

The Angels of Soul Winning (Part 3) – I Corinthians 13:1-3

I. Introduction:

- A. I have chosen to use *I Corinthians 13* as our launching pad this morning for two reasons.
1. First, there is a reference to angels, even though this chapter has nothing to do with our theme.
 - a. *"The Angels of Soul Winning"* is the general title of this part of our study of evangelism.
 - b. These verses don't say that God's heavenly angels preach the gospel, nor do they imply that Paul or any of us are evangelistic angels. It merely refers to angels.
 2. My second, and primary purpose for using this scripture, is that this chapter deals with Christian love.
 3. The Greek *"agape,"* which is translated *"charity"* here, almost four times more often is rendered *"love."*
 4. We will come back to both of these points in a few minutes.
 5. But let me say: here is an excellent theme whether or not we are talking about soul-winning.
- B. In this section of our study, I have been addressing the thought that you and I are **God's messengers** in this great effort.
1. Evangelism isn't limited to the work of the professional *"evangelist."* It isn't to be confined to the pulpiteer.
 2. Evangelism isn't confined to the extremely important work of preaching the gospel to large crowds.
 3. Every saint of God is commissioned to be one of God's gospel messengers, and one of the words translated *"messenger"* in the Bible is *"angelos"* or *"angel."*
- C. For our last two lessons we have been considering some of the **qualifications** of the gospel *"angelos."*
1. In the first we emphasized the fact that we must be saved & have assurance of our own personal salvation
 2. In our last lesson, I suggested that moving forward, instead of talking about *"qualifications,"* perhaps the word *"characteristics"* would be more accurate.
 3. We began looking at things which would make us **more effective** in this work.
 4. They are **not essential qualifications** but **helpful qualities** or **characteristics**.
 5. Specifically, we looked at two things related to *"hovering around God's throne"* – prayer and listening for the Lord's voice. Now let's move on.

II. One of the results of hovering around the Lord is the transference of His LOVE to our hearts.

- A. *"Iron sharpeneth iron; so the Lord sharpeneth the countenance of His servants."*
1. As **Isaiah** spent time in God's throne room, he came away with a burden to do the Lord's will.
 - a. Jehovah's desire became Isaiah's desire. The Lord's work became Isaiah's work.
 - b. The Lord's heart became his heart, and he became one of the Lord's evangelistic angels.
 2. We could say much the same thing about **Elijah**.
 - a. He had been a good servant of God, but he inexplicably fell into the pit of despair – depression.
 - b. It was a bit harsh, but while at Sinai, he spent some time alone with the Lord.
 - c. Rather than the prophet hovering around God's throne, the Lord hovered around Elijah.
 - d. And after that encounter came three of Elijah's most important accomplishments.
 - e. *"So he departed thence and found Elisha, the son of Shaphat" – I Kings 19:20.*
 - f. May we not look at that as a picture of evangelistic soul-winning?
 3. And similarly, God molded the heart of the once **hate-filled Pharisee** from **Tarsus**.
 - a. Saul, blinded by God, was forced to spend time by himself in the presence of the Saviour.
 - b. Not only had he received a new, regenerated heart, but those subsequent three days, and the rest of the time he spent alone with Christ filled that new heart with new emotions, desires and objectives.
 - c. The hate which once filled Saul of Tarsus became a reflection of divine love filling Paul the Apostle.
- B. What does Paul say about the importance and even **preeminence** of **LOVE**?
1. He tells us, *"Now abideth faith, hope, and 'agape,' these three; but the greatest of these is 'agape.'"*
 2. And, *"if I have not charity, I am nothing."*
 3. Of all the things in the world – of all the attitudes & emotions humans possess, what is less than nothing?
 4. Nothing is less than nothing.

5. If a preacher possesses the eloquence of Apollos or Gabriel, but has no love for the people to whom he is speaking, his ministry will usually mean nothing to them.
6. Despite its importance and theological accuracy, more often than not, the gospel which he preaches – his efforts at evangelism – will fall to the dust.

C. Who have been the Lord's greatest soul-winners?

1. I just finished a book which purports to survey the last 200 years, answering that question.
 - a. But on the inside cover, the man who praises the book is Jack Hyles, and for that reason I have to doubt every conclusion the author makes.
 - b. I have to question even in the authors whom I respect when they make their estimates of *"the world's greatest soul-winners."*
 - c. I have just read the histories of the Welsh revival and the evangelistic work in Russia by William Fetler, and I have to wonder about the stories which I read.
2. To properly answer my question about the Lord's greatest soul-winners, we probably should leave human history, sticking to the Word of God.
3. And it needs to be remembered that success and large numbers don't necessarily prove God's pleasure.

