

Ezekiel 3:16-19

Making Christ known to lost sinners is not the only task of a New Testament church, but it is the primary one. The first and supreme task of every church, every preacher and every Christian is to win people to the saving knowledge of Christ and to service for Him. Every church needs a minister who will stand in the pulpit and open his mouth boldly to make known the message of the gospel of Christ; a minister whose message concerning God and Christ and man and sin and salvation will carry home to the minds and hearts of his hearers, because that message is based upon the Word of God, and has been found true in his own experience. But every church needs more than this. She needs men and women in her membership who have been born again, and who by God's grace are willing to live the Christian life, to bear the Christian witness, and to do the Lord's work.

Christ said very plainly that His mission in the world was "to seek and to save that which was lost." Throughout His earthly ministry He had an unspeakable longing for the salvation of the lost. He lived and suffered and died to save them. To be a real Christian is to be a follower of Christ. To be a follower of Christ is to have the same purpose in life that He had.

Our supreme business is to go to the unsaved and to tell them about Christ, Who alone can save them. Every Christian is under an inescapable obligation to be an unceasing witness for Christ. And it must not be forgotten that personal evangelism, or the child of God witnessing to and working with a lost sinner, is the most effective method of soul-winning. One of the great weaknesses in present-day evangelism is our over-reliance upon preaching from the pulpit and the neglect of the personal testimony of every believer. Preaching to the masses will effect much, but it is only through the individual approach that many will ever come to know Christ. Due to the fact that the most of the unsaved do not attend church services, it is very obvious that they must be witnessed to by the children of God where they are or they will never be reached. To tell others about the one and only Saviour, Jesus Christ, is the inescapable duty of every child of God. This, the greatest work in the world, is committed to every believer in Christ.

There is something seriously wrong with any professed Christian who will not talk personally with lost people and try to get them to repent of sin and to believe on Christ, in order that they might be saved. Failure to do so may be due to one of the following things:

1. An unregenerate state.
An unsaved person does not have the inclination or the ability to lead others to Christ.
2. A worldly life.
Those who are living disobedient lives are not interested in winning souls to Christ.
3. A lack of faith.
Some, who are Christians, do not have faith enough to believe that they can introduce people to Christ and, therefore, never attempt it.
4. A dread of criticism.
Some never try to win a soul to Christ because they are afraid of what others might think and say.
5. A fear of doing harm instead of good.
We need to remember that the duty is ours. If we will perform our duty in the right spirit and with complete dependence upon the Lord, He will always take care of the consequences.

More than nineteen centuries ago the Son of God, having purchased the redemption of men with His own blood, solemnly charged His disciples, and all who would become believers

on Him, with the responsibility of telling the good news to every creature in their own generation.

I. The Revelation.

"I have made thee a watchman." The hand of the Lord was laid upon Ezekiel. Prior to this incident Ezekiel had been in the process of being prepared. He had received various communications from heaven in vision and by word. In God's own good time He laid His mighty hand upon Ezekiel, and made him a watchman. He revealed to Ezekiel that He wanted to use him for the care and culture of immortal souls. While the world would have made him a pleasure-seeker, a money-getter or a devotee of its temporal pursuits, God had one great concern about him, namely, that he might ever be a watchman. God's supreme interest in Ezekiel was that he might be an instrument in His hand for the salvation and culture of immortal souls.

Since the soul of man is God's highest product, it receives His supreme interest. He made man the acmé and climax of His creative operations, but sin debased him and he fell from his high estate. Then God reached beside His own eternal throne and plucked the exalted person of His only begotten Son, and subordinated Him to the interest of the souls of men. For the salvation of lost souls, God gave the very best that He had to give. Naturally, His greatest interest was where He had made His most priceless investment.

II. The Responsibility.

"Hear the word at My mouth, and give them warning from Me." Thus God made it clear to Ezekiel that he was not to express his own opinions, or to state the things which would agree with the opinions of the people, but he was responsible for standing in the light of truth and proclaiming God's message to those who were in dire need of it.

If one is to be serviceable for the Lord, his ears must be disciplined. "Hear the word at My mouth." To train the tongue properly one must begin with the ears. It is a well known fact that a man is not qualified to command until he has first learned to obey. Assuredly, a man must first of all find pleasure in learning before he is qualified to teach. Likewise, we must receive the gospel as God's own Word, and then go forth and proclaim it as such. If one is to be useful to the Lord, his tongue needs to be tutored and trained for the delivery of the message which comes from Him. To deliver His message one must be willing to speak some unpleasant truths.

