

WOMEN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART
HEART FAILURES

Question: How many had joy of bringing someone to Christ during the first few years you were a Christian?

How many have brought someone to Christ in the last two years?

Spend time thinking - what it means to be a woman after God's own heart

- hearts aflame for God.

-PILGRIMS/strangers on earth so JOURNEY we're taking is not on our FEET, but in our heart (Tozer)

- Satan, has DEVICES

- to SLOW down our journey

- keep us in a condition of heart failure

This morning we'll be looking at some of these DEVICES and their REMEDIES

Begin by going back to EARLY CHURCH

- people with hearts aflame for God

- their CULTURE and ours today have many SIMILARITIES

- in both cultures there were/are OBSTACLES to reaching other for Christ - yet they were extremely SUCCESSFUL

What was it about that church that made such an IMPRESSION on so many to become Christians?

GOAL - Satan had same GOAL with those early Christians as he has with us

- to keep people from being TRANSFERRED from his domain of DARKNESS into God's kingdom of LIGHT

- one MEANS he uses is to keep those already TRANSFERRED into the kingdom of light from being TRANSFORMED into conformity with Christ

LINK - between QUALITY of our life (our sanctification) and our ability to reach others for Christ (evangelism)

- given great PROMINENCE in the NT and the early church

I Peter 3:15

- Peter CONNECTS these two concepts

- familiar with LAST HALF - "Always being ready to make a defense for the hope that we have"

- FIRST half

- notice how he PREFACES this APPEAL to evangelism

- "But in your HEARTS, set apart Christ as Lord (sanctification)

1 Ths 2:1-19 - quality of Paul's life convinced them that what he proclaimed was not word of man, but word of God

I. CULTURE - during time of EXPANSION of early church

A. POSITIVE - People were SEARCHING - looking for answers to life's ultimate questions

- Like today, vast array of CULTS that attracted many

- Promising freedom from guilt, sense of security, immortality

- But viewed this not as a threat, but an OPPORTUNITY *to reach others for Christ*

- Today

- along with growth of New Age movement is POTENTIAL of a parallel spurt in growth in *Catholic* evangelical Christianity

- unprecedented interest in spiritual phenomena should be a MEGAPHONE that awakens us to realization people are now open to talk about the supernatural

B. NEGATIVE - Christians viewed as being MISFITS in society

1. Roman society FALLEN from virtuous days, exceedingly depraved

- a. in every social STRATA
 - prostitution, adultery, homosexuality, child exposure, gladiatorial shows, wild beast fights, concern only for money, & power over others at any price
- b. cult members
 - PARTICIPATED in all these activities
 - didn't demand a RADICALLY DIFFERENT life style like Christians did (p. 45 -) Green
- c. CHANGE in life/values
 - had ATTRACTION
 - but also was an OBSTACLE especially to those who as Paul says, "not only continue to do these evil things, but approve of those who practice them." (Rom. 1:32)

Most made a DEFINITE BREAK with past once they became a Christian but very magnitude of change was a formidable obstacle

2. Many CRIMES were associated with Christian cause - early press was uniformly bad

- a. ACCUSED of
 - atheism - didn't honor customary gods
 - incest & cannibalism
 - met in SECRET, used language about feeding on Christ in communion, spoke of loving fellow Christians whom they called brothers/sisters in Christ.
- b. UNFORTUNATE that at times - JUSTIFICATION for slander
 - like what occurred in Corinth church

3. Christians viewed as INTELLECTUALLY RIDICULOUS

- a. To proclaim that the WISDOM of God was exhibited in cross of Jesus was utterly LAUGHABLE
- b. Christianity viewed as a SUPERSTITION that belonged only to the dregs of society.

4. Evangelism in the early church

- a task involving social contempt, political danger, insinuation of horrible crimes and a calculated opposition from sources more powerful, perhaps, than at any time since.
- getting close?*

I. EXAMPLE OF THEIR LIVES

- In spite of all the OPPOSITION, the thing that made the greatest IMPRESSION on the culture around them was the EXAMPLE of their lives.

