



"And this is the commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also." 1 John 4: 21

Sunday – August 17, 2008

Heart to Heart...

For years I have heard over and over that we, the church of Christ, are dying. At one time we were known for being Christian's only and people of the Word. We ask the question, "Why are we dying?"

Let's begin by addressing our pulpits and classes. The message of our Lord is being abandoned for entertainment and feel good stories! Many are substituting ceaseless inspirational stories and jokes, sprinkled with a few Bible verses to make it all seem acceptable. Some have personal agendas they want to promote and that becomes their target. It makes the classes/pulpit powerless and empty. In other words, there is nothing offered that you cannot find from a motivational speaker in an unbelieving world! Many are preaching/teaching on the level of a Reader's Digest or a good movie or television show. Many use cute little sayings. Weak and empty! Where does all this take us? To the entertainment mode! It might hold one's attention and make some feel good but there is no substance, no power. There is nothing spiritual. It leaves people weak and shallow. It actually destroys a person's faith! They cannot distinguish between the gushy and mushy and true spiritual power!

On the other hand, you have those who constantly abuse the people with words of harshness, condemning others, wanting to debate or argue over issues, issue oriented while using biblical texts as machetes to strike down anyone who gets in their way. They are eager, as the Jews were, to defend not realizing they will destroy (or at least attempt) if someone gets in their way, calling it defending the truth! It demoralizes people. I am not saying to not hold to the truth. Truth must be held to and maintained but how does one go about it? It takes nothing more than looking at our Lord! Jesus is the Teacher and Lord. We have abandoned His love, His authority and His message! No longer do we desire to "know Him" but use Him for our convenience and personal satisfaction. We seem to be missing our Lord and the message of the good news (not fluffy stories). Wasn't it Paul who said he determined to know nothing, except Christ and Him crucified? What are we determined to know?

In the recent past, I was reading a blog by a brother in Christ. He asked the question about why so much diversity in the church in the contemporary and traditional arena. He personally held to the contemporary thinking. I wrote and pointed out some verses about knowing the Christ and our Father. In his response, he nicely set aside God's word with a nice smelling story and went on. Then it hit me, that's why the church is dying! We have lost the message and the focus of that message. The message and preaching become persuasive words of the wisdom of man and away from our faith resting on the power of God! What is the result? People church hop and truth no longer matters. "Hey, it doesn't matter where you go as long as you go!" becomes the motto! Let's split the services into two groups! (Sounds a little like Jews/Gentiles of the first century.) We as preachers/teachers seem to have created a people with little or no conviction, shallow, empty hearts that go after every wind of doctrine, book and entertaining assembly because our message is just as shallow. When are we going to take our roles as preachers/teachers and members seriously as the Lord intended? When are we going to take a gospel message back to the lost, confused world? Think about it!!!

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