

The Gospel – The Message of Jesus Christ

The Gospel and Evangelism

Evangelism is our Duty and Privilege

As we have learned in some detail, the Gospel is the message of Jesus Christ and what He has done to reconcile us to God and save us from sin and death. The fact that it is a message begs the question, “Who shall tell it?” And of course the obvious answer is, “Christians, those who have experienced the power and blessedness of His salvation.” The reason for this is twofold. First, that is our duty and second, that it is our privilege and delight. Let us first examine the fact that evangelism is the duty of Christians. It is a clear commandment of the Lord Jesus Christ to His disciples, of whom all Christians are, to preach the Gospel and to make disciples.

Matthew 28:19-20 - 19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." NASB

One might assume that maybe Jesus was speaking only to His disciples who were to be His Apostles, being that this command was given directly to them. However, it is obvious here that the command extends beyond the eleven to all those who would come after them. This is because the command he gave them was for them to teach their disciples to **“observe everything that I commanded you.”** Therefore the command to make disciples (which obviously includes evangelism), extends to everyone who becomes a disciple of Christ through the ministry of the Apostles, which includes every Christian in every age thereafter. This is also affirmed by Jesus statement, **“I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”** Obviously Jesus knew that this command would extend beyond the time of the disciples even until our time. In fact, one of the reasons we were given the indwelling power of the Spirit was to be a witness of Christ and to testify of the goodness of His salvation so that others may be saved.

Acts 1:8 - 8 but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. NASB

Not only is it clear that the Church is the witness of Christ to each successive generation until He comes, but the ministry of evangelism is exactly how the Church carried out Jesus commands as we see in the narrative of Acts.

Acts 8:1-4 - 8 And Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. - And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 And some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him. 3 But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house; and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison. 4 Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word. NASB

Here we see the Church being scattered because of persecution in Jerusalem, and being scattered to the surrounding regions. The Apostles however, remained in Jerusalem. So here we see the members of the body of Christ individually going about and preaching the word wherever they went. This is consistent with the idea of the priesthood of all believers, where we have been called to **“proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called us.”**

1 Peter 2:9 - 9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; NASB

Later in the same context, Peter tells us to be ready to **“make a defense”** (give an answer) for the hope that you have.

1 Peter 3:15 - 15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; NASB

It is rather clear that unless we are acting as Christ's "*witnesses*" (Acts 1:8), and "*proclaiming His excellencies*" (1 Peter 2:9) that we will have no need to "*make a defense*" to anyone because no one will be asking about our hope because it will not be evident. But if we are in fact living as "*lights in the world,*" and His praise is "*continually in our mouth (Psalm 34:1),*" people will be rather curious how we can always be so joyful and encouraged in a world that is falling apart around us. Not only are these things true, but Paul clearly describes our evangelistic ministry to us in 2 Corinthians chapter 5. There he explains that "*knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men.*" And this is because "*the love of Christ controls us*" and so therefore we Christians "*no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again.*"

2 Corinthians 5:11,14-15 - 11 Therefore **knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men**, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences..... 14 **For the love of Christ controls us**, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; 15 and He died for all, that **they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf**. 16 Therefore from now on we recognize no man according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.

This persuading of men Paul tells us is because we have become "*new creatures in Christ*" and we have received the "*ministry of reconciliation*" from God and now because of this "*we are ambassadors of Christ*" who entreat others to "*be reconciled to God.*" This is what we are "*persuading men*" to do (2 Cor 5:11).

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 - 17 **Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature**; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 18 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, **and gave us the ministry of reconciliation**, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and **He has committed to us the word of reconciliation**. 20 **Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God**. 21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. NASB

