



Personal Evangelism Cures Everything

Rob L. Whitacre

I heard it while growing up, but somehow, it has been forgotten: “Personal evangelism is the cure for every problem we face.” I know this sounds too good to be true, or perhaps overly simplistic, but I want to challenge everyone to give this serious consideration. By personal evangelism, I am not referring to “little talks about Jesus” or “religious conversations” with family or friends. I am talking about private, one-on-one, sit-down, organized Bible studies. Many members of the church today have never conducted or even seen a personal Bible study. Therefore, some might wonder how this approach might solve our problems.

Personal Evangelism cures practical problems. These are petty issues that have absolutely no bearing on our eternal destiny. Disputes about pews, chairs, carpet, paint, landscaping, parking stripes, thermostats, building appearance, room sizes, worship times, sermon lengths, class topics, and work assignments fall into this category. Such conflicts are the result of brethren with too much time on their hands, thus allowing them to focus on trivial troubles instead of eternal endeavors. Those who are seeking and studying with prospects do not have the time or desire to worry about these minor matters. Souls are at stake, and those who engage in Bible studies know it and are laser-beam focused on it.

Personal Evangelism cures personal problems. These difficulties revolve around personalities and “he said, she said” spats. They are self-centered tantrums that produce self-inflicted wounds to themselves and the local congregation. The attitude is normally “my way or the highway.” These are brethren who do not get along and will not work together. They choose to ignore one another instead of working together, and they remove themselves from the work of the gospel. Personal evangelism looks outward while these problems look inward. In contrast, an evangelist will bend like a young twig or stretch like a rubber band to build trust and make prospects feel comfortable. Personal workers become skilled in the art of forming relationships through genuine care and love for others.

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Great Churches Have Great Preaching

Andy Erwin



The church in Thessalonica was a great church. Listen to the words used to describe them by Paul:

“We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your **work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope** in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in **much assurance**, as you know **what kind of men we were** among you for your sake. And you became **followers** of us and of the Lord, having **received the word in much affliction**, with **joy of the Holy Spirit**, so that you **became examples** to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. For **from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth**, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. **Your faith toward God** has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how **you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God**, and to **wait for His Son** from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *even* Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come” (1 Thessalonians 1:2-10).

The great church at Thessalonica had faith, love, and hope which was manifest in their work, labor, and patience (endurance). This was a working church. They were an enduring church, having received (welcomed) the word of God in a time of “much affliction.” The church was filled with wisdom and

discernment, knowing, and being assured of the veracity of the gospel and the validity of the men who preached the word of grace to them.

Moreover, they were truly converted. Turning from idols to serve the living God and to wait for the Lord of glory to return, they became followers of Paul in word and deed, sounding forth the message true and glad in Macedonia and Achaia. This was an evangelistic church! In so doing, they became examples of faith and faithfulness to others. They were humble, receptive, and proactive in the ministry of the word.

How did they become so stalwart in their convictions? It began with great preaching. At the heart of every great church is great preaching. Notice what is said in 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12:

“For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, **we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict**. For our exhortation did **not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit**. But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, **even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God** who tests our hearts. For **neither at any time did we use flattering words**, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness—God is witness. **Nor did we seek glory from men**, either

from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But **we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children**. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased **to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives**, because you had become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, **our labor and toil**; for laboring **night and day**, that we might not be a burden to any of you, **we preached to you the gospel of God**. You are witnesses, and God also, how **devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved** ourselves among you who believe; as you know how **we exhorted, and comforted, and charged** every one of you, **as a father does his own children**, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” (1 Thessalonians 2:1-12).

During the Second Missionary Journey, Paul and his companions visited Thessalonica for the first time after being spitefully treated in Philippi. Even though their message was not welcomed by all in that city, they continued in doctrine, preaching the same gospel with boldness in the city of Thessalonica.

These men preached the truth boldly, not with error, uncleanness, deceit, or flattering words. They were

single-minded in their devotion to please and serve God rather than men. They came to Thessalonica humbly, not seeking glory from men, but that Christ may be glorified as the crucified Savior of the world.

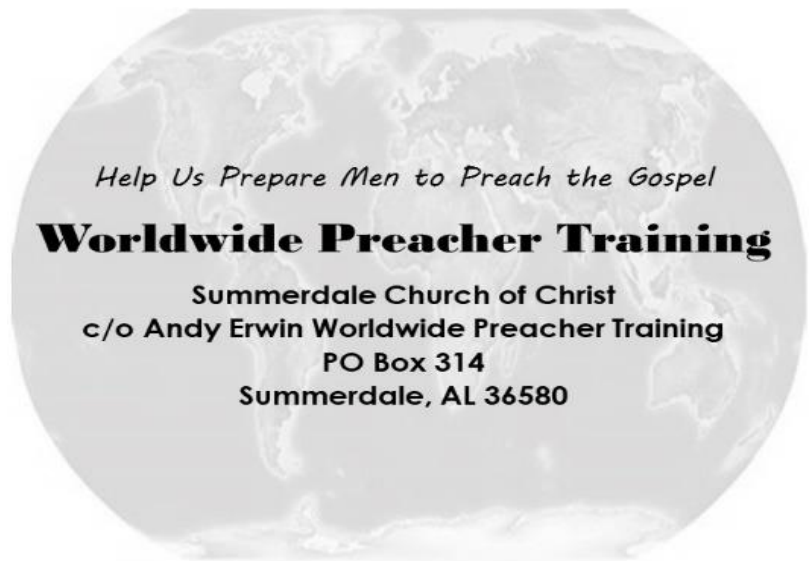
Moreover, they came willing to work and to labor and toil night and day for the furtherance of the gospel and to support themselves. These men labored sacrificially, not superficially, willing to impart not only the word of truth, but their own lives if necessary. Their manner of life was devout, just, and blameless. They set the example of Christian virtue for the flock to follow.

