

Do the work of an evangelist

Introduction

In the New Testament the word 'evangelist' is used several times indicating that in NT times using the freedom God gave His church, the church had an office of 'evangelist'. The work of an evangelist is seen in the very meaning of the word, which is 'proclaimer of the Gospel'.

- In Acts 21:8 Philip is called 'the evangelist'. He was one of the seven chosen in Jerusalem to assist the apostles. But he did not limit his work to that. The Lord had him down in Samaria reaping a spiritual harvest. We see him proclaiming the Gospel to the Ethiopian.
- In Eph. 4:11 an evangelist is listed with other offices in the church at that time of: apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers.
- Timothy, who had been assigned by Paul to work in the Ephesian area, was encouraged, "As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry." II Tim. 4:11

In this study we consider how we ought to be doing the work of proclaiming the Good News, evangelizing. We consider how first of all we are the Spirit's instruments. This does not diminish though in any way our efforts at evangelization. Secondly, we remember how in our efforts we have to always keep Christ in sight as the focus and example for us. Thirdly, we view points to ponder and pray over on evangelizing.

We are the Spirit's Instruments.

God works through us in our communicating the Gospel to the world round about us. As we look at Paul's efforts we note that though he is God's instrument, he does all within his power to carry out this effort of evangelizing.

Paul's writings breath the air of Good News preaching.

- In I Cor. 9:19-23 Paul points out how he would do all things that he could if by any means he might win, gain, save the more. He writes showing that he depends on God, but does all as if it depended on himself.
- In II Cor. 6:3f. he points out how, "We put no obstacle in any one's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry..." We can impede for a time God's will of salvation for individuals. It can be through carelessness on our part. But in the end it is the devil behind it to prevent the message of grace being given and received. The devil can use us as his instruments also.
- II Cor. 5:11 points up how we are to persuade men. It is with the message of God's love. In v. 14 the Gospel is centered on, "One has died for all." Our motives and our actions should bespeak this love of God for man.
- In II Cor. 10:5f. we with our speech "destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, taking every thought captive to obey Christ" In Paul's explanation here he is point out how thoroughly we carry on our evangelizing. It is not a mere couple statements, but a thorough explanation expanding as we need to to present the Gospel.

Just a casual look at some of Paul's actions show that he meant what he wrote.

- In Acts 13:43 after the synagogue meeting the people were "urged...to continue in the grace of God." And back in the synagogue again Paul and Barnabas "spoke out boldly" v. 46. This shows on the first missionary journey how it would be throughout the journeys. Intensive effort would be made in proclaiming Jesus.
- In Acts 17:1-4 we read that at Thessalonica Paul went into the synagogue again and again to speak the Good News of Christ as the fulfillment of God's promises. Notice the words used to describe Paul's activity: argued, explained, proved, proclaimed. In any way possible he would speak the Word.

- Later in Acts 17:16-34 we see how wherever Paul went in Athens he made it his task to proclaim Jesus, whether in synagogue, or market place daily, or on Mar's Hill. It was done with the religious and with the irreligious, to the ordinary and to the influential.
- In Acts 19:8-10 we learn that over and over again at Ephesus and the surrounding region Paul proclaimed the Christ. First for a period of three months is mentioned. And then two years are referred to indicating how this has to just keep on going, this proclaiming of Jesus. Paul used his words in: speaking boldly, arguing, pleading.

This all points up how evangelization should be to anyone and everyone, anytime and always, anywhere and everywhere. Our words are to be geared to the different hearers. And our words are to be from the heart.

We should earnestly contend for the faith. Jude 3 As we do we wrestle against our own flesh which is at times tries to get us to be indifferent and lazy and at other times fearful. We have to remember our exalted position though. We are a kingdom and priests unto our God. Rev. 1:6, 5:10 As such we cannot but speak of what we have learned from the Word. Our aggressiveness is seen also in our willingness to proclaim the whole counsel of God. Acts 20:27 We do not necessarily do this all at once. We do do it over time and consistently. It is a through and not superficial thing. And it is ongoing. As each of us has received gifts we are to employ them to serve in proclaiming His Word. We remember our Lord Himself in His earthly work, how He had to be working the works of Him who sent Him, while it is day. Jn. 9:4 So we too work before the night comes when the work will end focusing always on Him.

A Passage Explained = Mark 11:23

Mk. 11:23 "Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him."

