

The Purpose and Plan for the Church

The Priority of Evangelism

Selected Scriptures

Introduction

We live in an age and a place where our passion and faithfulness are being dulled by the constant encroachment of worldliness. Our commitment is being blunted by the plethora of options that fill up our time, and take our minds and our energy. We are being robbed of our inflammatory power by the cool culture in which we exist. JM

The Church may have a big brain, but it appears to have a small heart. The Church's temperature has dropped significantly. Her step is leaden, and her Spirit is apathetic. Christians today do not appear to be preoccupied with the purpose for which the Messiah came, but rather are preoccupied with making sure that they cover every little area of their life so that it can become utterly fulfilling in the way that they wish it could be. And they are very narcissistic. The Church has become equally narcissistic and tends to focus on its own comfort zone reaching the maximum.

I read a fascinating modern parable that appeared in *The Presbyterian Journal*...I share it with you. See if you can understand what the parable is all about.

"On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occur, there was once a crude little lifesaving station. The building was just a hut, and there was only one boat, but the few devoted members

kept a constant watch over the sea. And with no thought for themselves or their safety, they went out day and night, tirelessly searching for the lost. Many lives were saved by this wonderful little lifesaving station, so it became famous."

"Some of those who were saved, and various others in the surrounding area, wanted to become associated with the station and give of their time, money, and effort for the support of its work. New boats were bought, and new crews were trained, and the little lifesaving station grew."

"Some of the members of the lifesaving station were unhappy that the building was so crude and poorly equipped. They felt a more comfortable place should be provided as the first refuge of those saved from the sea. So they replaced the emergency cots and beds and put better furniture in the enlarged building."

"Now the lifesaving station became a popular gathering place for its members. And they decorated it beautifully and furnished it exquisitely because they used it as sort of a club. Fewer members were now interested in going to sea on lifesaving missions, so they hired lifeboat crews to do that work. The lifesaving motif still prevailed in the club's decorations, and there was a liturgical lifeboat in the room where club initiations were held."

"About this time, a large ship was wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in loads of cold, wet, half-drowned people. They were dirty and sick, and the beautiful new club was considerably messed up. So the property committee immediately had a shower house built outside the club where the victims of shipwrecks could be cleaned up before coming inside."

"At the next meeting, there was a split in the club membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the lifesaving activity altogether because it was unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal social life of the club. Some members insisted upon lifesaving as their primary purpose. They pointed out that they were still called a lifesaving station. But they were finally voted down and told that if they wanted to save the lives of various

kinds of people who were shipwrecked in those waters, they could begin their own lifesaving station down the coast, which they did." "As the years went by, the new station experienced the same changes that occurred in the old. It evolved into a club, and yet another lifesaving station was founded. And history continued to repeat itself. And if you visit that coast today, you'll find a number of exclusive clubs along the shore. Shipwrecks are still frequent in those waters, and most of the people drown." Pretty clear, isn't it? So easy for the Church to deviate and become preoccupied with its own comfort, and become indifferent, apathetic, and self-centered.

And when we read something like Verse 1 Chapter 9 of Jeremiah, we ask ourselves what that kind of emotion is like because it's so foreign to us. Jeremiah, looking at lost people, says, "Oh, that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slaying of the daughter of my people." Here is a man who says, "I don't have enough tears to carry out my sorrow. I wish I had more tears to carry the sorrow that fills my head."

We don't identify much with that all, if any. We have settled for a self-indulging activity center...we call it a church. But somehow it's missed its purpose. We are content with comfort. We are content with personal prosperity. The lifesaving enterprise of the Church means little, if anything, to us.

John Stewart Blackiewrote, "The early Church worked by a fervent moral contagion, not by the persuasion of a cool argument. The Christian method of conversion not by logical arguments, but by moral contagion and the power of the Holy Spirit has with the masses of mankind always proved itself the most effective," end quote.

It's not how cool, and clever, and aireodite, and airtight, and logical your argument is; it's how passionate your heart is. The passion for Holiness, the passion for the lost, is what makes the Church powerful, not the preoccupation with its own comfort or the sophistication of its own arguments.

Dr. Benar, after listening to a minister who was preaching with great gusto, said to him, "You love to preach, don't you?" "Yes, indeed, I do." "But," said Benar, "Do you love the men to whom you preach?"

