

Zeal for Souls

Compiled by Paul R. Blake

The Story of the Lifesaving Station

On a dangerous sea coast where shipwrecks often occur, there was once a crude little life-saving station. The building was just a hut, and there was only one boat, but the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the sea and with no thought for themselves went out day and night tirelessly searching for the lost. Some of those who were saved, and various others in the surrounding area, wanted to become associated with the station and give of their time and money and effort for the support of its work. New boats were bought; new crews trained. The little lifesaving station grew.

Some members of the lifesaving station were unhappy that the building was so crude and poorly equipped. They felt that a more comfortable place should be provided as the first refuge of those saved from the sea. They replaced the emergency cots with beds and put better furniture in the enlarged building. Now the lifesaving station became a popular gathering place for its members, and they decorated it beautifully and furnished it exquisitely, because they used it as sort of a club.

Fewer members were now interested in going to sea on lifesaving missions, so they hired lifeboat crews to do this work. The lifesaving motif still prevailed in this club's decorations, and there was a miniature lifeboat in the room where the club initiations were held.

About this time a large ship was wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in boatloads of cold, wet, and half-drowned people. They were dirty and sick, and some of them had black skin and some had yellow skin. The beautiful new club was in chaos. So the property committee immediately had a shower house built outside the club where victims of shipwreck could be cleaned up before coming inside.

At the next meeting, there was a split in the club membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club's lifesaving activities, since they were unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal social life of the club. Some members insisted upon lifesaving as their primary purpose and pointed out that they were still called a lifesaving station. But they were finally voted down and told that if they wanted to save the lives of all the various kinds of people who were shipwrecked in those waters, they could begin their own lifesaving station down the coast. They did.

As the years went by, the new station experienced the same changes that had occurred in the old. It evolved into a club, and yet another lifesaving station was founded. History continued to repeat itself, and if you visit that sea coast today you will find a number of exclusive clubs along the shore. Shipwrecks are frequent in those waters, but most of the people drown.

A. 1Cor. 9:16 - Preach - Euangelizomai - Evangelize

B. Threefold purpose of Christian existence:

1. Evangelism - Great Commission is a command for every Christian
2. Edification - teaching and training young believers
3. Spiritual Growth - Growing toward perfection

C. True Christianity has been sidetracked:

1. Social Gospel - physical needs made a priority over spiritual
2. Gospel mixed with worldly sciences and content (psychology, politics, astronomy, archeology, entertainment)

3. Word of God is not preached as authoritative because many do not believe it is God's Word, or believe it must be adjusted to fit the times.
 4. Busy work; fishers of men have become keepers of the aquarium
- D. Results in:
1. No spiritual content - Heb. 5:12-14
 2. No spiritual concerns - Acts 28:27
 3. No spiritual commitment - Eph. 4:14

I. THE NEED

- A. A fresh awareness of Hell - Matt. 13:41-42; Mark 9:44
1. People are seldom moved from a comfort zone without a strong sense of urgency
 2. What kind of Christian understands what is at stake for others, and takes no action on their behalf? Lazy, uncaring, cynical, fearful
 3. Are you aware that God will not accept "I was afraid" as an excuse for failing to reach out to the lost? - Matt. 25:25-26
- B. A fresh awareness of our responsibility - Mark 16:15; Ez. 3:17-18
1. A command that carries the same weight as baptism
- C. To overcome our embarrassment of being Christians - Rom. 1:16

II. THE METHOD

- A. Be a student of scripture - Rom. 10:17
1. It's what your prospects need; we used to be called "people of the book"
- B. Be focused in prayer - Acts 12:5
1. Not just Lord bless the preachers, help the sinners find the truth, etc.; get out there and be the answer to your own prayer
- C. Plan a strategy - start small - Goals in steps; Even God took six days to create the world, not one
- D. Start with what you know; You never will have all the answers; The unbeliever knows less about Christ than you do.

III. THE NEVERS

- A. Never concern yourself with the possibility of the Adversary's hindrance. Satan has no authority over the believer. He cannot prevent anyone's salvation. He was defeated at the cross.
1. Peter preached and 3000 saved
 2. Remove from your vocabulary, "What if" in a negative context.
- B. Never allow your profession to dictate your usefulness for Christ. Gideon was a wheat thresher and Amos was a Herdsman.
- C. Never allow financial support to replace your personal involvement in ministry. If giving is all you can do, then do it, but try to find a way to put your hands on the task
- D. Never think that the results depend on you; Leave the results with God - Don't be anxious over what you cannot control. You just bring the Word - 1Cor 3:5-8
- Conclusion: Edgar Guest - "A soul I must save, if I would save my own; For, heaven's gates are closed, to him who comes alone."