

Let's Be Evangelistic

An Examination of the Doctrinal Basis for Biblical Evangelism

It is often an emotional appeal that is used by those who seek to convince the average passive Christian he ought to be evangelistic. For example, they may refer to the "blood on your hands" remarks of Scripture such as Ezekiel 33:6 where the watchman is warned, *But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.*

An emotional appeal may have its part in generating evangelistic activity, but there must also be a strong Biblical basis established for Christians to be evangelistic. First let us consider that Biblical basis. Then we will make the emotional appeal.

The Imperative of Faith

Faith is the primary element in man's relationship with God. As Hebrews 11:6 says, *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

Actually, what man needs in order to see God is holiness and purity of heart. Hebrews 12:14 says, *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, **without which no man shall see the Lord.*** And Matthew 5:8 says, *Blessed are the pure in heart: for **they shall see God.*** But man does not have either of these, or anything like them. Romans 3:23 makes it clear that *all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.* Neither can man obtain these things by his own efforts because Isaiah 64:6 says *But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.* In other words, the best that man can do is equal to filthy rags, which will never qualify as holiness or purity of heart, and so man by his own efforts will never be able to see God.

For example, if you were to drive up to the White House in Washington, D.C. and request to see the President of the United States, you would be asked to show the proper credentials. If you cannot, you will not be given access to the President. In a similar way, when a person dies and shows up at the "pearly gates" seeking access to heaven and to God, he must show the proper credentials: holiness and purity of heart. Without them, he may not see God as noted above according to Scripture.

So, if a man does not have holiness or purity of heart and cannot obtain them by his own efforts, yet these are the things he needs in order to get into heaven and see God, what is he going to do? Thankfully, God has a plan.

God has chosen to accept faith from man in place of righteousness (the active ingredient of holiness and purity of heart). Abraham had nothing to boast about in his flesh (Romans 4:1-2). But when he exercised faith, his faith was counted unto him for righteousness (Romans 4:3). Trying to earn his own way only added to his debt (Romans 4:4). But his faith (believing God) was accepted in place of righteousness as if faith were righteousness (Romans 4:5). Faith is like a divine coupon. A coupon is not real money, but you can trade it at a store as if it

were real money. When a man places his faith in Christ, his faith is not a work of righteousness. [Note that Romans 4:5 makes work and faith opposites when it says, *to him that worketh not, but believeth.*] He still has nothing to boast about. But God accepts his faith in place of the working of righteousness and counts it as if it were (as Romans 4:5 says, *his faith is counted for righteousness*).

To those who exercise faith in Christ instead of trying to earn their own way, God gives His own righteousness, imputing it to their account. Romans 4:6 says that *God imputeth righteousness*. Romans 3:22 says that *the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ is unto all and upon all them that believe*. This means that when a person believes in and trusts Jesus Christ and all that Christ did righteously for him, God imputes divine righteousness into his heart. This verse also teaches that this is available **unto** everyone, but is only actually bestowed **upon** those who believe.

From this we can see why Hebrews 11:6 says that it is impossible to please God without faith. Faith is the only thing that man has available to him that allows him to obtain the holiness and purity of heart he needs to see God. Faith is therefore very, very important.

1. How does a man come to faith?

Man has five senses: taste, touch, smell, sight, and hearing. For many, believing in something depends on what they see or experience. 1 Corinthians 1:22 says that the Jews require a sign. As they said it themselves in John 6:30, *What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee?* Even the Greeks who require wisdom, base their belief on visual confirmation of their “wise” reasonings. As Gerhard Kittel reports,

In Greek mysteries and Gnosticism, more stress is laid on apprehension of God by seeing. Hearing can lead astray, not seeing. If some revelation is by hearing, the true mystery is known to sight.

Thus for God to say that faith comes by hearing, He is introducing a different dynamic than that which is generally practiced by man. He says in Romans 10:17, *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*. He says this at the conclusion of explaining the process by which one comes to salvation in verses 14 and 15. The process includes five steps. Someone must be sent. The sent one must preach. Someone must then hear what has been preached. Having heard, he must believe. Having believed, he must call (on the name of the Lord as specified in verse 13). Note how He expresses the matter of hearing and faith in the midst of this explanation: *how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?* True faith is believing in what God has said without the necessity of seeing or experiencing anything.

