SOUL-WINNING IS NOT AN OPTION

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Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 9:14-22

Text: 1 Corinthians 9:16

1 Corinthians 9:16 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!

Introduction: Preaching the gospel was not an option with Paul. Even if he didn't want to do it; he said he HAD to. It was a MUST.

Some things in life are not an option; you just HAVE to do them. Some people say the only things in life that are certain are death and taxes. However, God gave 10 COMMANDMENTS, not OPTIONS. Church attendance is a commandment, not an option. Tithing is a commandment, not an option. Bible reading and prayer are commandments, not options.

Likewise, soul-winning is not a SUGGESTION, for the Christian; it is a COMMANDMENT. It is not a spiritual gift for some select individuals; it is the DUTY of every Christian.

I. IT IS OUR PURPOSE AS A CHURCH

2 Corinthians 5:18-20 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. 20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

Our church Exists Solely to Exalt the Savior as we Evangelize the Sinner and Edify the Saint!

A. It is our purpose to produce fruit

B. It is our purpose to preach the gospel

C. It is our purpose to prepare soul-winners - Matt. 28:19-20
Next Sunday afternoon at 5, we will begin another 90-day session for training soul-winders. This time we have openings for two men and one lady. Please let me know if you are interested!

We have been given a bus by Grace Independent Baptist Church in Moultrie, Georgia. We plan to pick it up this week. I don't believe God gave us that bus for it to just sit. God wants SOMEONE in this church, I believe, to be a bus captain and use the bus to win people to Christ.

II. IT IS OUR PATH FOR GLORIFYING GOD

I Corinthians 10:31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

John 15:8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

A. It is His person that we preach

B. It is His pardon that we offer

C. It is His promises that we give

D. It is His power that we trust

Must I go, and empty-handed, Thus my dear Redeemer meet?
Not one day of service give Him, Lay no trophy at His fee?

Not at death I shrink nor falter, For my Savior saves me now;
But to meet Him empty-handed, Thought of that now clouds my brow.

O ye saints, arouse, be earnest, Up and work while yet 'tis day;
Ere the night of death o'ertake thee, Strive for souls while still you may.

Chorus: Must I go, and empty-handed? Must I meet my Savior so? Not one soul with which to greet Him: Must I empty-handed go?

III. IT IS OUR PROGRAM FOR PROSPERITY

Matthew 17:27 Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

Matthew 4:19 And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

Acts 2:47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

A. We just preach the gospel; God will provide

B. We just give the message; God will give the money

C. We just take care of GOD'S business; God will take care of OUR business!
I heard Brother Lee Roberson tell this story this week in Winston-Salem. Hyman Appleman led a young man to Christ and sent him to Lee Roberson. He told the man that Brother Roberson would tell him what to do. Brother Roberson didn't know what to do with him, but tried to encourage him to live for the Lord. He put him up in the college dorm at no charge and fed him. The fellow eventually left, and Brother Roberson wondered if he was just a "deadbeat." Brother Roberson did not hear from him for years, but the young man became a businessman. Years later, he sent an offering to the church that had treated him so well ... for $12 million!!!!

IV. IT IS OUR PRIORITY

Acts 20:26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.

A. It was the priority of the Son of God

B. It is the priority of the Spirit of God

C. It must be a priority for the saints of God!

A TRUE STORY OF THE TITANIC

John Harper was born to a pair of solid Christian parents on May 29th, 1872. It was on the last Sunday of March 1886, when he was thirteen years of age that he received Jesus as the Lord of his life. He never knew what it was to "sow his wild oats." He began to preach about four years later at the ripe old age of 17 years by going down to the streets of his village and pouring out his soul in earnest entreaty for men to be reconciled to God.

As John Harper's life unfolded, one thing was apparent: he was consumed by the Word of God. When asked by various ministers what his doctrine consisted of, he was known to reply, "The Word of God!" After five or six years of toiling on street corners preaching the gospel and working in the mill during the day, Harper was taken in by E. A. Carter of Baptist Pioneer Mission in London, England. This set Harper free to devote his whole time and energy to the work so dear to his heart.

Soon, John Harper started his own church in September of 1896. (Now known as the Harper Memorial Church.) This church which John Harper had started with just 25 members, had grown to over 500 members when he left 13 years later. During this time he had gotten married; God did bless John Harper with a beautiful little girl named Nana.

Ironically, John Harper almost drowned several times during
his life. When he was two and a half years of age, he almost drowned when he fell into a well but was resuscitated by his mother. At the age of twenty-six, he was swept out to sea by a reverse current and barely survived, and at thirty-two he faced death on a leaking ship in the Mediterranean. Perhaps, God used these experiences to prepare this servant for what he faced next!

It was the night of April 14, 1912. The RMS Titanic sailed swiftly on the bitterly cold ocean waters heading unknowingly into the pages of history. On board this luxurious ocean liner were many rich and famous people. At the time of the ship's launch, it was the world's largest man-made moveable object. At 11:40 PM on that fateful night, an iceberg scraped the ship's starboard side, showering the decks with ice and ripping open six watertight compartments. The sea poured in.

On board the ship that night were John Harper and his much-beloved six-year-old daughter, Nana. According to documented reports, as soon as it was apparent that the ship was going to sink, John Harper immediately took his daughter to a lifeboat. It is reasonable to assume that this widowed preacher could have easily gotten on board this boat to safety; however, it never seems to have crossed his mind. He bent down and kissed his precious little girl; looking into her eyes he told her that she would see him someday. The flares going off in the dark sky above reflected the tears on his face as he turned and headed towards the crowd of desperate humanity on the sinking ocean liner. As the rear of the huge ship began to lurch upwards, it was reported that Harper was seen making his way up the deck yelling, "Women, children, and unsaved into the lifeboats!" It was only minutes later that the Titanic began to rumble deep within. Most people thought it was an explosion; actually the gargantuan ship was literally breaking in half.

At this point, many people jumped off the decks and into the icy, dark waters below. John Harper was one of these people.

That night 1528 people went into the frigid waters. John Harper was seen swimming frantically to people in the water leading them to Jesus before the hypothermia became fatal. Mr. Harper swam up to one young man who had climbed up on a piece of debris. Rev. Harper asked him between breaths, "Are you saved?" The young man replied that he was not.

Harper then tried to lead him to Christ only to have the young man who was near shock, reply "No."

John Harper then took off his life jacket and threw it to the
man and said, "Here then, you need this more than I do," and swam away to other people. A few minutes later Harper swam back to the young man and succeeded in leading him to salvation.

Of the 1528 people that went into the water that night, six were rescued by the lifeboats. One of them was this young man on the debris. Four years later, at a survivors meeting, this young man stood up and in tears recounted how that after John Harper had led him to Christ, Mr. Harper had tried to swim back to help other people, yet because of the intense cold, had grown too weak to swim. His last words before going under in the frigid waters were, "Believe on the Name of the Lord Jesus and you will be saved."

Does Hollywood remember this man? No. Oh well, no matter.

This servant of God did what he had to do. While other people were trying to buy their way onto the lifeboats and selfishly trying to save their own lives, John Harper gave up his life so that others could be saved.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

John Harper was truly the hero of the Titanic!
Sources for this article: "The Titanic's Last Hero" by Moody Press 1997,