

Soul winning

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[0 : 00] If you turn back with me to the chapter we read in Proverbs chapter 11 and to verse 30 there in that chapter, the second last verse of that chapter.

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life and he that winneth souls is wise. Now if you were at the fair meeting a few weeks ago I preached on a very similar subject from the New Testament where Christ spoke about seeking the lost and the joy in heaven over seeking the lost.

And you may be wondering, well why on earth are we going through the same subject again, the same topic again? And I share with you one or two reasons why. The first being a deep sense of my own inadequacy when it comes to this area.

And so you realise as we go through this, and I'm not saying any more about that, that it's a sense of my own inadequacy rather than a sense of other people's inadequacy.

Under the truth which ought to affect us like an earthquake, I often feel greatly unmoved by the spiritual realities that I preach and deal with.

[1 : 23] So it's under that sense of my own inadequacy. But also from a sense of an ache within my soul for the unconverted. I'm not going to say this very often from the topic, you'll probably not hear it again.

But from my point of view looking at it from the preacher side of things, there's a tremendous pain in the heart. Preaching that often makes you sick to the stomach, feeling of gut sickness.

For you can imagine, preaching to the people in the congregation, and the people who aren't Christians don't respond. I can imagine, and I can sympathise with Paul very much in 2 Corinthians 2, for he says, For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.

To the one who are the smell of death, to the other the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task? You feel that very acutely when you preach. That some people who hear the preaching don't respond, and your message to them is like the flavour of death, and it does them no good.

And there's a tremendous awareness recently of that, of people who have been under the word for years and years in Raskin, who are still unsaved, and who still reject the truth that is preached passionately and preached genuinely.

[2 : 48] People who treat that truth and their souls lightly, and don't seem to care. And who don't realise that every time we stand up there, we're standing on the edge of eternity.

And that we're doing something that takes tremendous effort, and tremendous difficulty, because our own hearts are exposed, and our own stupidity is made clear. The ache for the unconverted that grows every week, because you learn to love them every week that bit more.

How they can't respond to the simplicity of the message, and why they go out unsaved. And also that ache for people in the area, who are ignorant of the truth, and who in their own ignorance go around and are lost, and who are in the grip of the evil one.

So through that sense of my own inadequacy, a sense of fear and trembling for those who remain week in and week out unmoved under the preaching of the word.

And also because of a feeling that the Holy Spirit will not let my mind rest on anything other than the message for this evening. The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he that winneth souls is wise.

[4 : 10] It speaks of fruit-bearing and soul-winning as being something brutal to every Christian, not just to preachers, far from it, but to every Christian.

And as Christians, and you know as well as I do, that as Christians we must bear fruit. There isn't such a thing as a fruitless Christian, as there oughtn't to be, that we are bearing fruit all the time as Christians through Christ.

And that happens in two ways. We bear fruit individually in our Christian lives. We bear fruit within our souls, within our own persons.

We are like the images of a piece of fruit growing from a seed to a mature and perfect and sweet piece of fruit.

And the Christian in their life is to be somebody who is growing and maturing and becoming ripe, becoming ripe for Christ. With Christ in us, that we are fruit-bearing.

[5 : 13] We are showing that there's the life of Christ within us. That that life within us bears the characteristics of Christ. To use another image, we are a temple of the Holy Spirit.

And because we are a temple of the Holy Spirit and Christ dwells in us, we are to bear his fruit. We said before, we're people who are changing, learning, growing, repenting, changing to become like Jesus because we have the life within us, the tree of life.

And it's a life that bears fruit. Jesus in us is bearing fruit. And that is what we are to look for in our own individual lives. Improvement, growth, maturity, more sweetness, more taste, more like Jesus. But we also bear fruit in another way because we are part of a crop. We bear it individually but we're part of a crop. We're a growing tree.

We're a growing body. We're a growing army. Or to go back to that other illustration used in a different way by Jesus, we are also a temple of the Spirit.

[6 : 25] Not only as individuals but as a body. And 2 Corinthians speaks about that temple being the church. And it's an incomplete temple.

And every Christian is a brick in that temple. And that temple, since Christ has died on the cross, is being built up. And it's becoming completed. And when it's completed then Christ will return.

It's this great image of us as Christians being part of the temple yet reaching out to bring others in so that they will be part of the temple.

We are to bear fruit because we're a growing kingdom. We are to make disciples. We are to reach out. We are called fishers of men. We are to win souls.

