

A Word On Personal Evangelism And Soul Winning

by Michael Jeshurun



I had the priceless privilege of preaching the Gospel this evening to a young Mohammedan who is a sinner like the rest of us. I do not preach the Gospel to EVERYONE I run into like I used to do when I was a young convert. When I was newly saved man I was so 'on-fire' that I would preach to the cab driver, the bell boy, the lady behind the hotel desk, the housekeeper and if I didn't find anyone else you'd probably catch me preaching to the mannequins on display. I just HAD TO tell folks about Jesus!

I still believe that I have to tell folks about Jesus and I do, but over the years the Lord has taught me to use a little DISCERNMENT. He has taught me that there is such a thing as 'Giving that which is holy unto the dogs, and casting your pearls before swine!' [Matt. 7:6]

"The ordinary church-goers of today suppose that the Lord Jesus spent most of His time in preaching the Gospel to the unsaved, that He sought out the unchurched masses, endeavoring to arouse them from their unconcern, that He made it His business to go after the giddy worldling and convince him of the folly of his ways, that He proclaimed the love of God to every soul He could possibly make contact with? Then turn to the first four books of the New Testament and see whether or not this was so. The Master never cast pearls before swine: even when Pilate ASKED HIM, "What is truth?" (John 18:38), He did not say, "I am the Truth," nor did He explain to him the way of salvation.

The Master declined not an invitation to eat with publicans and sinners, nor did He turn His back upon the leper who sought Him. But what we have directed attention to above is His attitude towards those who SOUGHT HIM NOT, to those who evidenced no interest in Him, to those who opposed Him. Read again the many recorded cases where the Pharisees antagonized Him: is there a single instance where He preached the Gospel to them? So with the

Sadducees and lawyers who endeavored to ensnare Him: He closed their mouths, but He never opened His heart to them or gave that which was holy unto dogs!

It is very necessary this precept - "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs"- should be pressed upon the RANK AND FILE of God's people. In certain circles it has been taught that as soon as a person has experienced the saving grace of God in his heart, it is his bounden duty to preach Christ to all his acquaintances, to endeavor to become a "soul winner," and that if he or she declined such "personal work" and evangelistic endeavor it is because he is cold and selfish, indifferent to the eternal welfare of those around him. But WHERE did Christ or any of His Apostles bestow such a commission on any young convert? "Come and hear, all you that FEAR GOD, and I will declare what He has done for my soul" (Psalm 66:16): that qualification warns us against publishing the most sacred experiences of our hearts to all and sundry, for the unregenerate have no more capacity to appreciate the sovereign operations of the Spirit than swine have to rate pearls at their true value. But is not the young convert to "witness for Christ"? Assuredly, but how? "You should SHOW FORTH the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9): a changed life, an unworldly walk, is the most affective "witness" of all! See Matthew 5:16.

Zeal needs to be tempered with KNOWLEDGE. The holy things of the Gospel are not to be bandied about indiscriminately: the precious secrets of His love which the Lord has revealed to us are not to be communicated to His enemies. If believers defy this Divinely- imposed restriction they must not be surprised at meeting with insults and incurring the ire of those upon whom they attempt to force the holy mysteries of the Faith. Of the Pharisees Christ said, "Let them alone" (Matthew 15:14), do not attempt to convert them from the error of their ways. "Of SOME have compassion, making a difference" (Jude 22): what a discriminating word is that! We are told to "Go from the presence of a fool" (Proverbs 14:7), and not lower our Christian dignity by arguing with him. But are we not told to "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that ASKS a reason of the hope that is in us"? (1 Peter 3:15). Yes, when "asked" (compare Proverbs 22:21) and then "with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15) and not with bombast and impudence.

The Gospel is a message of "good news." To whom? To sinners. But to what sort of sinners? To the giddy and unconcerned, to those who give no thought to the claims of God and where they shall spend eternity? Certainly not. The Gospel announces no good tidings to THEM: it has no music in it to THEIR ears. They are quite deaf to its charms, for they have no sense of their need of the Savior. Only those who have their eyes opened to see something of the ineffable holiness of God and their vileness in His sight-who have learned something of His righteous requirements and of their criminal neglect to meet those requirements-only those who are deeply convicted of their depravity, their moral inability to recover themselves, whose conscience is burdened with an intolerable load of guilt and who are terrified by their imminent danger of the wrath to come-only those who know that unless an all-mighty

Redeemer saves them they are doomed-only those are qualified to appreciate and welcome the Gospel. "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." - A.W. Pink.

The first requirement for any 'personal evangelist' or for that matter any 'public speaker' is to be IN TUNE with God and go about his task 'AS GOD LEADS'. Trust me, God still speaks to His servants in that 'STILL SMALL VOICE' and tells them what to do [1Kings 19:12]. "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, THIS IS THE WAY, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left' [Isa. 30:21]. And again, "Blessed is the people that know the JOYFUL SOUND: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance" [Psa. 89:15]. So be in tune with God and He will clearly show you WHOM to preach to and WHOM to avoid. One of the cardinal rules in sharing the Gospel is to 'avoid the devoid' - i.e. those devoid of any signs of brokenness or interest in the things of God.

