

Love

I have a confession to make: I recently went to a Petra concert. For those of you who don't know, Petra was one of the first popular Christian rock bands. They are currently on their Farewell Tour; after 33 years they are going into retirement. Some of my friends think I'm old school (and just plain old) for liking their music, but I appreciate Petra's heart for ministry.

Petra had a lot of hits in their day, but one of my favorites is "Love." The song is a ballad based on 1 Corinthians 13. We like the song so much that we had it sung at our wedding. When Petra played this song, I was reminded about our motivation in evangelism. Ultimately, it is love. Love first and foremost for the Lord Himself. As He said, the greatest commandment is to love the Lord with all of our heart, soul, strength and mind. Secondly, it is love for our neighbor. If we truly love them we will share the message with them that can bring them eternal life.

Lately the Lord has been speaking to me about my motivation in witnessing and 1 Corinthians 13, especially verse one: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal." We have to seek the Lord in prayer and ask Him to search our motives. Are we preaching in order to glorify our abilities, rail against sin for railing's sake, fulfill a duty, because we get a "buzz" out of it, or are we preaching out of heartfelt concern for the lost and a passion for the Lord? If it's for any other reason, we sound like clanging cymbals due to the fact that love is not being communicated. We are told to speak the truth in love. If we are, people will know it.

When we plow up the hard ground by using the Law and then proclaim the exclusive Gospel of Jesus Christ, we sometimes communicate it with a demeanor that does not appear loving to those that we are speaking to. As soundly saved Christians we have a natural hatred for sin. As we bring the righteous demands of the Law and the character of God to bear upon the consciences of those we preach to, that love of holiness and hatred for sin can inadvertently be communicated as hatred for the sinner. The sinner ought to know that we love him or her, even if they disagree with the message and hate the messenger.

So how do we do this without compromising the message? Keith Daniel, one of the great preachers of our time says, "The harshest words we ever speak from the pulpit of God ought to throb with love." No one would ever try to make the case that Keith Daniel is a cream puff preacher. Likewise, no one could argue that Brother Daniel does not practice what he preaches in this respect. He agonizes over the fate of the lost; he doesn't rejoice over it. He weeps over sinners; he doesn't gloat over them. We need to preach the uncompromised truth and do it with a love that *throbs* for the lost.

Praise God for those who train their evangelism teams to share the Gospel Biblically. They not only know how to share the Law, judgment, Hell and repentance. They also know how to share the Cross, grace, Heaven and saving faith. May the Lord of the harvest give them grace to share this message with hearts broken over the fate of the lost and hearts that are full because of a walk with Christ that is characterized by reality.

Do you love the lost? Do they know it?