

GUILTY !!!

Here in Rwanda

Angela and I have now been in Rwanda almost five years. The Lord is blessing and many are being saved and Cornerstone Baptist Church is growing stronger as Christians give more of themselves to the Lord. We have faced many challenges in our time here: difficulty in getting visas, lack of money and support, culture shock, loneliness, and thieves.

Furthermore, I have been called the antichrist by other local “Baptist” churches here because I preach Salvation by faith, not by works, and eternal security of the believer. And finally, being attacked by a disgruntled former employee with him actually getting a lawyer to shut down the church – God has protected the church and it is still going. Amen!

However, all of those problems are small in comparison to the **great temptation** that I face here on the mission field: Toning down the preaching against sin and letting up on standards. Not because I accept sin, but rather because I have a desire to see more people saved and for the church to grow up quickly in numbers.

The main cause of the temptation would have to be the ministry of Rick Warren. He has “adopted” Rwanda as his “baby”. Three years ago, President Paul Kagame invited him to come to Rwanda and change Rwanda into a purpose driven country. He has made about a dozen trips here and has sent probably hundreds of his church people here on short-term missions trips. He is very well accepted by the people and I see his purpose driven books every place I go.

Hmmm... Join Rick Warren?

So, the question is then: Is he preaching the Gospel? After talking to many of his church people, they consistently say that Salvation is by grace, not of works, and it is eternal. Great! That is what the Bible says and what I preach!

So, why not join him? If he is bringing lots of people to Christ, then by all means, we should follow his example. How foolish I am to hold on to a few “out-dated” rules and standards that offend people while millions go to hell. How foolish I am to preach against sin which makes people feel uncomfortable and therefore causes them not to hear the Gospel.

Yes, he enjoys his loud Christian-rock music and maybe he likes to sing Jimmie Hendrix songs in church; but if people are getting saved through his ministry – then wonderful! Right? He does not preach against sin because that would be offensive to people and they would not receive Jesus into their hearts.

I would gladly lower my standards and tone down the sin preaching if it reached more people for Christ. I would be happy to receive a lesser reward in heaven if it meant more people actually going to heaven. So why not follow Rick Warren, Bill Hybles, Joel Olstein, or Joyce Meyer if they are really reaching people with the Gospel?



Why preach against sin?

The problem is without preaching against sin people never know they are GUILTY! In order for anyone to be saved they first have to be brought to a place of total helplessness before God. When a judge strikes his gavel down and says, "GUILTY!", the person standing in front of the judge suddenly feels incredible guilt and the feeling of helplessness. The only thing he can do at that point is to ask for mercy or a lighter sentence.

It is not a pleasant feeling to hear the Judge of the universe pronounce that same verdict on one's soul. But it will push that person to seek for a lighter sentence and plead to God for mercy for his soul.

The whole thrust of the Bible from beginning to end is to show people they are sinners and GUILTY so that they may come to God for mercy. ***Romans 7:12-13 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.*** In short, through the preaching of righteousness (the law) one comes to the place of being exceedingly GUILTY!

Real preachers preach against sin

God's real prophets always carried this one important theme – Show people they are sinners. ***Isaiah 58:1 Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.***

Ezekiel 6:11 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Smite with thine hand, and stamp with thy foot, and say, Alas for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel! for they shall fall by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence.

Micah 3:8 But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.

It seems to me that those who really are God's servants are many times offensive to many people about sin (of course with all the love, compassion, and kindness that is possible) but they are full of the power of God to preach so. Those who never preach against sin don't have the power of God!

Even Peter, filled with the Spirit of God on the day of Pentecost, was so very "rude" to his audience. He did not follow seeker-sensitive church building principles. ***Acts 2:36***

...Jesus, whom ye have crucified... He called all those people a bunch of murderers – but 3000 repented and got saved!

Preaching righteousness and holiness is absolutely essential for anyone to come to Christ. ***Galatians 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*** The law as a schoolmaster tells people that they are not good enough for God. It tells people they are bad and even wicked in God's sight. It is not a pleasant feeling at all to hear "GUILTY!"; but the law then points to Christ as the only way of escape.

