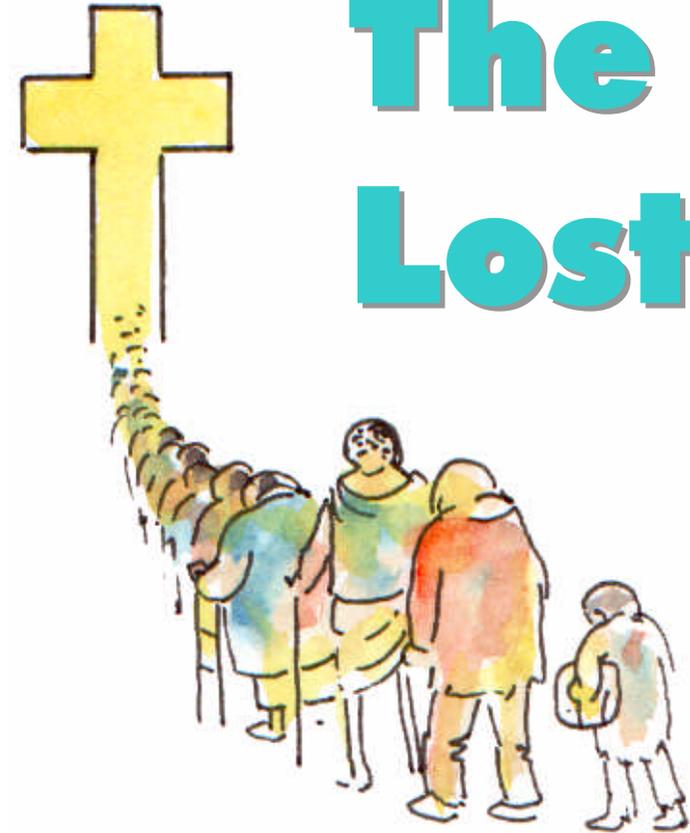


"Love For The Lost"



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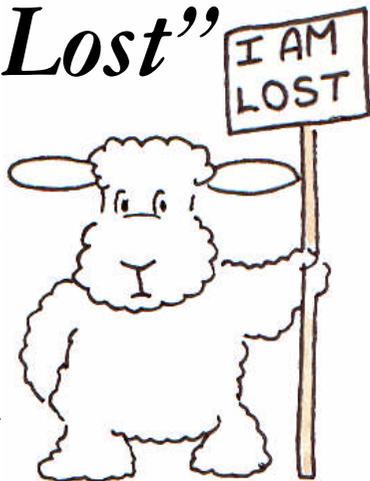
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*What are you doing
to tell them?*

by Pastor David Legge

“Love For The Lost”



First Corinthians chapter 9 is the text that I want to take that we'll deal with in some measure later on in this booklet. We've looked at 'Love for the Lord', which must motivate everything in our Christian lives including what we're studying here. We've also looked at 'Love For Others', and now we're looking at 'Love For The Lost'. In 1 Corinthians chapter 9:22, Paul says - now please notice this, and allow the import and the depth of this statement to grasp you:

“To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you”.

Now in Luke's gospel chapter 16 we have the very poignant and tragic story of this rich man who lifted up his eyes in hell. He lived for this world, yet the pauper lived for the world to come, and because of that when both of them died the rich man went to hell, but the pauper was taken to heaven by the angels. This is a story that I could preach a series on, let alone one message, but it's two verses in this passage of Scripture that I want us to home in on, verse 27 and 28. Within those two verses there are two words that I want to highlight just in introduction to this study on 'Love For The Lost'. It's the word 'send', the rich man in hell said to Abraham: 'Abraham, send Lazarus! Send! Send him to my brothers', and in verse 28 the second word that I want you to notice is the word 'lest'. The first word 'send' someone to my brothers, the second word 'lest' they come to this place of torment.

I wish that God the Holy Spirit would burn on my heart and your heart those two words; for those two words, I believe, are the cry from hell. If anything is being heard right this very moment from the caverns of the damned, it is two words: 'Send, lest!'. 'Send someone, lest my mother, or my child, or my brother, or my sister, or my neighbour come to this place that I am in! I cannot get out, but send someone lest they come here'. Now the fact of the matter is, not all believers hear this cry. You may have heard of the eye of faith that is necessary to try and picture and conceive of some spiritual things in the word of God; but in order to hear this

road, but what compassion have we for the lost? Have we compassion enough to hear the cry of the damned? Can I ask you a question that I ask myself continually: David, do you really believe that the world is perishing?

Charles Peace was a wicked criminal who was sentenced to death. On the morning of his execution the clergyman led him out of the cell and began reading the liturgy to him. He tapped the clergyman on the shoulder and asked him: 'Do you believe what you're reading?', and he said 'Oh, yes, yes, I believe it'. He said: 'If I believed what you believe, I would crawl on my hands and knees across broken glass to the four corners of the world to warn people'. There is the law of the watchman, and there are consequences for us if we do not take the gospel - but what I want you to think of is the consequences to the lost.

