

Evangelism: Preaching the Gospel/Good News

By Mark Mayberry

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INTRODUCTION

In discussing the need for evangelism, we should understand the terminology of Sacred Scripture, and also recognize the demands of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Greek verb *euaggelizō*, which communicates the concept of preaching, a compound of *eu* [good, well] and *aggelos* [a messenger, angel], means, “to announce good news” [Thomas 2097]. BDAG define it generally as “bring good news,” or “announce good news,” and specifically, “to proclaim the divine message of salvation,” i.e., “proclaim the gospel” (Rom. 1:15; 10:15; etc.).

The related noun *euaggelion*, usually translated “gospel,” signifies “good news” (Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 1:16-17; etc.). In the New Testament, it refers to “God’s good news to humans, good news as proclamation.” Additionally, it may involve “details relating to the life and ministry of Jesus, i.e., the good news of Jesus,” or “a book dealing with the life and teaching of Jesus, a gospel account,” i.e. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John [Thomas & BDAG].

One additional word deserves consideration: *euaggelistēs*, translated “evangelist,” refers to “a bringer of good news” [Thomas 2099]. BDAG define it as a “proclaimer of the gospel, evangelist” (Acts 21:8; Eph. 4:11; 2 Tim. 4:5).

Knowing that the gospel involves the good news of Jesus Christ, one might suppose that nearly everyone would be receptive, that most would jump at the opportunity of salvation, that preachers and personal workers would be overwhelmed with prospects, that places of assembly would be packed, and that baptistry waters would be in a constant state of agitation. Sadly, such is not the case.

While the gospel is undeniably good news, it requires accountability. It involves duty and discipleship. It demands sacrifice and self-denial. It carries physical, financial, and spiritual obligations. It entails cross-bearing and counting the cost.

Even in the first century, when the fields were white unto harvest (John 4:35-38), more individuals rejected the gospel than received it (John 1:11-13). This sinful world lies under the power of the evil one. Men prefer darkness rather than light. Sensuality is easier than sanctification. Selfishness comes naturally, but serving is hard.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

A Message of Joy

The gospel is a message of joy: When the Christ-child was born, angels announced to the shepherds in the field, "I bring you good news (*euaggelizō*) of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:8-11). Yet, this blessing is conditional; not all receive it (Col. 2:6-7). Certainly, Herod was not pleased when he learned of the birth of a King (Matt. 2:16-18). Even among those having good and honest hearts, the gospel must be accepted and assimilated if joy is to be realized (Phil. 2:1-2; 4:1-2, 4-7).

A Message of Hope

The gospel is a message of hope (Luke 4:16-21; Isa. 63:1-3). Yet, some reject it, because they have differing agendas or expectations (Luke 4:22-30). Hope is communicated through the Word of Truth, the Gospel, which must be received in faith and love, resulting in constant spiritual growth (Col. 1:2-8). This message of reconciliation holds great promise, but high expectations. Christians must continue in the faith, being firmly established and steadfast, and not be moved away from the hope of the gospel (Col. 1:21-29).

A Message of Peace

The gospel is a message of peace (Luke 1:78-79; 2:13-14). Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1-2). The gospel enables us to live at peace with others (Eph. 2:14-18), and also holds the promise of inner-peace (Phil. 4:4-9). Yet, this can only be accomplished on God's terms: Disobedience produces divine indignation and wrath, but glory, honor, and peace belong to those who keep His commandments (Rom. 2:6-11).

A Message of Grace

The gospel is a message of grace (Rom. 6:1-4). Yet, it is possible for one to receive the grace of God in vain (2 Cor. 6:1-2), to set aside the grace of God (Gal. 2:20-21), to fall away from God's grace (Gal. 5:1-4), to insult the Spirit of grace by willfully rejecting God's law (Heb. 10:26-30), and to turn the grace of God into lewdness (Jude 1:3-4).

In order to be saved, we must continue in the grace of God (Acts 13:43), and be built up in the same (Acts 20:31-32). It is imperative that we properly receive divine grace (2 Cor. 6:1-2). We must be strong in God's grace (2 Tim. 2:1-3), and stand firm in it (1 Pet. 5:12). Moreover, we must grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord (2 Pet. 3:17-18).

ATTITUDE OF THE PRESENTER

Eager Compulsion

Paul spoke of competing and (in some measure) conflicting emotions: "I am under obligation ... I am eager to preach the gospel" (Rom. 1:14-15). He felt compulsion, but acted voluntarily (1 Cor. 9:16-17).

Fearful Obligation

Faithful proclaimers evidence an attitude of fearful obligation. Divine condemnation falls upon one who preaches a distorted message (Gal. 1:8-9). Promoters of error provide not the slightest benefit (Jer. 23:25-32).

ATTITUDE OF THE RECIPIENT

Obedient Faith

From the Parable of the Sower, we learn that one's response to the Word differs according to the characteristics of the heart (Luke 8:4-15). Possessors of good and honest hearts manifest obedient faith (Heb. 4:1-7). Salvation is conditioned upon our being doers of the word, not hearers only (James 1:21-25).

Steadfast Growth

Possessors of good and honest hearts hold fast, and bear fruit with patience (Matt. 13:23; Luke 8:15; 1 Cor. 15:1-2; Col. 1:9-12).

CONCLUSION

The gospel is a message of divine origin (1 Cor. 2:6-13; Gal. 1:11-12). It is a message of universal obligation (Luke 4:31-32, 42-44). It is a message that will endure forever (1 Pet. 1:25; cf. Isa. 40:3-8). Have you obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ?