famous for the person of Christ once our tongues consistently speak of the supremacy of Christ.

Words can kill. Words can heal. But words that take people to Christ can totally lift up and transform one person or one nation for the good.

If words about Christ, from Christ and for Christ begin to saturate the church and subsequently the whole land through the church—if those words are believed, received, consumed, lived out and passed along—then that kind of language will really matter.

When replicated by millions of believers in daily conversations, emails, texts, tweets and blog posts along with Sunday sermons—when backed up with gospel deeds of love—Christ-exalting words can eventually reconstitute an entire people making them famous for Christ rather than for conflict.

We’re told that “faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ” (Romans 10:17, NIV). No wonder, then, that the Bible summons Christian communities to “embrace love ... [and] let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing each other” (Col. 3:14b-16a, MEV).

Out of such an overflow of words focused on the spectacular, saving supremacy of God’s Redeemer, there will ignite in our land such a fervor for Jesus and for all He is and all He brings, that like the sun spreading its rays across a field in early morning, there will come about such a “warming” of the

spiritual and moral climate that America will become more and more famous for Christ.

And when that testimony arises before the nations, in contrast to our present sullied reputation of division and bickering, the impact of such a nationwide Christ Awakening will prove to be so profound it will strengthen the work of the gospel in every part of the earth.

Psalm 68:11 (NASB) records: "The Lord gave the word; Great was the company of those who proclaimed it." Even so, let words of life and love in Christ resound without delay among God's people throughout our land. {eoa}

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