I finish with a story from Hudson Taylor's life again. Nee Yung Fa was a Ningbo cotton dealer in China, he was converted under Hudson Taylor's preaching, but he had also been a leader before that in a reformed Buddhist sect which would have nothing to do with idolatry, but was seeking the living way and the truth. At the end of Hudson's sermon, Nee stood up in his place and turned to address the audience and said these words: 'I have long searched for the truth as my father did before me, and I have travelled far but I haven't found it. I found no rest in Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, but I do find rest in what I have heard tonight. From now on I believe in Jesus'. He was converted and followed the Lord with all his heart. Nee took Hudson Taylor to a meeting of the sect he had formerly led, and he was allowed to explain the reason for his change of faith to them. Taylor was impressed by the clarity and energy with which he gave his testimony. Then another member of the group was converted, and both he and Nee were baptised. Then Nee asked Hudson Taylor, the great pioneer missionary, a very difficult question: 'How long has the gospel been known in England?'. Nee asked Hudson Taylor: 'How long has the gospel been known in England?'. 'For several hundred years', replied Hudson Taylor in an embarrassed tone, vaguely. 'What!', exclaimed Nee, 'And you have only come to preach to us now? My father sought after the truth for more than 20 years and died without finding it! Why didn't you come sooner!'. Hudson Taylor writes, 'That was a difficult question to answer'.

Let's stop playing church and going through the motions, wearing the right clothes, saying the right words, and waken up to the fact that people are lost and dying - and from our perspective there's one reason for it: how shall they hear without a preacher? Who shall go? Who will tell them?

about what Paul says when he said: 'We preach Christ crucified', that is the only thing that will win people. I don't believe a message is a gospel message unless the cross is uplifted high. That's not chiefly what I'm thinking about, I'm thinking about what Paul said in Colossians 1:24. He rejoiced in his sufferings for the Colossians, and he filled up 'that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church'. Now it's that little statement, Paul claimed that he was filling up that which was behind - or, as another translation puts it, that which was lacking in the afflictions of Christ. Now if we misunderstood that, we would almost think that he was denigrating the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, but that's not Paul's point. There is nothing lacking in the redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ, there is nothing incomplete in His salvation, but what Paul is saying is this: 'These people whom I'm ministering to, they've never seen Christ dying on the cross. I can preach to them about it, but they have never had in a direct sense the love of Christ communicated to them as the people around the cross saw it that day'. You might say, 'Who has?' - but you're missing the point! What Paul is saying is: what is lacking in the gospel is that there should be a living personification of the love of Christ shown to men and women who are lost, and in that sense Paul was saying, 'I am filling up that lack in that through my sufferings, through my sacrifice, I am communicating sacrificial love, the very dying love of Jesus to those who are lost'.

What Does Our Love For The Lost Cost?

Here's the question to us today: what is it costing us to win the lost? Do we touch the lost with Christ's scars? Not just preaching the cross, but living the cross. Here's the question: how much time does it cost us to win the lost? How much money does it cost us to win the lost? We can build buildings, we can do all sorts of things, but how much are we giving to win the lost? How much energy does it cost us? How much sleep does it cost us? How much food does it cost us? How much inconvenience does it cost us? How much sweat, blood, tears does it cost us to win the lost? Paul says: 'I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus'!

True love is always costly, and I would say it's a worthless love if it doesn't cost anything. The heartbeat of God is to save men and women, and when His heartbeat is echoed in our souls we will hear the cry of the lost, we will love them, and we will lay aside our lives for them - and they will be touched with the sacrifice that we express in love for them. We have compassion on a child that dies, and whenever on the television screen we see that little coffin, our hearts break. We have compassion for the dead pet dog that lies in the middle of the

cry from hell, you need the ear of faith. The ear of faith to hear these two words 'send, lest', it is cultivated by the word of God, by prayer, by meditation and contemplation upon spiritual things - and quite frankly if you're not reading God's word, meditating on it, praying over it, praying it in, you will not hear this cry. If you're not opening yourself up to the means of hearing it, but apart from that, ultimately this hearing of the cry from hell is regulated and is proportionate to your love as a Christian. It is regulated by your love for the Lord, for the more you love the Lord the more you will love the lost. It is regulated by your love for others, because the more you love others, there is a category of those others who are without Christ, apart from your brethren, apart from some who may be your neighbour and are Christians as well, there's this great majority of people who are lost. If you love the Lord and if you love others, as the greatest commandment of all tells us to do, you will also love the lost.

