

Evangelizing The Nations

12 Lessons

Prepared by:

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2003

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Preface

A man stood dazed beside the twisted frame of an automobile. He was banged up pretty badly, but nothing terminal. As his wits began to come back to him, he heard a cry inside the car. His son was trapped and bleeding badly. He frantically tried to get into the car and also began to cry for someone, anyone, to help get the boy out before he died. But all he could hear was a voice saying: *“There is no hope....there is not a chance in a million he will live.”* But the father kept crying for help because it was his son that was trapped in the wrecked car. He reasoned: *“There just had to be some hope....that just had to be!”* But the words kept coming back into his ears: *“No hope, not a chance in a million!”* Then....his wife’s voice woke him up from his terrible dream!

While the above incident did not really happen....it could have! How many times has a similar situation been repeated over and over in the lives of hundred of people on our highways. While we would sympathize and even attempt to help someone in such a situation, we have a situation that is far worse than this story. It is the true story that is real and desperate! For there are billions of souls on earth who are without Christ, without Hope, and doomed to be punished for all eternity away from God. Unless something is done, they will perish. They need help. And their only hope is the Gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16).What will you and I do with this real and desperate sight in our world?

Before ascending back to the Father, Jesus gave His marching orders to the disciples..... ***“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature....”*** (Mark 16:15). They understood their mission and began at Jerusalem filling the city with their teaching (Acts 5:28). They made an effort to stabilize and prepare others to help teach and preach this message (2 Timothy 2:2). As a results, when persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem, the disciples went everywhere preaching the word (Acts 8:4) And as the word of God began to spread widely, the number of disciples to Jesus began multiplying (Acts 6:7). Their growth was in direct proportion to the multiplying of the teaching of God’s Word. Thirty years later, the apostle Paul could say by inspiration that the gospel had been preached ***“to every creature under heaven”*** (***KJV***) (Colossians 1:23).

This same spirit of Evangelism is needed today as well. The simple solutions to reaching the lost is to get more people involved in real, sincere study, learning, and teaching others. As the Word of God increases, the church will grow. Reaching out to the Lost should be our passion, our purpose, and our commitment!

This series of lessons has been designed to encourage all who will to get on board and put our hands to the great work of reaching the lost.

Paul E. Cantrell
(2003)

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Lesson One

Why Are People Lost?

“Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.” (Matthew 18:10-11)

Jesus said that He came to save the “lost.” What does it mean to be lost? Just who are the lost? And why are they lost? The Scriptures record that Jesus wept on three different occasions. One of those was at the end of His public ministry over the rebellious city of Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37-39). It was said of the apostle Paul upon his entering the great city of Athens that his spirit was stirred within him! (Acts 17:16). What was Jesus and Paul concerned about? They saw people who were “lost”....who needed to be “saved!” People who were in ignorance and darkness without God and without hope in death! (Ephesians 2:12). What is the effect upon our hearts as we behold our world filled with “lost” people?

In Matthew 25:46 Jesus talks about people going into everlasting punishment! Why? It must be because they are lost—they are not in a relationship with God, nor do they have hope after death. To say that you don’t believe that God will punish people in everlasting torment is to call Jesus a liar! For He clearly stated that people will go there! This is sad! But there is something sadder! Jesus also said that many will go the way of destruction—only few, in comparison, will be saved or go to heaven (Matthew 7:13-14). Why did Jesus say that so many will be lost?--- they travel the wide or broad road that leads to everlasting death!

WHAT IS THIS WIDE OR BROAD ROAD?

It is a way of Disobedience to God! Sin is defined as lawlessness....unwillingness to abide in the Law of God (1 John 3:4). When man sins, he is separated by those sins from a holy and righteous God (Isaiah 59:1-2; Ephesians 2:1-5). He then comes under the “bondage of sin.” That is, he is captured by the power of sin over his life and he cannot free himself of it or its penalty by himself! (Romans 6:6-7). God holds all men responsible for breaking His Law (Romans 3:23).....and because we break His Law, we are lost!

It is to reject the good news of the Gospel! Man is basically lost because he breaks God’s Law and must pay the penalty of such. However, God has provided a means for man to escape this just punishment through the sacrifice of His Son on man’s behalf. He planned the Plan and then executed the Plan so that man could have hope of being “saved!” He then gave us His inspired Word, the message of salvation (Gospel), and commanded that all men be given the opportunity to hear and respond to God’s offer of salvation through Christ. Those who will believe that message of hope and will respond in the act of being buried in a “watery grave” with Christ, has the promised of being “saved,” “forgiven,” “reconciled to God” (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21). Those who will not believe that message will continue in their condemned condition. Truly, *“Blessed is the man whose sins are covered...”* (Romans 4:7-8).

It is to go into a state of unbelief again! Since man must come to Jesus in order to be set free, it is also important for him to continue with Jesus to the end. ***“Be faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life!”*** (Revelation 2:10). Unfaithfulness, unbelief, doubt not properly dealt with will lead us away from Christ...and it can be said of us that we fell away and returned to our old way of life (2 Peter 2:20-22). Our entrance into heaven will be because we are overcomers—not failures or doubters (Revelation 2:11). The danger is still there that must be constantly guarded against—that we may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:12-13).

FIVE ATTITUDES THAT CAN CAUSE A PERSON TO BE LOST

Surveys are often made in various areas of mankind’s activities to help give insight to how we act in life. One such survey was made of 76 corporations. The question was, *“Why do people lose their jobs?”* There were sixteen basic reasons that were pinpointed in the survey. The interesting thing about the answers was—90% lost their job, not because of inability to do the work, but because of something they could have done but didn’t. When you look at the top four reasons given, you can see that the same attitudes carry over into the spiritual realm and explain why people will be lost eternally.

1. Carelessness! It stated that people were indifferent and negligence of doing their job correctly. They really didn’t care about their company or employer. They were not concerned as they should have been about things that were important. When you look for a ***Spiritual application***, it is easy to see that man is indifferent, inattentive, and negligent of God’s Will, his duties and his responsibilities. He has greater interest elsewhere! Our service to God must be with zeal! He rebuked the church at Laodicea because they were neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm (Revelation 3:15-16). The apostle Peter’s inspired advise to us is to ***“...give diligence to make your calling and election sure.”*** (2 Pet. 1:10) And the Hebrew writer adds, ***“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?”*** (Heb. 2:3).

2. Having a Non-Cooperative Spirit! The person would not cooperate with management nor fellow-workers. There was a lack of pulling together. Usually, the greatest accomplishments are attained when all are working together toward a common goal. In the **Spiritual** realm, the same problems can be seen for man’s failure. He is going his own way—not with the group—nor with God! He gets cross-ways with leadership in church, does not accept the “Family” concept of the church, he does not accept the “One Body with many members working together” concept, and he is not concerned about adding his part to the unity, harmony, and togetherness of the church. God’s admonitions are very clear on these matters: ***“For we are laborers together with God...”***(1 Cor. 3:9) and ***“...that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”***(Phil. 1:27).

3. Being Lazy! It is one who doesn't pull his load, he doesn't do his job. He likes to loaf and talk, but not do what is rightfully expected by his employer. He is indolent, procrastinator, and lethargic. The **Spiritual** application is very forcefully made by Jesus in Matthew 25:26, 30 when He said: —***“You wicked and lazy servant....Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness.”***

The apostle Paul dealt with this problem forcefully in writing to the church at Thessalonica when he said: ***“Let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”*** (1 Thess. 5:6). The indolent & lazy person will never make it to heaven.

4. Being Absence Without An Acceptable Cause! Again, it can be easily seen that there is no real feeling of responsibility to his job or employer. This results in putting stress and strain on management, but other employees as well in order to take up the slack. It also puts greater strain on the company to stay in business. ***Spiritually***, this is clearly dealt with in Heb. 10:24-25—***“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”*** It is to show no real concern for the church and its responsibilities. It is saying to the church and to God, I cannot be counted on when needed. The negative effect on the church becomes obvious! ***Faithfulness & Dependability*** is the way to heaven. (Rev. 2:10). ***“For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end....”*** (Heb. 3:14).