Because it says he who wins souls is wise. And that is the fruit bearing. Not only the individual but the fruit bearing as a people, as a body that we are to do.

[7 : 23] Reaching out to bring the fruit of Christ in. To make the church grow. So that we have this passionate concern to fulfil the kingdom of God.

To bring it to completion. To snatch people like brands from the fire. So that like Paul, to the weak I become weak. To win the weak. I have become all things to all men.

So that by all possible means I might save some. I make myself a slave to win as many as possible. This ambition of Paul and the ambition of Christ to reach out and to bring his own in.

And to build the temple. To complete the body. To have the army completed. To have the tree of life fully flourishing.

So we are fruit bearing Christians. Individually. And as a congregation. We are fruit bearing as we reach out. And spread the love of Jesus.

[8 : 26] And see souls being saved. Winning souls. Because winning souls is bearing fruit. Soul winning. He goes on to speak. Fruit of the righteous is a tree of life.

And he that winneth souls is wise. He is a tremendous passage. A tremendous text. He who wins souls is wise. He is using human language here. The record through the Holy Spirit is speaking about our responsibility.

To win souls. Now it is very unreformed if you want to speak like that. Unreformed language.

Talking about men winning souls. Now we know.

We know that Christ alone can win a soul. We know that it's Christ's work to regenerate the heart. And yet the Bible says. He that winneth souls is wise. The person who wins.

Paul who wins souls is wise. We can't hide behind the sovereignty of God. As an excuse for being Mr and Mrs do nothing. We can't say well that's God's domain.

[9 : 27] It's his work. Because we're commanded to be winners of souls. And we mustn't hide behind convenient and comfortable theology. Taken out of context. And taken out of this place.

Because this is speaking about our responsibility. To be a soul winner. And he uses this word winning. Being a soul winner. And the Hebrew word has the ideas of taking hold of.

Laying hold of. Snatching. Getting. Taking. Even marrying. There is these kind of images behind it. And there are three illustrations. There are three pictures.

That we can take from that. There are also in different parts of the Bible. The first is the picture of warfare. That winning souls is like winning a battle. It's like winning a fight.

It's like an army. Now only a few of us I'm sure here have been in the army. But to be in the army. To be in a fight. To be in a war. Is to be involved in discipline.

[10:29] Involved in obedience to higher command. Involving tactics. Awareness of the enemy. Courage. Fitness. Alertness. Boldness. You know great images.

For soul winning. Comes into this picture of winning. In warfare. And the same is true for souls. That when we're out to look for people for sight.

It's a battle that we're in. And it's often a heart breaking battle. A soul destroying battle. And it requires all our energy. We can't be half hearted.

As we seek to reach out. To win souls. Because we have enemies. We have the enemy of unbelief. And we have the enemy of Satan. Stopping us.

We need courage. We need great skill. You know there needs to be. There's language of soul winning. That we need to learn. Doubtless we'll make mistakes at the beginning. There's strategies we need to follow.

[11:27] We can't blunderbuss in all the time. Because it doesn't always work. We need to learn to obey our commander in chief. The Lord Jesus Christ. And follow him. We need to persevere.

When one soul turns our back and doesn't listen to our witnessing. We don't then just give up.

We're to keep on fighting. We're to be as Christ says. Wise as serpents as we reach out.

Yet innocent as doves. We're to do everything we can to reach out to lost souls. And everything that we do is to reach out for lost souls.

And all we do as a congregation. All the hospitality we're involved in. All the Sunday school outreach work that we're involved in. All that work is to do with winning souls. That is what it's about. It's not about having a nice name in the community. It's not about having a face to be seen. It's not to give the children an hour to do something on a Sunday morning. It's to win souls.

[12:23] That is the foundation of what we do as a congregation. The Sunday school picnic. Where we have 150 wild kids on the bus. It's not about having given them just a good time.

It's because we want their souls for Jesus Christ. And we'll do anything to get them in. To hear the gospel sound. The supper evenings we have broken apart. Are serious business.

They're not extravagant. They're not indulging in things that we shouldn't be. They have a serious soul winning business.

That we have these supper evenings. Because they're great things to invite. For the men who are coming up. The men's supper evenings. To invite men that will maybe not come near a church. But they might have a meal with us.

And when they have a meal with us. They might find that Christians don't have two heads. And they might find that there's an enjoyable atmosphere. That there's no swearing. That there's warmth. And there's happiness. And there's joy.

