

## Evangelism (Part 5)

A happy and restful Sabbath to all. As we begin our study this week, let us be thankful for all that our Father has given to us, not only over the past seven days, but in total. We have heard many prayer requests this week. Some are ill, some are facing lots of work. But in all this, we continue to give thanks that a way forward is provided for us in the work of winning souls. Despite the apparent setbacks that may arise, we know that the work of Yah cannot be halted, and this is cause for joy.

These thoughts are particularly appropriate for this week, as we will be covering another section of the book Evangelism, still under the main heading, "The Metropolitan Masses." This sub-section that we will look at is called, "Increasing Difficulties."

So, let us begin:

[quote]

We are nearing the great and final conflict. Every advance move made now must be made with increasing effort; for Satan is working with all power to increase the difficulties in our way. He works with all deceivableness of unrighteousness to secure the souls of men. I am charged to say to ministers of the gospel and to our missionary physicians, Go forward. The work to be done calls for self-sacrifice at every step, but go forward.-- Letter 38, 1908.

[/quote]

It can certainly be said that there are obstacles, and sometimes perplexity, in moving forward. Sometimes the difficulty is obvious – the resources are few, as are the workers. Sometimes the difficulty is not as clear – we may have more than one path open before us, and we must ask for divine wisdom in making decisions that can alter the course of the evangelical work.

All of us here have made sacrifices for the work, but if we focus on those things, we cannot advance in sanctification, even though we have given much, or all. Yah loves a cheerful giver, as it is written, (2Cor 9:7) not only because this provides a better testimony than a reluctant giver, but because this is necessary for true spiritual growth. The Pharisees would make a great show of their generosity, but it did not benefit them, for they received payment for their donations in the praise of their fellows, and the respect of those who associated with them.

But those who give to the work without a desire for praise, and without bitterness due to feelings of obligation, these are the ones who truly advance the work, both in the world and in their hearts.

[quote]

We have no time to lose. The end is near. The passage from place to place to spread the truth will soon be hedged with dangers on the right hand and on the left. Everything will be placed to obstruct the way of the Lord's messengers, so that they will not be able to do that which it is possible for them to do now. We must look our work fairly in the face, and advance as fast as possible in aggressive warfare.

From the light given me of God I know that the powers of darkness are working with intense energy from beneath, and with stealthy tread Satan is advancing to take those who are now asleep, as a wolf taking his prey. We have warnings now which we may give, a work now which we may do; but soon it will be more difficult than we can imagine. God help us to keep in the channel of light, to work with our eyes fastened on Jesus our Leader, and patiently, perseveringly press on to gain the victory.-- Testimonies, vol. 6, p. 22.

[/quote]

I wish that these words had been heeded in the time they were given. Had Seventh-day Adventists taken these instructions seriously (how often are they contemplated in today's Sabbath school meetings, or sermons, in the nominal churches?) the work of teaching the true Gospel would have been, and would be, much easier. Had there even been the need for a CSDA movement at all, we would find believers in different parts of the world who had already been taught the foundations of the Gospel, and there would be a higher degree of visible fruit for our labors.

It is certain that more souls would have been saved, both now and earlier in our spiritual history.

But the principle here is unchanging. The work does not get any easier as we approach the end, and we must move forward with courage, and with intense prayer, in order to reach those who need to be reached.

[quote]

We do not realize the extent to which Satanic agencies are at work in these large cities. The work of bringing the message of present truth before the people is becoming more and more difficult. It is essential that new and varied talents unite in intelligent labor for the people.-- Medical Ministry, p. 300 (1909)

[/quote]

We have seen glimpses of Satan's work against us. The Scriptures speak of it a little, and lay out all the principles. More recent inspiration has given us some further insights. The enemy we face is an army without mercy; it is without pity for men, women or even little children. We cannot face this enemy with strength of arms – with force of any kind, including a dependence upon our own willpower. Those who have employed worldly force, supposedly in the service of Heaven, quickly end up on the very side they wished to resist.

And as for us, we are truly outnumbered, and outmatched for power in every aspect, except for one. Yah is with His people.

Our Father has given us His strength of character, the blessing of favorable providence, and the guidance of His Holy Spirit. But as we have been examining lately, merely possessing these things is not the completion of the work. Possessing these things is a responsibility to use them, as the quote above says, "in intelligent labor for the people." It requires the will to do Yah's pleasure, it requires the faith to believe His promises, and it also requires intelligence – the gift of being able to reason and judge rightly – to be able to see opportunities as they arise, and to utilize them in the work of winning souls. This is how our Father would have His people be.

[quote]

A great work is to be done. I am moved by the Spirit of God to say to those engaged in the Lord's work, that the favorable time for our message to be carried to the cities has passed by, and this work has not been done. I feel a heavy burden that we shall now redeem the time.-- Manuscript 62, 1903.

The work which the church has failed to do in a time of peace and prosperity, she will have to do in a terrible crisis, under most discouraging, forbidding circumstances.-- Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 463. (1885)

[/quote]

Reading the above caused me sorrow. I saw in my own mind's eye the Spirit of Yah resting heavily on the cities, where precious souls were lost, and are being lost, because those who were called to go into those places did not go forth. The first thing I thought of when I read it was this Bible verse, "For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke 23:31)

Yahshua was speaking there of the persecution of the righteous by the unjust. In His day, even when He was put to death, the world was a much more spiritually awakened planet. Even the strongest enemies of the truth believed in something greater than themselves. There was paganism, and heresy, but they were so distinct from the truth that the choice was clear to every soul where light and darkness lay.

