

TWO PRINCIPLES OF SOUND EVANGELISM

A testimony shared by Neil Simmons at The Waldo Restoration Branch in Independence, Missouri during an evening service by the Restoration Seventy.

I am conflicted this evening. There are testimonies that I wish to share which derive from the opportunity to go into the mission field to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. But this conflicts with the need that I sense here in the Center Place for there to be sound principles of evangelism embraced by the people of the Gospel, and then put into practice in their daily life and in their daily walk with the Lord.

Thus, there are two things I feel to share with you tonight; and while I will be very brief, yet I am deeply convinced that these two principles are of major importance.

The first principle of sound evangelism is to know the Lord, and to make this Everlasting Covenant real in your life.

I want to affirm is that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not so much about what Church we belong to, or what set of doctrines we hold to, or what kind of apologetic we can present. It is not about flannel-graph materials or flip charts or other missionary materials. It is not about clever arguments for our doctrinal point of view. It is not about pitting one church against another or putting one doctrine above another.

It is really and truly about the fact that all of us at some point in our existence are going to have to kneel down before our Lord Jesus Christ, the God of creation, and acknowledge him as our Lord and Master. It is about the awe filled truth that none can escape this eventuality and reality. You and I will, one day, kneel at His feet, for the scripture says that every nation, kindred tongue and people will have to bow before Him, and confess that He is their Lord and their Creator; for He is our Maker and our God.

He gives us our choice. One of two things shall certainly happen. One is that He will be joined with us in covenant relationship for eternity. The other is that we can deny that opportunity and join with whomever and whatever else we choose, and endure that relationship for eternity.

The Seventy are called to go out into the World to cry out: **Behold, the Man.** Our witness of Jesus Christ is such that we ask men to kneel down at that place where Jesus intersects their life and He asks them to commit themselves, then and there, to an Everlasting Covenant. There is no price that can equal that. There is nothing that can be valued above that moment.

I tell you truly that one cannot then say to the Lord,

“I will make covenant with you, **but**, first, let me go test my oxen. Or, first let me look back.

Or, let my wife and my children come first. Or, Lord, my mother and my father are important to me. Or, I will make that covenant, but my work is important to me Lord.

Or, Lord, I will make that covenant, but my security is essential to me, so don't ask me to give away my money or time.”

At that eternal place of the intersection of the human and Divine, all things of supposed importance vanish away as silly illusions. When we kneel before Him, brothers and sisters, all other things mean nothing. You are called to a relationship with Jesus. The only real truth in that moment is the question, **“Will you give all that you have to make that relationship permanent?”** Because the truth is, Jesus will not accept anything less.

The first principle of sound evangelism is to know the Lord, and to make this Everlasting Covenant real in your life.

The second principle of sound evangelism is to labor within God’s great plan to restore the House of Israel.

His plan for evangelism is spelled out in the Scriptures, it is still sung in our hymns. It has been a part of the Restoration from the very beginning. Yet it has become but a dim echo in the very places where it should shine the brightest and be said the loudest. As a church people, we came into existence in the promise that God was *“making bare His arm in the eyes of all nations”* that He would do *His Great and Marvelous Work*, that He would call again, from their scattered state, His House of Israel. We still love to sing, Redeemer of Israel, Our Only Delight.

I testify to you that **the pathway of great evangelism leads straight through the heart of scattered Israel.**

The word that was put into our mouths, of the eternal truths of the gospel, is to be shared primarily and first into the heart of Israel. We are supposed to call the children of Israel back into covenant relationship with Jesus Christ. The extent to which you and I can participate as a people in God’s program, going in the direction that He sends, is the extent to which we shall have great blessing from on high.

Brothers and sisters, to the extent that we deny our task of calling the House of Israel to obedience, turning in other ways, and emphasizing other elements of the gospel, going into other places, or to other peoples, is the extent to which we shall walk without light.

If we wish for the power of the Almighty God to become visible among men, if we want to experience anew God’s Spirit in the vibrant heart of the church, then you and I must commit ourselves anew to complete the great the task that was initiated when the gospel was restored--that the covenants He has made with His prophets of the past shall all be fulfilled.

