



## CHRIST IS THE ANSWER INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES

# Street Evangelism and Public Ministry: The Forgotten Mission Field.

"I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek." Romans 1:14-16. These words of Paul reveal the passion that he had to share the gospel to everyone all over the world. He believed in the power of the gospel to save, and he cared enough for the lost to take the gospel to them.

In the last years we have heard much talk of revival and how the Lord was going to move in Italy and fill the churches, giving the impression that we must just wait for Him to save multitudes of people. Could it be that, while we are waiting on God, He is waiting on us to move and take the name of Jesus into the streets to those who need it? One of the signs of the end time church is that the gospel will be preached in all the world and He will not return until it is completed.

If I would have to ask someone that I'd known for some time if he was married or not, and he told me that certainly he was, I would think it was strange that he had never mentioned it. In fact, I would be tempted to think that either he had a very ugly wife and didn't want anyone to know about her, or that he didn't love her. Why? Because it would be strange never to talk about the one you love; we always talk about the people we love. Look at couples who've just gotten engaged, they never stop talking about their fiancés because they are so in love. Are we so in love with Jesus that we talk of him publicly wherever we are? Is the church expressing her sincere and fervent love for her Savior publicly in a systematic way? There is power waiting to be unleashed to the church today to accomplish this mission.

From the beginning of His ministry, Jesus took His message to the people wherever He met them, publicly preaching and teaching the Kingdom of God. The disciples then took their faith to the streets, not as a job, but because of the passion for Christ that burned in their hearts. This same passion should be burning in our hearts today. We often complain about just going to meetings and hearing another preaching. But what is the alternative? Conferences, Christian theater, retreats, Christian rock concerts and movies all have good objectives, but they are basically aimed at pleasing or entertaining believers, and in the end, they are just another form of a meeting. Paul wrote that if an unbeliever would come in their midst, they needed to have order. It would seem that, in Paul's day as in our day, it was an exceptional event to have unbelievers coming in their meetings. If the unbelievers were not coming in, where was all the great movement of the gospel in that time of spiritual outpouring? It was with the believers who spoke boldly to everyone, taking what they had received in their meetings out to the lost, and God blessed them with many coming into the church.

Through the years, a renewed interest in taking the gospel message out into the streets and public places has always been marked by a fresh spirit entering the Church. Believers desired to meet together to receive strength and encouragement to witness to lost souls. Whether it was the Wesleyans, the Anabaptists, the Puritans, the Jesus People, or even the Italians who immigrated to America in the 1930's and returned with a new faith, they all made an impact on their societies. We admire the courage they had, but can we copy it? There are so few people who regularly preach the gospel publicly because Satan does not want the gospel to go outside the four walls of the church, and he will do everything he can to stop it. As an evangelistic ministry, we battle this worldwide. There are always new ideas that would try to take priority over simply preaching the gospel on the streets. There are always excuses why we should change our course, and that is the way the devil would have it because he hates public evangelism and will do whatever he can to discourage those who are involved in it. Public evangelism is the hardest job in the world and that is why so few do it. Those who do go out are constantly tempted to stop, but I can assure you that if you are not ashamed to lift up the name of Jesus, your faith will grow and you will be filled with a spirit of boldness. A united army of dedicated street preachers will make the devil shake with fear.

God turned my life around in the early 70's when I saw people witnessing on the streets near my office at the bank. They gave me tracts and challenged me in a simple way to follow Jesus. It was contagious. I was caught up in the "Jesus Revolution", and God used it to bring me to Italy to share His beautiful name here in the same simple way, and to encourage others to be bold and speak out to those in need.

Every person becomes a preacher with a pulpit when they go out to share their faith in the midst of this sinful world. Do you feel that you have to be in a building and sharing with the saved to be a preacher? That is not what Jesus did. He went out to the prostitutes, thieves and the needy in this world. That is where we also will be able to accomplish a work for the Lord. When we go out to reach the lonely and broken-hearted, the sick and the hurt, the young and the old, when we imitate Jesus, we will be blessed. I feel that I am at my best when I am preaching with a team on the streets and not when I am in the tent meetings or teaching somewhere. It is a great experience to be able to proclaim the truth to a world that is believing a lie.

