

Why the Holy Spirit Is Crying 'Urgency!' to Today's Sleeping Church

As I pray and ask the Lord, "What is the Spirit saying?" I hear in my own spirit one word: urgency!

These are urgent times, contentious times, confusing times. There are times of great upheaval and great opportunity. These are intense times, difficult times, blessed times. And the Spirit is saying, "Urgency!"

Unfortunately, the message from all too many of our pulpits is not one of urgency. It is one of complacency. Of comfort. Of personal success. It is not a message designed to wake up a sleeping church, nor a message designed to prepare for war or to challenge and stir.

Instead, while moral confusion and spiritual deception rises, many of God's people are enjoying a peaceful slumber, lulled to sleep by voices of compromise that refuse to confront sin, address the culture or talk about divine judgment. It's time to wake up!

I'm not talking about focusing on politics. I'm not talking about preaching with anger and judgmentalism. I'm not talking about a holier-than-thou attitude. I'm talking about having a burning heart, a heart consumed with love for God and love for a dying world, a heart that is deeply burdened by the direction in which society is heading. I'm talking about urgency.

While in prayer earlier this year, I was reminded of a quote by Edward Payson (1783-1827), known as "Praying Payson of Portland." He said, "I do not believe that my desires for revival were ever half so strong as they ought to be; nor do I

see how a minister can help being in a 'constant fever' ... where His Master is dishonored and souls are destroyed in so many ways."

Immediately, I was cut to the heart by his words. What would Payson say to us today?

If he expressed these sentiments in the early 1800s, grieved and burdened over the spiritual complacency of his generation, how would he feel in 2019?

How much more is our Master being dishonored today? How much more are souls being destroyed "in so many ways"? How much more should ministers be in a "constant fever" over the moral and spiritual state of our nation, beginning with the state of the church?

I had the incredible privilege of being a close friend of Leonard Ravenhill the last five years of his life (1989-1994; he was 82 when we met), and he was in a "constant fever" because of the compromised state of much of the church. He would come out of his prayer closet with tears in his eyes and a stunned look on his face and say to me, "Mike, the church is blind and naked and doesn't even know it!" He was embarrassed and grieved and broken on behalf of His Lord, He who died for this church to make it something beautiful. Ravenhill lived with a sense of holy urgency. How would he feel today?

Brother Len, as we called him, gave my wife, Nancy, and me a precious set of books consisting of the sermons of Catherine Booth. Talk about messages of intensity and urgency!

In one of her sermons, Booth uttered these unforgettable words: "Opposition! It is a bad sign for the Christianity of this day that it provokes so little opposition. If there were no other evidence of it being wrong, I should know from that. When the church and the world can jog along together comfortably, you may be sure there is something wrong. The world has not altered. Its spirit is exactly the same as it

ever was, and if Christians were equally faithful and devoted to the Lord, and separated from the world, living so that their lives were a reproof to all ungodliness, the world would hate them as much as it ever did. It is the church that has altered, not the world.”

Yet today in America, unless we push back against the sinful culture, the church and the world jog together quite comfortably.

But it’s not because we’re changing the world. It’s because the world is changing us. It’s time we wake up!

Kids are being exposed to pornography at 8 years old. There are reportedly more witches in America than Presbyterians. Infanticide is being defended by elected officials. Divisions are ripping our nation apart at the seams. And the number of professing Christians in our country is decreasing rather than increasing.

How should we respond?

We live in a day in which, to use a figure of speech, America is burning. We should be burning too.

May God awaken His people! May He set our hearts ablaze. May He share His pain with us.

The Spirit is saying, “Urgency!”

Dr. Michael Brown is host of the “Line of Fire” podcast and radio broadcast. His latest book is Jezebel’s War With America.

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