

HIS HAND OF LOVE



Jim Cymbala February 14, 2015

Maintaining doctrinal purity is good but it is not the whole picture for a New Testament church. The apostles wanted to do much more than simply “hold the fort,” as the old gospel song says. They asked God to empower them to move out and impact an entire culture.

In too many places where the Bible is being thumped and doctrine is being argued until three in the morning, the Spirit of that doctrine is missing. William Law, an English devotional writer of the early 1700s, wrote, “Read whatever chapter of Scripture you will, and be ever so delighted with it—yet it will leave you as poor, as empty and unchanged as it found you unless it has turned you wholly and solely to the Spirit of God, and brought you into full union with and dependence upon Him.”

One way to recognize whether we suffer from this disconnection is to look at our concern for people who are dirt . . . people who are “other” . . . people who don’t fit the core group’s image. The idea that a church could be called to serve just one designated class is not found in the New Testament. The ravages of sin are not pleasant—but they are what Jesus came to forgive and heal. “The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10). The Spirit of God is a Spirit of mercy, of compassion, of reaching out.

Yet Christians often hesitate to reach out to those who are different. They want God to clean the fish before they catch them. If someone’s gold ring is attached to an unusual body part, if the person doesn’t smell the best, or if the skin color is not the same, Christians tend to hesitate. But think for a moment about *God* reaching out to *us*. If ever there was a “reach” that was it: the holy, pure Deity extending Himself to us who were soiled, evil-hearted, unholy. God could have said, “You’re so different from Me, so distasteful, I would really rather not get too close to you.” But He didn’t say that. It was our very differentness that drew His hand of love.

Jesus didn’t just speak the healing word to lepers from a distance . . . He touched them. “And He put forth His hand and *touched* him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him” (Luke 5:13).

Jim Cymbala began Brooklyn Tabernacle with less than twenty members in a small, rundown building in a difficult part of the city. A native of Brooklyn and longtime friend of both David and Gary Wilkerson, Cymbala is a frequent speaker at the Expect Church Leadership Conferences sponsored by World Challenge throughout the world.

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