

## **Will there be any stars in my crown?**

Prov. 11:30 The fruit of the righteous *is* a tree of life; and he that winneth souls *is* wise.

When I was a young boy I used to go round the doors giving out tracts. We also used to have open-air services in many of the towns and villages in Northern Ireland. There were evangelistic missions held by many evangelical churches of various denominations. Faith Mission used to hold campaigns for anything up to two or three months ... from Monday to Friday, and on Sunday evenings after the normal church services. Large tents seating 5-6-7 hundreds and more were packed to hear the straight-forward no-compromising Gospel being preached. In those days many people were saved, and added to the churches ... the great majority genuinely born into the family of God.

Why aren't these things happening anymore? What has gone wrong? Is it because we've somehow changed the emphasis on the Gospel? Why is there such obstruction in the hearts and minds of men and women, boys and girls to hear the message of Saving Grace that has been previously so widely preached across the land ... even within our own lifetimes?

In our June prayer letter, shared by the churches with whom we are in particular fellowship ... here are some of the comments. Bear in mind, these churches preach the undiluted Biblical Gospel of Free and Sovereign Grace ...

**Penicuik Baptist Church**, "By the time this letter goes out we hope to have been able to hand out tracts and have a bookstall at the Penicuik Gala Day. Please pray for the gospel message as it goes out to these people that God would speak to their hearts. For all the years we have done this we have seen very little response. But God is able."

**Kerriemuir Baptist Church**, "God willing, on 14th July, we shall have a table in the Craft Tent at Kirrie Show. We intend displaying Scripture plaques and evangelistic books and booklets. We would ask for prayer that people will take and read the literature, as well as opportunities be given to share the gospel."

**Stornoway Baptist Church**, "We have begun door to door work again now that fingers are thawed out enough to hand out literature. We are now trying this on Monday evenings from 6.00pm."

**Trinity Baptist Church, Dundee,** “There are regular evangelistic efforts every month, yet for all the seed sown, there is no harvest brought in. This is a problem we all face and needs to be the subject of much prayer.”

**THE PROBLEM WITH EVANGELISM, - *No one wants to listen***

There's little or no interest. Even people who are rolling about in the filth of their addictions don't want to listen. They might hardly be able to string two words together, but they can tell you enough for you to realise they're not interested.

It doesn't matter whether they are rich or poor ... It doesn't even matter if they attend a church or not ... I've had some of the most difficult conversations with church elders who despise the Gospel.

The Gospel is a complete anathema to so many ... and it seems to be getting worse! In the schools children repeat what they hear at home, and they castigate the Name of God and of Christ. They know next-to-nothing about Him, and yet they despise His Name ... even little children!

God is not relevant! He has nothing to offer for the ordinary person. Religion, - and it seems Christianity in particular, - has been like a noose around the nation's neck, and the people are glad they can at last get rid of it!

And it is not particularly *Evangelical* Christianity that is under attacked ... it is all types of Christianity, including Roman Catholicism. If it were not for the European influx, there would be a notable decline in *that* organisation!

But we are all 'banded' together. Christianity is on its way out! And evangelism is becoming increasingly difficult. **The problem with evangelism**

*However, that* doesn't take away from the fact that until the Lord Jesus Christ returns we are obligated to obey the Great Commission ... But how are we to do it in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

**THE PATTERN FOR EVANGELISM, - *It must be Biblical***

Well, the Gospel is not ours to 'chop and change' to try and make it suit the whims of society. ... When God instructed the Hebrews to build the Tabernacle His instructions had to be carefully observed. Where a certain cloth was required to be made of linen, it was *not* to be made of anything else.

When God told the craftsmen certain measurements had to be adhered ... and if He said it was to be ten metres, He didn't mean 10¼ or 10½!

The point is, evangelism is the work given by God to His people to carry out as He has clearly defined. It is not to be confused with how some evangelicals set out to play 'mind-games' in order to win converts ... to try and attract by means not stipulated in God's Word. Such practices can win converts to a 'cause', but we're interested in winning genuine converts to Christ.