And this brings us to our second point, that it is our great delight and privilege to share the good news of the Gospel with others. Is it not the great desire of our hearts now that we have received the mercy of God in Christ to see others come to faith and repentance and be saved? Isn't this what Paul meant when he said, "*knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men.*" In fact, one must wonder if so called Christians have no desire to see others saved, if they really be Christians at all. But in fact we do want to see people be saved as this is one of our chief desires in life now. It gives us meaning and purpose as Christians as we have a sincere love for our fellow man and wish for them to be "*reconciled to God*" and find the hope and peace that we have received in Christ. More than this, it is because we have a great love for God that we would not keep silent about the glory of His grace to us in Christ and that we shall tell it to the ends of the earth. This is something that glorifies God in a very distinct and direct way. When we speak of the excellent greatness of the salvation of God through Christ Jesus, we are telling forth the high praises of God for the greatest thing He has done in all of History. This magnifies the greatness of the mercy of God in Christ and causes people to see the whole purpose of God in creation. In short, sharing the Gospel in evangelism glorifies God in a way that speaks directly to God's plan of redemption like no other things we can say. Consider this quote from **J.I. Packer in his book, "Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God"**..... "*May I stress again, if we ourselves have known anything of the love of Christ for us, and if our hearts have felt any measure of gratitude for the grace that has saved us from death and hell, then this attitude of compassion and care for our spiritually needy fellow men ought to come naturally and spontaneously to us. It was in connection that aggressive evangelism that Paul declared that "the love of Christ controls us" (2 Cor5:14). It is a tragic and ugly thing when Christians lack desire, and are actually reluctant, to share the precious knowledge that they have with others whose need of it is just as great as their own. It was natural for Andrew, when he found the*

*Messiah, to go off and tell his brother Simon, and for Phillip to hurry to break the good news to his friend Nathaniel (John 1:40). They did not need to be told to do this; they did it naturally and spontaneously, just as one would naturally and spontaneously share with one's family and friends any other piece of news that vitally affected them. There is something very wrong with us if we do not ourselves find it natural to act in this way, let us be quite clear about that. It is a great privilege to evangelize; it is a wonderful thing to be able to tell others of the love of Christ, knowing that there is nothing that they need more urgently to know, and no knowledge in the world that can do them so much good. Dear friends, let us consider the great need of the lost people around us. How important and serious is the issue of salvation? We should consider it a great privilege to have the knowledge of Christ and on this basis, a great privilege to share it. Is it not the most important thing in the life of anyone we know? Will it not do them more good than anything else you can say or do for them? Is it not the highest act of love to tell them how to be saved and reconciled to God? It is indeed and therefore let us open up our mouths and tell of His wondrous grace! Furthermore, let us consider what a shame it is to withhold the Gospel from those who so desperately need it.....**J.I. Packer** goes on..... “We should not, therefore, be reluctant and backward on the personal and individual level. We should be glad and happy to do it. We should not look for excuses for wriggling out of our obligation when occasion offers to talk to others about the Lord Jesus Christ. If we find ourselves shrinking from this responsibility and trying to evade it, we need to face ourselves with the fact that in this we are yielding to sin and Satan. If (as is usual) it is the fear of being thought odd and ridiculous, or of losing popularity in certain circles, that holds us back, we need to ask ourselves in the presence of God: Ought these things to stop us from loving our neighbor? If it is a false shame, which is not shame at all but pride in disguise, that keeps our tongue from Christian witness when we are with other people. We need to press on our conscience this question: Which matters more – our reputation or their salvation? We cannot be complacent about this gangrene of conceit and cowardice when we weigh up our lives in the presence of God. What we need to do is to ask for grace to be truly ashamed of ourselves, and to pray that we may so overflow in love for God that we will overflow in love for our fellow men, and so find it an easy and natural and joyful thing to share with them the good news of Christ.” Dear friends, let us find the courage needed to rise above our fear of man and to share the good news of our Lord's precious sacrifice. Let's face it. Jesus was a Gospel preacher and we are all followers of Him. I am not quite sure how you read this, but in my mind, that makes us all Gospel preachers to some extent or degree. Dear Christian, are you glad to have been saved by Christ? Good heavens man, tell somebody!*

God is Sovereign in Salvation

This brings us to the question then, how does evangelism work? Is it really our job to “save people?” Is the Gospel a tool in our hands that we use to save people and cause them to come to faith? Is it really our job to convince people somehow of their need to be saved and of Christ's provision for them to do so? Well, the very clear answer to these questions is NO of course not and YES of course! As paradoxical as this may seem let us not be confused by this but rather clearly understand the doctrine of salvation as the Bible teaches it. In short, God is the One who saves people through the life and death of Christ by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, but He uses the Church as a means of telling the message of Christ so that His elect people can be saved from every tribe and language, people and nation. Therefore, God is sovereign in who will be saved, but we are the means of bringing them to faith, by our obedience in sharing the Gospel with them which is “*the power of God unto salvation for all those who believe,*” regardless of race, class, or gender.

