

# SEARCHING *the* SCRIPTURES

"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" — John 5:39.



"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" — Acts 17:11.

"DEVOTED TO THE SEARCH FOR DIVINE TRUTH"

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## SPECIAL ISSUE BRINGING IN THE SHEAVES

### The Harvest is Plenteous

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"But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, **The Harvest truly is plenteous**, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matt. 9:36-38).

Henry Thayer says of "Harvest": ". . . the crop to be reaped, i.e. fig. a multitude of men to be taught to obtain salvation, Matt. ix. 37 sq.; Lk. x. 2 . . ." (p. 289).

"Plenteous" means "much, many, numerous, great, abundant, plenteous."

"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2).

"Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields: for they are white already to harvest" (John 4:35).

The Bible pictures man as a lost and hopeless creature without the gospel of Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). God's great love is expressed in the great sacrifice of His Son for the remission of sins unto all those who obey His will (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8, 9; Acts 10:34,35). But without the knowledge of this great love and sacrifice one

would not know what to do to receive the remission of sins. The gospel must be preached.

From Matthew 9:36-38 we want to focus attention upon two or three significant points that should move us to action today. The multitudes followed Christ because he was healing them and giving them hope through his doctrine. Neither the apostles then, nor any of us now, can really see the great harvest of souls unless we look through the eyes of Jesus. He saw the multitudes and was moved with compassion toward them. Their outward appearance may have done little to excite the compassion, but the real pity comes from the moral and spiritual poverty that gripped the masses. They were blind to the truth; prejudiced and enslaved by rotten traditions and were "faint." The figure turns to that of lost sheep, scattered, and without a shepherd.

This view of the lost world should move us to some action to proclaim the saving gospel to all who will listen. We need to be seriously aware and keenly conscious of the need in this country and abroad to reach the lost. It is doubtful if many of us see the masses as a lost and undone generation swiftly , traveling toward the judgment and eternal damnation. What do you see in your community? in your own family? in your travels over this land? How do you look upon the peoples of other nations and their eternal destiny? Millions of these people are eagerly waiting for someone to tell them the story of God's love and tell them what to do to be saved. This can not be taken lightly.

The denominational world is bankrupt and destitute insofar as giving spiritual sustenance and hope is concerned. There are large numbers in the churches of men who are so disillusioned and discouraged that they are looking for you to tell them the way of salvation.

The multitude who followed Jesus were in a deplorable spiritual condition "because they fainted"—not that they lacked in intellectual powers, but they were lacking spiritual knowledge, understanding and the feeling to do right. They were scattered

abroad, having no shepherd. Such sheep left to themselves would wander away from the fold and have no protection from wild dangers. They did not know the way back home. In losing their way, the sheep would become scattered and would lose interest in each other. And the Lord, passing from this scene of scattered sheep without a shepherd to "the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few," is stressing the picture of the lost multitudes that should excite the desire to take action, and to amplify the need for more workers.

The plenteous harvest is not necessarily that the time is ripe for the gospel to be preached more than at other times, but rather that there were far more who needed to be taught the truth than there are true qualified teachers to teach them. It is the greatness of the work as compared to the few who really work.

The harvest truly is plenteous today in the sense that there are millions of people within the reach of some of the most powerful means of communication known to man. Especially is this true in metropolitan areas. In what is called the "Bible Belt" there is a conservative estimate of nearly eleven hundred lost people to every faithful worker in the church, if every member of the church were an effective teacher. But considering the population of the United States, there are more than eight thousand lost souls for every faithful worker. This should give us some idea for the great need of workers in the great harvest.

The need may be multiplied a hundred times if we considered the countries of the world where freedom of speech would allow us to carry the gospel of Christ. One of the sad aspects of this need is that in many of the foreign countries people are begging for someone to teach them the gospel of Christ. Many of them are laboring under great difficulties to escape the horror chambers of paganism, Catholicism, and protestantism.

I am ashamed of many of my brethren who spend their time quibbling about a small amount of money and crying because "their preacher" will be gone an extended period of time in some foreign country to preach the Gospel. Those who have such a view of their "duty" and their sense of "saving the Lord's money" have never been able to see with compassion the plenteous harvest of which the Lord spoke in Matthew 9:37.

Jesus said "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few" (Matt. 9:37). Our Lord was not talking about a few preachers who were specializing in "foreign mission work". He was talking about those who were God's husbandry. "For we are labourers together with God; ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building" (1 Cor. 3:9). The obligation of every child of God is to prepare himself and put forth the effort to teach somebody the gospel of Christ.

One of the reasons why we have so few teachers is that somewhere in the past two or three generations we have developed a "clergy" system. This means we (the church) have hired one man to do our labor for us. This will not get the job done. In addition to this problem, we have ignored the many ways that we

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teach without knowing it. We teach people by our examples, by our attitude, and by word of mouth. The misplaced zeal, without knowledge, robs the majority of us of our effectiveness in trying to teach.

We have a great harvest and few laborers, both at home and abroad, and we are doing virtually nothing with the time and talent that God has entrusted to us. "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Rom. 13:11). We need to arise from our apathy and get to the job as laborers in the great harvest.

In this day, we have opportunities both at home and abroad that we did not have a few years ago. Political, religious, social and economic conditions fifteen years ago kept us from going into certain parts of the world to preach the pure gospel, and these conditions closed the minds of men. But today we have doors of opportunity opened unto us in foreign lands that we must take advantage of.


Last year brother Connie Adams and I spent two

weeks among faithful brethren in Italy. The thrill of finding people who had an eagerness for the gospel of Christ that is seldom found in this country is something never to be forgotten. The Lord willing, my plans are to spend three weeks preaching the gospel in Italy in November and December of this year. The fields are white unto harvest in the Philippines, Australia, South Africa, England and Europe and several South American countries. This does not cover all the areas, but it should make us aware of the places where great good can be accomplished. "The harvest is plenteous!"

# Editorial

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## Bringing in the Sheaves

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psa. 126:6). This joyful Psalm gave rise to the hymn I heard so often as a child, "We shall come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves." Psalm 126 pictures the jubilation of those who were released from captivity in Babylon. The midnight of their history would be over. This Psalm stands in sharp contrast to Psalm 137 which paints one of the most forlorn scenes in the Old Testament. There we see captives uprooted from their homes and hallowed places and set in strange surroundings where they hanged their harps upon the willows and wondered how they could sing the Lord's song in a strange land. But Psalm 126 sees the captivity ended. It would be like a dream come true (v. 1). "Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing" (v. 2). "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad" (v. 3). They had sown in tears but would then reap in joy (v. 5). The sheaves of harvest were reward enough to overshadow the long hours of toil.

### The Joy of Reaping

Our Lord spoke of sowers, soil, seed and harvest. He viewed the saving of souls as the gathering of a harvest. He said "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest" (Mt. 9:37-38). Rejoicing always attends the bringing in of the sheaves. On the day of Pentecost "they that gladly received his word were baptized" and later continued with "gladness and singleness of heart" (Acts 2:41, 46). The Ethiopian treasurer was harvested and "went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:39). When Barnabas came to Antioch and saw the great harvest of souls there, he was "glad, and exhorted them all" (Acts 11:23). Paul reviewed the conversion of the Thessalonians who had "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thes. 1:9). Then he said "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" (2:19).

A scene of more than twenty years is stamped in my memory. The sermon had ended and we were singing an invitation song. There was a rustling in



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the seats about five rows back and two people stepped out into the aisle — a young girl about seventeen, and beside her a woman whom I regarded as a very strong Christian. I thought "What has Betty done? Why is she coming forward?" Then it dawned that the young girl was a neighbor to Betty with whom she had been studying the Bible. The girl was ready to obey the gospel but was shy. Betty was just "bringing in the sheaves."

Any who have ever had a part in leading a lost soul to Christ knows exactly the joy of which we speak. Preachers, Bible class teachers, those conducting home studies and those who have taught fellow-workers or neighbors, have seen their hopes realized and prayers answered when the sheaves are brought in. There is no greater joy on earth than this.

### Is the Seed Yet in the Barn?

The aged prophet, Haggai, had the difficult task of stirring the hearts of a sluggish people to finish the temple. Years had passed since they began amid feverish excitement. But they grew weary and turned aside to their own houses and pursuits. They had suffered one reverse after another and Haggai said it was time to "Consider your ways." The reason for their trouble was "because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man into his own house" (Hag. 1:9). The seed for their blessing was in attending first to the Lord's house. Then they would be blessed. But that seed was "yet in the barn" (Hag. 2:19). What good is seed in the barn? There can be no harvest until it is sown in the field.