[13:20] And at the end of the meal. Then they'll tell them about Christ. And Kenny Highman's horrible priest the gospel. Whether they want to hear it or not. Because we want to win their souls for Jesus.

Because we love them. And they'll do anything. We will use their bellies. We will use their gifts. We will use their gifts. We will use their gifts. Because we want to reach out with them. Tactics. Suffolkity. Winning souls. Warfare. And it's easy. It's easy to sit on the side. And watch everyone else be involved in the work.

It's easy to sit on the side. And criticise and condemn the strange tactics that are used. But we do it to win souls. We do it to bring people to Jesus Christ.

And we need to be involved in the war. To win souls. But another image is the image of the race. And it again has many of the same qualifications that the warfare image has.

[14:22] But there's one slightly different aspect of the race. Where people are out to win a race. And that is. And Paul uses the image often. Is the awareness of the prize. That we run to win the prize.

The victor's wreath. And so the same is true for soul winning. You see. In athletics. Or in sport of any kind.

There's the great thrill of winning. The great feeling of being first over the line. You know footballers. In a great team. A magnificent team.

That is better than all the rest. And they win. Keep on winning trophies. And you've heard it in the television. The reporter may be asked. Do you not get tired of winning?

Is this not as good as the first time? And invariably they'll say. No. No. When you've won once. You want to win again. And you get into the habit of winning. And you find every time more thrilling.

[15:21] It's an addictive thing. So that you want to win. And each time it's better. And more enjoyable. And so it is. With winning souls. There's a knowledge of the prize.

When somebody comes to Christ. Through your efforts. Through your words. Through your smile. Through your kindness. Through your warnings. When a soul is won.

That's addictive. And it's not good enough. You don't want to rest there. But you want to get into the winning habit. And you want to learn to be expert in winning a soul. And in telling others about Christ.

And inviting them to hear the word. Because there's the great prize. Nothing like it. Of knowing that you've been used. And that you're a tree. That you've. That person has become part of the tree of life.

That you are in. But it's always. It's also. In the third place. The language of love. It's the language of warfare. The language of racing or sport.

[16:18] It's also the language of love. Winning somebody's love. Winning somebody's affection. I know we find that beautifully. In Genesis 24.

Where the servant of Isaac. Is sent off. To go to Rebecca. To. Or well he didn't know it was going to be Rebecca. But he went to find out a wife. For Isaac. And he went.

And he met Rebecca. And he knew immediately. She was the right one. And isn't it interesting. That he prayed to the Lord before. And he said. Lord give me success. In this. He'd asked for God's blessing.

He'd wanted success. In finding a wife for Isaac. And when he found Rebecca. He told Rebecca. All about how great Isaac was. And then he asked the question.

Will you go with this man? And you know. That's what it's like. In. Winning souls. Is that we go to people. Because we are the servant of the Lord.

[17:12] And we tell people. How lovely he is. Because we've experienced. Their love ourselves. We know what it is to be forgiven. We've tasted the sweet taste. Of the heavenly gifts. We've enjoyed the glory.

And the wonder of being Christ. And we tell others. And recommend others. And say. Will you go with this man? Will you not come in with us? Will you not become a Christian?

Because he is the best of all people. Because it's love that drives us. And motivates us. And we want others to share. And what we have. Winning souls. Is the language of love.

Not only love for Christ. But love for other people. That we reach out to them. And it's the key. Isn't it? To everything. Loving other people. And loving Christ. That we go out with this.

Passionate desire. To win souls. Because we love them. Because we see ourselves in them. We see our own ignorance. And our own unbelief.

[18:07] And our own stupidity. And our own thrawnness. And our own carelessness. With regard to our souls. And we see it in others. And we want to see our friends that we love.

And our families that we love. And our neighbours that we love. We want to tell them. And we want them to share in what we have. And we want to look at them.

With the same eyes that Christ looks at. At us. And when we begin to have that desire. To win them out of love. Out of desire.

To see the prize. And awareness of the war. Then we can begin maybe to pray. Like Luke. Like Knox. Saying give me Scotland.

Or I die. Give me Roskine. Or I die. Because we have a passion. And a concern. To win souls. For Jesus Christ. Because it's the way of wisdom.

[19:06] And the motive. That sent Christ to the cross. For you and me. Is the motive that becomes ours. As we seek to bring others in. Loving them.