5. Be Dishonest! They do not hesitate to lie to the boss—to others—even to themselves. They steal from the company. They misrepresent & suppress the truth. They become the kind of people you cannot trust. The **Spiritual** application is so badly needed here also! It is to lie to fellow-Christians about why we are not involved and not attending as we should. Such will lie to God about their giving, their use of time, and the use of their abilities. The admonitions about lying are strong: ***“Put off all these....lie not one to another, seeing that you have put off the old man with his deeds.”*** (Col. 3:8). ***“But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”***(Rev. 21:8). We must not be deceitful with the Word of God. We must see the need of honesty & truthfulness in our lives, words, and deeds.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

When we lose our jobs because of such things as **Carelessness, a Non-Cooperative Spirit, being Lazy, being Absence Without An Acceptable Cause, and Dishonesty.....**it is obvious that we will suffer as well as possibly our family will suffer. But even more so, if we lose our soul over these same problems. It means not only that I will be lost, but that others may be lost because of my bad influence in their lives. Let’s take a serious look at our work ethic—both physically & spiritually. No one should want to lose their job, nor most of all to lose their soul for eternity!

Lesson Two

The Challenge to Lift up Christ

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.....And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John 3:14-15; 12:32)

As the Israelites began to journey again, they left from Mt. Hor and traveled through the wilderness in the land of Edom. It was hard, hot, hostile, and discouraging. The people began to complain against God and Moses. They should have known from past experience that God would provide for them in His own good time. They were continually giving in to the great sin of unbelief. So, God sent fiery serpents among them to punish them. Many died as result, but others were brought to repentance before God. They pleaded with Moses to speak to the Lord in their behalf. God's reply to them was instructions to make a serpent of brass, put it on a pole, and whoever is bitten should look upon the serpent to be healed.

Why use this method of healing the people of the serpent bite? Why a brass serpent on a pole to get the job done? In the first place:

- 1 – It served as a test of their faith in God, and Moses as God's spokesman.
- 2 – It emphasized their need to obey whatever God said to do.
- 3 – It humbled them.....it challenged them to come and look upon the brazen serpent and believe they could be healed.
- 4 – It showed God's grace and mercy....there was no merit in the Brazen Serpent!

But God usually has no in mind when he requires something as unique as this. And the answer is obvious to us from the statements in John 3:14-15; 12:32. It helped to pre-figure God's plan of redemption through Jesus being lifted up upon a pole (cross) also. Faith in this event is again God's means of giving salvation from sin.

GOD'S GREAT DRAWING POWER

Jesus' statement that all men would be drawn unto Him would be accomplished through Jesus being lifted up on the cross and proclaim before the whole world (Mark 16:15-16). It is interesting to notice that God's drawing power is not said to be Jesus' life, but His death! He lived an ideal life! He was serene, poised, and balanced in life. There was an absence of a sense of guilt (John 8:46). He spoke with authority and they sensed it (Mark 6:2; Luke 4:22). He was tender, compassionate, and concerned with those who needed such, but firm and condemning to those who needed such. Jesus was said to be the "friend of sinners," and He was in a unique sense. Children were attracted to Him (Matthew 19:13-15). He taught as no man had ever taught before (Matthew 7:29). He lived as no man had ever lived before. And yet, Jesus said: ***"If I be lifted up.....I will draw all men to me."*** Thus, His greatest drawing power is His death, not His life.

Why is Jesus' death such a drawing power? Two thoughts stand out in Scripture and, as well, in common sense. In the 1st place, it shows clearly that God sincerely loves His creatures. (John 3:16). Jesus added this thought as well....***"Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."*** (John 15:13). But Scripture goes even further.....***"But God***

commended His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8). Then, in verse 10, mankind is referred to as enemies against God. There is no greater expression of love than what God did through His Son on the Cross toward sinful, rebellious mankind.

A second thing that should be obvious about Jesus' death is that it demonstrates the great justness of God in forgiving sinners! God states and man knows that all have sinned before their Maker (Romans 3:23), and therefore deserve proper punishment (Romans 6:23). God says that our disobedience deserves death! God's Law pronounces such and must be carried out or the Law will be made ineffective! God sent His Son to take our place and suffer our just penalty. He came to taste of death for every man (Hebrews 2:9). His death is able to bring about reconciliation before God and man (Hebrews 2:17). Thus, God's act of forgiving sinful man is justified on the basis of what Jesus did for us (Romans 3:25-26).

What deep gratitude this should bring to the hearts of redeemed men. We cannot help but be drawn to such a God and such a Savior as this. He has lifted us up from the depths of sin and death and made us to be sons and daughters of His (1 John 3:1).

There was a school located in a mountainous area that found it hard to keep teachers because of the roughness of the boys in particular. The school was desperate to find someone who would come and stay. A young man applied. They wanted to be sure he knew what he was getting into, but he assured them he understood and wanted the job. The first day of school came, and immediately the rowdy boys went to work trying to undermine the schooling process. After a little, the teacher stated: *"I want a good school, but I confess I do not know how unless you help me. We probably need a few rules to go by. Could you tell me what you feel would be fair and I'll write them on the blackboard."* Several things were suggested: *"No Stealing," "Be on Time," etc.*, until finally ten rules were agreed upon. The young teacher then said: *"Now, a Law is no good unless there is a penalty attached. What shall we do with the one who breaks the rules?"* One of the students spoke up: *"Beat him across the back ten times without his coat on."* The teacher pointed out that this was pretty severe and asked them if they would be willing to stand by such. They all agreed!

Later that week, an older boy found his lunch was stolen. It took a little time, but they found out who stole it. He was a thin, small boy about 10 years old. The next morning, the teacher announced who the person was. He told them that the penalty would be enforced...ten stripes across his back. The boy had on a coat too large for him and was asked to take it off. He pleaded with the teachers: *"You can lick me as hard as you like, but please don't make me take my coat off."* The teacher reminded him of the rules, so he reluctantly began taking his coat off. He had no shirt on and his thin bony body was evident to all. The teacher didn't know how he could whip such a fragile boy, but if he didn't do something, all was lost for him as a teacher. While the teacher was slow to begin the whipping, an older boy whose lunch was stolen came up to the teacher and said: *"Teacher, if you don't object, I will take Jim's licking for him."* The teacher acknowledged: *"Very well, that is a recognized condition of Law that one can become a substitute for another. Are you all agreed?"* The answer was a resounding "Yes!"

Off came the older boy's coat and after five strokes, the stick broke. The teacher bowed his head in his hands and thought: *"How can I finish this awful task?"* Then, he heard the entire class sobbing and crying. When he looked up, he saw the thin ten-year-old with his arms around the older boy and saying: *"Tom, I was awful hungry. Will you forgive me? I'll love you till I die for taking my licking for me!"*

It is for this very same reason that we too will love God forever! We deserved the penalty for breaking His Law, but Jesus graciously took our place....suffered and died in our stead!

SOME OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE CROSS

Even on the cross, the effects of it were felt! Women who watched wept at the sight of Jesus' unjust death. Those who saw the sight, smote their breast in sorrow and fear. The thief on the cross was brought to repentance by witnessing the death of Jesus. The Centurion in charge of his crucifixion stated: *"Surely this was a son of God."*

When Jesus is lifted up before men, they are called to look upon Him to be healed of the curse of sin. Men are brought to the realization....He is dying for MY sins! Thus, He is my escape from my richly deserved punishment. It is not hard to see the strong magnetism and pull of the crucified Christ!

The paradox about His death to the Jewish people was that they thought His death would stop His influence. They cried: *"Crucify Him,"* and then His influence would come to an end. But Jesus said: *"Crucify Me, and I will draw all men unto Myself!"*

And the point is....men have been and are still being drawn to Jesus—not driven from Him. The strongest magnet of love is at work in His cross. We are drawn because of such love, mercy, and justness. But if men prefer to be self-indulgent, prefer to live in ease, and to do our own thing.....we shall not be drawn to Him. The Power is not inescapable! We can withstand the pull!