When congregations stop growing it is time to ask "Is the seed yet in the barn?" It is not enough to settle back in comfort and "keep house" for the Lord with two or three gatherings a week, two of which will be attended by about half the people. When a congregation of 300 has only 10 souls added within a year, then something is wrong. Even the preacher ought to be able to bring in more sheaves than that. Why must it take an average of 30 ransomed souls to reach one sinner in a year? Not only should preachers, elders and deacons be working to bring in sheaves, but so should every Christian. I heard Peter Wilson say once that the reason we are not successful as fishers of men is that we don't have enough lines in the water. When we capture the spirit of the early Christians who went "everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4), then we will see the sheaves being brought in with great rejoicing.

### There Are Sheaves To Gather

For too long we have been intimidated by the mournful laments of those who have assured us that "this is a hard place" and "nobody is interested in the gospel anymore." Paul thought Corinth was a hard place but God assured him with these words: "for I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:10). He brought in sheaves for a year and a half. But from what sources shall we gather sheaves?


(1) We must bring in our loved ones. Some of us are not even leading our own children to the Lord. Noah was able to save only his family out of all

living humanity. It will be the cause of eternal rejoicing if we can save our own. Is there any joy to compare with seeing your children, husband, wife, father, mother, brother or sister, obey the gospel?

(2) Many of the morally bankrupt can be reached. Sin is a terrible master. It creates a burden of guilt and emptiness, breaks hearts and homes, wrecks health and hands one down to his grave only to receive eternal misery in the world to come. Nothing but the gospel can fill the void made by sin. The Gentile world of the first century was spiritually bankrupt. But many turned from idolatry, fornication, homosexuality, stealing, covetousness, drunkenness and many other vices to be washed, sanctified and justified (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Our society is full of such people today. The Lord died for them. Let's bring in these sheaves.

(3) There are sheaves to garner from **religious** error. Never before in our time have so many been so disturbed over the shifts and changes being felt throughout the fabric of denominationalism. Many are tired of being fed the empty husks of political lectures, social reforms, book reviews, endless club and committee meetings and recreational activities. They do not hear Bible preaching. Comfort in this world has become the end of all things rather than preparation for the world to come. Many are hungering and thirsting for the word of life. If you don't believe this, then persuade some friends from such backgrounds to come with you to hear a simple gospel sermon and watch their reaction. In my own work I am speaking to more denominational people during gospel meetings now than at any time in my memory. If we will arrange studies in their homes and do a good job of sowing the gospel seed, there will be a harvest.

It is time to abandon every excuse, overcome our laziness and indifference and get the seed out of the barn and into the field. All of us need stirring along these lines. To this end, we have prepared this special issue of *Searching The Scriptures*. We believe our writers have done an exceptional work in preparing this material and send it forth with the hope that it will cause all who read it to sow more seed and thus "come rejoicing, BRINGING IN THE SHEAVES."



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## The Sower of the Seed

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In Luke 8:4-15, Jesus told a parable saying, "a sower went out to sow his seed." In this special issue of *Searching The Scriptures* called "Bringing In The Sheaves" it is my privilege to write on the sower of the seed.

### Who Is The Sower?

Since Jesus said "the seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11), we need to identify the sower. One of the reasons some seed never gets sown is many do not know they have the responsibility to be sowing the seed, the word of God.

I am afraid that the common conception some brethren have is that the sower of the seed in the parable is the preacher. Nothing could be further from the truth. If we wait for only preachers to sow the seed, much of it will "never get out of the sack." It is true all preachers should be sowing gospel seed, but the job is too great for preachers alone to do it.

In the first century, the apostles, prophets and evangelists were not the only ones found sowing the seed of the kingdom. When the church was scattered the apostles remained in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1) but the record says "they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria" and "they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:1, 4). The result of these disciples preaching the word is seen in "the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord" (Acts 11:19-21). What if every Christian today used the opportunities that knock at his door to preach the gospel, to say nothing of the opportunities that He could make? In nearly any city, if such were the case, it would be said, "these that have turned the world upside down are come hither also" (Acts 17:6).

Phillip did not wait to "be sent" but rather "went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them" (Acts 8:5). If you are wondering what "church work" you can do, try following the example of Phillip.

I am concerned over an attitude that if one is not "sent" then one can not go with the gospel message. Every Christian should be working to tell someone else the gospel story. We have been saved to save. Many claiming relationship to Christ have never taught anyone the truth. I know of a congregation that made exceptional progress without a building and without a full time preacher. The reason was they did not have a preacher being supported so he

could work full time and the brethren had to do the work that was done. Do we not often feel when a preacher is supported that our responsibilities have been fulfilled? It will not be until we have restored the New Testament concept of every Christian preaching and teaching those they contact in daily life that we will be charged with turning the world upside down.

Our problem is that we do not believe the plan will work. A friend recently told me of a car salesman making about \$2,500 his first month. He said the reason was, he believed what he was told while in training and put it to practice. If we would believe God's plan, put it into practice and quit wondering what the results will be, the results would have a way of being taken care of by God.

### Seed Is Important

The seed is the word of God (Luke 8:11). The creeds of men will not make Christians, for seed produces after its kind.

Paul stated "I have planted" (1 Cor. 3:6). It was told "Apollos watered" but it was said "God gave the increase." Maybe the teaching you do is watering what another planted or another will water what you and I plant. One thing we need to remember for sure is "for as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isa. 55:10-11).

When the tendency is for one to exalt himself because he is sowing seed, the lesson Paul wrote to Corinth is needed. "Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase" (1 Cor. 3:7). The teacher of truth, the sower of seed, needs to remember he did not originate the plan, he did not die so men might be saved, and it is not his body to which men are added when saved. This should cause all of us as we sow the seed from heaven to realize the life of the seed is not in us. Nearly any old crow can drop a seed, but he can not claim credit for the beautiful flowers that it produces.

### Good Sower Characteristics

(1) **Know the TRUTH.** Jesus said there was a condition to knowing the truth (John 8:31-32). The word of God is truth (John 17:17); truth is not what someone thinks the word of God says. There is a difference. Paul said he preached the "word of God" which was "truth" (1 Thess. 2:13) and the truth preached was the "commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37). Only the truth will free from sin (John 8:32). If one is teaching, he has the responsibility to teach the truth the first time. Much effort is required today getting error out that has been planted in people's hearts before room can be found for truth. Teach nothing if truth is not taught the first time.

(2) **Understand People.** Insulting people is not the way to teach them the truth. I am impressed that Jesus said the Father will "draw" the sinner to him



(John 6:44-45). In the drawing process there is (1) hearing, (2) learning and (3) coming. Many do not know the difference in drawing and driving, or in smart aleck speeches and in teaching so men might learn. Until we reach people's hearts we will not reach their heads. This does not mean compromising the truth, but it does mean "as sheep in the midst of wolves" we should be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matt. 10:16) or "let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col. 4:6). To be sure, people will have to be told they are lost, but if you convey to them that you love them and are concerned about their soul, such will not be resented; however, if you tell them in such a way as to indicate you are glad they are headed toward hell and take great delight in telling them, you could not even drive them into the kingdom of God if such were possible.

Jesus gives us an example of how to handle the word and people in John 4 when he talked with, not at, the woman at the well. She first addressed Jesus as "sir" (verse 11) but He did not "tell her off. Instead, he continued to instruct leading her to recognize him as a "prophet" (verse 19) and finally as the "Christ" (verse 29). It would be difficult to know how many people have been turned away from Christ, not by the gospel, but by men who either did not understand people and the word of God, or who did not care and took great delight in getting someone told, rather than in teaching them.

(3) **Good example.** A godly example is hard to argue with. Paul told Timothy, "be thou an example of the believer, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12). Further, he said, "take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:16). What does the word of God do when translated into life? If "truth in life" produces good results, others will want to follow; however, if evil is the result, few will care for it. Many times truth has been hindered by ungodliness in life.

(4) **Faithfulness in sowing.** In Matt. 20:1-16 Jesus taught the lesson of a householder going out for the purpose of hiring laborers into his vineyard. He did this "early in the morning," at nine, twelve, three and five o'clock. Among other lessons taught by this passage, the lesson of patience and persistence in seeking those to serve Christ stands out. How often do we give up on someone when they are not baptized after we talk with them the first time? Most people want to investigate and look around before they buy. Why should it be any different when one is looking at religion? The sower probably did not obey the gospel the first time he heard it, so why should he expect others to be different? What if the one who taught you the truth had given up the first time you heard it? Why should you expect one to do or to know at one sitting, to hear the gospel, what it has taken you twenty years to learn?