Paul and his company also came with a spirit of tender compassion, as a nursing mother cherishes her children, and as a godly father exhorts, comforts, and charges his children.

With men of God like these in their midst, and the truth of the gospel being exemplified and imparted through them, is it any wonder that the church in Thessalonica became such a fine congregation? Paul and these men were bold in their proclamation of truth, they understood their responsibility as ministers in behavior and work, they sought to please God first and foremost, they were gentle and affectionate to the people, and they were sacrificial with their money, love, and time.

If we can imitate the example of these men as ministers of the gospel today, our congregations will also be more likely to mirror the church we read about in Thessalonica.


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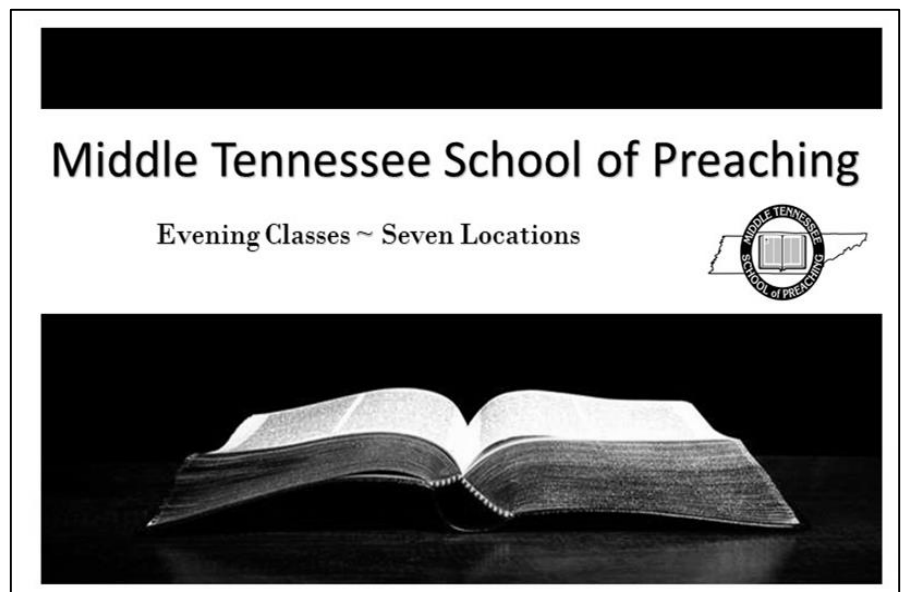


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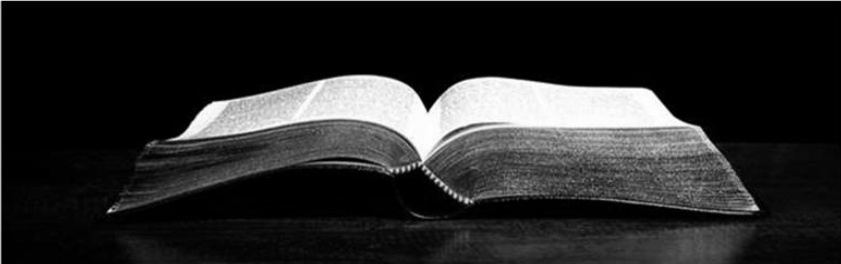

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Melchizedek and Biblical Inspiration

David R. Pharr

Tracing the Melchizedek thread at-tests to the inspiration, accuracy, and unity of the Bible. The 14th chapter of Genesis tells of Abram's (Abraham) rescue of his nephew Lot and the recovery of the people and possessions that had been taken from Sodom. Chedorlamer and his confederates had invaded Sodom and Gomorrah. When Abram heard that Lot had been taken, he and his armed servants pursued and defeated the invaders. Returning, he was met by the king of Sodom, who offered that Abram keep all the goods that had been recovered. Abram refused, declaring that he had made an oath before God that he would accept nothing. The people of Sodom "were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly" (Gen. 13:13).

Only five verses record this transaction between Abram and the king (vv. 17, 21-24). Inserted into the record, however, is a seemingly separate event.

"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all" (v. 18ff).

It seems unlikely that "the priest of God most high" would have ties with Sodom's king. Whether Melchizedek's visit was at the same time as Abram's encounter with the king is uncertain. What is unusual in the biblical text is that verse 17 starts the exchange between the king and Abram, then abruptly switches to Melchizedek in vv.

18-20, and resumes about the king in vv. 21-24. This interruption in the narrative seems curious. but it also happens that the three inserted verses give the entirety of Melchizedek's story. Not another word is said about him in Genesis nor anywhere else in the Old Testament for almost ten centuries.

A Divine Oath

Suddenly, however, his name occurs again in the middle of Psalm 110. This psalm begins with a very significant Messianic prophecy. "The Lord said unto my Lord: Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." As applied by Jesus and the apostles, this foretold Christ's enthronement in Heaven and His reign until all enemies are destroyed. Then in verse four it is further said of Christ:

"The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

That the prophecy was declared as a divine oath makes it emphatic and irrevocable, but its significance was not to be explained for almost another thousand years.

Priest and King

The unnamed author of Hebrews is the first New Testament writer to expound on Melchizedek as a type of Christ. The brief history in Genesis 14 provides the type, the oath in Psalm 110 makes it significant, and Hebrews explains the fulfilment in Christ. The purpose of the Hebrews epistle was to demonstrate the superiority of the Christian faith over the Old Testament system. In particular it is shown that the priesthood of Christ is better than the

Aaronic priesthood which was under the Law.

Christ is a priest "after the order of Melchizedek" which involves not only being a priest, but also king. The Old Testament personage was a "priest of the most high God" and also "King of righteousness . . ." (Heb. 7:1 ff). In this he serves as a type of Christ. Christ's kingship is well established in many passages, but the emphasis here is in his holding both offices. The psalm that assured he would be a priest had begun with reference to his being enthroned at Jehovah's right hand (110:1). In Hebrews 5, where the writer first quotes the oath, he connects it with the Second Psalm, a psalm on the coronation of the king (5:5 ff).

