WOMEN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

HEARTS AFLAME

The theme we have chosen today is evangelism. God is the Evangelist. It is the Holy Spirit who initiates evangelism, motivates for it, and empowers it.

Evangelism follows from the nature of God; He so loved the world. He is the supreme lover who gave everything, endured anything for us the beloved. That is what our God is like, and if we are his beloved children, then it stands to reason that we should mirror in our own attitudes that supernatural love for the lost souls all around us.

The early church was like that--they had a profound sense of indebtedness backed by the love of God warming their own hearts. They could not bask in it selfishly, they simply had to go out and tell others. They went out because they had fallen in love with the Great Lover. "We loved because He first loved us" (I John 4:10) and because Christ had given them a clear command. They did what He told them to: they went out in the power of the Spirit and proclaimed the Good News as Jesus commanded them. We should be excited about sharing this life-changing message with everyone. Especially, since it is the dearest and nearest thing on the heart of God.

It is my conviction, however, that many of us have lost our sense of purpose because we have become sidetracked.

(1) First, we can focus on many good and noble Christian activities and neglect the most important thing, the reason Christ came to earth: "to seek and save the lost."
(2) We can become so busy with home + children
(3) The other ways we are sidetracked are through confusion, losing our passion, discouragement, becoming diverted or simply complacent.

Unless there is a touch of revival in each of our hearts we run the risk of becoming an institutional success without a radical commitment. Christ's command is to make disciples; faithful reproducing followers of Christ. Not only should we lead people to a saving knowledge of Christ, but we should also nurture them toward maturity so they can do the same (II Tim 2:2). Making disciples is to be the part and parcel of everything we do.

Possibly you are experiencing spiritual tiredness or pressure to perform or feeling spiritually trapped or the frustration of an up-and-down relationship with Christ. If you are experiencing any of the above, let me say, every Christian at one point or another has wrestled with frustration and failure. We have all at times struggled and

failed in our attempts to be spiritually vibrant, radically committed Christians. I would like to examine some reasons why we fail or falter, and some solutions to our problems.

Let's examine some heart problems and find out how to have hearts which are consistently aflame.

1. THOSE WHOSE HEART'S ARE THE LORD'S - PARTWAY

Two examples illustrate this heart problem: (1) Solomon in the Old Testament and (2) some would be disciples in the New Testament.

1. Solomon's "However" Becomes "Not Fully the Lord's"

The Lord loved Solomon deeply; even offering him the option to

"Ask for whatever you want me to give you." (I Ki 3:5)

At Solomon's request the Lord gave him wisdom and great knowledge. The condition placed on Solomon to enjoy this undeserved blessing was

"If you walk in my ways I will give you a long life."

The life of Solomon prospered. But then we read Solomon's "however."

"King Solomon, however loved many foreign women." (I Ki 11:1-9)

The word "however" qualifies what has gone before--it is a modifier--it changes the good report to a conditional one. In this case, the word "however" recasts Solomom's life into a sad light. The Lord had said to Israel,

"You must not intermarry with foreign women because they will surely turn your heart after their gods."

"Nevertheless Solomon held fast to them"--his foreign women.

Because he intermarried with the culture of the world

"his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God."

"The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart turned away."

Solomon's life was fine until he came to his "however": his love of foreign women who turned his heart away from Jehovah God to their false gods. In the same way, our life as a Christian is a cause and effect relationship: if we are seduced by the culture and intermarry with it, then we will surely have the result of "however"--merging the way of the world with the way of God. The result is that the world

swallows us up. Solomon died a **broken** man--disillusioned and **spiritually insensitive** (vanity of vanities, all is vanity). "His heart was **not** fully devoted to the Lord" and he could **not** have it **both ways--God** and the **world.**

The lesson for us is: **flee** from the **gods** of this broken world before they **swallow you up**--don't think "I can get away with compromise because it's not hurting me now." **Wrong** conclusion! It is **easier** to **continue** with the **Lord** than it is to **make a comeback.** Our **pride** stands in the way and being our own God is **addictive.** Don't think you are wiser than Solomon. If you want to avoid Solomon's "however", **surrender** to the **God** who **is.** Stop seeking the god you want in the world and start seeking the God who is and live a "life fully devoted to God."

2. The Would Be Disciples In The New Testament

The **would-be** disciples of Luke 9:57-62 present to us the same divided devotion. In September we looked at the different responses to Christ's call to become His disciple in Luke 9:57-62. The three responses were:

(a) The **verbally** committed--just to say you are a disciple isn't enough. Christ wants us to identify with him completely.

(b) The **procrastinating** disciple is one who is retaining the right to make selective **self**-determining decisions regarding commitment. It is really an excuse for partial obedience.

(c) The **undecided** disciple is one who keeps her options open, trying to get the best from both worlds. This indecision results because we don't really believe God has our best interests at heart.

