

*Having God's Heart
for the Lost*

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

God loves us so much that He gave His only Son as a ransom for our lives; we are worth that much to Him. While we were still dead in trespasses and sins, Christ died for us. Jesus paid a debt He did not owe when He shed His blood on the cross, taking the penalty for every sin that we would ever commit—past, present, and future. He made a way for us to come to the Father as children of God and joint-heirs with Himself. *This is good news!*

The mystery is that so many Christians keep this news to themselves. Newspapers, magazines, television, and other media are more than willing to broadcast every bit of bad news they can dig up. Our senses are constantly assaulted by gossip and slander and with reports that people really don't need to hear.

Christians possess a message that must be heard. As believers, we have been commissioned by Christ Himself to be witnesses unto

Him (Acts 1:8) and to “go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). The days for the world are numbered. If we don’t redeem the time, who will? Now is the time for every Christian to get busy seeking the lost. Are you fearful? Worried that no one will respond? God is fully aware of your weakness. That is why He sent the Holy Spirit, to constrain us by His love and give us boldness.

My prayer is that these words will compel us to labor more abundantly and share the Good News of God’s great love for mankind. May His compassion motivate us to be sent ones, making a difference.

Chapter One
LOVE THAT MAKES
A DIFFERENCE

“And we have *known* and *believed* the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

“Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment [at the Bema Seat]: because as he is [in heaven], so are we in this world.

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

“We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:16-19).

When *agape* love takes over a Christian through the Holy Spirit and through conscientious commitment, discipline, trusting, and abiding in Jesus Christ, then we don’t “put on” love—we *live* in love, and love lives in us! We in-

habit love, and love becomes our new nature. Then, even though we are not perfect, the love is made perfect in us because it is allowed to control our soul. “Herein is our love made perfect....” There is no fear in love—no anxiety, no discontentment. That love casts out the fear. But he who fears is not made perfect in love.

A young girl who had been arrested a number of times was in court again for more serious charges. She was being counseled by a social worker who asked, “Considering all the problems you have had, what do you think would have made a difference in your life?”

“I don’t know,” she said. “My parents got divorced, my mother worked two jobs, and I was home alone. Our neighbors were Christians, and they were always going to church. My mother didn’t want to go, though I think she would have let *me* go if they had asked. *But they never asked.*” Then, the girl made this statement: “I think if I could have had what they had, it would have made a difference in my life.”

God’s love makes the difference in people’s lives. We need to let them know.

A Desperate Soul

An affluent man in New England seemed to

have everything. Yet, though he was healthy and had lots of friends, he took his own life. He left behind a note which said, “I don’t know why I’m doing this, but I have to do it. The boredom is intolerable. I have all the money I need. I have achieved success. I have attained the ‘good’ things in life. But I’m so bored and so unhappy.” He pulled the trigger and committed suicide.

Did anyone tell this man that there is hope for those who are weary? Was he aware that Jesus Christ said, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden”? As far as society goes, this man had everything the world could offer—and perhaps he did. But his heart was not in it, and he lived a life without hope. He did not value his life.

The Word of God is crystal clear about what a tremendous value system people can have when they receive His love. The love of God would have made a difference for this man.

Witnesses in Every Situation

I receive so many wonderful notes from people every week. Let me share one that I received recently:

“Pastor, it’s such a privilege and an honor to be a member of such a wonderful ministry. Each

day, the life I observe in the Christians around me reveals the nature of God. I'm so thankful to be under such precious and real teaching of the Word.

"I was a man living in the world, full of emptiness within my self. From the day I met the Body of Christ and witnessed the lives of some men in an office who were from this church, I knew I had to have what they believed. Each day now, I thank the Lord for that business owner's life, and for the men who work for him. Not that the credit goes to any one man, but I just thank God.

"For more than a year, I've been taught under such a servant of God. That's why I have the heart after God that I have today. I was so broken during the service tonight, as I am in so many of the services. Recently I visited some of our missionaries overseas and other affiliated ministries in the United States. I see the same heart—*God's* heart. Thank you."

It is so beautiful when emptiness is filled by finding the *real* thing. Those businessmen had a testimony to God, and it changed this man's life. Love and integrity in the work place made a difference. Certainly that did more for Christ than the lady who had a bumper sticker that read,

“Honk twice if you love Jesus.” So, a fellow came up behind her at a red light and honked twice. She rolled down her window and hollered at him, “You fool, can’t you see, the light is red!” Then she made a left turn without using her directional light, caused an accident, and then yelled, “What did you do that for?!” Eve all over again. Our testimony is not just what we say but who Christ is in us.