Many of the songs that we sing in church lift up the name of Jesus and give gospel messages on salvation, redemption, and healing. To whom are the messages of these beautiful songs directed? These messages should be going out to the lost, to those who need it the most, but instead, we sing them over and over to one another. And yet, with all these wonderful songs, how many times are the brethren scandalized and upset with each other over some issue in the church. These are believers who have heard the gospel over and over for many years! Just outside the door are those who have never heard the good news that Jesus can save and deliver from sin, but it is very easy to forget about them when we are taken up by our own conflicts.



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Then we have those who ask, "Why aren't we seeing more people getting saved? Where are the miracles, healings, signs and wonders that should accompany us?" When was the last time you prayed for a lost soul to be saved or for the healing of a sinner? The promise of God is there and you will see these signs when you go out and confront the man on the streets with love, faith and prayer. If we will make ourselves available, there will be no lack of desperate people needing the Word of God and prayer. Street evangelism worked for Jesus and it will work for us, too. It takes effort and sacrifice and not just talk, but Jesus asks, "Who will go, who loves me enough to be My representative to the lost?"

Brother Andrew said that if the church does not take the gospel to the world then the world will bring its gospel into the church. It is happening and we can only turn the tide by getting our priorities right about evangelism. A modern trend among evangelical churches is to look at how big the congregation is. Jesus certainly didn't count the multitudes that followed Him and who eventually forsook Him when His words were too hard for them. Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked if they were going to leave as well. He wasn't looking at success as being a large number of followers, but as having those who would follow Him and do His will. The Kingdom of God will be preached by word and by example. Our young people and the newly converted are looking for these examples to follow.

In 1736, John Wesley was on a ship going to America when it ran into a terrible storm which threatened to drown them all. The passengers were terrified, and so was he, but a group of Moravian brethren also on board were singing and praising God with peace on their faces. He couldn't understand how they could be so tranquil when he was afraid to die. When the storm was over, even though he was a minister of the State Reformed Church and a very educated man, he asked them what was the secret of their faith, and they shared with him about repentance from dead works and living a life of faith in Christ; a faith so strong that they were able to trust in God no matter what happened because they knew He was in control. Wesley desired such faith and prayed that God would give it to him, and when he received the assurance of his salvation, his life was completely changed.

He took this message back to his church and preached how God had changed his life through repentance and knowing Jesus in a personal and powerful way. He lost his job as a pastor and wasn't allowed again in the churches of England. He asked himself how he could serve God without a pulpit or a congregation? As he was walking through a mining town, he came upon a group of miners who were drunk, violent and cursing God. Seeing their need of the gospel, he stood up on a tree stump and began preaching about the love and God and the joy of repentance. Day after day he preached from the stump, and to his surprise, crowds began to gather, and that was the beginning of the greatest revival Europe has ever seen. John Wesley and his disciples rode horses all over England, through Europe and even down to Sicily, stopping in the town squares, in barns or taverns, or even in the fields to preach the simple gospel message of salvation by repentance. God used the Methodist movement to stem the tide of the popular atheistic and immoral teachings of Voltair that were filling people's minds at that time.

Are you too afraid or embarrassed to approach people with the gospel? Preaching on the streets to strangers has never been an easy task, but we know that it is the Lord who has commissioned us to go into all the world and preach the gospel, on the highways and byways, in season and out of season. The devil does anything he can to discourage us, but Jesus has promised to give us power and to help us fulfill His will. His presence will be with us.

Our society is in a crisis of fear and confusion and people just don't know where to go with their lives. All that they have been living for is in danger of collapse, and they see everything they have lived for all these years vanish in a moment. They need answers and they are looking for help. We can use this moment as an opportunity for the kingdom of God. We have the answer, Christ is the answer still today.