As we found out this morning, the battle rages as we try to make the decision to follow Christ and become His disciple. It continues to rage throughout our walk with the Lord, but it will be a victory if we are fully devoted to the Lord.

This part-way or would be heart problem does not ~~produce~~ result in an abundant Xian life

II. THOSE WHOSE HEARTS ARE THE LORD'S - WILLING BUT TENTATIVE

What do I mean by tentative? Probably the word that describes this person is naivetè.
naivetè

1. The 12 Disciples

I think of the 12 disciples before the cross. They loved Christ--recognizing His messiahship, enjoying His

miracles and teachings. But, their focus was largely on what they were going to get: Who among us is going to be the greatest?, When is He going to bring in the Kingdom?, Let's hear about your time schedule Lord and our seats of authority. They were embarrassed by Jesus, who He associated with, and His offending statements to the pharisees and scribes. They got more and more nervous about the increasing animosity of the rulers and their determination to kill Jesus. The disciples didnot intend to forsake Jesus, but in the crisis of His arrest they all ran away in fear.

2. New Believers - Like The Disciples

The new believer is like those disciples. They are willing, they are excited, they participate fully in the Lord's work. But they don't yet realize the implications of suffering for Christ or being "hated by the world." It comes as quite a suprise that being a disciple of Christ's often involves rejection, or a daily, sometimes unexciting walk. Even more disillusioning is the exposure of our sins to a greater and greater depth, more than you ever expected you had. Add to that Satan's attacks which are unexpected and vicious.

And here the believer has a choice- one choice is:

III. THOSE WHOSE HEARTS FOR THE LORD ARE TIRED AND LUKEWARM

Christ addresses this [redacted] response in his message to the churches of Ephesus (Rev 2:1-5) and Laodicea (Rev 3:14-19).

(1). Ephesus - was at one time a radically committed church [redacted] they evangelized all the country around them

But 30 yrs. later Jesus said;

If this is true in our case we need to ask:

Ephesus--"I have this against you, you have lost your first love." The missing element is love; that spontaneous glad response to the grace of God which resulted in your coming to Christ. What has changed? Has Christ's love diminished? Christ advises the church of Ephesus to "remember from where you have fallen" and "repent."

If we want to regain that 1st love

To "remember" is to realize that we should be living in our identification truths with the power of the Holy Spirit as our strength. Losing that motivation of love for Christ is to "forget our forgiveness" and forget our condition as unbelievers: guilt, fear, failure, despair, and depression in our former life.

To "repent" means choosing to change our mind and the direction of our life. Agreeing to see our life the way the Lord sees us and living according to truth--God's Word, not our feelings. If Christ is our first love, then all of life

becomes exciting and motivating, and His **agenda** becomes ours. **Conversely**, life becomes hopelessly **confused** and **boring** when we take our focus **off** Christ and His **love** for us. We lose interest and stop being involved in **His program**: evangelizing the world.

If we forget our position truths

2. Laodicea - Lukewarm

If we do not repent + remember

Laodicean lukewarmness is the natural **result** of losing our love for Christ. The mark of the Laodicean church was that it was composed of people who were deceived: **so self-deceived** that they were **indifferent** to everything that was of **real value**, both **now** and in **eternity future**. The two phrases that express their wrong view of themselves are:

(1) "You say..." and

(2) "but you do not realize...."

(a) They said, "I am rich." - Center of banking industry; materialistic.
Christ said, "You are poor, wretched."

(b) They said, "I have acquired alot. I have clothes and many things."
Christ said, "You are naked and poor."

(c) They said, "We make the best eye salve to preserve our eyesight."
Christ said, "You are blind."

→ The points of their **greatest achievements** and **pride**, Christ condemns as their greatest weaknesses.

which is the result

Christ **hates** compromise with the world's values and spiritual indifference. It's a real challenge for us to keep from being drawn into the **apathy** of our world towards God. The world feels **no need** for God. We dare **not allow** ourselves to fall into the trap of **indifference**. It leads to **self-deception** and not being used by the Lord. Our indifference towards the Lord and His agenda is observed by neighbors, and even more troubling, we transfer it to our **children**. **They** become enamored by the world's values and want the world's riches and accolades.

(1) The **self-deception** which results is very **addictive**. Christ says, because he loves us, he will **rebuke** and **discipline**
(2) this **lukewarmness**. →We often become alienated from God as the result of continuing in a **besetting sin** and **refusing** to **deal** with it. Our walk with God becomes lukewarm and He disciplines us to get our attention. **Repentance** is the only way back to our **first love**. Accepting Christ's forgiveness,

Another (3) sad result

"When love gets low, criticism gets high. Getting out of touch with Christ criticism of others begins. When living in touch with Christ and therefore filled with His love, then that love hides a multitude of sins. Love the members of the Body of Christ" Commentary on I Peter

Paul Reese