Chapter Two

FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE: HOW TO HAVE 20/20 VISION

God's love came for one purpose. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Then consider what the Bible says in Luke 19:9-10, where the Lord Jesus said to Zacchaeus, "This day is come salvation to this house....For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

God left heaven to seek and to save that which was lost, and this was the day for Zacchaeus. Jesus went to his home because God believes in confrontational evangelism; *He believes in house-to-house visitation*. Jesus went soul-winning, and men and women went with Him. He sent out the twelve disciples to go from house to house. He sent the seventy house to house (Luke 10:1-5). Paul followed God's example and went

from house to house, according to Acts 20:20. (And I've always said that God will give you "20/20" vision any day in your life!)

In a recent survey, out of five hundred American ministries that describe themselves as "born-again," fewer than two percent reported that they did any soul winning house to house. A revealing statistic, it says a lot about why things are the way they are in this Christian nation.

The Business of the Church

The love of Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. Do you know that that's the business of the Church? To seek, to keep right on seeking, and to bring Jesus Christ to those who are lost.

In Luke 15:4, one sheep was lost. The shepherd left behind the other ninety-nine in his fold, went after the lost sheep, found it, and carried it back to the flock on his shoulders. Then he called his friends and neighbors to gather and rejoice with him over the one that had strayed and was found. The Bible says in Luke 15:7 that likewise, there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents.

In Luke 15:8-10, a woman lost a coin. She lit a candle and searched diligently until she found

it. Then she called her neighbors, and there was great rejoicing. Again, “Likewise,...there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15:10).

In Luke 15:11-32, we have the parable of the prodigal son, who represents backslidden, rebellious believers. But the same passage reveals his lost elder brother, who represents Christians lost inside the house of God, lost to their call because of anger, resentment, and bitterness. The prodigal was found when he came to himself (verse 17) and ran home to a loving, gracious, waiting father. There was a great celebration. The rational elder brother, however, required a personal revelation of his position in Christ so he could be found rejoicing once again, with a ministry of reconciliation (verses 31-32).

The sheep was lost because of ignorance; people need to see and hear personally about God’s love for them. The coin was lost—though it was right inside of the house—because of indifference and carelessness. Some people are lost inside of Christian churches because of ignorance and indifference (a lack of proper teaching by dedicated pastors) and because of carelessness among Christians who have become familiar with the *gift* of salvation. The sons were

saved but lost to the purpose of God. They were lost in rebellion because they didn't know the father's heart and didn't understand the father's plan.

People are lost because of ignorance, indifference, carelessness, and rebellion; but thank God, Jesus came to seek and to save that which is lost.

I remember that I was twenty-three years old when a preacher came to our small town. He knocked on my door and gave me a Gospel tract. Nobody *else* did that. God bless him for it, because that tract brought conviction to my life, even though I didn't get saved until later.

I've often wondered why, in twenty-two and a half years, not one single person ever knocked on my door to tell me about Christ. Thank God for the Christians who do go door to door. Thank God for the wonderful servants who are soul winners! But guard against the notion that soul winning is somebody else's call. Every person who has received Christ as his Savior is commissioned to bring the Gospel to the lost.

Overcome Fear with Wisdom and Power

Proverbs 29:25 says, "The fear of man bringeth a snare [a trap, or an allurement]: but

whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.”

The fear of a man is a snare. We have a vision in our church to build a community center with a gymnasium. We want that gym to bless our kids, our neighborhood, and to win souls. We don’t fear bringing the vision before people. Why? Because perfect love casts out fear.

When God puts something on your heart, don’t just talk about it. Pray. Do something about it! Be constrained by love, because it may be something that could help win the lost. What may seem extravagant to skeptics is a sweet fragrance to God (Matthew 26:6-13). Don’t let the fear of man be a snare. “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.”

Have you visited your neighbors since you got them to come to a special event at your church? Someone you met casually may be thinking about taking his own life because of loneliness and emptiness. Or, like that troubled young woman, there are people waiting for an invitation that will make the difference in their lives. “Herein is our love made perfect....”

Chapter Three

OUR PURPOSE ON EARTH

“And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and *they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever*” (Daniel 12:3). During these days, let’s purpose to redeem the time. Jesus said to Israel in Isaiah 43:10, “*Ye are my witnesses.*” In Acts 1:8, the Lord told the disciples, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy [Spirit] is come upon you: and *ye shall be witnesses* unto me....”

We are on this earth to witness and to make disciples. We are here to seek and to save that which is lost. We are on this earth to reveal the love that sent God—in a Man—down to Calvary. And that Man, Jesus Christ, was crucified and shed His blood for the sins of mankind. We are on this earth to reveal that one soul is worth more to God than all the world. “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give

in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36-37).

Our ministry, along with every ministry that shares God's heart for the lost, is in the soul-winning business. When the wall was being rebuilt in Jerusalem, every tribe had laborers working side by side, every man with a trowel and a sword (Nehemiah 4:17). But Nehemiah 3:5 mentions the indifference of a group who "repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord." Too often, we get familiar with God's love and familiar with our purpose, which is to reveal His love to others. Psalm 126:5-6 says, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

On our jobs and in our neighborhoods, we need to ask God for ways to win the lost. Let's speed up the process! Let's do more of it! I thank God for the many Christians who are doing the work, but let's do more of it. We are here to seek and to save that which is lost.

