

The Gospel of Salvation

Evangelistic Addresses

by Hyman Appelman

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Chapter Three -

THE GREATEST BUSINESS IN ALL THE WORLD

"And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him." (Matthew 4:18-20).

THIS is an age of specialization. General practitioners in any line are rare, mostly a thing of the past. Doctors specialize in dietetics, surgery, obstetrics, pediatrics. Lawyers specialize in civil practice, criminal law, real estate, chancery, Federal procedure. The specialty for the Christian is soul winning. It is by odds the greatest specialty in all the world. Soul-winning is the work of GOD, the task of CHRIST, the mission of the HOLY SPIRIT, the undertaking of the church; the responsibility of the preacher, the obligation of every Christian. It is a divine task, Heaven-entrusted, GOD-directed, SPIRIT-empowered.

Soul-winning requires more energy, calls for more heroism, challenges to greater sacrifices, insures mightier rewards, than any other occupation in all creation. It starts chains of consequences, originates spheres of influence, commences circles of effects that will outlive eternity. It should be the joyous privilege of every born-again child of GOD to subordinate every other ambition, every other aspiration, every other engagement in life to the task of bringing the lost to a saving knowledge and acceptance of the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

In these three verses of Scripture, the Master gives us a key to effectiveness in soul-winning. He tells us three things. First, we are told that He ever calls common folk. Second, there is the invitation to a common task. Third, we have the introduction of common instructions.

I. HE CALLS COMMON PEOPLE

It has been so throughout the ages. When GOD wished to show His mighty power, He picked out a shepherd lad, David, to slay the giant Goliath. Then He elevated this humble boy to the throne of Israel. The prophets, with but few exceptions, were men of very humble mold, of very lowly birth. It was the SPIRIT of GOD energizing, spiritualizing, magnetizing their lives, their words, their works, that made them so effective. When the Son of GOD walked upon the earth, He, too, had a predilection for the humble, the poor, the lowly, the one-talent men. There was a reason for that. You will find the reason in I Corinthians 1:29-31, "**that no flesh should glory in his**

presence . . . He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

Had the Master chosen the wise men, the rich men, the mighty men, the chief captains, the statesmen, the warlords, the priests, the rabbis, to advance the interests of His kingdom, the world long ago would have said that it was on the strength of the superior minds, abilities, possessions, leaderships, achievements of these stalwarts that the church of the living GOD has been built. As it is, considering the poverty in every direction of Peter, James, John, Philip, Thomas, Matthew, and of the first-century Christians, no intellectually honest person can truthfully point to these men as the builders of Zion. On the other hand, it is very evident; that the strength of GOD was manifested in their weakness, His wisdom in their foolishness, His power in their powerlessness.

It has been that way throughout the ages. Scan the pages of church history. See how "**that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called:**" but GOD has always chosen and is still choosing "**the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.**" Run through the Valhalla of Christian names. Count them one by one. What were the antecedents, what was the dry ground, what were the unpromising roots from which sprang such men as Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Wesley, Whitfield, Spurgeon, Moody, Booth, Billy Sunday, Sam Jones, Gipsy Smith, George Truett, Lee Scarborough, and a host of others in every denomination in every church? All this is but to the glory of GOD.

See if it is not that way in your own church. Here is a man who owns his own business or works at a job that gives him all sorts of liberty. He does not work to exhaustion. He makes a good salary. He can come and go as he pleases. He has all kinds of time that he can devote to the Lord. Here is another man who works for a wage. He is perhaps obliged to punch a time clock. He has not a moment of time to call his own from the hour he rises in the morning, hurries through his breakfast, hastens to his daily toil, until, worn and weary, he wends his way home at night. His salary is a pittance. His work is hard. Yet, and I speak from definite experience repeated over and over again, if you want a work done for the Lord, get the second man to do it, because the first man will find every sort of alibi and excuse.

Here are two women in the same church. One of them has a good income and does not have to do any of her housework. She has no children, or perhaps she has one or two. Her time is mostly her own. She can come and go as she pleases. The other woman is of limited income. Having a family of five or six babies, she has to be her own cook, housekeeper, nurse, laundress. Her time is worse than limited. Yet, if you want a job in the kingdom service done, ask the second woman. The first woman will usually make excuses that she hasn't the time. It should not be that way. It is a heartbreaking shame that it is so. Yet facts are facts, and these are true of almost every church where the dear Lord has used this poor preacher to tell the story of CHRIST, either as pastor or as evangelist.