Romans 1:16 - 16 For I am not ashamed of **the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes,** to the Jew first and also to the Greek. NASB

In fact, right in the middle of Paul's definitive teaching about the doctrine of God's sovereignty in salvation (Romans 8-11), he clearly tells us of our great responsibility to be the means that God uses by preaching the Gospel.

Romans 10:12-15 - 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; 13 for **"Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved."** 14 **How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent?** Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" NASB

In fact, it is because God has elected people from every tribe and language that we are guaranteed some level of success in evangelism. Consider these words from John Stott from his commentary on Ephesians pg 48 in regard to this matter.... *"Let no one say . . . that the doctrine of election by the sovereign will and mercy of God, mysterious as it is, makes either evangelism or faith unnecessary. The opposite is the case. It is only because of God's gracious will to save that evangelism has any hope of success and faith becomes possible. The preaching of the gospel is the very means that God has appointed by which he delivers from blindness and bondage those whom he chose in Christ before the foundation of the world, sets them free to believe in Jesus, and so causes his will to be done."* Therefore it is important for us to grasp the concept that it is God working in the hearts of those He is calling to salvation who will eventually respond to our preaching and be saved. We cannot convince anyone to be saved apart from God's work in regeneration. This is because the natural man does not receive and CANNOT understand the things of God apart from regeneration. Only the Christian has received the Spirit of God and with Him the supernatural ability to **"know the things freely given to us by God."**

1 Corinthians 2:12-15 - 12 Now **we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God,** 13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. 14 But **a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them,** because they are spiritually appraised. 15 But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. NASB

This is why it is often so difficult for us to persuade and convince people of their need to be saved. It is also what we pray for when we ask God to save people. We are asking for God to regenerate them and give them the gift of faith by the power of the Spirit so that they can believe and be saved. This what Jesus meant when He said to Nicodemus, **"unless you are born again you cannot see the kingdom of God."**

John 3:3- 3 Jesus answered and said to him, **"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."** NASB

Furthermore, this is why we receive so much resistance when telling people the Gospel. To people who God is not calling to faith, they have no ability in their natural selves to receive or understand the things of God and the Scripture says that **"the word of the cross is foolishness to them."** Therefore God must enable them by regeneration in order to have this supernatural ability. This is how God works out salvation in people's lives by the effectual calling of the Spirit. For more on this topic see the following....

- **Natural Inability** - http://www.heavenslight.org/salvation/Natural_Inability.pdf
- **Regeneration** – http://www.heavenslight.org/salvation/Regeneration_2007.pdf
- **Effectual Calling** - http://www.heavenslight.org/salvation/Effectual_Calling.pdf

Consider how clearly this matter is stated in 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 where Paul gives us some definitive statements about God's Sovereignty in Salvation.

1 Corinthians 1:18-31 - 18 For the word of the cross is **to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.** 19 For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,

And the cleverness of the clever I will set aside." 20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 **For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.** 22 For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; 23 **but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, 24 but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.** 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 26 **For consider your calling, brethren,** that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; 27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28 and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, 29 that no man should boast before God. 30 **But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus,** who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, 31 that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord." NASB