Remember the Lord said "my word that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me

void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it" (Isa. 55:11). The Lord said "It shall not return unto me void", "it shall accomplish that which I please," and "it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it." God did not promise a harvest at the time we thought it ought to be. If we will sow the seed at every opportunity that we have, leaving the results to God, He will take care of the harvest. We can "force" a crop failure if we are not careful by our impatience.

## The Seed or the Sack

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In our day we are bombarded on every hand by super sales techniques which overwhelm by the "pitch" and, more often than not, almost lose sight of the product. Salesmen are engrossed with selling the "sizzle" and care little about the steak. If the sack packaging the product is attractive and appealing to the eye that seems to be more important than what is in it.

This philosophy has invaded the thinking and attitudes of citizens in the kingdom. Super salesmen have sold gimmick after gimmick under the guise of making the gospel appealing until many are trapped in this gimmickry and all but forget the gospel. We plead with all for an awakening to the fact that it is the seed and not the sack which will produce a plenteous harvest. The bus ministry craze with its various reward and incentive tricks, ranging from money hidden under the lucky seat to cokes and snacks for the riders, is representative of the concept of Christianity enamored by the "sizzle" instead of the steak. While expressions of this materialistic, childish and undignified approach to the spread of the glorious gospel are varied and limited only by human imagination, this single, though not exhaustive, reference will suffice to illustrate.

We even get swept up in this program craze in our efforts to do personal work. There is a constant seeking for a better plan, a more "fool-proof" method of contacting and teaching the sinner that he might be converted to Christ. Reams of paper have been used to publish complex and sure-fire outlines of personal work programs designed to get every Christian busy teaching others the truth. When it is all said and done we end up with the same problem, motivation. We, in our emphasis on the program, the theory, the "how-to" plans, are concentrating on the sack when it is the "seed" that is essential to fruit.

A young preacher friend of mine, in fact my son-in-law, was commenting on how often he used to hear about the need for personal work classes, reading books on personal work, various "how-to" courses, and the like. He opined, "these are all good, but the best way to teach one how to do personal work is take someone with you while doing it. Let them see how it is done and pretty soon they will be doing it." I like that, a simple, yet clear, workable concept which places emphasis on the practice instead of the theory, the seed and not the sack.

Where does the emphasis truly belong? Where is the power to accomplish the purpose of almighty God in the saving of the souls of men? The apostle Paul wrote, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). Take note of the fact that it is the gospel that is "the power of God." Proper enunciation as this verse is read emphasizes the word, "power," and such is a complement to the gospel. Try reading it aloud with this in mind. In the same epistle we take note of two additional statements which emphasize the means of accomplishing the purposes of God among men. Paul "ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 15:16) worked "through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ" (15:19). Preached what? The gospel. Why? This and only this is the "power of God unto salvation." The dignity that attaches to such a solemn and glorious task cannot tolerate a foolish, even childish, commercialization by the humanly devised trappings which some see as a complementary carriage to the message of the cross.

Does our world need the subtle approach of advanced sales techniques? I am persuaded our world is little different basically from the world of Paul's day. In all likelihood our day and time, the city where you and I live, is very comparable to Corinth, our world to the world of apostolic time. Take the situation to which Paul addressed himself in the Corinthian letter. Here is a city enraptured by intellectualism, rhetoric and human philosophy, all of which created a barrier to the progress of the gospel and had some effect both within and without the church. Corinth represented the ultimate in Greek culture. Steeped in the vices and the wickedness of idolatry, to "Corinthianize" had come to describe the most vile and degenerate course of life. To a people so engulfed, overshadowed by adverse influence, what was the apostle's approach, what did he preach? We have the benefit of his inspired reflection. Acts 18 is the history of the activities.

The need of our day is no different from Paul's day, from the city of Corinth. The mournful cry of sinful men is the same. The tender response of God is the same. Knowledge of "Jesus Christ and him crucified" as such comprehends the "testimony of

God" (1 Cor. 2:1-5) is the answer. Let us never be guilty of responding to the cry of sinful men with a gaudy package, an empty sack, which can but dull the sincere longing for the security and hope that only the "seed" (Lk. 8:11) can satisfy.

In this Corinthian situation let us profitably take note of the preaching of Paul. Negatively, it was not with excellency of speech. There is no reflection here upon either method or ability. Rather we see a contrast between human standards of effectiveness and acceptance, and the divine. The strength of the gospel does not depend on rhetoric, neither upon orations of eloquence. The impartation of human wisdom was not Paul's object at Corinth. He came not as a philosopher to join the ranks of the great thinkers and establish his own superiority. Rather he came as a herald with certain facts and truths to proclaim which set forth Jesus Christ and him crucified. Paul does not here identify as an enemy to human wisdom, neither is the gospel antagonistic to learning. Such is despised only as a means of human redemption and is contemptible only when it transcends its sphere.

Paul came to Corinth presenting that which was certain, sure and unfailing. His was the testimony of God, summed up in "Jesus Christ and him crucified." Here is embraced the person and history, the office and purpose of Jesus. Jesus is "savior," Christ is "anointed of God." Crucifixion marks the consummation of heaven's will, the payment of redemption's price, sin's atoning sacrifice. The gospel has as its basis certain facts concerning the life, teaching, miracles, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The apostles could render personal testimony based upon precise and accurate knowledge of these facts which they by inspiration, proclaimed. However, their concern was not with facts for facts sake alone, rather as throwing light upon the person, mission and saving power of Jesus. They declared salvation comes by a personal trust in Christ; a trust dependent upon personal confidence. A confidence based upon knowledge. Therefore they went every where preaching the gospel, declaring the "testimony of God."

In preaching "Jesus Christ and him crucified," Paul and all others give emphasis to the mission and purpose of Jesus. Without the crucifixion of the Son of God his mission into the world would have been a failure. The gospel would be but a moral scheme and not the "power of God unto salvation" through the obedient faith of the believer. Jesus Christ is the blending of humanity and deity. The crucifixion culminates, endows the Son of God with his present saving power. Here there is a joining of the cross with the throne of God as he is raised from the dead and ascends on high.

Let us take note that Paul said "not with enticing words of man's wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:4). In every argument, in every miracle, it was the Spirit working in the apostles. The result of this, in the receptive heart, was a conviction of sin and the need for a savior, the

conviction that Jesus Christ was that savior. Words and human wisdom could not produce this, it took the power of God as demonstrated by the Spirit in the apostles. The Spirit is now demonstrating that same power through the word of truth, the gospel.

There is a definite aim to the preaching of the gospel, to the preaching of "Jesus Christ and him crucified." What is it? The awakening of faith. The plaudit of men is not the aim and object, and in this respect the gospel is quite unlike the rhetoric and philosophy of men. A faith that should indissolubly bind to Christ through obedience and blossom into Christ-likeness through conformity. A faith that is well founded, not standing in the wisdom of men, not built upon beautiful words and theories. Such is aimed at divinely wrought conviction and conversion. All of human origin is swept away that hearts and minds might be fixed upon the God-sent savior and His victorious mission as comprehended in the cross. This is the power of God, the demonstration of the Spirit, and is the crying need of every day and time. The cheap promotions, gimmicks, and gaudy packaging of our day serves only to cheapen and detract from the faith the gospel will produce.


There is a summation of this in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 which begins, "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain."

Some who might be inclined to reason that all the "flim-flam" and "fol-do-rol" used is but a means to attract attention to the gospel and the church. Reminds me of the ole' farmer who explained his hittin' his mule with a two-by-four. "Just gettin' his attention," he excused and explained. Some have become so addled with the sack that the seed is all but forgotten and any lasting effect lost. Let us ever remember the "gospel is the power of God unto salvation" and it requires no "sack" to convey it to honest and sincere hearts, only the concerted effort of those devoted to it.

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## Soil for the Seed



*Marshall E. Patton*

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*"And he spake many things unto them, in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: And forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matt. 13:3-9).*

This parable presents a clear view of the different kinds of soil into which the seed of the kingdom, which is the word of God (Lk. 8:11), is sown. According to our Lord's own explanation of the parable (Matt. 13:18-23), the soil represents the hearts of men. The primary emphasis is placed upon HOW men hear, and, consequently, that which accounts for the difference in the reception given the word (Matt. 13:9; Lk. 8:18).

