

ESSAY 3 A Evangelism – a Personal View

It is suggested that you read this essay after 'Essay 3' which deals with the Apostles.

This short paper was first produced on a small-font typewriter and was designed to fit on one page – dated 5-3-1980. The whole topic of Evangelism was then (and of course still is) creating urgent but divided views. If I were to rewrite this page I would change very little but I would give much clearer emphasis to the evils of the often seen practice of preaching 'Personal Evangelism' in a legalistic and non-nuanced way as a sort of new 'Gospel Law' laid on all Christians equally. Preachers and teachers must recognise that the Christian Life is one of Grace not Law, and the only universal Gospel Law is that of LOVE generated by Grace. I have to observe that this central NT teaching, that it is Love not Law which works as the engine that drives the practical daily life of Christians, is poorly understood and poorly presented at many if not all levels of church life.

I have been challenged to produce my complete 'Theology of Evangelism' or complete blueprint for evangelism which would try to answer all the possible questions as I see them. A moment's thought will tell us that the NT itself is very light on details about ongoing evangelism and in the end provides no blueprint and leaves it up to each group and each generation to respond however they can in changing circumstances.

EVANGELISM – A PERSONAL VIEW

by PAUL L. MEETH

- 1 Certain key words must be noted. They must be defined as the NT defines them. They must be used consistently in our discussion of Christian life and evangelism.
- 2 EVANGEL = GOSPEL = God's message to us in words.
EVANGELISM = Spreading and sharing the Evangel, so that words are somehow communicated which can be received with 'the hearing of faith.'
EVANGELIST = One who brings God's words with the clear and conscious aim of bringing others to new life in Christ. Makes opportunities not just takes them. Active not passive.
TO WITNESS = to SAY what one has SEEN. In the NT was one who had SEEN Jesus both before and after his resurrection and was specially chosen to SAY so. Today used of the Christian Life in a loose, misleading and essentially false way. One cannot WITNESS without SPEAKING and the speaking we are concerned about is EVANGELISM (see above). The only WITNESS today is the NT itself, the product of and record of the Apostles as Christ's WITNESSES.
- 3 I have heard many preachers, writers and Bible-study leaders say that the Bible COMMANDS all Christians to be evangelists. I have never found such a command.
- 4 Others say that the Bible has at least a clear EXPECTATION that all Christians shall

- evangelise. I have never found such an expectation.
- 5 Those who support the first view have a genuine concern for evangelism as a whole. So do I.
- 6 They find evidence for their view in hundreds of different Bible verses. I have found that in all cases their understanding of those verses is inadequate.
- 7 Do you think there is much EVANGELISM today?
- 8 Do you agree that everyone in your town has the right to hear at least one clear statement of the EVANGEL during their life?
- 9 What should we do then?
- 10 'Sit back and do nothing' is a view which has falsely been ascribed to me. There certainly are things which groups and individuals can and must do.
- 11 In the NT some people (not all) were EVANGELISTS. Let us for the sake of the discussion accept this as a signpost. Thus:
- 12 In any group of, say, 100 believers, God distributes various callings. One or two to be pastors, perhaps one to be an EVANGELIST. A special call makes this person a SPECIALIST.
- 13 The other believers do not sit and do nothing. They should see the following things as ACTIVE:
- a Pray earnestly and often that God will mercifully raise up EVANGELISTS at the local level. This is what has been missing for many decades – We do not have evangelists because we do not ask for them!
 - b Pray that God will clearly signify to them who these evangelists are.
 - c Pray that they will have God's grace to acknowledge and accept these people and ministries.
 - d Pledge themselves to GIVE – Their money, their time, their prayer, their personal encouragement, their car when necessary – to SUPPORT the various ministries.
 - e Not only pledge but actually carry out sacrificial support. Let us love in fact, not only in words and intention.
 - f Go to work every day to help pay for the evangelist's (and pastor's) college fees for training, and the expenses of ministry when they have been trained. EVANGELIST = full-time?
 - g Provide books, Bibles, Bible-study groups child-minding and all necessary personal support for those newly converted under the ministry of the EVANGELIST.
 - h I have deliberately left to last what others put first – try EVANGELISM yourself, otherwise you cannot find out if God is calling you to this special ministry.
- 14 If at length God confirms this call to your best friend but not to you, do not feel GUILTY, as if you have failed, or JEALOUSY towards your friend. Such jealousy and competitiveness is quite inappropriate in Christ's service, and destructive of others rather than supportive.
- 15 This overall approach is, I trust, Biblical but also simple and commonsensical,

leaving much to God in his grace.

16 You will probably not read the above approach anywhere else, so please consider it carefully.

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