

Good Christian People: Affirming a Lukewarm Culture

Possibly the most unbelievable (but common) reaction to the urgent (but rare) call for Christians to burn with great passion for Jesus is the accusation of legalism. To be actively involved with zeal and to call others into a deeper devotion to Jesus and the mission of Kingdom advance smells of unrighteous works to many.

I can barely believe I just wrote that.

Further, I've heard it said that such a determined devotion reveals a lack of revelation of the finished work of the cross. The thought is that we can now rest easy due to the work of Jesus and, in fact, any energy expended on our part in response to the cross is an offense to the cross. This, friend, is sickening and theologically ridiculous, yet that teaching is gaining ground in many Spirit-filled circles.

Not only should the cross of Jesus evoke the fire of passion from deep within every one of us, we should also understand the radical, costly participation that we must embrace:

"And He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it" (Matt. 10:38-39, MEV).

The cross is the very picture of passion, and any response less than all consuming zeal is an indicator of a lack of understanding, certainly not of greater revelation. A revelation of our beautiful Savior being savagely tortured and brutally murdered due to our own detestable wickedness should drive us to our knees in a never-ending lifestyle of thanksgiving, worship and intercession. Our desire to go deeper and to get closer to Jesus should wreck us every single

moment of every single day.

Yet, even within the context of the church there are masses of people who resist such a focus. I'm shocked and disturbed to say that I heard of a locally popular pastor who actually confessed that he no longer preaches the cross. I suppose it's old news and time to move on to more positive things. I'm grieved.

"For to those who are perishing, the preaching of the cross is foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18, MEV).

For those who do embrace the cross, and who do carry their own cross, they become a person who yearns to be with Jesus day and night in prayer. They can't get enough.

One person's response to the cross will result in a prayer lifestyle. When a group of people have a true revelation of the cross, it results in a prayer culture. When a region is impacted by the precious blood of Jesus that was shed on Calvary, you have a prayer movement. You have a mass advance of fervent, burning, passionate prayer.

In addition to a lifestyle of intercession, an immediate reaction to a life impacted by the unparalleled sacrifice of Jesus on the cross is a desperation for every person at risk of slipping into a lukewarm state. Passion for the sleeping church overwhelms.

"I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:15-16, MEV).

When people are awakened to the reality of the cross, their urgent, heart-wrenching cry is to "WAKE UP! WAKE UP, YOU ARE ABOUT TO DIE!" We shouldn't be surprised when awakened people are suddenly crying desperately for the sleepers to awaken as

well!

“He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars says these things: I know your works, that you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain but are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfected before God” (Rev. 3:1-2, MEV).

The prophetic alarm targets those who are relaxing, casual and unaware that their lack of urgency is putting their very lives—their very eternities—at risk.

Those who are comfortable and relaxed—especially those who are at ease “in the name of Jesus”—will always react against any alert that threatens their sedation. Those who are asleep do not like to be awakened, even if it’s for a good cause.

“Furthermore, knowing the time, now is the moment to awake from sleep. For now our salvation is nearer than when we believed” (Rom. 13:11, MEV).

Just this morning I was deep in sleep when, all of a sudden, my wife shouted, “John! You need to wake up!” I jolted awake, not at all happy that I was suddenly forced out of what was really satisfying comfort. She said, “The plumber is here and he has to turn off the water for a few hours. If you want a shower, you better get moving! You have 10 minutes.”

Of course I needed a shower, but I was still not thrilled (Okay, I was actually irritated) to be disturbed from my long, glorious slumber. But, in order for me to accomplish today what was necessary, I had to wake up—and fast.

A sleeping church is at risk of something much greater than a missed shower.

“Therefore let us not sleep as others do. But let us be alert and sober” (1 Thess. 5:6).

John Burton has been developing and leading ministries for

over 20 years and is a sought-after teacher, prophetic messenger and revivalist. He has authored nine books, has appeared on Christian television and radio and directed one of the primary internships at the International House of Prayer (IHOP) in Kansas City. Additionally, he planted two churches, has initiated two city prayer movements and is currently directing a prayer- and revival-focused ministry school in Detroit called theLab University. John also has a web- and graphic-design business and is continually developing new and exciting ventures. He and his beautiful wife, Amy, have five children and live in the Detroit area. He can be reached via his website at .

For the original article, visit . This is the first of a three-part series.