THE CHALLENGE OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Thus, if the drawing power of Jesus is in His being lifted up.....then God's people must lift Him up before the world to see. Every creature is to have depicted before their eyes....Jesus' death on the cross! And what a challenge.....yea....even a privilege to carry such a message to lost men. We have within our hands, heads, and hearts the greatest message of hope that men can ever hear. The greatest drawing power for the salvation of men is within our power to make known to all. Our great mission is to take this message to the whole world (Mark 16:15-16). **How well are we fulfilling our challenge?**

Lesson Three

Accomplishing Our Mission

"And the Word of God increased; and the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." (Acts 6:7)

The early church in Jerusalem grew rapidly in spite of opposition, persecution, hardship, and starting out small. It grew because of many things: conviction of truth, dedication, purity, unity, boldness, courage, enthusiasm, generosity, caring, serving, and evangelism. In many places in our world today, the church is growing rapidly. The receptivity of the gospel is almost overwhelming at times. Yet, in most places in this country, it is rare to witness any rapid growth at all. It is imperative that we do some honest evaluation of ourselves and our activities to be sure that we are accomplishing the mission given to us by the Lord. If we do not accomplish our mission, our children, our children's children, and millions upon millions of others will pay a terrible price for our failure. We need to give diligence, not only to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, but as well to fulfill our mission as the people of God.

PERVERTING OUR MISSION

One thing that should be obvious to all of us.....the devil doesn't want us to fulfill our mission! He is willing to do anything to pervert us from carrying it out. There are at least two basic areas in which he can work to turn us from our purpose of saving the lost: (1) Change the message to mislead the people; (2) To cause the means or methods of evangelizing to become an end in itself, rather than a means to an end.

CHANGING THE MESSAGE

Strong warnings are continually given throughout the New Testament Scriptures of this danger. Pervert the message and you can have all the activity you want....Satan's job is done! (1 John 4:1; Matthew 7:15; Ephesians 4:14; Romans 16:17-18; etc.). What are some of the tactics that he uses to accomplish this end?

He will try to imitate Christians and righteousness. Satan's workers will come in "sheep's clothing" to deceive and lead away God's people (Matthew 7:15; 24:24; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15). Those who do not really love God's truth will be caught up in Satan's lies and will perish (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10).

He will create a false religious system to imitate and oppose the true. Cain and Abel illustrate this concept at the very beginning of humanity. Abel's religion was the true one...he brought what God required as a sacrifice to God. Cain's religion was the false one...he brought a sacrifice, but it was not what God wanted. The early church no sooner got underway good than false teachers begin to try to pervert the teaching (Acts 15; Galatians 1:6-9, etc.). The many different religious groups today are testimony to Satan's devices and how well they are accomplishing his work among mankind. False religious systems are characterized in Scriptures in the following ways:

- 1) Colossians 2:18—Worship of others besides God
- 2) Colossians 2:20-22—Binding doctrines and commands of men
- 3) 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4—Teachers who usurp the authority of God
- 4) 1 Timothy 4:1-5—Will not hold to the faith once given to the saints (Jude 3)
- 5) etc.

He will use every means to over-ride Biblical Authority! Satan demonstrated this technique in the Garden of Eden. God had told man not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If they did, they would die! Satan came along to undermine God's authority....*"God is a liar, you will not die!"* Satan will use every tool in his arsenal to deceive man into believing his lie (Colossians 2:8). He will appeal to education (the wisdom of men), to high-sounding words (scholarship, culture), seeming logic (but in reality, rationalization), and make use of the intellectually clever and crafty (Ephesians 4:14). Such men are adept at beguiling the untaught and uninstructed. They become the mouth-piece of Satan's lies—the dupes of Satan. They carry out his will, not God's. They become the preachers of the Devil's lies (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

If Satan can get God's people to doubt God's Word and to believe his lies, he has perverted our efforts to save the lost.....for they will remain lost unless they obey God's truth, for it is only through truth that man is set free from sin (John 8:31-32). The Devil even tried this approach on Jesus. He told Jesus, bow down and worship me and I will give you rulership over all the kingdoms of the world! But His mission was not an earthly rule over nations, but to die to redeem fallen man so he could rule over their hearts spiritually. Satan failed with Jesus, and he must also fail with us! We must keep our mission intact!

MEANS TO BECOME AN END IN ITSELF

The purpose or mission of the Christian is to evangelize the world! It is then to strengthen and train the converted, so that they can contribute their part to fulfilling the mission. But there has to be means, methods, activities that help to fulfill that mission. Some means or methods are divinely stipulated such as preaching, teaching, making disciples, baptizing, nurturing, fellowship, worship, etc. Some means are what we call expedients such as Bible classes, youth group activities, newsletters, committees, study groups, audiovisual aids, literature, programs, retreats, Gospel Meetings, camps, missionary efforts, educational institutions, etc. Why do we have these things—as a means to accomplish our mission! The danger is to lose sight of the purpose of these things and let them become an end in themselves.

A Christian moved into a new community and begin meeting with the church. He had been very active in the congregation where he had attended. He wanted to get involved in his new place. He canvassed the streets close to the church building. He found a lot of children that could be taught in a class at the building. He approached the men about helping with it on Sunday AM. They rejected his request! Why? The men were in a contest with the women to see who could have the most in their respective classes for the quarter. They had lost sight of why they were there. The MEANS had become an END in itself. So, they were devoting their energies and finances to other things besides their real purpose for existence. The dangers are real as the following ideas will illustrate.

Activity for activity's sake! Activity is great and a necessity in order to accomplish our God appointed end or purpose. But a church can become so busy that they don't have time to evangelize! The church at Ephesus was busy and involved, but they had left their first love (Revelation 2:1-5). They were so involved with everything else that they no longer were evangelizing!

Our traditions must be maintained at all cost! Traditional means or methods of evangelizing have to be used to accomplish our purpose. But to hold on to a traditional method when it no longer proves effective has allowed the MEANS to become the END. A conversation among men in business meeting:

- a) *"This method of evangelism is no longer effective."*
- b) *"Yes, we know, but we have done it this way for a long time, and we don't want to give it up."*
- c) *"But why? Why maintain something that has lost its effectiveness?"*
- d) *"It is just too much trouble, or it takes too much time to find something that is effective."*
- e) So the group lets the MEANS become the END in itself.

The Jewish leaders illustrated this concept with Jesus. They condemned him for healing on the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-28). So, Jesus tried to help them see that they had a misconception of the reason for the Sabbath. ***"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath!"*** Man was not made in order to keep the Sabbath, but the Sabbath was made for man's well-being, his benefit. This is the reason why acts of mercy could be done on the Sabbath. Keeping the Sabbath was not an end in itself, but a means to a good and desirable end for man.

Traditional ways of doing things must always be evaluated. We need to be sure that all recognize them for what they are—traditional ways, not law! Then, we need to be sure they are contributing effectively to the fulfilling of our mission! Changes may need to come, but changes for change's sake can be just as ineffective in carrying out our mission.

Over-emphasis on form! The church at Corinth had all the miraculous gifts to be exercised in their midst to accomplish God's purposes with them. But, the problem was....these gifts had to be exercised out of love for the up building of God's people. It seems that those who were exercising their gifts were doing so out of selfishness, self-centeredness to their own glory. Paul rebuked them and showed them how to use them for the good of the whole church. He concluded by saying that all was to be done in decency, in order, one person at a time. (1 Corinthians 14:33, 40).

But orderliness can also have its dangers! Order or forms are developed in order to carry out the purposes of God in the midst of God's people. But when the true purpose for order and form are lost, it becomes formalism. The purpose of the Lord's Supper is to remember Christ and the help it can be to us spiritually (1 Corinthians 11:20-22, 28-30). The church had lost the purpose and were carrying out the form. Singing in our worship assemblies can be of great benefit to Christians. But if we sing these songs of great dedication and commitment, but with no intent of doing what we sing....The form has become the END, not the MEANS to a correct

END. To affirm Christ as Lord in our midst, but with no intent of carrying out what He commands....such is only a form.....not a MEANS to an END.

