

MAJORING ON THE MASTER'S MESSAGE

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Mankind often looks away from Deity's desires. The long history of humanity is a sad picture of man maneuvering his way without regard for God. The prophets and preachers of the Bible are often consumed with calling God's children back from the world or reminding them of their self-centeredness. Examples abound, but two will make the point. Jeremiah, the weeping prophet due to the callousness of the people of his day, wrote, "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein" (Jer. 6:16). The theme of the book of Judges shows that "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 17:6; 21:25).

The Master commissioned his disciples to "...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). In this brief statement is concentrated the mission of the church for which Jesus came into the world and died on the cruel cross. The personal ministry of Christ served to prepare the apostles for their work in receiving and recording the complete body of soul-saving truth for all time (Col. 1:23; Matt. 28:20). The historical record of Acts constitutes a study in the faithfulness to the task that the early disciples possessed. At great personal expense many of these people advanced the Master's message even to the remotest areas of the then known world.

The value inherent in loving the Master's message sufficiently to sacrifice so seriously to see that it was spread was captured in song. Frederick W. Faber wrote in "Faith of Our Fathers," "Faith of our fathers! living still in spite of dungeon, fire, and sword: O how our hearts beat high with joy whene'er we hear that glorious word! Our fathers, chained in prisons dark, were still in heart and conscience free: How sweet would be their children's fate, if they, like them, could die for thee! Faith of our fathers! we will love both friend and foe in all our strife: And preach thee, too, as love knows how, by kindly words and virtuous life: Faith of our fathers, holy faith! we will be true to thee till death!"

Today little is heard about sacrificing to spread the Master's message much less about dying for it. Many are mistaken about the magnitude of the message of the New Testament. In order to prepare the children to understand the message to the point of sacrificing livelihood and even life to promote it, the parents must

themselves be conversant with it and committed to it. Genuine faith may be passed on from one generation to another, but not without effort. Paul complimented those in Timothy's family who had prepared him. He reflected, "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also. ...But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15).

The Christian home needs to take back the zeal for Christ's cause that worldly pursuits have stolen. Christian fathers need to assume the position as spiritual leader in the home as God ordained (cf. Eph. 5:23; 6:4). Love for the word of God needs to find expression in daily reading and study of it by the entire family. Some call this suggestion legalistic and fanatical; the Bible calls it noble (Acts 17:11). Reports have been given that due in large measure to the current conditions in the world the sale of copies of the Bible significantly is growing. Would it not be wonderful if an increasing number of people were reading and studying their Bibles? Ought not those who are members of the Lord's church to be taking the lead in focusing on the Master's message?

The churches of Christ need to major on the message of the Master. The church is the "pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15). The pulpit is to "preach the word" (II Tim. 4:2). Eldershops across the land need to take a critical look at the pulpits they oversee to insure that "the whole counsel of God" is being preached (Acts 20:27). No member of any congregation should be able to say they cannot remember when a sermon was preached on subjects like hell, withdrawal of fellowship, worldliness, cursing, marriage-divorce-and-remarriage, and denominationalism to name only a few. Eldershops need to review their role as stated by Peter, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock" (I Pet. 5:2-3). Consider the emphasis on "taking the oversight thereof." Eldershops have a job to do that was given to them by God not by the concession of the membership.

The Master's message of calling men and women out of the world by the gospel must be maintained as a major point of emphasis (II Thess. 2:13-14). The public and private teaching of the gospel of Christ must be thoroughgoing following the example of the apostles. Paul said, "And how I kept back nothing that was

profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house” (Acts 20:20). Christians should identify with the obligation Paul had to proclaim the Master’s message: “I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:14-16).