



Voice Ministries

BEING PREPARED

Reading: 1John 3: 13 – 24

Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. (3:15)

God is love (1 John 4:16), and the New Testament teaches us the extent of His love towards mankind. The majority of Christians will know John 3.16, probably the most well-known verse in Scripture:

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

When we accept Jesus as our Saviour and acknowledge Him as Lord, then our lives change, and we become, as Paul puts it, *new creatures in Christ*. One test of our commitment to Christ is to consider the fruits of the Spirit which Paul lists in Galatians 5 (22-23):

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

If we have truly submitted to and accepted Christ then all these qualities should be in us and displayed in our daily lives. Of course we all slip up from time to time, but with these qualities we recognise times when the qualities of hell to enter us, and we can immediately reject them, claiming victory over them in Christ's name. If we find that we are being unkind towards others and struggling to find joy, self-control or patience, then something other than the fruit of the Spirit has entered us, and we should immediately reject it in the name of Jesus.

The indicator in all things is always love.

We should firstly love God, then love others, and then love ourselves.

When we do this then others will see that we are different, for even if they don't understand what it is, they will be seeing the love of God in us. They will be seeing Christ within.

It's this that helps us to fulfil Christ's command to share the gospel with others. Our Christianity needs to be contagious! That way it will make a difference. The Bible teaches us that we are co-workers with Christ. We are not simply asked to share the gospel and then left to our own devices. It's important to understand that Jesus has accepted us and commissioned us, but also that He equips and motivates us as well.

When we think about God's plan for the salvation of the world it seems such a massive task, almost too great to be achieved. What is His plan? It's us! Me and you! There is no other plan - no plan 'B'. Jesus is still saying to His followers, 'As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you (John 20:21).

We are called to evangelise, and yet many evangelicals, though they might pay lip service about witnessing, struggle when it comes to actually doing it. Generally speaking, we fear confrontation and confrontation about our faith in particular. People fear the thought of being questioned about the Bible and not having the answers. Yet fear is not one of the fruits of the Spirit of God! When Jesus commissions us to share the gospel He also equips us to do so. We need to own the truths of Scripture in such a way that they permeate our entire being. We need to feed constantly on the Word of God so that it becomes second nature to us to live that Word. Above all, we need to have confidence that He is always there, **with us in every situation.**

Peter reminds us that God is *patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance* (2 Peter 3:9b). Every person is created in the image of God and has great value in His eyes, no matter their position or status in life. Yet God also tells us through Scripture that people are spiritually lost. We read in the Bible that, *There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one* (Romans 3: 10-12).

This is an important truth for us to take on board and understand if we are to become contagious Christians. As Christians we have found Christ by the grace of God. We need to reach out to those who have not yet found Christ, those who are not even seeking to know Him, and when we do find them, we need to share the truth of the gospel with them. We will find many of the lost amongst those we meet on a daily basis. There will be many among our friends, neighbours and family who, though they might be good people are still lost souls. Their goodness is that which is measured in a worldly sense rather than a spiritual sense. One thing is certain, no matter how much good people do, if they don't know Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord then they are lost souls headed for eternal damnation.

Recognising that people are lost it follows that they need Jesus Christ in order that they might be reconciled to God. In this politically-correct world in which we live, many teach a form of inclusive religion, claiming that we all worship the same God, no matter what religious standpoint we have, and that there are many ways to God. Yet the Bible truth regarding this is absolute. Jesus said, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."* (John 14:6). Let us be quite emphatic on this point. The **only** way for people to be reconciled to God and ensure their place in heaven is through accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. No matter what people might claim, **there is no other way!**

One of the great problems that faces us today, as Christians seeking to evangelise, is that in this materialistic and hedonistic society in which we live, people have distanced themselves from God so much that they can no longer see the depths of sin in which they exist. To convince people who recognise poverty only

in relative terms, that they suffer from spiritual poverty more than anything else, is extremely difficult, because to them the only thing that so often seems to matter is where to get the money from to buy the latest mobile phone, the latest digital this or that, and so on. So to talk in the same terms that we might have used perhaps fifty, or even thirty, years ago is no longer effective. We speak to people about the Bible in terms of absolute truth, yet many people in our society today simply don't believe in absolute truth, regarding those who do with suspicious contempt.

No matter what the problems are, people still need the answers that only God can give. We need to find the means to break down the barriers that people have erected around themselves, addressing the main issues of their lives and demonstrating that the Christian life is not only the best life to live but also the way that helps us to face death with hope rather than despair.

A big part of the way in which we witness to others is by ensuring that our faith is a visible faith. People should be able to see that there is something different about us and about the way we live. If they can't see any difference, then what are we urging them to change for? But in addition we must also be prepared to answer their questions, and to defend our faith when we come under attack, and the only way we can do that is by familiarising ourselves with the Word of God and by being strengthened through our daily prayer lives. Not only must we be prepared to share what we believe with others, but we must also be prepared and equipped to explain why we believe as we do.

Of course, when we share our faith we must do so out of love, demonstrating the love of God that we have by His grace. We must be gentle and non-judgemental, taking the trouble to explain the truths of the Bible with respect and patience. And remember, no matter what we do or what we say, we can only share the truth. It's the work of the Holy Spirit to convict people of the truth and wisdom that we share. People are not saved by us, only pointed in the right direction. Only Christ has the power to save. Our task is to be obedient to Him, and to fulfil the job that He has commissioned us to do.

Amen