FALSE DICHOTOMIES IN MISSION

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Category: Mission

This is the first of two posts I'll make today about work by Chris Wright. (It does seem as though having the *Wright* surname is a help in writing good Christian books -*sorry)*. Koinonia, the Zondervan theology website has a couple of excellent posts on false dichotomies in mission by Chris Wright. He makes a number of excellent points, here are two of them:

> ***1.*** *We have tended to separate the* ***individual from the cosmic and corporate*** *impact of the gospel, and to prioritize the first. That is, we put personal salvation and individual evangelism at the centre of all our efforts, (and of course individual evangelism is an essential part of our commitment.). But Paulâ€™s order of the gospel message in Ephesians, and Colossians 1:15-26, is Creation (all things in heaven and earth, created by Christ, sustained by Christ and redeemed by Christ), then:, church (with Christ as head), and then individual Gentile believers: â€˜and you alsoâ€™. All of this, says Paul, is â€˜reconciled through the blood of Christ shed on the crossâ€™. So we are not saved out of creation, but as part of creation that God has redeemed through Christ. The church is not just a container for souls till they get to heaven, but the living demonstration of the unity that is Godâ€™s intention for creation, in itself a â€˜preachingâ€™ to the principalities and powers because of what God has accomplished and proved in the creation of â€˜one new humanityâ€™ in Christ. All this we learn from Ephesians and Colossians, but we still tend to put all our emphasis on getting individuals saved.*
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> *The bad result of this weakened theology is that Christians evangelized by such a truncated version of the biblical gospel have little interest in the world, the public square, Godâ€™s plan for society and the nations, and even less understanding of Godâ€™s intention for creation itself. The scale of our mission efforts therefore is in danger of being a lot less than the scope of the mission of God...*
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> ***4.*** *We have tended to separate word and deed, or proclamation and demonstration, and to prioritize the first. But again, both are essential and integral to the presentation of the gospel, and to bringing about the obedience of faith among all nations. This is clear from Paulâ€™s own practice: in Romans 15 he reflects on his whole missionary work and speaks of "what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the nations to obey God, by word and deed and by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. (Rom. 5:18-19).*
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> *In his letters he constantly emphasizes the evangelistic power of "doing good" (he mentions it 7 times in Titus, encouraging slaves in doing good so that they can "adorn the teaching about God our Saviour" - ie. Their good deeds make the evangelistic message more likely to be effective by being more attractive. Peter speaks about "doing good" 10 times in 1 Peter, and again links it to evangelistic effectiveness (e.g. for believing wives of unbelieving husbands). Jesus too speaks of the â€˜lightâ€™ of good works, drawing people to God the Father.*
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> *The bad result of this separation is that our evangelistic efforts are sometimes derided by the*

> *world, because people discern the hypocrisy of those who talk a lot but whose lives donâ€™t support what they say. Lack of integrity in this area has been identified by various researches as the major obstacle to the acceptance of the message of the gospel.*

Read the whole articles:Â Part One, Part Two