Jesus is teaching His disciples to pray without doubting and here uses a figure of speech, hyperbole to stress this. This is an exaggeration for an effect. Think of when He told them it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. A camel cannot go through the eye of a needle. This is the figure of speech again of an exaggeration for an effect. Jesus wants His followers to pray trusting completely in God. When Jesus prayed in Gethsemane He said, "Not my will be done, but Thine." This we have to always attach at least in our mind to our prayers. If something is according to God's will, it will be done. In James 4:13-15 we are taught again that it must be according to God's will, not ours, "...If the Lord wills, we shall live and we shall do this or that."

We need always to keep Christ in sight as the focus and example.

Is. 42:2 "He will not cry or lift up His voice, or make it heard in the street," was a prophecy of how He would be humble. We need this humility which was in Christ. This passage does not mean we cannot do open air preaching. Our Lord did that on the mount, on the plain, in the boat. He even tells us we are to proclaim upon the housetops. Mt. 10:27

We seek to have the mind in us which was in Christ Jesus on humility. This is granted to us by His Spirit as we pour over the Scriptures. Jesus did not take glory to Himself, but gave glory to His Father. He was not doing His work for mere show, but to fulfill all for us and to demonstrate who He was for our comfort. He sought not to attract some following in a social or political manner.

He warned of the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees in that they did things to be seen by men. Mt. 6:5 They would go into the streets trumpeting themselves that they might be praised by men. We follow Christ's example of humility not seeking a following for ourselves. We must decrease, but He must increase. If we look at the two lengthiest evangelizing incidents with the woman at Jacob's well and with Nicodemus, we see He sought them to know Him as their Redeemer for heaven's home, not for earthly glory.

As we evangelize let us have this mind of humility in us with Christ as the focus of the proclamation and as the example of the proclaimer. Phil. 2:1-11

Evangelizing Points to Ponder in Prayer

These that follow are in no way exhaustive of all that we should consider. May they act as stimuli to get us more to thinking and praying.

- Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. Lk. 19:10 This is stated after the conversion of Zacchaeus. Would we have considered him one on which to focus? How often today don't we spend so much time on those already in the fellowship, while those outside – how much effort is put toward them? Remember the parables of the lost coin, lost sheep, lost son.
- Reaching out means to reach out. When Andrew went to his brother Peter, Peter did not know what Andrew knew. Brother to brother. Jn. 1:35-42 When Philip went to Nathanael, Nathanael did not know what Philip did. Jn. 1:43-51 Think also of the reaching out to strangers, would-be enemies, and people you just would not think of or want to reach out to – Lydia, Jailer at Philippi, Cornelius. In I Peter 3:15 we are reminded that the seed is to be broadcast to all. Make a defense to anyone. And how will they call you to account for your faith unless you first have broached it with them?
- We have a great goal put down by Paul as he wrote to the Romans. He did not want to build on another man's foundation. 15:20 This goal gave expression as he referred to Spain. 'New ground' was sought to reach the unreached.
- And then there is Love. We are to love in word and deed. I Jn. 3:18 What greater love can be given that to proclaim the precious Good News of a Savior slain and risen again for our deliverance. And when we talk to people are we interested in them? Do we seek to have points of commonality and contact that we might have a thorough discussion? Do we look for the windows of opportunity to speak? In II Cor. 5:14 we see that Love is the motive that impels, drives, controls, moves us. It is His love for us that we in turn show to others.
- When we proclaim, do we pray before and after speaking? We do all within our power to convey the saving message to others. Like Paul we seek to persuade. Acts 18:4, II Cor. 5:11 We get personally involved with anguish in our heart over people. Rom. 9:2 And we pray that God would work on their heart.
- Are you concerned about making an intentional effort to win (as Paul says) for Christ? In I Cor. 9:19-23 the very use of the words 'win, save, or gain' show us the intentional effort.
- In Acts 5:42 with the every day in the Temple and at home not ceasing to teach and preach Jesus as the Christ reminds us that it is a daily thing whether in a formal setting or in an informal setting. In Acts 5:28 it was said that the apostles "filled Jerusalem" with their teaching. At every opportunity and in seeking forums the evangelizing went on and could not be stopped.
- Do we seek a response? Peter said "repent and be baptized". Paul said "believe". This is surely evidence of a response desired. Do we carry on as if we seek a response?
- In our evangelism do we expand our opportunities and go on to yet other individuals. The history of the church is one of expansion. From Acts on it continues: 6:7 "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith." 12:24 "But the word of God grew and multiplied." 19:20 "So the world of the Lord grew and prevailed mightily." When we view the history of the church, it gives us confidence to move on.
- We know that God gives the increase. I Cor. 3:5-9 This causes us to commit all to the Lord in prayer. While we do all we can, it is God who produces.

We want to be proclaiming His Good News in season and out of season. There is nothing so great as the Good News of what our Jesus has done. May God allow each of us to do the work of an evangelist.