Into the kingdom. So soul winning. Is the word he used. And then he goes on to speak about soul winning. Being the. The. Pastime.

Of those who are wise. Now that means that. It's wise people. That win souls. But it also means. That we need wisdom. If we're going to be soul winners.

It takes great wisdom. To be a soul winner. And it's something we learn. And it's something we'll make mistakes in. But it's a gift. The wisdom of God. To win souls. Is a gift. That he gives. To those who ask. And the spiritually wise people. They win souls. It doesn't say spiritual wisdom. It's for those who are orthodox.

[20 : 02] Or those who know the bible. From back to front. Those who win souls. For Jesus Christ. Who extend his kingdom. Because that reflects Calvary most. Spiritually wise win souls.

Because they understand. The nature of the kingdom. To be spiritually wise. Is to understand. That the gospel. Is the only real answer. To man's ills. It's the only real answer. To drug abuse. And to drunkenness. On a Saturday night. And to the misery. And meaninglessness of life. It's an awareness. That Christ alone.

Counts. And that Christ is really. Real to the spiritually wise person. And that people. Who they smell. And who they're beside. And who they talk to. Are really lost.

Without Jesus Christ. Heading to a hellish. Eternity. Wise people are those. Who have a heart religion. Who see. Their own responsibility.

[21 : 01] Who don't cluck about. The great responsibility. Of God to do this. But who see their own. Responsibility. To win souls. And let God. Do his sovereign work.

Let the wind blow with it. Listen. Those. Who are wise. Have great faith in Christ. Great faith in his love. And in his power. And in his willingness.

To save. And in his promises. Which he says. He has. Promised salvation. Harvest. White to harvest. He has promised people. To come. If we don't give up.

In doing good. The word of God. The wise people. Those who understand. The nature. Of the growing kingdom. And those who also experience.

The fear of the Lord. Because remember. The fear of the Lord. Is the beginning of wisdom. So that in our lives. And in our worship. There is a reverence. And an obedience. To the king of kings. That goes beyond.

[21 : 58] Anything else we do. Because only then. Do we have a life. And perspective. Only then. There's unemployment. Only then. There's poverty. Only then. There's social problems.

Only then. There's relationship problems. And all the other things. That crowd down. In every one of us. Only then. Do we have a perspective. When we fear. And worship the Lord. And see him. For who he is. That fear of the Lord.

Softens our heart. And heats up our heart. And motivates our will. What then. Is the conclusion. Of the matter. Well.

Winning souls. Is the power of God. 1 Corinthians 4 verse 20. Says. For the kingdom of God. Is not a matter of talk. But of power.

And we're very good at talking. A good religion. It's easy to talk a good religion. It's easy even to preach a good religion. But. It is involving the power of God.

[22 : 53] Not of talk. But of power. The key of winning souls. Is seeing God. Work. Through us. In answer. To our prayers.

We win souls. Not by talk primarily. But on our knees. Because on our knees. Is where we find. The power of God. And. It is always.

Prayer is always. And will always remain. Until the end of time. The gauge. The thermometer. Of our love. Of our understanding.

Of the gospel. And of our true love. And concern. For other people. To know what it is. To wrestle with God. In prayer. Until he comes close.

Drawing near to him. Until he will draw near to us. Keeping on praying. Until we get through. The swathe of words. And petitions. And ordinary things.

[23 : 49] Until we know. He's right beside us. The hard work. The. The. Striving. That comes. Through great effort. The ability.

To be so burdened. In prayer. That we will pray all night. We'll be willing. To break. Out. Of our cozy routines. To pray. To pray more.

Than we've prayed. Because that is. Where the battle is. That is where the success line. That is where the key is. Is on our knees. Because it's the power of God.

And it's a matter of power. The kingdom. And we fight with. Christ's. Eh. Weapons. Not with our own. Winning souls. Is the power of God.

And also. In winning souls. There is great reward. There's nothing like it. In the Christian life. And there'll be nothing like it. In heaven. To be known as a soul winner.

[24 : 46] Those. Daniel tells it. I've quoted it before. Daniel tells it. It's one of the. Best verses in the Bible. Those. Who are wise. Will shine like the brightness. Of the heavens. And those who lead many.

To righteousness. Like the stars. Forever and ever. Shine. When we win. Souls for Christ. We shine in our souls. We shine in our hearts.

Because we know. We have the favour of heaven. We know it's a good thing. We know. What it is like. To have been a tree of life. To others. It's a great thing. To be living our lives.

