

A PASSION FOR SOULS

Proverbs 11:30, Ezekiel 3:16-19, John 1:40-42.

These words mean that Andrew, who had spent the previous afternoon in the company of Jesus, now brought his brother Simon Peter to Jesus and introduced him. Andrew was a man of only ordinary ability, but his brother Peter was used by our Lord to preach one sermon by which three thousand people were converted and won to Christ.

Without doubt there are thousands of people who would like to know Jesus, if only someone would introduce them to Him.

"Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you; as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." John 20:21.

"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Romans 9:1-3.

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." Romans 10:1.

A passion for souls is an intense desire for the salvation of the lost. It is a great longing to bring the lost to Christ and get them to receive Him as Saviour and enthrone Him as Lord. Our Saviour had an unspeakable longing for the salvation of the unsaved.

He came "to seek and to save that which was lost." Paul probably had a greater passion for souls than any other follower of Christ. He said: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved."

The true mission of everyone of Christ's churches has been and is to win the lost to a saving knowledge in Him. Through the years, various methods of winning souls to Christ have been used. Among these methods are the following:

1. Gospel Sermons -- Example: Andrew. John 1:40.
2. Bible Teaching -- Example: Thousands of Christians.
3. Family Influence -- Example: Simon Peter. John 1:41-42.
4. Saved Friends -- Example: Nathaniel. John 1:45-47.
5. Christian Atmosphere -- Example: The early disciples won many to Christ by filling the air with the name and praises of Christ.
6. Combination of Forces -- Example: Four brought the paralytic to Christ. Mark 2:3.
7. Personal Work -- Example: Christ used this method extensively. John 3, John 4, and John 5 are typical cases. This method was used at Pentecost. Acts 1 & 2. Paul used it and urged others to do likewise.

Soul winning is: --

1. A great task.
"Taking men alive." Taking men alive, or catching them for Christ, is an art. Every person is caught by somebody -- Christ or Satan.
2. A great work.
It is not a perfunctory undertaking. It is seeking to get souls "added to the Lord." A great work because it brings the sinner into intimate, personal, living eternal relationship to Christ.

3. A wise work.

Proverbs 11:30. The Revised Version has it, "He that is wise winneth souls." The world's idea of wisdom and God's idea of wisdom are very different. The world's idea is that of pleasure, success in business, and making a fortune. God's idea is that a winner of souls does a work of permanent and eternal value.

4. A hard work.

It is not an easy task. Persistence succeeds.

5. An effective work.

Christ found it so. Seven of the Apostles were won by individual work -- Peter, Andrew, James, John, Phillip, Nathaniel, Matthew, and possibly others. The early church found it so. The rank and file did the work -- talked of what Jesus meant to them. They did not depend on the Apostle's sermons.

6. A joyous work.

Every Christian should have a passion for souls and work continuously to get people to forsake sin and to accept the Saviour. The absence of this longing and activity in the lives of professed Christians today is indeed appalling. Multitudes of church members never pray for the salvation of a lost soul, and never put forth any effort to that end. Something is certainly wrong with any professed Christian who does not have a passion for lost souls. If one does not have it, that fact may be due to one of the following conditions or causes:

1. An unregenerate state.

The unsaved do not have the inclination or ability to lead others to Christ.

2. A worldly life.

The disobedient are not interested in winning the lost to Christ.

3. A lack of faith.

Some do not believe they can win souls to Christ and therefore never attempt it.

4. A dread of criticism.

Some are afraid of what others might think or say.

5. A fear of doing harm rather than good.

Duty is ours. Let us perform that duty in the right spirit, and the Lord will take care of the consequences.

I. The Reasons for Soul-Winning.

1. The example of Christ.

This was the primary business of His life. He lived and suffered and died to save the lost. "Follow Me." To be a Christian is to be a follower of Christ. To be a follower of Christ is to have the same purpose in life that Christ had. "He came to seek and to save that which was lost." Is it your purpose, ambition, and passion to win lost souls to Him? If not, why do you call yourself a Christian or follower of Christ?

