

THE BURDEN OF THE FISHERS OF MEN

The world has always been occupied with itself but yet I think it is fair to say that it is more so today than ever. People nowadays have less and less time for God. Does this impinge upon God and does it curtail and limit His activities? *Is* God able to save to the extent we read that He used to save? Is God battling against such a tide of unbelief and materialism that even *He* finds it difficult to stem its flow? ... An important fact we need to get hold of is this: *when God delays, it is not a sign of inactivity, it is instead a sign of preparation* for Rom. 8:28 *we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

We need to get hold of the fact that the Reformers and the great preachers of the Gospel down through the centuries held faithful to ... and that is that the saving of precious souls is God's business and it is the purpose for which He sent His Son to Calvary.

As in all things, - without exception, - it is absolutely beyond any shadow of a doubt that God's people must once again be driven by a sincere and Biblical knowledge of the doctrine of the Sovereignty of God. It affects everything, including our consideration concerning the subject of soul-winning.

Who inaugurated the plan of salvation? Who decided Who was to be the Sacrifice on Calvary, and when did He decide it? *God* decided all these things for so the Bible says, Eph. 1:11 *we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.*

It is important to get these matters straight and into their proper perspective. When you give man more freedom than he actually has you end up deluding him, and also what you are doing is setting out to rob God of His Sovereign, all-controlling power ... if you leave even a portion of the salvation process up to the sinner.

When you say the truly unBiblical statement that man can choose for God if and when he feels like it you mock God, - whether you mean to or not, - and you set out to steal from Him His Divine and eternal right to distribute the gift of salvation, - a gift that only He can in grace give.

This is the doctrine of Arminianism and is the most evil and perverse doctrine. It lies behind every false religion, philosophy and ideology. It says that you have a portion to contribute towards your own salvation and that you can get to God through a certain degree of your own efforts, - i.e. God can only do so much, for you have the last say. This perversion has its origin in the Garden of Eden, in the Satanic conversation between Eve and the serpent, [Gen. 3:1 And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? 2 And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: 3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. 4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: 5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.](#)

The Bible says ... that [2:9 Salvation is of the Lord](#). It is not a product of giant crusades and world-famous evangelists. It is not of multi-million dollar events with all the latest up-to-date equipment. Salvation is the Divinely inspired-and-originated entering into the hardened heart by God the Holy Spirit; when He enters in He changes the heart and all the old things pass away, and all things become new. It is as He describes it ... 'a new creation'; it is being 'born again'. Now, who of us here contributed to our natural birth? Who of us here decided when the time was right to be born and when we wanted to be born? Inasmuch as any little baby can contribute to its birth ... that is as much as a babe in Christ is contribute to their 'new birth'!

So, why am I saying this? ... Because I don't want anyone to be falling foul of the old lie that Eve listened to; the Bible clearly says it is God Who saves, - totally, absolutely, 100%. We've got to get it right at the start so that God gets all the glory!

One day, as the Lord Jesus was walking along the shores of Galilee He saw the fishermen by their boats, **He saith unto them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.** (Mt. 4:19).

HE CALLS YOU

- * He's not saying, "I have been able to look down through the rest of your life and I'm able to see how it all turns out in the future and I can see that you are willing to allow me to take your gifts and talents and use them", - that is how the Arminian sees it ... because he wants to play a part and get some of the praise.
- * Instead Jesus simply, yet directly, said, ***I will make you fishers of men.*** We would do nothing for God if He did not put it in our hearts ... because 'doing' for God is totally against what my heart would naturally dictate.
- * Now we are talking about believers and Christ's intention to make them 'fishers of men'. Did Jesus ever save anyone and intend for them *not* to witness for Him? Did Jesus save you so that you would keep the message of the Gospel to yourself? Did He save you so that you could dig a hole in the ground so as to put the Gospel in a nice safe wee place ... just like the steward who was given one talent?
- * These men, - these disciples, - were 'fishermen'; they knew what going out in a boat and catching fish actually meant ... but being fishers of men was a whole new concept.
- * Do you see their response? **v.20 they straightway left their nets, and followed him.** This was Simon Peter and Andrew that Jesus called, - I would have expected Peter to have put up a whole discussion about the matter; I would have been surprised that Peter would have acted as quick as he did ... without putting up some sort of an argument. I'm not too surprised about Andrew immediately leaving the nets ... but the Peter of the Gospels always had to make his voice heard!
- * But, - as you see, - when Jesus called, Peter obeyed immediately, ... James and John also (vv.21,22).
- * Has God saved you? Has He done a work in your life that has brought about a change?
- * This change that has taken place, ... do you notice a pulling at your heart to honour and glorify God?

