

THE SAINTS PART IN DECLARING SALVATION (The Basis of Evangelism)

INTRODUCTION

Evangelism is declaring the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified to men. It is the responsibility of every Christian to be a witness for Jesus Christ and to declare this message of salvation. A failure to be an active witness for the Lord is rebellion to the revealed will of God.

While every Christian is to be a witness, why is it that so many professing Christians do not evangelize as they could or should? The problem goes much deeper than just external failure; it must be traced to improper motivation. It is a failure to see men as Christ sees them.

PROPER MOTIVATION—Attitude

Obedience (Matt. 28:19): Jesus Christ has given the Great Commission, and Christians are to be obedient to it. If Christ commands, Christians are to act, no matter how they may feel personally. NOTE: There must be submission to Christ who is the Christian's supreme authority.

To See Men Saved (Rom. 10:1; 11:14; 1 Cor. 9:22): Christians witness for they know that all men are lost because of sin and are headed towards eternal punishment. Only Christ can deliver them from sin and the consequences of sin, which is eternal judgment. Scripture presents unsaved men as perishing (2 Cor. 2:14—15) or doomed to perish if they refuse the Savior (John 3:16, 3:36). NOTE: The realization that men are perishing is an urgent need for faithful witnessing.

To Reach the Elect (2 Tim. 2:10): The context is about suffering because of declaring the gospel (2 Tim. 2:9). Paul suffered every kind of hardship as a faithful servant of the Lord that God's elect might be reached with the gospel. This refers to the potential elect; that is, those who were to be saved (cf. Acts 18:10; John 10:16, 25-29). NOTE: Paul labored not only because of need but also because of the elect.

To Share the Blessings of Salvation (1 Cor. 9:23): The gospel is preached so that others might be saved and share in the blessings of salvation in Christ Jesus. NOTE: The Christian is not to be selfish, for the gospel is for all who respond to Christ.

To Receive Reward (1 Thess. 2:19): There is a special crown for faithful witnessing which results in the conversion of others.

The Love of Christ (2 Cor. 5:14—15)

A few in the local church at Corinth were challenging Paul's right to be an Apostle. They made the claim that he was beside himself; that is, he was insane—the same charge

leveled against our Lord (Mark 3:21). Because of his zeal for Christ, Paul was accused of being a religious fanatic. His critics said that he went to extremes (2 Cor. 11:1, 16); that he courted hardships and hazards beyond all reason (2 Cor. 11: 16ff). Paul defends himself to this charge (2 Cor. 5:13). He said that if this is religious fanaticism then he was a religious fanatic, but his fanaticism had brought the gospel to the Corinthians.

Paul then tells the driving force in his life for evangelism, which is the love of Christ (2 Cor. 5:14). It is not Paul's love for Christ that is his motivation but Christ's love for Paul through His atoning death. We love Him because He first loved us. The word "constrains" means "to hold together by pressure" or "hemmed in." From this we get the derived meaning "to impel." Paul says that the love of Christ was the impelling power that forces him to evangelize regardless of the cost. NOTE: The lack of impelling power is the very thing that is the key to the Church's failure to make an impact on the world as it did in the first century.

The love of Christ compels a person not to live unto self but unto God (2 Cor. 5:15). Here is the root of our problem in evangelism. We are blind to the fact that we are not free to do with our lives what we wish. We do not fully understand that we belong to Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 6:20). NOTE: We want salvation—all the joys of it here and hereafter—but we do not want to be obligated when we receive it. To be the object of Christ's love puts an obligation on the receiver to tell others.

PROPER ACTION - Fruitbearing

Introduction: Right motivation will produce faithful Christians and this in turn will produce fruitbearing Christians.

Fruitbearing: According to the New Testament, there are many types of fruit that a Christian can produce, and one of these is soul winning fruit. The types of fruit are: the fruit of holiness (Rom. 6:21-22); the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:21-22; John 15:2, 4-5, 8, 16; Eph. 5:9); the fruit of righteousness because of discipline (Heb. 12:11); the fruit produced by the gospel in the believer (Col. 1:6); fruit produced by righteous ones (Prov. 12:12); fruit of good works (Col. 1:10); fruit of thanksgiving and praise (Heb. 13:15) and the fruit of soul winning (Prov. 11:30; John 15:16; Rom. 7:4; Phil. 4:17).

Reproduction: Every believer has the capacity to lead people to Christ and see some fruit in this area. Rom. 7:4: The natural result of marriage is children; the Christian has been married to Christ that he might bring forth spiritual children. John 15:16: The word "go" here seems to imply that every Christian can bring forth soul winning fruit.

POINTS TO PONDER

Fruit is always a product of a tree. There can be no fruit without the life-giving principle in the tree. There can be no fruit without dependence upon Jesus Christ, who is our life (John 15:4-5).

Not every tree produces fruit at the same rate. Every tree is different. So not every Christian produces the same amount of soul winning fruit. NOTE: The gifted evangelist will see more soul winning fruit than the person void of this gift.

If you are not seeing fruit, do not get discouraged. It is not your season (Psa. 1:3). Just be faithful in witnessing. NOTE: If you are not seeing any soul winning fruit, this does not mean that you are not filled with the Spirit.

Housewives and mothers should remember that their first mission field is their home. They can see God reap a harvest in their children if they will be a faithful witness at home. NOTE: If every Christian mother had led just her own children to the Lord this

would be a different world!

The person who is a gifted teacher may not see as much soul winning fruit as he would like because he is feeding the flock and training them to be effective witnesses. Always remember: some plant, some water, but God gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:5-8).