

Cautions for Soulwinners

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Date: 12 June 2022

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[0 : 00] All right, well, good morning, everybody. If you've got your Bibles, then please open them up to Matthew 23.

You want to catch a verse here in Matthew 23 and get into something here that'll, I think we'll just, this is part one probably, but if we do part two next week, it'll be a completely different thing.

Though they're related. Matthew 23, I just want to read verse 15 and kind of pull a thought here and make some application to today and to some things that have been going on in soul winning in these days.

Verse 15 says, Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte. And when he's made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

Now, I understand that to apply this to today directly is a little bit off in the sense of the Pharisees and their Jewish religion and what they're proselytizing someone to in their missions attempt.

[1 : 23] But in the thought of making somebody a proselyte and actually not doing anything for his soul, but rather what Jesus says is making him more a child of hell.

So what they've done in making someone or converting them, so to speak, to their religion is damn their soul. Not completely, obviously.

Christ could still save their soul. But as far as that person is concerned, they think, I'm okay now. I've got the truth or I've got this religion and now I have what I need.

And what I want to do today is kind of, is off of that thought, go through a topic with you this morning about giving you some cautions when you're dealing with the lost.

Some cautions and some, I think, just some practical advice that things to maybe avoid doing or saying or look for even when you're trying to win a soul to Christ or deal with them about their sin and lead them to Christ and salvation.

[2 : 27] Sometimes, well, some years ago, Brother Gipp wrote a book called For His Pleasure. Does anybody know that book or read that book? Anybody? One, two, a couple of years?

And one of the things he stated in that book and one of the purposes maybe for his writing it was because there was a trend among independent Baptists or among the fundamentalist circles or whatever it would be that soul winning was getting thrust to the top of the list of what we're here for, what God wants you to do.

And if you're not doing it, it was getting just promoted so heavily. And obviously, it's a great thing to try to lead souls to Christ. I mean, of course it is.

But he was noticing in his book, he writes this, and I've heard him say this from the pulpit in places when he maybe is talking about the book. He was noticing that the trend was just, you've got to get them.

You've got to get them. You've got to get them. And it became an out of balance, maybe an approach or methodologies to winning souls became lessened.

[3 : 36] And so to the degree that it was just about getting numbers. And it was about just getting them to pray a prayer and then go back to the church and report that I led five souls to Christ in 30 seconds.

And so whatever it was. And so he noticed this. He wrote some things about that. And I've, since that, had my eyes open to it. And then even met some men and heard them and gone with them and heard some of their, we want to call it methods, in dealing with the lost.

And sometimes I just feel it's shameful. And more and more, in certain circles, it might be best to say that, soul winners are rushing sinners into a prayer, which I believe can be a damning prayer, making them a child of hell, not even realizing or not even attempting to, because they're rushing them to a prayer and they're not dealing with their souls.

And they're not dealing it from the scriptures. And the new birth is not something that you just, it's not a New Year's resolution, that you just decide today, I'm going to do that. Decide today, I'm going to give that a try for a little while.

And so just tricking them into saying some vain words is doing nothing. It's vanity. And our goal as soldiers of Jesus Christ and in the fighting the fight of faith and winning souls for Jesus Christ because he died for them, our goal would be to have them understand the gospel and to be born again and to have the conviction of God on them present.

[5 : 14] Therefore, they're prepared and ready. But if we're not careful, we could be just guilty of converting someone to a religion like these are here in Matthew 23 and then just leaving them misled, leaving them confused and even damned.

And so what I want to talk about this morning is just some cautions. I'll give you four things, four thoughts along with some points along with these that I think can help you to be careful when you're dealing with the lost.

Think about this. What if I memorized the oath that the president takes and he speaks even if he does put his hand on the Bible or not anymore?

I don't know. What if I memorized that oath and stood in front of you all and said it? Would that make me the president of the United States? Negative, thank you.

It would not. Just rehearsing those words doesn't do it, does it? There's more to it. And running someone, if you'll say this prayer, you'll be saved. If you ask Jesus to save you, you'll be saved.

