

rejoice over one day when he also went to be with the Lord.

5. THE SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL IS DEPENDENT UPON THE OBEDIENCE OF THOSE WHO ARE ENTRUSTED WITH IT

Read verse 23 prayerfully. There is a real sense in which the gospel is failing today. Why is this? Is it because so few Christians are really obeying the great commission of the Lord Jesus, Matt. 28:19? The gospel is still the power of God unto salvation to all who believe, Rom. 1:16, but see what Rom. 10:14-15 says!

GROWING IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

F. W. Dixon

Study 9

BY ALL MEANS SAVE SOME

Scripture Portion: 1 Corinthians 9:1-27

The verses which give us the theme for this study are recorded in 1 Cor. 9:22-23. They were penned by the apostle Paul, and they reveal to us the consuming passion of his life and ministry, which should be the great concern of every Christian. Paul lived, and was willing to die, for the salvation of souls. There was a constant burden resting upon him that others might be saved; he longed for their salvation and he was willing to go to any trouble or inconvenience in order that they might be saved. Like John Knox, who later cried, "O God, give me Scotland or I die!" the burden of Paul's prayers was, "O God, give me souls or I die!" Whether he was working or resting, at home or abroad, in season or out of season, this man must at all costs seek the salvation of the lost, take a good look at Rom. 9:1-3 and 10:1. Do we share this consuming passion for the salvation of souls? Have we any real concern to see men and women saved? Are we doing anything to get them saved? It is so easy to be engaged with many other matters, secondary matters, and to be failing in this great and supreme objective. Notice this:

1. THE SUPREME OBJECTIVE IN EVERY CHRISTIAN'S LIFE SHOULD BE THE SALVATION OF SOULS

If we are the Lord's, then the one great business of your life and mine should be the salvation of souls. This was the master passion in our Saviour's life, Luke 19:10; John 9:4; 1 Tim. 1:15. He came to seek and to save lost men and women, and He has commissioned us to do the same, John 20:21. We are saved to serve, Eph. 2:10.

(1) This should be the supreme objective in your life and mine.

To win souls is to be the matter of first importance. Is this the supreme business of my life, of my church? A Christian or a church may be thoroughly evangelical without being at all evangelistic. It is so easy to become inward looking and not outward reaching: to "hold fast the faithful word", Titus 1:9, without "holding forth the word of life", Phil. 2:16.

(2) This should be the objective of every Christian: of not just a few Christians, but of all, look up Acts 8:4, and notice that it was the rank and file members of the church who "went everywhere preaching the word", and not the apostles, verse 1. This is the New Testament pattern for evangelism, and this is what is needed today.

(3) The objective is the salvation of souls. Men are lost, they need to be saved, and only the Lord Jesus can save them, Acts 4:12. Our objective is that they should be forgiven, Acts 13:38; born again, John 3:5; justified, Rom. 5:1; and led into all the fullness of God's great salvation, look up Rom. 15:29.

2. EVERY SOUL WE TOUCH IS TO BE REGARDED AS A POTENTIAL CHRISTIAN

Paul says, "all men", 1 Cor. 9:22. Yes, God loves all, John 3:16, and Christ died for all, 2 Cor. 5:15, so Paul had proclaimed the gospel to all whom he could reach. See what he says in Acts 20:26; he had faithfully proclaimed the gospel to all the souls he had met, look up Ezek. 3:18. If we are faithful like this, how will it work out practically? It will mean being on the watch for souls all the time. In the home, in business, while traveling, in our letter writing, on holiday, at all times and in every circumstance we must be ready to present the claims of Christ to those who need Him, look up 1 Pet. 3:15.

3. WE ARE TO ADOPT EVERY MEANS AVAILABLE TO SECURE THE SALVATION OF SOULS

Think of the Saviour's journey from Heaven to earth, and to Calvary's cross, to secure your salvation and mine, 2 Cor. 8:9; see Him traveling a special route in order to save a poor sinful woman, John 4:4, and through her many others, John 4:39-42. Study the parable of Luke 15:4-24, and notice the concern of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit over the lost sheep, verses 4-7, the lost silver, verses 8-10, and the lost son, verses 11-24. What have we denied ourselves in order that one lost sinner might be saved? If we would get others in, then we must put ourselves out! This will call for sacrifice, persistence and determination, but it will result in success, Psa. 126: 6.

What means should we adopt? The most important thing is that we should be at the disposal of the Holy Spirit. He will then lead us as to the methods to adopt in soul winning. He will certainly lay upon us a burden of prayer, Rom. 10:1, and He will direct us to the needy souls whom He has prepared to receive our testimony, Acts 8:26, 29 and 30. He may lead us to speak or to use carefully chosen tracts or portions of scripture; He will enable us to "steer" our conversations into the right channels so that we may speak of our Lord, Psa. 107:2; but the important thing is for us to be really in touch with Him, look up Prov. 8:34.

4. THE MOST ANY SERVANT OF GOD CAN DO IS TO SAVE SOME

Paul preached the gospel to many who rejected it. A fisherman never catches all the fish available; he only catches some, and sometimes none, Rom. 11:14. But God's plan is that we should all have the joy of saving at least some precious souls, make a careful study of 2 Cor. 1:14; 1 Thess. 2:19. In these verses the apostle is referring to those whom he had led to the Lord, who were now in Christ's presence, but whom he would