"Give them warning from Me." What a tremendous responsibility! There are souls whom He wants you to warn. You are under a solemn obligation to warn those who are without Christ of their eternal doom, and then to tell them the good news that Christ can set them free. "Give them warning from Me." Don't talk to them on every other subject under the sun, to the neglect of the matter of the salvation of their souls. Every Christian watchman is responsible for warning every unsaved person of the danger to which he is exposed. This responsibility is impressed upon us by four things.

1. The command from above.

In giving His final instructions to His followers, Christ spoke with infinite tenderness saying, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." "As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." Our Master has the right to command us, but we certainly do not have any right to ignore His command. It is neither right nor safe to disobey the command of Christ. He lived, suffered and died in order that the lost might be saved. Is it your purpose to witness to lost souls, with a view to their becoming the children of God? If not, you do not love Him as you should, and you are not pleasing Him as you ought, and as He has a perfect right to expect.

2. The cry from beneath.

In Luke 16:19-28 Christ tells of the pitiful cry of a lost soul in Hades, revealing his agony and pleading for someone to go and warn his five brothers, "lest they also come into this place of torment." Any soul that is spiritually sensitive can hear the anguished wails and pleading cries from beneath saying, "Christian, hurry to our relatives and friends still on earth, hurry to you neighbors and friends, talk to your own dear relatives, hurry to lost souls everywhere, and warn them of the unspeakable torments of hell. Plead with every one of them to turn from sin speedily and accept Christ hastily, lest death overtake them in their unprepared condition, under the condemnation of a just God." Such pitiful cries should constrain each of us, who knows the Lord, to tell every lost sinner the old, old story of Christ's redeeming love. As the song has it, "Plead with them earnestly, plead with them gently, tell them of Jesus the mighty to save."

3. The plea from without.

All who are without the Saviour are in a desperate plight. They need somebody who knows the Lord Jesus Christ and loves Him and them enough to witness for Him as to His saving power. Some years ago public sentiment was aroused in New York, especially, against a brakeman on the New York Central Railroad because he failed to give the danger signal to the St. Louis Express. He was sent with a red lantern to wave down the approaching train, but, instead of doing so, he went into a depot and sat down by the fire. As the express thundered by he asked, "What's that?" When told, he disappeared in the darkness and was never found by the police. The express dashed into the train on the track and killed twelve persons. All felt that such neglect was criminal, and yet how about us who believe that our friends are going headlong to ruin but still we have never warned them once of their danger.

4. The urge from within.

Christ's earthly life was under the compulsion of a mighty compassion. He yearned for and wept over the lost. In whatever direction we look today, we see ripe harvests and a scarcity of laborers. This lack of laborers is due to the lack of love for Christ and lost souls. In this matter of witnessing for Christ to the lost, if our lips are still, it is simply because our hearts are cold and lacking in love. Can you say with Paul, "The love of Christ constraineth me."?

III. The Results.

Perhaps as you think of your duty to speak to your friends who are not Christians about their need of the Saviour, you may ask a couple of questions.

1. What good will it do?

If you will place yourself unreservedly at the disposal of Christ in warning the unsaved and pleading with them to accept Christ as their Saviour, there is a strong possibility that they will be saved. If so, that will be glorious. If not, then you will have performed your duty and delivered your soul of your God-given opportunity and responsibility. Don't fail to do your duty by the lost and then go out into eternity with your skirts stained with the blood of souls. Do what the Lord is holding you responsible for doing, and do it in the spirit of loving concern and prayerful interest, and then leave the results with God.

2. What difference will it make if I don't do it?

The neglect of this holy obligation will result in the desolation of life. Any life which leaves out the Lord Jesus Christ is a lost and desolate one. Horror rings in the very phrase, a life without God. A sense of gloom surrounds the very thought of it. If Christians refuse to witness personally to the lost, human lives will be wasted and lost.

To live without God, without Christ and without hope, is a terrible thing to do. In all the vast scope of human experience on this earth, I can think of nothing

so terrible as living without Christ and dying in one's sins. If you or I fail to warn an unsaved person of his danger and destiny, he may die in his iniquity, but you or I will be responsible for it.

A poor man in an asylum continued to repeat the words, "Oh! if I only had!" He had been a signal man at a railway bridge which opened over a river. When the bridge was swung open it was his duty to show the danger signal and stop any train that was approaching. One night when the bridge was open he forgot to show the red signal and a train filled with people was hurled into the river. The shock and anxiety over it drove the poor man into insanity, after which he kept repeating the same sad words, "Oh! if I only had!" If we fail to warn the lost of their danger and doom, we may be forced to think and say, "Oh! if I only had!"

In substance, God says to us, "If you do not bear faithfully My message of warning to your loved ones and friends who are lost, I shall hold you responsible for their fate." After all, beloved, if Christ loved them enough to die for them, don't you think you and I ought to love them enough to go and tell them about that glorious fact of His matchless love?