Consider what is meant by the phrase in verse 18 ... ***“the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”*** Paul is here making a distinction between two kinds of people, those who are ***“perishing”*** and those who are ***“being saved.”*** But consider how he describes the distinction between them. The person who is perishing thinks ***“the word of the cross (that is, the Gospel) is foolishness,”*** and to the one who is ***“being saved”*** it is the ***“power of God.”*** He continues to draw this out in the following verses stating that ***“the world through its wisdom did not come to know God.”*** This is to say that it is not a matter of intellectual assent to some common facts about knowing God, for if it were, the world could come to know God simply by reasoning about the facts. He points out that the message indeed does seem like ***“foolishness”*** to the world and it is through this ***“foolish message”*** that God is ***“well pleased to save those who believe.”*** Then in verse 24, he makes the key distinction between those who ***“perish”*** and those who are ***“being saved.”*** He describes those who are ***“being saved”*** as ***“the called”*** and explains that to them ***“Christ is both the power and the wisdom of God.”*** He then goes on to describe that the ***“calling”*** of the ***“brethren”*** is not because they were ***“wise, mighty, noble, or strong”*** but instead that ***“God has chosen”*** the ***“foolish, weak, base and despised”*** things of the world in order to ***“nullify”*** the wisdom of men so that ***“no man should boast before God.”*** In summary, God has chosen those whom He saves and does affect that salvation in their life by a ***“calling”*** to salvation that causes them to see Christ as wisdom and power, granting them an ability that worldly people who are ***“wise, mighty, noble and strong”*** do not have. His point is that God saves the ***“foolish, weak, base and despised”*** in order to show that it is ***“by His doing”*** that people are ***“in Christ Jesus.”*** This is his summary point of this passage in verse 30, ***“but by His doing you are in Christ Jesus who became to us wisdom from God.”*** By God’s sovereign grace has He called those who are being saved, and He has done this in such a way as to nullify the world’s wisdom with the foolish word of the cross in order to close the mouth of boasting men, so that no one can boast about salvation but rather only give praise to God for what He has done to save. Therefore he reasons, ***“let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.”*** verse 30. People do not come to Christ by wise intellectual assent but rather by God’s divine calling to salvation which opens eyes to see Christ as His wisdom and power to save. In fact, in the entire chapter of 1 Corinthians chapter 2 Paul is explaining this point, making it clear that the only way we come to know and accept the depths and things of God, namely Christ and Him crucified, is by the power of the indwelling Spirit who gives us a supernatural ability to understand and know the things freely given to us by God. This truth about God’s sovereignty in salvation is a common theme in the entire Bible and a key to understanding how evangelism and the Gospel work in order to save those who God is calling to salvation. We cannot discern who they are, we only know as they respond with supernatural power and understanding of Christ as Savior. Therefore it is this understanding that we seek to

give them by the message of the *“word of the cross,”* that is, the Gospel. And to this understanding we all pray. Consider what it is that you pray for when you pray for someone to be saved? And if it be by the power of intellectual assent that people are saved, why do you beseech God for this? For if it be true that it is just a matter of intellectual assent verses divine enablement, then it is simply a matter of your persuasive words in order to bring them to faith by the *“wisdom of the world.”* Of this fact Paul speaks explaining that he did not use *“superiority of speech or of wisdom,”* that his *“preaching and his message were not with persuasive words of wisdom”* but rather he simply presented *“Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”*

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 - And when I came to you, brethren, **I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom**, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. **2** For I determined to know nothing among **you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified**. **3** And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. **4** And **my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom**, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, **5** that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. NASB

This is because people come to believe by the power of divine enablement (effectual calling) not by being persuaded to some intellectual assent unto the glory of the cross by superior speech. But even as we consider this, we all know the folly of it, because it is only by divine enablement that anyone comes to know God and believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ with saving faith, because saving faith is the gift of God and no one can employ it until it be given to them by God. Of this fact of divine enablement (regeneration & effectual calling) the Bible speaks clearly.

Ephesians 2:8-9 - **8** For **by grace** you have been saved **through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God**; NASB

Matthew 13:11 - **11** And He answered and said to them, **“To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.** NASB

John 6:44 - **44** “No one can come to Me, **unless the Father who sent Me draws him**; and I will raise him up on the last day. NASB

John 6:65 - **65** And He was saying, “For this reason I have said to you, that **no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father.**” NASB

Acts 16:14 - **14** And a certain woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; **and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.** NASB

Romans 8:28-30 - **28** And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those **who are called according to His purpose.** **29** **For whom He foreknew, He also predestined** to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; **30** and **whom He predestined, these He also called**; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. NASB

1 Peter 1:3 - **3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has **caused us to be born again** to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, NASB

James 1:18 - **18** **In the exercise of His will He brought us forth** by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures. NASB

