

Personal Evangelism

by Ernest C. Reisinger

Personal evangelism is a clear command of Jesus to go into all the world and make disciples, and it is most effective when done with a devotional life and a focus on one person at a time.

Duration: 1:15:18

Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:24

Topics: "Personal Evangelism", "Sharing The Gospel"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on his own conversion experience and the impact of a true witness in his life. He emphasizes the importance of true evangelism and witnessing, highlighting the role of believers in pointing others to Christ. The speaker then focuses on 2 Timothy 2:24-26, discussing the condition of the unconverted and the need for patience and gentleness in sharing the truth. He concludes by urging listeners to go home and share their testimonies with their friends, relatives, and neighbors, emphasizing the power of personal experiences in drawing others to Christ.

Transcript

I think this is an appropriate subject, might not be an appropriate carpenter preacher but it's an appropriate subject at least for this flash closing thing. You know there are two very important words in the Bible, a lot of those little words that are very important like but and therefore and some of those words, but there are two other words that are very important and one is come. And I hope you've heard that word from the lips of the Savior, come unto me.

But there's another word from the same holy lips and that is go. And the same crowd that claim they've heard him say come, that's the same crowd to which he said go. He didn't say come to some and go to others.

The same ones to whom he said come, and if they've come in a saving way, that's who he says go to. Now I'm not going to preach to you today, I don't think, I might, you never know. If you've preached once in your life you always say Lord just let me preach one more time.

But so many times we do our best but we really don't preach. And that's not my intention really today to preach to you. I want to give you some Bible material on the subject that's been assigned to me for this hour.

And then I want to do what I do not recommend normally in sermons. We're not meant to preach ourselves, but I do want to share some experiences in this great work. And my purpose, I think I'm old enough to assure you that it's not for your praise, I don't need your praise, I'm about to cross the river one of these days and I don't need your praise anymore.

And I'm not asking your purse, I need your prayers, but I don't need your praise and I don't need your purse. One of the dangers about giving personal accounts of things is to receive personal praise. I believe I'm past that.

My reason and my intention and my purpose and my motive is to instruct a little bit and guidance and especially to encourage people in this work that never ends. It's been my life's work. I don't feel like a preacher.

Particularly, principally, I try to fill in to the, you know, like the National Guard to the real army get there. But when the real army don't come, I just have to keep on going as the National Guard. But in 33 years, this, what I'm speaking to you about has been my life's work.

It's been my life's work and I'm serious about that. Two things. I think that at the bottom of it lies, first of all, of course, is God's command.

But I've ever been conscious of the fact that the greatest service ever rendered to me between eternity past and the world to come, the greatest service that any human being has ever rendered to me in this world has been the man that told me about Jesus. The practical aspect of that is it changed my life, my home, my marriage, and bless God, my destination. And that's one reason why I'm convinced so much about its importance.

And the second thing is, I think that lies somewhere at the bottom, motivation. Part of motivation is this. The greatest joy, and I've known what the world calls joys, and I thought it was joy too.

I've known all about the other life, but I say without any mental reservation, the greatest joy that I've known in this world is to be and feel that you're a link in a chain or a signpost to point somebody to him who changes lives and homes, and to see lives and homes changed by the power of the gospel, and God magnifying his grace and mercy in the salvation of some souls. I tell you, I don't know any greater joy. It's wonderful to sit in a church and see those that you've labored with for years sometimes, to see them come in with their family, sit in the church.

Well today, that's those two things. It's been my life's work, and I believe it for those two reasons, partly. I want to say at the outset, likewise, that I'm dealing with the human side of things today.

Not that I don't believe and have some measure of understanding of the divine side of things, but the same Bible that tells me who does the saving, and the car tells me how he does it. And you, my dear reformed brethren, better give some attention to how he does it, as well as who does it. Because there's an awful lot in this book about how he does it.

One of the arguments I get at times is, you don't know my circle, you don't know the circle geographically, or the kind of work I do, or the people I work with. And you know what I say? I don't say it outside all the time, I say baloney. I've been in all kinds of circumstances.

I've tried this as a carpenter on a construction job. I've tried it as a sailor in the Navy for several years, as a businessman, dealing with bankers and lawyers and doctors. There's nobody too high, there's nobody too low.

And I've tried it as a preacher, and that's the most difficult. And I'll tell you why. You people who are laypeople, I was on that side of the fence, still am, for all practical purposes, in my heart at least.

But when I sit down on a train and talk to somebody, I suppose hundreds of times they'd say, are you a preacher? I'd say, no, I'm a carpenter. And of course, when I was a sailor, they knew I was a sailor, because I had that beautiful uniform on. So when you say to somebody now, and they say, are you a preacher? You say, yeah, well, you're doing what you're meant to do.

And it kind of cuts a great deal away. So I've tried it in all kinds of situations. Well, I'd better give you a text.

It's closing time. I only have an hour and a half yet. So Mark chapter 5. And I'm only going to read two verses, or three, but I'll give you the context.

This is chapter up to the 18th and 19th verse that I want to use. The context is there was a maniac who was a recipient of the sovereign and saving touch of our Savior. And after he'd been a recipient of that sovereign and saving touch, he did what all men do.

