

## PERSONAL SOUL-WINNING: A LABOR OF LOVE

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Much of the stalemate in the church has been because of the neglect of personal evangelism as a means to carry out the great commission of the Captain of our Salvation. Instead of following His command, "Go!" we have reversed the order and, if we have done anything, we have said, "Come!" There is nothing wrong with the latter, but the first emphasis should be to see men filled with the Spirit of God rather than to have our churches filled with men.

There is much that is encouraging. General church leaders have been encouraging local and district churches to set up an organization for the promotion of and training in personal soul-winning. Some denominations have established a Department of Evangelism, with a full-time secretary. Tracts and other printed literature are rolling from the press to be used in this plan of evangelism. For all this we praise God.

But as one surveys the field with only a casual interest, some things are quite apparent. Some pastors have utterly failed in either getting their churches to co-operate, or those who have had some co-operation have found that the work soon died on their hands. There must be a reason. In the following, let us consider one of the major reasons why the work of personal soul-winning, which begins with great zeal and enthusiasm, so soon slows down and often ends with disappointment.

First, many, after hearing a gifted soul-winner relate his experiences, seem to get the idea that a magic formula is being offered that will soon revolutionize their church and result in a great increase in numbers. Little preparatory work is done. The prayers may be earnest, but not prevailing. The crusade is launched with great enthusiasm, but it soon loses its fervor.

Now what is forgotten is that the one who excited them to put forth an effort in this work did not explain that there were periods of discouragement and long valleys of despair through which he pressed his way. The secret of the speaker's success was not altogether in his unusual ability, but because of his labor of love which kept him pressing on, regardless of the trying and discouraging experiences.

Paul said that the church at Thessalonica had a "work of faith, and a labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thess. 1:3). A work of faith is of great importance, and patience is indispensable, but neither one nor both of these will meet the full requirements for soul-winning. Love must be the supporting pillars of both faith and patience.

Now, what is a Labor of Love? Let us go into the sick room where a mother watches tenderly, longingly, patiently by the bed of her child who is lingering between life and death. Household chores are cut to the minimum or completely set aside. The other members of the family receive only secondary attention. There she watches day and night. If she must rest, she sleeps by the bed, awakened at every move of the child — ready to do anything to make it more comfortable or to grant its every desire. She loves the child and is willing to give her life for it.

She never once stops to ask the father if he appreciates it or considers her endless toil; she never asks the rest of the family if it is pleasing to them; she never even asks the child if it appreciates what she is doing. As to pay, such thoughts could never enter her mind. She loves that child. Nothing else matters, not even her own health. All must be forgotten in order to nurse the child back to health. This is a labor of love.

The same thing is true of the church—it must have a

The King's Highway

labor of love. This is making it too general. Individuals must have a labor of love.

The lack of this love is often expressed by remarks such as these: "I think I will give up that class. They don't want to learn and nobody appreciates my efforts." "I made several calls for the church and Sunday School and not one word of praise was heard from the pulpit or the pew, so I am not going to put myself out for the church again." "I went out calling by myself. And now if no one else co-operates, I am not going out either." "I spent a whole day working at the church and not one word was said about it. The next time they can get somebody else."

Such remarks come from those who labor for the compliments and words of appreciation and not because of love of the Lord. If one has a labor of love, a love for Christ and His Kingdom, he will have much the same attitude as that of the mother who watches over the child. What others may do or say, or fail to do or say, will not detour him from his labor of love in the Lord. He knows that it is the Lord's will and that it pleases Him. He is not working for the praise of men but for the glory of God.

Jesus said, "Except a man take up his cross daily and follow me, he cannot be my disciple." God so loved that He gave His Son. Jesus Christ so loved a sinful world that He gave His life. God knew that many would reject His son, but still He gave Him. Christ knew He was going to suffer, but still He came. Love caused him to do it. He knew a few would become His followers. Thus He was willing to be rejected by the many that He might save the few.

If Christians are going to be a militant force they must rise up as an army and take this gospel to every soul, never asking whether those to whom it is taken will appreciate it or not. Nor are they to consider whether the church takes note of it, or if they are going to get so much "pay" in the form of compliments of appreciation for their efforts. Neither are they to carry it forth just so long as they get a blessing. The love of Christ burning in the heart is the only way this message is going to be effective.

We, each one of us, must have a labor of love. This means getting near the cross, willing to take it up daily, weeping over those whom Christ weeps over. When we get close to the cross, we will love what He loved — be interested in what He is interested in, putting the emphasis where He placed it. Giving, giving with a heart full of love. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

—The Herald

### COLOUR BLIND?

"A man who is colour-blind may master the science of optics, he may be as competent as anyone else to follow discussions of rival theories of light, but he will never see a sunset as others see it, and his appreciation of a poetic description of it is bound to be sadly limited. So the man, who studies the worship of others but is not himself a worshipper, may discuss with clarity and insight the grounds which prompt men to worship, or which lead them to a sense of sin and its forgiveness; but what these things are in themselves and in their pervasive influence on experience as a whole, he can never know unless he learns to worship."

—William Temple.