'He that hath ears to hear', the Lord Jesus said, 'let him hear'. I'm asking all of us: do you have ears to hear the cry from hell? I believe the battle today for the Christian is the battle for the heart, that could also be put 'the battle for the mind'. Proverbs 4:23 tells us that out of the heart spring the issues of life, and really this question I'm posing before you: 'Do you hear the cry from hell?', is asking you the question: do you have a heartfelt Christianity? A heartfelt Christianity? Now we don't believe in a feelings-based Christianity, but God deliver us from a feeling-less faith, where we don't feel things that we ought to feel - the realities of a Christian experience, and the great doctrines and dogmas of God's word don't penetrate our hearts - because the Christian faith is not a religion simply of the head, it is more importantly a religion of the heart. The prophet Ezekiel told the Israelite people that God one day would give them a new heart, and we have experienced that in the new birth - God has taken our heart of stone, apparently, and He has now given us a heart of flesh, a heart that beats with the needs of humanity that is lost. I'm asking you: do you feel the need of those around you that are without Christ?

Now you might ask the question: what is this cry from hell? Is it 'Lord, be merciful unto me a sinner!?' Is it people asking for a second chance? Is it weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, as we read often in the Scriptures? Is it people cursing God because He has sent them to hell? Well, I believe it's none of those things. It's not even questioning the justice and fairness of God for sending people to hell - people are beyond that, they know where they are, they know they're there forever. This rich man knew that there was a great gulf fixed, and he wasn't

the apostle, at least four times, described himself as serving the Lord with all humility and many tears. Our greatest example, what is He named before He is even born? 'A man of sorrows, acquainted with grief', and His life is saturated with tears. We see Him weeping over a sinful city in Luke 19: 'And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it'. We see Him weeping over the wages of sin in His friend Lazarus, as he dies and he's put into the grave, and it says 'Jesus wept'. Why was He weeping? Yes, He had lost a friend, but I believe He was weeping over what sin had done. Then we see Him weeping over sin's sacrifice in Gethsemane: 'Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared'.

Friends, do we have tearful eyes? Do I have? Or have we reached the stage where we've got so businesslike, so slick, so professional in our Christianity that to shed a tear is embarrassing? Or maybe it's even impossible! We're at one extreme or the other - either we're freezing in intellectualism, or we're frying in emotionalism, but it seems that tears for souls, genuine compassion and heart travail has disappeared. Seeing them with Christ's eyes will be seeing them with tearful eyes, but it also means seeing them with eyes of vision. In Proverbs 29 we read those famous words that are so often quoted, but so less often lived by: 'Where there is no vision the people perish'. I've been homing in on Paul, but you read the verse with me: what a vision this man had. First Corinthians 9:22: 'To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some'. That simply means that he set aside everything that hindered the Gospel's influence in his life, everything that hindered him. Now that also means that he didn't take on methods that hindered the gospel - it doesn't mean that any way to present or communicate the gospel is right - but anything that hindered the presenting of the gospel, he led it aside. That is what is characteristic of every man or woman of God that has ever done anything in relation to winning the lost.

Hudson Taylor, I encourage you to read his life story, he went to China - if you didn't already know that - and he went to China, you may not know, at a time when Britain was at war with China - like a missionary going in World War II to Germany. Now if that wasn't a stigma enough, Taylor took the unique and monumental decision of becoming a Chinaman to Chinamen to win Chinamen. He became a Chinaman to Chinamen to win Chinamen, and what do I mean by that? Well, he shaved his hair off, he kept a long traditional ponytail that the Chinamen had, he dyed it black and in the process of doing so he almost blinded

through others is the love of Christ, because this love is the fruit of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus, so it is actually His love that we are showing to others, His love constraineth us, 'Greater love hath no man than this' - so we want this 'great love'. John 17 expresses in this light, the Lord Jesus as he was praying said in verse 26: 'I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them'. The Lord is praying for His church that the love that the Father loved the Son with, and that the Son had for the Father, would be in the Christian - and it is His love, for Christ is our life.

Love Them With Christ's Heart

Now let me tease out for you this love threefold. To love the lost is first of all to love them with Christ's heart. Secondly, it is to see them with Christ's eyes. Thirdly, to touch them with Christ's scars. Let's begin with the first: to love them with Christ's heart. John Henry Jowett was a great preacher over a hundred years ago, and he said this in a book he wrote called 'The Passion for Souls' - a tremendous book. 'We can never heal the needs we do not feel' - we can never heal the needs we do not feel - 'tearless hearts can never be heralds of the passion. We must pity if we would redeem, we must bleed if we would be ministers of this saving blood. The disciple's prayer must be stricken with much crying and many tears, the ministers of Calvary must supplicate in bloody sweat, and their intercession must often touch the point of agony. True intercession is sacrifice, a bleeding sacrifice'.

