

EVANGELISM: A Call To Service

When spiritual leaders begin to call people into the service of evangelism many in the congregation start trying to make themselves very small so no one will notice them. Just the thought of having to memorize all of those scriptures and then remember the proper order of presentation scares most of us to death.

Many of us have come to the conclusion that we hire pastors and associates to do that kind of work. Have you ever felt that way?

One of the reasons so many of us have such a fear of evangelism is that we do not understand what evangelism is all about. The first section of these lessons answers the question, "What is evangelism?"

THE WORK OF EVANGELISM

The Apostle Paul had a disciple by the name of Timothy. He commissioned Timothy as the bishop of the church at Ephesus. Paul wrote two letters to Timothy during his tenure as bishop of Ephesus. These letters contain some very valuable teaching concerning the church and the Gospel of Christ.

Let's take a look at a passage in 2 Timothy:

2 Timothy 2:1-3 - You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

Contained in this passage:

v. 1 - “Be Strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”

Be strong because the task is great. Joshua was told when he was being called to lead Israel, “Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them” (Joshua 1:6). Timothy was being commissioned to a task equal to that of Joshua. He was being instructed to lead the believers of Ephesus into the promised land of abundant life and ministry.

Be strong because the devil takes advantage of every weakness. This admonition to be strong is directed not only to the leaders in the church but also to all who would follow closely the ways of the Lord. The Apostle Paul wrote, “When I would do good, evil

is present with me” (Romans chapter 7). We are constantly assaulted by the evil that would defeat us. We must be strong and exercised in faith to stay ahead of him.

Be strong because others need to see our strength. Other believers are watching to see how we will respond to the call to evangelize. If they see that we are not moved to serve they will feel justified in holding back. One of the prophets wrote of a time when God was looking for someone to lead the people in righteousness. He wrote it this way, “I looked for a man who would stand in the gap and make up the hedge and I found none.” Could that be God’s cry concerning this generation and his call to evangelism?

v. 2 - “And the things you have heard me say... entrust to reliable men.”

Commit the message of salvation to people who will carry the message to those who need to hear it. Not everyone will value the message of hope contained in the gospel. Therefore, we must diligently search for people who will respond to the call and become carriers of this message of hope.

Contained in this command is not only the responsibility of choosing people who will treasure the gospel, but it also includes training them in the gospel. The reason we are studying evangelism is that we want to be able to first understand the gospel and what it means to us, then we want to be able to

explain it to others.

The command is clear. First, learn well the message of the gospel. Then, find others who will be faithful to the gospel and train them.

Sometimes we feel inadequate to be carriers of the message. We may feel like God's Dirty Dozen. We are the chosen of God from the pile of society's discards. God has chosen us to do the work of evangelism. Whatever our place in the socio-economic structure of society - we are commissioned as carriers of the message.

Those who have been involved in addiction recovery and have practiced the 12 Steps have an understanding of the value of evangelism. Step 12, the final step in the process is as follows; *Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.*

"We tried to carry this message to others." A part of our own healing process is taking the healing message to other hurting people. All of us are in the process of being restored from sin and its effects in our lives. Our restoration process requires that we give witness to the work the Gospel has accomplished in our lives.

When we give a witness to the power of God to deliver us from sin two things are accomplished. First, there is great power released into our lives. Second, the power of the gospel is released into the life of the one to whom we have been witnessing.

There is a person in history who reminds of the reason we should tell people about Jesus. Do you remember the story of Aaron Burr? One of the most renowned traitors in American History. Years before his infamous alliance with the British he was attending Princeton University. There was a great revival and he was moved to be converted. He took counsel with a friend. The friend advised, "Wait until you have had time to think it through clearly and then decide." There is no record that Aaron Burr ever considered conversion again.

v. 3 - "Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus."

Understand this; when you accepted the call of God to salvation, you also accepted a call to war... Everyone one of you who have proclaimed faith in Christ has been drafted into the war of the ages.

This war, like all wars, requires commitment and dedication to victory. When Paul instructed Timothy, "Endure hardness as a good soldier," he was warning him that there would be times when it was not easy being a believer. Anyone who has heard the gospel and begun a walk with God has experienced some trials along the way.

There are times when we just want to draw back into the comfort of Christian fellowship and not be concerned with the world. It's just too painful to try to influence others. Most of them don't have a clue as to what we are talking about anyway.

It is during those times that we must learn to endure hardness. We must remember that our call is to being faithful and that God will give us the power to fulfill our commission as we are faithful to the call.

WHAT IS EVANGELISM?

It is realizing we have a message worth telling and telling it. An evangel is one who has a message to tell. An evangelist is someone who tells the message. Evangelism is simply telling the message to someone who would benefit from hearing it.

The value of communicating the message of the gospel cannot be overemphasized. We cannot take responsibility for the way others respond to the message, but we are responsible to see that they hear the message.

In the War of 1812, waged between America and Britain, there were 2070 Americans killed *after the peace treaty had been signed*. The reason? *Lack of communication*. The troops had not been informed that the war was over. How many have lost their lives to sin because no one told them they didn't have to die that way?

The Apostle Paul writes, "We hold this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Corinthians 4:7). The treasure of truth and the gospel of Christ have been placed in our safe keeping. We have been entrusted with this

message of the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus the Christ, the Son of God.

Because we have come to know the gospel and its' effect on us we “try to persuade men” (2 Corinthians 5:11). We know what is missed when people do not live in the blessing of the gospel; therefore, we try to persuade men.

It is this sense of being compelled to influence others that has served to propagate the gospel. Many people do not know that the first book printed on a printing press was the Bible; In fact the printing press was invented for the purpose of printing Bibles.

The first Bibles were printed in America in 1663. John Eliot, a pastor, paid to have 150 Bibles printed in the language of the Algonquin Indian. The purpose of these Bibles was to evangelize the Indians and “persuade” them of the good news of the gospel of Christ.

The “good news” is that man can be Reconciliation with God, be restored to the person that God intended man to be and be renewed in our inner man.

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