Our mission (evangelizing the nations) is our purpose for existence. It is the END towards which all MEANS or METHODS are designed and entered into. Even the maturing of God's people is not an END in itself but a MEANS to an END.....which is, the continued, explosive, and involving of all of God's people in evangelizing the world.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

A man was given the job of lighthouse keeper on a rugged coast line. Many ships and countless lives were in his care constantly. He was given enough fuel to keep the lamps going for at least a month. Then, every thirty days, he was given a new supply and charged with the seriousness of the responsibility.

In a few days came a knock on his door. A neighbor woman was pleading for fuel for her stove for heat for her children. Later, a father came asking for fuel for his lamp so his son might get his homework. Another came stating he needed fuel for his engine to operate his business. All were worthy needs....so he gave each some fuel. Before the month was out his fuel was gone.

The next day, a government official knocked on the door demanding an explanation why the lights were out. The keeper kept apologizing to the official and stressed that all were needed causes to which he contributed. The official reminded him: *"You were given one main task above all others—to keep the lights burning and give guidance to ships passing along the coast. Other demands upon your fuel were secondary to this. Your lights went out. As a result, three ships went down. For this there is no defense."*

The Christian has also been charged with a grave responsibility—seek and save the lost. It is our primary responsibility. So much is depending upon us to do our work well. If we fail, souls will be lost for all eternity!

Lesson Four

The Need for Conviction of Truth

"Men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it." (Acts 2:22-24)

One of the obvious factors in the preaching and teaching of the Apostles was their conviction of the message they preached! They knew the truthfulness of what they preached. Their preaching was designed to bring about that same conviction in the hearts of the hearers. Peter's sermon in Acts 2 was clear, plain and straight forward. He said they had crucified the very One they had been looking for—the Messiah (the Christ). God has raised Him up to be both Lord and Christ. You have sinned grievously and are in a lost condition (understood). His sermon brought conviction to their hearts that brought the desirable response...what must we do! Peter's answer was simple but to the point—you need to repent and be immersed for the remission or forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38). They gladly received his word and were baptized.

Sermon after sermon was recorded with the ring of conviction—conviction of the truthfulness of what was preached—conviction of the people's lost condition—conviction that the people needed Christ and the salvation He offered—conviction that they had to be obedient to the gospel to receive forgiveness. That same conviction is needed today, not only in the one doing the teaching, but also in the hearts of the hearers. It should be obvious, that without conviction: (1) We have no message to offer; (2) We have no compulsion to take a message; and (3) We will have no compassion to take the message to the lost.

THE CONVICTION OF THE EARLY CHURCH

The early church had strong convictions about Jesus: (1) That He was the bread of life (John 6:35); (2) That He was the way, the truth, and the life and the only access to the Father (John 14:6); (3) That only truth can make one free; and (4) That those who will enter the kingdom of heaven are those that do the will of the Father in heaven (Matthew 7:21). Their conviction of Jesus' resurrection gave them great boldness to speak (Acts 4:13-20). Many had seen Jesus put to death and knew He was buried, but that He was also raised on the 3rd day that many were allowed to be witness to (1 Corinthians 15:6). The early church was convicted, grounded and rooted in Christ Jesus as Lord. They proved it by the way they lived and died for Jesus. They proved it by carrying that message over their world in one generation (Mark 16:15, 19-20; Colossians 1:23; Acts 8:4). They understood and were convicted of their need of submission to Christ as Lord (Luke 6:46). They showed it by giving up their lands, houses, friends, families, etc., and even to the extent of being put into prison, persecuted in various forms, and enduring horrible deaths. YES....they had Conviction!

WHAT ABOUT OUR CONVICTION?

Do we have the same convictions that they had? Do we believe that Jesus is man's only hope of eternal life; that He is the only way to the Father; and that without Christ all is lost? Do we really believe that only God's truth properly understood, believed, and obeyed will set men free (1 Peter 1:22; Hebrews 5:8-9)? And, do we really believe that God wants His gospel preached to the whole world in our generation? Do we show our faith by our actions? Are we really willing to die for those convictions of truth? Do we encourage this one true gospel to be preached and then stand firmly behind that preaching at all cost?

If we are not sure that we believe these great truths, then, let's get down to the business of studying to see what the Bible teaches. Let's not dilly-dally around, playing church, until everyone is lost because we are not sure of what we believe. Let's be sure of what we believe and then go forth with great conviction and a sense of urgency to tell others of God's way of salvation (Psalm 51:12-13). Let's go forth with optimism believing that there are those who will respond to God's gracious invitation.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LOVE IN EVANGELISM

While conviction is critical to having a message to speak, even so love of God and our fellowman is a critical attitude that helps to motivate our doing the evangelizing. Without this love there will be no evangelizing. A person can be convicted by God's truth which leads to an obedience to the gospel. We can actually be recipients of God's great and magnificent love (John 3:16) and at the same time not fully grasp the great significance of that love and how it should affect our attitudes and actions. Jesus reminds us that there is no greater way to show one's love for another than to give his life (John 15:13). God has shown His magnificent love to us in His Son. The expected reaction to this love is to love God in return (1 John 4:19). Love for God is shown by obedience to His commands (1 John 5:3). Serving God is in reality done by our service to our fellowman out of the same love that God showed to us. There is no greater love to be shown to our fellowman than to give them a message of hope eternal. Thus, love is a key motive for evangelizing with God's truth!

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Genuine love will cause God's people to plan to evangelize, prepare themselves to fulfill the plan, finance the plan, and faithfully stay with the plan until results have become a source of joy for God's people.

Lesson Five

The Challenge to Become Teachers

"Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching....But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them.....Then He said to His disciples, the harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." (Matthew 9:35-38)

As Jesus traveled among the cities, villages, and synagogues teaching people, He had compassion on them for they were without a truly loving shepherd to help give them direction for their lives. He encouraged His disciples to pray for laborers to be sent forth among the people. The harvest was ready and laborers were badly needed. The situation today is still the same—the multitudes need what Jesus has to offer. But laborers are needed to go forth to tell the good news about Jesus.

Jesus told His disciples to pray for laborers.....why? Wasn't Jesus already teaching the multitudes? He was the great teacher....no one could match Him! And didn't He have twelve disciples to help do the teaching? Yes, but that wasn't enough! More, many more were needed in order to get the job done. Later, Jesus sent forth seventy laborers to go from city to city. Jesus is helping us see a great principle—**the more laborers there are, the greater the harvest!** The more people involved in reaching out to others with the gospel, the more souls that can be reached. Someone may observe, *"Don't we have a full-time preacher that is supposed to be reaching people?"* Yes, that is his primary task! *"Then, why should others have to be involved?"* The answer is obvious—the more the laborers, the greater the harvest! The principle is clearly stated in 2 Corinthians 9:6: ***"He which sows sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which sows bountiful shall reap also bountifully."*** The more laborers, the more seed that is sown. And the more seed sown, the greater the expected harvest. Of course, there is another factor involved in the process—there must be the openness of the heart and willingness of the mind to be taught God's truth. This also helps to determine the largeness of the harvest.

A young boy of ten agreed that he would get his neighbor's groceries in town each week for a year. It meant a two mile walk there and back. At the end of the year, he would be paid. He would be given thirteen eggs and the loan of a setting hen. He had a choice: eat the eggs and his pay would be gone; or, hatch them out—which he did. By the time he was eighteen (eight years later), he had enough money to go to college on! Smallness is not the problem in and of itself. It is how you use that smallness to make it multiply. The small can become large when properly used. Thirteen eggs is a small number, but properly used (eight years later) it can become a multitude.

COMMIT TO FAITHFUL MEN!

The apostle Paul took several men with him on his missionary trips to help train them in the work of reaching the lost. One of those men was Timothy, who had been a faithful

companion during most of Paul's efforts among the nations. Just before his death, he was inspired to write Timothy his last letter encouraging him to do the same thing with others that Paul had done with him—*"the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."* (2 Timothy 2:2). In other words, carry out the great commission, which is two-fold. The challenge is not only to reach out to the lost with the gospel message, but to also teach and train those who respond to in turn reach out also

THREE IMPORTANT CONCEPTS INVOLVED

In Paul's admonition to Timothy can be found three important concepts: (1) The need for a teacher; (2) The need for a learner; and (3) The need for a purpose.