But, thank. GOD, the Lord can and does use common, limited, unprepossessing people of ordinary, everyday, barnyard variety, talents, and abilities. Thank GOD, the HOLY SPIRIT still has an affinity, not for those of unusual personality, education, wealth, resources, but rather for those who are on the altar of obedience and surrender. There is a place for every one of us, no matter how lowly, no matter how humble, no matter how ordinary, no matter how common.

II. HE CALLS COMMON PEOPLE TO A COMMON TASK

Fishing for men, soul-winning, is a common task for all the blood-bought children of GOD. There is no alibi, no exception, no excuse, no escape from this assignment. Every Christian is obligated to CHRIST first, to a lost world next, with an unassignable, inescapable, irremovable responsibility for the bearing of a victorious, SPIRIT-filled testimony to the saving, keeping power of the Lord JESUS. It cannot be obviated by the living of a clean, Christian life. It cannot be balanced by the giving of large sums of money, tithes, and more. It cannot be met by the sending of some one else either into a home field or to some far-flung missionary frontier. It cannot be transferred to the preacher, relegated to the deacon, assumed by the Sunday-school teacher, handed over to some other godly church member. Preacher, deacon, Sunday-school teacher, lay church member - each of us, every single one of us, is faced with this task. Our part of it cannot be delegated. It is a personal responsibility. Some day at the judgment seat of CHRIST we shall give an accounting, fair, impartial, of our stewardship of the souls of men.

The same blood that saved us from our sins signed our lifelong commission to be evangelists of the grace of GOD. The same SPIRIT who sealed us unto the day of redemption separated us unto the task of ambassadorship for CHRIST. The same hour that witnessed our salvation wrote our names in the muster of witnessbearers. The same CHRIST who by His fearful agony on Calvary's cruel cross lifted us from the depths of hell to the heights of Heaven now looks to us to devote our lives to the reconciling of men to GOD by the way of the cross.

It is our work, the work of every soul among us, young, old, and in between. We may as well get at it. The field is white. The laborers are few. The harvest is upon us. We are racing against time, against death, against sin, against Satan. It is now or never with many of these precious souls lost in sin. The day is far advanced. For many the harvest is perilously close to the end. For many the summer is waning, and they still are unsaved. From every city, from every country place, from every hamlet and roadside, from every teeming center of population, comes the cry for harvesters.

Those who are in the field now are not even remotely able to cope with the situation. Unless we rush to their sides, the harvest will be pitifully barren, and many precious sheaves will be destroyed by the blighting frosts of Satan and sin. Men have described the breath-taking horror of a battlefield when the smoke has cleared away. Many have made our hearts miss their even beats at the fearsome description of the cries of the wounded and dying, writhing and moaning with the feverish thirst and the nameless pains of the hours of dissolution.

Oh, beloved, this whole wide world is a battlefield. From every corner of it, wafted on every breeze, come the piteous cries of the wounded by Satan: pleading for the water of life that is ours to give them. They are dying in sin, sinking into hell, hopelessly, helplessly enmeshed in the toils of the devil. There is but one thing that can help them, one power that can rescue them, one Person who can save them from death and destruction. That thing is the Gospel. That power is the HOLY SPIRIT. That person is the Son of GOD.

Our responsibility is to take this Gospel, this HOLY SPIRIT, this Son of GOD to them. They will never come of their own free will.

- They are dead in their trespasses and sins.
- They are blinded by the god of this world.
- They are bound down by the things of this earth.
- They are in the paralysis of sin.
- They know not their condition.
- They realize not their plight.
- They understand not their awful helplessness.
- They are adrift on the sea of iniquity, in leaky vessels that are shipping water with every foot of distance covered.
- They have no compass, no rudder, no oars, no pilot, no provisions.

Every maddened, whitecapped, storm-driven wave threatens to engulf them and their pitiful crafts in the yawning maelstrom of the bottomless, burning sea named Hell, Tophet, or the pit of torment. See them drifting on and on, heedless, careless, indifferent to the cataclysm they are approaching.