We do not have to choose between a fervid ignorance and a passionless culture. "Thank God," he said, "we can have both a knowledge and a zeal, a well trained mind, and a warm heart." The passion of John Wesley, for example, stirs my heart...it should yours. He went out to do for England more than was done by the armies and the navies of England in his lifetime. He had tremendous courage. He toiled beyond what was rational. He parted company with ease and comfort. And as for money, he lived as a pauper. He lived on a pittance and gave away more than \$200,000. He was abused and maligned in his time so that he could say, "I leave my reputation where I left my soul, in the hands of God." He traveled 225,000 miles, mostly on foot and horseback, and preached 2,400 different sermons. And amid misrepresentation and abuse, never knowing the delights of love at home, subject to incessant attacks of the mob, the pulpit, and the press, he never abated the joy of his heart and the hope in his ministry until he reached the age of 88. And he ended his ministry at his death, and not before.

Cannon Ferrars said of Wesley, "Overwhelming evidence exists to show that the Church and people of England in his day were dull, vapid, and soulless, and the preaching was careless. The land was steeped in immorality. And to Wesley was granted the task for which he was set apart by enviable consecration...the task which even an archangel might have envied him of awakening a mighty

revival of religious life in those dead pulpits, in those slumbering churches, and in that moribund society."

And it was said of Wesley he was out of breath pursuing souls. And then there was George Whitfield, a contemporary of Wesley, who, in zeal, wore patched clothing, ate coarse food, prayed under a tree far into the winter nights in agony of soul, until it was said the sweat ran down in his face, that he might know the power of God.

Ordained at 22, he began to preach immediately with tremendous effect. Probably no man since the days of the Apostle Paul excelled Whitfield in sacred eloquence.

John Newton said of him, "If you ask me who is the second preacher in the world, I don't know. If you ask me who is the first, there's only one answer: George Whitfield."

But after all could be said about his eloquence, his power with men depended most upon the passion of his soul which absorbed every lesser ambition. And his biographer says, "Used every God-given power to lead men to the personal choice of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord."

At one time he wrote, "Lord, when you see me in danger of nestling down, put a thorn in tender pity into my nest." And again he said, "I am determined to go on until I drop, to die fighting, though it be on my stumps."

And they put on his gravestone, "As a soldier of the Cross, humble, devout, ardent, he put on the whole armor of God, preferring the honor of Christ, to his own interest repose, reputation, or life," end quote.

He lived in the later 1800s...his ministry. He crossed the Atlantic 13 times. He preached for 34 years...18,000 sermons.

John Scott, in a recent book that he wrote, said, "There are many popular preachers today, but not many powerful ones. Where are the models? Where are the Wesleys and the Whitfields? Where are the Puritans? Where are the Jeremiahs? Where are the people of passion?"

In the 1920s, there was a president at Southwest Baptist Seminary in Dallas by the name of Scarborough. Among many things that he wrote, he said this: "Jesus was more than a reformer, benefactor, liberator...more than preacher and teacher. He was and is the world's regenerator. He found all life poisoned with deadly sin. He put the saving antitoxin...the life-giving serum of regeneration at the root of the world's sinful malaria, cholera, paralysis, leprosy, cancer, and tuberculosis. He was the great physician, the world's great soul surgeon," end quote.

And when you look at Christ, you have to see Him as the one who came to seek and to save the lost. We've been talking a lot, about being like Christ, pursuing the goal of Christ-likeness. This is at the heart of it. If we are to walk as He walked, as John 1:2 tell us, then we must understand his concern for the lost.

Review

Lesson

- I. The Passion for Evangelism
- II. The Person for Evangelism
- III. The Pattern for Evangelism
- IV. The Proclamation for Evangelism

1. A Passion for Evangelism

Ro 10

10 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. ²For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

9 I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit— ²that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (Ro 9:1-3). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

“The apostle Paul had something essential for effective evangelism: a God-given burden for those who did not know **Jesus** Christ. In his case, the burden was for his own people, the Jews. He cared. It burned inside him.

