

WINNING A SOUL TO CHRIST

By Milton Smith

Winning a soul to the Lord's kingdom may at times be somewhat frustrating, but few experiences are more rewarding than seeing a soul baptized into Christ as a result of our efforts. Proverbs 11:30 tells us, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise." It is the duty of every Christian to try to bring others into the Kingdom of God. When Jesus gave the Great Commission, He clearly taught that this commission of bringing lost souls out of the darkness into the marvelous light of truth was to continue until "the end of the world." That commission is now in our hands.

As stated above, sometimes a sincere effort to win a soul to Christ can be frustrating because it may

prove to be a difficult task. For example, sometimes a person might be so close to the one who is being taught, he may not exercise the proper patience needed. I have known of cases in which another person might have more success teaching a soul than someone who might perhaps be very close to that person. Often one can become so impatient that the wrong thing might be said that could push a person even further away from responding. A few added thoughts are listed below.

You can actually lead a person to Christ by your good example! Often, a person is more impressed by what you do than by what you might say. Very few things can take the place of a good example. Let us never forget the fact that Jesus tells us that we

are to be "the light of the world." Likewise, Paul tells us in Philippians 2:15 that in the midst of a crooked and perverse world, we are to "shine as lights in the world." But what about letting others involve themselves in helping us teach the lost? This may not always be needed, but often others can be of great help in winning a soul to the Lord. Also, we should never lose our temper when we try to teach others. It is needless to say that becoming hostile or hateful in any way will almost always prove to be counterproductive to our efforts. The Great Commission is in our hands. May we always be looking for opportunities to lead others to the light of Jesus Christ and may we do so in the most advantageous way.

—Tulsa, OK

GOD'S HELP IN KEEPING THE HARDEST COMMANDMENTS

By Danny Tunnell

Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." (John 14:15.) Some believe the commandments the lawyer spoke of in Luke 10 are two of the hardest to truly keep: (1) Love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and (2) Love your neighbor as yourself.

These commandments would be hard, if not impossible, to obey without help from God. How can we love by commandment alone? Can society pass and enforce a law that would compel a person to love God or to love another? No! Why would the answer have to be "no?" Because love by its very nature has to be voluntary. No one has ever been frightened or coerced into loving anyone. If that happened it would not be actual "love."

I heard a story about a man who was very brutal with his wife. He came home from work and walked up to his wife with an angry face and said, "Where is my dinner?"

Then he commanded her to get dinner. She was afraid of him so

she hurried off to put dinner on the table. He had been abusive that way throughout their marriage.

He got what he wanted. But after dinner, he cannot walk up to his wife and say, "I now command you to love me!" Why? Because you cannot just command someone to love you! It takes willingness on their part. It has to be voluntary.

God does not command us to love Him or to love others as ourselves without His help. That help is given to the Christian. Peter told those on Pentecost, "Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38.) Paul declared, "God's love (agape love) is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us." (Romans 5:5.) God's love is listed first among the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22.)

We should never look at the commands in the Bible as only rules and regulations that we must

keep without God's help. If we do that we become too judgmental of ourselves and others. That steals our joy and makes us hard to be around. It becomes hard for us to show mercy to others because we don't believe we've received it. It's hard to give away something we don't have.

It's important for all Christians to stay on the narrow path. (Matthew 7:13-14.) It is important to realize that we are made righteous by the blood of Christ. (Revelation 1:5.) But if we try to do it on our own we become self-righteous. Self-righteousness and pride always go together. Pride always needs something to be proud about.

Christians who have God's love and are made righteous by the blood of Christ are not looking for an excuse to sin. They are doing everything they can to stay out of sin. Knowing they have God's help leaves them time and incentive to truly fellowship with Him.

—Miami, OK

Old Paths

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"ask for the old paths" (Jer. 6:16)

THREE THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN TEMPTED

By Danny Boggs

"No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." (1 Corinthians 10:13.)

When I was baptized into Christ, God washed away all my past sins and gave me a new life. (Acts 22:16; Romans 6:4.) But baptism did not obliterate every inclination to think what I should not think. It did not tie my tongue from ever saying what I should not say. It did not destroy my ability to do things I should not do. How then can I follow through with the appeal I made to God when I became a Christian that said, "I do not want to be held captive to sin?" When tempted, 1 Corinthians 10:13 teaches me to remember . . .