The pattern, therefore, *must* be Biblical. It may or may not achieve the results we would like ... but that is not the issue we need to concern ourselves with. It is *faithful* we are called to be, and the results are in the hands of God. You nor I, - on our own, - cannot cause a single anxious thought, but we look to the Holy Spirit to use our feeble means to achieve His purposes in the salvation of those to whom He sends us.

... And He sends us with His Word, and the Gospel in particular. It is a foreign concept, - as Paul found on Mars' Hill in Athens, and everywhere else he brought the Gospel, - ... but he brought it nonetheless. He didn't dress it up, nor smoothed off any of its less appealing attributes to a lost world. He simply preached and shared it as it was ... and he trusted the Holy Spirit to reward and bless his faithfulness.

It is like the disciples who received the loaves and fishes from the Lord and presented them to a starving people in need. It was the Lord Who provided the abundance ... It was the Lord (not the disciples) Who attracted the people to listen ... and yet, it was the disciples' responsibility to present the offer. ... And what we present must be all of God. ... His Gospel, and nothing less!  
**... The pattern for evangelism.**

**THE PASSION FOR EVANGELISM**, - Eph. 6:19 *And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel*

What would drive anyone to tell someone else about Jesus, His power to save, and the need to believe in Him? ... What's your answer? Is it only for certain people to be involved in evangelism? ... Look back into your own testimony and you may remember the witness of someone who doesn't mean much to anyone else here, but God used that ordinary person to bring you to salvation. Some day you'll stand beside them in Glory ... and you will be there because God used them to speak to you, so that you would believe and be saved.

You see, evangelism is about *passion* ... God so *loved* the world. He didn't send His Son through pity, or because He was somehow forced to. He sent His Son for one reason alone ... for God so loved the world!

Now, since God so loved the world ... and since it is our aim and purpose to be like Him ... it is necessary for us to *also* love the world, for salvation's sake. ... God instructs us to love its people that they might be saved. And, as an example, look at how His Son loved them, - even those who crucified Him!

But, which comes first ... the passion for evangelism, or the passion for lost souls? I've got to say I sometimes find evangelism daunting. It's not particularly easy to go into a 'cold' situation with the Gospel. It is the last thing on the minds of most people, and you are knocking their door with a message that seems so irrelevant to them. And even when you begin to talk to them, it's easier to tell them about the 'niceties', - i.e. if you believe in Christ you will go to Heaven, - than it is to tell them if they don't believe they will incur His eternal wrath. ... But they must know both sides! You cannot present a 'lopsided' gospel!

But surely your passion for evangelism is stimulated and reinforced by your passion for lost souls. That person to whom you are directed ... *you* may be the only one to *ever* share with them the Gospel! If they don't hear it from your lips, they will *never* hear it! ... And we are talking about Scotland, the land that sent missionaries to many parts of this world!

Yes, Paul had a passion for lost souls and, consequently, he had a passion for evangelism that took him throughout many areas of the Mediterranean, Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome. You might struggle with the word 'evangelism', - "Oh, I'm afraid I couldn't do it", - but there are lost souls in this part of Kirkcaldy where God has placed our church, ... and we need to you have a passion to save them saved.

I trust you have. They, themselves, have no desire to know God. There is nothing about His Son that presently attracts their attention. He is completely unrelated to their lifestyles. That, though, is where God comes to His children as He came to Paul as he faced the daunting task in Corinth, Acts 18:5 Paul was pressed in the spirit ... 9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: 10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city. 11 And he continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

## CONCLUSION

Yes, we need to face up to it, - **the problem with evangelism** is that no one wants to listen. And from our point of view we can't 'doctor' it to make it more palatable, we've got to tell it as it is ... Clearly, there is **the pattern for evangelism**. And the means by which we express the Gospel must surely only be by personally owning **the passion for evangelism**. ...

*Will there be any stars, any stars in my crown  
When at evening the sun goeth down?  
When I wake with the blest in the mansions of rest  
Will there be any stars in my crown?*

O what joy it will be when His face I behold,  
Living gems at his feet to lay down!  
It would sweeten my bliss in the city of gold,  
Should there be any stars in my crown.