

The Spark That Sets the Nation Aflame

We see in our nation and the nations of the world some disturbing things. People living lives far from what God intended for us to live. Wars, fights, road rage incidents, spitefulness, anger, confusion, racial tensions, laws that definitely transgress God's moral code, and depravity in general. Why? Because sin has its grip on the people. But more than that, it's because the church, the born again in Christ, have failed at large to share the love of Christ that overcomes sin, to see people set free from sin so that they may live the abundant life for which Christ shed His blood on our behalf.

So what will it take to see a national awakening and turning to the Lord?

Some may say we need a "Billy Graham", or some big campaigner evangelists to win the lost. But it's way more simple and effective than that.

I believe it will take each one of us, the Church, God's born again family, to consistently live the Christ-life, the life that's in accordance with the word – to be the salt and light Jesus said we were to be for the world to see and want to come to Christ.

There's an analogy I would like to use that will serve to explain an important principle. We in Australia, and the people of America, have in recent times seen vast forested areas devastated by fire. In all cases these fires have started from a spark somewhere igniting some dry leaf or twig or other combustible matter. Just one little spark in the right place, that's all it takes and a forest is set on fire.

Now take this into the realm of the life around us. There is a whole nation around us, a mighty "forest of people" that have been "dried out" by sin and shame. And all it will take to set the fire of God alight and raging across this nation, or the nations of the world, is one little "spark" of the life and love of Christ at just the "right place".

After a forest has had a fire go through it, in time you see new shoots, new growth and a beautiful restoration take place. Seeds in the ground need the fire to break them open to release the new life. Similarly, after the "fire" of God has burned through the hearts in repentance, new life comes forth. The old is gone and the life of Christ is birthed.

So, the big question, which I believe God is asking of His people, is: will you, or I, be the one to emit that "spark" and see this nation set ablaze for Jesus? That "spark" of Christ's unselfish, sacrificial, serving, and unconditional love. The "spark" of the life of Christ lived consistently before those in need of salvation.

Let us for a moment think of, and meditate upon, a few simple words:

INTAKE - OUTPUT - EFFECT

Now link those words to three more words:

CHARACTER - CONDUCT - INFLUENCE

The **character** of Christ developed in us, through **intake** of His word and His Spirit's enlightenment – reflected through our **conduct**, which is the expression or **output** of Christ's character through our

words and actions – has an ***influence*** on those around us to whom the words and actions are expressed, bringing the desired ***effect*** of seeing people turned to Christ.

It all starts with character. The character of Christ developed in us.

Now we must differentiate here between the words “*character*” and “*nature*”

When we are “born again,” new life, the life of Christ is birthed in us. When anything is “born” it has the *nature* of its parents. Puppy is born with a “dog” nature. Kitten is born with a “cat” nature. A child is birthed as a human by nature. When we are “born again” we are born with the God nature, the divine nature.

The word, according to Acts 17:28-29 and 2 Pet 1:4, tells us that we, the “born again”, those birthed by God, are “*partakers of the divine nature.*”

The kitten, the puppy and the child grow and over time develop characteristics unique to them. These characteristics are learned or developed through the training, exercise, and learning they receive from those around them and the environment in which they’re raised.

Nature is given, Character is developed. You had nothing to do with your birthing as a child. You can do nothing to change that which you were when you were delivered by your mother. But from there on you have been on the pathway of development. Growing and developing character. Something in which you have had to actively participate. Your “*divine nature,*” the life of Christ, is given to you when you are born again. The ***character*** of Christ is developed in you through learning, training, and the exercise of obedience.

For us to have the ***influence*** or ***effect*** of seeing this nation come to Christ, our ***conduct*** or ***output*** will have to be a consistent demonstration of the life and character of Christ. For this to happen we need to focus on the ***intake*** of the word and teaching of the Holy Spirit so that the ***character*** of Christ is formed in us. 2 Pet 3:18 ... “*Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*” So, let Him who is our life and our all be seen in and through us so that others may know Him and receive His life.

