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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes

INTRODUCTION

Please open your Bibles to Romans, chapter 9. Today I am going to preach to you. You say, “Well, I thought that’s what you did every Sunday.” Actually, those of you who hear me Sunday after Sunday realize about 90 percent of the time I am a pastor-teacher. That’s what I’m called and gifted to do, to be a pastor-teacher and I am an encourager. But, today I’m going to preach to you and it’s more than just encouraging you. It is challenging you and admonishing you. It’s a lot more fun to encourage folks as a pastor-teacher, but get ready, because today I’m going to preach something God has laid very strongly upon my heart.

Green Acres Baptist Church is a growing church. As you know we are one of the largest churches in America, but our church is woefully inadequate when it comes to having a true evangelistic zeal. That means a real burden and concern for lost people all around us. You say, “Why do you say that, pastor?” Well, a rule of thumb among all churches is that you ought to baptize about 10 percent of your attendance every year. Now, you know we have over 3,000 people who attend every Sunday, but our church has never baptized 300 people in one year. We, generally, in one year baptize about 200. Now, I thank God for every one of those, but I am serious when I say we are falling behind when it comes to that one area. I thank God we are a church that leads Texas and is number two in all of America in the financial support of giving to missions, but we have to ask ourselves are we sort of salving our own conscience by giving money away for missions instead of being personally and corporately involved in reaching lost people.

A church grows three ways. A church grows by what we call “transfer growth” when people who are members of other churches come and join our church whether they are members of local churches or they have moved into town. We thank God for every single person who unites with our church by transfer of their membership. There’s another kind of growth called “biological growth” in which the children of current members come to know the Lord and are baptized, and I thank God for every precious child who learns about Jesus and is baptized. The third kind of growth is the one where we are lacking. That’s called “true conversion growth.” That’s where children, teenagers and adults who really have no church background are brought to Christ by their loving friends and relatives and they are one to Christ and they become a part of the body of Christ. We just don’t have a lot of those people who are coming out of a purely pagan background coming to know Christ.

When I think about our church in 1999 and I think about the church in the book of Acts there’s a terrible contrast. We do so little with so much and that early church in the book of Acts they did so much with so little. They didn’t have padded pews. They didn’t have microphones. They did not have television. They didn’t have beautiful buildings. They didn’t have buses and vans. But, I’ll tell you what they did have: They had the power of the Holy Spirit and they had a concern for lost people. The Bible tells us that there were only 120 of them who gathered in the Upper Room for Pentecost. Jesus was crucified, Jesus went up, the Holy Spirit came down, the Christians went out and the lost came in. How many? 3,000 of them were saved in one day on the day of Pentecost. Then the Bible tells us again the number of the disciples were multiplied, then it says again another 5,000 were brought to Christ. Our problem is growing by the *addition* method and the church in the book of Acts grew through *multiplication*. There’s a difference there. Our

church is growing by additions which means Sunday after Sunday we have several added here and several added there. But, multiplication means when everybody goes out and they take their faith and share it with others. That’s how a church multiplies. That’s how the church in the book of Acts multiplied. Now, I’m not all that smart in mathematics, but something tells me that if every one of you in this room right now went out and brought somebody with you next Sunday, we’d have approximately twice as many people here next Sunday. That’s multiplication where every person realizes the importance of reaching people for Christ. If I have any “preach” in me whatsoever, I’m going to ask God for me to lay this on your heart today the way it has been laid on my heart. I pray it will be etched upon your soul. It will reverberate in your spirit and yes, I pray God that it will even torture you somewhat. Because, as a pastor it’s my job to comfort the afflicted but sometimes as a preacher it’s my job to afflict the comfortable when you become so self-satisfied and complacent you can’t be moved into action for Jesus.

I personally believe the apostle, Paul, was the second most influential person who ever walked planet Earth. I think his writing and his life have had more impact on the entire world, second only to Jesus Christ who was a God man. I want you to read in Romans, chapter 9, the first three verses and I want us to see the burden, the concern Paul had for lost people.

