

Salted Oats

Perhaps you have heard the saying, “You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make him drink.” Even though that saying is old and worn and has become trite, still it is a truth. A farmer brings the horse to the watering trough, but it just stands there. He may do everything in his power to get that stubborn horse to drink; however, if that horse is not ready to drink, he won’t, no matter what the farmer does. On the other hand, if the farmer were to **salt the horse’s oats**, the horse then being thirsty would want to drink the water.

When we think of the need for lost sinners to receive Jesus Christ as personal Saviour, we know that there is absolutely nothing we ourselves can do to save the sinner, or to convince him of his need of salvation. Sometimes Christians use their best efforts to convince the lost person of the need for salvation, but to no avail. Though the Christian may be sincere in these efforts, he is without power to convince or save anyone. We learn from Jude 15 that it is the Lord Himself who does the convincing. It is no more possible for Christians to convince someone of his need of salvation than it is to give him the faith to be saved.

Someone may say, “There goes one of my converts.” If that person were truly saved, it would be wrong for any Christian to say that this is one of “my” converts. We, as Christians, cannot give to someone else our faith. We can, however, share our faith through word and deed. Of all the verses in the Bible using the word “faith”, two are sufficient to establish that faith is of God. In Hebrews 12:2 we find that Jesus Christ Himself is the author and finisher of our faith. Then in Romans 10:17 we read, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” Who is the author and finisher of our faith? Jesus Christ! And where does this faith come from? It comes from the Word of God. Without the Word of God there can be no faith. Not only is Jesus Christ the author and finisher of our faith, and this faith comes to us from the hearing of God’s Word, but Christ Himself is THE Word – “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1) “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.” (I John 5:7) “And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.” (Rev. 19:13) It remains then that it is Jesus Christ Himself who is the author and finisher of our faith and that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Jesus Christ is The Living Word!

As we hold in our hand the King James Version (KJV 1611) we hold the English translation of the Word of God. As we preach God’s Word, the Holy Spirit takes and uses it in the heart of the lost sinner and child of God alike. We find in Ephesians 6:17b that the Holy Spirit uses a weapon – the sword, “...and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” In Hebrews 4:12 we learn more of what the Word of God does – “For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

Those to whom we so often refer to as “my convert(s)” are not ours at all, for they are trophies of God’s grace. We did not convince, give the faith to, or save them – it was all of God by the person of the Holy Spirit and for the glory of Jesus Christ. ALL of it!! In this dispensation so commonly referred to as the “church age,” God has given the church, that is, the local New Testament assembly the responsibility, yea the privilege, of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost and dying world. As Christians assemble at the meeting house at the prescribed time(s), they are taught the things of God to show them how to live for Christ, and to encourage them and to help them grow spiritually. These same Christians then have the responsibility to go out and share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with lost sinners that they, too, might have opportunity to receive Christ as personal Saviour. There are many Christians who appear to have no burden at all for lost souls: they seem to have, and often display the attitude of, “I’m saved and satisfied – that’s all that matters.” Such an attitude is wrong, for there are souls that are lost, and they **MUST** hear the Gospel before it becomes eternally too late! (Mt. 9:37-38) Then, too, there are those who do have this burden, and this is as it should be.

So many times when sharing the Gospel with a lost sinner, we feel that we **must** extract a profession of faith from this one or we have failed. To employ high pressure tactics is wrong. To coerce an individual into making a profession is wrong. For us to send the lost one on a guilt trip is wrong. When we do things like this, the lost soul may make a profession of faith just to get rid of us, or to make us happy, when in reality it did not

come from the heart and he did not mean it. The lost sinner may be left with a false hope, thinking that he was saved when in fact he never really received Christ as Saviour. It would be better to leave the individual knowing that he is lost than for him to have a false hope of salvation. Now, we may have been sincere in our efforts, but over-zealous to the point where we hindered the working of the Holy Spirit. In our witness for Christ we must have a burden for souls while at the same time allowing the Holy Spirit to do His work in the heart. It remains then, that when we go forth to sow the precious seed, we must first have our own hearts prepared by bathing in prayer. As we commence the ministry of soul winning, we must remain sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and allow Him to direct us to the lost soul. When dealing with the sinner, we must remember that we cannot “cram” the Bible down his throat. The sinner may not be in the mood for listening to the Gospel, and for us to become overbearing will cause more harm than good. Many times when a person like this sees that we really do care and have a gracious spirit, he will begin to listen. If we have to leave we should be kind about it, thus leaving the door open for a future visit. By being gracious and showing that we care, we are then in fact **salting his oats**. As the sinner hears our testimony of what Christ has done for us, as we share the love of God and use Bible verses, we are **salting his oats**. As we explain how sin came into the world and man’s need of salvation in Christ, and the fate of the lost, we are **salting his oats**. As we encourage the sinner to yield to the wooing of the Holy Spirit and confess his sins and to receive Christ as personal Saviour, we are **salting his oats**. The sinner may receive Christ, or he may not – we can and should encourage him to do so; however, it is not possible nor is it our responsibility to save the sinner – that is the responsibility of the Holy Spirit to save the soul. (Titus 3:5) It may be that the seed we have sown someone else will have the joy of reaping. (Jn. 4:37) Again, that is the business of the Holy Spirit. As we live the Christian life the way the Bible teaches, as we have the burden for and share the Gospel with the lost soul, he must see in us something that he needs – we are again **salting the oats**.

In doing all of this we do not have to compromise on anything the Bible says, nay, we must not. There are those who feel that they can or should concede certain portions of the Word of God in order to win the lost. Nothing could be further from the truth! Respect for our Christian beliefs is not obtained by compromising the teachings of the Bible, but by remaining firm on, and true to it. For us to compromise any part of the Bible will only tell the lost person that we really do not believe it. On the other hand, to remain firm will tell him that we do in fact believe the Bible and that it is God’s perfect Word. This in itself will be **salt in the oats**. The early Christians were hated and despised for their faith and beliefs in Christ, even to the point of death. In the midst of all of this they remained true to their Saviour, and in their death they gained the respect of their persecutors for they had **The Hope** that far exceeded any of the false religions. In death they **salted the oats!** How many came to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ as a result we’ll not know until we cross over Jordan into the promised land of the redeemed in Christ.

Christian friend, as you go forth to a lost and dying world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, **the only** antidote to the sin problem of the world, remember that you are only the vehicle carrying the message and that it is the Holy Spirit of God who does the saving. As you witness in word, with Gospel tracts, and in daily living, the Holy Spirit will use this to work in the heart of the lost sinner – **the oats are being salted**. The Bible is God’s Word (2 Ti. 3:16) and He has promised that His Word will not return void; He uses it in ways that we may or may not see. (He. 4:12) Let’s continue to teach and preach the eternal Word thereby **salting the spiritual oats of the lost sinner**. Let’s **salt those oats** real good, all the while praying that the Holy Spirit will create in him such a thirst that he could not help but come to the Living Water and drink freely. (Jn. 4:14) Don’t give up! Don’t be discouraged! Continue to teach and preach the Word of God! “He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” (Ps. 126:6)

KEEP SALTING THE OATS!

~Richard A. Ciarrocca © 2004

All Scripture references are from the KJV 1611