

A LOVE FOR THE SOULS OF MEN

Perhaps one of the most familiar and most often quoted Bible verses is John 3:16. The verse says, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* Consider this verse from God’s perspective. God created man in his own image and after his own likeness (Genesis 1:26-27). God is the Father of spirits (Hebrews 12:9), not just of *“the spirits of just men made perfect”* (Hebrews 12:23) but *“the God of the spirits of al flesh”* (Numbers 16:22; 27:16). His love for the creatures made in his image is greater than his creatures can fathom. The Psalmist declared, *“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?”* (Psalm 8:3-4). God’s love for man is so great that even thou he is so pure and holy that he cannot look upon evil and iniquity (Habakkuk 1:13), yet he has commended his love toward a lost humanity. Paul wrote, *“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8). Many people wrongly insist that because of God’s great love He could never punish them for their sins. Be hot mistaken, God will by no means clear guilty sinners. The Psalms say, *“The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity,”* and *“God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day”* (Psalm 5:5, 7:11). Moses wrote that God is *“keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation”* (Exodus 34:7). The context bears out that God is merciful, gracious, longsuffering, abundant in goodness and truth (Exodus 34:6). And, God will not “clear the guilty,” but he will pardon iniquity and sin (Exodus 34:8-9).

Men trying to be holy and trying to imitate Christ find sin repulsive. Often the mistake is made of desiring the punishment of God to be brought down upon the wicked because there is no argument but that they really deserve it. James and John once thought this way as recorded in Luke 9:51-56, *“And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.”* John 3:16 needs to be considered from God’s perspective if “a love for the souls of men” is ever to be cultivated strongly enough for Christians to give of their time, their talents, and their treasure to win them.

Time

Think of the time God has invested in the interest of wicked, sinful men to bring about their salvation. Before time began, God purposed to bring his Son into the world to save the lost. Paul wrote, *“According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Ephesians 3:11). The twenty-five hundred years of the Patriarchal period of Old Testament history and the fifteen hundred years of the Mosaic period of Old Testament history were designed to serve as a *“schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith”* (Galatians 3:24). He remains *“longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (II Peter 3:9). God gave and is continuing to give time which shows “a love for the souls of men.”

One test of the Christian which shows whether or not he loves God and the souls of men is the use made of time. The apostle Matthew wrote, *“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind”* (Matthew 22:37). Heart, soul, and mind is a description of the eternal part of man. “All” is a quantitative word expressive of the degree of love God requires from those who serve him. Christians need to cultivate to a greater degree their love for God and for the souls of men.

Talent

The ability and wisdom God displayed in providing the plan of salvation is so marvelous the prophets and even the angels desire to investigate it. Peter wrote, *“Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did*

THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

“...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel...” (Amos 7:8)

**PUTTING THE PERSONAL BACK IN
PERSONAL EVANGELISM**

Text: _____

Personally We Must Realize:

I. The _____ of our Mission

Notes:

II. The _____ of our Mission

Notes:

III. The _____ of our Mission

Notes:

IV. The _____ of our Mission

Notes:

V. The _____ of our Mission

Notes:

50 to 500 souls is sometimes a daunting task. For this reason, God gave explicit and detailed qualifications that a man must meet before serving as an elder (I Timothy 3:1ff). As you read through those qualifications in the future, ask yourself this question: Could a man possess these traits if he were not a man of daily, faithful prayer? The answer is undeniably no! Elders are to be men of prayer.

In turn, those prayers will keep them busy in the work God has for them to do. Their minds and hearts will be more attuned to what the flock needs if they have prayed daily for those needs to be met. Their senses will be aware of danger posed to the flock by false teachers if they have prayed for wisdom to determine such. Their compassion for the flock will be evident if they have prayed for them with tears filling their eyes.

Certainly prayer will motivate all of us to be busier in the things that matter. Parents, preachers, and elders, may we utilize this tool and incorporate it in our daily routines.

-Wayne Jones

signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into” (I Peter 1:10-12). Talent in the form of the wisdom of God in saving man exceeds man’s comprehension and can only find expression as God has revealed his will to man. Paul said, “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (I Corinthians 2:9-10).

Christians have different ability levels. Paul described it in I Corinthians 12 as the body of Christ or the church of Christ having many members yet not all of them having the same use or function. However, each member is expected to perform to the best of his talent level or ability. Paul said, “So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also” (Romans 1:15). The parable of the talents in Matthew 25 also teaches personal responsibility and accountability for doing the will of God. What the Christian does with the talent God has given him mirrors the love he has for God and the souls of men.

Treasure

Heaven was undeniably robbed of its richest treasure when Christ left the celestial regions to enter the world as a babe in Bethlehem. Yet, Philippians 2:6-7 says, “Who, being in the form of God, though it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” “God gave.”

