



DEFINING EVANGELISM & CONVERSION

Acts 1:8

If you have a Bible—and I hope you do—let me invite you to open to Acts 1. This is the second message in a series on key terms and definitions when it comes to the church and mission. By the end of this series we will have covered ten key terms and definitions. There is a document created by me and some other leaders in the IMB—the International Missions Organization that I have the privilege of leading—that not only defines these terms but elaborates on key truths that are associated with those terms. Take the definition of the gospel that we looked at in the last message. That document gives the definition of the gospel and then elaborates on various key truths in it about Who God is, what sin is, Who Jesus is, what He has done, how we respond, and on and on. That document is available at www.radical.net. You can download it and use it however you want. Hopefully it will serve you as a supplement to these messages. In that document there is a whole host of Scripture references that are footnoted that you can use to dive deeper into study. I just want to make you aware of that.

In the last message we looked at the term gospel:

G	God's character	The only true God, the just and gracious Creator of the universe...
O	Offense of sin	...looked upon hopelessly sinful men and women in our rebellion and sent...
S	Sufficiency of Christ	...His Son, God in the flesh, Who lived the life we could not live, died the death we deserve to die by a substitutionary death on the cross for our sins and has risen from the grave so that anyone...
P	Personal response	...who responds by turning from their sin and trusts in Him, will be reconciled to God forever...
E	Eternal urgency	...creating eternal urgency and...
L	Life transformation	...creating life transformation for all of eternity.

This definition of the gospel then leads into two key terms that I want us to look at in this message.

Evangelism and conversion

Evangelism and conversion may seem to some people like pretty basic terms. You might think you know what these terms mean but I am not so sure. Evangelism and conversion are words that are oftentimes not politically correct or we do not use those terms. “What do you mean? You are trying to convert people and evangelize? What does that mean?” I want us to think about what it means to proclaim the good news. That is literally what evangel means, to make the gospel known. Think about conversion because these are issues or terms that are totally diluted and misdefined, not just in the missions world but in the church today. I am convinced there is a massive crisis concerning conversion in the church where scores of people claim to be Christian yet do not actually know Christ.

Look at the numbers and the research. The majority of Americans today identify themselves as Christians but among those self-proclaimed Christians less than half of them are involved in church on a weekly basis. Less than half of them actually believe the Bible is accurate. The overwhelming majority of them do not have a biblical view of the world around them. Research has gone even deeper to distinguish that people describe themselves as born again Christians and not just Christians, as if there are different kinds of Christians. That is a whole other issue. There are people who say, “I have made a personal commitment to Jesus and I believe I will go to Heaven because I have accepted Jesus as my Savior.”

According to the research almost half of Americans are born-again Christians but out of that group of born-again Christians researchers found their beliefs and lifestyles are virtually indistinguishable from the rest of the world around them. Many born-again Christians believe that their works can earn them a place in Heaven. Others think that Christians and Muslims worship the same god. Some believe that Jesus sinned while He was on earth. An ever-increasing number of born-again Christians describe themselves as marginally committed, or kind of committed, to Jesus.

People have used this data to conclude that Christians are not really different from the rest of the world. I am convinced that interpretation of that data is totally inaccurate. The one thing that is abundantly clear from this research is that there are a whole lot of people in the world who think they are Christians but they are not. There are scores of people here and in cultures around the world who culturally identify themselves as Christians yet personally are not followers of Christ.

We should not be surprised by this. What does Jesus say in Matthew 7:22-23? He says, *“On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.’”* Jesus Himself says there are many people who will be shocked one day to find that though they thought their eternity was secure they were ultimately deceived. Many people who call themselves Christians today will be shocked to stand before Christ one day and hear Him say, *“I never knew you.”*

It is the case across our culture in America, around the world, and maybe even the case among people who are listening to this. We have to ask the question, what does it mean biblically to become a follower of Christ? How do we lead people to Him? How do we lead people to become Christians? With the gospel foundation laid I cannot think of a more important topic to dive into than how to proclaim this gospel and how people come to believe this gospel and how they are converted to becoming followers of Christ. Definitions of these terms—evangelism and conversion—have huge implications for understanding whether or not we are converted and understanding what it means to lead others to faith in Christ.

