

## WHAT'S THE USE IN TRYING?

### Lesson 2

#### The Purpose of God in Evangelism

What is God's purpose in evangelism?

The primary purpose or *goal* of evangelism resides not in us but in God. David Vandrunen said it well in *God's Glory Alone: The Majestic Heart of Christian Faith and Life*:

On many occasions Scripture calls the saints to give glory to God in their worship, and in a couple of places it exhorts Christians to do all things for God's glory. But more often Scripture appeals to God's glory as a way of describing *God*, especially as he manifests himself through biblical history, climactically in the Lord Jesus Christ, his Holy Spirit, and the new creation where Christ now sits enthroned."<sup>1</sup>



#### ***God purposes evangelism to manifest his glory***

- Evangelism is the proclamation about God manifesting himself as he reveals his glory to his world in the new creation. Evangelism exists because God is upholding his glory through the entirety of history. And he makes his glory known through the witnessing of the gospel to the nations.

Psalms 102:

15 Nations will fear the name of the LORD,  
and all the kings of the earth will fear your glory.  
16 For the LORD builds up Zion;  
he appears in his glory;  
17 he regards the prayer of the destitute  
and does not despise their prayer.  
18 Let this be recorded for a generation to come,  
so that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD:  
19 that he looked down from his holy height;  
from heaven the LORD looked at the earth,  
20 to hear the groans of the prisoners,  
to set free those who were doomed to die,  
21 that they may declare in Zion the name of the LORD,  
and in Jerusalem his praise,  
22 when peoples gather together,  
and kingdoms, to worship the LORD.

- What is *the name* of the LORD that they may declare? The Lord, Christ Jesus is the ultimate coming of God's glory to us.

<sup>1</sup> David Vandrunen, *God's Glory Alone: Majestic Heart of Christian Faith and Life*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015) 26.

- Hebrews 1:3-4 “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.”
- God is manifesting his glory in the Son to the waking world. The effect of that unique work of Christ continues today as God actively advances his gospel by the word and Spirit.

### ***God purposes evangelism to establish his kingdom***

- Psalm 102:22 declares, “When peoples gather together, and kingdoms, to worship the LORD.” The Old Testament’s anticipation of the coming of the Messiah is far beyond a localized nationalistic leader. It is cosmic in scope.
- Herman Ridderbos writes, “The coming of the kingdom is first of all the display of the divine glory, the re-assertion and maintenance of God’s rights on earth in their full sense.”<sup>2</sup> It is God’s self-justification that he is not only there, but that he reigns our world, rules all man, and demands allegiance by the glory revealed in the cross.
- The kingdom revealed (consummated) in Christ’s gospel is the divine self-assertion against any who would oppose his authority.
- Ultimately, evangelism is something God is doing. Primarily, we are recipients of his kingdom. The kingdom is breaking in on the hearts of rebellious sinners from the outside-in.
- God’s eternal decree purposed to establish a people for himself through the seed of the woman, who would crush the serpent (Gen 3:15). This kingdom is indestructible (Mt 16:18), not even the gates of hell will prevail against it. King Jesus taught us to pray about his kingdom this way, “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven...” (Mt 6:10).
- His kingdom comprises a multitude of peoples and kingdoms from a vast stretch of history, languages, cultures, and places.
- The central redemptive focus of the coming of the kingdom is the conversion of his hearers to faith in Christ. When you pray, “your will be done” you are living out the reality of the obedience received within the kingdom.
- Considering Psalm 102:20-21, the message of the gospel is the central message of Scripture as to what accomplishes the work of the coming kingdom of God. The central idea is not in what we are trying to accomplish for God, but what God is doing in saving sinners.

### ***God purposes evangelism to purify us***

Titus 2:11-14 “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness *and to purify for himself a people* for his own possession who are zealous for good works” (ESV, *emphasis mine*).

- Christ gave himself for us in his life and death so that we would be purified.
- Purification situates itself in the Old Testament tabernacle under the ministry of the priesthood. The Levitical priesthood led ceremonial worship for Israel in which the people would temporarily come to the house of the Lord to offer their sacrifices to God as acceptable acts of proper worship.

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<sup>2</sup> Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1962. trans. H. de Jongste. ed. Raymond O. Zorn.), 20-21.

