Seeking The Lost

by

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Luke 19:10

The great mission of Jesus Christ when He came into this world was to seek and save the lost.

Luke 19:10, "*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*"

The word "lost" here does not mean "damned" or "doomed," but it simply means "in the wrong place." Vine defines it as "spiritual alienation from God." In other passages the word "lost" means the "loss of eternal life." If a person remains "in the wrong place", and does not turn to God, he will eventually find himself "lost eternally."

Sometimes when we are trying to find something we want that has been "misplaced" it requires a little effort on our part to find it. We may have to sacrifice some time and effort in locating what is missing.

Jesus made a great sacrifice in seeking and saving the lost by the giving of his very life on the cross so that many could be saved. What was "*lost*" was the souls of men which were "misplaced" in the sins of the world.

John 1:29, "*The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*"

Christ did not come to solve the political problems of Israel, nor to break the back of Roman tyranny, nor for bringing improvements in agriculture, trade, medicine, or education, nor for any other similar thing. He came to redeem men from sin.

He started at an early age.

Luke 2:49, "*And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?*"

Verse 42 says Jesus was 12 years old when he went to the temple, and was not only listening to the teachers, but was also asking them questions. Verse 47 says they were all amazed at his understanding and his answers.

Can each of us say that we are about and doing our Father's business?

Jesus was known as a teacher sent from God. John 3:1-2, "*There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know*

that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."

Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin, and later spoke in defense of Jesus (John 7:45-52), and also was the one who prepared the body of Jesus after the crucifixion with a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes. He may have come to Jesus by night because of the rest of the Sanhedrin, who were not so honest. Nicodemus admitted that Jesus was a teacher from God because no man could perform the miracles that He did unless God was with him.

The point we want to derive from this was the fact that Jesus was preaching. The miracles that He performed served to prove that the things He said were true.

Jesus wants us to seek and save the lost, also

Matt. 16:24, "*Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*"

Cross-bearing is widely misunderstood. It is not old age, poverty. taxes, illness, bad weather, or any other discomforts of life. It is the acceptance, for the sake of the will of God, of some burden or burdens, undertaken out of a desire to fulfill God's purpose.

Many a Christian has received abuse for stating the will of God. They were not to give up preaching the Gospel just because others told them to be still, or not to teach in this name of Jesus.

Acts 5:27-29, "*And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.*"

What command of God was Peter referring to?

- Mark 16:15-16, "*And he said unto them, **Go ye** into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*"
- Matt. 28:18-20, "*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. **Go ye** therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you:*

and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

Nothing was to be left out concerning the teaching of God's commandments.

Was it all right to ignore this command?

1 Cor. 9:16-17, "*For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.*"

Paul, in his first letter to Timothy, exhorted him to not to slack off in teaching the Word of God.

1 Tim. 4:13, "*Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.*"

I cringe whenever I hear someone say, "We don't convert anyone by cramming the Word of God down their throat, therefore we teach by example." We do teach by example, but we cannot stop right there. There has to be some point where the Word of God is presented.

Remember, Paul said, "*Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!*"

Don't soft-sell the Gospel, and don't apologize for the Gospel. Just present it.

Some act like they are ashamed of God's plan for saving the lost, and try to come up with other ideas to reach people on their own.

- Rom. 1:16-19, "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.*"

- 1 Cor. 1:18-21, "*For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by*

wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

The Word of God can be presented in an organized manner without being overbearing and running others off.

Our aim should be to save other's souls.

We can all cite examples as to how some were offended because of the way certain people presented the scriptures to them. This doesn't mean that preaching the gospel is not the method that should be employed. Remember, preaching the Gospel is God's method for salvation. It pleases God that this method is employed.

Some people will be offended. Many times that is unavoidable.

Christ said that many would be hated if they followed Him and preached His Word.

- John 17:14-17, "*I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*"
- John 15:18-22, "*If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin.*"
- 2 Tim. 3:12, "*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*."

Early church is seen seeking the lost

- 3000 souls were saved on the Day of Pentecost by Peter's preaching. Acts 2:37-41, "*Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest*

of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

- Acts 8:4, "*Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.*"
- Acts 20:20, "*And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house,*"
- Acts 5:42, "*And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.*"
- Example of Philip teaching the eunuch. Baptized him that very day. Acts 8:26-39, "*And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou*

believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing."