A. What they PROFESSED, they consistently lived out

1. They went around CLAIMING:

- that one God, good, loving, and righteous was creator of whole world
- that this God had revealed himself personally in Jesus of Nazareth
- that through the death and resurrection of this Jesus, a new relationship with God was available for all those who wished to have it.
- that his Spirit was available to enter human lives and morally transform them from within while at the same time binding them together in a loving fellowship to which there was no parallel.
- that it was the task of every member of this fellowship to do all in his power to spread this gospel to others

2. Claims brought SCRUTINY

- With claims like these, the lives of the Christians came under close scrutiny.

a. TRUTH of their claims ASSESSED to very large degree by CONSISTENCY of their lives with what they professed

b. Like Peter ^{Paul} CONNECTED necessity of sanctification with successful evangelism..

- so Paul does same thing ^{again} in 2 Cor. 4:1-5

- when REFLECTING on power of gospel to open eyes that were once blind to the truth, to bring men to the light, there are 2 CONDITIONS:

- i) there must be a CLEAR PROCLAMATION of Jesus as Messiah/Lord
- ii) it must be BACKED UP BY LIVES of people
 - who are NOT SELF CENTERED in their approach
 - but who are WILLING to be entirely at the SERVICE of the Corinthians
 - with their lives open to INSPECTION at every point

II. ^{Quality} 5 ~~Areas of EVIDENCE~~ ^{some evidence} that ~~prove~~ that the lives of early evangelists were

AFLAME with love of God &

Discover DEVICES Satan uses

- to PREVENT that same ^{quality} flame from burning
- to KEEP us in a state of heart failure

A. QUALITY OF FELLOWSHIP/UNITY

Fellowship early church offered TRANSCENDING BARRIERS of race, sex, class and education was an enormous ATTRACTION.

1. EVIDENCED in

- Antioch church by GENEROSITY in supporting Jerusalem church in its time of need
- by being WILLING TO SEND OUT from their midst Paul & Barnabus, two of their most prominent teachers

2. Satan's DEVICE to DESTROY this unity has always been to cause

- DIVISION
- us to "BITE AND DEVOUR" one another (Ga. 5:15)

a. ATTACKED early church relentlessly

- greed, arrogance about spiritual gifts at Corinth
- following certain men, instead of God
- disunity at Philippi and Rome
- James had to deal with snobbery, partiality

3. REMEDY against Satan in MAINTAINING UNITY

- through forgiveness, reconciliation *True for Cal or our own church*
- LACK of reconciliation holds back the blessing of God- Aldrich

a. best bond of SAFETY in the church

b. so wouldn't the enemy try to get us to FOCUS our ATTENTION on our WEAKNESSES rather than our STRENGTHS?

c. early church leaders DEALT QUICKLY with disunity because convinced EXTENT and POWER of their Christian outreach depended on QUALITY of their unity and fellowship

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B. TRANSFORMED CHARACTERS

1. The transformation of John, the Son of Thunder into Apostle of Love, & Peter, the hothead, into a man of rock
 - a. essential part of LOGIC of gospel
 - b. This is what CONTACT with Christ does for a person
2. Satan has DEVICES to prevent/slow down that transformation
 - a. One way most EFFECTIVE is to catch us in the trap of FILLING OUR LIVES WITH THINGS as opposed to filling our lives with LOVE OF GOD.
 - b. accomplishes this by working through GREED OF OUR FLESH
3. GREED literally at HEART of our consumer society
 - a. "THE ONE WHO DIES WITH THE MOST TOYS WINS"
 - b. society may parrot "IN GOD WE TRUST", but in reality isn't it "IN THINGS WE TRUST"?
 - c. keep FORGETTING God did not CREATE us to find satisfaction in things
4. PROBLEM - not only TWISTS VALUES, but also WASTES TIME
 - a. PROMOTING God's kingdom takes a back seat
 - b. TIME & MONEY go for entertainment, deck we've always wanted
5. A SOCIETY LIKE OURS THAT HAS LOST A GENUINE BELIEF IN GOD DOESN'T BECOME GODLESS; IT DESIGNS OTHER GODS FOR ITSELF
 - a. result being religious materialism. What is its manner of worship? SHOPPING - was not always a national PASTIME & recreational activity - was NECESSITY carried on several times/year in order to get needed supplies & maybe occasional treat - today, shopping itself promotes SELF ABSORPTION

b. ex. what happens to me when I go to an "after Christmas sale," Sam's Club, 14-hour sale power takes over "This is such a bargain, you better buy it" Redding outlets, school clothes, overwhelmed with "bargains" Check out, glazed look, cashier, "IT'S NOT A BARGAIN UNLESS YOU NEED IT" Helps today at sales

