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The making of an evangelist

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À LÀ Ú Ó • Lost until he finds it – a study in the passion for souls •

In the Book of Revelation 3:15-16 it says, 'I know thy words that thou art neither cold or hot: I would that thou wert cold or hot. I am about to spew thee out of my mouth', said Jesus to the Laodicean church.

On this passage the literal meaning of the words, cold, lukewarm, hot, and spew are worth our study.

Cold Can mean cold water, frigid, indifferent, phlegmatic (not easily agitated, composed).
Lukewarm – Tepid.

Hot – Boiling hot (the Greek word Zestos seems to have the idea about it).

Spew – Vomit (some have translated this verse, 'You make me sick' or, 'I will spit you out of my mouth').

In this study on the passion for souls, the word of the Saviour commends in the passage from Revelation, the idea of heat (boiling hot or zestful, zealous and the like). This is well illustrated in Luke 15:3-7 where a sheep is lost until He finds it. This is an indefinite time till the mission is accomplished, suggesting perseverance to answer the persistent call of the lost one, until all is complete and Heaven can rejoice.

Again, in Matthew 9:35-38 and 10:1 we see 'the passion for souls' in the Saviour's heart – we note there is

Vision – He saw the multitudes.
Emotion – He was moved with compassion.
Action – He went into action.

To have a true 'passion for souls' these three areas of concern are needed. To have a vision without the other two makes us only a visionary. It is not enough.

To have emotion without the other two makes us an emotionalist. It is not enough. To have action without the other makes us into an activist. It is not enough either.

As usual, the Saviour's attitude is the only right attitude if we are to be like Jesus Christ our Lord. There are some other scriptures to be quoted as examples further on, but before that is done, let us look into meanings of the word passion as it concerns 'the passion for souls'.

According to various English dictionaries, the word passion means an ardent desire; any strongly felt emotion; especially the suffering of Christ. Other meaning feature the 'suffering' side of passion – suffering of body and mind; strong feeling, strong desire; wrath against evil, desire with a compelling force; deep feeling for (the lost); meaning of the Greek word Ú Ó "pathos" is affection (subjection to like passion as the Saviour, or perhaps, as other Christian or old testament prophets, for example, Elijah). A study of a thesaurus lists words such as ardour, eagerness, emotion, fervour, fire, heat, intensity, warmth, zeal, zest.
Now back to some Scriptures to show some of those definitions in action and which show Christians ideas of 'the passion for souls'. We will start with some Christians, and then close with Biblical examples, leaving on a high note of inspiration.

Dr Oswald Smith in his book, "The Passion of Souls" (Marshal, Morgan & Scott, published 1950-1957, pages 25-37 says, 'The supreme task of the church is the evangelisation of the world', it takes a 'heart of passion' to act on that statement.

Another saying by Dr Oswald Smith in the same book on page 38 said, 'Why should anyone hear the gospel twice before everyone has heard it once'. That's passion if acted upon.

Dr Alexander Duff raised, against doctor's wishes, from his bed (Duff was experiencing very serious illness) feeling that he must speak to a congregation of young men. Flanked by his doctor and a dignitary of the church in which he was to speak, he managed to struggle up to the pulpit. His voice was weak but his heart was aflame with love for India. He intended to recruit young men to go to India, but not one responded to his impassioned appeal. Then he said, 'Is it true that Scotland has no more sons to send to India? I will go back and even though I cannot preach, I can lie down on the shores of the Ganges and die in order to let the people of India know that there is at least one man in Scotland who cares enough to give his life for them'. The result - young men sprang to their feet crying out, 'I'll go, I'll go, I'll go'. Many of them found their way to India. That's a passion for souls.

The apostle Paul had a burning heart like Dr Duff. In Acts 20:24, he said, when faced with personal danger, 'But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God'. Again we saw Paul as 'knight of the burning heart' in Romans 9:1-3, 'I say in truth, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorry in my heart, for I could wish that myself were accursed (lit. 'anathema') from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh'.

This is the same Spirit as the Saviour's of whom it was written in John 4:4 that he needs must go through Samaria to save the soul of a deeply sinning woman.

Jesus' statement in Mark 13:10 shows the urgency and priority of the Gospel, as set out, including the word first, 'And the gospel must first be published among all nations'. It has been pointed out by preachers and teachers across the centuries that the enemies of the Gospel have made us afraid, and so Christ's plan is hindered. There has been an over-emphasis on education, good though it is, but it is not first priority. There is a danger of being long on preparing and short on going.

