

OUR SUPREME TASK

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

Evangelism is the proclamation of the good news of God in Christ with a view to winning others to faith in Him as their personal Saviour and fidelity to Him as their Lord and Master. It is the primary function of a church and the first duty of every Christian. The first business of every church and every Christian is to win people to the saving knowledge of Christ and to service for Him. Satan's supreme desire is to prevent us from performing this glorious task of soul-winning.

I. The Meaning Explained.

Soul-winning is that form of Christian activity which expresses itself in earnest solicitation for the salvation of lost individuals. Soul-winning is the most important work of the churches. Christ instituted the church for the purpose of winning the lost to a saving knowledge in Him. He said plainly that His mission in the world was "to seek and to save that which was lost." Our Saviour had an unspeakable longing for the salvation of the unsaved. He also said, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." The true mission of each of Christ's churches has been and is to win the lost to a saving knowledge in Him.

Soul-winning is:

1. A great task.
"Taking men alive." Taking men alive, or catching them for Christ, is an art. It is the finest of the fine arts. In Christ was this art perfected. It was followed by His apostles, the church which He established, and brought to glorious consummation in the life and labors of the Apostle Paul. Every person is caught by Christ or Satan.
2. A great work.
It is not a perfunctory undertaking. It is seeking to get souls "added to the Lord." It is a great work because it brings the sinner into intimate, personal, living, eternal relationship to Christ.
3. A wise work.
"He that winneth souls is wise." Another 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 of wisdom is that of pleasure, success in business and making a fortune. God's idea of wisdom is that of a winner of souls doing a work of permanent and eternal value.
4. A hard work.
It is not an easy task, but persistence will succeed.
5. An effective work.
Christ found it so. Seven of His apostles were won by individual work--Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Nathaniel, Matthew, and possibly others. The early church found it so. The rank and file did the work. They talked of what Christ meant to them. They did not depend on the Apostles' sermons.
6. A joyous work.
Nothing will bring greater joy to a Christian than introducing a lost person to the Lord Jesus Christ. There are many who would like to know Christ if only someone would introduce them to Him.

Since soul-winning is the most important work of Christians, it naturally follows that Satan will do all he can to get us sidetracked or satisfied with something else. The greatest sit-down strike in the world has been on the part of those in our churches who claim to be saved and yet have never made any personal effort to get others to accept Christ as their Saviour. Illustrating this fact, Dr. W. W. Melton of Waco, Texas, told the story of two men who were engaged in conversation when he approached. The one who knew Dr. Melton introduced him to the other and then remarked to the preacher, "I want to tell you a joke. This man and I have worked side by side for seven years. Neither of us knew that the other was a Christian, and it turns out we are both Baptist. Isn't that funny?"

Dr. Melton said, "No, it is not funny. I would be ashamed to let people know that I had so little interest in the salvation of others." Here were two men working side by side for seven years, talking about everything under the sun, but having such little concern about the souls of each other that not once in seven years of daily contact did one ask the other whether he was saved or not.

Such indifference is the curse of the church. Parents live under the same roof with their children and never once talk to them about their souls. Neighbors live close by and never discuss the most important question in the world. What a shame that these who are so close to us drift into hell with never a word from us about the dangers that threaten them! Personal soul-winning is the most effective way to reach men. The passion for souls is what counts. No church can live long without it. No church will ever die that has it.

Every Christian should work with all his might for the salvation of the lost. There is something seriously wrong with any professed Christian who is not constantly working to get men to repent of sin and to accept the Saviour. It may be one of the following:

1. An unregenerate state.
The unsaved do 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 do not believe that they can win souls to Christ and, therefore, never attempt it.
4. A dread of criticism.
Some never try to introduce a soul to Christ because they are afraid of what others might think and say.
5. A fear of doing harm rather than good.
Remember that the duty is ours. So, let us perform that duty in the right spirit, and the Lord will always take care of the consequences.

Soul-winning was the primary business of Christ. If we would be like Him, we must be personal soul-winners. How can any person be a follower of Christ who does not give his or her life to that which He gave His life?

II. The Motives Enumerated.

1. The command from above.
Farewell instructions always demand attention. With infinite tenderness Christ

gave His final command to His followers. 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 command. It is serious business to disobey the command of Christ. If we love Him, we shall strive earnestly to obey Him and to please Him.

As an incentive to obey the command of Christ we have His noble example. Christ lived, suffered and died to save the lost. To us He has said, "Come ye after me; and I will make you to become fishers of men." 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 He had. "He came to seek and to save that which was lost." Is it your purpose to win lost souls to Him? If not, why do you call yourself a follower of Christ? What is the response of your heart and life to our Lord's supreme command?

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 that someone go to warn his five brothers, "lest they also come into this place of torment." The soul that is spiritually sensitive hears the anguished wails and pleading cries from the nethermost regions, "Christian, hurry to our relatives and friends still on earth, hurry to your neighbors and friends, hurry to lost souls everywhere, and warn them of the unspeakable torments of hell and plead with them to turn from sin to Christ speedily, lest death find them unprepared and under the condemnation of a just God." Does the cry from beneath cause your heart to burn and your lips to vibrate with the precious story of redemption for sin's sad captives? "Plead with them earnestly, plead with them gently, tell them of Jesus the mighty to save."

3. The plea from without.

At Troas Paul had a vision and heard a voice utter the fervent plea, "Come over and help us." The multitudes of Macedonia and Europe, servants of Satan and without the Saviour, were in desperate plight and needed the help which Paul could offer. How Paul labored, prayed and suffered to bring them into a saving knowledge of Christ! Redeemed hearts today should be stirred to similar endeavors by the dark and desperate need of multitudes all around us without Christ and without hope. All people need Christ.

4. The urge from within.

Our Lord's life was under the compulsion of a mighty compassion. We are told repeatedly that He was moved with compassion, that He yearned and wept over the lost. Wherever He went He saw two things: ripe harvests and a scarcity of laborers. Does He not see the same things today? And surely the explanation for the lack of laborers is to be found in the lack of love for Christ and for lost souls, the lack of a great urge from within. God's Word denounces Christians who are lazy in the presence of great harvests which wait for wise and zealous reapers. "He that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame." Proverbs 10:5. So yield your life to Christ and be filled with the Holy Spirit to the extent that you can know the reality of the experience of Paul, who said, "The love of Christ constraineth me."