6. GIVES ILLUSION OF CONTROL - we want to control our lives

a. one way to do this is by OWNING things, want to know they're

ours

b. STRUGGLE of one woman: insecure, many moves as child, with husband, "If buy LAMP, physical thing to touch, look at, could be switched on somewhere even if she didn't know which continent - made her feel a lot better - made her feel as if in control.

7. Remember: OUR ENEMY WANTS US TO BE FUNDAMENTALLY DISSATISFIED

a. REMEDY: LEARN CONTENTMENT & GENEROSITY

b. THE GREAT RESPONSE WHEN GREED RAISES ITS UGLY HEAD IN OUR LIVES IS TO LEARN TO GIVE

- giving SHATTERS SENSE that what we have is OUR OWN
- that it is ours to control
- generosity FLOWS OUT, greed PULLS IN

C. THEIR JOY

Joyous ENTHUSIASM of early Christians ENHANCED their CLAIMS for Jesus

1. - if he really was ONLY WAY to God
 - if salvation in NO OTHER
 - then, not SURPRISING they should be so excited
2. Joy, even under PERSECUTION, led to UNHEALTHY lust for MARTYRDOM
 - This was ^{an} UNBALANCED belief, but a thoroughly BIBLICAL one was ^{that}
 - "in His presence there is fullness of joy and that " to depart and to be with Christ is far better." (Ps 16:11, Phil. 1:23)
 - JOYFUL LIVES, & even more, joyful DEATHS were major factors that ATTRACTED Christ to so many

p. 177-8 *See*

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3. Satan's DEVICE to keep us in another form of heart failure is to get us to TRUST EXTERNALS TO MAKE US FEEL GOOD, a COUNTERFEIT of joy.

a) we believe LIE that EXTERNAL SUCCESS will make us feel WORTHY & give us JOY. *Is this why we stay so busy?*

"WHAT DO YOU DO?" can be a dreadful question for a woman at home with small children

b) when we LOSE PERSPECTIVE on WHO we are in Christ, that that is what makes us worthy and lovable,

- have SWALLOWED lies of world where WORTH MEASURED in what we DO rather than who we ARE.

c) QUESTIONS that EXPOSE heart failure

"Do I think a lot about the IMPRESSION I am making, wondering what people think of me?"

"Do I get into the "IF ONLYS"? If only I got a particular job, had a baby, my child got better grades, then I would feel good, have some joy, be fulfilled?"

"AM I SUBSTITUTING "WHAT I DO" FOR GOD" *(my busy-ness)*

4. REMEDY to this device is TO BEGIN TO FIND *what it means* OURSELVES IN GOD, NOT IN OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

D. THEIR PATIENT ENDURANCE - during scourging, insults, prison, martyrdom

- had incredible EFFECT in BRINGING those who observed them to the faith.

- did Peter & John COMPLAIN about their hardships, much less give up? - simply JOINED with friends, gave themselves to PRAYER, and then CONTINUED PREACHING the risen Christ

1. Instead of learning to endure, another DEVICE Satan uses against us is to GET US STUCK IN OUR DISSATISFACTION - ENVY

a) UNATTRACTIVE temptation

- greed, lust, gluttony at least offer some TANGIBLE (though fleeting) PLEASURE before the GUILT sets in
- WE ARE CONTINUALLY TEMPTED TO ENVY THOSE WHO HAVE WHAT WE SO DESPERATELY WANT
- springs from our sense of HELPLESSNESS, sense of being a VICTIM of CIRCUMSTANCES
- yet I Cor. 13:4 tells us "LOVE IS NOT ENVIOUS"
Gal. 5 lists envy with DEEDS of the FLESH
- SNEAKY - may NOT KNOW we're envious until we find ourselves GOSSIPING about someone:

"Well, they're rolling in the cash, they can sure afford it, but you wonder where they got it, don't you?
"Their kids seem fine now, but you can be sure all that private schooling just breeds snobs in the end."