Today, people don't want to go to old-fashioned, sin-hating, Bible-thumping, hell-fire and damnation preaching Baptist Churches. They love their sin too much to admit that they are sinners so they go to "happy" churches that are "nice" in their preaching. The effect is that the schoolmaster is removed or silenced. People feel good but have nothing to point them to Christ. So, lots of "nice" Christians in these "nice" churches are still on their way to hell!

I recall what I have heard Dr. Jack Hyles preach so many times: "It is not enough to ask Jesus in your heart. You have to know that you are a sinner." Then he proceeded to make fun of "the prayer" in a high squeaky voice: "Oooh! I asked Jesus in my heart". Any man of God knows that that is not enough to just say a prayer. It has to come after a person knows they are a sinner and the GUILTY verdict grips the heart.

Some still went to hell after "Praying"

Luke 18:9-14 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

We find here that both men prayed. Both went to church. Both were worshiping God. But only one got saved! The one that knew he was GUILTY before God. The other felt good with himself and would fit very nicely into a seeker-friendly church of today.

Luke 23:39 And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

Both men prayed to be saved. But only one accepted that he was GUILTY before God; Jesus had mercy on him. The other said, “save thyself and us” but it was not enough because it was not mixed with acknowledgment of being GUILTY.

Keep in mind – Rwanda was 90% “Christian” in 1994 when one million people were slaughtered in the Genocide. With so many “Christians” how could this happen? And why were 80% of all bananas grown being used to make banana beer?

Just because people pray and “receive Jesus” in these big feel-good ministries does not mean they are getting saved. ***John 6:44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.*** The Father has to draw people and He does it through the acknowledgement of sin.

God drew me to Salvation

There are three distinct times I remember God drawing me to Salvation:

The first was when I was six years old at Sheridan Road Baptist Church in Saginaw, MI. During the invitation, the Pastor called for people to come to the altar to receive Christ. I remember holding the pew in front of me and saying to myself, “That is for bad people, I am a good boy.” God was showing me I was not good and I was “arguing” with Him that I was good. I walked away that day feeling sick in my heart that I said no to God. But I soon forgot the incident because I was “ok”.

The second time was in third grade. I had a dream that Jesus came back and took all the Christians up to heaven. But he did not take me like I expected. I dreamed that fire began coming up around me. I looked up to Jesus and said, “What about me?” He said, “I don’t know you”. I awoke from the dream shaking and with great fear but said to myself again, “I am a good boy. It was just a dream”.

The third time was January 11, 1985 at the age of 13 in Phoenix, AZ. In a preaching service at teen camp, Pastor Conner gave an invitation and said for those who were not sure of going to heaven to come forward. I said to myself again that I was a good boy. As we were leaving the building, I thought about what would happen if we were hit by a Mac truck that day. I realized that I was not good enough to meet God. I ran back to the front with tears in my eyes and Pastor Conner showed a GUILTY boy how to be saved.

All three times that God tried to draw me it was by showing me that I was not a “good boy”. All three times I tried to convince God that I was a “good boy”. ***1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*** Only when I acknowledged that I was GUILTY could I get saved.

Lift up ALL of Christ

All of Rwanda has gone after the teachings of Rick Warren. So, if he is lifting up Christ and seeing lots of people saved then I am wasting my time here. After all, Rick Warren is accepted and I am rejected. I preach against all the typical sins: drinking (even the casual drinking of most Pastors here), dancing in the church, long hair on men, pants on women, queers, and turkey gobbling (speaking in tongues).

So, why waste my breath if all that is necessary is to “lift up Christ”? – Because, without a strong stand for holiness that makes people feel GUILTY, Christ is not really being lifted up – but rather an anti-christ. Therefore, let’s lift up ALL of Christ: His holiness, righteousness, and hatred of sin – along with His wonderful grace.

God Bless,
Gregg Schoof

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