[6 : 26] I mean, I don't know about some of you younger people or folks that grew up in church. I can speak for myself. I've said a prayer to be saved a lot of times as a young child. Just growing up, around it, gospel every Sunday, every Sunday night, every Wednesday, in chapel at school and every Bible lesson.

I mean, so many times, camps, I mean, I've gotten saved a lot, so to speak. And that's just part of the confusion of a child or growing up around it or sin and just it's something there.

But just saying words doesn't necessarily make it happen. And I could learn words in another language and say them but have no idea what I'm actually saying and have no meaning to what I'm saying from my heart or even my head just because I'm repeating something that I've heard somebody feed me.

And so I want to steer us away from just if I could just get them to pray this, then it's all good because that's not necessarily the case. I've done this exercise with some students where I've asked them questions and got them to answer in the affirmative to all my questions like, do you believe there's a God?

Yes. And I've gone through a few questions and even when they say yes to all of my questions that are about the Bible, about Jesus, about the cross, I say, see, they're saved.

[7 : 53] And I could do that with you today and I'll even kind of give you some info here that'll help you see why that's not a good idea. And that's what happens sometimes. And I've read a book from an evangelist who is a street-working soul winner and he writes some stories about some things he's seen along these lines and they're despicable of men just rushing somebody in to say this prayer or say these words or do you believe this?

Okay. And then declaring them to be saved and walking away as if God was present and just rescued a sinner from hell when nothing of the case happened.

So caution number one, when you're dealing with a lost person, is do this. Assume nothing. Assume nothing.

What do we mean by that? I mean, don't assume that they're lost because you're talking to them, but also don't assume that they're saved. If I give you, for instance, at the end of a church service, somebody walks the aisle.

You've seen this happen, I trust, in your lifetime. Somebody walks the aisle. There may be a real strong gospel invitation or push or thrust towards sinners and somebody responds.

[9 : 08] Somebody walks the aisle and then the pastor or somebody, you know, has a personal worker has you say, go deal with them. What are you going to do? Do you just take them out there and say, okay, well, let's just pray this prayer because you obviously came forward when he asked you if you wanted to be saved.

What I say is no. Assume nothing. When you have that person, you start from scratch. You don't assume that they're lost because they responded to an invitation. But rather exercise discernment and be careful not to be excited like, oh, boy, I get to lead somebody to Christ today because that may not be what's happening at all.

I've sat in a week-long revival at the Christian school we were at for years. And this week had a guy preaching to the teens and he preached all week, never gave an invitation, just preached, preached, preached.

And by the end of that week, the place was ripe. And the kids were just, things were happening. The Lord was dealing with their hearts. I mean, they're carnal kids growing up in Christian homes.

Some of them were not even. But they're just full of sin, full of the world, full of the devil in their lives. Most, if not all, are born again but just living in sin.

[10 : 19] That's just the way it was. And this man preached and the Lord just sat in there and got into them. And by the last day of this, I mean, he's preaching for an hour and a half every day. By the end of that week, he gave an invitation and they were just in droves coming forward to the invitation.

Now, one portion of the invitation was for salvation. And he was calling on people to be saved. And so I had, I got to deal with, I think, four different teens that I knew pretty well, all four of them.

And I looked at them and my first thought was, yeah, right. And not being super skeptical or nasty to them, just thinking, you're just, I know what's going on here.

I really think I do. I've been there. I know what it's like to be a teenager saved in church around the gospel your whole life, knowing the truth. And then just rejecting walking with God and having that taste and that appetite for sin in the world and going after that.

And then having the Lord deal with my heart and squeeze it and show me and start to wonder. I mean, a preacher preaches on hell long enough. Everyone in here will start to wonder.

[11 : 26] I know I don't want to go there if there's any chance. I better make sure. And so these teens, so I'd talk to them and I'd say things. What I didn't do was assume they're lost and run them into a prayer because I didn't think that was going to be the right thing to do.

What I did was just spoke to them. I said, why? Why are we sitting here right now? Why do you think you're lost? How do you get saved? Every single one of them knew how to be saved.

