

Hell's Best Kept Secret

Extract from the book, *Hell's Best Kept Secret*, (1989), by Ray Comfort

Something is radically wrong. Let me share some disturbing statistics with you. In September of 1977, 178 churches in the U.S. combined for a series of evangelistic meetings and reported 4,106 decisions for Christ. *Ninety percent backslid!* In 1976, one of the world's largest evangelistic associations reported a massive 18,000 decisions for Christ. However, according to Church Growth magazine, *94% failed to even become incorporated into a local church.* It would seem that the average backsliding rate, from local church to large crusade, is somewhere between 80-90%. Or, to put it another way, modern evangelism creates 80-90 backsliders with every 100 decisions for Christ.

The problem is rooted in the fact that the Church has forgotten to use the Biblical key to convert sinners to Christ. Satan knows that the Bible reveals what it is that actually converts the soul, and he is doing his utmost to hide it from the church.

Here is hell's best kept secret: **"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul"** (Psalm 19:7). What is it that converts the soul? *It is the law of the Lord.* Before you say, "But we're not under law, we're under grace!", consider the following thought. If this one verse tells us the law is instrumental in conversion, it won't do us any harm to take a few moments to see what else God says in His Word on the subject.

A Good Reason

One very good reason why we should use the law to evangelise, is because Jesus did. In Luke 10:25, when a professing expert in God's law asked how he could inherit eternal life, Jesus didn't give the good news of the cross, he pointed him to the law of God. This man was proud and impenitent, so Jesus used the law to bring "the knowledge of sin". See also Luke 18:18 and Matthew 15 in conjunction with Mark 7, Mark 12:29 and John 4:16-18. Jesus taught the multitudes using the law many times in the Sermon on the Mount. The law brings light to darkened understanding; that's its function: "For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light" (Proverbs 6:23).

Mercy for the Penitent

However, when anyone approached the Son of God in humility and contrition, Jesus gave them grace, as in the case of Nicodemus, Nathaniel, and the woman caught in the very act of breaking the 7th commandment. Those who have faced the wrath of God's justice, thoroughly embrace the grace of God, and go their way and sin no more. When the Gospel (the good news of God's grace) was preached, it was either to Jews, who knew the law (and therefore had a sense of sin), or to those who "feared God and worked righteousness". But when the Gospel was preached to the ungodly, it was always preceded by the law of God to bring the knowledge of sin, for a man will not repent if he doesn't know what sin is.

The apostle Paul used the law when dealing with the ungodly, as seen in his preaching at Athens. These were Gentiles who had no understanding of sin (Acts 17:30. See also Acts 28:23). Paul says the function of the law is to "stop the mouth", i.e. to stop sinners from justifying themselves (Romans 3:19-20. See also Romans 7:7-8,13). If Paul needed the law to show him God's standard of righteousness, how much more does this lawless generation! The very purpose of the law is to act as "our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ" (Galatians 3:24).

For What Was It Designed?

The law's function is clearly seen in 1 Timothy 1:8-10. The law gives reason for the cross. James not only used the law to bring the knowledge of sin (James 2:7-10), he gave it honour by referring to it as the "royal" law and the "perfect law of liberty". He spoke of sinners being "convinced of the law as transgressors".

John the Baptist also preached the law to Herod (Mark 6:18). However, the thrust of John's message was to Israel, *to those who knew the law*. So as soon as John said "Come and acknowledge your sins", multitudes flocked to him for a baptism of repentance (Luke 16:16). The law made them "press into" the Kingdom of God. This is clearly stated in Matthew 11:12-13.

These Men Being Dead Yet Speak

The law was the essence of the Gospel proclamation of John Wesley, Charles Finney, D.L. Moody, George Whitefield, and Charles Spurgeon. Their evangelical efforts were zeal with knowledge. In fact, they warned that if the Church failed to use the law, it would do nothing but fill the Church with false converts (see Luke 11:52). The law is perfect, holy, just, and good. It is the very "form of knowledge and of the truth" (Romans 2:20).

When we get a grip of its purpose, to bring souls into the Kingdom, we will say with the Psalmist "Oh how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day." We will say with the Apostle of grace "I delight in the law of God." When we use the law in evangelism, we will work with the Holy Spirit who convicts the world of sin (which is the transgression OF the law [1 John 3:4]). The "Work of the law" which is in the heart of every man (Romans 2:15) will then affirm the truth of each commandment, giving the knowledge of sin and showing need of the Saviour. We need to preach the way God instructs us to, and leave the results to Him.

Equipping the Saints

I can think of no stronger way of putting the following fact. If we continue to evangelise without the use of the law to bring the knowledge of sin, *we will find that we are working for the devil*, rather than for God. For every 1,000 decisions we get, we will create as many as 900 backsliders; and for the hundred who remain in the Church, at least 70 will become lukewarm in the areas of prayer, holiness, evangelism, and hunger for the Word of God. Satan's strategy has been to blind the Church to this weapon of warfare, which is mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

On the other hand, those who pray "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" will see the power of the law to convert the soul. Their converts will be more than 'decisions for Jesus'; they will be sinners who are *soundly* saved. They will be soul-winners not pew-warmers, labourers not layabouts, assets not liabilities for the local church. Revival will then become a reality, and this world will be reached for Jesus Christ.