This parable is a refutation of that tenet of Calvinism which affirms *total depravity*. This doctrine cannot be true, if the hearts of the unconverted are different, and indeed they are, according to this parable. Even some hearts among the aliens are good and honest (Lk. 8:15). Furthermore, it equally refutes the doctrine of the **immediate** or **direct influence** of the Holy Spirit in conversion. Whatever fruit is produced, from whatever soil, must be accounted for upon the basis of the relationship between the seed and the soil. This is true of every kingdom. The products thereof always spring from the seed. It follows, therefore, that the soil (heart of man) cannot produce any fruit apart from the seed which is the word of God (Lk. 8:11).

This parable also shows how imperative it is that the gospel be preached to every creature in the whole world (Mk. 16:15). The soil throughout the world (the hearts of men) can never be converted short of our planting the seed into the soil. May God help every Christian to sense the weight of this responsibility!

### Overcoming Despair

Unfortunately, some, having failed in their efforts to convert some friend, neighbor, or loved one, have



given up. They no longer are active in "personal work." Some say, "What's the use?" These, no doubt, have overlooked a significant point. Jesus teaches in this parable that not all the sowing of the seed is expected to produce a harvest. Brethren, many of our efforts in sowing the seed will go for naught. Not all hearts are alike. Some are wayside soil. Others often fail before harvest time. Be not discouraged, however. Somewhere there is fertile soil and in the end there will be a bountiful harvest!

### Different Attitudes

The four soils picture to us four different attitudes of heart. Understanding these attitudes should help us in our efforts at bringing in the sheaves.

**The Wayside Soil.** In Palestine narrow paths, open to the public, separated the small fields. Frequent travel over these paths hardened the soil, hence, it was unreceptive to any seed that fell on it. Such seed was soon devoured by the birds. There are hearts like that. When they hear the truth they "understandeth it not." Why? Their heart has become hardened. They were not born that way. Like the wayside soil, conditions and circumstances made it that way. In the case of the human heart, Jesus shows that the individual is responsible:

*"For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them"* (Matt. 13:15).

This hardening process begins with the searing of one's conscience. Hence, God demands that a clear conscience be maintained (1 Tim. 1:5). Conscience urges man to do what he knows to be right. If he lacks knowledge, he may have a clear conscience and yet be wrong (Acts 23:1). Hence, conscience is not a creature of education, but the individual is. As the individual receives knowledge, conscience urges him up to the point of his knowledge. Failure to so act begins the searing process. Continual suppression of conscience will put to death a God given power designed to help save one's soul. Thus, many become wayside soil.

**The Stony Soil.** This soil was shallow because of an underlying ledge of rock. Seed sown here sprang up quickly, but because of a lack of depth, was soon scorched by the sun and withered away. There are individuals who receive the word readily, but who are motivated more by impulse, emotion, and carnal things than by conviction. These act without due deliberation and in time of trial turn "and walk no more with him" (Jno. 6:26, 66). The sower can improve the soil condition here by proper motivation. The cost, too, must be counted (Lk. 14:25-33).

**The Thorny Soil.** This soil did not produce fruit because when the seed began to grow "thorns sprang up with it, and choked it." Jesus explains that the thorns represent the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life (Matt. 13:22; Mk. 4:19; Lk. 8:14). We cannot bring in the sheaves, unless those converted truly

"seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). Many precious souls are lost each year simply because of undue interest, time, and effort expended upon otherwise legitimate responsibilities of life. Others trust in a false sense of security through the riches of this world. Still others become "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:4). Thus, the word is choked and, consequently, there can be no harvest.

**The Good Soil.** Here is soil that produces fruit and makes possible our "bringing in the sheaves." Jesus explains that this represents an honest and good heart (Lk. 8:15). Many are honest with everybody except themselves. We sometimes sing, "Oh, who to himself will be true?" One cannot do this, unless he acts in harmony with what he believes. How many know and believe the truth, but do not obey it? Are they true to themselves? Are they honest with self? They may brag about not being a hypocrite, but really, are they not a hypocrite when they believe one thing and practice something else?


Here is the honest and good heart, according to Jesus: He hears and understands (Matt. 13:23); receives the word (Mk. 4:20), hence, obeys it. Furthermore, he keeps the word (Lk. 8:15), which means that in the face of all pressure, trials, and temptations he keeps on keeping on "holding fast . . . without wavering" (Heb. 10:23). Therefore, he "with patience" (Lk. 8:15) brings forth fruit to the glory of God. Here is soil that enables us to "Come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves."

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## The Laborers are Few

*J. Wiley Adams*

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Men and women by the thousands are dying all over the world every day without the gospel of Christ. Many of these might have been saved had someone taught them God's word. It is equally true that many of these would not have obeyed the truth even had they learned it. Notwithstanding this, God has charged the faithful in every generation since the Pentecost of Acts 2 to preach the truth to the whole creation and this for the purpose of providing all men with the opportunity to be saved. Their acceptance or rejection of the truth will rest upon their own shoulders. The responsibility for making possible this opportunity to all men rests upon God's faithful children. WE must transfer this responsibility as soon as possible.

The Bible teaches us that men are lost and the gospel is the power of God to save them (Rom. 1:16). Jesus said to his disciples that they should go and preach into all the world to each nation and every creature (Mark 16:15, 16; Matt. 28:19, 20). It is evident that this command in our generation falls far short of the Lord's expectations. Jesus said in Matt. 9:36, 37, "... the harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few ..." and then "... Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." Brethren, we not only need to pray for more laborers but we need to combine our prayers with action in providing more laborers. If the harvest is plenteous then there must be people who will obey the truth when they learn, many of them. The scarcity is not in the harvest but in the number of harvesters. Many of us seem to get this turned around and think the harvest is scarce while the laborers are plentiful. Jesus said it is not so.

**The Problem.** The scarcity, then, of laborers is the problem. They are few. The Lord needs all the preachers he can get. Several hundred preachers for the whole world is not enough. They must be of the "worker" type and not of the "drone" variety. There are some would-be preachers who are nothing but lazy heads. They view themselves as some sort of figurehead. Any of this kind is too many. The Lord wants those who will labor. Labor is always needed when there is "work" to be done.

To the many faithful preachers who are working so hard, spending and being spent, becoming all things to all men for the kingdom of God's sake, we take our hats off. There are others who are heading in that direction. Some want to be full-time workers but the

brethren will not help them and they have to make tents and thus diminish the amount of kingdom work that can be done by them. Whether in local work or in some distant field brethren ought to be willing to support those who preach the gospel and thus make it possible for them to use their time to the fullest in proclaiming the word.

There are still others, particularly the young men, who hesitate in becoming full-time workers in the Lord's vineyard. Why do they hesitate? Perhaps there are many reasons. If a man has the ability to preach then he should get on with it. If he shakes and trembles a little this is good. It will keep him from being arrogant and cocky. That is far better than a man being so overconfident that he presents himself to the brethren as the model in know-how. Such are destined for a fall and the sooner they fall down on their knees and realize the need for humility the better. No one should worry as some do about whether or not they will get their daily bread. Will God go off and forget those who are doing His work? Not so. He will not forsake us. If a man is worth his salt he will have enough of what he needs. There might be times when it will be beans instead of steak but they both are nutritious. He need not think he will become a millionaire preaching the gospel but the fringe benefits as well as the main event (heaven) are terrific. If the brethren fall down on support (as many shamefully do sometimes) then make a tent or two to keep in the preaching business but do not let tent making become the main object.

The Lord needs preachers with strong conviction and plenty of faith mingled with raw courage. Such men will have the needed stamina to stand whatever may be the test and will not faint at every turn in the road. We never read of Paul having a nervous breakdown. Listen, young men, there is no greater or more fulfilling endeavor than the preaching of the gospel of Christ. Read up on Abraham a little and make your decision to preach. He was not afraid to pull up his tent stakes and go wherever God had in mind for him to go. Neither should you. We need men of that caliber to preach the gospel of Christ. Do you have that much faith?

Another reason there are so few workers in the kingdom is that some men of great ability quit preaching and go back to secular work. This reduces the number of workers. Some men have so hurt their influence by misbehaviour that they might as well quit but not the Lord. Preachers who misbehave can repent but they may have to settle for less front line work as a result. If this is true then that is their place to work but they still should work as far as possible from within the ranks of the people.

The ranks of preachers are reduced at regular intervals by the decease of faithful men of God who have served their time and have gone on to their reward. This is the best way to go, in a period of faithfulness to God. They are missed and they leave an empty place but the work must go on and so we must close ranks and encourage others to help with the work.