To love the lost, you need to love them with Christ's heart - now what does that mean? Let me be as practical as I can with you, I feel it means two things at least. It means having compassion, and it means knowing travail or pain in your heart because of the need of the lost. Compassion is obvious, when we look at the Saviour we see the compassionate one, who looked at the sheep and saw them as sheep scattered abroad not having a shepherd, and He had compassion upon them. Then we read of Him in Matthew 23, standing over Jerusalem realising that they had rejected His Messiahship, and He cries: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thee together as a hen gathers her chicks', and as the tears trickle down His cheeks, He says: 'and ye would not'.

Now here's a simple question: do we have any measure of compassion like that for those who are lost? Do we have any compassion? That compassion will outflow

itself in what used to be called - the word is lost, almost, today in Christian circles - 'travail' for souls, or 'agony', or 'anguish' for souls. This is what the apostle Paul had in Romans chapter 9, he said: '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'. In the spirit of Moses before him, Paul is saying, speaking of his Israelite brothers in the flesh in his nationality: 'I could almost wish that I would be damned, that they would be saved'. He says that he is continually sorrowful, downcast in his heart - he hasn't lost his joy in the Lord, but he continually carries with him this burden, this cloud over his head, that there are people whom he loves that are lost! That compassion for them moved a step further, where he travailed.

Luther, the great reformer, said: 'It seems incredible that a man would desire to be damned in order that the damned might be saved'. Now if I came off with a statement like that, you'd think: 'You're going too far, you're going further than Scripture, you can never be damned' - Paul knew he could never be damned, but he wasn't chiefly speaking from his intellect now, not that he set that aside, but he's crying from his heart! He's got a beating heart for his lost brethren, to the point that he could almost say: 'I would nearly go to hell for them!'. We see this in Paul to the Galatians in chapter 4:19, where he says: 'Little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you'. He knew what it was to travail until these people came through for Christ, until they matured in the faith. In Philippians 1 verse 8 we have the same sentiment, I feel, where Paul says: 'For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ'. Now that's an unfortunate translation for us in this modern day, but you have to understand that the ancients, for them the bowels, or this abdominal area, was the seat of the affections. When they felt fear, or love, or compassion, they felt moved in this part of the body. You could translate it that he was 'moved in the heart of Jesus Christ'. F. B. Meyer, the great writer, put it like this: 'The apostle had got so near the very heart of his Lord that he could hear its throb, he could detect its heat; nay, it seemed as though the tender mercies of Jesus to these Philippians were throbbing in his own heart'. It was as if the heart of Christ dwelt in the breast of the apostle Paul.

This is not something you work up yourself, and try to get all compassionate for lost people - you can't do this, this is not a natural love. This is the very supernatural love, the agape love of God in Christ. It is having the heart of Christ

and the compassion of Christ, and do you know what that will do? That will transform all of your human relationships. It places love on a supernatural plain, to the extent that you'll be able to love the unlovely, love the unthankful, love the people that you don't really like and don't gel with you, to even love those who are indifferent to you and those who are indifferent to the gospel of Christ. How do I get that love? Well, the potential for it's already in you, because the Holy Ghost dwells in you if you're Christ's. How do you let that love out? Well, you need to be totally surrendered to the Lord, but even if you are that there is a process that needs to be instigated, and it's simply the process of intimacy. How do you know someone's heart? You've got to get near them. You've got to learn to trust them, and they've got to learn to trust you. Then when that intimacy increases - maybe it might be in a boy-girl relationship, engagement might come along, and then eventually marriage comes along. You get to the stage - some of you older, maybe not so old, couples will be able to testify of how you start to second-guess one another. You know what each other are thinking, you almost know what the other is about to say before they say it, you maybe know what they're feeling - and that's exactly what we're talking about here on a divine level, where you get so intimate with the Lord Jesus Christ that you actually feel His compassion for lost souls with His own heart. Do you love them with Christ's heart?

See Them With Christ's Eyes

Oh, we must move on, secondly: do we see them with Christ's eyes? This is talking about tears first of all, the eyes of Christ are tear-filled eyes. The Psalmist said in Psalm 126: 'They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him'. Spurgeon called tears 'liquid prayers'. Albert Smith put it like this: 'They are the safety valves of the heart when too much pressure is laid on' - I think that's wonderful! When you have this compassionate heart of Christ, and you experience this travail where it's almost that you're birthing souls in your soul in prayer and intercession for Christ, the tears start to spring - the safety valves release. Herbert Lockyer said: 'Tears win victories. A cold, unfeeling, dry-eyed religion has no influence over the souls of men'. You look at Christian history, you look at the word of God, and all of the writings of Christian biography, and you will see very clearly that all the great men of God that did any great work for God were broken spirits who had wet eyes.

Jeremiah compared his weeping to a fountain, and his head as a river of tears. Paul