Nowadays, under the guise of good concepts like tolerance, and peace, even greater dangers to the truth are taught. Unbelief for the doubters, and neutrality for the believers, these things keep souls from the truth, and teach them that the suffering of a few people is nothing, if it is done for "the greater good." Those who think these thoughts, which do not even seem so violent or terrible, they are the ones who make the work difficult in this dry-tree season.

But being in a difficult time does not make the work any less important. We are the redeemers of the time. We are the restorers of the old paths. We are the rebuilders of the walls of Jerusalem. There is joy in the work of Yah, even in this dark time.

[quote]

The days in which we live are solemn and important. The Spirit of God is gradually but surely being withdrawn from the earth. Plagues and judgments are already falling upon the despisers of the grace of God. The calamities by land and sea, the unsettled state of society, the alarms of war, are portentous. They forecast approaching events of the greatest magnitude.

The agencies of evil are combining their forces, and consolidating. They are strengthening for the last great crisis. Great changes are soon to take place in our world, and the final movements will be rapid ones. -- Testimonies, vol. 9, p 11. (1909)

Fearful tests and trials await the people of God. The spirit of war is stirring the nations from one end of the earth to the other.-- Testimonies, vol. 9, p. 17. (1909)

[/quote]

Ellen White could not have known, in her day, that the greatest enemy to the truth would have come from within Adventist ranks. Little could the pioneers have known that we would look back at predictions of a Sunday Law as an "easy" test for the world.

The Spirit of Christ in professed believers must be either revealed, or shown to be absent. There will be none at the very end who can be neutral, or none whose loyalty will be unknown. Choices are being made, but the test of character in this generation is so much greater, so much more subtle, than it ever was in the past.

Just recently, I saw an email exchange between Pastor “Chick” and a well known health worker. Her replies to our sharing of the simple and powerful truth of unity and victory were filled with pride, with unbelief, and with a kind of sad weariness that would seem to leave no opening for hope. But this is an individual who had done great good in the faith community, and in any other generation would have been seen as a “great person,” a shining example of a true believer.

As the quote says, the Spirit of Yah is being withdrawn from the earth. It is only by the purest and most powerful outpouring of our Father’s grace that anyone at all can escape the cruelty of this present age. The most recent movements have indeed been rapid ones, and the tests have been, and will continue to be, very great even for those within the Covenant of Yah’s Peace. Let us pray, fervently, for one another, and most certainly for those who have yet to even enter into this new life.

Here is one of the longer quotes:

[quote]

Again and again I am instructed to present to our churches the work that should be done in our large cities. There is a great work to be done, not only where we have churches already established, but also in places where the truth has never been fully presented. Right in our midst there are heathen as verily as in far-off lands. The way must be opened to reach these with the truth for this time; and these openings should be made at once. . . .

Often we have been told that our cities are to hear the message, but how slow we are to heed the instruction. I saw One standing on a high platform with arms extended. He turned and pointed in every direction, saying, "A world perishing in ignorance of God's holy law, and Seventh-day Adventists are asleep." The Lord is pleading for laborers, for there is a great work to be done. There are conversions to be made that will add to the church such as shall be saved. Men and women in the highways and byways are to be reached. . . .

We are far behind in following the light God has given regarding the working of our large cities. The time is coming when laws will be framed that will close doors now open to the message. We need to arouse to earnest effort now, while the angels of God are waiting to give their wonderful aid to all who will labor to arouse the consciences of men and women regarding righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.-- Manuscript 7, 1908.

[/quote]

There is much to consider in these words. Every soul won to the truth is another potential laborer for the Master, who can reach still others with the Gospel. Every soul who turns away from the truth, because of pride, or offense, or any other reason, condemns not only himself or herself, but all those whom he or she might have reached in the course of the born-again life.

How sweet is the thought of a handful of Creation Seventh-day Adventists in various cities around the world at once, planning studies, leading out in meetings, visiting churches and sharing the good news. May Yah grant that we indeed see such things before the end.

We have much to make up for. We have inherited the consequences of our spiritual ancestor's sins. We can never recover those souls who have already passed to the grave, and each such soul is an incalculable loss... but if we are forgetful of self, and dedicated to the truth, and committed to doing "intelligent labor for the people," a phrase I am coming to like, we may yet find a harvest from among these fields.

Here is the final quote of this relatively short section:

[quote]

My brethren, enter the cities while you can. In the cities that have been already entered there are many who have never heard the message of truth. Some who have heard have been converted, and some have died in the faith. There are many others who, if they were given an opportunity, might hear and accept the message of salvation. . . . These, our last efforts for the work of God in the earth, must bear decidedly the impress of the divine.-- Manuscript 7, 1908.

[/quote]

The "impress of the divine..." This is another way of saying the "Seal of Yah." The character of our Savior must be firmly "pressed" into our foreheads as a mark of our willing service for the Kingdom of Heaven. With the Seal of Yah, all our efforts will succeed. We may not see how. We may not even recognize "success" when it takes place. For all the apparently greatness of the nominal Churches, few souls if any are actually being won to eternal life. By contrast, while what a few disciples accomplish may seem insignificant, these are the seeds of the Everlasting Kingdom.

We have much for which to pray. We have much to do. Souls perish every moment without learning the saving truth of the Gospel. If we truly love Yah, and our neighbors as ourselves, what can possibly prevent us from "entering the cities," in at least a metaphorical sense? By that I mean, we all have "cities" to enter, if we look at the principles carefully. We all have victories to win, and souls to teach. Let us give thanks for the will to do Yah's work, for the blessings of providence that open up opportunities for us, and the intelligence and faith to move forward when they appear. In this way, we may redeem the time lost by sins of the past, and pave the way for victories today, and also in the days to come.

Are there any questions or comments about tonight's study?