Maybe not in practice, but in their heart. They want to be with him. They want to be with him.

And this man made such a request. And when he, verse 18, when he, Jesus, was coming to the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil, the maniac of Gadara, asked him, or prayed him, that he might be with him. A good request.

How be it? Nevertheless, Jesus said, suffered him not, or allowed him not, but said unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. You don't have to take any courses in personal evangelism to do that. You don't have to have ten little simple things to do that.

Go home to thy friends. Would you look at the first chapter of Mark, verse 17? I'm just giving you a few verses at the outset, and I'll be referring to them later. He had had something.

He had received something. Mark 117, they usually teach this to the little children in the nursery department or somewhere else. But I would remind you that when Jesus said it, he was talking to men.

Men, not little children. Jesus said unto them, Come after me, follow me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And the key is, follow me.

Acts chapter 8, verse 4, first four verses. I want to read those as a springboard for this morning. Acts chapter 8, 1 to 4. Saul was consenting unto his death, that is, the death of Stephen.

At that time, there was great persecution against the church, which was at Jerusalem. And they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea, Samaria, except the apostles. Now, they may have been having a conference on prophecy or eschatology or something like that.

I don't know. Maybe they were trying to decide whether they were superlapsarians or infolapsarians, or I don't know what they may have been doing. They may have been praying.

It doesn't tell us. But they weren't out there, anyhow. They were having a conference in the ivory tower.

Devout men carried Stephen to his burial and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house and hauling men and women and committing them to prison. Therefore, they that were scattered abroad, everybody except the apostles, everybody except the apostles, went everywhere preaching the word of God.

I read one book on evangelism years ago where a fellow said you can describe New Testament evangelism. He was a Christian reformed man. He said you can describe New Testament evangelism in three words.

Everyone, everywhere, every day. Acts 8.4. I want to ask you two questions. This is going to be a class, so I want to ask you two questions.

I want to ask you to raise your hand on it. How many here have come to know the Lord through a personal witness, basically? Let me see your hands. Somebody invited you to Sunday school or church.

Is that all? How about your mother? Didn't she talk to you personally? Your pastor, your neighbor? I think if you think about it, maybe your idea of witnesses is somebody that ran up to you with a little card or something and said, well, nobody witnessed to me that way. I'm not talking about that. When I'm finished today, I hope you'll know that.

How many cases were literature used in bringing you to Christ? Let me see your hands. I wonder if this crowd saved. You know, one of the questions that's asked me most of the time in the little evangelistic conferences or privately is this, how do you do it? How do you do evangelism? You know, you're knocking this kind of thing.

Now what they really mean, give me a formula so I can do it. And again, I say after 33 years, I still don't know how to do it by formula. But there's some things I know and believe because I believe they're biblical, not by experience.

Can't prove great truths by experience all the time, but I know because it's in the scripture. And of course, I know it somewhat by experience too. And one thing I know is this, the clearest command in the New Testament is go ye.

At the end of Matthew, Jesus said, go ye into all the world, make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost. In the end of not, he that believeth that is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned.

It's clear to go. Luke says in the last chapter, the 24th chapter, verse 48, ye are witnesses. And in John chapter 20, he says, as my Father has sent me, even so send I you.

It's the clearest, clearest command in the New Testament as far as the will of God in respect to our task in the earth. And Acts 1.8 is, go ye into all the world. Or Acts 1.8, ye shall receive power as you shall be witnesses of the beast, Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost part.

And do you know what? That the rest of the book of Acts is all about Acts. What they said, what they did, how they preached, their whole purpose was carrying out that Acts 1.8. And do you know further that we this very moment in our, all these instructions and so on needed for that in the local church and all. But

that part, why do we discipline? Why do we have compassion? Why do we have this clearest command in an honorable way? You know, you hear a lot of people talk about home missions and foreign missions.

Now, I think that's all right. And I know how they mean it. That's all right.

But I don't find it in the Bible. It's all missions. When you get to, I got an idea about home missions.

When you get somebody between the front door and the back door and you start, in the world. And so I know this morning that it's the clearest command in all the scriptures, the New Testament, from the lips of our Savior. And thank God still people are doing it.

Don't be discouraged. There's more people doing it now than ever before. Think, stop, close your eyes, think.

All the bush, and do you know why they're there? They're trying and they're weak and sick, Christ. And they may not do it perfectly. They make crooked steps and stumble.

And we do it half-heartedly. So the one thing I know that it's the clearest command in the New Testament. Another thing I know is this.

I know that evangelism, at its best and its purest, is nothing more than the overflow of a devotional life to Christ. And when you have that, you do care for God and his commandments. And you care for men.

It's an overflow of Christ. You know, we always start off with mission. We want to preach on evangelism or missions.

We always start off with the great commission. Would you turn to it again this morning? Matthew chapter 28. I'm not going to refer you to it just now.

I already quoted it. But I want to show you what preceded it. Matthew 28.

It's verse 19 and 20 where it says, Go ye. But in verse 17, which preceded verses 18, 19, and 20, we have these words. And when they saw him, they worshipped him.