Though Zechariah does not mention Melchizedek, he did foretell that Christ "shall be a priest upon his throne, and shall sit and rule on his throne" (Zech. 6:13). Just as was the case with Melchizedek, Zechariah declares that the two offices would be joined in one Person. This marks an obvious difference from the Old Testament system in that the same person was never allowed to be both priest and king. The type, the Psalm, and the prophecy show That Christ would be Priest and King at the same time. As he could not be a priest on earth (Heb. 8:4), it must follow that his place as both High Priest and King is in heaven.

The typology continues with attention to what is not said in the brief Genesis history. Melchizedek was "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life" (Heb. 7:3). That is,

there is no mention of these things. Absent any knowledge of such, it might be assumed he “remains a priest continually.” It is not supposed that Melchizedek actually had no parents or is still alive. Rather, the writer argues that by these details being omitted in the Genesis record the Holy Spirit made Melchizedek a type of Christ, who is the actual one who is “a priest forever.” This is a remarkable demonstration of the writer’s confidence in the preciseness of the inspired record. He saw that the Holy Spirit left out certain details on purpose, in order that Melchizedek as a type could be “made like the Son of God.”

The writer then takes note of two things which are specifically stated in Genesis (Heb. 7:4-10). First there is the fact that the patriarch Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth (tithe) of the spoils. The Levites received tithes because the people were so commanded, but Abraham voluntarily gave tithes to Melchizedek, which is evidence of that priest’s greatness. “Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.” Further, that Melchizedek blessed Abraham shows his greatness. “Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better.” Levitical priests received tithes, but they were men who would die. This does not mean Melchizedek never died, but based on the absence of any reference to his death, Melchizedek could serve as a type of Christ, who is the one who actuality continues to live.

Law Changed

Next, attention turns to the force of the oath. That Jehovah swore “and will not repent [change his mind]” proves he intended a change in priesthood. A change in priesthood necessitated a

change in the Law. “For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law” (Heb. 7:13). As the Law specified that priests were to be of the tribe of Levi, Christ of the tribe of Judah could not, under the Law, be a priest. “For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.” It should be noted that the Law change involved more than requirements for priesthood. The writer will go on to show that because of the priesthood change, the whole system of which it was a part also changed. It is an entirely new covenant, an entirely new system (Heb. 7:6ff).

Here again the inspired writer relies on the silence of Scripture. “For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood” (7:13). The Law had nowhere specifically forbidden priests from another tribe, but in that Levi was specified, by implication other tribes were excluded (7:13 ff). Here is an important hermeneutical principle. It is a necessary inference that when divine instructions designate a specific thing, other things of the same class are not authorized. The Hebrews writer does not say Moses (the Law) specifically forbade having a priest of Judah. Rather, that as regards the tribe of Judah, “Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood” (Heb. 7:13).

Oath Disannuls Commandment

The writer then focuses on the promise being in the form of a divine oath. Priests under the Law were chosen on the basis of their family lineage, according to a “fleshly commandment,” but never by an oath. There was “weakness and unprofitableness” in system that continually changed “by reason of death.” The oath provided a

better hope. Those priests’ tenure would always be shortened because they would die. The oath provided for One who would be “a priest forever.” “But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:16ff).

“All Scripture”

The writer has much more to say regarding Christ as our High Priest. Our purpose in this brief summary has been to emphasize the inspiration and unity of the Scriptures. As has been often and rightly observed: though the Bible involves sixth-six books, by around forty authors, over a period of thousands of years, it is in fact one book by one Author. The Melchizedek theme is one evidence of its verbal inspiration. When Paul wrote that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16), he meant “all” of it.

The Holy Spirit guided Moses to record specific information—no more, no less—about an obscure person from the time of Abraham, which would have seemed hardly significant in the greater theme of things. His name appears again, however, in Messianic prophecy as David was inspired to declare things which were completely outside his own experience and observations (cf. 2 Sam. 23:2).

The Hebrews writer, himself also inspired, brought history and prophecy together, to show Melchizedek as a type of Christ. God knew his plan from the beginning and chose to reveal it as an enigma until every aspect was fulfilled in Christ. It all fits perfectly to assure us that: “We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (8:1).

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Not Made to Sit on the Shelf

Luke Griffin

In the late 1600s and early 1700s, Antonio Stradivari produced the finest musical instruments ever created. In his lifetime, he is known to have produced 1,101 instruments. These included guitars, cellos, violas, and at least one harp, but his crowning achievements were his violins. They are known for their clarity of tone and ability to resonate perfectly. His violins are what make his name synonymous with quality and fine craftsmanship. To be called the “Stradivari” of any field is to be designated the finest.

There are approximately 650 of his instruments (called “strad” or “strads” for short) still in existence today, and almost all of them are well known. They are played by the best classical musicians, including Yo-Yo Ma, Itzhak Perlman, and Gil Shaham. There is an extensive collection of his instruments at the Vienna Philharmonic and another at the Library of Congress, which holds concerts each year featuring the top students at Julliard. His instruments have their own names, such as “Solomon” and “Lady Tennant,” and they command top dollar at public and private sales. One of his violins that went up for sale in 2006, known as “The Hammer” sold for \$3,544,000 to an anonymous bidder.

There is one, however, that is prized above all others. Its value is not known, but it could easily be several times that of other Strads. Known as “The Messiah,” it occupies the same place in musical history as the *Mona Lisa* does in painting. Made by Stradivari in 1716, and kept by him till his death in 1737, it is a rare gem indeed. Created at the

height of his “golden period,” “The Messiah” has several details that set it apart from the rest.

Because its creator seemed to be enchanted by it, it was passed down through his family until it was sold in 1776. It finally fell into the hands of a peasant named Tarisio in the 1820’s. Tarisio came from humble origins, but through a relentless pursuit, a way with words, and often through trickery, he acquired more Strads than anyone in history.



