

The Revival Harvest Is Always Ripe Among Lost Sinners

by John R. Rice

The harvest is plenteous, but the laborers are few, and sinners are ripe for revival if we go to them with the gospel in love and power.

Scripture: Genesis 50:20, Matthew 9:35, Luke 7:37, Luke 8:43, Luke 13:4, Luke 19:1, John 4:35, Acts 8:29, Acts 10:1, Hebrews 11:7

Topics: "Evangelism", "Salvation"

Description

John R. Rice preaches about the readiness of sinners to hear the gospel, emphasizing the importance of recognizing the hunger in people's hearts for salvation. Using the example of Jesus' compassion for the multitudes, he highlights how sinners are ripe for the harvest, longing for peace, forgiveness, and salvation. Through various Bible illustrations like Cornelius, the Ethiopian Eunuch, Zacchaeus, the sinful woman, and the woman with an issue of blood, he demonstrates how hungry sinners are eager to accept the good news when presented with love and boldness. The sermon also delves into fundamental reasons why sinners can be won to Christ, including the universal realization of God, the failure of the world to satisfy, the wages of sin, the loss of loved ones, the burning of conscience, and the fear of death as powerful influences aiding the gospel.

Transcript

Throughout these lectures we have felt constrained to return repeatedly to the Scripture given in Matthew 9:35-38, where Jesus gave us this law that the harvest is plenteous but the laborers are few--that the trouble is not with the circumstances, the sinners, the world, but with the church, the people of God. Let us read that Scripture again with the thought in mind that sinners themselves are ripe for the harvest, in the sight of the dear Saviour.

"And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."--Matt. 9:35-38.

This passage centers about the work Jesus did among the people. He taught them in their synagogues, knowing how hungry were their hearts. He preached the gospel of the kingdom, and the word gospel means good news; so the people must have felt very hungry for it and surely heard it gladly. He healed every sickness and disease among the people; so here He calls attention to the ravages of sin, the unrest, the want and need which are felt everywhere in a world of sin.

We are told that Jesus "saw the multitudes," fainting. (The term is plural; not a single multitude, but "multitudes.") That indicates that the people were not only needy but felt their need. They followed Christ, hung on to His words, sought His help.

And the great heart of the Lord Jesus was moved with compassion on these people. He saw how weary and faint, how discouraged and whipped they were. He saw how they "were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." They had no one to whom they could go. They had no leader to follow. They had no fold for refuge.

All this was in the mind of the dear Saviour when He said to the disciples, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."

Not only do sinners need the gospel, but they will hear the gospel. Many of them are hungry for the gospel and eager to accept it, if it be preached clearly and with boldness and love and tears, in the mighty power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus evidently had in mind the same truth, that multitudes of sinners are ripe for the harvest, when He sat on the curbing of the well at Sychar in Samaria and said to His disciples, "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together" (John 4:35,36). Here Jesus had in mind particularly this city of Sychar. He had won a wayward woman to love and trust Him. She had left her waterpot and had run to the city to tell the men, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (John 4:29). They would be coming now in a few minutes to see Him for themselves and to hear His words. Some of them were so eager for peace and forgiveness, so eager to know the Saviour that they trusted Him, unseen, on the testimony of the woman. Others would come and beseech Him to stay. He would stay in that town two days, and many more would believe because of His preaching (John 4:40,41). So Jesus told these disciples that they should not feel that the harvest would later be ripe, after four months. It was ripe already.

And what Jesus said about Sychar, He said in principle about the whole world.

Everywhere in the world there is such unrest on the part of sinners, such disillusionment over the unfulfilled promises of the world, over the wages of sin that hurt and warn them, over burning consciences, over lost loved ones and over the fear of death, that sinners can be won. Unnumbered millions of people in the world today--lost people who need saving--are ripe for the harvest. That is what the Saviour said. That is what Bible examples prove. And by God's grace I shall try to give some of the fundamental reasons why there are always sinners who can be won to Christ, and so revival is always possible.

I. Bible Illustrations of Hungry Sinners Who Longed for Peace, Forgiveness and Salvation

Again and again in the New Testament we find hungry hearted sinners, like ripe fruit on a tree, waiting to be won. Not all of them knew exactly what they needed, of course, but they had some deep need that left their hearts open to the gospel and made them quick to trust the Saviour when the good news was presented to them.

1. Consider Cornelius, the Roman Centurion at Caesarea.

In Acts 10 we find the remarkable story:

"There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do"--Acts 10:1-6.

