

~Other Speakers S-Z: John Sung:

(Acts 18:1-17)

This afternoon I want to continue on the topic of witnessing for Christ. Every Christian should regard winning souls a personal responsibility, like paying one's debts. Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel! Jesus says, "Freely ye have received, freely give." Those who have received grace must tell forth the beauty of the gracious Lord that others might come to know Him, and receive His grace. Let us look at Acts 18:1-17.

Vs. 1. "After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth." See how faithful is Paul to his charge, ever on the move. He is on the go all the time, from one place to another. For what? A tourist on a sight-seeing trip? No! To pay the Gospel debt. O, how I owe you a Gospel debt. My heart would never be at peace if I don't pay this debt.

Talking of debt-payment I remember how my father had borrowed \$99 for dowry, in order to marry my mother. And what a joke it was, for he could not make full payment of this sum even after two decades. When he got sick he said once to somebody, "Except this debt is cleared, till death my heart is seared. I dare not die, I dare not die." Now, Paul's heart was like this as he considered preaching the Gospel. Quickly pay up, for the time is short! Preach on, preach on! Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel. Athens over, on the Corinth!

Corinth was a prosperous but adulterous city. More sins abounded here, so Paul stayed longer, for he had a greater debt to pay. Now, I have preached most in Shanghai, and is it because her sins are the greatest?

Vs. 2. "And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla ... and came to them." As easy as that? Now, Paul came from Athens to Corinth, not like a rich man in style. All he had consisted of, perhaps, a pack and a small suitcase. Perhaps, he carried nothing beyond his books and parchments (the Old Testament). And when he got to Corinth how much money had he to keep himself alive? None! So, he had to work for a living. He found someone of the same profession and worked alongside him. While he worked, he preached. While he earned, he paid. For what? He entered business to get rich? Many do this, but not Paul. Out of love he worked to support himself. This was in order to pay his spiritual debt. By sweat and blood to earn souls. If every worker is like this, the Gospel will be preached far and wide. The Church will become prosperous. Paul considered souls most precious. Neither poverty nor endless toiling could affect him. His problem was: If I don't preach, who would? If I don't preach, how can these souls be saved? If I don't preach, how can I face the Lord? I am the chief of sinners. I had persecuted the Church for no reason. I imprisoned countless Christians. I am indebted to God and man. I can't count my debts, nor can I pay them. Thanks be to Christ, He is the Lamb of God who has taken away my sins. "For the ten thousands I owe, the Lord has paid it all. And cleanses me white as snow, from a heart so black and foul." Though so great are my sins, the Lord has not denied to save me. Shall I not go and save others? The Lord has saved me that I might save others. No matter what, rice or no rice, even with empty stomach, I must at all costs preach. Nothing can please the Lord like bringing the lost sheep back to the fold. No wonder he said, "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." (I Cor. 9:22, 23) Yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." (I Cor. 9:16).

Vs. 3. "And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tent makers." A secular job to support a sacred work. Any secular work for the Lord is sacred. But how many believed through such a faithful preaching ministry? Perhaps not one in a hundred! However, he considered not this disparity, for his calculation was based on this ---to save one soul is of greater value than gaining the whole world.

One sinner who comes to repentance brings joy to all heaven, yea even more than ninety-nine righteous ones who need no repentance. To lead a sinner from going astray is to save a soul from death and to cover a multitude of sins, His viewpoint is: There is nothing new under the sun, and one's labour under the sun is vanity, like trying to catch the wind. But our labours in the Lord (not under the sun) are truly not in vain. And he knew very well. Not everyone will receive salvation, outside those whom the Lord foreknew and are predestinated to receive mercy and obey the Gospel. So he didn't count whether believers were few or many. For, he laboured not for the sake of results but rather with all his might within and without the City, to call God's people out of sin.

I have read a sister's testimony which touched my heart very much. This testimony concerned her mother's experience in coming to the Lord. Briefly: The village in which she lived had never heard the gospel. One day a blind man suddenly appeared, with a stick in one hand and a guitar in the other. When he began to strum and sing the crowd made fun of him. But, not her mother. She took pity on the blind man and invited him to a meal. Did her mother realise this was the first day of her hearing the gospel? Henceforth, the blind man visited her every week, and by this her mother was saved. Her father was furious and persecuted her mother. But she persevered and prayed for her father. This soon led to the salvation of her father. Both father and mother later on became preachers of the gospel. How marvelous is the salvation --- grace of God! A blind man sent to a remote country to seek His own out of many unbelievers, from whom were also raised His own labourers.

Therefore, it is by God's grace that we are what we are today. Were it not for this, we should have heard the gospel, ear in, ear out, to no result. We have received God's grace not by chance, but according to God's eternal plan.

Having understood God's plan, Paul laboured on earnestly. He preached not only when he went out, but also while he was making tents in their house. The Priscilla couple were molded not a little by Paul in this way. So let Christ be manifested in our daily lives to all who come in contact with us. I think, if Paul neglected them, never said a word to guide them, they would blame him before God. See the Rich Man, how when he was suffering in hades looked everywhere if he could see one he knew before to save him. He saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom. Did he cry with indignation, "My father Abraham, see how bad this beggar Lazarus is. I gave him food everyday, but he never cared for my soul! What a selfish, dastardly fellow. How can he enjoy being in your bosom ... ?" Did he complain thus? No! He only begged for a drop of water to cool his tongue. Moreover he knew, if possible, the good and kind Lazarus would descend to hell to save him. Beloved, let us double-up, tell the good news to our family, relatives, neighbours, classmates and acquaintances. Introduce Jesus as a Friend to them that they might not end up in hell, gnashing their teeth against you. If you've done your part then those who have heard and hardened their heart against you will have to bear their own guilt. Paul laboured thus: while he worked he prayed; while he sweated, he wept. How worthy are his sweat and tears! They surely moved the heavenly hosts above who would willingly minister to him. All the more were Aquila and others moved to give themselves to Christ. Their labours were most worth their while. But many are failures, for they are not willing to carry the cross like Paul.

Vs. 4. "And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks." Six days he laboured, but on the sabbath day he preached publicly at the synagogue. Could anyone accuse Paul of being a "rice-bowl" preacher? He was a preacher, constrained by the love of Christ. There were some poor old ladies who waxed rich in their faith. With the two or three dollars earned in the month by handwork they rented a house in the village for a gospel station. Every Friday, they stopped work and went to the village to evangelize. How lively, how precious, is work done by their hands. "Lord, I can return thanks in no other way than give You all I have!" Now that village has some fifty come to salvation. It is enough if everyone in Shanghai loves the Lord like them. These ladies have stored their treasure in heaven. But what are You busy about everyday? To earn a coffin? Or to store up treasure (coffers) in heaven?

THEME SONG

I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord,

O'er mountain, or plain, or sea;

I'll say what you want me to say, dear Lord,

I'll be what you want me to be.