

Sevenfold Sin Of Not Winning Souls -2/15/23

Great Sermons – John R. Rice

Preached at a Sword of the Lord Conference in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, 1964

TEXT – 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 *In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;*

INTRO – By Dr. John R. Rice (1895-1980) Born in Texas. Saved at 12 years of age in his parents' church. He began a school teacher and later became a pastor of churches in Texas. In 1926 he left the pastorate for evangelism. Settling in Fort Worth, he became an unofficial associate of the J. Frank Norris, pastor of First Baptist Church, who was preparing to leave the Southern Baptist Convention. Rice himself broke with the Southern Baptists in 1927.

In 1934, Rice founded The Sword of the Lord, a bi-weekly publication that grew into an influential fundamentalist Baptist newspaper. At first it was simply the publication of his Dallas church, handed out on the street and delivered door-to-door by Rice's daughters and other Sunday School children **22,923 letters that had come to Rice between the beginning of his writing ministry and his death, each reporting that the writer had found Christ through Rice's books or booklets or through his sermons.**

He was an ardent soul-winner and to him soul-winning was the most important function of every Christian.

If you are a Christian and don't win souls, it is a sin like getting drunk, lying, hate, murder or adultery. It is a wicked, terrible sin! Every preacher and every Christian ought to win souls. Any Christian who does not win souls is sinning. And we who win a few are sinning if we don't do our best all the time to win more souls.

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."—Matt. 28:18–20.

We call this the Great Commission, and it contains three teachings.

- First, go and teach all nations the Word—that means make disciples of men in all nations by teaching them how to be saved.
- Second, baptize them.
- Third, teach them to observe all things that Jesus commanded us.

Soul winning is the main thing with God. If soul winning isn't the first thing with the church, the church isn't right. If soul winning isn't first for a Sunday school teacher, he or she is not a good Sunday school teacher. If soul winning isn't the main reason for a Christian school, it is not a very good Christian school. The first and main thing with God is soul winning.

In **1 Timothy 1:15**, Paul said, *"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance..."* That sounds like it was a saying often repeated among New Testament Christians. What was the saying? *"...that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."* Jesus came to save sinners. Jesus said, *"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"* **Luke 5:32**

Again, He said, *"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"* **Luke 19:10**. This is what Jesus came for, what Jesus died for. That is why the Bible was written, why churches are organized, why preachers are called to preach.

He gave the Great Commission in each of the four Gospels with slightly different words. The same day He rose from the dead, Jesus entered into the room where the disciples were shut up for fear of the Jews and breathed on them and said, *"As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you"* **John 20:21** Another time He came to the disciples as they were eating and said, *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"* **Mark 16:15**.

Again, Jesus met the disciples on a mountain in Galilee and gave the Great Commission **Matthew 28:19-20** *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.* Then in Luke He said that *"repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things....but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high"* **Luke 24:47–49**.

Forty days after His resurrection when He was preparing to ascend back into Heaven, He gave the Great Commission yet a fifth time:

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" **Acts 1:8**. He had already given the command four times (and perhaps many unrecorded times during the previous forty days); but in the last minute before He went away to Heaven, Jesus repeated it. **These were the last words of Jesus on earth.**

There is a sevenfold sin in not winning souls.

I. Sin of Disobedience to Christ's Main Command

We have an all-inclusive command for every Christian in the Great Commission. Not to obey that is not to obey Jesus on the one thing He died for, the main thing He gave instructions about.

Jesus is saying, "The command I give you today, you pass on to everybody you get saved." So the Great Commission is as much to everybody here as it was to Peter or any one of the twelve.

But you say, "I'm not called to preach." You're called to be a Christian, though, and this is a part of being a Christian. If you were taught what Jesus said, then you were taught you ought to be a soul winner.

The Lord Jesus didn't call denominational headquarters or baptize them or give them the Great Commission. If you don't win souls, you have failed in your Christian life. Those who do not win souls are disobedient in the main command of Jesus Christ, and that is not a small matter.

II. The Sin of Lack of Love for Christ

"If ye love me, keep my commandments" **John 14:15**. He says in verse **21**, *"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me."* And then verse **23** says, *"Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words."*

When I was called to preach, I said, "Lord, I don't have a great voice like Dr. Truett, and I don't have a personality like some other people, but I will do the best I can." Your trouble is not poor equipment. It is heart trouble. You don't love Jesus enough to do what He said. The Lord Jesus said three times in this chapter that if we love Him we will keep His commandments. Wouldn't it be wonderful if God would give us such a floodtide of love in our hearts, shed abroad by the Holy Ghost, that we would beg Jesus for power to win souls?

In the letter to the Ephesians in Revelation 2, the Lord said, 'I have somewhat against you because you have left your first love!'

You are backslidden if you don't have that first love that makes you concerned about lost sinners.

*One night I preached on "You Must Be Born Again." When I asked, "How many want to be saved?" she did hold her hand up; but when we gave the invitation, she didn't come. The next morning her husband brought her to the home where I was. She wanted to be saved, and I showed her how. She said, "There were a lot of churches in France; why didn't anyone ever tell me I needed to be born again?" I prayed in English, and she prayed in French and trusted Christ. **John 3:36**: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. Lack of love for Jesus is one of the sins of not winning souls.*

III. The Sin of Not Following Jesus

Those who do not win souls are guilty of not following Jesus. Matthew

4:19 Jesus said to Peter and Andrew, *"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."* Those who followed Jesus turned out to be soul winners.

