

Maintaining a Biblical Anthropology in Biblical Evangelism.

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Our glorious Lord clearly calls all of His followers to go and proclaim repentance (Luke 24:47) and to speak of the wonderful deeds of the Lord (Psalm 96:3). Preachers of the gospel, fathers and mothers, Christians who share the gospel with co-workers, neighbors, friends, and family members all have a passion, to see souls saved from God's wrath and Christ magnified in sovereign grace. And as Christians, we understand that God saves (Titus 3:5) by the regenerating work of the Spirit (John 3:3, 8) as the faithful gospel is proclaimed (Rom 10:9-15) and the sinner repents of sin and believes in the gospel (Mark 1:15). This gospel that we preach is summed up in the wonderful truth that Christ Jesus came to save sinners (1 Tim 1:15) by being the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:10). *But how does all of this affect us when we evangelize?* In other words, how does our doctrine drive our evangelism? How does our biblical fidelity to truth guide us in our presentation of the truth to lost souls?

Many Christians who share their faith zealously and faithfully will often hear professing Christians say things like this: "you're doing it all wrong!" or, "you're driving them away!" or, "you need to befriend people first before they'll listen to you & open up!" or "you catch more flies with honey than vinegar" or, "what kind of results will your speaking of judgment and hell produce?"

I believe there are three key doctrines that need to be underscored to Christians time and again as we live for the glory of Christ and spend ourselves for the souls of others. First, we must understand the biblical doctrine of man (*anthropology*). Second, we must grasp the doctrine of salvation (*soteriology*). And finally, we must understand the importance of biblical evangelism. I'll look at each of these in turn and then summarize how they fit together.

I. Man Is Dead.

God declares that those who are "in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom 8:8). This is so because all sinners are dead in transgressions and the uncircumcision of the flesh until God makes a man alive in Christ (Col 2:13). Paul elsewhere writes that all unbelievers were "dead in your trespasses and sins in which you formerly walked...we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest" (Eph 2:1-3). Jesus tells us that every who commits sin is a "slave of sin" (John 8:34). Man is in darkness and is accustomed to doing evil (Jer 13:23). That is to say, every person born in this world, a child of Adam, is spiritually "dead" in relation to God. There's no life, no reconciliation, no union, no salvation *until God gives life*. Lazarus was dead and decaying in the grave until Christ sovereignly called him forth (John 11). The young man in Nain was dead laying on a coffin until Christ came and sovereignly called him to rise up and live (Luke 7:14). So it is with every person in the world that we talk with about the gospel of Christ. *Every person is dead in sin*. They may be a churchgoer who is *dead in sin*. They may go to their Catholic church and be *dead in sin*. They may be an adherent to Mormonism who remains *dead in sin*. Whoever the person is and wherever they may be found, if someone is born from above and is not a follower of Christ, then that person is *dead*, cold, lifeless and *unable* to come to God (John 6:44).

This theological reality will radically revolutionize contemporary evangelism. Rather than thinking that the "method" can contribute to someone's salvation, we must remember that Christ calls His people to go and make disciples of all nations and to preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins and call men to be reconciled to God! Those who are dead in sin can't be driven further away. They're already dead! Fervent open air preaching, loving admonitions and warnings of eternal condemnation at a Starbucks table with a friend, and patient gospel presentations to unbelieving

children cannot make a nonbeliever more distant than he already is from God. True Christians must understand the *utter impossibility* of any sinner coming to God on his own initiative. Indeed, no Christian can do anything to make a dead sinner more receptive to the gospel. After all, the dead sinner is ... *dead*.

2. God Alone Saves.

Here is the great confidence that we as believers have in evangelism. God saves! Salvation is of the Lord (Jonah 2:9). It is by God's doing that you are in Christ Jesus (1 Cor 1:30). God saves the lost and the rebels (1 Tim 1:12-16). It is God who is rich in mercy because of His sovereign love who makes sinners alive in Christ (Eph 2:5). It is God who makes dead sinners alive and forgives us of all our transgressions (Col 2:13). In an absolute, unrepeatable, supernatural miracle, God is the One who shines in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Cor 4:6). So great is this act of salvation and of regeneration that the Apostle Paul compares it with the spoken, sovereign work of God creating light from darkness by His very breath (2 Cor 4:6). God saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).