What's the principle? The principle is something else I know about true evangelism. You've got to be before you can do. You've got to be before you can do.

Then what comes out of us in our evil effort, if it's preceded by worship and devotion, what comes out of us will be done in a loving manner. It will be done in a compassionate manner because it's nothing more or less than Christ's love that we receive from that devotional flowing out around us, oozing out of us. So I know that it's the clearest command in the New Testament.

And I know that at its best and purest is the result of spending time with Christ. And then I know something else that I've learned about it from the New Testament. We have a blessed example, more than one, but our most blessed example is the one who is our example in compassion, the one who's our example in prayer.

No less than 17 references to our Lord praying in the New Testament. From the, we get our example of sacrifice. We get it, our example of his contempt from the world should be our contempt from the world.

His obedience to the Father's will, I've come to do thy will. And as he is an example in all these areas and areas. I think he's our best example, our purest example in personal evangelism.

We find him dealing with one woman in John chapter four. He didn't say to that woman, go sell all that you had, give to the poor. Her problem was not money.

It was men. And he dealt with her. And if you read the end of the chapter, you'll find in verse 39 of that, because he dealt with one woman as a result, many came to know the Lord.

We find him dealing with that adulteress in John eight, one woman, he dismissed the crowd so he could talk with her. And he didn't ask her for a drink or tell her to go sell. That wasn't her problem.

He dealt with a blind man, one man in John nine. He dealt with one man, different kind of a man, Nicodemus. He didn't say to the blind man or to the women, you must be born again.

But he said to Nicodemus, you must be born again. Not because they didn't have to be. You find him with one lawyer, finding dealing with a rich young ruler.

And that principle of him being our example is followed through an act. There's a couple references to what we think is a large revival. That's the exception, not the rule.

The rule was dealing with one, the unit Cornelius, Lydia. These are valid examples of personal evangelism and New Testament evangelism. And of course you have the often referred to section in John chapter one, those 10 verses from verse 41 to 51.

We find that Peter was dealt with by one, his brother. We find that Philip was dealt with by one. Nathanael was dealt with as one man.

It's very important. So I don't know a formula. I know we have a biblical basis, clear command.

I know it's cured. It's from a devotional life of Christ. These are things I know.

And I know that the New Testament is full of examples. And I know it's a binding duty upon everyone who names the name of Christ. I know that.

And I know something else. I know it has some broad advantages. Some broad advantages.

One of which is this. Every person here that's come to Christ, you came as an individual. You came not wholesale.

You came one at a time. Everybody must come for himself. That's individual.

That's personal evangelism. Another thing I know, it can be done anywhere. It can be done by anyone.

It can be done by all ages. I know a young mother here that's brought to the church through a girl in high school. That's a long while ago, and she's still serving Christ today.

Born on the wrong side of tracks, maybe. A girl in high school. So you see, all ages can be done by everyone.

I wonder how many adults, their little children have been the means of getting them into a Sunday school or a church where they heard the gospel and were converted. It can be done anywhere by anyone. It can be done by all classes, rich and poor, educated or illiterate.

I know this. I know that when you deal with one man or one woman or one boy, it hits the mark. When I'm talking to you today, you say, oh, that's good for John Smith.

That's good for Betty Jones or somebody like that. And you just keep pushing on back. When you've got one preacher and one audience, it's pretty hard to pass it off.

You kind of know who you're talking to, and they kind of know who's being spoken to. Always. How do you do it? That's what they say.

How do you do it? Well, let me tell you something. You sometimes, just for your own information, go over your own experience. Just go back and think of what were the circumstances? Who was involved? All the circumstances that led.

And then take a couple more people in your church and try to do it in your mind with them. And you'll get an idea of what I'm talking about. I did that once.

The fact is, I've preached on it a lot of times since. I'm not going to do it this morning. But one day when it was wintertime in my soul as a Christian, you know anything about that? You haven't been a Christian very long.

You know, sometimes it's wintertime in your soul. You can't even find any leaves on the tree. The heavens are brass, the psalmist said.

Well, it was one of those periods. And in that particular year, I was trying to take one day a month off the business to read and pray. Not to get sermons or Sunday school lessons, but to be alone with God.

And I tried to take as close to the first of the month as I could. And this day was one of those days. And I remember I took my Bible.

I took Horatius Bonar's little pamphlet, Words to Winners of Souls. I took a legal pad and I went to a mountain. And I had a very short prayer on my heart that day and in my lips.

And this was it, verbatim. Lord, what did Elmer have on the human side that caused me to want to know you? That's all. That was a very long prayer.

And on top of that mountain, I reviewed the best I know how, the things I thought, what he said, things I thought about him, the things and circumstances that led up to my conversion. And I turned to Proverbs chapter 14, where it says, the true witness delivers souls. The false witness speaks lies.

And I thought, I believe today, I believe today I gained some of the principles. By reflecting on him, the man that pointed me to Christ. By reflecting on all that, basic principles to true evangelism, to true witnessing.

Because I believe he was a true witness. Now, of course, I'm aware that there's only one true, true witness. And there's only one that can deliver souls.