I am not the only one. "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man." What I face is what humans face. My struggles are the same as other people's struggles. I am not the first – and I will not be the last – to fight what I fight. Fellow Christians are tempted the way I am tempted. Jesus Himself knows how it feels to be me. (Hebrews 4:15.) I lie to myself with Satan's own propaganda when I believe that no one would understand my challenge. "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world." (1 Peter 5:8-9.) I may be tempted, but I am not the only one.

I am not alone. "God is faithful." He is never the one tempting me to do wrong. (James 1:13.) He never leaves me to fend for myself. (Hebrews 13:5.) "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1.) "But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one." (2 Thessalonians 3:3.) The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials. (2 Peter 2:9.) One promise after another from God tells me that He does not leave me alone. Though I have not seen Him, I love Him. (1 Peter 1:8.)

I am not trapped. "He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." How can I get good at seeing and seizing the way of escape? "I have stored up Your word in my heart, that I might not sin against You." (Psalm 19:11.) I listen to God by reading my Bible regularly, and then in prayer I tell Him every day that in my heart of hearts I do not want to sin against Him. (Matthew 6:13.) If I will be vigilant, God will give me the guts to do the right thing. He will give me the wisdom to walk away. He will position others beside me who are determined to do the right thing. He may grant new circumstances. He will strengthen me to endure. I might be tempted, but I am not trapped.

I am not the only one. I am not alone. I am not trapped. There is hope for me!

—Neosho, MO

OH, THOSE HANDS!

By Hershel Dyer

A little girl was once admiring her mother. She spoke of her eyes, her hair, her face, and then, stopped to add, "But your hands . . ."

The mother's hands were drawn and misshapen. She felt it was time to explain to her daughter the reason for this disfigurement. She told of a fire in her house about ten years earlier. Her baby was upstairs in its cradle and she had rushed up the stairs and into a room, which was ablaze, snatching the infant up into her arms. In doing so, she suffered severe burns on her hands, leaving them scarred for life.

The little girl, listening intently to her mother's words, now looked with reflection and deep affection upon her mother's hands. Finishing her statement earlier begun, she added, "But I love your hands best of all!"

Another scene had transpired on the day of our Lord's resurrection. He appeared to His disciples behind closed doors and, at first, it greatly frightened them – thinking He was a spirit. However, when He showed them his nail-pierced hands and the hole in His side made by the soldier's spear, they rejoiced.

One of the apostles, Thomas, was not there that evening to see the Lord. When the others told him about it, he averred that he would not believe until he saw "in His hands the print of the nails." A week later, Christ again appeared to the group and this time Thomas was present. Again, as before, the resurrected Jesus appeared. He especially addressed Thomas, saying, "Reach your finger here, and look at my hands . . ." (John 20:27.)

To the believer's eye, surely no set of hands could be so beautiful as those that were pierced for our redemption!

"I shall know Him, I shall know Him, and redeemed by His side I shall stand; I shall know Him, I shall know Him, by the print of the nails in His hand." —Tulsa, OK

(Just a few days ago, many of us enjoyed helping Brother Dyer in celebrating his 90th birthday. It would be difficult to overestimate the good done by this good and godly preacher of the gospel over the better part of the last century. The church today could use many, many more servants of his caliber.

—DK

TRUSTING IN THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

By Bobby Key

I have always been a believer in the providence of God. I believe that God is active, in both the events of our lives and the events of the world. I further believe that God controls and guides the events of our world in such a way as to bless His children and sometimes to chasten them.

The longer I live the more I am convinced that God governs in the affairs of men. Wise old Benjamin Franklin once said, "If a sparrow cannot fall without His notice, is it possible that an empire can rise without His aid?"

One greater than Franklin said, "The Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men." (Daniel 4:17.)

Or in the words of the Psalmist, "The Lord reigns; let the people tremble!" (Psalm 99:1.)

Man was created as God's crowning work. The animal, mineral, and vegetable worlds were placed under His dominion. God formed the world to meet the needs of man; He "formed it to be inhabited." (Isaiah 45:18.) God has not gone off and forgotten man's needs. A father is mindful of the needs of his family, and God is, and always has been, mindful of the needs of His offspring.

Romans 8:28 has always meant a great deal to me. "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." He is not talking here of only a few events in our lives, but of all the events of our lives. The ultimate and final good of man is announced in this promise.

We need to become stronger in faith. We need to learn to trust Him more. "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7.)
— Miami, OK

Editorial . . .

