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The making of an evangelist

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Bringing it Back to Basics

The New Testament is a veritable storehouse of the basics of the Gospel, and its methods of promulgation. It is wise therefore to examine it in some depth.

In doing this examination there are three areas that are worth looking at. They are:

2. The types of evangelism used in the New Testament.

Come with me as I seek to look for the basics then.

1. The place of evangelism in the New Testament

There is the large place Jesus Christ gives to evangelism in the New Testament and the underlining of its importance. In Acts 3:20, Peter reminds the Jews that the coming of Christ was appointed for them, and that Jesus came for their sakes. Then again, in verse 26 of the same chapter, he reminds them that God raised up His servant (Jesus) and set Him to bless them by turning everyone of them from their evil ways. Also, the New Testament informs us that Jesus came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). And He also promises to teach His followers how to evangelise as He does Himself (Matthew 4:19). A close study of the Gospels shows the large place evangelism played in the Master's preaching and life.

In Matthew 9:36-10:1 we see the vision, compassion, and action of the Saviour, as a result of His deep concern for souls.

The Master and His servant, Paul, had the same passion for lost souls, as it was with His Master, to Paul all else was subsidiary to evangelising.

In 1 Corinthians 1:17 he writes 'Christ sent me not to baptise, but to preach the Gospel'.

This same spirit of concern should be seen in disciples of these days. It is the way of the Master, shouldn't the servant follow in it still?

Jesus was not only a preacher to the big crowds, but also concerned about the ones and twos. More of these encounters will be seen later in this chapter.

The intensity of the Saviour's love and concern for the lost, as seen in His tremendously intense prayer battle in the Garden of Gethsemane.

In the New Testament, there is seen the presentation of the central and essential doctrines of the Christian faith, concerning:

1. The souls.
2. Man, sin and grace.
3. The personality of the Saviour.
4. The atonement.
5. Regeneration.
6. Salvation and other great essentials of the faith.

One Christian of other days, visited many of the English churches, hoping to hear some of the great messages, came to the conclusion that most of the preaching of his day would not have converted a titmouse.

The 'pulpits' of Jesus were found in many places, and certainly were not ornate. Sometimes he spent a great deal of time preaching to one or two people because they were bewildered and needed the truth. These were Zaccheus, the rich young ruler, the woman of Samaria, for whom He seemed to go out of His way because the Scripture said 'He needs must go'. It was the Heavenly Father's will you see so that was that. There was Nicodemus, a scholar who was walking in the darkness, despite his knowledge of other things.

Jesus practised what He preached, when He said the Gospel should go into the highways and the byways. You could find Him in the temple speaking, or in areas like Galilee, Judea, Jerusalem, Samaria, at a wedding in Cana, Nazareth, Caesarea Philippi, Bethsaida, Capernaum and Bethany. He preached at picnics, on mountains, from the Lake, by a pool, near a well, in His home town, and many other areas. As has already been pointed out, that His 'congregations' were sometimes very large, and sometimes quite small and on a person to person basis.

Whatever the crowd, there was the urgent note in what He said (see Matthew 28:10-20 and Mark 16:15). His last words before He ascended on High still had the urgent note (Acts 1:8).

As the evangelism of the New Testament gained a wider circle, there came a developing sense of responsibility, and care for, those of the Christian family for whom Christ died.

This social concern, or 'social implication of the Gospel' started in the early Christian church and still is making its impact today, in the slums of the big cities, in the third world nations of the world. The aged, the widows, the orphans, the injured, the bereaved still feel this secondary impact of the Gospel.

There arose out of the death of Christ on Calvary's Cross, the knowledge of the centrality of the Cross in preaching. The Apostle Paul shows the centrality quite clearly when in 1 Corinthians 1:22-24 he writes, 'For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God'. Preach the word wrote Paul to Timothy. We, Christian preachers, are heralds of the Cross and the resurrection of Christ. Paul was often in trouble simply because He preached the Cross of Christ, and he suffered 'for the offence of the Cross', whereas if he preached to please some people his suffering would have been over. There was no way Paul could be persuaded to tone down the exclusiveness of the Gospel and be loyal to Christ the Lord. When he preached at Mars Hill in Athens, on the resurrection of Christ, he knew full well that topic cut right across the current thinking of the area.
St Bernard was reported to have said, 'Yesterday, I preached myself, and scholars came up and praised me. Today, I preached Christ and sinners came up and thanked me'.

All preachers need to remember that Christ said, 'By thy words thou shalt be justified' and how solemnly true are the words which go on to say, 'by thy words thou shalt be condemned' (see Matthew 12:36-37).