Some seem to slip at times into full-time preparation, but the end purpose of the preparation is not realised. There is a danger too, of taking too much notice of 'closed doors' and failing at the same time to see the open doors of opportunity. In 1 Corinthians 16:9, Paul said, 'For a great door and effectual is opened unto me and there are many
adversaries'. In this situation we need a large view of God and a wide
door, and a wide, open door, and a small view of the closed doors and
the adversaries.

You see the text quoted can be translated literally in the following
way. 'For a door to me has been opened great and effectual (that is,
productive of due result) and opposers are many.

Some things that cause the passion for souls to cool are: There are
many religions, a number major, and people seem to be happy in them.
Anyway, we are all going the same way, so we don't think they are lost.

That is typical of Satan lying to us. We need to substitute my 'I
think', for the 'Thus said the Lord'. What does God think about it all.

It is possible also to believe that 'those without Christ are lost', in
a theological or academic way, but the Saviour's tremendous concern has
not entered our hearts. In 2 Peter 3:9, it tells us of the Father's
concern, 'The Lord is not slack concerning his promises, as some men
count slackness, but that all should come to repentance in the famous
John 3:16 passage, God's concern for lost mankind was so great, '...
that He gave His only begotten Son' to save us from perishing. In John
3:17 it says, 'For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the
world; but that the world through Him might be saved'.

We must avoid being evangelistic in theory and precept but not in
practice. There are some people who seem so good - delightful pagans,
they have been called - that there are some Christians who believe that
they will get by somehow. There are some passages of Scripture quoted
here which give the direct lie to that idea.

Ephesians 2:8-9 'For by grace (undeserved favour) ye are saved
through faith and this not of yourselves, it is God's gift; not of
works that not anyone might boast'.

Ephesians 2:1,3,12 People without Christ as Saviour are 'dead in
trespasses and sins, children of [God's] wrath having no hope and
without God'.

John 14:6 Jesus said, 'No man cometh to the Father but (except) by me'.

Acts 4:12 Peter points out, 'Neither is there salvation in any other'
apart from Jesus that is). Jesus elsewhere in scripture said, 'I am
the way, the truth and the life'.

Forsyth said, 'You may always measure the value of Christ's cross by
your interest in missions', the missionless church betrays that it is a
crossless church and it becomes a faithless church. Also, Dr Ford
quotes a seminary president as saying, 'evangelism in general suffers
from too much conferring and too little practice'. The famous
evangelist Dr L. Moody met someone who said he didn't like the way Moody
was evangelising. Moody replied, 'I like the way I am doing it better
than the way you are not doing it'.

Dr Leighton Ford summed up the apostle Paul as a 'Christ mastered,
Christ interested man, who had a Christ centred mind'. Also in 2
Corinthians 5:10-21, Dr Ford indicated that the secret of his [Paul's] passion lay in three realms. In each Christ was supreme.

They were, it seems to me:

- The realm of theology. Obviously Paul's passion for souls was not merely emotional. It was deeply thought out. Again evangelism and theology are partners, not competitors.

- The realm of personal experience. The overflow of a Christ-filled heart.

- The realm of urgency.

As far as I can gather, they seem to be the basis to Paul's passion for souls. In 2 Corinthians 5:21, it says, 'For He hath made him (Jesus) to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him'. That is the tremendous message of evangelism which should warm up every heart that reads and understands that statement. It was the tremendous exchange of our sins for His life in us, working to make us like Himself in 'passion for souls' in the 'image of God' again.

Because it is God's pleasure to make us knights of the burning heart and the cool head, it is relevant to ponder the wonderful statement in Philippians 2:13, 'For it is God which worketh (energising you with the power and desire) both to will and to do His good pleasure'. What is very clear it seems to me is the deep evangelistic passion is not a worked-up thing by man, but a winked-in thing by Almighty God.

Rev. J.A. Pennington of Oklahoma in a paper he gave on 'Concern for the Lost', said the lost word in our vocabulary today is 'concern'. A compassionate concern for the lost. He also quoted David M. Dawson in his book "More Power in Soul Winning", where he makes the forceful statement, 'When Christianity loses its passionate concern for lost dying, eternal souls, it brings repudiation upon itself for men, and is an offence to God.