There is a great scripture in the Book of Revelation. It declares, *“Prophecy is the testimony of Jesus Christ.”* I used to believe this meant that the people who went out and testified about Jesus Christ, saying that He was the Son of God, had the spirit of prophecy.

But there is another sense in which the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. I came to this understanding by experience. I am not a prophet. It has been rare in my life that prophetic gift has come to me. But when it has, I have understood something more about that scripture. I

want to pass this understanding along to all of you because it has everything to do with evangelism.

It is the understanding that the prophetic testimony is the testimony that came out of Jesus' mouth. The testimony of Jesus, which is prophetic, is not about Him, but what He said about His Father's kingdom.

I know I cannot create prophecy. I cannot produce that spiritual gift that we think of as prophecy.

But I **can** say the very things that Jesus said about His Father's Kingdom.

I can go before men and bear record of the Kingdom of God.

I **can** talk about the Great and Marvelous Work that He has brought forth among the children of Men.

I **can** say that He is fulfilling the covenants that He has made to our forefathers and their forefathers.

I **can** bear record of the fact that Jesus is the Christ, and that He is, and that He lives, and that He empowers His work in the last days.

I **can** bear record that He has restored authority in the earth so that the Kingdom of God may rise up and fill the earth.

I can **say** those things because my Lord said those things.

He has called me, and He has called you, to go say these things with Him. When you do--when His words come out of your mouths, brothers and sisters--that is the spirit of prophecy! Know also that the words of the Prophets shall not fail.

I want to say something about an experience I had with the Lord. It was my privilege to have a dream in which I saw the Lord. It began as an ordinary dream. I heard that He was somewhere giving ministry. When I heard this, I ran and got into my car and drove to the place where He was. When I got out of my car, I ran to open the doors and I hurried down the hallway calling His name. He saw me. He was walking away from me, but He turned.

In our conversation He asked me, "Neil, what do you most want from me?" I don't know what you would have said. Frankly, the desire I had in that dream was just to be there with Him. I simply wanted to be near Him. But He asked, "What do you desire of me?"

I remembered that He had asked this question of the Three Nephites, who were among the twelve assembled in mighty prayer, "*What do you desire of me?*" He had asked them, too.

In my dream, I fell down at His feet and said, as did His disciples of old, “*Lord teach me to pray.*” I whispered.

He knelt down beside me. He looked me in the eyes, and He said to me, “Why do you have your hands folded? What are you holding?”

I looked down, and my hands were folded together, though I did not know why. I suppose from my childhood I had been taught to do that. I opened my hands, and He took them and He placed my hands on His own shoulders.

He said to me, “*Neil, when you pray, you hold me, and not anything else.*”

Then He said, “*Prayer, Neil, is sacrifice.*”

I thought about that statement. I had not heard this before. I was not sure that I understood.

Then, He said rather sorrowfully, “You come of a people who know nothing about sacrifice”

I am afraid it is true. There is little that we sacrifice for Him. When we pray, so often we are holding a thing, some material blessing desired, while so few times we have our arms around our Lord. So few times do our prayers come out of and after much sacrifice.

Let me remind you that the first step in sound evangelism is to know the Lord, and the second step is to bear record not only of Him personally, but of of the Gospel of the Kingdom that He taught, to the remnant of the House of Israel.

I want to conclude by sharing this personal testimony.

When I have gone out into the world, being sent to bear my witness of Jesus Christ, unto the children of the House of Israel; when I have been diligent to put into my mouth His word and share that testimony sacrificing my time, energy and body, the power of the Father has been manifested.

As a consequence there have been many men and women who have made their decision to kneel down before their Lord and covenant with all their might mind and soul to become His child, and to enter into the waters of baptism.

Do you desire Joy? Have you been sad lately? Hear the words of the Lord. “*For how great shall be their joy, with them, in the Kingdom of my Father.*”

If you desire joy, let the testimony of Jesus be in your mouth. Proclaim the need of all men to make covenant with Jesus Christ. Call men to Him and the power of the Almighty will bless, and heal, and unify and bring to pass His great and eternal plan.