Watch them with trembling soul and burning heart as they speed on and on, their pace getting faster and faster, their actions wilder and wilder, as Satan increases the tempo of his maddening beat. See them dying, dying, dying, sinking down, down, down, into the flames of the lake of fire.

See them, old, young, middle-aged; men, women, children; rich, poor, weak, strong; friends, neighbors, business associates, schoolmates; fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, merrily stepping off the measure of the *danse macabre* of Beelzebub.

See the demons of hell howling their glee at the numberless multitudes that are treading the broad highway of destruction. Hear the Old Serpent urging on his minions to stoke high the fires of hell for the reception of the doomed and the damned.

See, oh, see, beloved, one more thing. See the CHRIST, bleeding, torn, thorn-crowned, bent low beneath the load, not only of His own terrible cross, but of the crosses that we Christians have dropped by the wayside in our cruel, careless, callous indifference and bitter unconcern.

Oh, brethren and sisters in CHRIST, they have built up Golgothas all over the earth. CHRIST is being crucified afresh, not once, outside the gates of Jerusalem, but again and again wherever men gather to sell the Son of GOD, no longer for a beggarly thirty pieces of silver but for the even more beggarly sins of the day. This should be changed. CHRIST has suffered enough.

There is not one of us who would willingly add a jot or a tittle to the already too heavy burden of the SAVIOUR. This can be changed. This will be changed when the people of GOD respond to the appeal of the CHRIST when He cries, **"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."** This will be changed when the church, as one man, like an army with terrible, conquering banners, goes out to rescue the pawns of Satan, the slaves of sin, by a fearless assault on the very gates of hell. Soul-winners crown, instead of crucifying, JESUS. Souls won add stars to His glorious diadem instead of driving nails into His hands and feet, and thorns, dreadful thorns, into His throbbing head. Brethren and sisters, by the agony of Golgotha, by the blood of the holy cross, let us to the task of winning souls for CHRIST.

III. HE CALLS COMMON PEOPLE TO A COMMON TASK UPON COMMON INSTRUCTIONS

His word is still, as it always has been, "**Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.**" Christian schools are good. Seminaries are excellent. Bible schools are an advantage. Study courses are a necessity. Training for Christian work is a requirement. Books help greatly. But, greater than all these, superior to all these, ahead of all these, is the clear requirement of the Son of GOD, "**Follow me.**" All these other things are valuable, but this qualification is essential. Understand the implications of following CHRIST; live up to the plan proposed; and although you may be the meekest of the meek, the lowliest of the lowly, the humblest of the humble, your success is guaranteed by the unchanging, unchangeable Word of GOD.

What does it mean to follow CHRIST? Some one has well said that it means to give up, to take up, to keep up. Yes, it does mean all that, and more. It means to lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us, to put away every evil thing, every evil thought, every evil motive, every evil ambition that might put a barrier between us and the CHRIST. It means to take up our duties, our responsibilities, our crosses, our burdens, our tasks, all that devolves upon us as children of the Most High. It means to keep up in effort, in toil, in sacrifice, in travail with the Son of GOD, Who set the pace and the example to us. In soul-winning, however, it means all these things, and some other things that are more definite. What did JESUS do to win souls when He was here upon the earth? What was His mode of procedure? Surely He was a master at the art of fishing for men.

To bring men to GOD; to win men to Himself, JESUS did two things. First, He prayed for them. Second, He went after them. He prayed for them untiringly and unceasingly. By day and by night, His strong pleas, His earnest cries went up to the Father for the salvation of the souls of men. His prayers were the most characteristic expressions of His life. They were the courage of His soul, the comfort of His heart, the confidence of His life. He prayed for the glory of His Father to be manifested. He prayed for the living. He prayed for the dying. He prayed for the sick. He prayed for the well. His prayers moved the heavens, melted the earth, molded men, militated against Satan. He prayed when He was baptized. He prayed before He chose His disciples. He prayed at Lazarus' tomb. Undoubtedly He was engaged in prayer when Nicodemus came to Him. He prayed in the Garden. He prayed on the Cross. He prayed when He broke bread for the disciples after His resurrection. He prayed when He ascended into Heaven. He is even now interceding for the souls of men.

