

Rescue The Perishing

In 1 Peter 3:15, Peter wrote, *"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear ..."* Honesty would compel most congregations -- and most individuals -- to admit to being deficient in the matter of personal evangelism. In places, a shortage of personal evangelism is so critical that it threatens the very existence of the local church.

To be sure, there are a number of congregations which have a handful of members who are genuinely motivated and quite active in trying to reach the lost. This is good as far as it goes, but it tends to make us feel, as a congregation, that "we" are doing better than we actually are. There is a certain euphoria that is produced by having an active nucleus of personal workers -- and this euphoria sometimes makes it difficult to face the truth about our collective shortcomings.

Our shortage of personal evangelism is not only an obvious problem in itself; it is also a means by which the devil seeks to hinder the work of the Lord in general. Paul said, *"Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices"* (2 Corinthians 2:11). Our failure to be diligent in rescuing the lost is a failure that causes considerable difficulty for us in other areas. It is a problem that makes other problems worse than they would be otherwise. For example, if there is dissension in a congregation, the problem is often aggravated by a lack of growth and new converts. Without something positive occupying the minds the members, there is a tendency to turn inward and be very critical of one another. Herein lies the cunning craftiness of the devil! All he has to do is to get Christians to *"bite and devour one another"* (Galatians 5:15).

For very many of the Lord's people today, negligence in teaching the gospel to those around us is one of the ways the devil is hurting us most. Too many of us are failing to be personal evangelists, and that failure is costing us dearly. Our shortage of personal evangelism is one of our worst problems. We will either correct it, or we will be destroyed by it! Satan would like nothing better than for us to be distracted and discouraged in regard to God's work of rescuing the lost. If he can keep us from that work the devil need do nothing else to hinder us spiritually. We simply cannot allow the devil to have his way. Through our great God, we must abound in the work of communicating the gospel to mankind. "Rescue the perishing, care for the dying, Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save."

Kyle Campbell