Over the years “The Messiah” was passed down through many owners, often upon their death, and eventually came into the possession of the Hill brothers who wanted the violin to remain in the United Kingdom. Henry Ford offered them a blank check for the violin, but they refused, placing it in the Ashmolean museum at Oxford with the stipulation that it may never be sold and never be played. Although its provenance has been questioned, it has repeatedly been proven to be genuine, and there it sits today. It is quite possibly the greatest and most perfect instrument ever made, and it is still in almost perfect condition, yet no one will ever

hear its tone or fully realize its true beauty.

When I heard this story, I thought about lessons and applications that could be made between this beautiful violin and the Bible. The Bible is undoubtedly the greatest book ever written. Although its provenance has been called into question, it has time and again proven its authorship and validity. The words contain the most beautiful message known to man, that of everlasting salvation. Yet many who own a Bible place this beautiful masterpiece on a shelf and never read or study it.

The Bible is not meant to be a museum piece in our lives. It is meant to be used as a sword in battle (Ephesians 6:17), a comfort in times of need (1 Thessalonians 4:18), a light when darkness surrounds us (Psalm 119:105), and a guide to help us decide the moral problems in our life (Hebrews 4:12).

Just as “The Messiah” Strad was owned by princes and paupers, the Bible is meant for all, and its message crosses all barriers of race and class.

No one could purchase the salvation contained within it, not even with a blank check, but Jesus already paid the price—His own blood—to make it freely available to all who will accept it.



Religious Unity

Raymond Elliott

“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; “that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me” (NKJV, John 17:20, 21). In the Lord’s Prayer there are several things that are quite evident: 1. Jesus’ concern for His apostles. 2. Not only for His apostles but for all who would believe in Him. 3. That this belief would come through the apostles’ doctrine. 4. That there would and could be unity among all such believers. 5. This unity would have a tremendous impact on the unbelieving world.

One of the most difficult things for modern man to accept and understand is that God intended for all believers to be united in religious matters. If this is not the case then our Lord prayed a deceptive prayer, knowing all the time that he was praying for something that was not possible. But our Lord knew that men could be united if we followed the apostles’ doctrine (Acts 2:42).

Unity of teaching cannot help but to produce unity of believers. There cannot be unity in diversity of doctrine and beliefs. Each separate and distinct religious organization exists today because of a distinctive and different doctrine. This is in direct contradiction to the Lord’s sentiments expressed in His prayer to the Father. We can also know the mind of God and the desire of the Holy Spirit in this matter through the inspired scriptures.

God hates “he that sows discord among brethren” (Proverbs 6:16-19). The apostle Paul, guided by the Holy Spirit wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:10: “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”



Paul instructed early Christians in this manner: “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them” (Romans 16:17). We know that “God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints” (1 Corinthians 14:33).

We must conclude therefore that religious division exists today, not because of God’s desire: rather, it is man’s unwillingness to be guided by the sole authority in religious matters and as found in the Holy Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). It seems odd that we accept the fact that the government has written a book for the Postal Service to use in the setting of prices

regarding the sending of mail and packages, but, we reject the thought that God, in His infinite wisdom, has given us a divine book which can unite believers in his Son Jesus Christ.

Our Heavenly Father has not left us without direction in this matter of religious unity. The Holy Spirit had the apostle Paul make a plea to the first century Christians to “Give diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3).

It should be the desire of every believer to contribute to unity and not disunity in religious affairs. This unity is possible if we subscribe to the Spirit’s platform as follows: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:4-6).

These are seven basic truths that will unite all believers if all follow them in our heart and in our practice.

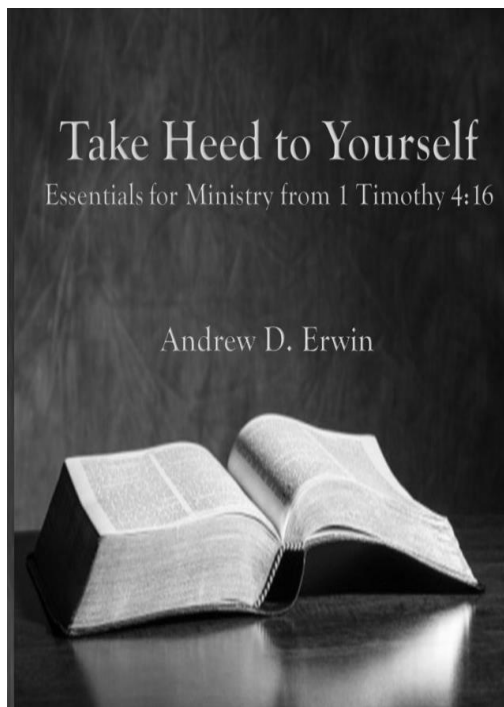
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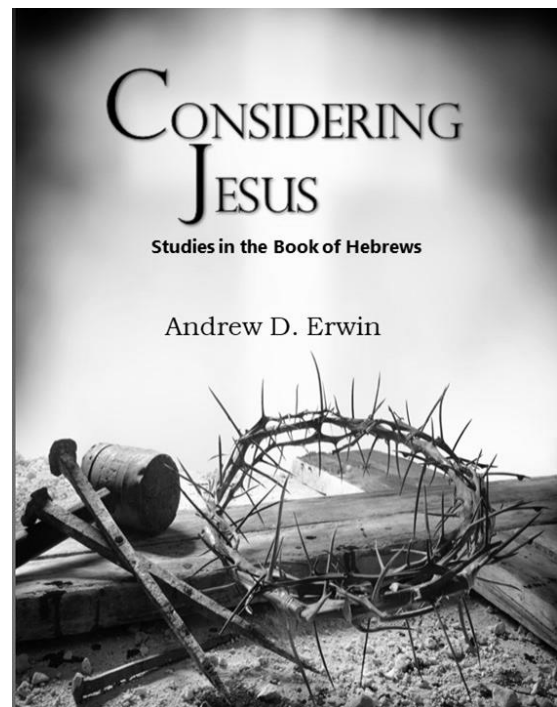
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The Joy of Salvation

Johnny O. Trail



Most services of the church are concluded by the offering of the invitation. While this is not a requirement, it does provide a convenient time for one to respond to the message in an affirmative manner. When people come forward, there are diverse, unspoken things that happen within congregations of the Lord's people. There is a sense of heart-felt joy that is exhibited among those who are preparing to be baptized or restored from a state of backsliding. Pews are oftentimes emptied by the saints who want to hug or encourage those who respond in a positive way to the Lord's invitation. This is a wonderful thing to behold and a source of encouragement to the faithful and the erring as well. Why is such a display of happiness apparent among those wishing to encourage the one or ones who respond to the invitation?