John 3:16 viewed from the perspective of God means giving, and following the example God set means giving that which is nearest and dearest to the heart. Since God gave His Son, man should not hesitate or question to give his best in return. There are two parts to the presentation of the gospel: sending and going. Paul wrote, “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things” (Romans 10:14-15). While everyone cannot preach and teach (James 3:1), all must be ready to give an answer of the hope within (I Peter 3:15). And, all are instructed to support the preaching and teaching of the word of God to the salvation of the souls of men everywhere (I Corinthians 16:1-2). God expects Christians to give their earthly treasures to enrich heaven with the souls of men, one of which is worth more than the whole world (Matthew 16:26).

When John 3:16 is viewed from the perspective of God, Christians will rightly see themselves as instruments of God’s will to be used in getting the soul saving message of the gospel of Christ into the hearts and minds of lost and dying men and women. The Savior said, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

-Gary McDade

PRAYER WILL KEEP UP BUSY

Christianity is a religion that revolves around the work and participation of its members. Jesus stressed this need as He taught such parables as the “talents” (Matthew 25:14-30) and the “sower” (Mark 4:3-9). Paul reaffirmed this teaching by referring to God’s people as those who are “zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14). James warned that trying to live a life of faith without works was emptiness and void (James 2:17,26). Despite God’s continual reminder, He still addressed those who would try to follow Him and refuse to work (Proverbs 21:25; 26:14). Solomon describes the field of a lazy man as being overgrown with thorns and the wall around it as broken (Proverbs 24:30-31). What’s the point? We out to be people who are busy!

Someone might respond, “Well, I have that covered!” We are all busy people, are we not? Little League, soccer practice, band concerts, football games, school projects, overtime, and many other things keep us busy from sun up to sun down, almost every day. Let us remember that in our schedule of things to do, God must capture first place and retain such a position. Sadly, some who claim to be people of God are described in Psalm 39:6. Here David penned, “*Surely every man walks about like a shadow; surely they busy themselves in vain; he heaps up riches and does not know who will gather them*” (Psalm 39:6).

How then do I keep from being busy in vain? How do I go about reorganizing my priorities so that I am busy with things that will matter on the Day of Judgment? One of the many answers to this question is to pray. Not that all of our time in each day will be consumed with prayer, but that faithful prayer (which will be accompanied with action by the petitioner) will keep up busy.

As we continue this study, let us consider some areas of our lives and some roles in the church that would be spurred to greater service if those who occupied those roles were diligent in their prayer life.

Prayer Will Keep Parents Busy

If it is our prayer that our children be faithful to the Lord and that they remain faithful to Him, even after they have left home, we will not forgo activities of a secular nature that conflict with the service and activities of the Lord’s church? If our prayer for our children is that their future mate be a New Testament Christian, will we not closely monitor whom they date? Sometimes this might even include forbidding them from dating certain people. Do we view prayer as a miracle cure in these situations, or do we realize that prayers of this fashion will keep us on our toes as parents, to be watchful and careful with our children?

It is true that our children should hear us pray for them by name every single day of their lives. They should know that mom and dad are far more concerned about their spiritual future than their physical future. However, if this is expressed in words of prayer, but then refuted in actions, our prayer that God be first in our lives, we should be busy carrying that out in our daily lives. Any other scenario would result in hypocrisy and spiritual peril.

Prayer Will Keep Preachers Busy

Prayer should play a valuable role in the life of any gospel preacher. The twelve who were commissioned to go preach the gospel were afraid of being swayed from that task with serving tables. So special servants were chosen to care for the neglected widows so that the apostles could give themselves “*Continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word*” (Acts 6:4). Preachers of the Bible such as Peter, Paul, and Christ spent a portion (and sometimes a large portion) of each day in prayer. Sometimes they prayed before making an important decision (Mark 1:35). Sometimes they prayed at the end of a long day of work (Luke 5:16). Sometimes they prayed in the face of tremendous adversity (Luke 26:39). Sometimes they prayed with fellow workers (Acts 20:36). Sometimes they prayed in the midst of physical danger (Acts 27:29). Sometimes they prayed earnestly and intently that others might obey the gospel (Romans 10:1). Sometimes they prayed at the grave of a dear friend (John 11:41). Sometimes they prayed in thanksgiving for their fellow workers in the Lord (Philippians 1:4). Sometimes they prayed that those converted would be strengthened and encouraged (Colossians 1:9-11). Truly prayer had played a vital role in the lives of gospel preachers in the past, and it should be a vital part of life for current preachers as well.

What work would be done if every preacher prayed in the same situations and for the same reasons that men like Christ and Paul prayed! May we ever bed in prayer that we may boldly speak the things of God and that doors of opportunity may be opened (Ephesians 6:18-20)!

Prayer Will Keep Elders Busy

Just as in the case of parents or preachers, a man serving as an elder should not have to find something to keep him busy. The task of an elder is impossible to accurately measure with words. Truly Paul called it a work (I Timothy 3:1. Those who do not view it a such are doing the Lord’s church a serious and destructive injustice. Remember that the work of an elder involves feeding, guarding, tending, and leading the sheep. As God arranged, the elders in a particular location are responsible for the sheep of that congregation. Even so, being responsible