Some Statistics. So far we have talked about the

scarcity of preachers in the work of the Lord. What about the average member of the church? Let us give some consideration to them. Does not each individual Christian, preacher or not, have some obligation to help in preaching the word? Absolutely! We fear that some have not yet become aware of this, however. Many church bulletins carry certain statistics relating to yearly growth from time to time. One such church of 228 members announced that during the year 11 were baptized. Another with 400 had 12 and another of 80 members had 13. All of this is for one whole year. This is shameful. Do you mean to say that 228 Christians cannot convert more than 11 to Christ in a year? The 400 church did about half as well and the 80 church with its 13 did far more. But who wants to be the first to say this is good work? Dare we? It is a shame and disgrace. This is only a small sampling but it is peculiarly representative. This should stir us. Better still, it should shock us into a self-examination. Now we must hasten to say that any who are saved are precious and for such results we are glad. But is it enough? Does it reflect the capability of the brethren in these congregations? The pathetic thing about all this is that in these situations too often it was the preacher and the elders who converted those who did obey. It may in some cases not be a good year's work for them even. But what was everyone else doing? The real problem in worker scarcity is in getting the average member of the church to realize that he too must engage in soul-saving efforts. Do the members think that they can do their work by proxy? Can someone else do their soul-saving for them? Friend, no one can discharge what God holds you responsible for but yourself. We must get involved personally. You may not be able to teach a class or preach a sermon publicly but you must strive to reach your friends, relatives, neighbors, co-workers, and all with whom we come in contact day after day. We all have Bibles, we have access to tracts and suitable materials to teach others. Excellent film-strips and charts are available to aid you. Spend a little of your personal money and equip yourself so you can work effectively for the Lord. We cannot put it all on the preachers and elders. They should not be regarded as our scapegoats on whom we can heap our own inadequacies thinking that this relieves us of obligation to the lost.

Getting Started. Getting ready to commence to begin to start soul-saving is the problem of most. We will do it tomorrow and that fantastic day never comes for us. We need a fire built under us so we will come alive. We need motivation or thrust. The latter is a contemporary word. We need thrust to get off the launching pad. To do this we will have to think about the great need for soul-savers. Then ask yourself this question, "What can I do about it?" If you will do this sincerely and objectively you will find the right answer. You must think after this fashion. If the world is ever going to be converted it looks like I'll have to do it myself. Think how close this would come to being accomplished if enough would think of it this way and do something about it.

Some might say, "Well, this is right but where do

I start?" This is a good question but it should be easy to answer. Some are like the little girl in the strawberry patch who stood there crying because she could not decide where to start picking the luscious red berries that were all around her. Why do you not start with the first you can get to? Is that not logical? Would it make much sense to jump across 15 rows to get to the berries on the other side of the patch when all we have to do is stoop down? No, it would not make much sense as well we know. So start where you are and get busy. It will unfold itself naturally from there on. But brethren, by all means **START** somewhere, sometime.

Our Example. If each member of the church would convert one soul to Christ in a year just think what that would mean. The 200 church would have 400, the 80 church would have 160 and the 400 church would have 800. Consider also that some would do better than this and you have a staggering picture of conversions to Christ. Please do not say that this is just hypothetical. It really is not. In Colossians 1:23 Paul was able to say in his day that the gospel "... was preached to every creature which is under heaven ... ." This was done without any of the mass media of our day and without modern communications and transportation systems. Brethren, the laborers do not have to be few and you can be one of them. Will you increase the number by one today?

**LET'S GO FISHING FOR MEN!**

**One on One**

*Ken Green*

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Some time ago a young man came to me quite upset because of a problem he was having. He said that recently on an airplane flight he had looked about and had realized that he was likely the only person aboard the plane who was a Christian. Suddenly he felt a compulsion to jump up and preach the gospel to passengers (Talk about a captive audience!).

But this young Christian felt a sense of real failure because he had been unable to muster enough courage to follow through on that compulsion. He asked me what he could do to increase his courage.

I told him that courage was certainly essential and that zeal was to be admired, but both needed to be tempered with reason. I then asked if he had thought of simply entering into a conversation with the person seated next to him and trying to lead him to a knowledge of the good news. He said such had not occurred to him.

Perhaps this incident typifies our problem. When

we do get worked up over a lost and damned world, we tend to forget that the fellow next to us is part of the world.

J. T. Bristow, in the April, 1977 issue of *Outreach*, told a story that illustrates the solution. He writes that something wonderful recently happened to June. She multiplied!

"You see, June had made up her mind that she would not rest until she had done what the Lord had commanded in Matt. 28:19. Jesus, in this passage, was saying to his disciples that 'as they were going' throughout the world they should make others to be like them, that is, make disciples. When one disciple makes another disciple, he (or she) multiplies self. June was nervous—and excited—when she met with Sue for a Bible study. She planted the gospel in Sue's heart, and a marvelous thing happened. Sue was baptized into Christ, and became a disciple! It was difficult to tell which one was the happiest over the event.

"Sue was so excited over her new life in Christ that she had an inward compulsion to tell the good news to someone else. The very first week of her new life, she set up a Bible study with Cathy. Using a very simple guide to plant the gospel seed, she taught Cathy. Another marvelous thing happened. Cathy was baptized into Christ, and became a disciple!

"Now, instead of one disciple (June), there were three • ■ • June, Sue, and Cathy. Just think about what would happen to the church if every disciple would do what Jesus said to do—multiply! In a matter of weeks the church would triple! In a matter of a few more weeks it would triple again! This is the kind of growth Jesus intended and anticipated. In Acts 6:1 we read that it happened, 'the number of the disciples was multiplied.'

"When Sue and Cathy continue to multiply, and the disciples they make multiply, then those disciples multiply . . . there perhaps will be several hundred disciples as a result. When it is all traced back (and perhaps it will be in the day of judgment), it will all come back to June, who decided to do what the Lord said.

"This process, which started with the original disciples of Christ, has worked for almost two thousand years, and it still works today!

"The process will work—if we will work. If you will multiply, the Lord will add."

Such is the pattern we find so clearly marked out in the New Testament. Some of the greatest lessons of our Lord we find recorded in one on one situations. Perhaps the outstanding example of this is His conversation with the woman at the well (John 4).

We might observe in the first place that we have, in this place, every possible excuse for not bothering to confront this person with spiritual things.

Jesus was traveling. How often do we feel compelled to share the gospel with strangers we meet on a trip? We're too often in a hurry and tend to rationalize that a brief conversation would neither be appreciated nor do any good. It might help us to pause and consider that Jesus, who had the greatest mission of anyone to tread this earth, never seemed

to get in a hurry, and yet He always had time to do His Father's will!

Jesus was tired and hungry. We excuse ourselves for getting hard to live with when we're tired and hungry. But our Lord became so involved in the great work of instructing a lost soul that He became oblivious of His hunger (v. 31-34).

**The person was socially, nationally, and religiously different.** Every possibility for prejudice was present (v. 9). It seems that the woman indicated in her immediate remarks a great deal of prejudice. Probably the difference in sex was of far greater significance than it is in our culture. Jews had no dealings with Samaritans, the woman said. And the religious differences between them had provoked great envy and bitterness.

God apparently does not agree with some of our brethren who opine that it's best for whites to preach to whites and blacks to blacks . . . Northerners to Northerners and Southerners to Southerners, etc. When He got ready to send the gospel to the Gentiles, He selected one of the most prejudiced Galilean Jews He could have chosen. In our wisdom (?) we would have undoubtedly sent one of the Grecian Jews who had adopted some of the customs of the Gentiles. But God sent Peter.

**The person was immoral.** She had had five husbands, and was then living with a man who was not her husband. Had we been there, perhaps we would have reasoned that it is no use trying to teach one such as this. Jesus did not let this stop Him.

**The person was rude.** When the Lord asked for a drink, she said, "How is it that thou being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?" Most of us would have probably dropped any intentions of bringing up spiritual matters at that point.

The second thing that should capture our attention in this encounter is the different steps that the Lord took in teaching her. Paul E. Little in his book, *How To Give Away Your Faith*, has outlined "seven principles for action" from this account:

1. **Contact Others Socially.** In order to reach and teach people, we must first meet people. Jesus associated with sinful people. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (Luke 5:27-32). We are to be separate from the world, but this does not mean we are to isolate ourselves from the world (John 17:15; 1 Cor. 5:9-11).

2. **Establish a Common Interest** (v. 7). Some of us may pride ourselves on "getting right to the point." It would benefit us to remember that Jesus did not think Himself above leading gently into the conversation. Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People* has been the butt of much ridicule by some brethren. But there are common sense principles in that book which would help any of us "win souls and influence people for heaven."