These truths are gloriously comforting for the Christian who goes *out* to the lost and preaches the gospel to them and summons them to repentance and faith in Christ. No sinner can ever hear and respond to the gospel call *unless God alone sovereignly, gloriously, irresistibly and mercifully saves them and grants them life*. This motivates evangelism! This puts zeal and fervency in our soul-winning. We go fishing for men trusting that God uses His Word to save His people for His glory through His ambassadors who bring the gospel to perishing souls. Do we know who the elect are? Do we know who will repent and believe? Of course not! But we go with confidence in God, in obedience to His command, and out of love for His glory and praiseworthiness and beg sinners to be reconciled to God through faith alone in Christ alone! That means that no "relationship-forming" can contribute to saving people. Friendships with people are not necessary for God to save men. Building bridges is not essential for soul-winning. Christ said go and tell! Plead and persuade! Call all men to repent and believe in the gospel! Let us go confidently and courageously.

3. We Proclaim Christ.

The content of our gospel proclamation must be Christ and Him crucified. We don't tell people about God's wonderful plan for their life and ask them to accept it. We don't just tell men they're sinners. We proclaim the incarnation of Christ, the deity of Christ, the splendor of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the atonement of Christ, the propitiation of Christ, the free offer of the gospel of Christ, the willingness of Christ, the invitation of Christ, the summons to follow Christ, and the wondrous benefits of knowing Christ and rejoicing in Him! Far from a method, our message is the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for all, the testimony given at a proper time (1 Tim 2:5-6). So when we preach from the pulpits in churches, we proclaim Christ (Col 1:28). When we preach on the streets to the masses passing by, we call and compel men to come to Christ's feast (Luke 14:23) and beg men to be "reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:20). When we speak to our children, we speak of the great Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). When we speak with our neighbors, we boast in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (Gal 6:14) -- even though it's absolute folly to the world (1 Cor 1:18). Our mission is clear. Our message is simple. Our duty is set. Our passion is urgent. Our burden is great. Our God is worthy. Our Christ is willing. Our Spirit is the Life-giver. Our time is short. So we go and proclaim Christ and speak as God's ambassadors that God is commanding all men everywhere to repent because He has fixed a day when He will judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:30-31).

In conclusion, when you share the gospel with someone -- friend, child, neighbor, coworker, stranger or family member -- remember that the unbeliever is *dead in sin* till God, by His Spirit, quickens them to new life through the going forth of His Word (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23). Then, once God has sovereignly given life to that deadened, cold, spiritually lifeless soul, that sinner will repent and believe in the gospel! So let us go forth with confidence, with zeal, with passion, with urgency! Let us know that the lost are blinded, dead, in darkness, and unable to please God regardless of how loving or earnest or marvelous our evangelistic efforts may be. And let that give us a foremost

passion to pray for and plead with God for the salvation of the lost. Let us call on our God who is mighty to save. And as we pray, we go! As we trust Christ, we proclaim Christ! As we believe His Word, we declare His Word to the lost and we believe that our sovereign God uses faithful messengers to declare His gospel so that He -- and He alone -- awakens dead and enslaved sinners to new life by His resurrecting power and marvelous grace. And let us go forth with joy, with gladness, with earnestness, and with persuasiveness!

Psalm 98:2-9—

*The LORD has made known His salvation;
He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations.
He has remembered His lovingkindness and His faithfulness to the house of Israel;
All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.
Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth;
Break forth and sing for joy and sing praises.
Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre,
With the lyre and the sound of melody.
With trumpets and the sound of the horn
Shout joyfully before the King, the LORD.
Let the sea roar and all it contains,
The world and those who dwell in it.
Let the rivers clap their hands,
Let the mountains sing together for joy
Before the LORD, for He is coming to judge the earth;
He will judge the world with righteousness
And the peoples with equity.*