The need for a Teacher! This kind of teacher should be knowledgeable of the message of Christ. He cannot teach what he does not know. Thus, he should be one who is hungering and thirsting for God's righteousness (Matthew 5:6). But the emphasis is placed on his being a "faithful" person. If he is to find and teach faithful persons, then he, himself, must be faithful. He has to be the kind of person who is willing to give the time and effort needed to teach others.

The need for faithful Learners! The expression, *"faithful men,"* is used in a generic sense. The Greek word is, **anthropos**, which is the generic word for both men and women. We know that women were to be taught so they could teach others from such passages as Titus 2:4, *"older women were to teach the younger women."* But a limitation was placed on the woman's teaching—not to teach over the man (1 Timothy 2:11-15). Thus, both men and women need to be taught and prepared for the work of reaching out to the lost with the message of salvation. The word, *"faithful,"* can be understood as *"trustworthy, trustworthy, reliable, and dependable as a person."* In this context, it would seem to be used in the sense of one who is dependable or reliable. It is assumed that they are Christians. The stress is on quality, not quantity. One who is willing to spend the time to be taught with the intent of passing the message on to others also.

The need for Purpose! Do we teach others just to have something to do? Some men just like to be up before others. They are not so concerned about what is taught or the results, but to feed their ego. The purpose is clearly stated in this passage: *"who shall be able to teach others also."* Faithful people are preparing other faithful people to faithfully teach others. It is to help them to become capable, competent, and qualified teachers of others. It is to take a faithful Christian and make him into a "fruit-bearing Christian!" (John 15:4-5). Christianity is propagated and spread through proper examples and teaching. The more teachers who are trained, the greater will be the spread of Christianity.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

I hope that the need for laborers is obvious! Then, how can we get more people involved in studying, learning, maturing? How can we get more people to commit themselves to reaching out to the lost? How can we find more faithful people willing to be prepared to teach others?

Lesson Six

The Importance of the Ordinary

“One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus....” (John 1:40-42a)

The gospel of John has some unique sections that the other Gospels do not have. One of such is the calling of the first five disciples that is found in John 1:35-45. The names of the first five disciples were: John, Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael. But something special is stated about both Andrew and Philip—they not only became followers of Jesus, but they also brought someone else to Jesus (verses 41, 45). Neither of these men became outstanding among the Apostles, but they still did a very important thing—they reached out to someone else! Some would call them just ordinary men among men! One of the reasons for the great growth in the early church was that just ordinary people brought others to Jesus to be taught about Him.

JESUS’ EMPHASIS UPON THE ORDINARY

Jesus was born and lived among ordinary people. He was a carpenter’s son (Matthew 13:54-58). He never had or knew riches, nor power that men strive to achieve. It was stated of Him, *“the Foxes have holes, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.”* (Matthew 8:20).

Jesus’ teachings were primarily for and to the ordinary man. His words found the greatest appeal among the ordinary person—*“and the common people heard Him gladly.”* (Mark 12:37). This emphasis is seen even in the great Sermon on the Mount—*“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.”* (Matthew 5:3, 5) Later, in the letters to Christians, they needed to be reminded of this fact—*“hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to them that love him?”*(James 2:5) Also, *“For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called....”* (1 Corinthians 1:26).

Jesus chose ordinary men to be his Apostles. They were not rich or famous; nor were they men of political power or prestige. Most worked at ordinary trades among the people. There was nothing about these men that would attract the well-to-do. But the common people, the ordinary people, were willing to listen to them.

The ordinary man or woman played a very important role in the early church, as well as today....of which we all are aware!

THE ORDINARY IN THE CHURCH TODAY

The church will be made up of all kinds of people, as it was in the beginning; but, the overwhelming numbers are going to be among the ordinary (Matthew 28:18-20). People of all nations will flow into the church, but it will primarily be composed of the ordinary (common) people.

There is, however, an interesting thing about some who start out as “ordinary” but wind up being “extraordinary!” Simon Peter was just an “ordinary” fisherman. He was brought to Jesus by his “ordinary” brother, Andrew. While Andrew did not stand out among the other Apostles, Peter did! But the impact that Jesus had on him brought out qualities that made him “extraordinary.”

It should be obvious to all that not everyone will become a “Simon Peter,” nor wind up being in the forefront in the church. As well, all cannot be Elders, Deacons, Preachers, Teachers, Missionaries, etc. The majority in the church will be the “ordinary” person. What can we do about this fact?

- 1) Sit and complain about our lack of talent, ability, or opportunity?
- 2) Sit idly by and wish I had some great work to do?
- 3) Minimize all work which will not bring me honor and prestige?
- 4) Become more interested in credit than the cross?
- 5) Think—“*I must be great, or I will be nothing!*”
- 6) **Or, be willing to seek out and do what I can like Andrew?**

POEM

“Just an ordinary member of the church,” I heard him say,
But you’d always find him present even on a rainy day.

He had a hearty handclasp for the stranger in the aisle,
And a friend who was in trouble found sunshine in his smile.

When the sermon helped him, he told the preacher so;
And when he needed comfort, he let the preacher know.

He always gave so freely and tried to do his share
In all the ordinary tasks for which some have no care.

His talents were not many but his love for God was true;
His prayers were not in public, but he prayed for me and you.

“AN ORDINARY MEMBER?”.....I think I would say.....
He was EXTRAORDINARY in a humble sort of way.

Someone has phrased the thought so well in these words: “*I am only one, but I am one! I cannot do everything, but I can do something! What I can do, I ought to do; and what I ought to do—by the grace of God I will do.*” It is the ordinary person that gets the job done, if it is done!

THE IMPORTANCE OF HOW WE VIEW OURSELVES

If we looked upon ourselves as unimportant and ordinary people that cannot do much good, then we are defeated before we begin! Listening to the voices of Defeatism is well illustrated in the Bible!

The ten spies who were sent out to evaluate the land: *“We are not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we.”* (Numbers 13:31-33) They so discouraged the people with their “defeatists” attitude that they were not able to go in and conquer and settle in the land.

The One Talent man: *“...I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground...”* (Matthew 25:24-30) The thing that was so sad, he didn’t even try! If he had tried and failed would have been one thing, but not even to try was inexcusable. His condemnation was just—just as ours will be if we make no effort to do what we can.

Israel coming out of Egypt: *“...because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore have you dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell you in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians.”*(Exodus 14:11-14) With God’s help, the Egyptians were defeated, and they were safely led through the Red Sea to their deliverance.

The defeatists person has forgotten that not only has God commanded us to do things, but has promised to help us accomplish them. He has commanded us—ordinary people—to preach the gospel to the whole world (Matthew 28:18-20). He has chosen through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe the gospel (1 Corinthians 1:21). Then, let’s not be guilty of saying, *“Oh, it doesn’t do any good to preach the gospel to people—they won’t receive it.”* The power to save is in the gospel....so, people must hear it. If one hundred people hear it, but will not respond to it, we have not failed in our mission! We carried the gospel to them.

We need to have an attitude of victory about our efforts! Great good can come through the preaching and teaching of the Gospel of Christ! This is what God has commanded us to do. We show our great faith and confidence in God and His Word by doing it! Let’s be like the two spies: Joshua and Caleb: *“Let us go up at once and possess the land....our God will fight for us.”* (Numbers 13:30; 14:7-8).

Anything we do for Jesus to reach out to others is important! *“And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.”* (Matthew 10:42). It is the ordinary people doing the important little things that makes the difference. Let’s don’t underrate our ability as an ordinary person. Let’s put away such distorted sense of values and put our ordinary abilities and talents to work in the Lord’s vineyard (2 Timothy 2:20-21).

Lesson Seven

Making Christianity Attractive

“And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses’ hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses knew not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.” (Exodus 34:29)

Moses face shown! Why? Because he was in the presence of God! It caused a sense of awe in the hearts of the people. Such would help the people to listen to what he relays to them from God.