Isn't this a short, simple, easy way to get to be a soul winner? I follow Jesus, and He does something wonderful in my heart. It gets to where I love sinners as He does and want to go after them like He does. He puts His power on me to get people saved and makes me a soul winner.

If it is true that when you follow Jesus He makes you into a soul winner, it follows that if you are not a soul winner, you are not following Jesus.

During a revival, a woman said to me, "Brother Rice, religion is like the measles. It's catching." I said, "You're right, but you can't give someone measles unless you have a fever." We surely need people with fever.

God, put a burning in the heart of people and made them soul winners!

IV. The Sin of Not Abiding in Christ

Those who do not win souls are guilty of not abiding in Christ. John 15

Jesus said, *"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me."*

"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." **Vs. 4,5.**

The fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

Proverbs 11:30 says, *"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life."* A tree?

You mean the fruit of a peach tree is another peach tree? The fruit of a Christian is another Christian, and the fruit of the soul winner is another soul winner. The Great Commission is not only to get one saved but to get him baptized and to tell him to do what Jesus told us to do. So if you don't bear fruit, you are not abiding in Christ.

I'm tired of these deeper-life conferences. D. L. Moody and R. A. Torrey and Billy Sunday had the deeper life. You can tell, because they bore fruit.

The deeper life is keeping people out of Hell. That is what brings eternal rewards and causes rejoicing and hand clapping and bell ringing and singing the "Hallelujah Chorus" up in Heaven. If you don't win souls, then you are not abiding in Christ.

V. The Awful Sin of Dishonesty in a Sacred Trust

Those who do not win souls are guilty of dishonesty in a sacred trust.

Romans 1:14,15 *"I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also."*

If you are saved like Paul, you got salvation by God's mercy. You didn't deserve it. How much in debt you and I are!

Matthew 25 tells of a man who took a far journey and he left his goods with his servants and provided for them.

"For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods....every man according to his several ability" (**vss. 14,15**). When the man returned, one servant told him, 'I worked hard. I made five talents into ten.'

"Well done, thou good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (**vs. 21**).

The **second servant** came and said, 'I worked hard and made two talents into four.'

The lord said to him also, *"Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord"* (**vs. 23**).

Another fellow with one talent returned it, saying, 'Here is your talent. I knew you were a hard man, so I took your talent and hid it in the earth.' And the lord said to him, 'You wicked and slothful servant. If you didn't want to risk this money, why didn't you put it in the bank so I could at least have earned some interest on the money?' He called him wicked and slothful—crooked and lazy!

If you don't win souls, you are wicked. God has a lot invested in you—the precious blood of Jesus, the wooing of the Holy Spirit, the writing of the Bible, the preaching of the men of God, Mother's prayers. Shouldn't God get a little back on His investment? If you do not pay some back to God by spreading the Gospel.

Dr. H. A. Ironside once sent a sermon for the SWORD OF THE LORD with a note on the back of a handbill that was advertising some meetings he was going to have. The note said, "Just trying to pay my debt to my brethren." You have a debt to pay too, and you are dishonest if you don't pay it. God has a right to some soul-winning effort from you.

VI. The Sinful Folly of a Shortsighted Fool

Proverbs 11:30, *"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise."* The soul winner is wise, because he is going to reap for eternity. **Daniel 12:3** *"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."* Who are wise? They that win many souls!

You think of food for the belly and clothes for the back and a new-model car, and four bedrooms and two baths. A heathen has that much sense. You had

better put your money and your time where you will have a real reaping someday.

VII. Not to Win Souls Is the Sin of Bloodguilt—Spiritual Manslaughter

"Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me."

"When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand."

"Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."—**Ezek. 3:17-19**.

If Ezekiel did not warn the Israelites about their iniquity and they died in their sins, God required their blood at his hand. What a staggering thought that God says to a man about sinners, *"His blood will I require at thine hand"*! But if Ezekiel warned the wicked, even if the wicked did not turn, then God said, *"Thou hast delivered thy soul."*

Paul had this in mind when he came to Miletus and had the elders of Ephesus meet him there. Solemnly facing these preachers, Paul told them that they would see his face no more, and then said, *"Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God"* (**Acts 20:26,27**). Then he said again, *"Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears"* (**Acts 20:31**).

Paul could solemnly say, 'After three years in Ephesus, I have no blood on my hands! I have gone night and day with tears, publicly and from house to house, carrying the whole counsel of God.'

Is there blood on your hands? Are you guilty of the death of immortal souls for whom Christ died, because you did not warn them?

In Dallas, Texas, an elderly man wrote, saying, "I am dying with cancer, and I am not ready to die. Brother Rice, please come and pray with me." But I had so many burdens that I postponed it. After two weeks I sent a young preacher to visit the old man, but a neighbor told the young preacher that the old man had died and the family were then gone to his funeral!

If you do not win souls, you are not right with God. You may be saved, but you are not a good disciple.

Consider again this sevenfold sin of failing to win souls. It is the sin of disobedience, of lack of love, of failing to follow Christ, of not abiding in Christ, of dishonesty in a sacred trust, of shortsighted folly, and of bloodguilt for which we must give an account.