
CLARITY TRUMPET

a publication of
CLARITY MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle? So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.
-I Corinthians 14:8, 9

Are Christians to Win Souls?

As in so many areas of Bible truth, there seems to be an imbalance in various segments of Christianity regarding this question.

When Humanly Applied Pressure and Manipulation is Called Soul Winning

I recall attending an evangelistic meeting conducted by a very well known evangelist. He preached his Gospel message and gave a rather normal invitation—at first. In the initial phase of his invitation he had those who were “making decisions” to trust Christ as their Savior to raise their hands for prayer. This was done with “every head bowed and every eye closed.” He then urged those who had raised their hands to step out into the aisle and walk forward. Some did and some did not. Then he invited the “Christian workers” who were in the audience to go to those who had raised their hands but who still had not walked the aisle, and offer to come with them. Of course, I thought—as you are thinking now—if every head was bowed and every eye was closed, how could these “Christian workers” know who had raised their hands in the first place? *Peeking* was obviously part of the planned approach.

After an extended invitation, there was still one woman who had raised her hand for prayer but who remained standing in her place. Finally, the evangelist looked right at her, pointed his figure, and said, “Lady, you’re holding everyone here. We’re waiting for you.” He then said, “One of you godly soul winning women come and bring her to the altar.” A well-meaning woman from the church came to her and only after repeated urgings, tears and resistance, did she get her to the altar. With that, several people around me stomped out of the meeting. I was so disgusted with what was paraded as the work of the Holy Spirit and a burden for souls that I felt like leaving as well. Call it what you will, this is not soul winning in the Biblical sense of the word.

When Soul Winning is Denied

On the other hand, there are those who maintain that we are never told anywhere in Scripture to *win* souls. Instead, they tell us, we are to simply present the message and allow God’s Holy Spirit to do His work of *winning* the individual to Christ. Interestingly, I’ve never heard any advocates of this position observe or admit that “we are never told anywhere in Scripture that *the Holy Spirit* wins souls.”

Is the Winning of Souls Legitimate? Can We, Should We Win the Lost?

I can answer these questions *yes* or *no* depending upon what is meant by “winning” the lost. If by *winning* the lost we’re talking about *imparting spiritual life* to them, then obviously the answer to the question is a firm *no*. Only God can save a lost person. He alone is able to produce the new birth. This is the work of God’s Holy Spirit. We dare not even attempt to do His work in the heart of anyone, particularly one who is lost in their trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1-3).

However, if by winning the lost to the Lord we are speaking of *reasoning* with them, *leading* them and *persuading* them to trust Christ, then our answer to the above two questions must be an equally firm *yes*.

What does the Bible Mean by Winning Souls?

Proverbs 11:30 is a good place to begin in considering this issue of winning others to Christ. It says, “*The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise.*” To “win” souls in this verse means to *bring*, to *lead*. So, the question becomes, “Can Christians *bring* or *lead* others to Christ?” Most would answer *yes*, and rightly so.

But *winning* those who are lost may involve more than just bringing or leading them to Him. For instance, Daniel 12:3 seems to include an

additional dimension: *“Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.”* Turning many to righteousness is a stronger thought than is used in Proverbs 11:30—to win souls. The wording here in Daniel seems to carry with it more of a hands-on, eye-ball-to-eye-ball grappling, coupled with strong reasoning and persuasion.

In light of this, it certainly has been my observation over the years that those believers who do make honest attempts at winning others to Christ are too often very weak in the reasoning/persuading department. As a result they are too easily satisfied with “having presented the Gospel,” with little thought given as to how they might improve their ability in bringing others to a definite decision to trust Christ as Savior.

The Apostle Paul as an Ideal Example

Paul, the apostle, urged the believers to, *“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ”* (I Corinthians 11:1). In what way are we to imitate him? The context has the answer. His statement just prior to that quoted above is, *“Give no offense, either to the Jew or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please [adapt myself to] all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved”* (10:32, 33). So, if I am to imitate Paul, following his example, I am to see that all that I do brings glory to God (10:31) and does not bring offense to anyone, in order that many may be saved, that is, trust in Christ to save them.

It seems logical, then, to discover from Scripture how Paul went about winning others to Christ. So we turn to the Book of Acts to see **the apostle in action**. We begin in 14:1: *“Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed.”* We are not told *how* they spoke but obviously there was something in *the way in which they spoke* that brought multitudes of Jews and Gentiles to believe in Christ as their Messiah/Redeemer. We know they were sharing the Word of the living God, and that when one *believes in Christ* they are saved then and there forever. Their speech (*manner of speaking*) was apparently crucial in bringing about this great harvest of souls.

We dare not speculate too much, but the Bible is clear that Paul was not much of a speaker; he was no orator. He recognized it, even quoting his detractors in their ridicule of him: *“For his letters,” they say, “are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible”* (II Corinthians 10:10). *Contemptible* carries the idea of being *of no account*. If you were organizing a high-powered Bible conference you probably wouldn’t consider Paul as a headline speaker; a workshop type guy, perhaps, but not your main man.

You’d want an Apollos for that job (see Acts 18:24-25). So when Paul “so spoke” as to win a multitude to Christ it couldn’t be referring to his eloquence. It must have been some quality other than that.

Continuing in Acts, I think we’ll discover what that quality was. When Paul and his company came to Thessalonica they went to the synagogue. *“Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.’ And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.”* Paul let the Scriptures do the talking (Isaiah 55:10, 11), but **he knew the Scriptures well enough** to walk these well-versed Jews and Greeks through God’s Word to the point of decision – belief in Christ (carefully note Acts 18:4, 13, 19, 24-28; 19:8-10, 26).

This is, perhaps, the area of our greatest lack in this matter of winning others to Christ. We are content to know a few salvation verses and if those verses aren’t enough to convince the unsaved, we hide behind clichés: *They weren’t ready. Their hearts were hardened. I planted; someone else will have to reap. I don’t have the gift of evangelism.* We are not willing to admit our *sin* of not being adequately immersed in Scripture so that we can turn any man’s objections or hesitations into an opportunity to present more of God’s Word.

Again in this chapter (vs. 16, 17) we see Paul’s pattern: *“Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshippers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there.”*

Finally, there’s Paul own testimony in First Corinthians 9:19: *For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more.* A willingness to serve all men for the Gospel’s sake is crucial to winning others to Christ, but this demands that we willingly step out of our comfort zones, trust in the Holy Spirit’s power, and begin to persuade others using the mighty Word of God.

REASONING FROM SCRIPTURE,
PERSUADING THROUGH THE WORD,
IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY OF
WINNING OTHERS TO CHRIST.

It is the Bible way. Is it your way?

Richard A. Seymour

Clarity Trumpet #22

~~~~~  
Post Office Box 10 • LaGrange, WY 82221-0010