You may say, "But, aren't we supposed to preach to EVERYONE that crosses our path"? No beloved, God does not call every one! "MANY are called, but FEW are chosen" [Mat. 22:14]. Many times the relative or friend that WE want to preach to and have a 'burden' for, may not really be GOD'S burden! Consider the Apostle's own experience - "Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were FORBIDDEN of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the SPIRIT SUFFERED THEM NOT. [Acts 16:6,7] So we see that though Paul had a burden to preach in Asia and Bithynia, the Holy Spirit forbad them.

'And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us". And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, ASSUREDLY GATHERING THAT THE LORD HAD CALLED US FOR TO PREACH THE GOSPEL UNTO THEM'. [Acts 16:9,10] So not only did the Spirit stop them from preaching to a certain group but also showed them WHERE TO GO and preach. So we need to be 'LED OF THE SPIRIT', especially when we are about the King's business!

Secondly, we need to apprehend and discern the kind of people the Lord generally calls. This is also of great importance. Failure to do this will cause us to 'give that which is holy unto the dogs, and cast our pearls before swine'; something which the Lord forbad us to do. [see Mat. 7:6]. Our Lord said, "They that are whole HAVE NO NEED OF THE PHYSICIAN, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but SINNERS to repentance". [Mark 2:17].

No matter how many arguments we may present or how many Scriptures we quote, WE cannot convict anyone of their sin. This office and prerogative is

WHOLLY of God the Spirit! 'And when He (the Spirit) is come, He will convict the world of sin' [Jn 16:8]. The burden of sin and wrath on the conscience is a function of divine grace. Joshua's filthy garments MUST BE TAKEN AWAY from him before he is clothed in clean raiment (Zech. 3:4). Thus KILLING goes before making alive; BEGGARY and the DUNGHILL before the inheritance of the throne of glory; the GRAVE OF BURIED HOPES and the DUST OF SELF-ABHORRENCE before the exaltation to a seat among princes (1 Sam. 2:6-8).

All that to say, when we come across relatives and friends who we can see are not BROKEN OR HEAVY LADEN for their sins in any sense of the word; but on the contrary are faring sumptuously every day and are going up the ladder of success to make a name for themselves; and notwithstanding we endeavor to present Christ to them; there is grave reason to fear that we have a great ZEAL WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE! [Rom 10:2]. For, 'The full soul loatheth an honeycomb' [Prov. 27:7], and 'He hath filled the HUNGRY with good things; and the rich he hath sent EMPTY AWAY. [Luke 1:53].

Lastly, we must bear in mind that the Gospel is not an 'INVITATION' but a PROCLAMATION! Many categorize "the Gospel" as an invitation: Jesus comes to you and invites you to follow Him. Jesus knocks on the doors of our hearts and invites us to choose to allow him to come into our hearts, etc., etc. This is, in fact, NOT THE GOSPEL. The Gospel certainly requires a RESPONSE, but it is a response that is made not to an invitation but, first and foremost, a response to a proclamation. Jesus has died for the sinner in his or her place and has been raised again according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:1-4). That is not an invitation, it is a declaration of the completed work of God's grace to seek and save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). Those who hear this Gospel declaration respond by receiving it through faith (Romans 10:17) God's grace is not merely an invitation but a REALITY that is declared to sinners.

All that to say, it is UNWISE and WRONG to tell the one you are witnessing to - "Dear friend, God loves you and Christ died for you, if you only will repent and believe you can be saved from hell"! For we do not know for a certainty whether Christ died for him. So just proclaim the glorious truth and facts of the gospel, that Christ died for sinners, was buried and rose again the third day [1Cor. 15:3,4]. After stating this fact you can even ask the one you are witnessing to - "do YOU believe this"?

Trust me, if he or she is one of God's sheep, THIS declaration WILL MEAN SOMETHING TO THEM. In almost all cases God would have already been working on their hearts, showing them their lost state before Him and their need for a Saviour. To these sheep, the proclamation of the gospel comes in POWER! But to the rest it is either a stumbling block or utter foolishness! "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But UNTO THEM WHICH ARE CALLED, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God"! [1Cor. 1:23,24]. Again, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your ELECTION of God. For our gospel came not unto you IN WORD ONLY, but also IN POWER, and IN THE HOLY GHOST, and in MUCH ASSURANCE"! [1Thes. 1:4,5].

Dearly beloved, I have not said any of the above to dampen your zeal in witnessing to others, but to encourage you more in your labours for Him! But more particularly I do not want you to be discouraged in your efforts to witness for the Lord.

The Lord never said, 'Well done thou good and SUCCESSFUL servant!' but rather, "Well done thou good and FAITHFUL servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" [Mat 25:21]. So just be faithful and be 'led of the Spirit' in ALL that you do. 'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, THEY are the sons of God"! [Romans 8:14]

As a last question you might ask, "But doesn't scripture tell us that "He that winneth souls is wise?" It sure does! In fact the whole scripture reads, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." [Prov. 11:30] For the record both the 'righteous' and the 'wise' in that scripture is none other than our Lord Jesus! And it is HE that 'wins' any soul. You and I can no more 'win souls' than we can raise the dead!

Salvation always was and still is "of the Lord!" [Jonah 2:9] Those who are truly born-again are born-again "not of blood (by natural descent), nor of the will of the flesh (their own volition), nor of the will of man (the preacher's persuasion), but OF GOD" [John 1:13], and to GOD ALONE shall be ALL the glory!

"Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake!" [Psalm 115:1]

Praise the Lord!