Building with gold. And with silver. If any man builds. On this foundation. Using gold. Silver. And costly stones. Wood. Hair. Straw. His work will be shown.

For what it is. If what he built survives. He will receive his reward. Gold. Silver. Costly stones. That's what we're to build with. And gold.

[25 : 41] Is winning souls. For Christ. That is what we're to be about. We sit among people. Who are unmoved. Week. After week. You sit beside them.

You're related to them. You know them. We must have a burden. And an urgency. In prayer.

Naming these people. Because every week. They go out untouched.

The nail of condemnation. Is drilled further. Into their own hearts. And that. Is appalling. To preach. To condemn.

When no man. Need be lost. Pray. That wherever possible. Before this weekend. We will seek. To win a soul.

For Jesus Christ. Now I've taken. I suppose. A lot of the inspiration. Or. Whatever it is. From this. From Spurgeon. Soul Winner. Which I've been reading for a long time.

[26 : 36] Takes me a long time. To read a book. And I want to close. By reading. Something he says here. Now Christian men and women. I want you to take this matter up. Practically. And to determine.

That you will try. This very night. To win a soul. Try the one next to you. In the seat. If you cannot think of anyone else. Try on the way home. Try with your own children. Remember he preached. About three or four thousand people.

So he could say that kind of thing. Have I not told you. What happened one Sunday evening. In my sermon I said. Now you mothers. Have you ever prayed. With each of your children. One by one. And urged them.

To lay hold of Christ. Perhaps. Dear Jane is now in bed. And you have never yet. Pleaded with her. About eternal things. Go home tonight. And wake her up. And say Jane. I am sorry.

I have never told you. About the saviour. Personally. And prayed with you. But I mean to do so now. Wake her up. Put your arms around her neck. And pour out your heart. To God with her. Well.

[27 : 30] Say Spurgeon. There was a good sister here. Who had a daughter. Named Jane. What do you think? She came on Monday morning. To bring her daughter Jane. To see me in the vestry. For when she woke.

Her up. And began. I have not spoken to you about Jesus. Or something to that effect. Oh dear mother. Said Jane. I have loved the saviour. These six months. And wondered. You had not spoken to me about her.

And then there was great kissing. And rejoicing. Perhaps you may find that to be the case. For the dear child at home. And if you do not. So much more reason.

Why you should begin at once to speak. Did you never win a soul for Jesus? You shall have a crown in heaven. But no jewels in it. You will go to heaven childless.

And you know how it was in the old times. How the women dreaded. Lest they should be childless. Let it so be with Christian people. Let them dread being spiritually childless. We must hear the cries of those.

[28 : 27] Whom God has given. To be born unto himself by our means. We must hear them. Or else cry out in anguish. Give me converts. Or I die. Amen. Let's pray.

Gracious God. We give thanks for your word. And we give thanks for its challenge. And for its simplicity. And for its frankness. And we ask and pray oh Lord. That we would be a people. Who seek above all things to bear fruit.

Bear fruit in our own lives. And bear fruit in this community. By winning souls for Christ. Give us a passion. Give us an extravagance. May we do things that are out of the ordinary. May we listen to the voice of our own conscience. May we hear the still small voice of God. Telling us to speak to this person. To talk to that person. To phone the friend. To invite them to church. To pray for their souls. To think about using the means that are given in the church. And in other ways. To present the gospel. Bless the ladies supper evening that has passed.

[29 : 29] And we rejoice. There are over a hundred people there. And we pray that at all times. It may have had a spiritual content. And a spiritual fruit bearing.

And that souls will be saved as a result of it. And we pray oh Lord for the men's one this week. That we would not be frivolous. Or careless about it. Because we see it as a weapon.

In the fight for souls. May we strive to bring men in. Because this community needs men for Christ. As well as women. Strong. And courageous.

And manly. And we pray oh Lord. That it might be blessed by you. And that you would give Kenny I McLeod. The right words to say. And that souls might be saved. May we believe in the harvest.

That you promise is there. May we believe in your word. And may we begin to be soul winners. And put aside our reservations. Put aside our fears. And begin to believe in the great God.

[30 : 26] Who has purposes for us. To be those who will get to heaven with a crown. With jewels on it. And that we will take our children with us. Who will rejoice and give thanks.

For the day we were born. May that be true of us each and every one. And may we be those who have a passion. For the love of Christ in our lives. For Jesus sake. Amen.