

Scripture: Matthew 23:15

Sermon Topic-Theme: Who wants a
Proselyte?

Text: Mt.23:15b (selected words):
"...when he becomes a proselyte, you
make him....a child of hell..."

Proposition: Jesus warned the scribes
and Pharisees that people won to their
point of view by proselytising were un-
desirable, narrow, dogmatic, and dis-
turbingly zealous. This prompts us to
ask "who wants a proselyte?", and to
answer it, "we don't," because such a
person rarely is tolerant, loving, for-
giving, cooperative, and generally is
unpleasant to be around. It points
out that as christians we should try
hard to exemplify loving, cooperative,
and positive attitudes ~~word~~ toward
others, whether or not they agree with
us and are of one mind with us.

Dates written: February 1-5, 1971

Dates and places used:

Feb. 7, 1971 - OAKLAND PARK, FLA.

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Introduction:

1. Somebody has said that "many a small boy is the kind of kid his mother wouldn't want him to play with." (from The Burlington Standard (Wisconsin), in Quotem Jan. 24, 1971).

2. Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees that much of their work simply produced people that nobody liked, or whom others "don't like to play with" (to put it in small boy terms). He rebuked them for being so very active in seeking proselytes because so often the proselytes then became people whom nobody wanted to be around, who were "children of hell," as he put it. And, really, there are some people who are so disagreeable to be around that it is somewhat like hell must be to have to be around them!

3. Since the Scripture of today presents Jesus as talking about proselytes, maybe we ought to know what the word means before we spend time discussing it. By definition, a proselyte is "a new convert, especially to some religious sect, or to some opinion, system or party." However, quite often we have stretched the word to use it to

Introduction:

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3. Jesus had a different view of today's proselytes as talking about proselytes, maybe we ought to know what the word means before we spend time discussing it. In definition, a proselyte is a man converted, especially to some religious sect, or to some opinion, system or party. However, quite often we have stretched the word to use it to

REFER TO somebody from a slightly-different branch of ones own religion. Thus, when most ministers speak of winning proselytes, they mean perhaps that a Methodist spends his time trying to win people from the Presbyterian, Baptist or other denominations, rather than to try to convert people to Christ who were not previously Christian. Such narrow proselyting has brought the word "proseytle" into disfavor in many circles.

4. The way that Jesus used the word proselyte in our Scripture certainly put the activity of winning proselytes, and the proselyte himself, in an unfavorable light.

I. Jesus warned the scribes and Pharisees that people won to their point of view by proselyting were undesirable, narrow, dogmatic, and zealous.

1. Three men were discussing tight-fisted, penny-pinching persons they had known. One said, "I know a man who writes a very small hand to save ink."

Another said, "A friend of mine always stops the clock at night to save

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... I have learned the scriptures and I have...
... see that people were to their point of...
... view by proselytizing were unobtainable...
... narrow, cognitive, and emotional.

... I have not been discussing right...
... listed, comparing records they had...
... known. One said, "I know a man who...
... writes a very small hand to save ink."
... Another said, "A friend of mine...
... always stops the clock at night to say

wear and tear on it."

Your men are spendthrifts," said the third man. "I know an old man who won't read the paper because, he says, it wears out his glasses."

(from Exchange, in Quote Jan. 24, 1971)

2. There are people who overdo almost anything! A trait that normally is quite commendable can be carried out in such a way that it is ridiculous and objectionable. That is the way Jesus saw the proselyting activities of the scribes and Pharisees. They were very active in seeking converts to their brand of Judaism. At least some of them traversed, or traveled, "sea and land to make a single convert," he pointed out to them. This is real dedication, and might be thought of as very commendable. We send missionaries to far-away places to win converts to Christ, and feel good when they are successful.

3. But Jesus included this subject as one of the "seven woes," one of the ways these to whom he spoke were bringing sorrow and shame and trouble upon themselves. "Woe to you," he had begun, because you do this. What

...and fear of it." "Your men are spouting this," said the third man. "I know an old man who once read the paper because, he says, it kept out his classes." (from Exodus, in note Jan. 7, 1971)

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3. But Jesus included this subject as one of the "seven woes," one of the ways used to warn the scribes who bring heavy burdens and trouble upon themselves. "So to you," he had heard, "I said you do this, that

was so wrong with seeking proselytes, or converts?