I want us to think about evangelism and conversion. We are going to start with evangelism and think about proclamation of the gospel and see that it leads to conversion in people's lives. We will bring it back around to our own lives as well as other people's lives. We will start with the biblical definition of evangelism. Let me put it out there and then I want us to unpack it in Scripture starting here in Acts 1.

Evangelism

How does Scripture define evangelism? Evangelism is the proclamation of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit with the aim of persuading people to repent and believe in Christ. Every word here is important. The proclamation of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit with the aim of persuading people to repent and believe in Christ. Think about Scripture. Look at Acts 1:8 when Jesus says to His disciples right before He ascends into Heaven: *“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.”*

Let us start here. This is why this definition of evangelism starts with the first word proclamation. Evangelism is the proclamation of the gospel. That word proclamation is based on this word witnesses that we see here in Acts 1:8. Jesus is telling His disciples that they are all going to be His witnesses which necessarily involves communication or proclamation. Evangelism always means proclamation. It always involves communicating verbally the message of the gospel using language the lost can understand. I say verbally, but there are many people who may be deaf in the world so obviously there is proclamation of the gospel using sign language so they can understand. It is proclamation of news.

Now, the reason we have to emphasize this is because this is one of those areas in the church, particularly in American culture, where we have totally misconstrued evangelism. People say, “Well, I witness with my life. I witness by being a good person. I witness by putting a smile on my face everyday when I go to work, when I am out in my neighborhood.” Well, let us think about that. Hopefully that is a given. We want to live lives that agree with the gospel. We want to smile. We want to be kind to the

people around us at work and in our neighborhood. What Jesus is saying here in Acts 1 is you are not going to have the Spirit of God upon you so that you can smile or do good things.

The picture here is that you are going to have the Spirit of God upon you so you can speak, because that is what a witness does. You put a witness on a stand and they testify. They speak. They proclaim what they have seen, heard and observed. You look at the original language of the New Testament here and the word for witness is actually *martureo* which is where we get the word martyr. Think about it. Jesus was speaking these words to His 11 disciples on that day and tradition tells us ten of them lost their lives. John, the only one who was not martyred, was exiled on an island because of his faith.

These men who were hearing these words would die. Why? It was not just because they were going to go out and be nice or live good lives and do good things. They died because they proclaimed the gospel. It is the same reality for brothers and sisters around the world today who are being persecuted. They are not being persecuted in North Korea and Saudi Arabia and Somali and all kinds of other places in the world because they are smiling and doing good things. It is because they are proclaiming the gospel and when they are proclaiming the gospel they are facing risk to their lives and their families and their land.

We need to make sure that in a culture where we have the freedom to proclaim this gospel we do not sit and hide behind misconceptions of evangelism and say, "Well, I just witnessed with my life." No, we witness with our words. We proclaim the gospel. That is what evangelism is. We use language that people without Christ can understand. That is huge in missions. Our goal is to get the gospel to people who speak different languages in different places and help them understand it. We want them to understand it. That is the work of evangelism. This is why so many missionaries work hard learning language in different places. It is not primarily just so they can get around town and buy food for their families. That is obviously extremely important but the primary reason missionaries learn different languages is so they can proclaim the gospel in those languages and be able to evangelize.

Proclamation of the gospel

In the same sense, we look at the people whom we live around and we say how can I best communicate this gospel to them in a way that they can understand? That is evangelism. It is proclamation of the gospel. Now, that leads to the second part of this definition. It is proclamation of the gospel which takes us back to our definition from last week. We need to make sure when we think about evangelism that we are thinking about the full gospel or the full message of the holiness and love of God, the sinfulness of every human being, the atoning sacrifice and victorious resurrection of Jesus for our sins, the necessity of repentance in faith. All of these things must be communicated.