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.” (Acts 4:13) Yes, they had been with Jesus (God-Man) for at least three years. It affected them greatly by being with Him and the people recognized such. Their faces did not shine like Moses, but the people still knew. **Would you say they were a good advertisement for Christ?**

When the business world advertises, what do they use—their best or their worse? Can you imagine the LIQUOR INDUSTRY advertising their brew by drunks? Or, can you imagine a stringy-haired woman being used to sell \$500.00 dresses? We all know very well what they would use to advertise their products.

Christianity is the best product in the world! There is nothing superior, nor better. There is no better product on the Spiritual Market. People need to be made aware of such—Christianity needs to be sold. God has chosen that this selling be done through His people. But it is also obvious that He needs the best representatives possible. Can you imagine a hypocrite effectively selling true Christianity? Can you imagine an unfaithful Christian selling Christianity at all? But you can imagine a true Christian having his impact on selling the product. Even a new Christian that is joyful over what he has found, can help create an interest in people’s hearts. God wants each of us, no matter what our talent or ability may be, to so prepare our lives and ourselves to go out into the world to sell Christianity to a lost world.

THE CHRISTIAN’S BEST SELLING POINTS

LOVE makes Christianity beautiful and attractive! *“By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another.”* (John 13:35) It was this love that made the gospel possible (John 3:16). God showed His concern and compassion for lost mankind by sacrificing His Son for us. This love can even be expressed towards one’s enemies. *“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.”* (Matthew 5:44) Love is one of the most powerful influences for good in the universe. If true love is shown among brethren, we can sell Christianity!

UNITY makes Christianity attractive! Unity helps the world to know God sent His Son to this earth for our good, not our harm (John 3:16). Jesus showed His grave concern for the unity of

His people by spending time on the night of His betrayal to pray for the unification of His people (John 17:20-23). The Psalmists stated, ***“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”*** (Psalm 133:1) But how discouraging, disconcerting, and repulsive to watch brethren fight one another. Our greatest impact on the world will be when we are unified and working fervently together in the Lord’s vineyard.

GOOD WORKS makes Christianity attractive! Jesus emphasized this concept in Matthew 5:16, ***“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”*** The Apostle Paul emphasized the same thing in Titus 3:8, ***“This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that you affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.”*** And the Apostle Peter added these words, ***“Having your behavior honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.”*** What a great representation of Christianity we can be when we are engaged in good works in our community. The church needs to be known for its good works.

GOOD SPEECH makes Christianity attractive! The world has always been filled with speech that dishonors God and degrades mankind. The world needs to hear clean speech, kind speech, and considerate speech. We can make the proper impact with good speech that can help sell Christianity to a lost world. Right words at the right time, in the right way, and to the right person. ***“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer every man.”*** (Colossians 4:6)

A GODLY, DEDICATED LIFE can make Christianity attractive! When people are willing to give themselves to something and even willing to give their lives for something—it attracts the attention of those around them. One of the greatest selling points of Christianity is a life given to God. In order to have the greatest impact, it needs to be a life that is sincere, consistent, and constant. Jesus must be truly Lord of our lives at all times—not part-time! The Bible must be my guide in all things. I must not be spasmodic in my efforts to live, but dependable—the same tomorrow as I am today.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We have the greatest product to sell! It is not something of which to be ashamed. Everyone needs it desperately. It is the greatest sale that we can ever make in this life. Those who buy will be eternally grateful to us for selling it to them. Let’s go out into the world with one primary thought....”**I am going to be the best representation of Christ that I can be!”**

Lesson Eight

Day by Day

“So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:46-47)

About fifty days after Jesus’ death great events began to occur. The kingdom of heaven was set up among men. It soon began to affect the whole area of Jerusalem, Judea, etc. Miraculous things took place continually. People’s lives were affected greatly. The church had a wonderful beginning. Three thousand obeyed the Gospel the first day. Shortly afterwards the number came to five thousand men, and then a great multitude. All Jerusalem was affected in a short time. The church continued meeting together daily in the Temple. They worshipped, were instructed, and fellowshiped together on a daily basis for quite a while.

THEIR RECEPTION OF THE GOSPEL

These people had found something that was very important to them. They gladly received the message (Acts 2:41). They illustrated the parable that Jesus told about a man seeking after a pearl of great price. When he found it, he sold all that he had in order to purchase it (Matthew 13:45-46). These people had found something to rejoice and be happy over. They were thankful to be a part of God’s great new family. They were happy in spite of the sacrifices they had to make:

- 1) They had left their religion of past generations...even their parents in some instances.
- 2) They went against the majority of what the people believed.
- 3) They accepted something for which they would be persecuted—even to the extent of being imprisoned or death itself.
- 4) They would be scattered from their homes.

We are impressed with these people and their:

- 1) Devotion to their brethren (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32)
- 2) Willingness to suffer for their new faith (Acts 7; 8:3), as well as the spirit with which they suffered (Acts 7:60; 5:41).
- 3) Unceasing effort to preach Jesus Christ (Acts 4:18-20, 29, 31; 5:19-20, 42; Acts 6:7).

ADVANTAGES OF MEETING OFTEN

Acts 2:46a—They could share their gladness in being together. One of the great values of joy is being able to share it with others of like-mind.

Acts 2:47—They were welded together into a oneness of heart and mind. They were not only forming common basic doctrinal beliefs, but mutual determination, helpfulness, and

encouragement. Meeting daily helped to make all of this possible. When they were scattered by persecution, they were prepared for the mission that laid before them.

Acts 2:44-45—They made possible for them to share with those less fortunate. They not only had opportunity to know their brethren, but also to know their needs. In seeing such, they shared freely with those that had need.

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN

Realize what a great privilege it is to be God's children. Of all peoples on earth, why me? But I am a Christian. I have this privilege. I need to appreciate it, to show it, to talk about it, and not be ashamed of it. This should not be placed secondary in our lives, but primary! It must not be put into a small corner of our life and then brought out for an hour on Sunday morning only. We should value it so highly that we are willing to sell all to possess it.

We need to try very hard to capture their spirit of unity, oneness, and concern for one another. We must not be satisfied with just speaking to one another once a week. We need to work at the job of creating in our midst what they had.....a oneness of heart, mind and soul.

We must not be content to just keep house! We need to realize that our business is to unceasingly preach Jesus Christ as they did (Acts 5:42). We need to become a force to be reckoned with by our society (Acts 6:7). They had to be persecuted and scattered to break up their impact on Jerusalem (Acts 8:4). The rulers of the people warned them, but this didn't stop them. They put them in prison or jail and they got out. They warned and beat them again, but they still filled Jerusalem with their teaching. Finally one of them concluded....leave them alone, for if this work be of God it cannot be stopped. (Acts 5:38-39).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

A preacher once observed, "*There is no telling what God could do with one dedicated man.*" He then wisely added: "*I will be that dedicated man.*" We never know what God will do with each of us who devotedly give ourselves to Him; nor what He will do with His church collectively. So, we need to be that dedicated person—that dedicated church. We need to give ourselves wholeheartedly to our task. We need to live as holy a life as we can. We need to look seek, pray, and prepare ourselves for opportunities to preach Christ. We need to support every effort to reach out with the gospel.

The early church knew its reason for existence—to preach Christ and Him crucified. Let's show that we know ours!

Lesson Nine

The Urgency of Our Mission

“Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.” (2 Corinthians 5:20)

A little child is lost! The mother and father became panic stricken worrying over the child. They were pleading for all the help they could get to help find their child. Somehow, we need to capture this sense of urgency to save a soul from death. Jesus said that man’s most precious possession was his soul (Matthew 16:26). If so, then the most important thing in this life is to help save that soul—to call upon all men to be reconciled to God.

The challenge is becoming greater and greater the longer our world stands because we are seeing more and more masses of unsaved people on earth. Our task is to take the Gospel to our generation. Unless the church can be awakened to the great urgency, we will miserably fail in our task. Both young and old must feel this urgency and commit ourselves to the task. We need to recapture the vision, zeal, and urgency of the early Christians that carried the Gospel into all the world in their generation (Colossians 1:23).