4. It was the way these converts were turning out, for the most part. ~~They were~~ ^{Each was} becoming "twice as much a child of hell" as the scribes and Pharisees who won him over. This, in a sense, is quite understandable, that a person who makes a drastic change, from one religion or philosophy to another, must be very strongly convinced. Once he has announced the change, to justify it he must demonstrate it and proclaim it ever more strongly to others, especially to his former family friends and neighbors, who have not yet switched. If he can't be quite dogmatic, convinced and strong, it would indicate that he has doubts. If anybody is going to be obnoxious in presenting the claims of ~~the new~~ religion, it will be the newly-won who are having to justify to themselves and others that to which they have changed.

5. This ~~may~~ ^{is} be all right ~~too~~, if tolerance of others is practiced, if coercion is not used, if courtesy and respect for personality are ~~in the~~ basic attitudes. But so often zealous

... as so strong with ...

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... it ... all ... of others is ... if ... is ... the ... of ...

converts or proselytes to a religion are rude, intolerant, and condemning of others who don't see it their way. These, I believe, are the type of proselytes of whom Jesus talked. Such a person is better as he was.

II. This prompts us to ask "who wants a proselyte?", and to answer it "we don't."

1. We answer it this way because, as we've pointed out, such a person, a proselyte, is rarely tolerant, loving, forgiving, cooperative, reasonable, and generally is unpleasant to be around.

2. An old man was sitting on the porch of a little village store when a big shiny car drove up with two strangers in it. "Hey, Grandpa," one of them called out, "how long has this burg been dead?"

The old man looked over his spectacles before he replied: "Not long, I reckon. You're the first buzzards I've seen." (Quote, Jan.24,1971).

The attitude of the men in the car, that such a place as the small village was dead and undesirable exemplified a sort of condemning, ridiculing atti-

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2. An old man was sitting on the
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strangers in it. "Hey, George," one
of them called out, "that long has this
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The old man looked over his spec-
tacles before he replied: "Not long,
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I've seen. (Cries, then 2-1971).
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This toward others, ~~which~~ is somewhat like ^{some} the religious converts or proselytes ~~who~~ acts towards other people who don't share ~~this~~ particular twist of faith: they are dumb, unreasonable, heathen, condemned. And such ^{proselytes} people are hell to be around. Who wants such a proselyte? I don't.

III. Jesus' teaching here would seem to indicate that as christians we should try hard to exemplify loving, cooperative, and positive attitudes toward others, whether or not they agree with us and are of one mind with us.

1. A young lady was having a heart-to-heart talk with her grandmother about her school work, her boy friends, and other major interests. "Tell me, Grandma," she said suddenly, "at what age are men the most fun?"

"Men are like record players, honey," replied the elderly lady. "They play at different speeds according to age, but they are nice to have around at 33, 45, or 78." (Quote, 1-24-71).

2. Christians, or all people, should be nice to have around, shouldn't they? What makes them nice to have around?

This

...towards other people who don't
...the various concepts of prosody
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Because they are, as we've suggested, loving, cooperative, non-condemning, positive in their relationships with other people. No matter what a person says about his faith, if he is disputative, condemning, harsh, hard to get along with, domineering, you automatically suspect his sincerity, his degree of christian commitment. It's natural to look at a negative type person that way, even tho we shouldn't condemn.

Conclusion:

1. By way of summary, let us look at selected words, our text, from the 15th verse of Matthew 23, which say, "when he becomes a proselyte, you make him a child of hell." Who wants a proselyte like that? Obviously, few people. Jesus didn't, and we, his followers shouldn't.

2. The converse, the opposite, is obvious, that christians need to practice the positive traits about which we've talked, so that those won to the faith through our words and actions are loving, forgiving, tolerant, non-condemning, good-to-be-around persons as they practice and explaining of their faith.

because they are, as we've suggested, loving, cooperative, non-competitive, positive in their relationships with other people. No matter what a person says about his faith, if he is selfish, competitive, harsh, and to a large extent, uninterested in the welfare of other people, his behavior is indicative of a negative type person that we've seen in our study's context.

Conclusion:

1. A study of summary, as we look at selected words, our text, from the 12th verse of Matthew 23, which say, "And he becomes a hypocrite, you will be like him, child of hell," who wants a hypocrite like that? Obviously, no. So, Jesus said, and we, the disciples should...

2. The converse, the opposite, is obvious; that Christians need to practice the positive traits about which we've talked, so that those who do the right through our words and actions are loving, giving, tolerant, non-competitive, good-to-do-ground persons. At the practice and explanation of their...