Therefore as we consider the Gospel and evangelism it is important to understand that it is God that saves those whom He has called by the power of His Spirit at work within them. And it is our privilege to participate in this supernatural work by simply presenting Christ Jesus and Him crucified to people and helping them by explaining the simple facts of the Gospel to them. It is God then, that *“causes them to be born again”* by *“the exercise of His will”* as He *“opens their heart to respond”* to the things that we tell them. We then can rest even in the face of resistance and opposition to the Gospel because we are simply the means of bringing the message and they do not come by our superior speech or fancy words of worldly wisdom but rather by power of God’s Spirit in regeneration. This confidence then in God’s purpose and will should help us to be both bold and patient with those to whom we witness of God’s saving work in Christ. It is our responsibility to be a witness, but it is not our responsibility to save anyone because that is God’s work. Therefore let us simply present Christ and Him crucified and leave the results to God.

Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

To be sure, this is not to say that people don't make a conscious choice to believe in Christ and that we don't try to persuade them to believe, of course we do. People must make a conscious choice to be saved and respond to the Gospel in repentance and faith. Of course they must and this is the response we seek from them when preaching the Gospel to them. It is important to recognize however (not for the hearer but for the Christian witness), that if and when they do respond with true repentance and saving faith, they have done so by the power of God through regeneration and primarily because of His choice for their salvation. The outworking of His election then does have a moment in time and space when it comes to fruition and someone believes and is saved. This *conversion* is what we seek when sharing the Gospel even though we realize it is a supernatural work that God must perform in the hearts. So we seek to sow the Gospel seed, and expect others to water somewhere down the road, but it is God that causes the growth and brings to life. We may see one come to faith and repentance, and we may not.

1 Corinthians 3:5-7 - 5 What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even **as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. 6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.** 7 So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. NASB

Further, in sowing this Gospel seed we should seek to accurately and vividly portray the Gospel in the most serious yet amiable way that we can. After all, a right response to Christ's Gospel call is the most important decision that anyone will ever make. It will either be the "*fragrance of life*" to them or the smell of death, but they *must* either repent and believe, or perish. There is no middle ground with Christ. Either He is Savior and Lord, or we are at enmity with Him. In His words, either we will repent, or we will perish.

Luke 13:5 - 5 "I tell you, no, but **unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.**" NASB

2 Corinthians 2:14-16 - 14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and **manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.** 15 For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; 16 **to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life.** And who is adequate for these things? NASB

But as a Gospel witness, even though we seek a human response to our fervent efforts to persuade men of their lost condition and need to repent and believe, we also realize that this ability only comes from God through regeneration and effectual calling, so we are able to be both *bold and patient* with our hearers knowing that God will work His own will in His own good time. We can be bold because we carry the very words of life and we have direct orders from the Sovereign of the universe to do it. We carry the message of the triumphant King coming in to conquer what is rightfully His, and we are ambassadors sent to warn and encourage our subjects to surrender and be blessed or to resist and be destroyed. However, surrender or resistance is not in our power to grant, but we only come as a messenger of the good news of free forgiveness for rebellion and gracious lovingkindness and blessing to all who will surrender. Our job is to be faithful to the message of the King and a good ambassador of His Kingdom. A godly Christian example and clear presentation of the Gospel are the most effective tools we have to point people to Christ, but only He can give them a "*new heart and a new spirit.*"

Ezekiel 36:26-27 - 26 "Moreover, **I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you;** and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 "And **I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful** to observe My ordinances. NASB

Another important thing to remember is that God does all good things in His own good time. Therefore we must be patient in seeing others come to Christ. Many times God uses several people and different means to bring people to Himself and we are just one of these tools in the hands of God to help get them there. Therefore it is important to be patient and loving as we