Or, as repeated in Acts 11:13,14 in Peter's words, "And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved."

The Lord had to show Peter a thrice-repeated vision before He could break down his Jewish prejudice enough to get Peter to go to a Gentile's house to preach the gospel! But at least when two servants and a soldier sent from Cornelius came to urge Peter to come to tell Cornelius and his whole household how to be saved, Peter was convinced and on the morrow they went.

It is interesting to note that Peter seems to have prepared a great sermon. No doubt he thought this ignorant Gentile would know so little that it would take a great deal of teaching. But if he had intended to preach a long sermon he did not get to finish it. In a brief introduction, Peter told the plan of salvation in these words, "To him [Jesus] give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). And he never got to preach the rest of his sermon! Cornelius and his whole household were converted at once. Peter, telling of it later, said, "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning." So the new converts were baptized and Peter went on his way back to try to explain to critical Jewish Christians why he had gone to the house of a Gentile to preach the gospel!

In this charming story from the Scriptures it becomes apparent that God often has more trouble getting a soul winner ready to work for Him than He has in getting sinners ready to hear the gospel! It took signs and wonders to get Peter ready to preach to that poor unsaved man, a man of prayer, a man who gave alms, a man who fasted and waited on God, trying to find how to be saved. Just so God had more trouble in getting Jonah ready to preach than He had in getting the Ninevites to repent. Cornelius is a good example of hungry hearted people who in almost every community would be easy to reach with the gospel.

2. Consider also the Ethiopian Eunuch Whom Philip Led to Christ.

This treasurer of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, had been to Jerusalem to worship and, returning, sat in his chair and read the Prophet Isaiah.

"Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing."--Acts 8:29-39.

It is to Philip's credit that he went without protest, leaving the great revival in Samaria to meet the unknown man with a hungry heart! This man had already been to Jerusalem to worship. He was already seeking, in the Word of God, to find peace for his soul. Notice that the unsaved man took the initiative all the way through this meeting. He begged Philip to sit with him in the chariot and explain the Scriptures. The eunuch asked Philip to explain "of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?" So Philip deserves little credit that he "opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, [Isa. 53] and preached unto him Jesus."

It is the eunuch himself who begs to be baptized, though doubtless Philip had told of this rite and what it meant.

About men like this the Scripture says that "the harvest truly is plenteous."

3. Consider Zacchaeus the Publican Who Climbed a Tree to see Jesus.

Let us read the beautiful story from Luke 19:1-10.

"And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

There are many reasons why one would suppose that Zacchaeus would be hard to reach. For one thing, he was rich, and rich people do not always feel their need for help. They are not always humble. For another, he was a publican, a crooked tax collector. He had wronged many and was hated by many and despised by all. But his heart was hungry. He was a little short man, and when a big crowd gathered

around Jesus as He walked down the road and taught, Zacchaeus could not see Him. So, after trying in vain to see Jesus, he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree so that when Jesus came along he should see Him well.

Oh, how different the dear Saviour is from us, His blind and unbelieving disciples! Jesus saw the man and read the signs of his hungry heart. Jesus simply said, "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house." Would you think that this man would be so easily won? Oh, as soon as he knew that the Saviour loved him and would forgive, he slid down the tree and hit the ground a saved and happy man! As evidence of his salvation, he immediately resolved to give half of his goods to the poor and to restore fourfold to any man from whom he had taken money by false accusation, so common among publicans. And Jesus said, "This day is salvation come to this house."

Zacchaeus is an illustration of the verse of the old song:

Down in the human heart, Crushed by the tempter,

Feelings lie buried that grace can restore;

Touched by a loving heart, Wakened by kindness,

Chords that are broken will vibrate once more.

Zacchaeus is a type of many another sinful man who needs forgiveness and knows it, and whose heart would delight to see Jesus!

4. Consider the Sinful Woman Who Anointed Jesus' Feet At the House of Simon the Pharisee.

Jesus went to the home of Simon the Pharisee and ate at a low table in the cool, stone-paved plaza, within the horseshoe shaped house. As they reclined on couches to eat, each leaning on his elbow in Oriental fashion, a strange thing occurred:

"And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner."--Luke 7:37-39.