This true word of God should be preached with warmth and from a concerned heart.

Whitfield prayed over and over again, 'Lord give me a warm heart', and Phillips Brooks used to say something like this: 'The heart of the preacher ought to kindle at the sight of a man in his need.

Paul told Timothy (1 Timothy 4:16), 'Take heed to thyself and unto the doctrine continue in them, for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee'.

A moratorium on the preaching of theology, will produce an ignorance of the basics of New Testament evangelism, and much damage will be caused to some services and prayer meetings.

Here is a strange statement by Thomas de Quincey about a preacher he knew. He said Mr H. was sincere but not earnest, and his messages, though given sincerely, didn't have the earnestness of the preaching for the salvation of souls to whom he was preaching. Contrast to this is the well-known saying of Richard Baxter, who many years ago said, 'I preached as never ever to preach again, and as a dying man to dying men'.

Our attitude should be determined by the fact that as ambassadors for Christ and messengers of the great King, as we go into the pulpit, we go as men who have been trusted by God to declare the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.

New Testament preaching was evangelistic preaching with the expectancy of faith to encourage the preacher's hearts. They had an aim, a goal to reach. In the way they were like some leaders of nations. Adolf Hitler's goal was 'Today Germany, tomorrow the World'. Nikita Kruschev believes that one day he would see the red flag covering the whole world. Neither of them were right, and failed to reach their goal.

The Christian can set himself a goal and will reach it. The promise of God is in the Biblical record, and God is never mistaken nor does He ever lie to us. He says something which the Christian can hang onto, and work towards in his Christian life - we can say in effect, 'I shall live to see the day through the saving Word of Christ however much in the future, when the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of the Lord and His Christ'.

This has been the aim of the Godhead across the centuries and Christians of many ages have evangelised and worked to that end (Revelation 11:15).

The types of evangelism used in the New Testament

The New Testament does not only give a message to proclaim, and guide us to the power to proclaim it, but it also is a record of the various ways
in which the message is proclaimed. In other words it is what we would call today, evangelistic methods.

All types of evangelism can be effective as the Spirit leads. There is not only one effective type of evangelism. In the New Testament a variety of methods are seen.

Consider the promise set out in Acts 1:6-8. The word 'both' (verse 8) suggests a great simultaneous crusade and later events bear this out. The Church stayed at Jerusalem but persecution caused them to be scattered throughout Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1). God said to Abraham 'Get thee out ...' (Acts 7:2-3) and He still says 'go' (Matthew 28:18-20).

God has an ongoing plan of evangelism and the Holy Spirit who planned the work still works the plan. In accordance with Acts 1:8 the plan worked out in Jerusalem (some from Judea (Acts 2:8-11); Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1-5), the uttermost parts (Acts 10:1-24; 28:24-28). There is a continuing message in the last chapter of the Acts (28:28-31), all parts of God's plan. This book has not concluded yet.

Now this plan develops many different types of evangelism all directed by the Holy Spirit.

1. Mass Evangelism (Acts 2). This is also team evangelism (with the 11 - verse 14). Spirit directed after a long period of prayer with prayer partners in the upper room (Acts 1:14-15 and Acts 4). Peter and John (verse 19), their own company (verse 23) and when they had prayed (verse 31).

Some results can be seen in Acts 2:41 and in another effort, Acts 4:4.

2. There is a personal evangelism. Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch. This is a perfect picture of a personal soul winner 'in touch' with the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:26-28; 35-37).


7. Street evangelism and market place evangelism (Acts 17:16-18).


11. Tract and letter evangelism is seen in the epistles (eg. Philemon; also, the Ephesians letter is a 'circular' letter. This is also 'follow up' work on a grand Spirit-directed scale.

12. Jewish evangelism (Hebrews).

And so the list could be added to. There is work among men; women; two by two witnessing; visitation evangelism to every house (Acts 20:20-21); beach evangelism (Jesus taught by the seashore). The witness was before kings and court, before servants and slaves. False teachers were rebuked and their views straightened out. 'Big Brother' follow-up work (Paul and Timothy - 1 Timothy 1:1-2). Indeed the Acts of the Apostles is a great story of the Holy Spirit evangelising through men and the Epistles in the main, the follow up work of the church. They must go hand in hand. In the early church the work was done in the power of the Holy Ghost (verse 31), with great power (verse 33), with generosity (verses 34-36). Acts 5 says there was great fear in the church (verse 11) and great results (verse 14). In Acts 6 we see care for widows (verses 1-3), the social implications of the Gospel and transfigured Christians (verses 8-15). Acts 7 – Revelation (verse 55) and faithful unto death (Acts 13:52). These are but a few of the wonderful results of this Spirit directed and empowered evangelism.