3. **Arouse Interest** (v. 9-15). The Lord led her gently from where she was to where He wanted her to be. We cannot move people by shouting at them from across the room. The Lord threw out bait as a "fisher of men." He aroused in this person enough interest to question Him regarding spiritual truth.

4. **Don't Go Too Far Too Fast** (v. 13-16). Jesus gave this woman only what she was ready for. Eventually He revealed Himself as the Christ (v. 26).

5. **Don't Condemn** (v. 16-19). The Lord apparently did not subscribe to the theory that to not quickly and vociferously condemn a thing is to condone it. The woman was probably conscious of her sin. Jesus did not need to impress that upon her mind. Rude denunciations do not open doors for us. If we live lives which reflect the light of God's love as well as His word, we need not fear that people will not know where we stand.

6. **Stick With the Main Issue** (v. 20-26). The Samaritan woman attempted to sidetrack the Lord from the main issue. We can always tell folks, "That's an interesting question and we can discuss it later." Don't be diverted off the main road and find yourself discussing a subject that really makes very little difference.

7. **Confront Him Directly.** We should never lose sight of our goal in discussing the truth with others. It will not help them to accept the truth mentally if they do not obey it. We should think carefully about how to best bring to a successful climax our study of the gospel with others. One way or another, they need to be confronted with the choice that faces all men: "What shall I do with Jesus?"

The success that Phillip had in Samaria (Acts 8) may well have been due to this one on one encounter that Jesus had with the Samaritan woman. She multiplied (v. 39-41).

Brethren, let us follow in His steps.

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## Roadblocks to Reaping

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Multitudes of God's people have convinced themselves that they cannot convert others to Christ. Myriads of excuses are offered in an attempt to justify their attitude. We call these excuses, "Roadblocks to Reaping."

Enjoined upon every child of God is the responsibility of saving the lost (Rom. 1:14). Paul became all things to all men that he might save some (1 Cor. 9:22). The great apostle loved the souls of men and this was the driving impetus in his life that made him a traveling missionary—a personal worker.

Let us analyze several of the excuses that brethren use for not doing personal work and suggest what can be done to overcome these stumblingblocks to soul-saving.

(1) *"I cannot do personal work."* Do you have trouble talking to people about something you are enthusiastic about and sold on yourself? How many have trouble talking about a bargain at the store, a new detergent that takes care of "ring-around-the-collar," a new gadget that saves money, who is going to win the World Series, a favorite politician, etc., etc.? We all talk freely about these things to our friends and neighbors, and there is no reason why we cannot talk to them about Jesus Christ. Maybe some of us are not as enthusiastic about Jesus as we are about new cars, food recipes and gardening.

When Andrew found the Christ, he could not wait to go tell his brother, Simon Peter that he had found the Messiah. The Bible states, "And he brought him to Jesus" (John 1:42). When we are sold on something, we will want to share it with others. There will not be anybody saying, "I do not know how to tell others about it."

(2) *"I do not know how to do personal work."* One can learn. We learn to do about anything we set our minds to do. We learn to be mechanics, engineers, farmers, lawyers, physicians, teachers, cooks and many other things. We can also learn to be a soul-winner. This means learning the Bible and knowing how to properly answer the religious errors of those we try to teach. If you run into a problem you cannot handle, ask someone to help you who is better prepared. The next time the problem comes up, you will be ready for it.

Surely, if we can take the time and expend the effort of learning how to be successful in the world, we can do the same for the Lord and the good of men.

(3) *"People do not want to listen to the Bible."*

This is true with many people, but such is not the case with everybody. Our job is to find those with honest and good hearts and teach them the truth.

A good salesman never prejudges a potential buyer. He knows that a certain percentage is going to buy his product. His job is to find that percentage. The same is true with Christians. We should never presume as to who will and will not be interested in the gospel. Try them all and a certain percentage will respond—the honest people.

Who would have thought that Saul of Tarsus would have obeyed the gospel? If some of the brethren had lived back there in Saul's time, he would have been the last choice as a prospect for conversion. Look at the Corinthians. Some of them were murderers, thieves, homosexuals, idolaters, etc. Who would have thought of them as being touched by the gospel. But they were!

Brethren, our trouble is not the lack of people willing to listen, but rather the lack of church members willing to tell them. Shame on us!

(4) *"I am just too busy."* We generally find time to do what we want to do. Perhaps this is the reason for not doing personal work—we are busy doing what we want to do, and personal work is not one of those things.

There are 168 hours in each week. Let's say you work 40 hours, so you are left with 128 hours. But you have to sleep about 56 hours, hence, you now have 72 hours left. Some of this is spent in eating, necessary work around the house and some leisure. Alright, what about the rest of the time?

"Well, preacher, there is bowling, golfing, television, club meetings, shopping, house cleaning, gardening, and there is just not anytime left for this personal work." Now we are seeing what the problem is relative to time. The time is there but it is consumed on selfish interests and personal pleasures. These brethren need to learn to put the kingdom first (Matt. 6:33).

Hardly anybody in the world has anymore spare time than the American people. Everything is so automated that we get things done much faster than we used to. We are still busy, nevertheless, but not about our Father's business. Our business is the transitory and mundane things of life.

(5) *"I am not going to do it by myself."* It is discouraging when hardly anybody in the congregation does any personal work. We reason that since nobody else will go visit the lost and talk to them about their souls, then we are not going to do the work ourselves. "Why should I be the one who does all the work around here," some rationalize.

But let us remember that our service for the Lord is an individual matter. If nobody else fulfills his duty, that does not relieve me of my responsibility. "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12). We should not get sidetracked by the other fellow. Jesus said to Peter when he asked about John, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me" (John 21:22). Let our main concern be whether we are following Jesus.

(6) *"I am afraid I will hurt somebody."* Certainly, we do not want to hurt anybody. But souls are at stake. Men and women are lost and need to be saved. Would we rather see them go to hell than risk hurting some feelings by telling them what the Bible teaches?

Jesus did not make everybody happy. He told the rich ruler that he would have to sell what he had and give to the poor to be his disciple. The young man went away sorrowful (Matt. 19:22). Peter's sermon on Pentecost cut to the heart many of those who crucified Jesus (Acts 2:37). They were brought to the Lord.

We should not be rude with people, but we must attempt to convert them to the Lord. Find the proper approach with each person and strive to win him to Christ. Do not let fear of offending your friends and neighbors stand in your way. Those you help see the truth will be eternally grateful to you.

(7) *"I am too old" or "I am too young."* We never get too old to serve the Lord, unless we are senile and incapacitated. Some of the greatest works have been done by people in the sunset of life. Grandma Moses was known for her picturesque paintings in her latter years. What could be more fulfilling and rewarding for older saints than spending their time trying to bring lost souls to Christ? Who could have more appeal to older people than older people, themselves?

Daniel served God from youth to the time he exchanged worlds at a ripe old age. The beloved apostle John worked for Jesus till he approached the century mark in years. He died, having given himself fully to the Cause of truth.

Young people can talk to their peers and win them to Jesus. The religion of Christ is not just for the elderly. If young people are old enough to obey the gospel, they are old enough to work for the enlargement of the borders of the kingdom. Churches everywhere need to put their young people to work, sowing the seed of the kingdom. What opportunities teen-agers have to share the blessings of heaven with their friends.

(8) *"I do not have the right kind of personality."* Then, adjust your personality—try to improve it. People take courses to improve their personality in order to enhance their profession. Why not be that concerned about saving souls? Our personalities did not affect our getting married (generally speaking), creating friendships and participating in games with others. Why should, therefore, our personalities deter us from working with people, spiritually? There may be personality clashes with some, but not everybody.

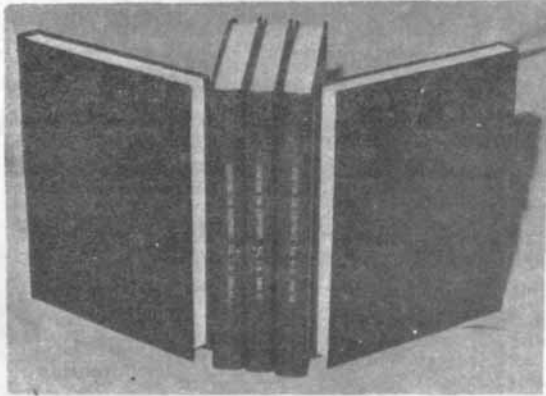
(9) *"I am too tired to do personal work."* Of course, everybody gets tired. Those who do personal work get tired, but they do the work, anyway. What if that soul you saved were your child? Would you be too tired? Remember, everybody is the son or daughter of someone. They are precious, too.

