

A Winning Church

By: Dan Gulley

“Soul-winning” is a scriptural term we don't hear too much anymore in the church of Christ. Proverbs 11:3 hints at the value God puts on the soul. That verse says, “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who wins souls is wise.” The prophet Daniel reminds us of the premium God places on souls and soul-winners. He pointed to a time yet in the future and said “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever” (Daniel 12:3-3). Jesus made soul-winning the most valuable work on earth when He said in Matthew 16:26, “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” We know that Jesus valued souls. Luke 19:10 sums up His whole purpose in coming to earth - “for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” This statement from Christ makes clear something that seems to be getting fuzzier and fuzzier in the thinking of some in the New Testament church, even some preachers and elders. Souls are lost, and they need to be saved.

Jesus believed that people were lost, but also that they they could be won. The early church reflected Jesus' concern and convictions about the lost. Acts 8:4 is one of a number of passages in Acts that makes clear the early church was a winning church. That verse tells us those who were scattered due to persecution "went everywhere preaching the word". The New International Version gives the slightly different reading that those scattered "preached the word wherever they went." Even casual students of the book of ACTS know that the early church was a winning church! In the face of powerful and well-positioned opponents who relentlessly persecuted them, they set out to win the world to Christ. That church didn't just keep house for the Lord or maintain the status quo. In the words of Acts 17:6, they "turned the world upside down.!"

How can we be a winning church? That is, how can we re-ignite the white-hot evangelistic fire and fervor that compelled the early church to see it that the gospel was made available and accessible to every person on earth? The apostle Paul gives us insight in 1 Corinthians 9: 19-22. Read that passage and you will feel the heart-throb of a soul-winner. Paul's stated aim was "that I might win the more." Scan these four verses and six times you hear him saying he purposely adapts, not his message, mind you, but his method, all in order

“that he might win' them & “by all means save some!” That's a winning attitude! I love what Luis Palau said about the church. He said the church is like manure. Pile it up, and it stinks up the neighborhood; spread it out, and it enriches the world. We serve a winning Savior and we have a winning message (the gospel). May each of us do our part to help build a soul-winning church.

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