Paul writes, “I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit” You say, “Well, now why in the world does he have to qualify it to such an extent?” Because what he is about to say is utterly amazing. He says, “I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race.” Lest you misunderstand about whom he is speaking, flip one page over to Romans 10:1 and he repeats his concern. He says, “Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they might be saved.” Now, go back to 9:1. Paul says, “Listen. I am so burdened for my Jewish brothers and sisters to know Christ, I have sorrow in my heart, I have unceasing anguish.” He says, “I would even be willing to be cut off from Christ if it would mean that they would be saved.”

I just want to ask you four questions today and these questions are not for someone else. These questions are for each one of us. Here’s question number one.

I. DO YOU TRULY CARE ABOUT PEOPLE WITHOUT CHRIST?

I’m talking about the people you go to school with, teenagers. I’m talking about the people you work with, adults. Your neighbors, your friends, your relatives; do you really care about them and do you really care that they don’t know Jesus Christ? For all of you who are born again Christians— and I know that many of you in this room are—if I were to line up every one of you and ask you to walk up these steps and stand behind this pulpit and say to this crowd answering that question. If I were to ask you, “Tell me _____” and I called your name, “Do you really care about lost people?” I suspect most of the people in this room who are believers would say, “Oh, yes, pastor. I do care about lost people.” But do you know what I think? As soon as you would say that or as you are thinking it right now, your conscience would give you a little twinge from within. Your conscience would be saying to you, “Do you really care about lost people? Then, why don’t you ever share your faith? Why don’t you ever pray for the lost? Why don’t you

ever try to bring somebody to the body of Christ?” Your conscience would say, “You are saying one thing, but you are living something else.”

Look at verse 1 again. Paul says, “I am speaking the truth. I am not lying.” He says, “Even my conscience can bear me witness.” Can you honestly say today without your conscience saying “You’re a liar” can you say “I really care about lost people?” You know I have already preached this message twice and it’s no fun hearing it twice, and I’m preaching it now for the third time. My conscience gives me a twinge as I preach this sermon. Do you know why? Because I know that as your pastor I do not bear the concern and burden I ought to. Our church is not reaching as many people for Christ as it should; I bear the responsibility for that. My conscience is saying to me, “David, you need to have a heavier burden for lost people.” I hope your conscience is saying the same thing to you. Do you really care about lost people?

Tony Campollo is an author and a speaker. He was speaking on a college campus, and he does this very often, usually when he’s talking to college kids about evangelism and missions, he’ll say something like, “Most people on the face of this planet are lost and dying and going to Hell.” Then he say, “The problem is, most of you in this room don’t give a !@#* about it!” I’m not bold enough to use the word he uses, but he says, “Most of you don’t care enough to give a !@#* about it” and he pauses to let everybody gasp and he says, “The real problem is you’re more concerned that I used that word than you are concerned about those people dying and going to Hell.”

Do you really care about lost people? Let me just say that in and of ourselves we don’t care about lost people. But only as we are in Christ and Christ is in us do we really have a burden for lost people. Do you see what Paul said at the very beginning in verse 1? He said, “I speak the truth *in Christ*” That’s the key. Paul was in Christ and Christ was in Paul, and the more you are in Christ and the more Christ is in you, the more you will be concerned about people who don’t know Jesus because Jesus was concerned about people who didn’t have a relationship with God. In Luke 19:10, Jesus said, “The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.” The more you are full of Jesus and the more you are full of the love of Jesus, the more you’ll be concerned about people who are without Christ. The more you are full of yourself and selfishness, the less you will be concerned. Here’s question number two:

II. IS YOUR HEART BROKEN FOR LOST PEOPLE?

Let me call your attention again to verse 2. Look at the word Paul uses, “I have great sorrow, unceasing anguish.” Look at those words, sorrow and anguish. Can anybody in this room say, “Yes, pastor. Yes, Lord, I have great sorrow over people who don’t know Jesus? It is something that bothers me 24 hours a day. I have anguish over it.” Jeremiah was called the “weeping prophet” probably because in Jeremiah 9:1, Jeremiah cries out to God and says, “Oh, that my head were a fountain of waters and oh, that my eyes were a river of tears so I could have enough moisture that I could weep day and night for the slain of my people.” Jeremiah was so burdened over the people, he wept.