Now the entire Word is full of ***character*** developing teaching. 2 Tim 3:16 says ALL of the Word is there for our character development. We read the word regularly, and can even quote some, or many, of the passages from the Bible. But the big question, and the real challenge, is: Do we meditate and think on what we read, receive revelation, and see if and how God is speaking to us individually through what we are reading, and then act upon it? Do we listen to the Holy Spirit and allow God’s word be a living and character forming reality in our lives? Or is it just “stories” we read and forget after a while? Are we open for change? If He, who is the Word, is not living in and through us in accordance with His character, how on earth will the world be evangelised?

Let’s examine a couple of passages of scripture and put this to the test in our lives.

1. The lawyers question and the story of Good Samaritan

Luke 10:25-37 ... “*And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” And He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?” And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your*

soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.” And He said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.” But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?”

Jesus replied and said, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.’ Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbour to the man who fell into the robbers’ hands?” And he said, “The one who showed mercy toward him.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do the same.”

Samaritans and Jews were enemies. This Samaritan was on a journey, minding his own business, but he went out of his way, disrupted and delayed his travel plans, to help the injured Jew, an enemy in dire straits, and got no reward or recognition for his service.

Jesus is saying here, to you and me, that your ‘neighbour’ is the person you like the least, or someone who has done terrible things to you, stabbed you in the back, the person you can’t stand.

So the Lord is challenging us, He’s saying, “Do you love this or these persons? Will you inconvenience yourself and go out of your way to help them in their time of need? Will you intercede and pray for their wellbeing instead of criticising and despising them? Will you foot the bill for their recovery, or their need, whatever that means? Will you do this and be happy to get no thanks or recognition for doing so?”

If not, how then does the love of God dwell in your heart? Listen to John’s instruction in this regard:

1 John 2:9-11 ... *“The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.”*

The real solution to this matter lies in what the lawyer said in response to Jesus:

Luke 10:27 ... *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.”*

Love God with your entire being and you’ll be transformed. Spend time in His presence, learn of Him, and allow His character to be developed in you. Then being obedient, and allowing His character, His unconditional love, kindness, and goodness to flow through you, will be no problem. It’s the output of His character through you to the “neighbour” that brings healing to the maimed. Life to the lost.

I'll leave it there for now, and leave you to think about what "loving God with your entire being" really means, and how this love is applied to your "neighbour", the person you least like. And remember, your response contributes either positively or negatively to the nation's spiritual state of affairs. For Jesus said, "By your love you will be known." May the character of Christ be formed in you and me.

2. The Sower and the seed.

Matt 13:3-4, 19 ... *"The sower went out to sow: and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up" ... "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road."*

Seed beside the road! It lies there pregnant with life and fruitfulness, but it's not in fertile soil in which to germinate. The miracle of quickening is about to happen, but it doesn't happen. A potential harvest, but it fails to be born. The seed and the earth come together but fail to combine. There's contact but no communion.

Is that what happens when we read or listen to the word? God's word heard, but not received, or believed, or personalised and acted upon. Contact but no communion. Pregnant with life, but failing to bear fruit. Potential but no harvest. No character of Christ formed, no output of life and light, and so a lost world remains in darkness.

Church, it's time for each one of us to make a difference. It's time for the character of Christ to be fully formed in us, and for Christ to be seen in and through us.

Let our lives be the "spark" that ignites this nation. To the glory of God.

Our Prayer:

Oh heavenly Father, please save us from this deadly nearness. Save us from using words but never praying. Save us from spouting spiritual clichés with no demonstration of life. Save us from making vows, but not following through with obedience. Save us from selfish short-sightedness. Save us from falling short of vital communion. Lead us from the outer courts into the holy of holies. Father, please help us to draw near to You, to love You with every fibre of our being, to be transformed that the character of Christ may be formed in us, and expended through us, that those in darkness may see the light, so that many may turn to You. May our lives bring glory and honour to You, every day.

Amen.