D. Who have been the Lord's greatest gospel messengers?

1. Don't we have to begin with **the Lord Jesus** Himself?
2. He has never failed to be the best of the best. Has anyone every equaled Him in anything? And yet...
3. Have you ever wondered how many people were brought into God's kingdom through Jesus' ministry?
 - a. It doesn't appear to be as many D.L. Moody, Gypsy Smith or even Billy Graham.
 - b. That first book I just referred to, declared that Billy Sunday was one of only three men to lead more than a million souls into Heaven. Imagine that: a million souls.
 - c. Does that mean that Billy Sunday was a greater soul-winner than the Lord Jesus? Is that possible?
 - d. And yet, it appears that Christ was more interested in discipling servants and soul-winners than He was in actual *"soul-winning"* the way I was taught in Bible college.
4. Nevertheless, the Lord Jesus certainly was instrumental in the salvation of a few hundred souls.

E. And clearly, two of the characteristics of His evangelism were **compassion** and **love**.

1. **Matthew 9:35** – *"And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people."*
 - a. So the Lord Jesus was bringing physical blessings to multitudes – as well as preaching the good news.
 - b. *"But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with **COMPASSION** on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd."*
2. The word *"compassion"* reflects those people's perspective on the seat of human emotions.
 - a. It refers to *"the yearning of someone's bowels,"* rather than the **heart** as we might say.
 - b. John elsewhere mentions *"bowels of compassion."*
3. We might say that Jesus' heart ached when he saw the people scattered abroad without a shepherd.
4. His heart ached. The human heart of the eternal God was breaking at the sinful condition of men.
5. Elsewhere, don't I hear compassion in Jesus voice in **Matthew 23:37**? *"O Jerusalem Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and ye would not."*
6. Jesus' love drove Him to share the gospel of His death, burial and resurrection with sinful men.

F. But someone might argue: *"Of course Jesus loved because he was the Son of God, and God commendeth his love toward us through Christ."*

1. Some might suggest that we **can't** really love the way that Christ loved, because we are not gods.
2. But we need to realize that Jesus' compassion, as expressed in these verses, was not the same thing as the love which carried the Son of God to Calvary.
3. There is no way for us to duplicate, replicate or imitate the love of God's sacrificial Lamb.

- G. But this compassion was different. This is something which **we** can feel and which we **should** feel.
1. In **John 13** and **15** the Lord Jesus **commands** us: *"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you."*
 - a. Oh, but that is a command to love the brethren. Yes it is.
 - b. But notice that it is *"as Christ has loved us,"* and He loved us when we were not brethren.
 2. Another command of the Lord is: *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."*
 3. Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us that our neighbor is anyone who is in need.
 4. The love and compassion of Christ should be as much a part of our hearts, and a part of our incentive to reach out to souls – as it was His.
 5. But I am afraid that none of us love as we should love. None of us even approach Christ's compassion.
- H. Why is **Jeremiah** sometimes called *"the weeping prophet?"* It was because he had a tender heart.
1. But was there something specifically which flooded his eyes with tears?
 - a. *"Oh that my heart were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people" – Jeremiah 9:1*
 - b. *"Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow" – 14:17.*
 - c. *"Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people..." – Lamentations 2:11.*
 - d. *"Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people. Mine eye trickelth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission, till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven" – 3:48-50.*
 2. Why was Jeremiah so broken hearted, or broken boweled?
 - a. It was not simply because of his love for the Lord.
 - b. It wasn't because God was being dishonored by the nation of Israel.
 - c. It wasn't because his beloved city was being destroyed by the Babylonians.
 3. Jeremiah's heart went out **to** the souls and **for** the souls of the people. He had the heart of a soul-winner.
 4. As an evangelist was he flush with success? He was not.
 5. But that didn't mean he didn't have a soul-winner's love.
 6. Pray to God that we might have just a small portion of the heart of that weeping prophet.
- I. Again, **Paul**, who **spoke** about love, **demonstrated** evangelistic love.
1. What prompted him to write: *"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh?"*
 2. Was it Paul's knowledge of Biblical theology which prompted those words?
 - a. Was he speaking about cousins, uncles and other relatives with whom he grew up?
 - b. Was this about specific people whom the Lord laid upon his heart?
 3. No, Paul was talking about the entire nation of Israel, people whom he loved with love given to him by God. I think he picked up that compassion during the time he spent alone with his Saviour.
- J. I don't know if it is true, but I read somewhere that 90% of evangelism's motivation is love.
1. I would assume the author referred to a blend between love for the Saviour with a love for our fellow man.
 2. As I have told you before, I have heard dozens, if not hundreds of sermons, exhorting me to go into all the world with the gospel.
 3. I have heard that it is the command of Christ. And of course it is.
 4. I have been told that Christians will be examined at Christ's bema, His judgment seat, in regard to our obedience to that command. And I believe that to be true.
 5. I have been told, & I have told you, that evangelism is one of the ways to glorify the name of our Saviour.