But I'm talking about us. In him and through him, we're witnesses too. And I put four things on that summary sheet.

Now, I'm not going to talk about them today. I have some sermons on this. Because I never did it to share it with anybody.

I said, what did Elmer have on the human side? And when I finished all my scrawling that day, 10 hours later, I came off of the mountain. And I said, I believe, compose the essence of a true witness. And the first thing I put on that sheet was the power of his holy life.

Nobody on that construction job could gainsay his life. They could joke with him and ask him all the crazy questions. Where came? He had a sense of humor.

He says, I'm a Christian. I don't bother about other men's wives. He says, and he went on about it.

And I could not wait. I know a preacher in this audience today. And I know a fellow who's not here today.

And I talked to that fellow and they were in college together. And he said, I couldn't live in that room. He watched the life of a preacher.

There's others here who observed the life of a godly mother. Somebody cared for me. I thought about it as Roger gave us those wonderful things and thoughts, principles of compassion.

Somebody cared for me. I read about where Paul had tears when he left those elders at Ephesus. He talks about his tears.

They don't necessarily have to be those kind. There's other kinds of tears. Some of us know a lot about them too.

And they drop down here where nobody can see them. I never forget the second time I ever went to a Sunday school, I shook his hand. And as I held that hard, rough carpenter's hand, I looked in his face and there was tears rolling down his cheeks.

And I thought, and I never understood that. He walked and he had a little measure of the compassion of Christ for me. Somebody cared for me.

First time I ever met his wife. The third thing I put on that Sunday. I didn't know who this was.

Many nights before he would eat his warm meal, he'd go back to the bedroom and she didn't. And that's the door. And she said, outside that bedroom door, she said, ah, somebody prayed for me.

I don't know the relationship between us. In the New Testament they prayed. If people are making any marks on the ice for Christ today, preachers or churches, there's somebody in there praying.

He prayed for me. And another thing, he had patience with me. You know how long I was invited to Sunday school before I ever darkened the door? For a whole year.

A whole year. I told him more lies than Grant had soldiers. Well, I suggest to you, to go back over your experience, then pick out a couple more people and say, how was John brought to Christ? How was Mary brought to Christ? And you'll see there's a whole series of things.

It's not always the big soul winner that run up with a little sheet and gave you four little things, or five little things, or six little things. That's not been my experience. And I want to share with you a couple experiences.

Not to tell you how to do it, because I don't know how to do it. I can't tell you how to do it. I wish I could.

I can give you some principle things. No two alike. In my own family, I was the first Christian.

No other Christians. And I thought, sure, that when I got home, I was aware, I'd wreck my car. For various reasons, I didn't have a car.

I had to get home after I was converted. I got home to my mother and I thought, the whole family, I'll tell them about Jesus and they'll all get saved. Yeah.

Yeah. Well, I got some of them in the living room and I got them told, all I knew, it didn't take very long, but I knew something happened. And they didn't say it.

But they said, few bricks less than a full load. My one brother's an elder in a Presbyterian church now. He said to me, after one day, he said, Ernie, I've had, that's when one of those tears went down.

They didn't come down here. He's an elder in a Bible believing church now. My brother, John, who's the preacher in the family, he left the business over Christ.

We used to have a little office on top of a barn, two chairs. I used to get there in the morning before John did. That wasn't very hard.

Every morning, not part of the morning, but I'd kneel down in his chair and I'd cry out to God to save him. Lord touched John. And I tell you, the more I prayed, the farther he got away, farther away.

Finally, one morning he came, he said, Ernie, he said, I don't think I'm cut out for business just now. And he said, I went from school to the South Pacific for 27 months. And he says, 27 months, he says, I want to live a while.

And he says, all you want to do is work and go to church. And he says, all right, be honest with me, no fight. We didn't have a fight.

He said, I'm just not ready for that. Married a Roman Catholic girl, started, he was, he, one time or other, he took some instructions to go into Roman Catholic church. And that day he said he was leaving.

And you know what? Worse than that, he was going a thousand miles away and I wouldn't be there. Surely he couldn't get saved now. I'm not there.

He went away, went to St. Louis on top of a big old Catholic high school where they were shooting. A carpenter started to talk to him about Jesus. He said, there's only two nuts in the world, you and my brother.

My mother was 15 years after we were converted. It was, my mother was converted. Let me tell you one of the reasons I think it was so long.

She saw her boys get religion and she saw them change from drunken gamblers to Christians. And her neighbor got her to go to church. And she was not religious before.

A good mother. She scrubbed floors to put clothes on my back because we were so poor, the poor people called us poor. Good mother.

Loving mother, but she didn't know Jesus. And that neighbor, she thought I'll get some, I'll get some religion too. And she went to a church of my, of our neighbors.

Unfortunately, she went to a great big ecclesiastical morgue and joined it. And she was worse off than she was before. That's why it took so long.

But I'll never forget, I was in Florida one time and she told me, she'd read the Bible through that year and she says, I have what you boys have. Any two alike? No. No two alike.

There's no two alike, it's not that way. And in my, I could, I could be here for half a day just giving you experiences. But I want to give you a couple more to show you they're not alike.