witness, hope and pray for the salvation of those to whom we preach. Consider these words again from J.I. Packer..... *“if on the other hand, you meet a person who is not thus prepared, a person who as yet has no conviction of the truth of the Gospel and perhaps no idea, or even a false idea, of what the Gospel actually is, it is worse than useless to try and stampede him into a “snap” decision. You may be able to bully him into a psychological crisis of some sort, but that will not be saving faith and will do him no good. What you have to do is take time with him, to make friends with him, to get alongside him, to find out where he is in terms of spiritual understanding, and to start dealing with him at that point. You have to explain the Gospel to him, and be sure that he understands it and is convinced of its truth, before you start pressing him to an active response. You have to be ready to help him, if need be, through a spell of seeking to repent and believe before he knows within himself that he has received Christ, and Christ has received him. At each stage you have to be willing to go along with him at God’s speed, which may seem to you a strangely slow speed. But that is God’s business, not yours. Your business is simply to keep pace with what God is doing in his life. Your willingness to be patient with him in this way is the proof of your love of him no less than of your faith in God. If you are not willing thus to be patient, you need not expect that God will favor you by enabling you to win souls.”* With this knowledge then of the Sovereignty of God and of the inevitable human response that is necessary for anyone to be saved, let us draw several **conclusions** from what we have learned.

God is Sovereign – People come to faith by the *effectual calling* of the Spirit of God because they have been elected by God. God is Sovereign in who the elect are, and He in His own time and in His own divine method saves those whom He has chosen.

Universal Call - We have no ability to discern who the elect are and are not, therefore we are diligent to preach the *free offer* of the Gospel to **all people** in hopes that they are elect and will respond, regardless of race, class, gender or any other distinction. Their salvation remains in God’s effectual call, not our ability to wrangle them with fine sounding words or skillful apologetic arguments. These may help, but in the final analysis it is the effectual calling of God that brings people to conversion.

Prayer - Prayer is a vital part of evangelism as salvation requires the hand of God to move upon an individual and regenerate their soul and give them the ability to grasp the Gospel. God in His sovereignty then, has been pleased to allow us to participate in people’s salvation through prayer and preaching. Praying for the salvation of those to whom we witness is important and necessary.

Gospel content - Our methodology is not the primary issue in evangelism but rather the content of the message of the Gospel itself is primary because it alone is *“the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.”* The *content* of the Gospel message is a matter of grave importance so that we clearly articulate the Apostolic (of Jesus and the Apostles) message of the Gospel.

Human Response – It is of utmost importance that we stress upon people their responsibility to *repent of their sins* and make a conscious choice to *trust in Christ* as their righteousness before God. Their must be a public conscious response to Christ of which *baptism* is the crowning event of ones public confession and identification with Christ as both Savior from death and Lord of our life.

Christian Duty – It is our responsibility to be a *witness* of the Christ and His Gospel, but it is not our responsibility to somehow change people’s hearts. That is God’s work. Therefore let us simply present Christ and Him crucified, and do this to the best of our frail ability and leave the results to God. This should allow us to be bold, patient and faithful in our proclamation of the Gospel as we confidently rest in the fact that God’s Word will accomplish that which He sent it for.

Important things in sharing the Gospel

There are no magic bullets when it comes to sharing the Gospel. It is simply a matter of us being a faithful ambassador of the message of Christ. However there are many guiding principles that can help us to be as **effective as possible**.

1) Simple Message – Communicate the simple truths of the Gospel **clearly**.

God – It is a message about the One true and living God and His claim on our lives as our Sovereign Creator and Righteous Judge.

Man – Man was created by God, in God's image, to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. But man sinned against God by disobeying His holy law. Man therefore separated himself from God's holy and satisfying presence, and incurred His wrathful displeasure. This is why there is death and suffering in the world.

Christ – Christ's death was the substitute payment for the penalty that we deserved for our sin. His death is God's only provision for the forgiveness of man's sin and the appeasement of God's wrath against him. His life provides a perfect righteousness for us in the sight of God.

Response - We are called to respond to this good news in repentance and belief - turning away from our sin and self-sufficiency toward God, and trusting in the shed blood of Jesus Christ as the substitute penalty that we deserved for our sin.

In one sentence, *“Man has been separated from God (the Creator and sustainer of life) because of sin, and sin is why there is death in the world, and Christ is God's provision to atone for man's sins, and man can simply receive God's provision through repentance and faith.”*

Romans 3:21-24 - 21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even **the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe**; for there is no distinction; 23 **for all have sinned** and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being **justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus**; NASB

2) Gentleness and Respect – It is important to be a witness with Christian character and integrity. You carry the words of eternal life to dying sinners and you represent the King of virtue. As a witness of Christ therefore, we are to be a **witness of Christ's character** to others as well as a witness of His message.