Constrained by Love

Love constrains us to go. We are here because people are weak, frail, sick, and needy. The best of them have nothing. The richest of

them have nothing. The most popular have nothing—they just exist from day to day. Without Christ, they have nothing. They are empty, and they need our message. They need God's love. They need to have a conviction of the reality of eternity—the reality of heaven, and the reality of a place called hell. They need to have Christians witness to them.

Recently, I was speaking at a church in New England where I saw so many old friends who traveled quite a distance on a bus to be there. As I looked at their faces, I recalled that most of them had been won to Christ simply by knocking on their doors. Now, here they were, still going strong for God, some thirty-six years later. They are still faithful to God, and many are amazing servants, all because a handful were constrained by love to pray and believe and go from house to house with the precious seed of the Gospel. Thanks be to God, that's the way Jesus Christ did it. That's the way the Twelve did it. That's the way the seventy did it. We can do many other things, but we can't ever forget old-fashioned house-to-house soul winning.

We're not for all the so-called new methods that are going around in Christianity today, methods that compromise godly values, that

draw in the crowds at the risk of forsaking the call to make real disciples. I want to be a born-again Christian who wins souls the way Jesus did.

Cast Your Cares upon Him

God sees all our ways and counts all our steps (Job 31:4). Think of it. All the hairs on your head are numbered (Matthew 10:30). One well-known preacher tells about a fellow in his choir who said after a morning service, “Pastor, you’ve only got seventy-six hairs left.” That pastor rebuked him and said, “You stop counting my fuzz during the message! Listen to God.” Of course they were both teasing (at least, I hope so!). But in fact, he didn’t need that guy to count his hairs, because every strand was numbered by God.

“Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?” (Psalm 56:8). That’s how close we are to God. He knows how many tears we have shed, how many steps we have taken, and how many hairs we have on our head (even if it is just seventy-six). And knowing that God knows everything about us, we can cast all our care upon him, “for he careth for you” (1 Peter 5:7).

A Personal Savior

In Psalm 41:12, the Word of God says, “Thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face forever.” Just consider that. God sets us before His face forever and ever. We are never out of His sight. Can you understand just how personal He is?

He personally went to Calvary’s cross. He personally shed His blood and died. He personally was buried, and personally He came forth from the grave. Then He personally ascended to His throne in heaven so we can go to Him at any moment. When Jesus was on earth, He was intimate with each person He met—the woman at the well, the prostitute at Simon’s house, Zacchaeus the crook, Nicodemus the Pharisee, just to name a few. And do you know why He came? Only for one reason: to win the lost.

Many people who call themselves Christians never go out to win the lost. To each one I plead, Why don’t you get right with God? Bow before Him right now. Repent and ask Him to constrain you with His love to win the lost. We are here to buy up the time to win the lost. One of the businessmen in our ministry goes soul winning with his employees every Thursday. They have a pre-

cise plan with a practical purpose, and God honors their faithfulness. Those Christians understand the value of a soul.

One soul is worth more than all the world, and God cares that much for every single one of us. I believe that we are down here just to win the lost. We are here to make disciples at home and throughout the whole world.

Fear Not

Many people never go soul winning because of fear—fear of being rejected, fear of not saying the right thing. But when we go soul winning, it is crucial that we remember: The Holy Spirit does the work in people's hearts. We are just the messengers. Don't walk by sight. If you go to ten doors in a row with no answer, it doesn't matter. We are simply told to go house to house. It's not our business if people come to the door or not; it is God's business, and He can take care of it.

If the church is to have Spirit-filled ministries, then we need to bring the people we work with. We need to call on our neighbors. We need to go into the highways and the byways seeking the lost. Find a way, through prayer, to go out and sow the seed. Find a way to get people in church to hear the Gospel and to be built

up in the Word, in the fellowship of other believers. Find a way to love them, because they have needs beyond what you can imagine. And you have a Provision that is beyond what they have dreamed!

CONCLUSION

I thank God that for all the years we have been part of a soul-winning ministry. We have never allowed fear to stop us in confrontational evangelism. Never. We have many different ways of drawing people, a variety of “fish-hooks.” But we are one church that will never forget the Great Commission to go from house to house.

Please join me in praying for our neighbors. Let’s pray for our cities, and pray to get people to church. Follow up on the people who respond even in the smallest way. Be quickened by the Spirit, and really begin to think of ways to honor the Lord Jesus Christ in seeking the lost.

Don’t you want to be like the stars that shine forever and ever? He that winneth souls is wise. In these last days, let’s go after lost souls like never before.