For one thing, the one being baptized has had their sins forgiven. Colossians 1:13-14 says, "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." The ones being saved by baptism (1 Peter 3:21), are cleansed from their sins. 1 Peter 1:22 says, "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart."

In much the same way, they are no longer under the shame and disgrace that comes from sinful lifestyle choices. We are no longer constrained to the disgrace and humiliation that brings us down. Phil. 3:13-14 says, "Brethren, I

do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

The one being baptized has the assurance of a resurrection from the dead and the expectation of eternal life. The nature of our assurance is multifaceted in nature. We have the promise of eternal life even while living the "abundant life" (John 10:10). We have the expectation of being reunited with our brethren in Christ and faithful, deceased Christians.

Concerning the power of death, consider 1 Corinthians 15:52-56 which says, "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law."

Akin to these things, the one being restored has a similar expression of celebration. The Bible does teach that one can fall from sin through succumbing to temptation (Galatians 6:1). When David failed God, he desperately wanted the joy of his salvation restored. Psalm

51:12 says, "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me *by Your* generous Spirit."

Even though one can fail in their Christian walk, there is joy when one is restored to Christ. For one thing, the whole host of Heaven rejoices over one repentant sinner. Luke 15:7 says, "I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance." This, coupled with the well-meaning brethren who offer hugs and words of encouragement after one is restored, means rejoicing on Earth too!

All people can experience joy in fulfilling the commandments of God. John 15:10-11 says, "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that* your joy may be full." God's word is designed to bring the appropriate type of happiness to those obedient to it. His words are not burdensome to those who love him. 1 John 5:3 says, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome."

There is joy in knowing that we are "in Christ" (Romans 6:3-4) and have eternal life. This is experienced by God's people who have a real, solid hope that is unshakeable. ☸

The Preeminence of Christ

Colossians 1:18

Introduction

1. The city of Colossae was in Asia Minor. During Paul's three years residence in Ephesus, we are told that "all they that dwelt in Asia heard the Word of the Lord." No doubt during this time the church was set up in Colossae.
2. Paul wrote The Epistle to the Colossians during his first Roman imprisonment. The church was being troubled by a heresy that was leading them away from Christ. Thus, this epistle affirms the supremacy of Christ.
3. Colossians 1:13-20 is all about the Person and Work of Christ. We are going to focus on verse eighteen and discuss the Preeminence of Christ.

Discussion

I. The Meaning of Preeminence.

- A. Only time the word is used. Note: different translations-
 1. "That He in all things may stand first" – 20th Century N.T.
 2. "That He may in all things occupy the foremost place." – Weymouth
 3. "That He might come to have first place in everything." – NRSV
- B. Emphasis given by Jesus during His ministry.
 1. Matt. 6:33
 2. Matt. 10:37
- C. Christ or Self – which will it be?
 1. The case of the Rich Young Ruler.
 2. The case of Diotrephes. 3 John 9- "who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority." (cf. Matt. 10:40; John 13:20).

II. The Reason for His Preeminence.

- A. He is the head of the body. (Which is the church.)
 1. The head directs the body. So, with Christ the church. Eph. 1:22, 23.
 2. The body is one...therefore only ONE head! (Some churches are in a state of confusion because they have more than one head!)
 3. Christ word is the authority... not another book! Matt. 28:18
- B. He is the beginning.
 1. He originated creation. John 1:3; Heb. 1:3
 2. He originates the new creation. Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:15.
 3. (The origin cannot be assigned to Abraham, Moses, John the Baptist. When someone claims some man started their church that would not be giving Christ preeminence.)
- C. He is the first born from the dead.
 1. In His resurrection His deity was declared. Rom. 1:4
 2. In His resurrection He proves He is the living, Savior. Rev. 1:17, 18.
 3. In His resurrection He assures us of victory. I Cor. 15:29-57; 1 Thes. 4:13-17

III. The Extent of His Preeminence.

- A. Our personal lives. He is not preeminent when:
 - 1. When we dress in immodest apparel. 1 Tim. 2:9, 10.
 - 2. When we entertain ourselves with ungodly activities. Eph. 5:19-21
 - 3. When we neglect our private devotions. Psalms 1:2; 1 Thes. 5:17
- B. Our business dealings.
 - 1. Christ is not preeminent if we are covetous. 1 Tim. 6:10
 - 2. Christ is not preeminent if we are false with our words. Rev. 21:27
 - 3. Christ is not preeminent if we are slothful. Rom. 12:11
- C. Our family affairs. Christ is not preeminent if:
 - 1. We as husbands and fathers do not rule our house well. Eph. 5:25; 6:
 - 2. We as wives and mothers neglect our homes and children. Tit. 2:5
 - 3. We as children are not obedient to our parents. Eph. 6:1
- D. Our faith and practice. Christ is not preeminent if:
 - 1. We forsake the assemblies of the church. Heb. 10:25; Acts 2:42
 - 2. We want to be broadminded about immorality. 1 Cor. 5:
 - 3. We think worship must be pleasing to us regardless of whether it is in spirit and truth. John 4:23, 24.

