



The Local Church (VI)

“Our Responsibility To Be Active In Personal Evangelism”

By Vernon Teagarden

The responsibility to be actively involved in the teaching of the local congregation, without doubt, is one some Christians are most reluctant to accept. However, if the church is to grow as it should every member must be active, to the extent of their ability and opportunities, in the work of saving souls. Christ still needs, and wants us to be, “fishers” of men (cf. Matt. 4:18-21).

THE NEED FOR EVANGELISM

The obvious reason for personal evangelism is seen in the fact that, without Christ, the world is lost (Rom. 3:23; 6:23; Eph. 2:2). Jesus, the head of the church, came to seek and save that which was lost (Lk. 19:10). Shouldn't we follow in the Master's footsteps (cf. 1 Pet. 2:2)? It is the gospel of Christ that can save (Ro. 1:16). However, that gospel needs to be taught to give the lost

and dying world an opportunity to hear it and obey it (Rom. 10:13-17). Consequently, Jesus commanded His disciples to teach His word to others (Matt. 28:18-20). Knowing the value of souls and the destiny of the lost, we should possess an enthusiasm to reach others with the gospel (Matt. 16:26; Acts 17:16; 2 Cor. 5:10, 11). Indeed, the need is widespread and urgent. The fields are white unto harvest (Jn. 4:35).

THE NEED FOR PERSONAL EVANGELISM

Personal evangelism is individual and private. This is in contrast to the teaching we may support someone else to do, and from public teaching of the gospel. Personal evangelism is one-on-one, not group teaching. Both types of preaching have always been needed, and all realize, or at least should realize, that neither replaces the other (cf. Acts 5:42; 20:20).

There is a special need for individuals to become actively involved in personal evangelism. This duty belongs to each member of the body of Christ, and no one can designate another person to obey this command for him.

The Southeast

Church of Christ meets at:

35 Walnut Court

Mogadore, OH 44260

Phone: 330.628.7432

SERVICES:

Sunday

Bible Study: 10:00 am

Worship: 10:50 am

6:00 pm

Wednesday

Bible Study: 7:30 pm

Every Christian is obligated to be ready to give an answer (1 Pet. 3:15). If we are going to be imitators of Christ we must attend to private as well as public teaching. There were times when Jesus taught the multitudes (Matt. 5:1, 2; 13:1, 2), and times when He taught individuals (Lk. 10:38-42; Jn. 3:1-12; 4:1-26). The seed of the kingdom, God's word (Lk. 8:11), will not do anyone any good if not sown (Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23; Rom. 10:13-17). There is no such thing as a “silent

Christian,” or a “Christian undercover” (cf. Matt. 5:13-16; Phil. 2:15, 16). How can we not speak out? (cf. Acts 4:20; 1 Cor. 9:16).

Whatever excuses we may offer in neglecting personal evangelism, they will be to no avail when the Lord examines the uses of our abilities and opportunities (Matt. 25:24- person to person (2 Tim. 2:2). Each Christian should ask himself, “If my efforts at personal evangelism are any indication, how many Christians will there be in the next generation?” Every member of every local congregation needs to adopt the attitude of Isaiah: “Here am I; send me!” (Isa. 6:8).

(Next, “Our Responsibility To Be Active In Edifying”)

“Broken Cisterns”

We are all probably familiar with the old saying, “Here today, gone tomorrow.” It illustrates the sober truth that many of the blessings that we enjoy each day are fleeting and temporal, perhaps even disappearing with little or no warning. These may include such blessings as our material possessions, our physical health, our relationships, or our earthly stature. We understand this adage to be a reminder for us to enjoy, appreciate and be grateful for all of these things while we have them.

However, I doubt that anyone would have ever

thought to apply this to a lake. It seems a few years ago in southern Chile a glacial lake suddenly disappeared. Apparently a crack unexpectedly developed in one of the ice walls of the lake and the water drained out practically overnight.

Jeremiah the prophet likely didn’t know about glacial lakes in Chile but he did know something about disappearing water supplies. In fact, a lesson he taught his people using similar imagery is very important for us today.

Jeremiah’s nation, the kingdom of Judah, had drifted further and further from God even though God was the very reason they even existed as a nation. In spite of all that God had done for them, the people had entangled themselves in the worldly and worthless practice of idolatry. Jeremiah’s work was to call them to repent and return to God.

“Has a nation changed its gods, which are not gods? But my people have changed their glory for what does not profit. Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; be very desolate”, says the Lord. For my people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns -broken cisterns that can hold no water.” (Jer. 2: 11-13)

In practicing the sin of idolatry the people had chosen the stagnant, fleeting water of their man-made, cracked cisterns over the fresh, pure, and perpetually flowing waters of the living God.

Such a choice should be easy and obvious, right? Sadly, people are no different today, often making the wrong choice. Many choose foolishly when it comes to the most important water – the spiritual water of life needed to save and sustain their souls that only God supplies. They simply fail to heed Jeremiah’s lamentable warning, “Oh Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps,” (Jer. 10:23).

Yet many have ignored this warning by willingly and willfully hewing out their own cracked cisterns – the broken cisterns of sinful living. While this may satisfy their worldly thirst for a while in this life, it can never satisfy their spiritual thirst, and imagine their surprise one day when they go to draw water from their trusted, impure source only to find that the water they have so wrongly relied upon has “up and disappeared.”

Broken cisterns? Why not choose the fountain of living water from the pure source above that saves, sustains and perpetually flows! - Jeff Haught