Just this past week or so, I stood again in Jerusalem on the very spot on the Mount of Olives where Jesus stood and looked over Jerusalem. We call it the “triumphal entry” but if you read

your Bible, it was really the “tearful entry,” because as Jesus stood there looking at the city of Jerusalem six days before he was going to be crucified, he looked at Jerusalem and do you know what he did? He burst into tears. Luke 19:41 says, “He burst into tears,” and the word there is a strong word, which means his body was racked with sobs. It means salty tears were coursing down his cheeks. He looked at that city of people and he said, “Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem! How often I would have gathered you like a mother hen gathers her chicks, but you wouldn’t receive me.” He said, “If you only knew who could bring you inner peace, but you wouldn’t receive me.” Do you know what made Jesus cry? He looked at a city of people that was more religious than we will ever be, but they were lost without Jesus, and they were lost without a personal relationship with God. I’ll tell you this about Tyler, Texas: This is a religious city. As I prepared for this message this week, I looked in the phone book and counted how many churches there are and I prayed for every single one. Does anyone want to venture a guess as to how many churches we have here in the Tyler area? Over 300! My soul, you’d think with 300 churches and 300 pastors and 300 congregations that this would be the purest, most moral, most ethical, most law-abiding place on the planet, but it’s not. I think when Jesus looks at Tyler, Texas, He feels the same way he did when he looked at Jerusalem. It’s a city full of religious people, but people who don’t really know God. I think you and I ought to find some spot where we can look over Tyler, Texas and East Texas, and it ought to break our hearts. There are people you work with, there are people you go to school with, there are people in your neighborhood, perhaps in your own home who are religious, but they don’t know what it means to know God personally. My question to you is, “Is it breaking your heart?” I’m not even asking you, “Are you sharing your faith?” I’m asking you, “Do you even care about those people?” It’s a different question.

My dad was a pretty strong man emotionally. I don’t think I ever saw my dad shed one tear the whole time I knew him. For that reason I grew up being a pretty harsh guy on the outside emotionally. I can honestly remember my dad telling me one time when I was a kid, “Listen, David, real men don’t cry!” so I kind of grew up being tough on the exterior. I can even recall in college there would be a religious service and people might be crying, but not me! I was under control and I was proud of the fact that I didn’t cry. But I can look back to about 12 years ago. I can remember the day. About 12 years ago I prayed a dangerous prayer. I said, “God, break my heart for lost people. God, break my heart for spiritual things.” Brokenness is always a tough experience. There are some times that I get a lump in my throat about the size of a grapefruit and I can’t even talk and it embarrasses me. God has answered that prayer and he has continued to answer that prayer when I asked him to “break my heart for lost people.”

Right out here in Lindale, Texas, we had a 20th century prophet, but we did not recognize him. His name was Leonard Ravenhill. Leonard Ravenhill wrote an article for Billy Graham’s magazine, *Decision Magazine* in the 1970s and the title of the article was, “Who Weeps Anymore?” I cut out a copy of it when I was in college. I pulled it out and looked at it this week. Do you know what he said in the 1970s? “The problem with Christians in America is we’re not concerned over lost people. We’re not concerned enough to cry.” He said, “A man and a woman will weep when their little pet gets run over in the street in front of their house, but that same couple has never wept one tear because their neighbor across the same street is lost without Jesus. Something is wrong”. He says, “A woman will cry when her daughter walks down the aisle of a church to be married, but that same mother has never shed one tear because that same daughter has never been saved. Something’s wrong.” Paul says, “Listen. It is great sorrow. It is

unceasing anguish” He wept over lost people. How do we know? Because in Acts 20 when he was talking to the Ephesian elders, he said, “I did not cease for three days and nights to warn people with tears.”

The founder of the Salvation Army was General William Booth. Some servants of the Salvation Army went into one extremely tough American city and after working there for several years, they said, “It just won’t work. We have tried everything. The gospel is just not being received here.” They telegraphed that to William Booth, and he telegraphed back a two word message. He said, “Try tears.” Do you have a family member, do you have a co-worker, do you have a student friend, do you have a neighbor who doesn’t know Jesus Christ and you think you have tried everything? Well, have you tried tears? Have you asked God to break your heart for the lost?