Some men called on evangelist Billy Sunday in his hotel room during a campaign in Chicago, Illinois. They said, Mr Sunday, we have been wondering how it is that you have such power in winning the lost to Christ? He took them to the window and looked down upon the throngs of people going to and fro, he turned and said, 'They are going to hell! They are going to hell!'. It was this that gave him concern for the lost.

A Christian man who dreamed he was swept to heaven and was delighted about it all. Someone came and said, 'Look down yonder, what do you see?', 'I see a very dark world', and he exclaimed, 'Why are men blindfolded down there, many of them are going over a precipice?'. 'Well, will you stay here and enjoy Heaven, or will you go back to earth and spend time telling those men about heaven?' That was a dream with a great message, but what the apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 1:23-24, 'For I am in a strait betwixt two', having a desire was no dream, but it came from a loving, concerned heart.

A good example of what the passion for souls means, in a dedicated life is the story of the great personal worker Lee Rutland-Scarborough. Dr
George W. Truett wrote of him, 'Ever since L.R. Scarborough found Christ precious to his soul as his own personal Saviour, his lofty spirit has been a fire for the salvation of the lost'. A book written about him by the Sunday School Board, Southern Baptist Convention, 1919, says of him, 'A compassionate leadership in Christian movements for the world is now our greatest need. Every niche of this lost world needs the ministry of a fired soul, burning and shining, blood hot with zeal and conviction of a conquering gospel'.

The outline below of the soul winners passion sums up most of what has gone before.

(What it is•œ)

(a) Self-dying love. Jesus gave His life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45).

Jesus wept over the death of Lazarus (John 11:35).

Paul in Romans 9:1-3 had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart and could wish himself accursed from Christ for the brethren (the Jewish people).

Moses long before Paul, in Exodus 32:31,32 had the same type of yearning over the people of Israel in his day. The people had made a golden calf, and followed out the attendant evil worship, and Moses in order to avert the judgment of God on them said, 'Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which Thou hast written'.

(b) It is concerned and a burning heart full of zeal for the honour of the Lord, and full of love for the lost and sinning people of the world.

(c) It has a deep faith in the gospel's power to save from eternal death and hell.

(d) It goes into action to show that power effect on single lives.

(e) It is not a worked up passion but a prayed-in passion, accompanied by strong crying and tears, if not actually seen, but certainly experienced in the heart. George Whitfield's prayer, 'O Lord, give me souls, or take my soul', expresses that prayed-in passion.

(f) To bless, we need to bleed first of all. to feel the tearing at the heart strings, in deep sorrow and agony for the lost; as the eyes of our hearts gaze into eternal destiny of the lost in Hell. Praying Hyde (the missionary to India) is a good illustration of this when he prays: 'Father, give me these souls, or I will die'.

This involves being Spirit-filled, compassionate, obedient, consistent in bible study and powerful prayer for the lost.

It involves a close study of the passionate workers in the Gospel, seen both in biblical and biographical areas. It should be noted that one loving soul sets another soul on fire.
Have a vision of the utter bankruptcy of the human race, and the adequacy of God's remedy in Christ Jesus.

An evangelist needs a glorious, God-given, one track mind. That is, the salvation of the lost souls for whom Christ died. Evangelist D.L. Moody wrote, 'I am doing just one thing, that is my motto - one thing, this one thing I do'. Evangelist Billy Sunday said something like this, 'Find out which side God is on and put me on that side any time, any place. Find out which side Satan's on and put me on the opposite side any time, any place'.

A cleansed life with all hindrances removed, sincere, Christ-like and utterly at the disposal of God. Thomas a Kempis once prayed, 'Give me what Thou wilt, and when Thou wilt, and deal with me in all things as Thou wilt'.

And last but by no means least, a dependence on the Holy Spirit to do a great work as you loyally proclaim God's Word, and never forget that Jesus said, 'Come unto me and I will make you (to become) fishers of men'. This means we are Christ-made 'products' by the working power of the divine God-head.

So as Charles Alexander, of Alexander Hymn Book fame said, 'Be a soul-winner if you are never anything else'. You will find very few who want to shine in winning souls all the time. Remember too, as Billy Sunday said, 'One spark of fire can do more to prove the power of (gun) powder than a whole library written on the subject'. The passion for souls is the spark of fire greatly needed today.