General William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, once said that his desire, had it been possible, would be to dangle his evangelism trainees over hell for 24 hours. That way, they could see the reality that awaits those who do not know Jesus Christ.” Greg Laurie

Charles Spurgeon spoke of a story he heard from another pastor: I heard of a dear [dying] girl the other day, who said to her pastor, “I could never bring my father to hear you [preach], but I have prayed for him long, and God will answer my request. Now, dear pastor,” she said, “you will bury me, won’t you? My father must come and hear you speak at my grave. Do speak to him. God will bless him.” And he did, and her father was converted. The death of his child brought him to Christ. Oh to be willing to die if others may be saved from the death eternal. God give us just such a spirit as that. (C. H. Spurgeon, “Concern for Men’s Souls,” sermon 1425, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Vol. XXIV, 1878 [Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1997 reprint], 418)

It was Paul’s passion to see his brothers “according to the flesh” (kata sarka) become his brothers “in the Lord” (en tô kuriô).

1. The Context

Sandwiched between the two clear and passionate statements is one of the clearest statements about the Sovereign election of God in Israel and an salvation.

So often we get stuck in Romans 9 and forget Romans 10

It is important to remember that election does not cancel election, but rather confirms it.. Evangelism would be completely ineffective if election had not occurred.

Men left to themselves will never believe.

Men need the work of the decree of God and the work of the Holy Spirit and the preaching of the gospel to be saved.

Election by itself does not save.

Belief by itself does not save

Its both.

CH Spurgeon

I believe that God will save his own elect, and I also believe that, if I do not preach the gospel, the blood of men will be laid at my door.

Our Savior has bidden us to preach the gospel to every creature; he has not said, Preach it only to the elect and though that might seem to be the most logical thing for us to do, yet, since he has not been pleased to stamp the elect in their foreheads, or to put any distinctive mark upon them, it would be an impossible task for us to perform; whereas, when we preach the gospel to every creature, the gospel makes its own division, and Christ's sheep hear his voice, and follow him.

It is true that the Bible does clearly teach that God is Sovereign and elects, calls and regenerated and creates faith and repentance... and understanding these things will guard us from errors in evangelism and the errors in the gospel

J.I. Packer's wonderful book *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*.

If we forget that it is God's prerogative to give results when the gospel is preached, we shall start to think that it is our responsibility to secure them. And if we forget that only God can give faith, we shall start to think that the making of converts depends, in the last analysis, not on God, but on us, and that the decisive factor is the way in which we evangelize. And this line of thought, consistently followed through, will lead us far astray.

Let us work this out. If we regarded it as our job, not simply to present Christ, but actually to produce converts—to evangelize, not only faithfully, but also successfully—our approach to evangelism would become pragmatic and calculating. We should conclude that our basic equipment, both for personal dealing and for public preaching, must be twofold. We must have, not merely a clear grasp of the meaning and application of the gospel, but also an irresistible technique for inducing a response. We should, therefore, make it our business to try and develop such a technique. And we should evaluate all evangelism, our own and other people's, by the criterion, not only of the message preached, but also the visible results. If our own efforts were not bearing fruit, we should conclude that our technique still needed improving. If they were bearing fruit, we should conclude that this justified the technique we had been using. We should regard evangelism as an activity involving a battle of wills between ourselves and those to whom we go, a battle in which victory depends on our firing

off a heavy enough barrage of calculated effects. Thus our philosophy of evangelism would become terrifyingly similar to the philosophy of brainwashing. And we would not longer be able to argue, when such a similarity is asserted to be fact, that this is not a proper conception of evangelism...

Don Whitney likens the evangelist to the mailman. The mailman has fulfilled the obligation of his job when he has delivered the mail to me. The measure of success in his job is to carefully and accurately deliver the message. How I respond to the letters I receive is none of his concern. And the same is true of the evangelist. He faithfully delivers the message and leaves the results to God.

Things we cannot do.

- 1 We cannot help others realize the desperation of their situation or convince them that God exists as it is the Holy Spirit who must do these things. Men are willfully ignorant of them. 2 Peter 3:5 says "*For they **deliberately** overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God.*" (emphasis mine) The hearts of men are hard and only God can soften them.
- 2 We cannot convince unbelievers of their sinfulness. It is the Spirit who convicts men of sin Before He died Jesus spoke of the Spirit and said "*And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.*" (John 16:8)

- 3 We cannot show them the beauty, necessity and wonder of Christ. A man needs the grace of the Spirit in his heart before he can see this. Isaiah 53:2 prophecies about Christ saying “For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him” Sinful humans can neither appreciate nor desire Christ with the Spirit first working in them.
- 4 We cannot produce repentance or faith. Once again, those are God’s works and His alone.