III. ARE YOU CONTINUALLY BURDENED FOR THEM?

Here’s question three. “Are you continually concerned for them?” The key I think is that word in verse 2 “unceasing anguish.” Paul says, “It’s not something I feel a lot more strongly at one time and then I forget about it.” He says, “It is a continual burden. It is something I carry with me” As the kids say “24/7.” It’s there all the time, wherever I go. Whether I’m awake or I’m asleep or whether I’m with people or without people, I am always concerned about people who don’t know Jesus Christ.” I’m afraid that’s the problem with our church. As a corporate body it doesn’t seem to me that we are concerned all the time about lost people. Our staff doesn’t do as good a job as we should in reaching people for Jesus Christ, and I take responsibility for that. Did you know we have over 100 deacons? I suspect there are some of our deacons who have never led a person to Jesus Christ. We have over 200 Sunday School teachers. There are probably some of those Sunday School teachers who have never led a single person to Jesus Christ. They might not even know who is lost and who is saved on their Sunday School Roll. I am here to tell you if suddenly God would convict our hearts about it and we would get serious about it, and bear a continual burden for it, in just one year if every staff member, every deacon and every Sunday School teacher just led one person to Jesus Christ we would lead the entire state of Texas in baptisms for that year. Understand, our goal is not to lead the state in *anything*. Our goal is to honor and obey God. Would you ask him to put a continual burden on your heart?

The apostle, Paul, said, “This is not something that I just get fired up about one time or another, it is a constant burden.” That’s the problem with a message like this. You probably feel a little uncomfortable right now, but you are saying, “Hey, I don’t know what got into him today, but at least in about ten minutes from now, I’m out of here and I’ll forget about it.” That’s right. Anything I can talk you into, somebody else can talk you out of just as easily. God forbid I should ever lay a guilt trip on you about something. Instead, I am asking the Holy Spirit to bring about conviction in your heart. Here’s the problem. You hear a sermon like this and suddenly you fall under what I call “red, hot conviction to the Holy Spirit” and you walk out of this room, you go to lunch and suddenly the icy cold waters of reason or doubt flood back in until that hot conviction is diluted into lukewarm apathy. Do you know what Jesus said about “lukewarm Christians” in Revelation 3? He said, “They make me sick. I’m going to spew them out of my mouth.” That’s the problem. We have made lukewarm Christianity the norm. Sometimes, we think if somebody gets saved and fired up about Jesus Christ, we say, “Just give them time. They will backslide just like the rest of us.”

I have a friend who was a member of a church in Birmingham and he got saved as a young, adult man. He was so excited about Christ for the first couple of weeks, he told everybody the difference Jesus had made in his life. One Sunday night he was at his church and they sang this song, "Rescue the perishing, care for the dying, snatch them in pity from sin and the grave, weep over the erring one, bring them to Jesus, tell the poor sinner that Jesus can save." He heard that song and he got so excited that as soon as the service was over he rushed up to the pastor, and said, "Pastor, I'm ready." The pastor said, "Ready for what?" He said, "Man, I'm ready to go rescue the perishing—let's do it!" The pastor looked at him and said, "Well, that's not something we really do, that's just a song we sing." It wounded that man's spirit for many years until he realized that the normal Christian life is to be excited about rescuing the perishing. Is it a continual burden that you bear?