But Jesus loved the woman whom the Pharisee despised. He told the parable of the two debtors and rebuked the Pharisee who had not loved the Lord Jesus enough to wash His feet or anoint His head, but this woman had washed the Saviour's feet with tears and wiped them with her hair, and had anointed His head with precious ointment, a token of love and worship. Hear, then, the wonderful words of Jesus about how this woman's sins were forgiven and her soul was saved by faith:

"Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."--Luke 7:47-50.

People often do not look among sinful women such as this woman, probably a harlot, for converts. It may be that you who say we cannot have revival now are more concerned with the Pharisees than with the sinful women. But wherever sin has done its worst work, often there is the deepest hunger for Christ. And this poor woman, so gloriously forgiven and saved, is typical of many, many others who are ripe for revival, if God only had some workers Spirit-filled to go with boldness, tears and holy abandon to win them.

5. Consider the Woman with an Issue of Blood Twelve Years, Healed when She Touched the Hem of His Garment.

As Jesus went to the home of Jairus, ruler of the synagogue, to raise his little daughter,

"... a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanch'd. And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace."-- Luke 8:43-48.

This woman had tried everybody else, and probably from absolute necessity or despair, she was ready to come to Jesus. She touched the hem of His garment. The Saviour tells us that it was genuine faith she had. "Thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace." So we must be sure that the dear Saviour forgave her sins and that she gladly loved and trusted Him for salvation as well as for healing.

Do you know anyone who has reached the end of human help? Do you know anybody who, with broken health, or with wayward children, or with burdens more than human shoulders can possibly bear, would turn to Jesus? There are countless thousands of such, if we would go to them with the gospel in love and power. The harvest truly is plenteous.

6. Consider the Woman of Samaria, at Sychar.

I have called your attention more than once to the woman of Samaria to whom Jesus spoke in the fourth chapter of John, and who was so wonderfully saved. Here I take time only to call your attention to the fact that her heart was hungry. It is true she was prejudiced. It is true that she had lived a careless and worldly life. She had married five men and now lived in sin with a man not her husband. It is true that she was ready to argue. But when Jesus pressed upon her the fact of her sin and showed her that He knew all about her life, she immediately believed that He was the Messiah He claimed to be. She loved Him, trusted Him, set out to serve Him and to bring others to Him that very day.

I believe that Jesus had known ahead of time by some divine wisdom about this woman in Samaria, for instead of going down to Jericho and following the usual river route up the Jordan, He went over the hills to Samaria. We are told, "And he must needs go through Samaria."

The Saviour never got away from the sense of hungry hearts all about Him, the multitudes like sheep without shepherds. God forgive us that we do not sense the need of people, the hunger of people, and their readiness to hear the gospel! Actually that woman who lived at Sychar had more than once grieved

over her shabby reputation and wished she might be as acceptable as more virtuous women. No doubt she had even grieved that Jews had no dealings with Samaritans, and Samaritans were a half-breed people with a half-breed religion, despised by the Jews. No doubt she had longed for a peace and satisfaction that the world had, despite all her marriages and efforts at pleasure, failed to give her. So she was a typical case of sinners ready for revival.

We can have revival now because all over the world are people, sinners with hungry hearts, who could be won if we went to them in the mighty power of God.

II. Fundamental Reasons Why There Are Always Sinners Who Can Be Won to Christ

There are certain deeply-felt needs in human hearts that tend to turn men toward God when they hear the gospel in love and power. Often men may feel these needs very indefinitely. Sometimes these needs are very intangible. Nevertheless they are real; and every man and woman who seeks to win souls, every evangelist who seeks to lead in revival, ought to rejoice that there are certain deeply-seated, fundamental causes which work on the side of the gospel and revival.

1. There Is Among Men Everywhere a Universal, Subconscious Realization of God.

Someone has said, "Man is incurably religious." Heathen races whose ancestors long centuries ago turned their backs on God, races that have had no gospel for many centuries, yet have a doctrine about God, a tradition, a race consciousness of God. As Wordsworth teaches in his Ode: On Intimations of Immortality From Recollections of Early Childhood, children do not come in entire forgetfulness from the hand of God into this world, but rather come with an inborn sense that there is a Creator, a God, a Judge to whom man must give an account. A world without a Creator is unthinkable to sensible men. No wonder that the Bible calls a fool any atheist who says in his heart, "There is no God" (Psa. 53:1). In the conscience, men have evidence of a God. In the sun, moon and stars, in the seasons, the tides, in God's provisions for man on this earth are abundant evidences to the heart that there is a God.

And men are made for God. How depraved is the savage race that does not believe in a hereafter! Man subconsciously feels that there is a place where wrongs are made right, where men get their just dues.

