

ANXIETY FOR SOULS

"No man cared for my soul." Psalm 142:4

The soul is that part of man which is spiritual, immortal, and made in the image of God. David tells us that no man cared for or sought after his soul. We are accustomed to think of God as caring for the souls He has made, and so we are prone to shirk our individual responsibilities in the matter of caring for and seeking after them. In our text the Psalmist is complaining about man's neglect of his souls and about the neglect of the souls of others. He clearly teaches that people ought to care for the souls of others. By caring for souls we mean:---

1. To have a firm conviction of their value
2. To cherish a tender solicitude for their welfare
3. To feel alarming apprehensions of their danger
4. To have an intense anxiety for their salvation
5. To make zealous efforts to bring about their salvation

With a clear understanding of what it means to care for souls we ought to consider:--

I. The Condition of Neglect

We have an interest in others within the range of civilization and commerce, but our concern for their souls is often very limited. Men generally care for their:--

1. Physical well-being
Their bodily development
Their health conditions
2. Social well-being
All that pertains to the relationships which men sustain
3. Political well-being
The attainment of the highest civil liberty consistent with stable government.
4. Intellectual well-being
Provide facilities for an education in the elementary, middle, and advanced stages.
5. Moral well-being
The general conception of virtue as the moderate and harmonious use of all the faculties.

Generally, men stop here. Yet the part that they have missed caring for is the chief part, namely, the soul or the spiritual well-being of others. The neglect of souls on the part of those who should care of them is a terrible and distressing fact. To many, no doubt, the assertion, "No man cares for my soul", often seems to be true. How many there are to whom no one ever speaks about their souls, and for whom no one makes any direct effort to win them to Christ! They are just let alone. And it is not because they would resent such endeavor. Often they greatly desire that some one would speak to them; for they know that they may become saved. But because so many of us neglect our duties, it seems to them that no one cares.

III. The Causes Of Neglect

1. An unsaved soul
Some are unsaved themselves and therefore have neither an inclination nor the ability to lead others to Christ. They may profess salvation and yet not possess it. In that event they will be certain to neglect caring for the souls of others.
2. A disobedient life
If one's belief does not enable him to live a life of peace, purity, progress, and praise he will not be very anxious about the souls of others.
3. A lack of faith
So many professional Christians do not have the faith to believe that they can

- win others to Christ and therefore do not even attempt it.
4. A lack of submission to God's will
 5. Fear of men
Being afraid of what others might say, they salve their consciences by thinking that such work belongs to preachers. We shall never do much in the way of caring for souls until we are willing to be thought "Fools for Christ's sake."
 6. Dread of doing harm rather than good
Remember that duty is ours, and not consequences. So if God, by His spirit, prompts and bids us speak for Him, as He very often does, all we have to do is to obey. He will take care of the consequences.

III. The Criminality Of Neglect

1. It is extremely ungrateful
If others had not cared for us, we would have perished. Therefore, shall we refuse to feel and labor for those who are now what we once were, and for whom the Saviour, as for us, has given His own precious blood? "Freely ye have received, freely give."
2. It is poignantly cruel
A man would be considered cruel who saw some animal in danger, and did not attempt its rescue. He then is certainly cruel, who, having it in his power to win the perishing, does not do it. If we neglect souls when we could help them to find Christ then our cruelty is indeed terrible. The cruelty of the person who knows the danger of souls and then does not care is beyond expression.
3. It is shamefully criminal
We cannot neglect the salvation of the souls of others and then be innocent. Cruelty to man and disobedience to God are joined in neglecting to care for souls.
4. It is exceedingly fatal
Fatal, in that neglected opportunities can never come back again. Fatal to those who are perishing.

IV. The Cure For Neglect

1. Repent of your past neglect of caring for souls
2. Have a deep and heartfelt conviction of the value of souls
Not only believe in the worth of souls, but also in their peril, and the willingness of God to save them. The care of an object is generally in proportion to its value. The soul is spiritual in its nature, noble in its capacities, and eternal in its duration.
3. Have a clear apprehension of the dangers to which souls are exposed.
We are not in the habit of caring for that which is invaluable if it is secure; but souls are objects of inestimable worth exposed to dangers the most imminent and to a destruction the most severe.
4. Cherish a tender solicitude for the welfare of souls
The Psalmist is an example of this. He said, Rivers of waters run down from mine eyes, because they keep not the law." 119:136
Jesus beheld the city of Jerusalem and weeping over it said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and ye would not." Matt. 23:37
5. Have a tactful sympathy with the various difficulties which souls have.
6. Be active, zealous, and continuous in your efforts to bring about the salvation of souls.

We are surrounded with those who do not know God in the forgiveness of sin. Many of them are not Christians because we have not showed them that we care about them. They question the worth if these professions do not inspire us to activity in winning them to Christ. If love for souls really exists, it will manifest itself in ardent and continued effort to diffuse the knowledge of Christ among men. This we can do by solemn warning, affectionate entreaty, earnest prayer, and liberal contribution. They say, "If believe what profess,

they would not leave us alone as they do." "They don't believe it and we won't."
This duty and responsibility of caring for souls rests on:---

- (1) Heads of families especially--first of all--most influence.
God holds them accountable for the souls under their care. You look after their health, education, etc., Are you looking after their souls?
- (2) Ministers
Their studies in private, their discourses in public, their prayers, their visits, their time, their talents, ought all be devoted to this object.
- (3) Teachers--why teach unless care for souls?
- (4) Every professed Christian
- (5) All people
(None can escape the responsibility

Conclusion:

To those who say, "No man cared for my soul":--

1. If others do not care, see that you care yourself.
2. If others care ever so much, and you do not, you will only be worse off than before.
3. If you care whether others do or not, you will certainly be saved.