To summarize this, we must not try to do the Spirit’s work, for if we are likely to meet with failure. This is not to say, though, that there is nothing we can or should do to spread the gospel. Here are four things that we are required to do. Things we must do:

- 1 We must pray for the lost. God delights in using our prayers to accomplish His purposes. Pray for salvation and pray for a “heart of flesh.” Pray that God would use circumstances, either specific or general, to bring people to a realization of their desperation. Pray that God would confirm what we are saying through other people or circumstances. Pray that God would remove the peace they have in their unrepentance. Pray that God would put people in our lives that we can share our faith with.
- 2 We must show our faith in our lives. We need to not only speak about God and what He has done, but we also need to show in our lives that we have changed.

Our day-to-day lives are our greatest testimony to unbelievers.

- 3 We must share our faith. When opportunities present themselves we are to act as the messenger to deliver the message, free from our prejudices and opinions. We are to present the purity of the gospel, not our spin on it. This, of course, requires knowledge of the Bible and of God's ways. A prerequisite to sharing our faith is strengthening our faith by learning about God and growing closer to Him.
- 4 We must invite others to hear the message. We are to invite people to church and other evangelistic occasions. I Corinthians 14:25 speaks of the potential of church services where it speaks of an unbeliever hearing the *"secrets of his heart [being] disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you."*

God chooses to use sinful humans to be His messengers on earth. We can be most effective when we understand our roles and our responsibilities. When we do this, we can joyfully and obediently do our part to fulfill God's purposes.

Tim Challies

2. The Care

Ro 10:1

10 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.

Roman 9:1

I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit— ² that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

great sorrow

sorrow

lupé: pain of body or mind, grief, sorrow

Original Word: λύπη, ης, ἡ

Part of Speech: Noun, Feminine

Transliteration: lupé

Phonetic Spelling: (loo'-pay)

Short Definition: pain, grief

Definition: pain, grief, sorrow, affliction.

3077 *lýpē* – properly, distress, vexation; (figuratively) physical or emotional pain; *heavy, heart-sorrow* (grief) that *brings a person down*.

megas: great

Original Word: μέγας, μεγάλη, μέγα

Part of Speech: Adjective; Adverb, Comparative

Transliteration: megas

Phonetic Spelling: (meg'-as)

Short Definition: large, great

Definition: large, great, in the widest sense.

anguish

oduné: pain, distress

Original Word: ὀδύνη, ης, ἡ

Part of Speech: Noun, Feminine

Transliteration: oduné

Phonetic Spelling: (od-oo'-nay)

Short Definition: pain, distress

Definition: pain, sorrow, distress, of body or mind.

HELPS Word-studies

Cognate: 3601 *odynē* – intense emotional pain (personal anguish); *consuming grief*, which is emotionally lethal if experienced apart from God's grace which comforts. See 3600 (*odynāō*).

unceasing

adialeiptos: incessant

Original Word: ἀδιάλειπτος, ον

Part of Speech: Adjective

Transliteration: adialeiptos

Phonetic Spelling: (ad-ee-al'-ipe-tos)

Short Definition: unceasing, unremitting

Definition: unceasing, unremitting.

HELPS Word-studies

Cognate: 88 *adiáleiptos* (an adjective, derived from 1 /A "no" and 1257 / *dialeípō*, "an interval") – properly, no unnecessary gaps in space or time, i.e. "as often as required" (as frequent as is necessary). See 89 (*adialeiptōs*).

88 /*adiáleiptos* ("without unjustified interval") refers to what happens regularly,

What caused the great Sorrow, grief and anguish

1.The Relationship

my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. ⁴ **They are Israelites,** and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. ⁵ To them belong the patriarchs,

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (Ro 9:3–5). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

10 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (Ro 10). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

Dr. Robert Haldane says and apply it to our own lives: "In this we may discern a characteristic of a Christian. He who has no sorrow for the perishing state of sinners, and especially of his kindred, is

not a Christian. No man can be a Christian who is unconcerned for the salvation of others.”²

Paul was a small man, but he had a huge heart of love and compassion for unbelievers. The gospels often say that Jesus himself was “moved with compassion” to heal the wretched and despised people coming to him. In the same way, Paul had a heart of flesh, not of stone. He daily experienced great grief and never-ending pain over those who were perishing and going to hell. He felt truly the pain the unbelievers would experience in hell, especially the Jews.