A hundred percent knew the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you done that before? Have you called on him and believed on him? Yes, every single one of them. Then why are we sitting here? Do you think you need to get saved again?

They were just confused. I know why you're sitting here because you've been living in sin for so long. You feel so guilty. Now you're not sure because walking in the flesh, you'll never be sure unless you know Bible truth.

And so just dealing with them in five to seven to ten minutes, we just kind of got that out of the way and then tried to address why they're really, what's really going on. It's the sin in their life and on and on and on.

[12 : 31] So I wanted to tell you when dealing with somebody, don't just assume, oh, they're lost and I need to get them to say a prayer. And as soon as that happens, because that may not be the case. Also, assume nothing.

Don't assume that somebody understands the gospel after they've heard it. Don't assume they understand it because you took a track and told them.

This is it, A, B, and C, okay? Let's pray the prayer. Don't assume it's clicking and that it's all put together. It takes time. I don't know about individuals in here.

We could perhaps give testimonies that the first time you heard the gospel, you didn't receive it. You didn't jump for joy and go run around the backyard because now you're getting saved. It could be that you were just like, really?

Is it that easy? There's more to it. There's got to be more to it. You didn't. So don't assume they fully grasp it just because you told them the truth.

[13 : 28] I've dealt with souls. I've dealt with men and women from the Bible and took them through scripture up to the gospel, up to the point of believing on Christ, and they were just like, not there.

And I've gone like backed off and went another route and came back around with another way and just talked back into it and just not there. And tried another illustrations and just tried talking things out in their life and whatever just to bring them to the, and they're not there.

They don't understand. And that's okay. It takes some work. It takes the planting or the plowing, the watering, and all of those things before the Lord will give the increase.

But don't assume they understand the gospel. They may not be ready. Somebody will put the pressure. The devil will put a thought in your mind. They could die today. You better get them now.

If God's not putting the conviction, if it's not there, if their eyes aren't opened, stop. Back off and pray. So don't assume that they understand the gospel.

[14 : 31] Another thing you don't want to assume is that they are saved even if they profess to be. You don't want to assume that either. Sometimes you just have to forget the way that you think and put yourself into their shoes.

Because Catholics believe they're Christians. They've heard that term. They've taken that term out of the Bible and said, this is us.

And they've taken the term church out of the Bible and said, this is us. Because they think that way. They've been taught that way. You ask them, are you a Christian? You meaning, are you believing on Jesus Christ?

Are you saved, like, biblically? And they hear a Christian? Just like the Arminian faith, we're all Christians. No, you're not. Not according to this book, you're not. Not according to the word of God, you're not.

According to your religion, maybe you are. But those are two different things. Now, don't believe they're saved just because they profess to be saved. So assume nothing. That's what I like to say.

[15 : 30] When you're dealing with somebody, a soul, just blank slate it completely. And make an informed judgment based upon what they say. And that's going to lead me into the next section here of cautioning you.

First of all, assume nothing. Now, secondly, learn to ask the right questions. Learn to ask the right questions because you're seeking an honest response from that person without putting words in their mouth.

You can be the one that, you can be cutting yourself off at the feet because you're trying to get something out of them. But you're saying things, then they're, what I say is try to avoid yes, no questions.

Try to avoid that. Because if you say, are you a Christian? Yes. Well, you know what? Now you've got to take that away from them if they're not saved.

Now you've got to show them they're not. And that can be tough. Now you've got to tell them you're wrong, you're a liar, you're a mislomer, whatever. It's a whole lot easier. Don't put them in that position.

[16 : 35] Don't ask them that yes or no question. Force them to reveal their faith. When it comes to an invitation, I've taken somebody out from our sanctuary before.

And, like, they've come forward. The pastor's preaching a message. He preaches, you know, an invitation for salvation. Somebody walks the aisle and he's like, hey, Tobe, take them. Deal with them. And so I go out and I don't say, hey, do you want to get saved?

Because if they say no, then, okay. If they say yes, then what I say is, why did you respond to the pastor's invitation to come forward? Why did you come forward?