Man, made in the image of God, finds the image now greatly marred by sin. And yet it is there! It is there so that St. Augustine could well say, "Our souls, O God, are restless, until they find their rest in Thee!"

All this means that most men are not hard to convince that there is a God, that there is a hereafter, that God punishes sin, that men need a Saviour. Deep in the consciousness of men is an ally of the gospel and that helps to make the harvest always white, a harvest of sinners for the gospel reaper.

2. The Failure of This World to Satisfy the Human Heart Leaves Disillusioned People Everywhere Ripe for the Gospel.

Sometimes Christians talk about all the pleasures of the wicked, and I have sometimes sensed envy in Christians who talk about the way sinners drink and carouse and live for wealth or pleasure. If the world could satisfy the human heart, it might indeed be difficult to reach men with the gospel. But one who preaches Jesus Christ, forgiveness, a new heart, the comfort of the Holy Ghost, and a home in Heaven, has so much more to offer than the world ever gives its devotees, that the scales are weighted in favor of the soul winner!

Do you think that the man who pursues wealth and finds it is happy? Well, if he does not have peace and joy of the Lord, his money certainly cannot give him peace and joy. Proverbs 15:6 says, "In the house of the righteous is much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble." How many men have found that in the revenues of the wicked is trouble! That is, to an unsaved man, money--whether gotten by fair means or foul--cannot satisfy. Money is not what the heart needs. Money is not the stuff out of which happiness is made.

Some years ago after a blessed city-wide revival campaign in Buffalo, New York, the pastors asked me to return for a week of services in the interest of Buffalo Bible Institute. They had procured a mansion, a very expensive property on half a city block, in an expensive section of Buffalo. The three-story mansion had bedrooms large enough for classrooms. The flooring was hardwood parquet. The bathroom by each bedroom had silver-mounted hardware. The interior doors were of three-inch thick solid mahogany, imported from Honduras. There was a private elevator. The dean lived in what had been the servants' quarters and said that his home was like a seven-room mansion. The walls of this beautiful building were covered with tapestry instead of wallpaper.

I understand that the big home itself cost a quarter of a million dollars, besides the cost of the half of a city block in downtown Buffalo. So I asked one of the committee who had helped to obtain the new property, "Where in the world did you get \$300,000 or so to buy such a property as this?"

"It did not cost us \$300,000," he said, "but only a tenth of that amount!"

I wondered how this came about. And he told me that the rich man's wife, for whom he built the beautiful home, had died. When she had been afflicted with heart trouble, he had put in the expensive private elevator; but one day she died. Then his only daughter ran off and married against her father's will. The hungry-hearted man, left alone, found his wealth no better than dust and ashes. He told his agents to dispose of the property, to sell it at any necessary price at once and get the matter off of his hands. He never wanted to see the place again!

Oh, there are no pleasures in the revenues of the wicked, but trouble! And men who do not know Christ can never find themselves satisfied with the husks of this world, no matter what money can buy.

I wonder if you ever envy those who go the merry rounds of pleasure? You are not wise if you do. Proverbs 14:12,13 says, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness." I remember a ballad of my boyhood, "After the Ball" which had the sad refrain,

After the ball is over, after the break of morn,

After the dancers are leaving, after the stars are gone;

Many the hearts that are aching, could we but read them all,

Many are the hopes that have vanished, after the ball.

If you think that wine and women and song, the theater, and travel, and music can give any permanent satisfaction to the heart, then you do not know. Among the most unhappy people I have ever met, I would number those who had nothing to do but have "a good time."

In Shamrock, Texas, I was pastor of the First Baptist Church and a young woman, an earnest Christian, told me of a friend who threatened to commit suicide. Would I talk to the girl and try to help her? Of course I would. She was brought to my home to visit us. I discovered, to my shocked surprise, that she was beautiful, that she was of good family, that she had a college education.

"Miss Irene tells me," I began, "that you have been sad and unhappy, and I have asked her to bring you to me that I might see if I could help you."

"Yes," she said, "I am unhappy. I had a good chance to try everything that would bring happiness, and it has all failed me. I wanted to go to college, and my father was glad to send me. He has bought me the nicest clothes. I have travelled in Europe. I was interested in art, and in literature, and I have had time and money to travel. I have gone into society, have enjoyed all the pleasures that other decent young people enjoy. But I have found that life is not worth living! If I go to a party or a dance, I may seem light-hearted enough, but by the time I am home again I know it is all empty and hollow and vain. There is nothing to satisfy the heart, and life is a cheat. I wish I were dead! I would have killed myself before now but for the grief to my mother and father," she said.