Did you know the world out there without Jesus Christ is trying to teach us a lesson? The problem is we in the church are not paying much attention to what they are telling us. This is what they are saying. "Make sure your buildings are beautiful. Make sure your pews are padded. Make sure the air conditioning and heating is just right, and that your sound system is good. Make sure the music is beautiful. Make sure you have beautiful billboards and slick, direct mail pieces. Do all of those things, and we are still not going to come." Do you suspect for one half second that by building this new house of worship behind us up here that lost people are just going to flock in by the hundreds? *Absolutely not*. Lost people just don't get up on a Sunday morning and say, "Hey, I'm going to go to church today." It's hard for those of you who love Jesus Christ to get to church on Sunday, isn't it? I remember how it was when my daughters were little. It took an act of Congress for us to make it to church every Sunday morning and I *wanted* to be there. I was the pastor. Our house looked like a war zone by the time we got to church. You know what I'm talking about. It's tough for those of you who want to come to church to come to church. Do you think some family out there without Jesus Christ is going to get up and get everybody cleaned and dressed and say, "Come on, family. Let's go down there to Green Acres Baptist Church and learn about Jesus today." It's not going to happen. That's like a 10-point buck going over to the deer camp and knocking his antlers on the door and saying, "Come on out and shoot me. Here I am." It just doesn't happen.

But, when you, and you, and you, and you, and you, and you, and you go out in your jobs, and at school, and in your neighborhood, and you get burdened over your friends and relatives and the people you work with and your neighbors and you say, "Listen, I want to tell you about Jesus. I want to tell you about the difference Jesus has made in my life. I want you to come to my church and see what God is doing." That's how lost people come to church. You say, "Well, pastor, I don't believe in talking to other people about religion. That's a private matter." If all we were talking about was religion, I'd want to keep it private too, but we are talking about the most life-changing relationship a person can ever have. Once you understand why that is, you can't stay silent about it. Our relationship is private, but our responsibility is public. You say, "Well, I can't talk to people about Jesus. I don't know how to lead somebody to Christ." There are three verses that you could use to lead somebody to Christ. Romans 3:23: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 6:23: "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord." Revelation 3:20. Jesus said, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." talking about the door of your heart "and if any person will open the door and invite me

in, I will come in and I will live with them.” Those are three simple scriptures. You say, “Well, pastor. I just can’t memorize scripture.” I suspect that if I offered to pay a thousand dollars for each one of those three verses if you could memorize them by 5 o’clock tonight, I imagine suddenly some of you would become geniuses when it comes to memorizing scripture. A thousand dollars for every one of those you could memorize by 5 o’clock this afternoon. “Got any more I can memorize?” It’s just a matter of motive.

The Bible says, “It is the love of Christ that constrains us.” Do you even care about lost people out there? “Well, no, I don’t really care about them out there.” Jesus didn’t say, “Do you love feeding sheep?” He didn’t say, “Do you even love sheep?” He said, “Do you love *me*? If you love me, you’ll feed my sheep. The more you fall in love with Jesus Christ, the more you’ll have a burden to talk to others about Jesus Christ. You’ll want to share him. Are you continually burdened about this?

IV. WHAT WOULD YOU SACRIFICE FOR OTHERS TO BE SAVED?

Here’s the final question. What are you willing to sacrifice? What would you sacrifice for others to be saved? Look at verse 3, and this to me is absolutely mind-boggling. Paul says, “For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race.” Now rather than debating what that really means, let me just tell you bottom line. Paul is saying, “I am so burdened over my Jewish brothers and sisters without Christ that I would be willing to give up my salvation and to go to Hell if it would mean that they would be saved.” Don’t miss what he is saying here. He is speaking emotionally. He is not speaking theologically. Theologically, it is *impossible* for someone to give up their salvation and be cut off from Christ. He just wrote in Romans 8, “Nothing can separate us from the love of God.” but he is saying, “Listen. My burden is so heavy that if I could, I would say ‘All right. You folks go to heaven. In order for you to go to Heaven, I would be willing to go to Hell.’” Let me tell you what he is saying. He is so full of the spirit of Jesus and the mind of Christ that he is talking like Jesus did. Isn’t that exactly what Jesus did? Didn’t Jesus hang on the cross and literally baptize his soul in Hell? Wasn’t he literally cut off and separated from God the Father on the cross so you and I could go to Heaven. He is so full of Jesus he is saying I’m willing to go to Hell that they could be saved. I’ll be honest with you. I haven’t reached verse 3 yet personally. I can’t think of any person on earth I would be willing to give up my salvation for so they could go to Heaven except, perhaps, my wife and my two daughters.