Let's say that you and I received \$10,000 from some rich brother for everyone we converted. How tired would we be, then? All of us would get tired, ;ill right. but it would be as a result of working to try



to convert as many as we could. Why should not heaven be a far greater incentive? A person who says he is too tired to do personal work is not taking the Christian life very seriously.

Brethren, I pray that there will be a revival of interest in soul-winning in the hearts of all Christians everywhere. Let's all say in unison, "I want to be a soul-winner for Jesus."



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**Self-Starters to  
Soul Winning**



*J. T. Smith*  
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Long Beach, CA 90808

It has been my experience, in the 25 years I have been preaching the gospel, that the majority of Christians must be continually "prodded" in order to get them to talk to friends and/or neighbors about Christianity. This should not be the case. We want to point out in this article a few of the reasons why we should be "self-starters" when it comes to soul winning.

In order for one to be a "self-starter," there must be some force that motivates that person. The word "motivate" means, "to provide with, or affect as, a motive" (Webster's New World Dictionary, Page 393). The word "motive" means, "an inner drive, impulse, etc. that causes one to act; incentive" (IBID). What is said in the New Testament that would cause us to be "motivated" to be soul winners? I believe the answer can be found in three points that are made by the apostle Paul in 2 Cor. 5:10-14.

**Love of Christ**

Let's begin with the last statement in these verses. Paul says in v. 14, "The love of Christ constraineth us . . ." W. Robertson Nicoll in his Expositor's Greek Testament tells us that the construction of the sentence here very definitely expresses the love that Christ had for us as being the motivating force behind Paul's preaching (Vol. 3, Page 69).

This love that Christ had for us is expressed in a number of passages. We know that the love (**agapao**) that God had for us in sending His Son (John 3:16) into the world, even while we were yet sinners (Rom. 5:8, or the enemies of God and Christ) is the thing that constrained Paul to preach. Many have the mistaken idea that this thing called "love", that we are to manifest toward others, is the kind of love that is expressed by the Greek word *phileo* which, according to Mr. Thayer, "denotes an inclination prompted by sense and emotion" (Thayer, Page 653).

A definition for love (the kind Christ had for us while we were yet sinners) that I have adopted, because I believe it encompasses the many things given by lexicographers who define the word *agapao*, is "Interest IN, Concern FOR, and Care OF another." Doesn't this explain how I may love my enemies even as Christ has commanded in Matt. 5:44? I don't have to have a personal liking for one in order to teach him the gospel. By following Christ's example, I can be interested in, concerned for, and endeavoring to care for him, simply because he is lost. It behooves every one of us to look back on our own lives and think about those who loved Christ

enough to follow his example in seeking to help us to know the truth and encourage us to obey it.

Many are often outspoken against the nine lepers who failed to return to thank Jesus for cleansing them of their leprosy (Luke 17:17). "Such ingratitude," they say. But what about those of us who have received remission of sins? What do we do to show our love and appreciation for all that Christ has done for us? Are we so ungrateful, not only to Christ who loved us enough to die for us, but to those who loved us enough to make the effort to help us to be saved, that we have to be pushed into helping others? Let us allow the love that Christ had for us, in dying that cruel death on the cross for our sins, to constrain and motivate us, as it did Paul, to try to bring others to Jesus regardless of personal consequences.

### Judgment

The second thing that ought to motivate us to do God's will is found in verse 10. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

We are assured of the judgment to come by the resurrection of Christ (Acts 17:31). But note what Paul says will take place. We will not be judged according to what our parents have done. We will not be judged by what some preacher we love has done. We will be judged according to what each one of us has done whether it be good or bad.

If I am to do good, I will be concerned with knowing the Word of God; for it furnishes completely unto every good work (2 Tim 3:16-17). But if I am going to be judged according to that which I have done, in obedience to God's word, how can I expect to be justified in the sight of God by the blood of Christ, when I have not tried to bring one single soul to Jesus when He loves them equally as well as me, and when I have orders from Him to "teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2)? We cannot plead ignorance. No lawyer can be there to try, by some devious means, to get our sentence changed. Now is the time to do good by living right and teaching others to prepare for the judgment to come— **and it will come.**

### Terror of the Lord

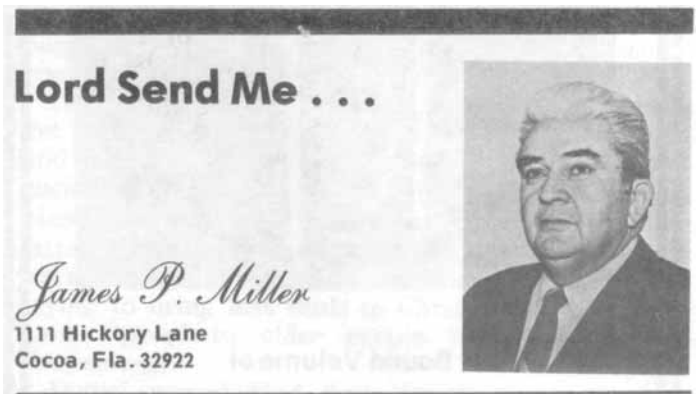
Finally, we should be motivated to take the good news (gospel) of Christ to others and endeavor to persuade them to become Christians because we know "the terror of the Lord" (Verse 11). Paul presents both "sides" of God in these verses—both love and terror. Although we want often to hear about the love of God, we neither want to hear nor believe what is said about the terror of the Lord.

How awful it will be, when but seconds after death we will be as the rich man of Luke 16, lifting up our eyes in hades being tormented in the flames, knowing there is no hope of escape—yet knowledgeable of the fact that we could have missed that terrible place by doing the will of God while on earth. Paul said Christ became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him (Heb. 5:9). How horrible for us to know that the Lord wanted us to seek souls, but

unwilling to do it, thus finally and eternally being cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone which is the second death (Rev. 21:8). How horrible indeed!

### Conclusion

If, after knowing of the Love of Christ and what He has done for us; knowing of the judgment to come; and knowing the terror of the Lord we are not motivated to be self-starters to save souls, we should be ashamed to live, and afraid to die. For God hath said, "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). And Paul said, "But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons" (Col. 3:25).



Isaiah cried out in the long ago, "Here am I, send me." Many do not have the faith of Isaiah, and do not want to get involved today. It is little wonder that the Lord said in Matthew 7:14, "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." The Lord sent the flood and saved eight, and Peter calls them "a few". If we multiply eight by ten we have eighty, and again by ten we have eight hundred, and again by ten we have eight thousand. Where is the verse that tells us to expect any more? It is little wonder that the Lord said in Luke 18:8, "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth." This scares me, as a preacher, for the reasons are just as good today for telling the old story of the cross as they were twenty, one hundred and twenty, or one thousand and twenty years ago.

The world is lost and some have to say, "Here am I, send me." A brother called me a fool for not taking a job that would pay me thousands when this same brother would have begged me to keep preaching the gospel twenty years ago. Brethren, what is happening to us? Have we reached the point where there are none who will say with Isaiah of old, "Here am I, send me."? It was not easy in Isaiah's time for a prophet to stand up for God, and it is not easy today, but the Lord did not promise us a "rose garden." Who said it would be easy? Not the Lord, for he told his disciples that men would even kill them in the name of religion. Even in my time, I have had the "One God Holiness" stand over my table for what seemed an eternity saying that the Bible says there is one Lord and Miller says there are

three. Time after time I have left without enough to buy my ticket home, and yet, I know nothing of real sacrifice. To borrow an expression of the Hebrew writer, "let the dead speak." Time would fail us to tell of Warlick, Freed, Tant, and Blue; or even further back, of Campbell, Raccoon John Smith, Stone and Scott. These men did not stand back because of the cost, but said, "Here am I, send me." Think of all the apostles who died the death of a martyr, excepting perhaps John.

Have we grown so accustomed to the comforts of life that we have lost sight of the call of the Lord? We have built for the preachers fine homes and for the brethren air-conditioned meeting houses. Carpets that reach from wall to wall are but symbolic of the lethargy that today is found in Zion. Are you in the eight, the eighty, the eight hundred or the eight thousand? I am sure the judgment will be full of surprises for all of us. A very small percent of those who have obeyed the gospel will be saved. "You are just trying to scare me" you say, but the truth is, unless we say, "Here am I send me," none of us will be saved.

