

# Love for the Lost Precious Souls

Matthew 9:35-38

## Intro

There are some Christians who just don't understand someone with a passionate concern about a spiritual enterprise, because spiritual passion is not the norm. The norm is not to let Christianity disrupt your lifestyle. If you follow that, your spiritual temperature will drop and you'll become apathetic and indifferent.

We all have to ask ourselves, “*Where is our love and burden for the lost? Why isn't reaching the lost the believer's central activity? Are most Christians only content with comfort and prosperity and could care less about the lost precious souls?*”

That was not the case with William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army. In 1904, Britain's King Edward VII invited Booth to Buckingham Palace to honour him for his contributions to society. When the king asked Booth to sign his autograph album, he wrote these timeless words: “*Some men's ambition is art. Some men's ambition is fame. Some men's ambition is gold. My ambition is the souls of men!*”

There have been powerful men and women of God who made a tremendous dent in the life of the church and its history. Their power came from a passion and love for God and to evangelize the lost. John Wesley was one of them

It was said that John Wesley did more for England than its armies and navies. He lived meagerly, having given away thousands of dollars in his lifetime. Abused and maligned, he left his reputation and soul in the hands of God. It has been estimated he traveled 225 thousand miles on foot and horseback and preached 24 hundred sermons.

Much of the established church despised him, but he brought fire into its cold heart. Wesley looked on all the world as his parish. He had the reputation of being out of breath pursuing souls.

The men and women who have made the greatest impact throughout church history—such as John Wesley, George Whitefield, Hudson Taylor and D.L. Moody—had this same zeal to see people far from God get saved.

Franklin Graham, Billy Graham's son, told how his father prayed for the lost every day even when his health had deteriorated at the age of 95. Like many of the heroes of faith before him, Billy's life and ministry have been shaped and driven by his love and passion for souls.

## **Jesus Our Perfect Example**

As wonderful as these examples are, the perfect example of one having a passion and love for lost men and women is Jesus Christ.

Let's look at Matthew 9:35-38

### **Verse 35 “Jesus went through all the towns and villages”**

Jesus was a going individual. There was a certain motivation about Christ. He certainly was not a lax or an idle person. Something motivated Jesus; something propelled Him to go through all the towns and villages.

\*I believe the following verses give the reason to His going and to his motivation.

The Jewish Historian Josephus wrote that in Jesus' time there were about 200 cities and villages in the region of Galilee, an area of about 40 miles wide and 70 miles long. The towns and villages

were numerous; the smallest of them contained about 15,000 inhabitants. The Galilee region contained approximately 3 million people. Most of them most likely had direct contact with Jesus.

Jesus was an itinerant preacher, teacher and evangelist. The message he preached was the “good news” of the Kingdom. Jesus not only taught and preached He also healed. Christ’s direct mission was not only to teach and proclaim the gospel but also to bring healing into people’s lives.

\*The healings that took place through Christ among the people attested that God’s Kingdom was present and advancing through Him.

Matt. 11:4-5 John the Baptist’s disciples were told to ask Jesus if He was truly the Son of God.

*“Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.”*

Acts 10:38 Peter said of Jesus, *“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy spirit and power, and how He went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with Him.”*

### **Verse 36 “But when Jesus saw the crowds, He felt compassion for them”**

Jesus saw! What did He see? Jesus saw the multitudes, He saw beyond the physical; in reality He saw their spiritual state. He looked beneath the exterior right to the heart of every man and woman.

Jesus was aware and conscious of the spiritual condition of those around him. Here Christ shows us how we ought to see people, how we ought to be conscious of the spiritual state of lost humanity.

Not only did Jesus see the crowds but He also felt. What did He feel? He was deeply touched and moved by their spiritual condition - He felt compassion. He often felt compassion

Matt. 14:14 *“When Jesus landed on shore and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.”*

Matt. 20:34 (Two blind men came to Jesus)

*“Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed Him.”*

Christ was moved with compassion and love by the world’s pain, sorrow, hunger, loneliness, sickness and the fact that they were lost.

### **Compassion defined**

German Theologian, Karl Barth gives us a revealing look at to what this Greek word for compassion means:

*“The term obviously defies adequate translation. What it means is that the suffering and sin and abandonment and peril of these people not merely went to the heart of Jesus, but right into His heart, into Himself, so that their whole plight was now His own, and as such He saw and suffered it far more keenly than they did. Compassion (Splagchnizomai) means that He took their misery upon Himself, taking it away from them and making it His own.”*

Feeling compassion isn’t some kind of lovey-dovey sensation or just feeling pity. Compassion goes straight into the heart and will create a gut-wrenching feeling in which we empathetically identify with the brokenness of another person. Those who choose apathy are choosing to be emotionally absent. Those who choose compassion are choosing to become emotionally vulnerable.

Our culture has painted this picture of Jesus who was lifeless and emotionless. That is NOT the Jesus of the Bible! He felt deeply for people, He was moved with great compassion and love for those who were lost, harassed and helpless.