1 Peter 3:15 - 15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, **always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you**, yet with gentleness and reverence; NASB

Matthew 5:16 - 16 **“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.** NASB

3) Old, Old Story – The Gospel never changes according to the shifting winds of culture or modernity or fads of any kind. It is a message about the **historical facts** of Jesus Christ and what He HAS accomplished through His life, death and resurrection. Redemption has been accomplished by Christ. It is therefore the fulfillment of the exact requirements of God to meet the demands of His own justice, and Christ performed that perfectly. It ever remains therefore, the unchanging power of God for all who receive it with authentic, persevering faith.

Romans 1:16-17 - 16 For I am not ashamed of **the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes**, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous *man* shall live by faith." NASB

4) Personal Savior and Lord – Jesus is a **personal Savior and Lord for every individual** who believes. This means that each person must come to Him personally and be saved by Him for their own personal sins. Each person must submit to Jesus as Lord, in repentance from sin and personal trust in Him alone as their righteousness before God to be saved.

John 3:36 - 6 "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but **he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.**" NASB

5) **A Right Response, Faith and Repentance** – It is of utmost importance that we stress upon people their responsibility to **repent of their sins** and make a conscious choice to **trust in Christ** as their righteousness before God. Their must be a public conscious response to Christ of which *baptism* is the crowning event of ones public confession and identification with Christ as both Savior from death and Lord of our life.

6) **A Message about God** – Many people in our era and culture have no fundamental understanding about God, or at best, a flawed view of God which is defined by much error. To make this matter worse, many in our "*postmodern, pluralistic*" culture, people have re-defined God to fit there own criteria of what they want God to be like, rather than who He really is according to reality. Therefore it is important to give people, to some degree, a fundamental and corrected view of God in order to lay a foundation for the Gospel message.

Acts 17:24-25, 30-31 - 24 "The God who made the world and all things in it, since **He is Lord of heaven and earth**, does not dwell in temples made with hands; 25 neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, **since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things**; 30 "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, **God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, 31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man** whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." NASB

It is important then to stress that people are estranged from God personally and need to be reconciled to Him personally.

7) **Nothing More Important** – The Gospel is good news of great joy, but it is also a **serious matter of utmost importance**. Undoubtedly we will meet with much resistance if we are faithful to the true Gospel. But we should not let this discourage us. We will need much courage to proclaim the Gospel regularly and accurately. We must ask the question to ourselves, *Which matters more – our reputation or their salvation?* It is a serious matter of utmost importance and a supreme act of love for neighbor to tell people the Gospel.

Luke 13:5 - 5 "I tell you, no, but **unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.**" NASB

8) **Keep Learning** – A brand new Christian can tell someone the Gospel, but a seasoned and experienced Christian can do it with much **more accuracy and clarity**. More than this, many will meet us with a variety of questions which need sincere and truthful answers. These answers can give much aid to people who are coming the Christ. Therefore it is important for us to be able to meet these questions with Scripture and explanations from the Bible that address people's most troubling doubts, fears and objections. This usually accompanies people in the early days of embracing the Gospel message.

Colossians 4:4-6 - 5 **Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders**, making the most of the opportunity. 6 **Let your speech always be with grace**, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that **you may know how you should respond to each person.** NASB

9) **God is Sovereign** – It is our responsibility to be a *witness* of the Christ and His Gospel, but it is not our responsibility to somehow change people's hearts. That is God's work. Their salvation remains in **God's effectual call**, not our ability to wrangle them with fine sounding words or skillful apologetic arguments. These may help, but in the final analysis it is the effectual calling of God that brings people to conversion.

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 - And when I came to you, brethren, **I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom**, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined to know nothing among **you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified**. 3 And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. 4 And **my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom**, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. NASB

Let us therefore be kind, straightforward and gentle in our witness to others. We can be both bold and patient as we depend on God to change their hearts.