2. Can SURFACE as a SURPRISING feeling

- We have a friend who moves into a NEW ROLE, realize FEELING very STRANGE about it
- feel more COMFORTABLE if we all STAY the SAME, if no one in our GROUP of friends decides to do something DIFFERENT, if no one starts to see new POSSIBILITIES
- we may feel THREATENED when someone we know MOVES into a NEW field or part of life, leaving us BEHIND.
- when RECOGNIZE feelings as envy, then COMPOUNDED by GUILT
- envy can cause tremendous CONFLICT between friends

3. Is a DESIRE to overcome our LIMITATIONS

- Haven't we been ENCOURAGED to BELIEVE that we could be SUPER-WOMEN, & "HAVE IT ALL", fulfilling careers, wonderful families, perfect bodies, beautiful home and gardens, many friends and a great intellectual life?
- when we DISCOVER the IMPOSSIBILITY of doing EVERYTHING
 - may find ourselves envying OTHERS who have something we DON'T
 - not REALIZING they are probably MISSING something else that we HAVE
- REMEDY: is to begin ADMITTING our LIMITATIONS

"During the years we had all 5 children in Christian school, and made all those payments month after month, year after 15 years, I had to learn to recognize those twinges of envy that would surface when I'd hear about families taking their kids on some big trip. I had to learn to counter that envy with, "yeah, that would be great, but we've made choices about the kind of family life we want, the schools we send our children to, which makes a trip like that impossible for now."

*Simulation in every area of life except closeness with God
 Sanders: "close to God as we choose to be"*

E. THEIR POWER

- we have no CONCEPTION of sheer power that went with PROCLAMATION of Christian message in early church
- in that SOCIETY, it was easy to get BORED with endless CHATTER of philosophers who had little CONVICTION about VALUE and TRUTH of their various POSITIONS
- HEARING people who were PERSUADED of the truth and RELEVANCE of their message resulted in many RECEIVING the truth
 - and RECEIVING it "not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit with full conviction" (I Thes. 1:5)

- And this
power over demons
attracts money
may also be done
done in our lives*
- POWER made AVAILABLE to them is available to us in same way
 - through COMMUNICATION with God, DEPENDENCE on Spirit
 - PRAYER - early church was DEVOTED to prayer *1st priority*
 - SATAN'S DEVICE to keep us in heart failure is TO KEEP US IN A STATE OF PRAYERLESSNESS - especially EVANGELISM

1. Prayer is the WARFARE

- BATTLEFIELD upon which spiritual war is waged
- battle WON or LOST here
- before we ever STEP on battlefield of evangelism (or any work for God) the OUTCOME has been DETERMINED on battlefield of prayer
 - ➔ Ex. 17:8-13 Moses, Aaron & Hur praying on mountain while Joshua is fighting down in valley. Where was battle decided? Victory in valley won by intercession on mountain
- a. evangelism is NOT the ATTEMPT to WIN the battle
 - it's MOPPING UP operation
 - physical POSSESSIONS of church (building, meetings, ministries, are TRUCKS we drive onto FIELD of battle to load up SPOILS of victory already WON by intercession

2. The PREPARATION of heart FOR salvation IS part of work OF salvation

a. Acts 8: Ethiopian Eunuch.

Before Philip ever saw the Ethiopian, before Spirit ever told Philip to join him, God had been preparing the man's heart to hear about Jesus. And when the man was READY, God sent Philip to COMPLETE the task.

b. Acts 10: Cornelius.

Only after Cornelius was PREPARED to hear the gospel did God SUMMON Peter. Actually Cornelius was READY to be saved BEFORE Peter was ready to TELL him how.

Tine & Preben - couple from Denmark that Don & I have been reaching out to - met her at water aerobics 1 1/2 yrs. ago, have 6 mo. old baby. One way I've tried to show her the love of Christ is to babysit for her whenever I can. As we've built a friendship with them, thought about them and prayed for them, I realized that I had to once again go back to 2 basic convictions about evangelism.

