

The Church and Evangelism

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By the term "evangelism" we mean the winning of sinners from the ways of unrighteousness to the way of righteousness by the method of definite crisis experience. As holiness people we hold that two distinct works of grace are essential to fully accomplish this. Since evangelism and revivals are closely related terms, and since many of our evangelistic efforts are put forth in the form of revival meetings, let us ask: "What is a revival?" It is a deep movement Godward of Christians or sinners or both, that goes far enough and deep enough to transform the lives of those so moved.

Having dealt with these definitions let us consider our subject by noticing: **THE IMPORTANCE OF EVANGELISM:** (a) It is the only way of scriptural growth. There are churches that increase their membership by other means than by evangelism, but if we are to maintain our spirituality we must keep a definite emphasis on the salvation of the lost, the reclamation of the backslider, and the sanctification of the believer. This must be the main means of our growth. We should be more concerned about the spirituality of our church than the increase in membership. A small spiritual church can do more to extend the Kingdom of God than can a large church of worldly and carnal church members. Let us remember this when we or others are inclined to criticize our slow growth—even growth can be detrimental. (b) We must evangelize or die. The only way we shall be able to keep the devil from defeating us is to keep evangelistic and this is especially true when applied to two of our greatest dangers, namely, formalism and worldliness. It is not enough that we declare our views and convictions in these matters—we must keep revival fires burning or the devil will gain the victory. The great danger is that we put on revival meetings but realize no revival and after a few years of this, we cease to put forth the effort. Then we drift farther and faster from God's plan for us as churches and as a denomination, until we reach the lace where we will be spiritually dead.

This brings to our attention two questions: (1) Why no revival? There are, no doubt, many reasons, some of which are known to us and others not known. The faithful pastor must do his best to remove the hindrances to revival, and yet not tear his church to pieces in seeking to accomplish this.

Let us note that it would be possible for what seemed to be a small meeting to be in reality a real deep move Godward by the church. The results of such a meeting might be evidenced at a later date, or perhaps not until the judgment. All revivals can be better determined over a period of time. No doubt the rewards will be as great to the individual and individuals who were faithful regardless of the visible results.

But to answer the question, "Why no revival?" It seems to me that the first and great reason is a failure to undertake, and believe God for, a real old fashioned Holy Ghost revival. A meeting is put on with the hope that some good shall be done and the church strengthened but such an attitude will never accomplish much for God. Another reason is—there are too many professed Christians

that are spiritually nil or worse. They are not rightly representing our teaching and are hindering, if not defeating, an effectual moving of the Spirit. There are many other reasons but we shall mention only one more—many meetings are not carried on long enough, things just begin to move when the meetings close.

Question No. (2). How often should revival meetings be held? No doubt this varies in different localities but it seems to me that every church should put forth an earnest effort toward revival and the salvation of the lost, at least once a year. There is the danger of too frequent meetings being held but lacking special effort, they fail to produce the desired results. Every revival meeting should be well advertised using the various means that are available in the locality, such as radio, press, mails, posters, church announcements, and above all, personal invitations by the pastor and the church people. This latter is, I believe, the most effective means of bringing new people into the services and I fear that in many cases very little is being done to reach even the immediate vicinity. I cannot feel that we have discharged our responsibility faithfully until we have made a real effort in this regard. Our minimum aim should to let everyone know within a reasonable radius that there is a revival meeting going on and that they are invited. Each revival effort that is put forth should be planned, prayed for, and pushed by pastor and all his active church; and great things should be undertaken. Blessed is the church and pastor that can be disappointed in the visible results and yet undertake great things in the next meeting. This call for courage and faith especially on the part of the pastor; he should be able to lead his church in making this adjustment.

In concluding our remarks on the "Importance of Evangelism" we declare that to live and be aggressive we must keep evangelistic and, by the help of God, I trust we shall.

THE HOW OF EVANGELISM: There is, of course, no set rule that will apply to all places and times. We believe that different places and times call for different types of action. Probably many mistakes are made because we use the very same method and approach on all occasions. There are times when a church may have a spirit of evangelism for an extended period of time and without any outside preacher or singer, people be seeking and finding definite victory. It is possible that under such conditions a special series of revival meetings may not produce more than would have been realized under the regular church services. I feel it is a mistake to always hold the services the same length of time, ten days or three Sundays, for example. There are times when as much may be accomplished in a real good weekend meeting, and there are other times when the ten day or three Sunday meeting should be continued. I feel that it is a very serious thing that on some occasions meetings are stopped when they are in reality just beginning. It would seem to me that those conducting these meetings should be prepared to make the effort or sacrifice or both to con-

tinue such meetings until the revival is realized and a work of God is done. I'm afraid we are in a rut in this respect.

But one of the most important things to remember about the "How of Evangelism" is—a real revival is prayed down. One of our greatest needs is for more intercessors, for mothers in Israel that carry a real burden for the lost and concern for the unstable. We have too few of these and without them we cannot hope to promote old-fashioned Holy Ghost revivals. We need to remember that this type of Christian is produced by and through the preaching of an old-fashioned, rugged gospel message. If we shrink in our declaration of Bible truth we shall certainly lack these intercessors and this lack will mean drastic failure in all our work. Too many of the so-called revivals of today are worked up and because of this the results do not last. Also we need to remember that a real revival is not just the result of a couple of weeks of meetings, more or less, but more than likely the result of some years of consistent Christian living, witnessing and praying.

We have all about us this shallow evangelism that has little or nothing to say about sin and the necessity of real repentance. Some of these people put forth great effort and many people are taken into their church membership but, alas, we fear too few are really saved. Also we have about us those churches that put forth almost no effort to reach the lost. We must be on our guard lest we be too much influenced by either of these. It is imperative that we press for depth and quality, keeping the standard high and yet not giving major emphasis to minor issues. We must stress the necessity of holy living and the definite need of a second crisis experience.

To conclude this point on the "How of Evangelism" let us not compromise and accept the popular methods about us, but let us also realize that our God may will a few changes in the way we do things.

In concluding this paper, let us remember that God has called us as Reformed Baptists to spread this glorious gospel of full salvation. Having called us into being for this purpose, let us therefore not fail in our emphasizing the two definite works of grace to deliver from the bondage and power of sin, and to destroy the carnal nature and cleanse the heart.

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