### **How does Compassion Work?**

It begins with the cultivation of sensitivity to human need. The compassionate person is committed to using his or her resources to meet the needs of others. They act instinctively, not stopping to count the cost, not questioning if the one in need is deserving or not. Compassion is being greatly concerned for the well-being of others.

- Compassion is one of the highest Biblical virtues, which few consistently manifest.
- Jesus was moved and deeply touched by the spiritual and physical state of those whom He saw.
- This is what made Him go; this is what motivated Him to go where the people were. This is what motivated Him to teach and preach, and heal. He was motivated by compassion; love for the lost.

### **Verse 36b “they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”**

Jesus was moved with pity and with deep sorrow because He saw people who were oppressed, wretched and their souls uncared for. He saw precious souls lying about abandoned, neglected as sheep having no shepherd, no leader to care for them. They were going about aimlessly without direction and no one to care and to guide them.

Christ was deeply moved by people’s spiritual condition. You know that condition is still prevalent today. Many are distressed and living in despair. The economy, the environment, terrorist threats, fear, despair, marriage breakups, family disintegration, and relationships falling apart, bullying, sickness. People are lost!

### **Verse 37 “Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.’”**

When Jesus saw the crowds, He taught and preached to them and healed them — all for the ultimate purpose that they might come to Him and escape the harvest of judgment they could not otherwise avoid.

Isaiah 17:10-11; Joel 3:11-14 speaks of the harvest as God’s judgment. The parable of the wheat and tares speaks of this judgment in Matthew 13:30, *“Allow both (wheat and tares) to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.”*”

It’s true what pastor John MacArthur said: *“It is easy to lose awareness of the imminence and the inevitability of God’s judgment but the Christian who loses sight of that judgment loses a major portion of his or her motive for witnessing.”*

*“The harvest is plentiful”* - there are yet so many precious souls to be won to Christ from the coming judgment.

### **“But the workers are few”**

Here Jesus shares His burden and great concern that there are not enough labourers. Jesus is speaking of workers who are spiritually qualified; workers who see the spiritual condition of the lost and workers who feel compassion for the lost.

These are the few! These are the few who see what Jesus sees! These are the few who feel what Jesus feels! The religious leadership, the pillars of orthodox religion of Jesus’ day were complacent — they did not bother with the lost. They had nothing to offer. The Parable of the Good Samaritan

is a classic example. Few are the workers who are deeply moved by compassion and love to help the sick and dying world like Christ.

**Verse 38 “Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.”**

Jesus desires workers, he asks his followers to pray that God would raise up workers who have a passion for the lost and send them out into the field. Many Christians need to be shaken out of their dead orthodoxy and lethargically spiritual state.

I believe the Church has lost sight of this truth which Jesus is teaching in this passage. Where is the compassion and love for the lost precious souls?

We get caught up with our materialistic lifestyle and getting heavy into debt that most of our time and energy is spent on paying our debt load. At times the church gets caught up in petty issues and quirks that don't contribute much to the Kingdom of God. The church gets too busy with administration and programs that it lacks energy to reach out to this dying world.

**How to enhance our compassion for the lost**

How can we enhance our compassion for the lost?

First, study Christ: His great love, compassion, and tender mercy. We can study great men and women in church history, but ultimately we must come to Christ and grasp His heart. As 1 John 2:6 says, "*The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.*" So we need to preoccupy ourselves with Christ by meditating on His Word, not pursuing life's trivia.

Second, study sin: its guilt, power, and penalty. That will make you aware of how we have all fallen prey to the subtleties of the world. Romans 12:2 says, "*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*" Let that remind you to be preoccupied not with worldly things, but with evangelizing the lost.

Third, study sinners. Try to cultivate love and sympathy for them, not bitterness. Note that the most zealous evangelists are often new converts. When a person comes to Christ, he has an acute awareness that everyone around him is lost. Many of us have lost that awareness.

Fourth, study Scripture. See what it says about hell, death, judgment, and salvation.

Finally pray for God to give you a compassion and love for the lost precious souls.

**Conclusion**

One of the reasons we are here in this world is to be a light to this world. If we grasp this, then this becomes one of our defining, dominant desires. It shapes our personality and our direction in life. If we have a heart that bleeds for humanity, we will seek their salvation; we will want to see them in heaven.

A man by the name of John Harper had a deep love for the lost. He was a newly called pastor to the great Moody Church in Chicago in the early 1900s. His character came to the attention of the Christian world in the sinking of the Titanic in 1912. Shortly after the ship struck an iceberg, Harper was leaning against a rail, pleading with a young man to come to Christ. Four years after the ship's sinking, a young Scotsman rose in a meeting and said he was a survivor of the Titanic. As he drifted in the water on a piece of wood, he came across John Harper, who was afloat on a piece of wreckage. Harper pleaded for the young man to receive Christ. The young man refused. The tide brought Harper around again, and Harper asked if he was saved yet. Shortly after, Harper disappeared into the water, and the young man decided to trust Christ as his Saviour. At the meeting he identified himself as John Harper's last convert. Cannot we be the John Harpers of this generation?