This is why we have to be careful when it comes to evangelism. We are not just saying, “Well, I talked to somebody about God today or I mentioned Jesus in a conversation so I evangelized.” Just because you mentioned God that is not evangelism. A Jewish person could have said the same thing and he would not be evangelizing. You say, “Well, I mentioned Jesus.” So did the Jehovah’s Witness but he is not evangelizing. The Jehovah’s Witness is not telling good news. He is telling bad news about how to earn the favor of God that actually condemns. To evangelize is to proclaim the gospel: God’s character, the offense of sin, the sufficiency of Christ, the personal response and need to turn and trust in Him, the eternal urgency that goes with that and the life transformation that flows from that. Evangelism is proclamation of the gospel. It is not that it is bad to mention Jesus or God in conversations and on-going dialogue with somebody but to evangelize is to bring the truths of the gospel together in conversation with someone else.

In the Power of the Holy Spirit

This is pure Acts 1:8. You will receive power from the Holy Spirit and the direct result is you will be a witness. You will proclaim the gospel. This is huge. According to Jesus in Acts 1:8 the power of the Holy Spirit is given to us. Think about that for a second. God, Who created the entire world and reigns sovereign over seven billion people in the world, Who is holding all the planets and billions of stars in place, the God Who is reigning sovereign over every speck of dust in the world, this Omnipotent God with all of His power has put the power of His presence inside you and me. What a thought! It will knock you over if you really think about it. You have the power of God’s Spirit dwelling in you which leads to the question, why? Why do we have the power of God’s Spirit? Jesus tells us He has given us the power of His Spirit for the purpose of proclaiming the gospel. That is the primary purpose of God’s Spirit in us that we might proclaim the gospel.

Now, people say, “Well, I thought we have the Holy Spirit for all kinds of reasons such as to convict us, comfort us, encourage us, guide us, lead us, teach us, fill us.” Yes, the Holy Spirit does all those things. It is interesting that in the books of Luke and Acts you will see “filled with the Holy Spirit” used eight times. These two books are the only times where this phrase is used. Every time Luke uses the phrase “filled with the Holy Spirit” it is automatically accompanied by some kind of exclamation, proclamation, or communication of God’s Word. We do not have time to turn to all of them now but consider these:

- Luke 1:13-15 is talking about Elizabeth having John the Baptist in her womb and talks about how he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, the one who would proclaim the coming of Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit.

- Luke 1:39-42 Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she automatically exclaimed with a loud cry, “*Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb,*” when talking to Mary. She is filled with the Holy Spirit and she speaks.
- Luke 1:67-69 Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and immediately he began to prophesy.

Three times in Luke 1 we see that phrase filled with the Holy Spirit and it is all accompanied with a focus on proclamation.

- Then you get to Acts 2:2-4 where it talks about how at Pentecost the people of God were filled with the Holy Spirit as they were gathered together in that upper room and they began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. As soon as they were filled with the Holy Spirit they started speaking.
- Acts 4:8—Peter filled with the Holy Spirit stood up and started speaking.
- Acts 4:31 says they were filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the Word of God with great boldness.
- Acts 9—Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit and immediately spoke the gospel.
- Acts 13:8-11—Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit and looked intently at this magician, Elymas, and he started speaking to him.

What we see is a clear pattern and theme that whenever we see this phrase—“filled with the Holy Spirit”—it is automatically followed with proclamation of truth. Get the implication for your life and my life. We have been given the power of the Holy Spirit for what primary purpose? For proclamation that when we are with a neighbor, coworker, family member, somebody in another nation who does not know Christ and we begin to speak the gospel there is a filling of the Holy Spirit that accompanies that proclamation in evangelism. Evangelism is a proclamation of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. We present the gospel message but only the Holy Spirit can do this powerful work of turning a person’s heart toward Christ.

In evangelism we are completely dependent upon the Holy Spirit to do what we cannot do. In the last message we talked about how people in their sin are dead and cannot come to life on their own. Only God can bring them to life. That is the whole picture in evangelism. When we proclaim this gospel we rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to do what we cannot do. We cannot manufacture somebody’s salvation. We cannot talk them in or manipulate them into coming to Christ. No, this is a decision that they must make and they can only make by the power of the Holy Spirit opening their eyes to the gospel that we are proclaiming, bringing them from death to life. When we do evangelism and proclaim this gospel we do it in total dependence on the Spirit of God to do what we cannot do which is evangelism. Proclamation of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit with the aim of persuading people to repent and believe in Christ.