2. This is why the enemy wants to prevent hearing.

The Devil's desire is to hide the Gospel from them that are lost. 2 Corinthians 4:3 says, *But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost*. The word “hid” means to hinder knowledge of a thing. Luke 8:16 uses it in reference to covering (hiding) a candle with a vessel so that the light of the candle cannot be seen. Satan wants to cover the Gospel so that it cannot be heard.

He does this by blinding their minds. 2 Corinthians 4:4 says, *In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them*. The word “blinded” means to blunt mental discernment, or darken the mind. The word for “minds” in this verse means thoughts, or

what a person thinks. The Devil wants to control what people think.

So when an unbeliever is exposed to the preaching of the Gospel, Satan seeks to do two things to prevent the listener from actually hearing the truth. First, he seeks to discredit the message. One method of discrediting the message is to have someone contradict the truth. For example, when Paul preached in Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13), the Jews were filled with envy and *spoke against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming* (Acts 13:45). Another method of discrediting the message is to have someone change the truth. As in Acts 15:1, *And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.*

Secondly, he seeks to attack the messenger. One method of attacking the messenger is by seeking to ruin his reputation. At Philippi, Paul was being harassed by a demon possessed girl who was a puppet of those who marketed idolatry. When Paul cast the demon out of her, her masters took him and his companions before the city magistrates and said, *These men being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans* (Acts 16:20-21). The result was that Paul and Silas were put in jail, with the thinking that their incarceration would make them look like bad men and prevent people from listening to them. Another method of attacking the messenger is by seeking to silence him. In Acts 14:19, Paul was stoned and dragged out of the city, being left for dead. In another place (Acts 13:50), his opponents stirred up the city officials and successfully had Paul expelled from town.

The Devil will do whatever he can to prevent people from hearing the Gospel, even those who have been exposed to its being preached. This is because he knows that hearing is the first step to believing.

3. This is why we must not stop preaching the Gospel.

It is imperative that the messengers who bear the message of the Gospel be faithful in sounding out the truth. If faith is the only thing man can use to please God, and if faith comes to a man by hearing, then we must give them the opportunity to hear. Not preaching the Gospel plays directly into the hands of the enemy.

The Bible tells us that we must speak. Ephesians 6:19-20 says, *And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: **that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*** And Colossians 2:3-4 says, *Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: **That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.*** 1 Corinthians 9:16 adds the word "necessity" to express the imperative of preaching the Gospel. It says, *...**for necessity is laid upon me;** yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!*

The Gospel is the most important thing a person can ever hear in his lifetime. 1 Corinthians 1:18 says that *the preaching of the cross is ...the power of God.* Romans 1:16 says *it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.* We cannot afford to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or fail to speak about it to others. If they are ever to please God, they must have faith. If they are ever to have faith they must hear the truth from the Word of God.

The above is a strong Biblical basis for being faithful in evangelism. Now for the

emotional appeal. The following is a modern parable which illustrates the danger of the church being distracted from doing the necessary work of actually preaching the Gospel.

The Parable of the Apple Pickers

by James M. Weber

Once upon a time there was an apple grower who had acres and acres of apple orchards. One day he went to the village, contracted for one thousand apple pickers, and charged them with their responsibilities. He said to them, "I want you to go out into all my orchards and harvest the ripe apples, building storage facilities for them so that they will not spoil. I will provide all you will need to complete the task, and I will reward you according to your faithfulness when I return.

"As a group, you will be responsible for the entire operation, but, naturally, all of you will not be able to do the actual harvesting, as some will be engaged in carrying supplies, others in caring for the physical needs of the group, and still others in administrative responsibilities."

He then gave specific instructions to various individuals, making some pickers, others packers, truck drivers, administrators, cooks, accountants, storehouse builders, and apple inspectors. Although everybody could pick apples, one hundred were designated as full-time pickers.