2. The command of Christ.

Farewell instructions always demand attention. He said: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." "As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." Since He is our Master, He has the right to command, and we must not ignore His commands. If we love Him, we shall strive to please Him.

3. The condition of people.
People, without Christ, are lost in sin. They need God. God realized their need and sent His Son to meet that need. Christ realized their need and came to die on the cross and meet that need. The Holy Spirit realized their need and persuaded them to accept the Saviour and get that need supplied. If we love people, we shall strive to win them to Christ, to a life of respectability, personal victory, Christian service, and eventually to a home in Heaven.
4. The welfare of the churches.
If we really loved our churches and wanted to see them grow, we would do more to win the lost to Christ and church membership. Some of our churches are decreasing in membership because their members are not winning others to Christ. Our churches must increase in membership if they are to perpetuate themselves and be powers for righteousness.
5. The desire for blessings.
Soul-winning brings great blessings to those who engage in it. Among these blessings are:
 - (1) Real joy within.
Christ said, "There is joy among the angels over one sinner that repenteth." Angels just watch us do the work. Joy of those who do the work -- there is none like it.
 - (2) The personal fellowship of Christ.
 - (3) The fullness of the Holy Spirit's presence and power.

II. The Requisites For Soul-Winning.

If we are to be effective and successful soul-winners, it is important that we possess the following marks of character or qualifications:

1. A real Christian experience.
The blind cannot lead the blind successfully. We must know that way over which we are to lead others. D. L. Moody once said: "To introduce two persons successfully one must know them both."
2. A genuine prayer life.
Matthew 6:6; Phil. 4:6; James 5:16.
Intercessory prayer works wonders.
3. A working knowledge of the Scriptures.
II Timothy 2:15; 3:16-17. Dr. Torrey said: "There are four reasons why every worker should know his Bible:
 - (1) To show men their need of a Saviour,
 - (2) To show them that Jesus is the Saviour they need,
 - (3) To show them how to make this Saviour their Saviour,
 - (4) To deal with specific difficulties which stand in the way of their accepting Christ."
4. A consistent Christian life.
II Corinthians 6:17. "God does not demand a beautiful vessel for His work, but He does demand a clean one." If one is not clean and consistent in his life, the more he keeps his mouth shut about Christ the better it is for Christ and His cause. Live close to the Lord, if you would win souls to Him.
5. A conviction of the sinner's need.
John 3:18; 3:36. Everyone needs Jesus.
6. A tactful approach.
Matthew 10:16. Tact simply means sanctified common sense. Say the right word

at the right time to the right person in the right way. Be courteous. Treat all as ladies and gentlemen.

7. A complete dependence on the Holy Spirit.

There will be very little power in our testimony if the Holy Spirit does not bless and use it.

8. A persistent effort.

No work requires so much patience and perseverance as soul-winning. Refuse to give up because of failure at the first attempt. Just keep on keeping on. Show him his need of Christ, teach him the way of Christ, and persist until you bring him to Christ.

I believe we ought to use the soundest principle of salesmanship in the winning of souls to Christ. The principles are somewhat as follows:

(1) Find your prospect.

(2) Make the proper approach.

a. Be natural.

b. Be tactful.

c. Be courteous.

(3) Secure his attention.

(4) Create an interest.

Message should be pointed, plain, personal, and persuasive.

(5) Get a decision.

The important thing is the signature to the order.

III. The Reward For Soul-Winning.

1. The joy of helping others.

There is no joy this side of Heaven comparable to the joy of bringing souls to the Lord Jesus.

2. The gratitude and affection of those you win.

3. The assurance of the fellowship of additional persons in Heaven.

4. The bliss of pleasing and glorifying the Lord Jesus.

"The World's Bible."