

Safford Church of Christ

3888 S Hwy 191, Safford, AZ 85546

26 January 2014

Topics

A.M. Bible Class: Jesus Arrested (John 18)

**A.M. Lesson: Our Heavenly Dwelling
(2 Corinthians 5:1-10)**

**P.M. Lesson: Why Does The Divine Warrior
Hide Himself (Isaiah 63-64)?**

Wednesday: Singing

Pulpit Evangelist

Ken Knowlton: 428-3494

Elders

Greg Briggs: 428-8756

John Cunningham: 428-0895

Sunday Bible Class	10:00 A.M.
Sunday Morning Worship	11:00 A.M.
Sunday Evening Worship	6:30 P.M.
Wednesday Evening Class	6:30 P.M.
Thursday Ladies Bible Class	10:00 A.M.

We Must Stand Up for Middle East's Persecuted Christians

Johnnie Moore

foxnews.com, January 31, 2014
(condensed)

Christianity began in the East, not the West, yet today Christians in the East are enduring an all-out-assault by Islamic terrorists, while Christians in the West live their lives largely oblivious to it all. This has to change.

This is no imaginary persecution; in Syria alone there have been reports of kidnappings, Christian communities intentionally displaced by militants and, worst of all, shootings and beheadings of Christians who refused to convert to Islam.

In Egypt radicals have recently destroyed dozens of churches, and the once vibrant Christian population in Iraq has been decimated.

Christianity was once so entrenched in the modern

Islamic world that for centuries the center for Christian scholarship was Baghdad, and the long-ruined city of Merv (not far from border of what is now Afghanistan) was not only the largest city of its time, it was also best known as the center of Bible translation.

To this day – in the Middle East – there are Christian communities that have persevered through the ages, but now face the threat of extinction.

They have endured conflict after conflict, schism after schism, and they have learned how to coexist with peace-loving Muslims who are themselves fighting against the same radicalism that has caused the burning and bombing of hundreds of churches around the Islamic world since the spark of Arab Spring.

The trickling stream of Christianity runs in these places all the way to the era of Christ himself, but now – particularly in Syria – that stream is being dried up more quickly than most people realize.

Sadly, few Christians in the West have any idea this is going on, and I was once just like them.

Then I was invited last September to observe a meeting convened by Jordan's King Abdullah in his country's capital, Amman. Several dozen leaders of the Christian congregations of the East attended the meeting; I listened as these Catholic cardinals, Orthodox patriarchs and Anglican and Coptic bishops described the plight of their people.

No one was discussing their theological differences, because it was their churches that had been burned, their relatives who had been kidnapped and killed, and nearly every one of them told stories of consoling an inconsolable mother or child as they grieved the death of their last living loved one.

I wept as I heard their stories, and I wondered why Christians around the world weren't incensed by it all.

Ironically, that meeting in Jordan was not convened by Christians, but by Muslims who cared about the plight of their Christian neighbors.

At one point, Jordan's strong and kind king said that "it is a duty rather than a favor" to protect the Christians in the region, and Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad, a senior adviser to the king, acknowledged that "Christians were in this region before Muslims." He said, "They are not

strangers, nor colonialists, nor foreigners. They are natives of these lands and Arabs, just as Muslims are.”

While I was deeply encouraged by the tone of these Islamic leaders, I couldn't help but ask myself, “I wonder how many Christians in the West even care about those in the East?”

In that moment, I decided I would be their advocate.

It was the Apostle Paul who once advised some friends in Greece to “pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil people.”

I hear Paul's prayer again on the lips of those persecuted today, and I call upon Christians everywhere to pray for and be an advocate for those upon whose foundation so much of our faith has been built.

Indeed, it isn't a favor. It's our duty.

<http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2014/01/31/must-stand-up-for-middle-east-persecuted-christians/>

Your Testimony Is Not the Gospel

So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, “Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner.” He answered and said, “Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see” (John 9:24-25).

This statement, “Give God the glory!” seems positive until we read the remainder of the sentence, in which the Pharisees revealed that they had concluded that Jesus was a sinner and therefore could not have performed the miracle. They were saying that the man should give glory to God, not to Jesus. The man was straightforward with them, saying: “I don't know whether He's a sinner. I don't even know Him. All I know is this: once I was blind and now I see.”

With these simple words, the man bore witness to Christ. He testified about the redemptive work of Christ. However, he did not preach the gospel. What am I getting at? In the evangelical Christian community, we sometimes employ language that is not always sound or biblical. You've heard the lingo. It goes something like this: “I plan to become an evangelist so I can bear witness to Christ.” Or sometimes we say, “I had a chance to witness the other day,” meaning, “I shared the gospel with someone.” We tend to use the terms evangelism and witnessing interchangeably, but they are not synonymous. Any time I call attention to the person and work of Christ, I am bearing witness to Christ. But that is not the same thing as preaching the gospel.

More than thirty years ago, I learned the evangelism technique taught by Evangelism Explosion, and I trained more than 250 people in that program and led them through evangelism efforts in Ohio. One of the finest

aspects of that program is that everyone who goes through it must write out and memorize his or her testimony. Your testimony is your story of how you became a Christian. I think it's very important that Christians are able to articulate to other people how and why they became believers. We all should have a prepared testimony, and we should be willing to share it at the drop of a hat.

But we shouldn't confuse our personal testimonies with the gospel. Sharing our personal testimonies is not evangelism. It's merely pre-evangelism, sort of a warm-up for evangelism. Our testimonies may or may not be significant or meaningful to those with whom we are speaking. There are lots of folks who can relate to my story; they say, “Yeah, I know what he's talking about because I used to live like that too.” But not everyone can relate to my story. In any case, the gospel is not what happened to R.C. Sproul. God makes no promise that He will use my story as His power unto salvation. The gospel is not about me. The gospel is about Jesus. It is the proclamation of the person and work of Christ, and of **how a person can appropriate** the benefits of the work of Christ by faith alone [emphasis mine - ns].

We see this from our passage in John's Gospel. The healed man could say, “I once was blind, but now I see,” and that was a wonderful testimony. But it was not the gospel. The man could not tell the Pharisees about Jesus' saving work and about how they could be delivered from their sins by faith in Him. So we need to learn not only our testimonies but the concrete elements and content of the biblical gospel. Evangelism takes place when the evangel is proclaimed and announced to people—that is the gospel.

This excerpt is taken from R.C. Sproul's commentary on John.

<http://www.ligonier.org/blog/>. This congregation does not fully endorse the teachings of Sproul. This editor agrees with the comments in this article. -ns

News

February 28 @ 6 P.M.: Mark your calendar for an

Elder Appreciation Dinner. Details to follow.

March 1, 8-10 A.M.: Breakfast and work party at the building.

Prayer List:

Healing: Harold Boling, Ben Atchley's family, Jerry Robinson's mother Norma, Mike and Sandy Cavasos, Faye Atchley, Nicolas and Annie Self, Jonda Gardner, Dave Morse, Richard Tuey.

Back issues are posted at <http://saffordchurchofchrist.org>