- Example of Ananias teaching Paul what he needed to do to be saved. Acts 22:6-16, "*And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me. And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*"

- Example of Aquila and Priscilla expounding unto Apollos "*the way of God more* perfectly". Acts 18:24-26, "*And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.*"

People need guidance; God is depending upon Christians to do this

Acts 8:30-31, "*And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.*"

Notice that Philip took advantage of the situation to present the gospel to the eunuch. He did not come across as one who was overbearing with the scriptures He used a simple question, and was invited to come up and sit with the eunuch and discuss it further. This should be our aim, also.

Some will be offended so matter what they hear. But if we have done our work correctly, their offense will be because of the message they didn't like, and not in the manner in which it was given.

A fisherman won't catch any fish unless he dangles his line in the water. Matt. 4:19, "*And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.*"

Christianity is an active profession. Christ has stated that he wants followers who will actively pursue the souls of others.

We have an individual responsibility to seek and save the lost

2 Tim. 2:2, "*And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*"

Paul instructed Timothy to go out and teach other faithful men to also go out and teach other faithful men. The Word of God is to be preached.

Phil. 2:15-16, "*That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.*"

Unless we hold forth the Word of God (preach it), we will be held accountable.

Jude 1:3, "*Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*"

Jude, in his general epistle to the brotherhood, exhorted the brethren to earnestly contend for the faith. This is not done by just sitting quietly by and letting the world watch us be a good Christian. This was an active work they were to perform.

1 Pet. 3:15, "*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:*"

This requires study and preparation. Sometimes we may find ourselves unprepared to answer a certain question. Instead of giving an answer that may or may not be correct, inform the questioner that you would like to get together with them to discuss the question. Then study up on it, and be prepared for the discussion. Once you have done this, you should be prepared the next time someone asks you a like question.

Phil. 1:14, "*And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.*"

Paul was put into prison for his preaching. Because of the way he acted (confident, bold, without fear, etc.), others were strengthened to act likewise.

- Acts 16:20-33, "*And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of*

the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway."

- Col. 4:5-6, "*Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.*"

Let's look at this passage a little more closely. Paul gives us here some insight as to how we should preach the Word to the world.

- "*... Redeeming the time ...*" is an expression that means "buying up the opportunities," "taking advantage of all occasions for doing good," etc.
- "*... Speech ... always with grace ...*" Speech that is pleasant, marked by sweetness and courtesy.
- *"... Seasoned with salt ..."* Give the words needed to preserve their souls. With some people there may be a tendency to feed them honey and sweet-tasting foods, but Paul tells us to also feed them with foods that will nourish their souls, and have a lasting effect.

Know how to answer every man.

God will do His part; He expects us to do our part

1 Cor. 3:6, "*I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.*"

It is God's Word that should have a lasting impression upon their minds, not what we think it should be.

People who hear the Word will react differently

It won't usually be because of the way it is delivered. If they reject the Word, don't make the mistake of thinking, "Well, I sure messed that presentation up." People are just going to react to the Word differently.

- Matt. 13:1-9, "*The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And he spake many things*

unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

- Matt. 13:18-23, "*Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.*"

Reasons are varied why some people won't receive the Word of God. Those reasons generally have nothing to do with the Christian presenting the Word. It has to do with how willing the hearer is in accepting the Word in his life.

Some will look for excuses not to seek

Luke 14:16-24, "*Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and*

the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper."

Every one of them gave excuses that sounded good to themselves, but these excuses were not accepted by the Lord.

Some look for a convenient season

2 Tim. 4:2, "*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*"

I sometimes think in my own mind, "I'm just too busy to do this now. I'll wait until I can devote more time to the Lord's work." If we keep putting off our work, it will never get done. We need to somehow find the time to place the Lord's work ahead of our own.

Preaching the Word is a good work; what happens when we don't perform it?

It is sin.

James 4:17, "*Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*"

It is being dishonest.

1 Thess. 2:4, "*But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we <u>speak</u>; <u>not as pleasing men</u>, but God, which trieth our hearts.*"

It is failing to bear fruit.

John 15:1-8, "*I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. <u>Abide in me</u>, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done*

unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."

It will let others lose their souls.

- James 5:20, "*Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.*"
- Ezek. 3:18-21, "*When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul.*"

Conclusion

Therefore, seek and persuade others.

2 Cor. 5:11, "*Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.*"

The fields are white.

- John 4:35, "*Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.*"
- Matt. 9:37, "*Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;*"