3. My MOTIVATION to pray for them must come from CONVICTION that they are BOUND by god of this world

- a. they have been "TAKEN ALIVE" as Satan's captives
 - they are not just under an evil INFLUENCE, but actually BELONG to an evil being
 - sometimes look at unbelievers as "SITTING ON THE FENCE", trying to decide which leader to follow - THERE IS NO FENCE
 - only DECISION to be made is to LEAVE kingdom of darkness and be TRANSFERRED into kingdom of light
- b. need to really CONSIDER FACT that
 - no matter how moral, cultured, educated and successful they are (she speaks 4 languages)
 - they are MEMBERS of the SAME evil kingdom as those who are ACTIVELY INVOLVED in the outright Satanist activities of abhorrent abuse and human sacrifice
 - only difference is PERCENTAGE OF INVOLVEMENT in evil lifestyle of Prince of Darkness. Without Christ,
 - everything they do is "ENERGIZED" by spirit of devil-Eph 2

IN PRAYING FOR A LOST PERSON, WE ARE NOT FORCING THE PERSON'S WILL, WE ARE FREEING HIS WILL FROM THE BONDAGE OF SATAN

c. second CONVICTION:

THEY ARE BLINDED TO GOSPEL BY GOD OF THIS WORLD

- they don't have the CAPACITY to see themselves as lost or to understand gospel message (2 Cor. 4:3,4)
- no amount of HUMAN POWER, logic or argument can penetrate darkness of unsaved mind.
- devil doesn't have to make a DRUNK or a murderer of a person to keep him from being saved
- he only has to KEEP him BLIND to gospel of Christ

d. GOSPEL OF CHRIST BASIS on which men are saved, WORK of Christ on cross

- people do not go to HELL because of their sins, they go because they REJECT the ATONEMENT made by Christ
- John 3:17,18 "He who does not believe in Him is condemned already BECAUSE HE HAS NOT BELIEVED IN THE NAME OF THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD. (no ^{annihilation} universalism in early church)
- he is NOT condemned by what he has DONE, he is condemned by WHAT HE HAS NOT DONE - he has not BELIEVED

4. WARFARE PRAYING

- when we pray we need to SEE and to PRAY for things from heaven's VIEWPOINT
- Math. 18:18 - whatever has already been bound in heaven, we may bind on earth, whatever has been loosed in heaven, we may loose on earth
- Col. 2:14,15 - from heaven's VIEWPOINT, has Satan been BOUND? Have the SLAVES of Satan been LOOSED?

a. to pray in a way to FREE their WILL from bondage of Satan

i) CLAIM them for Christ through POWER of Christ's BLOOD and AUTHORITY of Christ's NAME

- BLOOD provides POWER because of WHAT Christ did

- shed his blood for the forgiveness of their sins

- NAME gives AUTHORITY because of WHO Christ is

- Lord of Universe, name which is above every name

ii) pray for God to REMOVE BLINDERS Satan is keeping so SECURELY in place - to BRING LIGHT of Jesus to them

iii) Luke 8:11-12 (parable of 4 soils)

- one of Satan's main TACTICS in KEEPING people in his kingdom is to SNATCH AWAY the Word before it can take ROOT in their hearts.

- before we brought Tine & Preben to Billy Graham movie

- prayed for SOIL of their heart to be SOFTENED so enemy would not be able to SNATCH away the SEEDS of truth that would be PLANTED

Eyez Storm

iv) this is the same kind of praying that should go on BEFORE, during & after the SEEKER'S Meetings.

Conclusion:

am I willing

So in this journey of our heart, we must be willing to "PUT DOWN OUR TOYS AND PICK UP OUR SWORDS"?

- to be willing to do BATTLE for those God LAYS on our hearts?
- do BATTLE against devices of enemy in OUR OWN lives?
- God has PROVIDED us the needed PRECIOUS REMEDIES
- if we stay ALERT to the enemy's schemes
 - our TRANSFORMATION will leave such an IMPACT on those around us that many still in Satan's GRIP will also want to be TRANSFERRED from his kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son.
- Why don't we make it a priority to "EACH ONE, REACH ONE" this year?

Should it at Betty Grack mtz.