



“The Laborers are Few”

Current cultural and religious trends in our country are alarming and ought to be upsetting to the faithful Christian. Church attendance is down. The number of churches in our country is declining. Enrollment in Bible colleges and seminaries is dropping. Bible reading is less and less common. There is increasing popular support for the legalization of addictive narcotics. People are openly endorsing alternative lifestyles that are contrary to the plain teaching of Scripture. Etc., etc.

Without being simplistic, there is a clear reason for these distressing trends. Our nation's population is up, but the number of people being converted to Christ is down. It is unreasonable to expect people who do not know Christ to live Christian lives.

The great question then is, why are so few coming to Christ (at least in our society)? Why do we not see great numbers of individuals being born again? Why do we not see the mass evangelism that previous generations experienced?

Recent research from the American Culture and Faith Institute shows that less than one third of those who identify themselves as Christian feel any responsibility to share the gospel. More disturbing is that one in four theologically conservative Protestant pastors do not believe they have an obligation to tell non-Christians about Christ. Seminary graduates are less likely to affirm this obligation than those without graduate training.

The plain fact is, Christians are not sharing the good news of Christ with others. There can be no harvest of souls when the seed of the Word is not being planted.

Why this alarming reality? I would suggest several reasons: Perhaps foremost is the distracting materialism of our age. I heard a seminary president once lament that graduates from his school were looking for careers more than for ministries. “How much does the job pay?” is usually the first question a prospective pastoral

candidate asks. Whether one is in “full-time ministry” or not, soul-winning and mission work involves effort, time, self-denial, and is sometimes costly. If a Christian’s main priority in life is enjoying the American dream, few will ever be reached with the gospel.

It can be argued that the current resurgence of Reformed theology in fundamentalism, and its attendant hyper-Calvinism cools evangelistic fervor. Obsession with this aspect of theology fosters spiritual coldness and scholastic pride. The Scripture teaches the sovereignty of God and predestination, but too many are allowing these truths to become distorted into an unbiblical fatalism. Too many claim to be adherents of Charles Spurgeon’s theology, but they do not share his heart - his passion for souls. Dr. Bob Jones Jr. wrote, “A man may be a five-point Calvinist and not put his emphasis there and maintain a reasonable, humble attitude toward himself and a proper zeal for the souls of men. But no man can *emphasize* (italics original) this brand of theology without losing concern for the lost.”

Subtle unbelief has crept into the minds of professed believers that has hurt outreach to the lost. Our culture’s insistence on tolerance and inclusion for all beliefs has pressed Christians to accept politically correct notions of egalitarianism and universalism. But Scripture still teaches the exclusive nature of the gospel. Jesus clearly said, “No man cometh unto the Father but by me.” (Jn. 14:6)

Laziness, discouragement, disobedience, intimidation, etc., have all contributed to the dilemma of this generation’s failure to spread the gospel. And a dilemma it is. Jesus, moved with compassion for the multitude, urged his followers to pray to God “that he will send forth laborers into his harvest field.” (Mt. 9:38)

The need is as great as ever. Can we reverse the trend? Will we answer the call?