Now what are they going to say? They're going to tell me why they came forward. I'm going to ask a question that's going to get something from them rather than just a simple yes or no. And you'll be surprised the things that you'll hear.

You'll be surprised. One guy told me, well, I just, I've had trouble with alcohol for years and years. And we tried to talk about that a little bit.

[17 : 35] And I tried to go to the gospel. There was nothing with the God. It turns out the man saved. But he responded to an invitation for salvation. And his trouble was with alcohol. He felt guilty for his sin in his life.

Now if I would have not exercised a sermon and said, oh, you came to be saved, let's pray. No, if I say you want to be saved, he's probably thinking, yeah, I guess so. Because this sin has got me. I'm probably not saved. And as I had dealt with him from the Bible, it turns out he was born again.

But he's living in sin and it's got a hold of him. And he needed to get away from it. If I just take him through a prayer, he leaves the same way he came in. Still saved. But now he's just hoping that praying that prayer did something that's going to help him overcome that sin or give him some victory in his life.

And he never got help from the Bible. He just got some naive, soul-winning fool just not using discernment. So to seek an honest response, don't put words in their mouth.

Force them to reveal what they believed. I don't like to say, do you want to be saved? I like to ask, why did you come forward? One time a woman, there was a teenage boy who was on fire for God.

[18 : 45] He was just, he was a blessing. And his mom and dad are Lutheran and they're lost. And he was getting them to bring him to church. And over time, he got them to stay. And he was witnessing to his mom and dad.

He just didn't really know how to do it. And he was just telling them they're going to hell. He was telling them. And he was on fire. I mean, he was excited. And they didn't know how to handle that.

But they didn't know how to refute that. Because their son was changing. And it was exciting to them. But they were a little intimidated. So they started coming to church here and there. And one Sunday after the service, this wasn't an invitation, but the service was over, he marched his mom right up the aisle, right up to where I was at in the front of the church.

And he's going, like, get her. And I was like, Cindy, I'm like, you know, we talked for just a second. And I said, but she said, I wanted to talk to you.

And I said, well, what do you want to talk about? She's like, I want to be saved. And so, you know, to me, it's like, inside the excitement starts to go up. Like, okay, this is like, all of this is coming together.

[19 : 49] Praise the Lord. She just needs to believe on Christ. But I don't want to just assume that. And I said to her, why do you need to be saved? I want to hear her from her mouth where she's at.

And that's something that I think we need to be thinking on and cautious with is not presuming, oh, they said the word saved. Maybe she got that fed from her son. Maybe she heard the pastor say the word saved.

And asking her, now, this lady, by the grace of God, she was ready. And she did get saved that day. And the husband, it took him about six months of coming around church once a week until he came forward and got it squared away too.

But asking the right questions. I asked this question. How certain are you that you'll go to heaven when you die? Instead of saying, hey, are you a Christian?

I'd say, how certain are you about going to heaven? And listen to their response. 100% sure? Then you, well, how are you so sure? Why? Get it out of them. If they're not so sure, I don't know, then you're getting things from them.

[20 : 57] You're making the judgment of who they are and where they are and how they need to be dealt with by asking the right questions. This is a great one. And I ask this all the time. What is it that you're trusting in to get you to heaven?

What is it? And if sometimes even if it feels like this person's semi-religious but not too, I'll say this. I hate to do it because it's not true. But I'll say, you know, or I'll say like this.

If the Lord, if you died and stood before God at a gate of heaven like they suppose, you know, Peter at the gate. But I'll say the Lord. And if the Lord said, why should I let you into my heaven?

Why should I let you in here? What are you going to tell them? What's your answer? And if they can give any kind of answer, you're learning what's in their heart. You're learning what's in their head and knowing how to deal with them.

I don't say, hey, are you trusting Jesus to go to heaven? Because if they say yes, I'm kind of stuck. Whether they are or not, I've just put that in their mouth. And now they're like, yeah, I'm trusting Jesus.

[21 : 57] But they may not be trusting the gospel of Jesus Christ at all. So ask the right questions. Also along that line, ask the right questions to determine their religious background.