"Oh, no!" I said, "life is fit to live. Life is good. And you ought to be happy and have great joy and peace."

She turned her face to me and said with sharpness, yet with sadness, "I wish you would tell me how! If you know how to be happy, how to have peace, I wish you would show me!"

I answered her, "Well, I can certainly do that. Just get down on your knees here with me and tell the Lord Jesus Christ what you have told me. Tell Him that you have tried all the other things in the world--education, music, art, dress, society, and what people call good times. Tell Him that in all the world promises it is a cheat, and that it never delivers. Tell the Lord Jesus that your heart is heavy and you want Him to come in and fill it, and make life worth living. Turn yourself over to Him now, in your failure, in your emptiness, your sin and sadness, and I promise you He will come in and make life happy and worth living."

She uttered not a word of argument. She dropped on her knees and began to weep until her tears made a wet spot on the carpet. I asked the dear Lord to forgive, to help her to trust Jesus, to heal her broken heart. I asked the Lord Jesus to supply all that the hollow tinsel of this world had failed to give a hungry heart. And Jesus came in! She trusted Him there, took my hand on it gladly, then rose with a glad light in her face, and wiped away her tears! She found that the world cannot satisfy. She was only an example of the truth that everywhere there are hearts that are hungry and so ripe for revival.

Do you think that success and fame bring happiness? Then remember that "the paths of glory lead but to the grave." Remember Woodrow Wilson who at one time was on the peak of world fame and honor, and a few months later was a disillusioned sick man on S Street in Washington, betrayed by his friends, attacked by his enemies, by-passed by his subordinates.

Do you remember that President Calvin Coolidge, urged to run again for the presidency, said simply, "I do not choose to run"? He resisted all urging, and would not have the nomination that would have meant almost certainly a third term as president of the greatest nation in the world. But later, writing in *The Saturday Evening Post*, he reminded us of his son, beloved and fine and fair, who had blistered his heel playing tennis, and then the blister, becoming infected, had killed him. Coolidge said, "When my son died, the glory of the presidency faded away." Being in the White House does not make the heart happy. The

fame of this world cannot satisfy the longings of a broken heart.

Had Hitler happiness? Was Mussolini a shining example of joy? You may be sure that all the promises of this world are as vain to others as they proved to those men.

When men have tried all that this world can give and find still a heart unsatisfied, they are ripe harvest for the gospel. Sinners everywhere, millions of them, have in their bosom the unrest and the disillusionment that make them hunger for what can be found only in Christ. They may not know what they need, but they know instinctively that they need something. And you and I know that Christ is the answer, and we ought to take Him as the Balm in Gilead, the ease for every heartache, the satisfaction for every void in the human heart. Such a hunger in the hearts of sinners proves that we can have revival.

3. The Wages of Sin Are Themselves Often the Incentive to Salvation.

Satan often over-reaches himself. He wanted to plague Job by the destruction of his property, and God permitted it. He wanted to kill Job's sons and daughters, and God allowed that. Still Job trusted and honored God. And Satan, in a rage of jealousy, said that if he could but touch Job's body, Job would curse God. God allowed the experiment. And instead of Satan getting honor out of the matter, the Lord showed how wonderfully He can give patience to a Christian in trouble, and how wonderfully He comes to the help of His own afflicted. How many millions have been comforted in this matter! Satan meant it for evil, of course, but God overruled it.

The brothers of Joseph sold him into slavery and he went to Egypt, they thought, to be forever out of their lives. But God used Joseph to save a nation and even his own family from starvation during the famine. And Joseph said to his brothers, "Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good" (Gen. 50:20).

Of course God hates sin. Sin is wicked rebellion against God. And Satan, who leads people on to sin, intends the damnation of their souls, and the ruin of all happiness. But in this matter God often allows Satan to prepare the way for a revival. Where sin has done its normal work, there are broken hearts that can never be healed but by the gospel of Jesus Christ and the saving touch of His salvation!

And John 8:1-11 tells of a woman taken in adultery, in the very act, and brought before Jesus with the hope that He would condemn her to stoning, or that Jesus could be accused of being the enemy of the law. You remember how Jesus stooped down and wrote with His finger on the ground, as though He heard them not, and then said to them, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." And when He stooped again and wrote on the ground, these men, convicted by their own consciences, stole away one by one and left the woman alone with Jesus. And when Jesus looked up and saw no one but the woman, He said, "Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?" She answered, "No man, Lord." And Jesus said unto her, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."

All these, the woman's captors and enemies, had stolen away. Why did she not leave, too? Jesus had obviously turned His back to leave the responsibility wholly upon His hearers. He did not detain the accusers, and he did not detain the accused. Yet she stayed! She did not want to leave. And I think we can see that clearly when she called Jesus, "Lord."

She had had her adultery, but it brought no peace to her heart. It brought public shame and exposure. It brought the accusation of her neighbors. It made her a public spectacle. And it showed her, no doubt, that she needed something far more than any pleasures of this world. When she saw Jesus, she knew that He

was the one whom she wanted, that He could give what she needed. She loved Him, trusted Him, and took Him as her Lord. And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." We cannot doubt but that this woman's heart honestly turned to Jesus for mercy, and that He gave to the surrendered and believing heart the salvation she wanted. Oh, in that case, sin over-reached itself and but prepared a woman's heart for God!

I know a beloved Christian worker. He was a professional musician and lived fast and loose in sin until suddenly he discovered that he was about to lose his wife, his home, and all the things that seemed most dear. He had never valued them before; now he found that sin was about to rob him of home and love and happiness. He immediately turned to Christ, and after long crying and tears, won his wife to Christ.

I am saying that sin over-reached itself there, and that the wages of sin simply prepared a heart for the gospel.

Do you lament the sin everywhere about us? So do I! But do you think that the wickedness of men, with drunkenness, divorce, adultery, unbelief in the Bible, lack of parental respect, lack of discipline of children, lack of reverence for the Bible do you think that these things indicate that God cannot have revival? You are wrong, dead wrong! For these things guarantee that there are broken hearts that need the gospel, hearts that cannot be satisfied without the gospel. Sin itself paves the way, with its wages, for revival.

When I was in the seminary, I drove a bus of Christian workers from the seminary to the jail every Sunday morning for services--one Sunday with men, the next with women. One morning we had service in the women's chapel and I spoke on the woman taken in adultery, and the forgiveness of Jesus. A number of the women confined in the jail turned to Christ.

Among them was one of the most striking conversions I have ever known. One woman turned to Christ, trusted Him and claimed Him openly and seemed greatly assured about it. Then she praised God aloud, walking back and forth, clapping her hands as the tears of joy ran down her face. This is what she kept saying, "Oh! thank God I got in jail! I wouldn't go to church; I wouldn't listen to a preacher on the radio; I would not read a gospel tract: I wouldn't allow anybody to talk with me about the Lord. I went on in sin with no sense of my need for God. But I went too far, and I got in jail. I thought I would rot in that lonely cell with no one to talk to, with no way to pass my time but to think about the ruin of my life. I came out here to the chapel only for a change, but, thank God, He spoke to my heart and saved me! Thank God I got in jail! God let me get in jail to keep me out of Hell!" I believe that she was exactly right, that God let her reap the wages of her sin to bring her to her senses and show her her need for God.

Do you know that many a man turns to God when the only alternative is suicide? Did you know that many a man has turned to God when he otherwise had determined to kill his estranged wife? Do you know that many a man has turned to God when he lost his job and was driven from his home and had become a bum? I have preached in city rescue missions all over America and I have found that many, many of the men who turn to Christ are brought to a readiness for the gospel by the wages of sin.

The more saloons we have, the more certain we can have revival. The more divorces we have, the more hungry and broken hearts there are who need God and who feel it! The more men turn to infidelity and reap the barrenness of it, the heartbreak of it, the despair of it, the more room there is for the gospel. How foolish and wicked we are to suppose that sin can keep down revivals. The wages of sin makes men fit subjects for the gospel, and makes the harvest ripe.

4. The Loss of Loved Ones Prepares People to Hear the Gospel.

God has many ways to plow the hard ground of a sinner's heart and get it ready for the gospel seed. One way is the loss of loved ones.

While in revival services at Hastings, Minnesota, I went to visit a family out on an island in the Mississippi River. The man was notoriously hard and bitter. He had been nominally a Catholic. Now he seemed to hate God, the Bible and preachers, they told me. I went to his home. I was friendly with him and paid attention to his family, learned the names of his children, talked and prayed with them. Then I said to him, "Are these all of your children?"