In all, the apple grower had ten thousand acres of trees, and the hundred pickers started out at once to begin their harvesting work. Ninety-four of the pickers started picking right around the homestead, while six packed up a few supplies and headed out to the orchards many miles away.

In time, the eight hundred acres immediately surrounding the homestead blossomed with apple storehouses filled to overflowing with beautiful apples, and the orchards on those acres boasted thousands of apple trees almost picked bare. In fact, the ninety-four apple pickers working in those eight hundred acres were having more and more difficulty finding apples to pick, so, having time on their hands, they decided to put more effort into building larger storehouses and developing better equipment for picking and packing their apples.

Although there were yet apples to be picked from trees on the central eight hundred acres—here and there were small orchards in some rugged country a bit more difficult to reach where the trees still had large crops to be harvested—apples by the tens of thousands were rotting and falling to the ground on the remaining 9200 acres because the six pickers sent out to work those fields were simply not able to gather all the fruit that was ripe.

From time to time some of the full-time pickers passed away, but back at the homestead, members of the Society for the Picking of Apples were faithfully producing more prospective pickers, and they had a number of schools that specialized in training apple pickers. One day a prospective apple-picking student proved to have some special talents for picking quickly and effectively. When he heard of the thousands of acres of yet untouched orchards, he began thinking and talking of heading out into one of those faraway orchards, but some of his friends began to discourage him by saying, "With all your talent and ability, you would be far more valuable here around the homestead. Why, you could help to harvest apples from the trees on our central eight hundred acres more rapidly, and give all of us that much more time to build bigger and better storehouses. Perhaps you could even help us devise better ways to use our big storehouses since we have more space than we need for the present crop

of apples."

Trouble soon developed among the ninety-four pickers around the homestead. Some began stealing apples that had already been picked, and although there were still enough trees even on the eight hundred acres for all the available workers, some began fighting among and even in the trees. Some living on the northern edge of the homestead began sending their trucks to haul off apples from the southern side, and those on the south side sent their trucks to gather on the east side.

Stranger yet, near each of the apple pickers' homes were trees that were for one reason or another a bit more difficult to work. The apples were harder to get off, requiring a bit more time and effort, and the Society for the Picking of Apples hit upon a plan whereby the members of the society living in the east end of the homestead would send special pickers to those difficult trees in the west side, and those in the west side would send pickers to the difficult trees in the east side.

With so many workers and so few trees, the pickers and packers and truck drivers—and all the rest of the Society for the Picking of Apples living on the homestead—had lots of time for things other than just picking apples, so they began building nice houses and making a better life for themselves. They were very conscious of the proper styles of dress, and when the six pickers from the far-off orchards returned to the homestead for a visit, it was evident that they had not kept up with the styles.

Those on the homestead were always good to the six, and they always gave them the red-carpet treatment. Nevertheless, somehow or other, those six always had a difficult time understanding why the Society for the Picking of Apples continued to designate 96 percent of the budget for bigger and better apple-picking methods and equipment and personnel for the eight hundred acres around the homestead and only 4 percent for the really ripe orchards out in the distance.

The six knew that an apple is an apple wherever it may be picked and that the apples around the homestead were just as important as apples far away, but somehow or other they could not erase from their minds the tens of thousands of trees 'way out there which had never been picked. They longed for some pickers, packers, truck drivers, supervisors, equipment-maintenance men, ladder builders, yes, and even some professionals to teach better apple-picking methods out there where the apples were falling and rotting on the ground. Somehow or other they had in their hearts the nagging question of whether or not the people in the Society for the Picking of Apples were really majoring on the task assigned to them by the owner of the orchards.

There were those, of course, who were convinced that apple picking requires the best of equipment, so they were developing bigger and better ladders and nicer boxes in which to store the apples. They raised the standard of qualifications for full-time apple pickers. But when the owner returns and sees the acres of untouched apples, I wonder how happy he will be about the bigger and better ladders. 📖

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