6. There are lots of arguments and lots of ways to exhort the saints to the work of soul-winning.
 7. But rarely have my instructors, those great generals of evangelism, told me to examine my heart to see if the love of Christ was found therein.
 8. Love is among the greatest of all motivators.
- K. Paul tells us, *“Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”*
1. Love is patient, not selfish, not proud. Love doesn’t behave inappropriately, and it doesn’t accuse.
 2. Of course it doesn’t appreciate or encourage wickedness, because it rejoices in truth.
 3. And it yearns for the very best for those we love.
 4. The love which God puts into hearts isn’t distracted by that man’s shoulder-length long hair, that woman’s many husbands or that teenager’s drug use.
 5. No matter what you might think about that other person’s sin, God hated **your** sin with all His heart.
 6. And yet, he loved you and sent the message of His love through one of His soul-winning *“angels.”*
- L. The words which Paul uses here in ***I Corinthians 13*** make love very ***attractive***.
1. It may take months or even years to make our neighbor realize we love him.
 2. It may take years for us to become spiritual enough to love him as Christ loved us.
 3. But when that love becomes a reality and is recognized, it will cover a multitude of sins (***I Peter 4:8***), and I am not referring to covering that other man’s sins.
 4. When he begins to see that we actually care for him as a person in need, and not as another notch on our spiritual gun handle, he will be more apt to listen to what we have to say.
 5. When we love as we should, it makes our witness of God’s grace powerful and effective.
 6. Love is one of the characteristics of a God-used soul-winner.
- M. From where does that love come?
1. Once again, it is not something which we will be able to fabricate out of nothing – like the original creation.
 2. We are not gods with omnipotence in our finger-tips or hearts.
 3. And no matter how hard we try, we will not, in ourselves, be able to turn our dislike or hatred into love, like Elijah’s raising of the dead.
 4. It is to the Lord we must look in order to find the love of the true soul-winner.
- N. *Luke 7*** describes a meal which Jesus took at a Pharisee’s house.
1. While the Lord was there a woman came in who was known in the neighborhood as a wretched sinner.
 2. She had in her hand an alabaster box of ointment which, after washing Jesus’ feet with her tears and wiping them with her hair, she massaged into His callouses and skin.
 3. The Pharisee/host began to inwardly criticize the Lord for permitting this, and this drew a divine rebuke.
 4. Speaking about the woman, Jesus said, *“This lady loves me because I am forgiving her of many, many sins.”* She was displaying her love to Christ, by sacrificing the most valuable possession she had.
 5. She demonstrated the fact that the more for which people have been forgiven, the more they will naturally love the one who has forgiven them.
- O. That woman spent a great deal of money on the gift she gave to the Saviour that day.
1. She greatly loved Him, because she had been greatly blessed by Him.
 2. How do you think she would have responded, if Jesus had interrupted her and said, *“I appreciate the love and the gift you intend to bestow upon me.*
 - a. *But rather than putting this ointment on me and my feet, I would like you to give it to the poor widow who lives over on the next block?”*
 - b. *“I would like you to shower the love you have for me, upon that lonely, unloved woman over there.”*

3. Don't you think this lady would have gladly done what He asked, because she loved Him and wanted to please Him?
4. And how do you expect that widow might have responded to that display of grace and love?
 - a. *"Why are you giving me this gift?"*
 - b. *"Because the Saviour has blessed me, and I want to be a blessing to you."*
5. What would be the likelihood of that widow saying, *"That must be a very special person. Tell me more about your Saviour?"*

- P. The Lord has **asked** us; He has **exhorted** us; He has **commanded** us to love our neighbors.
1. We, who have been forgiven so much, should be willing & excited to obey our Saviour in any way we can.
 2. We should be willing to love as we have been loved.

- Q. Love is one of the characteristics of the Lord's most effective soul-winners.
1. I don't know whether or not God's seraphim or cherubim have anything equivalent to human emotions.
 2. I don't know if God's angels love or are capable of love.
 3. But I can't see how they could be around the Lord without some sort of angelic love for Him.
 4. Those angels may have never tasted of the grace of God as we have.
 5. But we have been forgiven much.
 6. We should have a greater love than the angels, because we have been loved differently than they have.
 7. And the love we have received should turn us into powerful angels of evangelism.