WHY I FIGHT THE LONG DEFEAT

Posted on September 29, 2015 by Eddie

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Before I go on , let me make a few observations:

- There are many churches who do have a lively interest in world mission, who support and pray for missionaries and who are seeking creative ways to get involved in whatÂ God is doing around the world.
- The British church is good at responding to clear-cut cases of need. An earthquake, the current refugee crisis and other events such as these stir up incredible amounts of generosity. The interest may only be temporary and often fades as soon as the television news agenda moves on; but the generosity is real.
- I have no concern whatsoever, for the world of mission worldwide; the church is growing and God is working in amazing ways around the world. My pessimism is all to do with the UK.

However, despite these observations, my impression is that a growing number of churches in the UK take no active, long-term interest in world mission;Â some are focussed on the needs they find on their own doorsteps and others who are hanging on in maintenance mode. Perhaps they make a collection for an aid agency on the appropriate Sunday, or maybe they have some young people who go off on short-term trips every now and then, but it doesn't go deep into the life of the church.

I have to admit that at times I get discouraged, it feels (to misquote Galadriel) that I am "fighting a long defeat". So why do I keep doing it?

- The most simple answer is that this is where God has placed me for the moment and I have to get on with what he has given me to do. It's not as exotic as living in a village doing Bible translation, but I've not had malaria for ten years, so it's not all bad!
- There is a needy world out there. The majority of Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus on the planet will never meet a Christian and will never hear the message of salvation in Christ. We as Christians are called to witness to his work around the world as well as at home.
- We are a needy church. The church in the UK is not thriving. There are some bright spots, but overall the picture is not an encouraging one. We need to be exposed to what God is doing and to be encouraged by the experiences of Christian leaders in other parts of the world. As Britain becomes more multicultural and diverse and as Christians find themselves a minority, surrounded by people of other faiths and no faith, we need to learn from our brothers and sisters who have lived and thrived in similar situations. We need to interact with the world church; not just asÂ starving victims who need our aid, but with growing, strong, matureÂ leaders who are seeing God at work in remarkable ways. The bottom line is that the British church needs world mission more than world mission needs the British church.

And that's why I keep fighting the long defeat. Though sometimes, I need to let off a little steam!