I had a friend ask me to give his boys, this is to encourage you. I said, I don't need your praise or your purse. This is to encourage you about this thing that we're talking about, obeying Christ.

One of my friends wanted a job for his boys. Okay, I gave his boys a job. I talked to them, one of them at least, about the Lord.

There's some humiliating experiences witnessing. One fellow heard it, he'd heard that I was alright in business. I only had one problem, I'm a fanatic in religion.

I'm just a religious fanatic. But other than that, I'm a pretty normal guy. So the first day of the job, he wants to engage me in religious conversation.

And you know, one of the things he said to me that day, he said, oh, he was so sorry for me. He was sorry that I hadn't studied Darwin and all that. He said, that would knock about half of that stuff out of you.

I said, really? I said, have you ever read anything on apologetics? Good Christian apologetics. He said, no. I said, well, that may knock something out of you.

I said, would you do it? Oh, yeah. So I gave him some books, Lawyer Examines the Bible. There's a couple other books, I gave him some books.

This was in the summer. He was in school. Christmas time, I'm hoping he'd talk to me about some of the content, that's how you witness.

Because you give him the book, then he'd talk to you what's in there, then you've got a discussion going, then you're right, that's it. But he didn't say anything about the books. Christmas time, he came, he brought the books back.

There was, I think, about four of them. I said, oh, boy, I thought he was going to tell me all. I said, well, what do you think? He said, I didn't have time to read them.

He said, my wife's tired of dusting these books, and I brought them back. A couple of those tears dropped down there then, you know. That's Christmas.

Next year, he wants the job again. So I said, okay. I said, I'm busy on this construction job.

I said, I'm speaking in nights and weekends, trying to cover these men's retreats and so on. I said, I need some material. I said, how about you read? I'll put you in the office to answer the phone.

Somebody has to answer this phone. And I said, you read these books and take notes of the things that you think would be helpful to me. If the Bible really said it, or if this author just said the Bible said it.

I don't know all he meant by that. One time, these same two boys I gave the job while I was with them, and they were laying on the floor shooting and playing National Guard and Army and making fun of me. It was really bad.

They really made fun of religion and everything. And I tell you, I was pained. And I went out of there and I thought, you know, I don't have to do this.

I'm not on anybody's payroll. But there was something in me that made me care, not because it was any good in me, but I thought of the patience that Christ had with me. I thought of the patience that Elmer had with me.

And I said, Lord, give me a little more patience with these boys. Give me a little more patience. Give me a little more patience.

I don't plan to have it. I'm not suggesting that. No ten rules.

I don't know when they were converted, the hour, the minute. There's a lot more to that story. I could take up the morning telling you those stories.

And where they took the gospel. The people they've helped. There's somebody here today.

I went away. A fellow introduced me. We were buying cows in Canada.

And I didn't know this man very well. But I said, well, he wanted to buy some cows too. So we went to Canada together to buy cows.

And I said, I prayed to be quiet. Because I wanted to talk to him when he got in the car. But I knew I had four more days.

And I didn't want to scare him before you catch him, you know. I remember Doris Trotman saying to a fellow going on a ship, he wanted him to live a life. Well, sometimes it's hard to keep quiet when you want to talk about the Lord.

That's a wait till the right time. So all day long, we'd get in this car. I didn't say a word, but believe me, I wanted to.

That night I said to this fellow, I said, you know, I usually read the Bible before I go to bed and pray. And I said, I don't want to embarrass you. I said, I could do this in the bathroom.

But I said, if you'd like, you could join me. And I said, you could read and I'll pray or I'll do both. I didn't want to embarrass him.

You must never embarrass people in personal work. Very important point. I didn't want to embarrass him.

He said, no, that's all right. He said, I don't know how to pray. I said, well, I'll pray.

He said, I'll read, but I don't know what to read. I said, I'll find you something. Here, John 3. That night we prayed.

Next morning I thought, well, I don't know how it worked pretty good last night. I'll see if it works this morning. So I said, John, I usually read the Bible in the morning before I take off and have a little prayer.

I said, could we do it like we did last night? He said, yes. Well, that led into a Bible study. It led into visiting his home.

It led into taking some tapes. No ten rules. I never did this before or since.

No ten rules. It led into a Bible study. Incidentally, his dear old mother's here.

Some of his children's here. The gospel got into that house. But there's no ten rules.

I didn't run up to him with some little pat answer with a syllogism at the end of it. No. What am I saying? Oh, let me tell you this one more.

Because my good friend John McConaughy's here, and he gave me a good word last night. You know, a law student came in my office one time, and I had some Holstein cows. I had a little herd of Holstein cows, miniature cows on my desk.

So this law student looked at it, started wondering why these cows were on a contractor's desk. And that led into a conversation that he came from a farm. He was telling me how bad it was, and he never wanted to go back.

He was knocking cows, and everybody had a farm because it was all work. He said, I want to go to law school. So he was telling me all about the bad things about it.

I said, how many times a day did you see your father on the farm? Oh, he said, we had most every meal together, all our meals together. I said, oh, and he went on about how he worked with his father. I said, how much is that worth in dollars and cents to be with your father? I said, you know, when you're a lawyer, you might be gobbled up in business and not see your children.

