

Where's the Power2-20-00

Gal 4:19 My little children for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you...

This last week the Lord has revived a couple of issues that He put on my heart over a year ago. Those burdens from the Lord were set aside while other things took precedence, but the Lord has this last week in the Word and conversation revived those burdens. They are two interconnected things. One is evangelism. To share the good news with those who have never heard. Ro 15:20 We have talked about the futility of methodology as opposed to the fruitfulness of being led by the Spirit. How can we be used to break the stereotypes that people have placed on the label 'Christians' and get people to see Jesus?

The other is, how do we move out of the rut of formal traditional church as a ritual and instead be the living loving body of Christ touching a needy world? I believe this and evangelism are completely interconnected because Jesus said they would know we are Christians (Christ like) by our love. The problem today is many see us as not (Christ like) because of our lack of love. The world sees one kind of person on Sunday and a different person during the week.

Thirty years ago someone used to walk the aisle almost every Sunday in many churches and ask Jesus to come into their heart. Now it is unusual to even have an altar call for salvation in most US churches. One good thing that has happened is that most churches realized it is not the Pastor's job to win souls. It is something the Lord does through all of us. The Pastor/elder is to equip you for ministry. That is a Biblical truth, but so few have gone on to really live it out. There are so many spectator churches. Bible clubs instead of life transforming equipping centers to change us and the world.

The period of church history between 100 – 325 was filled with persecution. One scholar estimates, as many 6 million Christians died a martyr's death. Yet at the same time Christianity became the largest percentage of the world's population that it has ever been. At first I saw it as a love for the brothers that we also talked about. They will know we are Christians by our love. But it is deeper than that for love is a fruit of the Spirit and really agape is impossible without the supernatural working of the Spirit.

2Tim 3:1-7 I believe this describes the organized church of America today. Where do we see power to live with love for others rather than self? Where do we see a love for the Lord so powerful money is seen merely as an instrument? Boastful – what about all glory to God? I hear over and over the bragging about ministry and functions, rather than what God is doing in an individual's life. We have to hear the truth about our conditions or we will have no desire to pray for the power of God to live transformed lives. The truth is marriages are falling apart in the church because

people are lovers of themselves. And there is no warning cry that it is not OK, that it is death! Where is repentance and forsaking of sin?

We could go on with each of the descriptions here but it is almost too depressing, pride, ingratitude, unholy, without love – see this is just one symptom, unforgiving, slanderous, without self control – that is a fruit of the Spirit, one that is a characteristic of an elder ...lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. I am afraid that pleasure dominates the thoughts of the body of Christ in America. Oh there is a form of godliness but where is the power to live a transformed life?

It is in Jesus! It always has been and always will be, and the life of Jesus is **available** to us right now. My Utmost for His Highest July 23 Is He in you? Will you let Him express his life through you?

That is what is available but we just refuse to die with Him that we might be raised with Him. Col 3:1-3 Pretty simple – very deep. We want what we want and we often play some kind of justification game in our mind not to die to ourselves. Are you dead to wanting your way and alive to wanting the will of God? Is your life truly hidden with Christ in God. 2Co 13:4 Eph 1:18-23 Eph 6:10 We have the power that raised Jesus from the dead to live a new life. Paul tells us here to be strong in that mighty power. Be strong in the Lord. Let his power that works in you say “no” to selfishness and self-gratification. Instead to grow into a place where we enjoy the disagreeable that we may have opportunity to manifest the life of Christ within us. (My Utmost for His Highest May 14) We must develop Holy Habits that keep our soul fit for cooperative yielding to the Spirit.

Consider where He bled for you. His head – the mind that must die to our own thoughts. His hands – the actions that need to be at his direction and not our own. His feet – the choice of where we go must be His. The heart - to desire the things of God and not of the world.

Peter says in 2Pt 1:3,4 His divine power has given us everything we need for life of godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these ( his glory and goodness) He has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. WE are suppose to take those great and precious promises – like the ones we have read, and let the divine nature keep our evil desires on the cross – and thus escaping the corruption of the world by the power of the risen Lord in us.

It works itself out first in our homes. Husbands the only way you are going to love your wife like Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her is to allow yourself to yield to the life of Jesus in you. Taking the low place, prefer her, set your agenda aside for hers – only by the power of God. Wives the only way you can submit to your husband as unto the Lord is by the very same nature that Christ had when He

submitted to the Father... even unto the death of the cross. Why? Eph 6:11 so you can take your stand. The enemy schemes of ways to get you to lean on your own power, to demand your own rights, to keep you from the victorious power of God. In all relationships not just husband and wife but believer with believer we must be dead to the sinful nature – self rule - for the life of Christ to manifest itself in us.

In the last days there will be ... a form of godliness but denying the power. Why is the church in this country so like the world? Because we will not go to the cross with our desires and let the resurrected life of Jesus manifest itself in our lives. Will we lose everything if we do? Yes, but that is when you gain everything! That is when this love we so desperately need begins to manifest itself first amongst us and then toward the lost. That is when the lost come to ask us about the joy, for real joy is the presence of the reigning Christ within us, sharing his victorious joy with us. Victory over the destructive sin nature that is forever crying "ME"! The word will come alive, for we will have no fear of hearing something we don't want to receive but instead a hunger to be corrected to walk more closely. The Kingdom comes in you when the reign of Christ begins in your life. Is He on the throne?

Evangelism is the natural outworking of lives walking in resurrected power. Unselfishness is the sweetest most attractive attribute we can have and it comes when Jesus is manifesting his life in us. People are drawn to that. And then, oh then, you feel His heart for the lost and begin to see opportunities through His eyes. And when you share, there is not a hint of trying to get someone to be a part of your group. There is only a desire to introduce the One who is your Lord, your very life. It is the Lord himself that wins souls through us. Fruit that remains comes when the life giving sap is flowing freely into the vine. He is the Great soul winner, we just lift Him up, declare what He did for us.

Where's the power for this kind of transformed life? Right here. Right now. We don't have to wait, we just have to choose to allow it to have the only place in our lives it can function – first place. Hide it under a bushel? OH NO! I'm gonna let it shine. Fan into flame the gift of God within you! Let the life of Jesus shine in all you do.

Let us continually grow into a Christ like, Christ' life, fellowship. One where He reigns in each individual. One where He is the focus, not styles or traditions or methods, or minor differences... just Jesus. Let us continually talk of what He is doing in our lives and His goodness to us. If we lift Him up all men will be drawn to Him. He gave up his freedoms to set you free – free from the slavery of sin – to have a new Master. Christ in you the hope of glory. Yield to the life of Christ in you right now and let His virtues shine out of all you say and do. Stand firm **in** the Lord!