"LOVE AS BROTHERS"

By Dalton Key

Some folks just can't seem to get along with anyone, and more than a few of these rabble-rousers have ever troubled the Lord's church, posing as children of God. Forgetting or ignoring Peter's admonition to "love as brothers," such Christ-less Christians still "cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which (they) have learned." (1 Peter 3:8; Romans 16:17.)

Will we never learn that battling among ourselves most always creates more problems than it solves? Such fights are seldom won. The apparent victor too often compromises integrity in the heat of battle to such an extent that victory becomes hollow at best and a defeat at worst.

It's hard to sling mud without getting yourself muddy.

Because Christ deeply loves His church, He desires unity among her members. (Ephesians 5:25; John 17:20,21.) He taught the futility of a house divided against itself and charged His disciples to love one another. (Matthew 12:25; John 13:34,35.) Paul described the united church as a body: "But now indeed there are many members, yet one body . . . so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another." (1 Corinthians 12:20; Romans 12:5.)

Personal differences between individuals have many times led to major divisions within the entire congregation. One scripturally united body is always more desirable than two separate and warring groups meeting together under the same roof while scarcely speaking to one another. With this kind of internal division, it is usually not long until a visible split takes place. And the split splinters the body into more than just two groups and does damage far beyond that felt by the original parties involved. In the words of the late Lloyd Connell, "There is the group that stays in the church building. There is the group that starts meeting in another place. There is the group that scatters to other congregations. And then there is the group that is disgusted about the whole matter and falls by the wayside, ceasing to attend anywhere."

And all this trouble and stressful trauma, all this division and divisiveness, all this loss of potential and promise, from just one or two troublemakers ignoring the Lord's command to "love as brothers."

Doctrine is one thing and opinion another. While division born of sincere insistence to obey the Lord and follow the teachings of the Bible is understandable and often unavoidable, tearing the Lord's body asunder over matters of opinion or personality is unconscionable.

Euodia and Syntche were implored to "be of the same mind." (Philippians 4:2.) The Ephesian brethren were commanded by the words, "Submitting to one another in the fear of God." (Ephesians 5:21.)

We would be wise to listen and learn.



NATIONAL GREATNESS

By Bobby Dockery

The Bible insists that there is a connection between the moral vigor of a nation and the survivability of a nation. The strength of any nation lies in the goodness of its people.

"Blessed is the nation, whose God is the Lord." (Psalm 33:12.)

"Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people." (Proverbs 14:34; Goodspeed's Translation has: "But sin is a people's ruin.")

History is full of examples of nations which fell because they forgot God and failed to walk in

His ways. Because of their national iniquity, God allowed Israel to fall to Assyria in 722 B.C. The wickedness of Assyria, in turn, led to their fall to the Babylonians in 612 B.C. The nation of Judah fell to these same Babylonians in 586 B.C., and, once again, God said it was because of sin. Mighty Babylon became so steeped in corruption that God overthrew it in 539 B.C. Eventually Rome, the mightiest empire the world had known, collapsed when its burden of wickedness became too great to bear.

And America????

Righteousness is America's greatest defense; sin is our window of ultimate vulnerability. Do you love your country? Do you want to do something good for it? Then do all you can to help turn America's heart back to God!

— Fayetteville, AR

(As Alexis de Tocqueville once famously observed: "America is great because she is good. If America ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.")

"FOR CHRIST'S SAKE"

By Ron Stough

One of the basic attitudes of this generation seems to be "What's in it for me?" The entire premise of the life of Christ, however, was living for the sake of others. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 8:9, reminds us that for our sakes Christ left the riches of Heaven for the poverty of earth. The word "sake" is an old Anglo-Saxon term, *sach*, meaning cause or lawsuit. When we do something for someone's sake, we do it for his best interest. Because of what Christ has done for our sakes, we are motivated to live for his sake.

For Christ's sake we are to forgive one another. Ephesians 4:32 reminds us that we forgive others as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us. The lesson here is simple: we forgive others, not because they always deserve it, but for the sake of Christ.

For Christ's sake we serve one another. Paul refers to himself as a servant for Jesus' sake. (2 Corinthians 4:5.) Sometimes our brothers and sisters are hard to serve. Sometimes we would prefer to promote our own welfare. But for Christ's sake we will "bend down and wash their feet."

For Christ's sake we pray for one another. Paul urged the Romans to pray for him for Christ's sake. (Romans 15:30.) We love one another only to the degree that we pray for one another. What a difference it would make in the Lord's church if His people fervently prayed for one another.

Remember, the only life worth living is the one lived for the sake of Christ.

— Duncan, OK

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Dalton Key Editor

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