I'll ask the questions, what church have you gone to? Have you ever gone to church in your life? And I want to hear a denomination. I want to hear something that's going to clue me in to knowing what they've been possibly taught.

I'll say, have you ever gone to church in the past? Sometimes it's no. Well, then I'll try to say, well, what do you know about the Bible? What do you believe about the Bible? What have you heard about? I want to hear anything I can hear from them to know where they're at.

So to try to determine their religious background. If they say they were raised Catholic and their mom and their grandmother's a devout Catholic, then you've got an idea that they're trusting in that system of works and sacraments and prayers and beads and baptisms and all of these things, that that system of works is going to save them, whether they're involved in it, practicing it or not, they still believe that's the truth.

And so now that helps you understand where to take them in the Bible. Ask the right questions to seek an honest response, to determine their religious background, and also to determine what they believe about salvation.

[23 : 12] What do you believe it means to be saved? I've asked that word. You've heard people talk about being saved. What do you mean? What do you think or believe it means to be saved?

Some people say, well, that means like you're a good person. You're not going to do the bad things. No, that's not what it means. I'm proof. It doesn't mean that.

Another question about a way to ask the question is how do you believe that one can obtain salvation? How do you think you could be saved? How do you think? And just see what they know.

You're gathering information. Now, while you're asking the right questions, the third thing this morning then is listen. Listen. Learn or listen to what they believe.

They may have a distorted view of God. If they don't have a Bible and they're not in the Word of God, chances are they really have no clue of the truth of the person of God and His Word and His Gospel.

[24 : 15] So find out what they know by listening. You ask the right questions and then listen. You know that they're a sinner. You know that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, but do they know that they're a sinner and that they've come short of the glory of God?

You know that their good works can't save them, but do they know that their good works can't save them? Then you know that Christ died in their place and you know that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation, but do they know it?

Do they have any idea? A good salesman is somebody who can read people by listening. I've talked to a guy that's a friend of mine who's a tremendous salesman and he said to me, he goes, I just want to get them talking.

That's all I want to do is get them talking. The more they talk, the more I learn because I've learned to listen to what they say and then make the judgments and make the plan of approach in the sale that way.

I know soul winners aren't salesmen and we're not conniving, but we're using tactics to gather information and understand how to then deal with them where they're at.

[25 : 24] We do not want to push them to some place that they shouldn't go or aren't ready to go. Absolutely not. And so the fourth thing then, after you listen, is look for conviction.

Look for conviction. I know that it's easy to hear the right answers and presume in your mind, well, I guess they need to just pray and be saved.

But if there's no conviction, I don't mean they've got to be sobbing and just uncontrollably flailing on the ground because they're broken and afraid of falling into hell.

But there's a difference between them just nodding their head and them being convicted of this truth that's in front of them. And so if they're not concerned or if they're constantly changing the subject, chances are they're not with you like you hope they are or want them to be.

If they're always changing the subject to something else, then it might be just that you need to back off. I've dealt with people where they talk about, you say something and then they just start talking about a death in their family.

[26 : 26] Or they'll talk about they lost their job or they're sad about some things and it's not because they know they're a sinner on their way to hell, it's because they lost their job. And I know that a death in the family can open their eyes to eternity and you can use that to try to get the gospel in their mind.

But just because they're a little bit upset about that doesn't mean they're upset about their soul being judged by God and being damned to hell. There's a difference. So look for conviction.

I want to give you these cautions this morning. Don't attempt to force conviction upon them because you could be doing what these Pharisees are doing and just converting them into something that's not true and real.

You could be pushing them a step closer to hell while you're trying to draw them to heaven. Don't attempt to force conviction upon somebody. That's the work of the Holy Spirit. So look for it.

And if God's working on their soul, church, it'll be evident. It'll be obvious to you. I remember telling you about this one woman that I was preaching at a nursing home and I told you that as I was in the message, I kind of felt myself always on the right side just hitting some things a little bit harder about hell or judgment or just whatever it was.

[27 : 39] and I remember feeling that like over here, it's on. I couldn't put my finger on the person or anything like that. But until it was over, I shook the hands of people and said, great to have you and all that.

