

THE BIBLICAL MEANS OF EVANGELISM

Discipleship Message #6: A Biblical Philosophy of Evangelism, Part 1

In our last message we started looking at the idea of a Biblical “Philosophy” of Discipleship.

- This refers to the “how” of Discipleship: How does it actually take place?
- And we talked about the “means” (the process) and the “goals” (our part in the process).
- Both evangelism and edification (i.e., discipleship) have both means and goals. (Side Note: I made mistakes in both the means and the goals of evangelism, so I'll be working on fixing that.)

Today we want to look at what the Bible says about the “means” of evangelism, since that is how a disciple is made (in the sense of “created”)—it's the first step in the discipleship process.

- What are the components of the process that God uses to save a sinner (to “evangelize” the sinner)?
- These components are the “means” God uses to save a sinner (I said last week there were three, but I overlooked a fourth); there are four general components of the process through which God saves a sinner.

I. Means #1: Conviction – The Personal Conviction of the Sinner

A. First, we need to understand that the Bible says that a sinner, left to himself, will never seek God.

1. (Rom 3.10-12) If God does not intervene in the personal life of the sinner, that sinner will never seek after the one true God of the Bible. There is no such thing as a “seeker” in the Bible.
2. (John 6.44, 65) No one would come to God (the Father or Christ) if God did not first draw him.
3. (John 6.37, 39) God must draw the sinner to Himself—to the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is where salvation begins, with God drawing all men everywhere to Himself.

B. (John 12.32) The Bible is clear that after the resurrection, God draws all men to Himself.

1. God draws men through creation: (Rom 1.19-20) God will convict the sinner through the testimony of creation (creation speaks of a big Creator who is powerful and intelligent).
2. God draws men through their conscience: (Rom 2.14-15) God convicts all sinners through the testimony of their conscience (the conscience testifies to the fact that God is a moral Being, He distinguishes between right and wrong, and convicts those who do wrong).
3. God draws men through the conviction of the Spirit: (John 16.7-11) After the resurrection, God sent His Spirit into all the world to reprove all men everywhere of sin (theirs), righteousness (God's), and the judgment to come (which is why all men fear death: they have to face God).

C. Review: Salvation begins with God personally convicting the individual sinner.

1. He does that through creation, the conscience, and the special convicting work of the Holy Spirit.
2. But the personal conviction of the sinner is not enough to save him. It just makes him feel bad.

II. Means #2: Cross – The Preaching of the Cross to the Sinner

A. (1Cor 1.18, 21) God has, in our dispensation, ordained preaching as a means of saving sinners.

1. The preaching of the cross is the preaching of the Gospel, and that has three basic elements.
2. The message of the cross is first a message of God's Law: God's justice is manifested on the cross.
 - If God spared not His own Son, and that for the sins of others, how will the individual sinner escape God's justice. God will punish law-breakers for every infraction of His Law.
3. The message of the cross is also a message of God's grace: God's love is manifested on the cross.
 - God spared not His own Son but poured out the wrath we deserve on Him so that we could be justified (we broke the Law, but Jesus loved us and paid our “fine”).

4. The final message of the cross is one of *decision*: Two law-breakers were crucified with Christ, one on His left and one on His right. One repented and asked Christ for salvation, the other did not.
 - That is where the sinner is left when confronted with the preaching of the Christ: Repent and believe, or continue in your lawlessness and perish.
5. The preaching of the cross (Law, grace, decision; justice, love, repentance) is what God has chosen as a means of saving lost sinners. They must *hear* the Gospel *proclaimed* in some fashion.

B. (Rom 10.13-17) Through the preaching of the Gospel, God gives the sinner sufficient faith to be saved.

1. I think the core truth of this passage is often lost or misunderstood because of our presuppositions.
2. (v17) We often say that we need to read the Bible and listen to good, biblical teaching and preaching because “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” So, if you want to grow in your faith, you need to hear the Word.
 - Although there certainly is truth in that statement, that's not what the passage says.
3. (v17) The “word” that one “hears” in this verse is the message preached in the previous verses.
 - a) (v16) It's the gospel that one must obey for salvation (obey the command of the gospel to repent of your sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ).
 - b) (v15) It's the gospel of peace (the message of peace *with* God: reconciliation between enemies).
 - c) (v13-15) The word that one hears that results in faith is the message of the gospel preached to the sinner.
4. Don't miss the truth here: When the sinner “hears” the gospel preached, God gives him sufficient faith the be saved (every time!).
 - a) (v17 cf. v13-14) The “faith” that comes from hearing the word (the gospel) is *saving* faith.
 - b) (v14-16) The hearing that results in saving faith is the hearing of the preaching of the Gospel.