- The priests, during their ordination, were consecrated to God by the washing of their priestly garments with water, the wearing of those garments, and the anointing of their heads (Ex 29:4ff).
- For priests to serve in that office in the presence of God, they were to be washed and anointed. The priests alone, were ordained to be in the presence of God, ministering his covenant to the people. However, their ministry was temporary. Aaron and his sons, the Levites, would not be priests forever since individually they would die, and secondly, theirs pointed forward to Christ, whom David says, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek” (Psa 110:4; cf. Heb 5-7).
- Christ is the highest priest, who doesn’t just offer a sacrifice on our behalf, he himself *is* the final sacrifice. His offering of himself brings us forever into the presence of God. If you are in Christ, you *are* now purified.
- You have been washed by the blood of the Lamb (1 Cor 6:11; Heb 10:22; Rev 7:14), clothed in his righteousness (Rom 13:14; Gal 3:26-27; 2 Cor 5:21, cf. Psa 132:9; Isa 61:10), and anointed with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:17; 1 Cor 1:21; 1 Jn 2:20, 27), and you now serve him forever in his presence.<sup>3</sup>
- *The Priesthood of All Believers* – You no longer need a priest to serve between you and God. It means that you are now consecrated to God, irrevocably devoted to the worship of God by the solemn ceremony of Christ’s sacrifice. You are now God’s holy possession. And since you are, you serve him in obedience to his entire counsel.

### *The Good Work of Evangelism*

Since you have been brought into the presence of God as a purified people, it results in something visible and something invisible.

- Visibly, a disciple of Christ invests in the good work of evangelism. We deliver the good news to the nations. How you use your voices matters.
- The Westminster Larger Catechism Q/A 144 “What are the duties required in the ninth commandment? ...the preserving and promoting of truth between man and man.” Evangelism falls within this statement.
- When we withhold the gospel, we are not promoting the truth to our neighbor.
- Robert Coleman’s *The Master Plan of Evangelism* from his chapter titled “Consecration”:  
One must ask, why are so many professed Christians today stunted in their growth and ineffectual in their witness? Or to put the question in its larger context, why is the contemporary church so frustrated in its witness to the world? Is it not because among the clergy and laity alike there is a general indifference to the commands of God, or at least, a kind of contented complacency with mediocrity? Where is the obedience of the cross? Indeed, it would appear that the teachings of Christ regarding self-denial and dedication have been replaced by a sort of respectable “do as you please” philosophy of expediency.<sup>4</sup>
- God’s purification of us is not only that we do not lie. But also, we are to use our tongues for building up, for encouragement, for advancing the truth, that is, sharing the gospel that sets one free.
- Hebrews 13:14-15, “For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Through him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, *the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name*” (ESV, *emphasis mine*).
- The Heidelberg Catechism says it well:  
Q. 32. But why are you called a Christian?

<sup>3</sup> These thoughts emerge from a wonderful exegesis of Exodus 29-30 by Daniel R. Hyde, *God in Our Midst: The Tabernacle & Our Relationship with God*, “The Liturgy for Ordination” (Sanford: Reformation Trust, 2012), 143-152.

<sup>4</sup> Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 1993), 59.

A. Because by faith I am a member of Christ and thus a partaker of His anointing, in order that I also may confess His Name, may present myself a living sacrifice of thankfulness to Him, and with a free conscience may fight against sin and the devil in this life, and hereafter in eternity reign with Him over all creatures.

### *The Good Motivation of Evangelism*

- Invisibly, according to Titus 2:14, we are to *be zealous* for good work. This is not limited to evangelism, but it is not less than this. We are to be zealous for promoting the gospel to our neighbors. As a living sacrifice and out of gratitude (thankfulness), we work out our faith.
- This must engage your motivations about evangelism.
- What most books out there don't want to mention when it comes to evangelism is that witnessing for Christ comes at a cost. There is a sacrifice.
- **Reflection Question:** What reasons prevent you from evangelizing?

- When it comes to our labors to share the gospel there is a real, honest, deep-seated battle.
- Rico Tice summarizes this teaching well, "If we're to share Christ, we need first to love Christ! We need to ask the Spirit to go to work in our hearts with the gospel, so that we'll love Christ more and more, and he'll displace our idols; and so when we talk about what we love, we'll be talking about him."<sup>5</sup>
- You are called to a consistent prayer-life of *repentance* for any small view of the gospel *and* any greater view of those loves of lesser things that eclipse the gospel. You are called to consistent prayer for *faith* that you act upon the command of Christ to share his gospel. It is a prayer for faith that is zealous for this good work. It is a prayer to persevere in the promotion of the gospel to your neighbor--and that you will give God all the glory.

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<sup>5</sup> Rico Tice, *Honest Evangelism* (United Kingdom, The Good Book Company: 2024), 53.