And this lady, she held onto my hand and then she started crying. And I just thought she was weird. Honestly, I thought, oh, she's weird. But it turns out she's like, I need to be saved.

She wanted right then and there to be saved. So I just got my Bible, melt down beside her and started going through some things. And she was, I didn't believe her when she said I need to be saved. I thought, okay, well, let's see where this goes.

But sure enough, as we went through the Bible, she said, I've been putting this off for so long, all of my life. I've heard that all the time. What a blessing. But you know what? The conviction was there.

She came to me even, in a sense. And so God was dealing with her soul and it was very evident. The lady beside her, I could have said, you know, you need this too. She could have been like, I couldn't force that.

[28 : 43] I'll pray anybody. So you and I, we're fools if we think that we can make somebody get saved or convince them to get saved or convict them of what they need to do.

And what I tend to be is skeptical rather than overzealous because I want to err on the side of caution. I really do. I want to be careful that I'm not pushing somebody into something that's not of the Lord as far as it's not the actual working of God.

So I recommend this morning that you don't assume anything and be trying to just get somebody saved. Be careful. So learn to ask the questions that can give you information of who they are, where they are, what they believe, what they feel, what they know, and then know how to deal with them from the word of God.

It's important to know your Bible. And as you deal with somebody, God brings verses to mind. You don't even think you know them. You don't even think you know where they are, but the Lord, he just does it.

He's done it to me so many times to where you're nervous as anything. I don't know my Bible. I don't know the verses. And then they're just there. It's his word and it's living and his spirit that wrote the book is inside of you and he's just, he's putting it out on them because he wants to deal with them.

[29 : 57] And so as you deal with them, as you ask the right questions, as you give them the word of God, you find out where they're at, listen and look for conviction. And I recommend you, you don't believe everything that comes out of their mouth, assuming that they may not mean what I mean when I say this or understand there could be some kind of disconnect there.

Now what I think, I think we'll do is go a step further next week. This is just kind of some cautions in dealing with the loss, but what I want to do maybe next time is take a look at what's commonly called the Roman's road and not break it apart and dissect it necessarily, but try to show some things from that method and really get to the point of what is it, the terminology is the appropriation of salvation.

What is it that actually appropriates God's salvation to a sinner? What is it? Is it the Roman's road? Da, da, da, da, da, da, boom, you're saved. Is it a checklist?

I mean, you'd say, well, it's believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and amen. But there's certain verses that are often drawn out of context that aren't, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

Well, it ends with saying thou shalt be saved, so then what do we need the rest of the Bible for if that's all it is? If confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead? Do you believe God raised him from the dead?

[31 : 31] Is that all it is to it? And so I want to take some of those verses and I want to draw a point that Paul makes, that Jesus Christ makes, that the Apostle John makes about the appropriation of salvation, about what it is to believe the gospel.

The term is obey the gospel. That's the Bible term, obey the gospel. And so we want to take a look at that probably next week and that's going to be a little more of a Bible study and a little more of a detailed thing.

But for today, I want to set some of that up just by helping you consider how you speak and deal with a lost soul and caution you not to be like these super soul winners that are just looking for a number and just hoping to get a prayer out of them because that may not be at all what's happening and that'll be even more evident next week as we study the scriptures on this.

So let's take a break here. I will dismiss in prayer and then we'll take a few minutes. Father, Lord, please help us to have a zeal and a desire for the souls of men and women around us for whether they're our family members or friends or neighbors or Lord, anybody that you place in our lives.

Give us a desire to see them saved. Lord, let us see it's our duty to be faithful, to be a testimony, to be an example of Christ to them. Let us see also that it's our job to open our mouths and to do something and to try to make an attempt to draw them to Christ.

[32 : 59] But Lord, also give us wisdom. Please give us discernment in dealing with them. Today is certainly a day of confusion. There's false doctrine, false religions everywhere. And God, help us to know the truth and to be able to clearly articulate the truth as you've given it to us in your word.

Help us to be faithful in this matter and may Jesus Christ receive the glory for it all. We pray in his name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.