Conclusion

- 1. Our lesson has been about Christ being preeminent in all things. Having first place in our hearts and lives; and in our activities in our worship and service in the church. As “A” always comes before “B” and “1” always comes before “2,” Christ should come first in our thoughts and lives.
- 2. Extend the invitation.

- Mike Kiser

Will Jesus Marvel at Me?

Cody McCoy

You cannot read the New Testament very long before realizing that Jesus is an amazing person. Throughout the Gospel accounts, people marveled at Jesus. The original word for “marvel” means “to cause amazement or have in great admiration.” Wherever Jesus went, His words and actions caused great amazement. His disciples marveled when He calmed the seas (Matthew 8:27) and withered a fig tree (Matthew 21:20). The Jews marveled as He taught in the temple (John 7:15). Pilate marveled when Jesus was silent (Mark 15:5). Even the Pharisees and Herodians marveled at His teaching (Mark

12:17). But did you know that the Bible only records two times when Jesus marveled? What could someone do to cause such a reaction from the Son of the living God? It must have been something special.

The first expression of astonishment Jesus exhibited was toward a centurion who showed great faith in Luke 7:1-10. Why did He marvel? We must remember that Jesus participated in the creation of the world (John 1:1-5). He became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). What could cause Him to be amazed by any human being? What did the centurion display that caused Jesus

to take notice? As Christians, we should be interested in studying the characteristics the centurion showed and incorporating them into our lives.

The centurion was **sympathetic**. If a servant boy died in the first century, most people would simply replace him with another one because he was considered a possession. This centurion, however, treated this boy as a person who was “dear to him” (Luke 7:2). The centurion was willing to go to great lengths to save him. He was sympathetic to a boy in need of serious help. Do we reach out to those dying spiritually around us as this man did to the boy

who was dying physically? We need to show sympathy and compassion for the lost, “and such were some of you” (1 Corinthians 6:11).

The passage also shows that the centurion was **benevolent**. The elders of the Jews reported he had built them a synagogue! (Luke 7:5). The Old Testament taught benevolence by leaving the corners of their field unharvested for the poor and needy (Leviticus 19:9-10; Deuteronomy 24:19-21). How concerned are we about meeting the needs of others? Simple acts of kindness can open doors for Bible studies and conversions. We must be willing to do for others. “But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?” (1 John 3:17).

The third characteristic Jesus observed was his **humility**. The community around him assured Jesus, “He is worthy.” Because the centurion’s friends thought he was worthy, they asked Jesus to help him (Luke 7:6). The

Jews thought he was worthy for his generous act of building the worship center for them (Luke 7:3-4). However, when Jesus arrives at his home, the centurion exclaimed, “I am not worthy” (Luke 7:6). He recognized Jesus’ authority and power to heal in a very humble manner. James 4:7-10 teaches Christians to understand the benefit of humility; God exalts and gives grace to the humble.

If all Christians would exhibit these characteristics, then our congregations, our communities, and our nation would be a better place. These attributes fall under the over-arching thought of biblical love. A “First Corinthians 13 kind of love” leads us to consider how other people feel so we can empathize and help them. When we see a need, we will share any possession in order to benefit others. This type of love is also humble; it esteems others better than self (Philippians 2:3). Read 1 Corinthians 13 and replace the word “love” or “charity” with your name. Can that be said of you?

The only other time Jesus marveled in Scripture was recorded in Mark 6:6. This time He marveled at the unbelief of those who rejected Him even though they had seen His miracles. Imagine being present for all the miracles and the teachings and then denying the only one who could save them! Today, when people ignore the teachings of the Bible, they will find themselves in the same category as those who sought to stop him, hurt him, and kill him. Jesus is astonished by those who do not believe in Him, even though they have been given all the evidence they need.

The title of this article is “Will Jesus Marvel at Me?” At the end of this life, Jesus will marvel at us. But what will be the reason? Will He marvel at our great faith or our unbelief? Be compassionate and sympathetic. Be willing to meet the needs of others with a benevolent attitude. Be humble because God has given us so much. When this life is over, Jesus will positively marvel at you with everlasting rewards.

GOD’S ONLY “FORGOTTEN” SON

Allen Webster

A man wandered into a church building and asked the minister for some spiritual advice. The preacher asked about his religious background. He replied, “I went to Sunday School as a child, but I can remember only one verse from the Bible, John 3:16: ‘For God so loved the world that He gave His only FORGOTTEN son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.’” He did

misquote it, but then, again, Jesus is all too often the “forgotten” Son of God.

JESUS IS FORGOTTEN WHEN HIS WORD IS REJECTED.

Jesus said, “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him” (John 12:48). Have you heard the story about the college football coach who was experiencing a losing season? By late October, the alumni were nearing a state of mutiny.

One Saturday after an embarrassing loss to an arch-rival, the coach received a telegram that read, “The last train out of town leaves Sunday at noon. Be under it!”

As the “philosopher” Snoopy once said in a *Peanuts* cartoon, “It doesn’t make any difference whether you win or lose—until you lose.”¹ Rejection hurts. It hurts Jesus when men hear of the salvation He offers and the sacrifice He made, yet they shrug their

¹ Jon Atkinson. Church Bulletin (source unrecorded)

shoulders, go their way, and reject His plan for their lives. When one rejects Him and returns to the world, he crucifies to himself “the Son of God again” and puts “Him to an open shame” (Hebrews 6:6).

JESUS IS FORGOTTEN WHEN HIS WORD IS NEGLECTED.

“Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this

one will be blessed in what he does” (James 1:22-25).

The word *natural* means “the face of his genesis,” that is, his beginning or birth. The word translated *mirror* (*esoptron*) occurs only here and in 1 Corinthians 13:12 in the New Testament. In those days, mirrors were not made of glass but of metal (usually copper or tin).² A person who soon forgets his natural appearance after looking at a mirror must return to look again. Otherwise, his appearance will be neglected. Likewise, a man who neglects his Bible will forget how Jesus sees him and then neglect his spiritual appearance.