- * What was one of the very first things you wanted to do when you became a Christian? ... You wanted to tell others.
- * And ... when you get an opportunity to share the Gospel nowadays and you don't use that opportunity ... does it bother you? Does it trouble you that God opens up a door, - even slightly, - but you don't take the benefit of the opportunity He presents you with?
- * General William Booth said, "Some men's passion is for gold. Some men's passion is for art. Some men's passion is for fame. *My passion is for souls.* ... Some like to live within the sound of church or chapel bell; I'd rather run a rescue shop within a yard of hell."
- * We have all got to say at some time or another we are guilty of not saying a word for Christ when we should have.
- * It's a good sign when if it bothers you; if it doesn't bother you, you mustn't have any yearning for either His glory to be known or sinners to be saved, - and that is a serious ailment for a Christian to suffer from.
- * J.C. Ryle said this, "A man's religion may well be suspect when he is content to go to Heaven alone".
- * God has called you in salvation and He has also called you to be fishers of men, women, boys and girls.
- * Have you got 'the rod and tackle out'? When I was a wee boy my father used to take my brother and me down to the river to fish. When we saw a few bubbles of air in the water we guessed there might be a fish nearby and you would throw your hook in that direction. We wanted to catch fish ...
- * We are fishers of men ... so far, what have we got in our net to bring home to Him? Do you have a burden of the 'fishers of men'? ... **He calls you** ...

HE CHOOSES YOU It is a fact that God chooses you for His service; He says [Is. 43:12](#) *ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God.* He says, [Mk. 16:15](#) *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel.* He continues to say to every sinner He saves, *I will make you fishers of men.*

- * When Hannah was praying at Shiloh, she prayed such a simple prayer but it was one that showed she believed in the Sovereignty of God, [I Sam. 2:6](#) *The LORD killeth, and maketh*

alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. 7 The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. 8 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them.

- * Notice that Hannah, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, gives us some harsh information; the Bible never makes excuses for sinners or for sin. Imagine saying something like, [The LORD killeth, and maketh alive!](#) It is harsh ... but it is also the reality that God presents!
- * And yet, don't you also see His compassion? Don't you see what God does? Here is grace at workm [He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and \[He\] lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory.](#)
- * The salvation of your loved ones, your friends and your neighbours is *all* in the hands of God.
- * Were it not for Him reaching down and lifting you out of the broad road, - packed with travellers, - on your way to a lost eternity ... you would never have believed and reached out to Him in saving faith, [Ps. 40:2 He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock.](#)
- * He loved me long before I ever knew Him and long before I ever loved Him,
- * In loving kindness Jesus came, My soul in mercy to reclaim,
And from the depths of sin and shame ... Thro' grace He lifted me.
- * Refrain From sinking sand, He lifted me, With tender hand,
He lifted me, From shades of night to planes of light, O praise His Name, He lifted me!
He called me long before I heard, Before my sinful heart was stirred ...
- * Dear Saviour, Thou art mine, How sweet the thought to me!
Thou art the sinner's Friend, So I Thy friendship claim,
A sinner saved by grace When Thy sweet message came.
- * Refrain: Mine! mine! mine! I know Thou art mine; Saviour,
dear Saviour, I know Thou art mine.

- * You wonder why God saved you ... it is because of grace. What is grace? God's Riches At Christ's Expense. Grace is God's eternal will that sets out to bring you unto Himself.
- * A soul cannot be won for Christ any other way ... not until grace begins the process.
 - * Grace is when God acts.
 - * Grace is when the Holy Spirit enters into a life bringing the new birth and salvation from sin.
 - * Grace brings regeneration, repentance and redemption. Without God's grace there is no salvation ... for God's Word says, [Eph. 2:8](#) by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.
- * A gift is not a gift if you contribute to it yourself. Salvation is because of grace, and grace comes from God alone. As a sinner untouched by God's grace, you don't know to cry out for repentance. ... However, it is God's prerogative *alone* to give saving grace freely and liberally as He chooses.
- * Augustine said, "The grace of God does not find men fit for salvation, but makes them so". Martin Luther said something similar, "The saved are singled out not by their own merits, but by the grace of the Mediator".
- * I do not know whom God has planned and purposed to save. There is no way neither we nor the angels in Heaven can find out. Only God knows ... and He places within His children the burden for the lost with whom we are in contact.
- * God is still in the business of saving souls ... *and not one for whom Christ died on the cross will be lost!*
- * He uses the same means that He has always used and that is through one sinner whom He has saved telling another sinner, ... one beggar telling another beggar where he can get a loaf of bread.
- * It is a burden we need to have when we consider that our loved ones are heading out into an eternity of torment, suffering and anguish.
- * The only means by which they will escape is through the grace of God. There is no other way, - only salvation in Christ will save them.

CONCLUSION

- * **He calls you** and **He chooses you** for this task. He has already called you and he has already chosen you for this task.
- * The burden of these fishermen was that they now were to become 'fishers of men'.
 - * It was *a command* by virtue of being a follower of Christ,
 - * It was *a commitment* by virtue of their new faith in Christ,
 - * And it was also *a communion* as they daily walked with Christ ... for as they had Christ walking beside them they wanted to introduce Him to others. "Here is my Jesus!"
- * Yes, because Christ has saved you He has at the exact same moment **called you** into His work to serve Him ... and He expects service from you in the spreading of the Gospel.
- * And it is also you that He has **chosen** for the task of making known His Name among the as-yet unsaved.
- * I trust that God has given to each one of us **the burden of the fishers of men.**