I said, you know, there's some things about the farm that has some value. I'm not witnessing to them, you say. I wanted to get his attention.

That led into, I got his ear a little bit. He's a Roman Catholic, a staunch Roman Catholic, and his wife was a devout Roman Catholic. He wasn't very devout, but he was staunch.

So that led into conversation. I took him, one night, I didn't witness too much. One night I took him out and bought him a steak.

I said to him, I'd like to tell you how I became a Christian. So I sat there over a steak and gave him my testimony. Didn't preach to him.

A week later I asked him to go to a hockey game. I said, how about going to a hockey game? All right. So we did.

That night I whet his appetite for a book by Simon Greenleaf, because he was in law school. Simon Greenleaf, a great lawyer, wrote a book, The Testimony of the Evangelist, and I thought I'd give him that

book. He read it and liked it.

I want to tell you something. He was coming to my house, asking me questions. We started to read the Gospel of John together, and the Lord in his mercy had mercy on him.

Let me tell you, that didn't end there. His wife got mad at me. He got awful mad at me.

She was later converted, and went back to their town, started a little Bible study. There's a church there now, and from all John tells me, pretty good church. One little seed you might sow, but there's no ten rules.

No ten rules. In all these cases, there was literature, not indiscriminate. Now there's some good Christian literature for general use, but it should be discriminately used with people.

I wouldn't give somebody else, Simon Greenleaf's *The Testimony of the Evangelist*, but he's a liar. You don't want to get too discriminated. I met this fellow who had a track for everything.

He had a bag of tracks, and he was going door to door. He thought he had a track, and a woman came to the door on roller skates. That's a fact.

Not every tape. I don't even give Pastor Chantry's book out right then. Well, what am I saying? I'm saying junk! And that's one reason a good... At least you got all you can do on the human side, and the rest are a lot of reasons.

Let me say a word about motives. I could take up an hour and a half, Bill. I won't, but I could.

Our motives stem from the law of God and the love of God. Now get that. Not either or.

They stem from the law of God. Because you see, the commandments express some things that we need to know. One of my motives, and it should be your motive, for preaching or witnessing is God's command.

When the lawyer said to Jesus, what's the great commandment? He says, love the Lord thy God. First and great commandment. Second, liken unto it, love thy neighbor as thyself.

And the real motive for witnessing ought to be, I love Christ, and I want to do what he says. First motive comes from the law then. Obedience to his command.

Second motive, if I love men, if I really love people, I'll love their soul. Because that goes on, don't fear him that's able to kill the body, but rather fear him that's able to destroy it. And Christian love is unique.

Christian compassion is unique. Because it's not just compassion for the blind and the needy and the poor, it's compassion for their soul. And I'm talking about soul compassion.

And that's why that man with a Cadillac convertible and a blonde going down the street, your heart just don't run out to him and who's out in compassion, does it? But if you have some of the compassion of Christ, it works. That's right. Both these things.

One, the motive is, love to God and concern for his glory expressed in obedience. Second motive is love for man and concern for his ultimate good. Concern for his ultimate good.

Yes, the love of Christ constrains us, but the law of Christ commands us. That's the only motive I know. Not sentimentalism.

That's not sentimentalism. We ought to have a right goal. What's our goal in witnessing? Just to get a soul saved? Ah, that's not all.

Our brother referred to it in his prayer this morning. Here it is. Here's the goal.

And let me tell you something. When I say the goal, it's not your prerogative to say, I want to have part of the goal. What's the goal? Hear it from the words of the Savior.

Go ye therefore and disciple all men. That's bringing men and women, seeking to bring men and women to a right relationship to the Son of God. Disciple them.

Baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. What's that? That's a church ordinance. It wasn't given to the Girl Scouts, the YMCA.

It was given to Christ Church. What's that? Bringing them into a right relationship to the Church of God. That's part of the commission.

That's part of the commission. What's the last verse? Verse 20. Teaching them to observe all that I said.

Bringing them into a right relationship to the Son of God, the Church of God and the Word of God. That's the goal. Not half of it.

Not just run out and try to get people saved. That's good, but that's not all. I want to leave you this morning with a passage that's helped me most of all in this, and I'm going to spend a little time in this text, because I don't just want you to have experiences, and I want you to turn to it.

Turn in your Bible, 2 Timothy 2, verse 24. As you go home and as you seek to do this, I want to give you some biblical principles from this passage that's been most helpful to me in this great work. Most helpful to me.

I remember I was speaking at Reformed Episcopal in Philadelphia one day. I think Wayne Mack had me there to speak to the mission group or something. It was a small group.

And when I finished, a young man darted up to me and he said, what's a good verse you'd give for some young man going into ministry? I said, it's a pretty big Bible, son. There's a lot of good verses for the ministry. And then he started to walk away and I said, wait a minute.

I said, I'll give you the ones that help me most. And this is what I gave him. Would you look at verse 24 to 26? And I'm going to tell you some things about him then.