JESUS IS FORGOTTEN WHEN GOOD WORKS ARE FORSAKEN.

“Do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Hebrews 13:16). In the context of the chapter, the writer discusses brotherly love and instructs them, “Do not forget to entertain strangers” (13:2). Jesus was not forgetful to do good (Acts 10:38), and we are instructed to walk in His steps (1 Peter 2:21). At Judgment Day, He will inquire as to how we treated the poor, hungry, naked, and imprisoned (Matthew 25:35-40).

Do not make Jesus God’s only “forgotten” Son!

TURNING SOULS TO GOD

Ronald Bryant

From the day of his conversion to Christ, to the day of his death, the apostle did all that was within his power to turn men to Christ. Paul proclaimed eternal truths to turn men to God, and those truths can be traced out. Three facts that can be readily observed. To study Paul’s preaching and teaching is to identify the fact that Paul consistently proclaimed a message of salvation that incorporated specific elements.

IN HIS PREACHING AND TEACHING PAUL DECLARED OLD TESTAMENT TRUTHS

Consider Paul’s initial contact with the people of Thessalonica as recorded in Acts 17:1-4. It is readily evident that one can read that text and comprehend what transpired as Paul “reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining

and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead...”

Paul had been in Philippi, and had taught many, including the household of Lydia and the Philippian Jailer. As was his custom, when he arrived in Thessalonica, he went to the gathering place on the Sabbath. Throughout his life and particularly in his missionary work, Paul sought out the people who believed in God. In the synagogues he encountered both Jews and Gentile proselytes. He entered the assembly as a participant and was permitted to speak. As was his custom, he went to the synagogue for three Sabbaths and reasoned with them from **the Scriptures -- the scriptures of the O. T.** Interestingly, the word “reasoned” literally means to discuss, to converse, to conduct a discussion. This term is

often used to identify that which Paul did upon meeting with people (cf. Acts 18:4; 19; 19:8-9; 20:7). [William Woodson provides considerable insight: “The word, “reasoned” by etymology, suggests the idea of speaking entirely through a subject, giving full examination and explanation of the matter being considered.” “What Paul did was not the work of a dabbler, but the work of seasoned analysis; he did the work of a veteran instructor.”]

It seems wise to consider that in teaching the people of Thessalonica, Paul’s “reasoning” had to do with the Scriptures, the only scriptures then available were those of the O. T. Yet, when Paul came before the idolaters at Athens, he used things they had in common then bridged to the things which

² Ralph Earle, Jr. *Word Meanings in the New Testament*. Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City. 1987

the Athenians did not know, but desperately needed to know.

The unforced conclusion: Paul knew that he had to help his hearers bridge from the known to the unknown, from what they knew to that which they did not know. At Thessalonica the common ground which Paul shared with those in the Synagogue were the Scriptures. The O.T. was the basis of his reasoning -- his discussion with them -- they were the common ground for the subjects discussed. At Athens, he began with that which the Athenians knew and proceeded to lead them to the God they did not know.

At Thessalonica, Paul had one desire: to lead those who believed the Scriptures, to a full awareness of their veracity, and strength, in speaking of the Messiah. There is no mistaking the fact that He worked to bring those people to a depth of conviction regarding the Christ and to a wholehearted commitment to Him. It is readily apparent that general conversation, and vague concepts were not part of Paul's method. In fact, Paul followed the same method which Jesus used (cf. Luke 24:45-48).

In following the Lord's example, Paul provided the true meaning of verse after verse, thought after thought, in a determined effort to counter the misunderstanding and confusion which ruled the Jews when they read the Scriptures.

At Thessalonica, Paul opened the meaning: "explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ" (Acts 17:3). To explain means to shed light upon so as to thoroughly distinguish the several parts of the subject. It is done so as to set forth and

make clear the several parts and the whole subject.

Having done this Paul proceeded to prove the conclusion: "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ" (Acts 17:3). He demonstrated the various O.T. passages pointed to this singular fact -- that Jesus is the Christ, the one promised by God through the prophets. He insisted that this conclusion was obvious and undeniable, being readily understood in every honest heart.

The real test has ever been one of honesty in one's response to the truth of God. Previous errors, sectarian falsehoods, and cherished alternatives are dismissed as nothing when one honestly understands the words of the truth of God. The truth exposes and opposes error no matter its strain, and knowing this Paul consistently worked to draw men into that which God alone had authored. Today, the great necessity is for people to come to know and do the will of God. To that end only the truth of God is to be proclaimed.

In preaching, Paul used evidence to prove that Jesus is the Christ. The evidence which he presented led to the conclusion which Paul insisted to be true. In the past Paul had been zealous of the Law and opposing the message of Christ; he persecuted the way of Christ unto death. Then as a servant of Christ he pressed this truth -- that the law and the prophets conclusively point to and establish the fact that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ of God. With an earnest desire to lead his kinsmen according to the flesh into a knowledge of Christ, he labored without ceasing. In Thessalonica he worked to turn men to Christ.

Paul did not leave out anything that was relevant or essential but was

careful to trace out and present the particulars. He dealt faithfully with the O. T. scriptures and consistently drew attention to and explained thoroughly what they said regarding the Messiah. Paul did not preach in a "take it or leave it fashion." He wanted his hearers to hear and heed the will of God, and he pressed them with the necessity of making a decision He would not allow them to be indifferent or negligent toward the gospel, he saw the point of decision as unavoidable. On the basis of fulfilled promises and prophecies -- the testimony of the O. T. he pressed the people of Thessalonica to accept Jesus as the Christ.

IN HIS TEACHING AND PREACHING PAUL DECLARED NEW TESTAMENT TRUTHS

Paul proclaimed the deity of Jesus Christ. He proclaimed all that pertained to the gospel of Christ, in a ceaseless effort to turn men and women to God.