But, Paul says, “That’s how burdened I am.” You have to understand where he is coming from. This is the man who in II Corinthians 12 said, “I know a man whether in the body or out of the body” (all commentators think he is talking about himself) “who saw a vision of the third Heaven.” He says, “I don’t know if the man was dead or alive or in between, but he was sent into the third Heaven.” You understand there are not seven Heavens, there are three Heavens. The Bible speaks of the atmospheric Heaven, that’s Heaven, number one. It speaks of the celestial sky, the stars and galaxies, that’s Heaven, number two. But Heaven number three is the dwelling place of God. He said, “I was escorted into the third Heaven”, and Paul says, “I saw things, they are so beautiful, so marvelous, so wonderful I was forbidden to share about it.” Do you know what I think? I think what he saw and experienced was absolutely so wonderful God said, “You can’t tell people because if you do, none of them will want to live anymore. They’ll just want to

go on to Heaven.” That’s the same man who said, “Having seen all of that, I’d still be willing to give it all up if my brothers and sisters could be saved.” Man! That is a sacrifice!

God is not asking any of us to give up our salvation for that’s impossible. But, he may be asking you to sacrifice something else. Maybe sacrifice your pride, sacrifice your comfort zone, sacrifice a false sense of respectability when it makes you think that if you don’t talk to others about Christ, you’ll stay respectable with them. Christians are guilty of the sin of silence and you think if you talk to somebody about Christ, they are going to call you a religious nut. Well, you are going to have to sacrifice that feeling to initiate conversations about Christ. What are you willing to sacrifice so others can know Christ? I have preached myself into a corner here. I have preached myself under conviction again and I declare before you and before God that I want God to put a burden on my heart heavier than I have ever carried in my Christian life to see teenagers, children and men and women come to know Christ.

CONCLUSION

There is an old evangelist named Eddie Martin. Some of you may have heard of him. Eddie is a very blunt, straight-forward guy. He could never be a pastor because he is much too straight-forward. But he tells the story about staying in the home of a very wealthy family one time when he was doing an evangelistic meeting. He said to the lady, “I’ll see you tonight at the services.” She said, “Oh, I’m not going to the services tonight.” He said, “Why not? Is something wrong?” She said, “Well, we have a mission study group in our church and I’m a part of it. Tonight we are meeting to talk about missions.” Eddie Martin didn’t like that too much. He said, “You know, I would have thought that when you have a revival meeting at the church, you’d cancel those things and everybody would support the revival.” Well, she didn’t like him saying that, so she kind of “bowed up” and said, “Well, I’ll have you know sir that missions is every bit as important as evangelism.” He was not going to argue with that, but he came back at her and he said, “Well, you go ahead and go to your mission meeting, but you don’t care about lost people anyway.” By then, the air was getting pretty thick. She says, “How dare you say that? What makes you say that?” Eddie said, “Well, yesterday I talked to your maid and asked her if she was saved. She said no and I asked her if she would like to be saved and she said yes. I led her to faith in Christ. I asked her how long she had been working for you and she said several years. I asked her if you had ever told her about Jesus and she said no. “So,” Eddie said, “you go along to your mission meeting, but you’ll never convince me that you care about lost people.” He said she stomped out and he stomped out but about halfway through the service that evening that lady came in and sat on the back pew and when the invitation was given, she was the first one down the aisle squalling, weeping and broken. She came and stood before the church and she said, “I have been a phony, and I need you to forgive me. I have loved church work, I have loved mission work, and I have loved this church, but I haven’t loved lost people the way Jesus loved lost people. I want you to forgive me and I want God to forgive me”

Could it be some of us need to say that today? “God, I have not been concerned about lost people.” Those people out there without Christ are not going to break down the doors of this church to get here and learn about Jesus. Chances are the majority of lost people in East Texas you know somebody they know or you know them personally. We cannot be satisfied. We cannot be complacent until someone has shared with them like somebody shared with us.

OUTLINE

- I. Do you truly care about people without Christ?
- II. Is your heart broken for lost people?
- III. Are you continually burdened for them?
- IV. What would you sacrifice for others to be saved?