#### **Problems Then And Now**

There have always been great problems that made the preaching of the gospel difficult. There is little excuse for us to say that no one is interested today. It may come as a surprise that the wise man said in the long ago, "What is the cause that the former days were better than these? For thy doest not inquire wisely concerning this." In the days when one-third of the world was slave, it was not easy. It was not easy when they raised a mob at Ephesus. It was not easy when they would not hear Paul in Jerusalem. It was not easy when they stoned Stephen for telling them the truth. It was not easy when John the Baptist lost his head. Who has told you that it would be easy?

The church, and members of it, need to quit making excuses and start to share the glorious gospel with the lost. We will have to bear fruit or perish. In John 15, Jesus said, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." In verse 2 he said, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." The truth of the matter is that in this country we have been spoiled. People would come to the meeting house, hear the gospel preacher, obey the truth and be saved. We are mad that this method is not the complete answer today. We want to excuse ourselves by saying that men and women are not interested in their souls.

Who promised us that it would be easy? Not Christ, for he said in Matt. 10:24, "Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth: I am come not to send peace but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." Was it easy when there was

scarcely a building in which to preach the gospel? When men stood on stumps and under brush arbors in the burning heat of summer. Was it easy when the gospel had to be preached in school houses and the doors were locked against us? Was it easy when the locks were changed and in some cases, even the stove had been removed to keep the audience from having any heat in the bitter cold of winter? Was it easy when the pioneers met the champions of error in the ring of debate and stood for truth against all comers? These were bitter battles and great victories, but they were all won at a price. We need to be willing today to pay the price also. If we fail, they fail also in that the heritage they left perishes with us. Christ, in a sense, also fails for the wonderful story of salvation is not told. Have we lost faith in the gospel as God's message of redemption? Have we lost faith in the ability of the God who made us to give us a message that would work in our time. Paul in 2 Cor. 4:3 tells us, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." If we really believed that men were lost, we would try to save them.

#### **One Sided Salvation**

When we think of the statement, "Here am I, send me," we sometimes forget how one sided salvation really is. All that God will receive for sending His Son is his "inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1:18). When you stop and think, even the most faithful of us will still be unprofitable servants (Luke 17:10). Our salvation can only be understood when we think of the great love God had for us. Such passages as John 3:16 tell us that God "so loved" and in this light alone is the motive of God set forth. Passage after passage in the Bible tells us that we will suffer persecution but that the suffering of this present world is not worthy to be compared with the joy that awaits the true Christian over there. We need in this day to be prepared to make any sacrifice to be sure that we find heaven, and to do that, we must try to take others with us. Who would deny that Noah tried to convince others that the flood was coming? He was unsuccessful, but he tried. It is the Lord's church and he will see that it accomplishes its mission, but the point is that in this generation it depends upon us or someone like us to do the work. The Lord has no tongue but our tongue to tell the story and it is high time we awake out of sleep and do just that. When there are no longer any interested in telling the story of redemption nor any who are willing to hear, the Lord will bring time to an end.

It has never been easy to preach and practice the gospel, but let us not be guilty of saying that the former days were better than these. In the words of Paul, let us say, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a more exceedingly and eternal weight of glory: While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Lord, help us unglue our eyes from the materialism and glory this world has to offer, and busy ourselves laboring in thy vineyard.

## Be Alert!

*R. J. Evans*  
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Alertness is a trait of character that is admired by all. I know, personally, that I appreciate the individual who is always "on the ball." This is especially true as it pertains to spiritual matters. There are many admonitions given in the Scripture for the Christian concerning the necessity of being alert. Jesus said, "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (Matt. 24:42). "Watch therefore . . ." (Matt. 25:13; Mk. 13:35; Lk. 21:36). "Watch and pray . . ." (Matt. 26:41; Mk. 14:38; Lk. 21:36). Paul said, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith . . ." (1 Cor. 16:13). ".... but let us watch and be sober." (1 Thes. 5:6). "But watch thou in all things" (2 Tim. 4:5). Peter said, "be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer" (1 Pet. 4:7). "Be sober, be vigilant. . ." (1 Pet. 5:8). Then other passages which emphasize alertness are such ones as these words of the apostle Paul— "Awake to righteousness." "Awake thou that sleepest . . ." (1 Cor. 15:34; Eph. 5:14).

Often times, Christians say they have nothing to do, the reason being—THEY ARE NOT LOOKING! We must be alert and be aware of what is going on and of what is needed. By so doing, we can then be diligent and more effective in carrying out whatever is needful. There are several areas where it is essential that we be alert. Let us notice some aspects of life where alertness is required.

### **We Must Be Alert To the Needs of One Another**

Sometimes it is the small, everyday needs of life which go unnoticed. However, these may very well be the critical areas where encouragement is so desperately needed. Paul said, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). Paul told the Philippians, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:4, 5). The need for concern and alertness to the needs of one another is further set forth by Paul in the Roman letter: "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another . . . Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another" (Rom. 12:10, 15, 16).

Surely, we must be aware of and respond to the "major" needs of one another. But also bear in mind that the "little things," such as a warm smile, a firm handshake, a pat on the back, a card, a telephone call, a word of appreciation, etc. just might "make

another's day!"

### **Elders Must Be Alert to The Needs of the Flock**

Paul told the Ephesian elders to "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). To obey this command, elders must know the flock. This necessitates alertness. The elders must be closely acquainted with each member, being alert to his spiritual needs in order to properly "feed the flock." Parents learn that children can not all be handled alike. One will be more subject to training and discipline than another; one will be more apt to learn than another, etc. So it is with elders watching over the flock. Some members need more fundamental teaching, while others require deeper study and training. Some may need discipline and correction. Some may need more encouragement than do others. To be aware of the particular needs and specific conditions of each member of the congregation requires alertness on the part of the elders.

### **Preachers Must Be Alert to the Needs of the Congregation**

A gospel preacher has the duty to "Set in order the things that are wanting" (Tit. 1:5). Preachers must at all times declare God's truth on any Bible subject. As Paul told the Ephesian elders, ". . . I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house . . . For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:20, 27). Preachers have the responsibility of preaching the truth, even though the truth "steps on a few toes" in the process. Strong preaching sometimes has a stinging effect on its listeners. Of course, this is a sign or indication that this particular teaching is needed. For example, if we rub alcohol on our skin, and in some areas it begins to sting, then those are the areas which need the medication. This, likewise, is true with regard to proclaiming the oracles of God and the effect it has on our lives. Paul told Timothy to "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort will all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2). Obeying this command requires alertness on behalf of the gospel preacher.

### **The Congregation Must Be Alert to the Needs of the Preacher**

The preacher needs the support of the congregation so long as he preaches and teaches the truth. It is very significant and meaningful to the preacher to know that he has the backing, the encouragement, and the support of the members as he does his work. Preachers need to feel a sense of "belonging" to a congregation if they are going to be effective. Hence, alertness on the part of the congregation is essential in this regard.

Also, I might add at this point, that brethren, likewise, need to be alert to the financial needs of a gospel preacher. "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." (1 Cor. 9:14). Many brethren are not aware

of the fact that the gospel preacher's salary is the gross amount out of which must come social security, taxes, insurance, retirement, or any type of fringe benefit that he might have. It has been estimated by a recent survey that the fringe benefits to the average American worker are worth about \$3,000 per year. According to the consumer Price Index, living expenses have risen nearly 20% in the last five years. Consideration to these facts must be given with regard to the preacher's salary. A gospel preacher can't perform his work effectively if he is constantly distracted by the financial needs for his family security. It is rather humiliating for a preacher to feel as though he is a "beggar." When a preacher has to ask for an increase in salary, he is usually placed in a very awkward position. Some might get the wrong idea and make the false charge that he is preaching for money. "That money hungry preacher!" But preachers are human! They have financial responsibilities, they have families, and they have obligations to their families just like everyone else. Therefore, brethren must be alert to the financial needs of the preacher.

#### **We Must Be Alert to the Needs of Self**

Being alert to what is lacking in our own lives enables us to then begin making the necessary corrections. We must guard against being conceited. *"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith"* (Rom. 12:3). We must guard against self-complacency. This was the problem of the Laodiceans: *"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing: and*

*knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked"* (Rev. 3:17). The necessity of being alert in reference to self is stressed by the apostle Paul when he says, *"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates"* (2 Cor. 13:5)? Alertness concerning our own abilities and weaknesses is imperative.

#### **Conclusion**

If alertness is lacking in our lives then it is time to "WAKE UP!" We close with the words of Paul: *" . . . it is high time to awake out of sleep . . . The night is far spent, the day is at hand"* (Rom. 13:11, 12).

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RESTORATIONS	150
(Taken from bulletins and papers received by the editor)	