There was a hushed silence. Then with choked voice he told me of the baby, three years old, that had fallen into the Mississippi River and drowned.

I was grieved for the man. But I told him about David's baby and how David said, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (II Sam. 12:23). I told him how little babies are kept by the power of God, how that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Cor. 15:22). I told him how that whatever taint of sin had been left by the baby's human inheritance, all of that had been paid by the blood of Christ and she was kept safe, and so had gone to meet the Saviour. And I told him that if he would trust the Saviour, he could see her, too.

Suddenly the man was utterly changed. He leaned against me and wept. I found that a Catholic priest had told him that since the baby had not been sprinkled, she was lost. He had thought that the Christian religion taught that his child, his beloved little girl, was in Hell. If his baby was in Hell, he hardly wanted to go to Heaven. But now, since he had Bible assurance that the little one had gone to be with God, suddenly his heart was hungry for God and for Heaven. He loved this poor preacher who had brought him the gospel, and wept on my shoulder. When I told him how to be saved, he instantly accepted the Saviour with glad heart. And I went away with this thought in my heart, that multitudes of people whom we think are hard and impossible cases, are really very near to the kingdom of God, if only we knew. In many a heart that seems hard, God has had His breaking plow and His stump puller at work. And the death of a loved one has prepared the soil to hear the gospel.

Do you suppose that because a woman is a Catholic or a Jew, or because she is a professed unbeliever in the Bible, that she does not miss the little one who is torn from her arms by death? How many millions of women, when the breakfast dishes are washed and the men of the household have gone to their work and the children to school, get out of the dresser drawer or from a nearby table a baby book and look over the mementos of the little one who is gone! There is the little footprint for identification, taken at the hospital. There is the little bit of blond baby hair, slightly curled, tied with a blue baby ribbon! There is the snapshot of the little one taking its first toddling steps. And there, it may be, is a picture of the grave and the flowers when the little one was put in the casket and carried out to the Silent City of the Dead and buried, along with the mother's heart. I say, do you believe that such mothers cannot be reached with the gospel? These mothers whose arms are so empty and whose hearts are so hungry, and who wonder if they will ever meet their little ones again--do you think they cannot be reached for Christ? I tell you that God has in thousands, yea, in hundreds of thousands of cases, beckoning hands on the heavenly shore who are doing more than others of us could do, to woo these to Heaven, if we but take the gospel in the power of God.

I remember the good deacon, "Daddy" Hickman, who died in Dallas, Texas, of cancer of the liver. I, his pastor, was called to his bedside at three o'clock in the morning and for two hours I sat there beside him and we talked of heavenly things. He knew he was going to Heaven. He said to me, "Brother Pastor, I have carried the burden of prayer for these boys of mine these years. Now I am going. I must leave the burden on you. I ask you to never give up my boys. They must be saved !"

Those fine grown sons were gathered to see their father in these last hours. The grim reaper was only a few hours or minutes ahead, we knew. So we brought these grown sons one by one to tell their father good-by. And he would grip their hands, look in their faces and say, "Bill, are you going to meet me in Heaven? You can't lie to your father on his deathbed. And I must know. Tell me, may I expect to meet you there?"

One by one these men broke down. Those who were unsaved would bury their faces in the pillow and weep, then promise their father to meet him in Heaven. Then I would take the Scriptures and we would have the matter assured from the Word of God while he dealt with another son. And, thank God, when he went away at 5:00 A.m., already the whole family was depending upon the Saviour. Some had trusted the Lord before, but some in that holy hour found Christ because their father was going to Heaven.

You see, the harvest is white, and God has ways of preparing it all the time in the hearts of sinners.

People mocked at Charles Alexander because he had people sing, "Tell Mother I'll Be There." But that is a proper and Christian sentiment. If God deals with people's hearts by the homegoing of a mother, it is right to sing about it and preach about it.

I promised her, before she died,

For Heaven to prepare:

O Saviour, tell my mother

I'll be there!

says the song. And you and I would be foolish not to thank God that He has dealt with many a heart and fixed there a longing that can never be satisfied but in Jesus and salvation.

5. The Burning of Conscience Prepares Men to Hear the Gospel Also.

How I thank God for that spark of celestial fire called conscience. How I thank God that when I preach to a wicked man I know that he has within his own breast a voice that is on my side and on the side of God.

