

But surely in a Christian message there can be somewhere in the course of the message where, if there is a man there who does not know the way of salvation, he will find it clearly presented. So I question whether a sermon is really fulfilling its purpose if it does not have part of the purpose of each sermon, have that of reaching whoever is there with a clear presentation of the way of salvation through simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now I've heard the question asked: Why when we are saved does not God take us right off to heaven? Why does he leave us here on earth for a while? Why does he leave us here with all the misery and unpleasantness that most of us have to go through here on this earth? When we're saved, we have our sins washed away. We are just as if we had never sinned. Why doesn't he take us to heaven then?

I think the answer is that while receiving Christ as Saviour is the most important thing in any person's life, it is not the end. It is the beginning of the Christian life, and God has a purpose for each one of us which must be accomplished on this earth and He will leave us here until that purpose has been accomplished. And that purpose has two sections, two purposes. One of which is that he leaves us here that we may be His witnesses, that we may show others how they may be saved. The second purpose is that we may grow in grace. While we are justified immediately, we are not sanctified. Sanctification is a process, and God wants us to go through that process. He wants us to help others go through that process.

Preaching should always have its objective: winning people to Christ. But it also should have the objective of teaching individuals to grow in their Christian life and develop those qualities that God wants us to have. These qualities are perhaps best described in Gal. 5:22. You are familiar with that verse where Paul describes the fruit of the ~~Spirit~~ Spirit. God wants us to bear fruit and there are two kinds of fruit. There is external fruit: the fruit of those whom we've led to the knowledge of salvation. And there is the internal fruit: the development of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." A list by the Apostle of the fruit of the Spirit. The minister should show forth the fruit of the Spirit in his life. He must also show it in his work. I've heard people say, Why should I witness for Christ? Why should I talk about my faith? My life is a witness. I live a good life and what better witness is there? This, of course, is an utterly false statement. Your life, if it is a good life, is a sounding board for your words. If you live a good life and your're ~~an~~ and atheist, your life is a witness for atheism! If you live a good life and you do not testify to the Lord, your life is not necessarily a witness to anything! The life you live is a sounding board, but the words you speak are the message your life conveys to other people. So it's very important that we should live a life that shows forth the fruit of the Spirit, but it is equally important that we witness and speak out what the Spirit develops within us and that we speak particularly to show where it all comes from--what Jesus Christ has done for us.