He preached the gospel (1 Thessalonians 1:5, 2:2, 4:8-9). To the church at Philippi, Paul wrote that he was set for the defense of the gospel. To the church at Corinth, he said, "woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." It is apparent that he regarded the proclamation of the gospel to be his greatest privilege and weightiest responsibility. He was ruled by the fact that he had been entrusted with this treasure -- the gospel of Christ. "But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts." (1 Thes. 2:4).

Paul did not regard himself to be the authority; the message he preached originated with God. He exalted it as "the gospel of God" (2:8-9). The gospel did not originate with Paul, nor did

it depend upon his wisdom for its power; but he was fully committed to proclaiming it as God's saving message.

He proclaimed the word (1 Thessalonians 1:6, 8; 2:13; 4:15). He used the simplest term to speak of the gospel of Christ, calling it "the word." God used words -- His words to communicate eternal truths to the hearts of men. God gave His words to the end that man would come to know and obey it (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

He gave the commandments: "for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 4:2). Paul preached the facts, the promises, and the commands of the gospel. He declared the message that was to rule in their hearts and lives (Titus 2:11-12). He gave them commandments with which they were to order their ethics and morals. He gave the followers of Christ the instruction they needed to follow in living so as to please God. Paul gave specific commands and instructions, not holy hints. In doing so, he wrote, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality" (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

Just as Paul gave instructions and commandments when he preached to them in the synagogue, in the letter he wrote to them, he gave them a permanent record of instructions and directions.

Those first hearers listened eagerly to the words of Paul. Those who first read the letters Paul wrote to them could call to mind the very words which he had spoken, could hold on to each phrase with fond memory. The fact that Paul did preach and did turn many of these to God, is of great comfort to us, and the letter that he wrote to them is of

great value to us. Our interest in it rests upon the fact that it was written by inspiration and for the benefit of informing, encouraging, and guiding us also.

Paul had used O. T. passages to turn the Thessalonians from the mistaken ideas and concepts of Judaism and from pagan idolatry. He also set forth the New Testament revelation, both in word and in letter, so that the fullness of God's redemptive truth might be known. Today we are privileged to have full access to God's word -- to all that He has revealed especially those the eternal truths which are the gospel of Christ.

PAUL URGED MEN TO RECEIVE THE WORDS OF THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL

Paul did not preach in a "take it or leave it" fashion; he wanted men to hear and heed the will of Christ. He sought to persuade, not simply to inform. He endeavored to turn men from sin to God. Twice in I Thessalonians Paul asserted that the Thessalonians did receive the word -- the message of Christ (1 Thessalonians 1:6; 2:13).

Paul did not manipulate, pressure, or coerce anyone to follow Christ. Those who come to Christ, must be free to do so; they must freely choose to make the good confession, and choose to yield themselves to the terms of the gospel (Romans 6:16-18). They received the word, simply indicates that they accepted and embraced the message preached. They opened their hearts and minds, and the trusting that message yielded to the will of God in Christ. He persuaded by the evidence -- the testimony of Scripture. The words of the truth of the gospel of Christ penetrated minds and brought souls to convictions which compelled them to accept the truth and the requirements of the

gospel. To their credit they embraced the gospel of Christ, even in the face of opposition.

The church at Thessalonica began with the response of faith in and obedience to the gospel of Christ. Paul preached the relevant message, presenting the prophetic utterances of the O. T. which found their fulfillment in Christ, and he then connected those utterances with the revelation of Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God and the Messiah. The O.T. and the N.T. fit together harmoniously and give explanation of insight and appeal. In Thessalonica the preaching of Paul met with honest and good hearts which accepted and embraced the truth of God. Those ancient people were turned to God, by the preaching and teaching of the gospel. God's plan for the salvation of man is still the gospel of Christ. No one can come to God except through the message that God has given -- the gospel of Christ.

We do not live in that day, nor do we live in that ancient city, and we may never be closer to its ancient streets than we are at this moment, but our hearts can be attuned to the same truth which they embraced, and we can become what they were -- we can become obedient to and live in loyalty to the gospel of Christ.



Continued from page 1

Naturally, these attributes are carried into the local congregation and become powerful forces for unity. It appears the love of the gospel is what motivated Paul to put aside his personal misgivings about Mark and later pen, “Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry” (2 Timothy 4:11). If we are busy fighting the devil in the world, than we will not have time to fight each other in the church.

Personal Evangelism cures principle problems. Religious error is the result of biblical ignorance (Matthew 22:29). False teaching on Bible authority, the differences between the Old and New Testament, the supremacy of Christ, the organization of the church, worship, instrumental music, the frequency of the Lord’s supper, church organization, the oneness of the church, the contribution, sin, moral issues, faith, repentance, confession, baptism, and faithfulness are all cured when we teach the lost. The best way to cure error is with a healthy dose of truth. Personal Bible study forces one to become a student of truth. Evangelists must be able to answer the question, “why,” which requires one to dig into the Scripture. Some Christians never move beyond their conversion to conviction. In other words, they do not know why they believe the different aspects of faith. This leaves room for planting seeds of religious error and allowing them to sprout and produce division.

Personal Evangelism cures the purpose problem. Too many congregations have become program-oriented instead of purpose-driven. We have programs for everything except personal evangelism (golden-oldies, silver wings, young adults, college singles, teens, youth, addiction recovery, divorced, marriage, depression, alcohol recovery, etc.). Brethren, we have lost our purpose. Jesus was the Master Evangelist. Soul winning was His mission (Luke 19:10), and evangelizing the world was His greatest and final commission (Matthew 28:18-20). When servants are not working, soldiers are not fighting, and families are not harmonizing, should we expect anything less than infighting, backbiting, bickering, and disunity? In contrast, Christians who are evangelizing are focused, determined, and unified.

Without a doubt, we need to be training Christians to teach the lost (2 Timothy 2:2). It is the cure for practical, personal, and principle problems. In addition, it maintains our focus on the one thing Jesus commissioned for all disciples, given by Divine instruction and preserved by the pen of inspiration. “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:19-20).