His example is our guide. His practice is our command. Victory in the service of the kingdom depends solely upon how closely we follow the precepts and the programs of Him Who is over all victorious. He prayed. We must pray. He gave Himself to ceaseless intercession. We, too, must travail in the agony of secret prayer for the souls of our fellows. He depended on prayer for wisdom, for guidance, for inspiration, for power, for purity, for peace. That must be the way we tread also. He overcame Satan by the power of prayer. That is our weapon also. He obtained the SPIRIT in answer to prayer. The promise is to us also. For us also the mighty omnipotence of GOD will move on the appeal, aye, may we not say, the command of prayer. You draw back before the harsh word, "command," as directed to GOD.

Turn to Isaiah 45:11. How read ye? Here is what my Bible (blessed Book) says: "**Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.**" GOD's Word, GOD's honor, GOD's promise, all are involved in GOD's answering our prayers to save the unsaved. Turn to the Book again. Read with me I John 5:16: "**If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death.**"

Pray, brethren, pray until our own hearts are melted; pray until the SPIRIT of GOD is poured out upon us; pray until our houses of worship are filled with seeking throngs; pray until backslidden Christians are reclaimed; pray until sinners are brought to their knees in broken-hearted, torn-souled repentance of their sins; pray until hosts of harvesters are called out, equipped, empowered, sent out by the Lord of the harvest into the fields of toil and endeavor; pray until Pentecosts are repeated in every city, village, and countryside over the land; pray until blazing revival fires burn in every church over all America, over all the world.

Second, JESUS went after sinners. He did not wait for them to come to Him. True, some of them did so come; but in the great majority of recorded cases the Master went to them. That is our plan also. The Word does not say, "Build a church." The Book does not say, "Hire a preacher." The Bible does not say, "Obtain the services of an evangelist." The plan of the SAVIOUR is not for the children of GOD to sit down and wait for the unsaved to flock to the services. It is anything but that. The word of command is not "WAIT," but "GO." The word of direction is not "SEND," but "GO." The word of instruction is not "GIVE," but "GO." The commission is, "**Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.**"

Waiting is necessary.
Sending is essential.
Giving is imperative.

Going is the standard.
Going is the criterion.
Going is the requirement.
Going is carrying on and out the mission of the blessed Redeemer.
Going is being CHRIST-like.
Going is obeying the HOLY SPIRIT.
Going is doing the Bible.
Going is living the doctrine.
Going is being a New Testament Christian.

Some one wrote a booklet, "*Evangelize or Fossilize.*" It were just as true to say, "Go or Stagnate!" "Go or Backslide!" "Go or Die!"

All are to go. We preachers are to start the parade. Deacons, elders, stewards, trustees are to join the line of attack. Sunday-school officers and teachers, B. T. U., Epworth League, Christian Endeavor leaders and sponsors are to come a close third. Fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, all church-members, are to close the files as, like an army with mighty, triumphant banners, the church of the living GOD attacks, and in the name of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, in the power and demonstration of the HOLY SPIRIT, batters down the gates of hell.

We are to start now, today, this very hour.

Time is fleeting.
Satan is working.
Souls are dying.
Hell is enlarging its borders.
CHRIST is pleading.
The SPIRIT is waiting.
Heaven is beckoning.

Let us, therefore, fall upon our knees. Let us in humble penitence confess our sins. Let us dedicate our lives anew and afresh on the altar of sacrificial surrender. Let us tarry in pleading, believing prayer, claiming Luke 11:13, until we receive the accolade of Heaven, even the baptism with the Holy Ghost. Then, strengthened in the inner man, let us hasten out to the attack. Following in the precious, blood-marked prints of the feet of the SAVIOUR of us all, of the perfected Captain of our salvation, let us challenge the myrmidons of hell to a fight to the death. See yonder the blood-red oriflamme of Calvary leading on the attack. Let us follow it to worship, to war, to win. CHRIST is leading. He never has lost a battle.

Following Him, we are more than conquerors.
The victory is assured.
The battle may be long.
The toil may be fierce.
Much blood may be shed.
Many of us may have to die on the field.

The victory is ours. The crown of righteousness, that never fadeth, is waiting the heroes of the cross. **"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men,"** cries the SAVIOUR. Let us follow Him at His behest. Let us go sowing, go weeping, go reaping, reaping a harvest for JESUS. In CHRIST's name, let us go. Amen.

~ end of chapter 3 ~