2. The Rational

Ro 10:2–3

²For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.

3. The Reality

Ro 9:27–29

²⁷ And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved, ²⁸ for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay.” ²⁹ And as Isaiah predicted,

“If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring,
we would have been like Sodom
and become like Gomorrah.”

Ro 9:30–33

³⁰ What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; ³¹ but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. ³² Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, ³³ as it is written,

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a
rock of offense;
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

Ro 11:7–8

⁷ What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, ⁸ as it is written,

“God gave them a spirit of stupor,
eyes that would not see
and ears that would not hear,
down to this very day.”

Ro 11:25

²⁵ Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

3. The Curse

Ro 9:3

³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

Paul was not the first to express such a sentiment. Moses also had a big heart. He was willing to make atonement for his people who committed, he said, “a great sin” in the worship of the golden calf. He asked God to blot him out of the book of life if that would save the sinners. Moses said, “Let me be accursed in their place” (see Exodus 32).

In the light of the reality of hell, no Christian can be unfeeling or neutral. We must have a big heart of love and feel the pain of those under the wrath of God. We must witness to them, warn them, and pray for them. We must especially evangelize our family and kinsfolk. Paul longed to take their place outside of Christ that they could be in Christ. Speaking of the characteristics of a Christian leader, Paul writes: “Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will

grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will” (2 Tim. 2:25-26).

curse

anathema: that which is laid up, i.e. a votive offering

Original Word: ἀνάθεμα, ατος, τό

Part of Speech: Noun, Neuter

Transliteration: anathema

Phonetic Spelling: (an-ath'-em-ah)

Short Definition: a curse, a cursed thing

Definition: a votive offering, a thing devoted to God; a curse, the thing cursed.

331 *anáthema* (from **303** /aná, "up" *concluding* a process, which intensifies **5087** /títhēmi, "to place") – properly, place *up*, referring to something *pledged* (given *up*) *to destruction*; a divine curse/ban ("accursed"); an "oath-curse."

separated from

apo: from, away from

Original Word: ἀπό

Part of Speech: Preposition

Transliteration: apo

Phonetic Spelling: (apo')

Short Definition: from, away from

Definition: from, away from. *huper*: over, beyond, fig. on behalf of, for the sake of, concerning

For

Original Word: ὑπέρ

Part of Speech: Preposition

Transliteration: huper

Phonetic Spelling: (hoop-er')

Short Definition: in behalf of, above

Definition: gen: in behalf of; acc: above.

HELPS Word-studies

5228 *hypér* (a preposition) – properly, beyond (above); (figuratively) to extend *benefit* (*help*) that reaches beyond the present situation.

Conclusion

John Harper was called to pastor the Moody Church in the early 1900s. He went down with the Titanic. And W.B. Riley related the death of Harper. The story went like this, and I'm quoting from W.B. Riley: "We have the history of John Harper's end, for survivors brought to harbor in safety told it to us. When the Titanic was struck by the iceberg that drove in her sides and sent the ship to the bottom, John Harper was leaning against the railing, pleading with a young man to come to Christ. Four years after the Titanic went down, a young Scotsman rose in a meeting in Hamilton, Canada, and said, 'I am a survivor of the Titanic. When I was drifting alone on a piece of wood that awful night, the tide brought Mr. John Harper of Glasgow on a piece of wreckage near me. He said to me, 'Man, are you saved?' 'No,' I said, 'I'm not.' He replied, 'Believe in the Lord, Jesus Christ, and you'll be saved.' And the waves bore him away, but strange to say, brought him back a little later, and again he said, 'Are you saved now?' 'No,' I said, 'I can't honestly say that I am.' He said again, 'Believe in the Lord, Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.' And shortly after, he

went down beneath the water. And there alone in the night, and with two miles of water under me, I believed, and I am John Harper's last convert."

That faithful passion to the end.