Acts Lesson 11

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There have been periods of my Christian life where I have, by God's grace, enjoyed fervent zeal towards evangelism. However, there are other spells of indifference and flat out negligence. To be honest, I really hate the way this fluxes. I have tried different things to rev myself up and stimulate faithfulness, but at the end of the day it comes down to two things:

1) my view of God, and 2) my view of others

My View of God
When I think about evangelism as proclaiming "the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2.9) I begin calibrating my heart with the reality of the message proclaimed. For in the gospel, we speak of the most God-exalting truth available, and the most effective truth available; for it (the gospel) is the power of God for salvation (Rom. 1.16). I need to spend more time at my Master's feet, learning to pray like a Christian, for it is indeed the instruction of Jesus that his disciples pray with a God-centered zeal, "Hallowed by your name". Yes, I must truly want this. I must truly desire to see the name of my God exalted. Lord, make your name hallowed, make it holy, for it is being disregarded, vindicate yourself through the proclamation of the gospel.

This is good for me spiritually. It is good to find myself seeing the disparity between my will and my Father's. And it is good to run back to him for a healthy calibration! In evangelism we are proclaiming the glory of God by declaring his excellencies, knowing that this brings God pleasure, honor and glory, regardless of whether or not
the individual is converted.

MY VIEW OF OTHERS
On the other hand I am convicted by my own lack of love for others. This is really an outflow of the first, for if I do not love God rightly how can I love my neighbor?!

So here I am walking the planet with a pharisaical mindset, ignoring the greatest need of people. What is wrong with me? I can talk to them about the weather, sports, politics, food or whatever, but Jesus? This is not on my tongue.

Why? Why can I walk by the man or woman who has been beaten by the affects of sin and not open my mouth? There they sit, ever afflicted by the beatings, like the young man voyaging from Jerusalem to Jericho who fell upon robbers (Luke 10.30-34) and I am like the Levite or the priest who just walked on by. I have a medicine cabinet strapped to my back and I ignore them like they are not even there? Why? I do not love them. Perhaps you can relate?

In this vein I was struck by Alex Montoya's words in his helpful book, Preaching with Passion. Montoya is a professor at The Master's Seminary in Sun Valley, CA. "One thing that has been particularly helpful relative to loving others with the gospel is to look into people's eyes. No I did not just go off the deep end. We live in a society where we fly by one another without even noticing each other, and when we look for more than the accepted 2.8 seconds, suddenly we are psychotic. What I am advocating is to look at people. Watch them, pray for them, look into their eyes as they speak to you. Hear their heart cry for relief. When you are filled with divine love for the glory of God and fueled for a love for your neighbor, a good healthy look into a person's eyes will convict you to the quick to evangelize and cease from meaningless dialogue about
such futile things as the weather, the news or other distractions.
Montoya writing in the context of losing compassion for people:
"That is when I retreat to a small taco stand in the barrio of East Los Angeles, to a place where real people live. I order a cup of coffee and sit with my back against the wall. Then I watch, I observe, I read, and I listen intently for the heart cry. A group of gang-bangers come in for a snack—one in four will die before the age of eighteen; two of the others will end up in prison. All are doomed to a hard life. A young mother comes in with her brood of youngsters. It is obvious they are poor. They share drinks. They live in poverty; some will never see a forest or snow. An old drunk staggers in, begging for a meal. He is quickly thrown out. That was somebody's baby boy. A mother at one time cradled that man and nursed him....I look, I listen until I hear their cries, until their souls cry out to me, "Please help, I'm perishing!" until the tears pour forth from my melted heart! I am in love with humanity once again." Perhaps you can relate to my tension. If you struggle like I do, I'd encourage you to pray to God that you might love him more, more along the lines with which he loves himself. And likewise that he would be kind to cause you to love others more, more along the lines with which he loves others. Pray that God would let you hear folks' hearts cry and that would open your mouth to speak the words of eternal life, joy and grace. We do know why we do not evangelize and this fact should bring us back to the reason why we must.

Acts 2:37 Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?”

Galatians 5:19–21 (NLT)
19 When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures,
20 idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, 
21 envy, drunkenness, wild parties,…

38 Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Ezekiel 36:27
27 And I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall heed My ordinances and do them.

39 “For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.”

John 6:44 (AMP)
44 No one is able to come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me attracts and draws him and gives him the desire to come to Me, and [then] I will raise him up [from the dead] at the last day.

40 And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation!”

41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.
42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

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Isaiah 43:25 I, even I, am He Who blots out and cancels your transgressions, for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins.

43 Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. 44 And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; 45 and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. 46 Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.