The evangelistic preaching met individual needs.

Jews with religious problems. Greeks with intellectual problems. Romans with problems of law and order; slaves; women with inferior standing. A brief list of some of the converts are:

Lame man (Acts 3:2-8) and many of the people (Acts 4:4).
Saul of Tarsus (Acts 8:1; 9:1-5).
Cornelius the Centurion (Acts 10:1).
Timothy (Acts 16:1).
Lydia a seller of purple and her household (Acts 16:14-15).
Greeks and chief women (Acts 17:4).
Apollos the orator (Acts 18:24-28).
Pagans with curious arts (Acts 19:19).
And many others.

It stirs opposition.

Someone has said wherever Paul went there was either a riot or a revival. In the Acts of the Apostles we see not only great blessing but great opposition.

The priests, the captain of the Temple and Sadducees (Acts 4:1-3).
Murmuring (Acts 6:1).
The Synagogue of the libertines, Cyrenians, Alexandrians and of Cilicia and Asia (Acts 6:9-12).
Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:1).
Elymas the sorcerer (Acts 13:8).
Jews filled with envy (Acts 13:45).
Paul stoned at Lystra (Acts 14:19).
Demetrius the silversmith (Acts 19:23-29).
Mob uproar (Acts 19:40).

These are but a few but suffice to show that people from many walks of life opposed the evangel. What prayer was offered! Nights of it, days
of it! The Apostles gave themselves over continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4).

Ú Ú””Rivers of God”

Jesus said that there would be rivers of living water when the Spirit was in control (John 7:37-39). This is God's plan for the Church. Not broken cisterns or pools or beautiful oases even - but rivers of living water. As the Old Testament prophet has said - waters not only up to the ankles, knees or loins but water to swim in (Ezekiel 47:3-5) and 'everything shall live wherever the river cometh (Ezekiel 47:9).

This river proceeds from the throne of God and the Lamb (Revelation 22:1) and whosoever is thirsty may drink (verse 17). Psalm 1 reminds us that the Christian who steeps his soul in God shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water with fruit in season, green leaves, freshness and life.

'God fills the soul that it may pour
The fullness on another heart;
Not that the filled with good may store,
The good God giveth to impart'.
(Author unknown)

Ú Ú””The message and outlines in the New Testament”

There are preaching areas in the New Testament, by various servants of the Lord, by which, if we analyse the passage carefully, we can see how the Holy Spirit has been pleased to work in answer to prayer.

For example, the preaching of Peter in Acts 3:12-26. This can divide up as each reader sees it of course, but here is the kind of thing I mean.

Verses 12-15 A reminder of the heinous things Jews did to God's Son (by whom the lame man was healed).
Verse 16 Reminds them that through faith in Jesus Christ's name, the healing came about (he exalted Christ).
Verse 17 Says the rulers committed this crime against Jesus through ignorance.
Verse 18 They had no excuse for ignorance because Christ's sufferings fulfilled Old Testament prophecies.
Verse 19 They need to repent and believe, and return to God again. The result would be sins wiped away and times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.
Verse 20 Jesus' coming was appointed for his killers, so that they might find the will of God (verse 26) shows the Jews were meant to have the knowledge of God's salvation first.
Verses 21-26 These verses are a recap of why they should have believed that Jesus was the Messiah.

In this message there are elements of culpability, promise, warning, knowledge instead of ignorance, the reason why Christ came to them first, etc.

Ú Ú””Some other passages worth studying in depth”

I listened to some lectures given on some of these matters some years ago, and the outlines given centred around a few headings. For example, giving some ideas in Acts 2 in a Spirit-led message.
1. The setting (verses 1-13).
2. The sermon (verses 14-40).
   (a) The information (verses 14-36);
   (b) The interrogation (verse 37);
   (c) The invitation (verse 38-40).
3. The summation on the kind of church it was (verses 41-47). Study each of these verses and you will find out different things concerning that early church. A learning church; a church of fellowship etc.; a praying church and so on.


1. Prayer offered (verses 24-30).
2. Place shaken (verse 31a).
3. Power came (verse 31b).
4. Preached with boldness (verse 31c).
5. People saved (verse 32).

I am indebted to the lecturer mentioned above, and to the lecture notes given to us for our use.

“Other passages for studying;


No doubt there are other passages which can be obtained by you for your study and edification.