C. God has ordained the preaching of the Gospel as a means of leading a sinner to salvation.

1. But, the preaching of the cross is not enough in and of itself to save a sinner. There must also be a personal conviction in the sinner (God must draw the sinner to Jesus Christ in conviction).
2. But even then, the sinner is not saved. Conviction and the preaching of the cross are not enough.

III. Means #3: Conversion – The Conversion of the Sinner

- A. (1Thes 1.9) The sinner who has heard the Gospel through the preaching of the cross and who is convicted by God, must turn *from* sin *to* Christ in order to be saved.
 - This speaks of “conversion” (and this is the element I overlooked in last week's message).
- B. (Acts 17.30-31) God commands all men everywhere to *repent* (to confess and forsake their sins).
 1. This is why the Bible speaks of “obeying” the Gospel, because the Gospel *commands* repentance.
 2. Without repentance, therefore, there is no salvation (because the sinner is still in rebellion).
- C. (Rom 3.21-26) The repentant sinner (who turns *from* sin) must turn *to* Christ in faith—he must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation (trust Him only to save Him).
- D. When we speak of a “decision” the sinner makes, it is this “decision” to convert to Christ.
 1. He is convicted by the Spirit. He has heard the Gospel and God has given him sufficient faith to be saved. Now it's time to *choose*—to *decide* if he will turn from sin and place that faith God gave him in Christ or if he will turn from Christ and continue in his sin.
 2. And, yet, we all know that a “decision” to convert to Christ (through repentance and faith) does not save the sinner. Sinners cannot save themselves; God must save them. And that is the fourth and final means of salvation: Regeneration.

IV. Means #4: Regeneration – The Regeneration of the Sinner by the Spirit of God

- A. God places the condition for salvation: “belief” in the Lord Jesus Christ (and biblical belief is far more than simple mental assent; it is the “conversion combination” of repentance and faith).
- B. (Eph 1.12-14) When the sinner meets the requirements (belief in Christ), God saves him—God seals him with His Holy Spirit and grants him eternal life.
1. Obviously it's at this moment, also, that God forgives the sinner of all his sins.
 2. This is the moment, also, of the sinner's “justification” (he is declared righteous because God applies the payment Christ made on the cross to the sinners account: debt paid in full).
 3. But this is the moment, also, when a child of the devil becomes a child of God through the new birth, something unique to our dispensation.
- C. (Titus 3.4-5) In our dispensation God saves the sinner by the washing of regeneration by the Spirit.
1. (Rom 8.9) This is why if someone has not received the Spirit, they are not saved (they are not Christians; they are not of Christ).
 2. (1Cor 12.13) Everyone that is saved in our dispensation has received the Holy Spirit.
- D. At this point (regeneration) the work of evangelism is finished and the sinner is saved.
1. God has moved the sinner through a process and brought him to the point of salvation.
 2. The *means* God has used to get that sinner to salvation are four:
 - a) The Personal Conviction of the Sinner (through creation, conscience, and the conviction of the Spirit of God).
 - b) The Preaching of the Cross to the Sinner (the Gospel: Law, grace, decision).
 - c) The Conversion of the Sinner (repentance and faith, turning from sin to Christ in faith).
 - d) The Regeneration of the Sinner by the Spirit of God (in our dispensation we are saved by the washing of the regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost).

Conclusion:

What, then, hinders the salvation of lost sinners?

- When you think through the means God has established to save sinners, where's the weak link?
- (1Thes 2.16) The weak link is us. What hinders the salvation of sinners is us not speaking (not witnessing, not preaching to the lost the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; Rom 10.13-17).

The weak link is not God:

- God has already done His part through the work of the cross and the resurrection.
- God is doing His part by convicting all sinners everywhere of sin, righteousness, and judgment.
- God will do His part by regenerating the repentant sinner who trusts in Christ to save him.
- What hinders salvation, then, is nothing that has anything to do with God. God is already at work!

The weak link in means of salvation that God has established for the evangelizing of the lost... is us.

- (Rom 10.13-17) Next Sunday we are going to talk about the “goals” we have in evangelism.
- What are our responsibilities in this process of God saving a lost sinner? There are two. It's very simple; there are only two goals—two things God expects of us in the salvation of sinners (I said last week there were three; I made a mistake, there are only two) and we will talk about them in our next message.