THINGS THAT HINDER A SENSE OF URGENCY

Unwillingness to pay the cost of evangelism. The cost must be paid. God paid the highest cost in the giving of His Son to die for us. It cost Jesus his gaping wounds, bloody sweat, mocking laughter, and a horrible death—physically and spiritually. And we too must pay a price. It will take our money, our time, our talents, our sacrifices, and often loss of friends and families. If we are not willing to pay the cost, the sense of urgency will not be there.

Belief in the doctrine of universalism. Such a belief advocates that people will be saved whether they obey the Gospel or not. It is an old heresy, believed in the Garden of Eden (“**You will not die.**”), and taught by Origen in 185-254 AD. It has periodically appeared through the ages. Such a doctrine overlooks some things: (1) The seriousness of sin, (2) The justness of God, (3) The truthfulness of God, (4) The concept of Reward and Punishment that compliment one another, and (5) Plan teaching of Scripture. It is fostered by a misconception of what tolerance is. Tolerance is obviously a virtue, but only if a man believes something and respects the rights of another to disagree with him. True tolerance does not play “footsy” with the Truth! God will have all men to be saved, but: (1) They must be saved through faith in Christ (John 14:6; 3:16); (2) Through repentance (2 Peter 3:9); (3) Through obedience to the Gospel (Matthew 7:21; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). This kind of doctrine cuts the sense of urgency out of our mission.

“Church joining” kills the sense of urgency. There is a difference in being born again and joining some church. More is involved than just joining up. We must: (1) Recognize that we are lost in sin because of our sins; (2) That we cannot save ourselves with our own good life; (3) That we need desperately God’s merciful forgiveness; (4) That forgiveness comes when we give ourselves—heart, soul, mind, and strength—to serving the Lord. “Church joiners” are not

interested in carrying the message of salvation to others. The person who is born again senses that deep need of finding others who are lost that want to be saved.

Discouragement can undermine our sense of urgency. When we make an effort and it fails to produce fruit, it can lead to discouragement and stop trying to reach out. Evangelizing the lost has become increasingly more difficult over the years. Let's be sure that a lack of reaching the lost is because of the stubbornness of sinful man, not our failure to carry the message to them.

A smug self-righteousness can undermine a sense of urgency. This attitude is often shown by thinking: *"I have obeyed the Gospel. If others want it, they can come and get it."* But a lack of concern for reaching others can be deadly to our spiritual life. We can become cold-hearted, complacent social club (Revelation 3:14-17).

WHAT CAN PROMOTE THIS SENSE OF URGENCY?

We must believe that Christ died that all mankind could have an opportunity to be saved. Christ in our hearts can be a strong motivating force to evangelize. It is God in us motivating us to do His will (Philippians 2:12-13). Too many tend to keep Christ outside their heart like the Laodiceans. If we don't believe in carrying the Gospel to every creature, we don't believe in Christ (Mark 16:15-16).

We must believe and love God's Truth. When we no longer hold high our view of God's truth in our hearts, we lose any reason to evangelize—we have no message of hope. Decline in evangelistic zeal can be traced directly to a loss of faith in the simple Gospel and its power to save. Urgency must come from believing these great truths:

- 1) That man is separated from God by sin;
- 2) That he is lost, undone, without hope in this condition;
- 3) If he dies in this condition, he will be lost eternally;
- 4) All must stand before God's judgment seat;
- 5) All will either go to heaven or hell;
- 6) Jesus Christ and His Gospel is man's only hope of salvation.

A sense of urgency comes from a Christ-mastered will. We are commissioned to "Go." We either obey or not. A Christ-mastered will....will go! (Luke 6:46)

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Do we still have that sense of urgency to reach the lost? If not, are we concerned about it? Are we concerned enough to find out why? When the sense of urgency is there, we will bear fruit (John 15:5).

Lesson Ten

The Need for A Proper Attitude Towards the Lost

“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.” (Romans 10:1-2)

When a person goes fishing, he secures bait for his hook, throws the line into the water, and hopefully lands his own fish. Spiritually, we too must prepare ourselves with a message to offer the lost, we must throw out the life-line to them, and then help bring the lost to safety. Just imagine that all of us approach a stream, but only one cast his line in. How many fish would “we” catch? Jesus wants to make us all “fishers of men.”

A study was conducted in Latin America to see what were the fastest growing movements. The study showed that Communists, Jehovah-Witnesses, and Pentecostal were the top three. It should be obvious that their growth did not depend as much as their varying messages as in the mobilizing of their people to all go out and speak to others. We believe that reaching the lost is deeply rooted in an attitude towards the lost. Without this, there will be no real success. We are convinced that this is critical to reaching them. There is probably no better example of this concept than in the life of the Apostle Paul (other than Christ).

PAUL’S GREAT CONCERN FOR THE LOST

Because they were his kinsmen. At least some of the lost were his own country-men (Romans 10:1-3). It is natural to be concerned first about your own nation, relatives, neighbors, city or state. These are the ones the closest to you. He even said that he would be willing to be lost if that could bring them to obey the Gospel of Christ (Romans 9:1-5).

Because Christ had died for them also. As a nation, they had enjoyed a special relationship to God. They were the ones through whom the “Messiah” had come. And even though their leaders had seen to the crucifixion of Christ, He was still willing to save them. As Paul stated, if Christ could save him, he could save anyone. He had been a severe persecutor of the church. He called himself the *“chief of sinners.”* (1 Timothy 1:15-16)

Because he knew that there was much good about them. They were zealous for what they believed. Their lives were generally much better than the Gentile world. If they could be turned, they could be a great force to reach the Gentile world (Romans 10:1-3). And even today, in our world, there are many zealous, devoted people that need to be turned from religious error to the Truth of God. We need to have Paul’s concern for them.

Because he knew their blindness. Jesus indicated in the Parables of the “Lost Sheep,” the “Lost Coin,” and the “Lost Son,” that:

- 1) Some do not know they are in a lost condition;
- 2) Some know, but do not know the way to God and need help;

3) And some who know and rebel, or are indifferent.

Paul's heart went out to the Jews because of their blindness. Some were obviously deceived by false teachers. They had a veil over their hearts that they could not see the obvious—the truth about Jesus. To bring these to the truth is like ***“life from the dead.”***

Paul's deep concern for the lost expressed itself in a positive way. It led him to teach and preach privately and publicly to reach them (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). He gave up an awful lot in order to reach the lost. It led him to work untiringly in the kingdom (1 Corinthians 10:33). His efforts actually stagger our minds. It led him to pray for them also (Romans 10:1). He took his deep concern for the lost to God in prayer continually. But he didn't stop there! He worked to reach them and did not expect God to save them another way.

NOTEWORTHINESS OF PAUL'S CONCERN

What was so amazing about Paul's concern over people? It was a concern over those who hated him, misrepresented him, and mal-treated him. They marred his successes and tried to embitter some of his followers. They tried hard to subvert his disciples and to overthrow their faith. Our challenge today may be no different! We need to try to reach people who speak evil of us and the church. Such did not stop Paul, nor should it stop us. It is obvious that most people will be obstinate, unreasonable, and prejudiced toward us. They were in Jesus' day, in Paul's day, and our day will be no different. Possibly one of the great lessons to learn from the Apostle is that he refused to despair, to faint, and to quit. The people Paul dealt with refused the truth, were stubborn, and were not likely to be saved. Yet, it did not stop him from being deeply concerned about them.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

A Newspaper published an account of a lawsuit against a doctor. The doctor had passed by the scene of an accident without giving aid. One of the men died from loss of blood. The family sued the Doctor and the court ruled against the Doctor. The reason.... *“The Doctor had knowledge of the situation, and was responsible for helping.”*

We see people all about us every day who need Christ and are dying without Him. And we can help them because we have the message of salvation. Do we pass by on the other side or do not have time to care? How much responsibility do we have to speak to them? Will the Judge of all the earth overlook our passing by without helping? Will He overlook our letting souls go into eternity without any effort to teach them?

May we be encouraged to feel keenly the same concern for the lost that the Apostle Paul had when he said: ***“I am debtor to Greeks and Barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish.”*** (Romans 1:14).