John the Baptist had preached to Herod, and Herod had imprisoned him; then at the request of a dancing girl and his adulterous wife, Herod had cut off the head of John the Baptist. Then he heard of the preaching of Jesus. And Matthew 14:1,2 tells us:

"At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him."

Oh, John the Baptist! Herod would never get away from him! Herod would forever hear the warnings of that good man. Herod would dream about him. Now that Jesus was preaching and doing miracles, Herod's heart smote him and he said, "This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead." I will tell you

that one could preach to Herod more easily, knowing that God had a silent minister in his own breast reminding him of his sin.

Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery in Egypt, and one would suppose that these hard-hearted men were glad to be rid of the young sprout who had such dreams of his dominance over them. And when they came to Egypt and saw Joseph but did not know him, and when their brother Benjamin was to be retained because of the money found in their sacks and Joseph's cup, they did not know that anybody else in the world knew about their sin. Yet they said one to another,

"We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required."--Gen. 42:21, 22.

I would not mind preaching to those brothers about their sins and their need of forgiveness. And their own consciences, at everything I might have said, would have risen up to brand them as the sinners that they knew themselves to be. Oh, thank God, He has a witness in the heart of every man and woman in the world!

In Seattle, Washington, in a city-wide campaign, I preached in one of the early services on restitution. I pleaded with Christians to go to offended brothers and be reconciled, to make right their wrongs, to pay their debts, and see that there was nothing to hinder their prayers and their influence.

After the service was over, when I had preached to Christians, a despairing man met me in the back of the auditorium and asked me for help.

"You have talked about making good the wrongs we have done," he said. "But how can I do it! I can never undo my sins, and I don't see how I can ever have peace with God."

He told me that he had been for years a panderer, that he had procured girls for the white slave trade. He would first win a girl's confidence and love, then lead her into sin, then reveal his purposes and leave her in a house of shame. He told me that now for a year he had been haunted by the faces of the girls he had led into sin and ruin. "Many of those girls are already in Hell," he said. "How can I make any restitution for things like that! And how can God ever forgive me?"

He told me how that very day as he had ridden a ferry across Puget Sound he had looked down into the dark waters and longed for peace and wondered if he might slip over the rail and into the waters at the bottom of the Sound and there somehow forget the tortured memories of the wrongs he had done!

Oh, you may be sure it was easy for me to tell him of the blood of Christ which washes away the vilest sin. It was easy for me to tell him, though it seemed almost too good for him to believe, that "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." I told him that a Christian should try to be reconciled with other Christians, but that a lost sinner could never pay God for his sins, could never undo most of them.

And I assure you that there was no difficulty for a brokenhearted preacher, with some blessed anointing upon him, to win that man to Christ that night. God had already cut him down with the sword of conscience! And I say to you that God has put that candle of the Lord, that little spark of celestial fire, conscience, in the hearts of sinners to work with the gospel for revival and soul-winning. In every lost man's heart God has some voices crying out to him to repent.

6. The Fear of Death on Every Hand Is a Powerful Influence to Aid the Gospel and Give Power to Plain Bible Preaching.

In that Spirit-filled and exalting bit of praise which Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, uttered after his son was born and named, he says that Christ came "the dayspring from on high," and He came "to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death." The shadow of death coming, surely coming, whether soon or late, is over every thoughtful man and woman in the world.

I know that many will say that the fear of death is an unworthy motive. I know that many people foolishly urge preachers never to use the fear motive in preaching the gospel. But they ignore the teaching and the example of Bible preachers. Nineveh repented when Jonah preached, "Forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." The fear of death turned men to repentance. Jesus used this motive when He said, "Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:4,5).

And we are told very sensibly that "Noah... moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house" (Heb. 11:7). Noah was moved with fear, and God intended that the preaching of the gospel should use the fear of death which God has implanted in the human heart. Wherever men hear the verdict of the doctor, "It is cancer"; wherever the doctor says, "Active tuberculosis"; wherever men feel the infirmities of age and are reminded that they, too, must die, there is ground broken up, ready for the gospel seed.

But young people as well as old die. And young as well as old fear death. A girl, thirteen, came to Christ in one of my services in Texas, and then after she had fully trusted the Saviour and had assurance of forgiveness, she dried her eyes, smiled and said, "Now I will never be afraid to go to sleep any more!"

Let us honestly face this truth taught in the Bible, that everywhere, even among sinners, the harvest is white. Let us admit that God has people ready to hear the gospel if He only has people ready to go, with the power of God, and a holy abandon, to pay any price to win sinners. The harvest is white!

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