You can go home and preach a sermon on this a couple times, preachers. Verse 24, here's some basic things. I'll read the verses and then I'll tell you what I'd like you to see in them.

One, verse 24, And a servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient in meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves. If God perhaps, or peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will. And what do we have here? We have, first of all, you need

to know something.

And one thing to do personal evangelism or any other kind of evangelism, you've got to know the condition of the unconverted. And you ought to be settled on that and have that fixed in your mind. The condition of the unconverted.

And what is their condition? Well, I find in verse 25 that they're ignorant. They need instructed. If they need instructed, they're ignorant.

That's why it says teach, in verse 24. Instruct, in verse 25. Why? Because they're ignorant.

But let me tell you something else. This Bible elsewhere teaches me some more things about the unconverted. And you need to know this and you witness it.

It'll help you to pity them. This Bible tells me they cannot understand. They cannot understand.

The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him. I look at that fellow I want to witness to and I say, I know he can't understand. I read in John 8, 43, that they can't hear.

Jesus said, and he was talking to people who could hear his words from his lips. But the same people who could hear his words from his lips, he said, you can't hear my words. He didn't mean with the physical ears or he wouldn't have said it at all.

He'd have made sign language. Now this is their condition. They can't understand.

They can't hear. And in John 3, so they can't see. And in John 6, 44, he said, you cannot come to me except the Father draw you.

And they're meant to be as creatures subject to God's law and they cannot be subject to the law of God. That's the crowd you've got to take this gospel to. That's their condition and you better know something about that or you'll get discouraged.

But you look at that fellow and when he does foolish things and says foolish things, you say, he's blind. You won't get mad with him. You won't get mad with him if you know he's blind.

You wouldn't get as mad at a blind man stumbling out here over a rock. You wouldn't get upset with an ignorant man because he didn't know the answers to some question. And when you see men in their spiritual condition, you won't get so mad at them and upset with them and want to fight them.

You can see them in this condition. And beside this, this text tells me they're in Satan's prison house. Will you see that? That they may recover, verse 26, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil.

They're in Satan's prison house. Oh, and let me tell you what's worse. They don't have the key to get out.

You know, most evangelism is they go this far with us. They say, oh yes, he's in Satan's prison house, but you do this and you do that and you do the other thing and God will save you. That's a lie.

That's like taking a man in prison and saying you've got the key in your pocket. You just work the key and you can come out whenever you want to. I wouldn't mind being in prison like that, would you? You're in

prison.

They go that far. And then they say, you do this and you do that and you do the other thing and God will save you. No, that's not true.

They've got to quit doing it. You see, the point is that they're in prison and they don't have the key in their pocket. And that boxes them up to their own helplessness.

And the whole purpose of the gospel is to box men up to their helplessness. So we have the state of the unconverted. They're ignorant.

They're blind. They're deaf. And they're dead in trespasses and sins.

They're in Satan's prison house, the verse tells us. And what will I do? No, I don't think so. Well, there's some effort in this passage that's very vividly described.

The effort. Well, here they are. The servant of the Lord does not strive.

Who has quarrel in their Bible? Who has quarrel for their translation? A lot of them. It's a better translation. Don't quarrel with your children about being gentle.

Father, be gentle to all men, apt to teach. And if you're going to teach, you've got to know something yourself. Otherwise, you'll just spew out hot air.

Be patient, patient, patient. How long? I'll tell you one thing. If you try to bring birth, you'll get ishmael's.

And our churches are full of ishmael's. God said, I'll give you a son. Supernaturally.

But he didn't come the first year. He didn't come the second year. He didn't come the third year, the fourth year, the fifth year, the sixth year.

I said, wait a minute. I believe God means for me to. That woman got the idea.

You go into Hagar. You'll have a son. They did.

That's how I'm going to bring it about. All these little gimmicks, gadgets, tricks. He did it.

Abram did it. You know what he got? Ishmael. Wild man.

That's why some of these people are so wild in the church. They're ishmael's. But that wasn't the one that was born supernaturally.

That wasn't the one that was born of God. You know how long I waited? Best I can figure it out from the Bible is 25 years. And I'll tell you, I'd rather wait 25 years than I've waited for 10 years in a case or two that I'm thinking of.

And I got a couple more people that I'm still waiting and it's been over 10 years. Somebody says, how's so-and-so? I said, I don't know. I'm still going to be with you.

I'm going to be with one of them tonight for dinner. I don't know. And that's why decision is a miracle.

Of all the cases I told you about one man or one person. I told them they need to make a decision. I told them choose ye this day whom you will serve.

But I didn't decision them. And there's a difference between telling a man or a woman or a decision them. I know I'm still waiting.

I'm waiting, waiting, waiting. Some of you with bleeding hearts, I know it. Some of you with bleeding hearts are waiting, waiting, waiting.

Well, dear bleeding heart, hear me. Please wait till God does it. Don't have any premature breaths or ishmael's.

What are the efforts? There they are to teach. But I want to show you something else. What's the encouragement? What's the encouragement in this passage? We have the condition.

That's important for you to know. We have their condition. We have some instructions.

Don't strive. Be able to teach. Patience and meekness.