Lesson Eleven

Vessels Unto Honor

“But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.” (2 Timothy 2:20-21)

Do we want to be useful in the hands of God? Do we want to be a vessel unto honor in the house of God? If so, we must: (1) Put away sin in our lives—and anything that would hinder us; (2) Let God’s forgiveness set us apart for holy purposes; (3) Get ourselves prepared for every good work. Then, and only then, can we work together with God (1 Corinthians 3:9).

Think about it...working together with God! What an awesome thought! Noah worked with God to try to save a lost world. So many others have worked with God to get the Gospel message to the lost. But what about Paul Cantrell, Lord can you use him? What about each of us, can we be used?

“A chisel cannot carve a statue—it is only cold, dead steel.” Yet, neither can the artist carve the statue without the chisel. But both working together can turn out a thing of beauty! God is depending upon us to do His work. But we cannot do it alone. It is God and I laboring together to get the job done.

DANGER OF UNDER-RATING OURSELVES

It is easy to make an effort to reach out, be rebuffed, and conclude that I don’t have the ability necessary to reach the lost. God can use any one that gives himself in service to Him, but it may be at the level we have prepared ourselves to serve. We need to prepare ourselves for every good work (2 Timothy 2:21). Let’s look at some examples to illustrate:

Moses was used mightily by God. When he was first called to serve, he did not feel that he was adequate for the task. He even excused himself because of an inability to speak well (Exodus 4:10). But God helped to solve that problem and he became the great Law-giver and Leader of the Israelite nation. The Apostle Paul purposely stated that he did not preach the Gospel with excellency of speech (1 Corinthians 2:1).

Peter and John were fishermen by trade, but used mightily by God. They were uneducated and untrained by the schools of their day (Acts 4:13), but they had been educated and trained by the greatest teacher of all—Jesus! We need that same education and training to be useful to God.

The poor widow had just barely enough to keep body and soul together. But her heart of gratitude led her to give all she had left to God’s Temple. When Jesus saw such, he praised her for her efforts (Mark 12:41-44). Even Jesus said he had not where to lay His head (Matthew 8:20), and no one worked with God any greater for the good of mankind. Riches are often a peril

to our souls, if not gained and used wisely (1 Timothy 6:9-10). But less we forget, it was the common people that kept Christianity marching forward. Money is needed, but not having much is not an excuse for not working with God to accomplish His purposes for our lives.

God is quite able to work with those who prepare themselves in mind, heart, and lives to do His bidding.

PREPARING TO BE VESSELS UNTO HONOR

What are some things that we need to be concerned about in order to properly prepare ourselves to be vessels unto honor?

2 Corinthians 13:5. We need to examine our hearts to see if we really want to be vessels unto honor. Some tourists were observing an art gallery in Europe. One man said with contempt, “*I don’t think much of these pictures.*” The Curator said: “*Sir, it is not the pictures who are on trial, but the visitors.*” Let’s look honestly into our own hearts to see where the trouble might be.

1 Thessalonians 5:22. Let’s have an uncompromising spirit against sin. We need to let it be known who is directing our lives. Sin is not on the throne, but Christ is there ruling! Like God, we will hate every evil way!

Acts 4:13. We need to have speech that reveals we have been with Jesus. We let that be known by being filled with His Words first, and then to live them in our lives.

Romans 1:14. We need to have a consciousness of being in debt to all men like Paul. We need to work in season and out of season—when it is convenient and inconvenient. We owe a debt that we don’t want to pay—death! We have been delivered from such a terrible debt. Now, we need a new debt....to want to help others to be delivered.

2 Timothy 4:7. We need to have a sense of fidelity, faithfulness, like Paul. At the end of his life he could look back over a faithful running of the course that God had laid out for him. Are we running our race with God with patience. Are we determined to run it faithfully to the end?

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

May we resolve to do what Paul states in 2 Timothy 2:24-26: “*And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.*”

Lesson Twelve

Something Worth Dying For

“Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.” (Acts 26:19)

The Apostle Paul had changed from his former religious affiliation (Judaism) to follow Christ and His teachings. This change was made out of strong convictions of the truthfulness of Christianity. He was supremely convinced that Jesus was truly the Son of God. He also tried to convince others of this great truth....and was even willing to die for his new found faith in Christ.

What would cause a man to change from his father’s religion? What could cause a person to give up position and prestige in his past religion? What could cause a man to be willing to die for his beliefs? There certainly had to be something of great value that Christ offered to those who would follow and serve Him. Let’s look at three things in this lesson.

CHRIST OFFERS THE GREATEST PURPOSE FOR LIVING

Solomon was said to be wise, rich, and powerful! He was a person who tried everything to see what was really important in life. After trying all avenues of satisfaction, he declared: ***“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, fear God and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”*** (Ecclesiastes 12:13) Is it man’s purpose for living only to be born, live, eat, work, reproduce, and die? Do we not have a higher purpose for our existence than this?

Christ offers to mankind the greatest of all purposes for living on this earth. There is no higher purpose than what Paul records in 1 Corinthians 16:19-20: ***“What? Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own? For you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”*** All we do, say, or think is directed toward glorifying God. And there is no greater honor we can give unto God than helping others to come to God.

CHRIST OFFERS THE GREATEST OF RELATIONSHIPS

This privilege is of a two-fold nature: (1) It offers fellowship with Deity; and (2) It offers fellowship with faithful, devoted, godly people of like-mind and spirit.

What are the values of having a relationship with God? Are there tangible benefits that I can know, understand, and profit by?

- 1) We can have the forgiveness of sins and all that it involves. We not only have our sins forgiven upon our obedience to the Gospel (Acts 2:38), but as we faithfully live the Christian life-style (1 John 1:7). There is no other way to have forgiveness!
- 2) God becomes our Father in a spiritual sense. He is the Father of all men in the sense of creation. We are all His offspring (Acts 17:28). But in a spiritual sense, He becomes our spiritual Father when we obey the Gospel! (1 John 3:1) Jesus tells us we

- have a choice of who will be our Father—God or Satan (Matthew 6:24). When we make the choice to become a child of God...we are born of God of the water and the Spirit (John 3:5). There is no other way that we know of to become sons of God.
- 3) We have the right and privilege of approaching the throne of God in prayer with Jesus as our one and only Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5). To reject Jesus will shut the door to the Throne of God. The greatness of this privilege is shown in 1 John 3:22: ***“And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.”***
 - 4) We have the promise of God’s care and providence over our lives (1 Peter 5:6-7; Philippians 4:6-7; Romans 8:28; Matthew 6:33). We have His assurance that He will work things in our lives for our good. He does not promise that we will not suffer or go through periods of chastisement. But that all things can be used to our spiritual benefit. Such promises are not made to the non-Christian!
 - 5) And most of all, we have the promise of Eternal Life with God. Jesus is the author of Eternal Salvation to all that obey Him (Hebrews 5:9). All of us will die and face judgment some day. There are only two destinies after death: Heaven or Hell! The greatest privilege of the faithful Christian is HEAVEN!

CHRIST HELPS US HAVE THE GREATEST INFLUENCE FOR GOOD

The Christian not only dies to himself, but to sin as well. His desire and efforts are to live a life of righteousness. And because of this great change for good, the Christian becomes a great influence for good. Jesus said that His people are the ***“salt of the earth”*** and the ***“light of the world.”*** (Matthew 5:13-14). We can help people to open their eyes to truth and turn them from the way of darkness to the light of God—from the power of Satan unto God (Acts 26:18). By our godly lives we can be blameless and harmless people and shine as lights in the world for good (Philippians 2:15). Such an influence can be far-reaching and endless in its impact. It can impact our homes, our community, our nation, and the world. Our world is definitely a better place in which to live because of the work of Christ in our lives.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

People should become Christians because: (1) It is a pressing need for their soul; (2) It is a gracious offer from God; and (3) To refuse such an offer is to our eternal ruin! But in addition, people should become Christians because: (1) It gives the greatest challenge for living; (2) It offers the greatest of relationships and blessings that come from such; and (3) It has the greatest influences in our world to bless mankind.

What about you dear friend? Is Christianity worth dying for?