Let me tell you something else. You must tell the sinner or the person you're witnessing to where in his hope lies. And when he's boxed up to hopelessness, you see this word in verse 25.

If God is a sinner, God saves sinners. God saves lost people. He has power, understanding, system or formula.

And they must see that there's a God in heaven. And that's God centered, not man centered. And that's telling them, brother, you do not have the key in your pocket, but you're free.

And when you get his eyes focused on God, he may cry out, Oh God, do something for me that the preacher can't do. Oh, and he's not far from you do this and you do that. He'll never say you could do it.

He said, I can't. It's the simplest way I know how to say it. If you will, you're welcome.

How's that? Can you get any simpler than that? Oh, it sounds so difficult right now. If you will. And I tell you, not only do we turn the sinner to God to put his hope there.

Is everybody going to be saved? God will have to do it. But there's something else in this verse. What's my hope? Where's my encouragement come from? Where is the preacher who preaches and the missionary who labors for years and years and years and sees no result? Where does my encouragement come from? Same place.

If God, if God, and what does that make me do? Call out to him. If he can do it and he must do it, then this verse teaches not only the sinner where in his hope lies, but it teaches the servant where in his hope lies. The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient in meekness, instructing those that oppose himself.

If God, if God, if God perhaps will give them repentance. Oh sinner, you're here this morning, some of you. You've been the subject of our tears and our prayers.

I wish I could save you. I wish these preachers could save you. I wish your mothers could save you.

I'm sorry you're in Satan's prison house locked up in death row. But I can't save you. Your mama can't save you.

But I want to tell you, God can save you. He has the ability, the willingness, and the power. Well somebody says, why do so few people witness? Let me give you a couple reasons.

Quick, and I'm not going to comment on them much. One of the basic reasons, I think at the bottom, most times, they have nothing to witness about. There's nothing real with them to witness about.

No reason to do it. They haven't considered. Secondly, maybe there's those who haven't considered the tremendous clearness of Christ's command to do it.

There's others who don't know how to do it, don't know what it's about. Another reason why men don't witness is because they've lost the joy of their own salvation. There's nothing joyous about it anymore.

And that's because of sin of some sort crept in. That's why David in that great penitential psalm said in verse 12, among other things, after he confesses his awful sin, he cries among others, when the joy comes, then will I teach transgressors thy ways and sinners shall be converted to thee. Sometimes people don't witness because they've lost the joy.

They have wrong ideas about what it is. I don't blame you for not wanting to run up to doorbells and bring people and tell them you've got this kind of a plan and then be taught to bring them to some kind of a fuller brush decision. You're not selling fuller brushes.

There's nothing wrong with fuller brushes. But when you're dealing with a molder soul, you're not selling fuller brushes. We're not salesmen.

We're not salesmen. And then sometimes their own lifestyle. Well, my text says, I wish I had another hour.

I had some more things I wanted to say today, but I'm not. I just want to refer you to the text and try to sum it up a little bit. Lord, I want to be with you.

The maniac said, no. You've been on the mountain for a week. You've been with me.

You've been a recipient of my touch. You've heard my voice. Go home, dear friend.

Go home, dear friend. Go home, dear friend. Your relatives, your neighbors.

What do you do? Give them a little sales pitch? Just tell them how great things the Lord has done for you and had compassion on you. Go home, dear friend. Go home to thy friends.

Oh, I know you hear my words today. I know you hear me say, go home. I know you hear me say, go ye into all the world.

But oh, I pray, I pray that I would hear it afresh. And I pray that you would hear it afresh, some of you who know it well and you're cold. I pray that you'd hear it here where only Christ can take it by the Spirit.

Oh, if we'd hear it afresh. If you'd hear Jesus say it. Go home, dear friend.

Your relatives, your neighbors. And tell them how great things the Lord has done for thee and has had compassion on thee. You've given us a great privilege to be ambassadors for thee in the world.

You've given us clear words what to tell the world. Your power is great to empower us. Lord, separate us from all that keeps us from doing it.

May this be a time when we rejoice in all that you've done this week. But Lord, we're gone off the mountaintop now. Go with us down to the valley, the cities, the hard places, the difficult problems we face.

And oh, Father, for Christ's sake, help us to obey him in his way. Give us, Lord, what we don't have by nature. Compassion for lost sinners.

Not sentimentalism, but oh, gracious God, grant to us some heavenly compassion. And oh, Lord, for the preachers put heavenly wind in their sails, that they may preach with the heavenly unction, moving their ship toward the celestial city. Hear our prayers today.

We would not make these requests without being mindful to give thanks for your tender mercies to us these weeks, these days. Thank you for each other. Thank you for this place.

Thank you for those who labored. Thank you for John who played the piano. Thank you for Bob Stein who did the registration work, for the kitchen help, for Bill as he moderated the meetings, and Roddy, and all the work that went into planning.

Oh, we would not forget to thank you, Lord. We thank you for our fellow laborers who came to minister. And we pray that all good would come to us, but glory to thee, as we seek to go to our separate ways and to hard places.

For Jesus Christ's sake, hear us, and for our good, attend to our cry. Amen.

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