With the Aim of Persuading People to Repent and Believe in Christ

This is why we do evangelism. This is why Peter preaches the gospel in Acts 2. It is why Philip proclaims the gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8. It is why Paul proclaims the gospel to the Philippian jailer and his family in Acts 16. They are not just informing people about the gospel. They are persuading people with the gospel. Evangelism has the aim of persuading people. We want to persuade, urge, plead for people to repent and believe in Christ. Evangelism is not just presentation of the gospel. It is persuasion with the gospel.

Evangelism necessarily involves a call for someone to not just hear this gospel but to respond to it and to repent of their sin and believe in Christ. The reason this is so significant is because we so often leave it out. Even if we start to get into more of a conversation about Who Jesus is and what He's done and how we have sinned against God and how Jesus alone is able to save us, oftentimes we are kind of content to stop there. We fail to connect the dots and say, "You need to turn and trust in Christ. You need to believe in Christ. Will you turn and trust in Christ now?" That invitation, that persuasion to turn—for somebody to repent and believe in Christ—is a necessary part of the gospel. It is what evangelism is all about.

Jesus says in Acts 1, "You will receive power; the Holy Spirit will come upon you; you will be My witnesses. You will witness to My truth." They are filled with the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. Peter stands up and proclaims the gospel. Everybody was cut to the heart and said, "What shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." It goes on in verse 40 of chapter two, *"with many other words and exhorted them, saying, 'Save yourselves from this crooked generation.'"* You see the persuasion and pleading here: "save yourselves." Verse 41 then tells us the result: *"those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls."* People's lives were changed for eternity. Why? Because there was evangelism. Proclamation of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit with the aim of persuading people to repent and believe. We do not just present the gospel. We persuade with the gospel message.

Some people shy away from that because it almost starts to sound manipulative, but it is not. Here is why it is not. Number one, we know it is only the Holy Spirit Who can do this work. We are not talking about manipulating some kind of man-centered response through man-centered means. No, we urge people to repent and believe the gospel, dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit to bring about that kind of repentance and belief. Secondly, persuasion, urgently pleading, is exactly the picture we should have in our mind when it comes to evangelism. With urgency we persuade people. Eternal urgency marks our message. If we know that people's lives for eternity are dependent upon how they not just hear the

message but how they respond to the message, then we will call them to respond. We do not just leave it hanging in kind of a take it or leave it kind of thing.

I remember my preaching professor describing it this way. He said if I walk into my teenage son's room one day and see my teenage son with a gun pointed at his head about to take his life I do not say to my son, "Well, here are the facts son. If that is what is best for you then go ahead and do it." No, he said I get down on my knees and I plead, "Do not do this. Do not do this. Please, do not do this." He is persuading. If that is the case when it comes to temporal life on this earth, how much more do we persuade for their eternal life? Do we persuade? Do we plead?

Evangelism is the proclamation of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit with the aim of persuading people to repent and believe in Christ.

Conversion

That then leads us into the definition of conversion. In evangelism we are persuading them become followers of Christ. What does conversion mean? What does it mean to become a follower of Christ? Let me give you this definition, then we will think about it through different places in Scripture. Conversion is what evangelism is leading toward, the aim of persuading people to repent and believe in Christ. What is conversion? The divinely enabled personal response of individuals to the gospel in which they repent, turn from their sin and themselves and they trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord. Let us think about that definition and kind of unpack it in Scripture.

Conversion is the divinely enabled personal response. Just put that phrase together. It is divinely enabled. That flows directly from what we looked at in the last message on Ephesians 2 which made it abundantly clear that we are dead in our sin. Not sort of dead, kind of dead, partly dead. We are dead. No one who is dead is able to bring himself to life. You have to be given life which is exactly what the entire Bible teaches. We do not have time to turn to all of these texts. Think about Old Testament anticipation of New Testament salvation. It is centered on divinely enabled response.

Listen to God's promise in the new covenant with his people in Ezekiel 36:24-29 and the verses that follow. As I read these verses try to see if you can notice a theme in God's language. This is God speaking. He says:

I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. ²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶ A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. ²⁸ You shall dwell in the land which I gave to your fathers; and you shall

be my people, and I will be your God. ²⁹ And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses...

Do you hear it? Five verses and no less than ten references to things God will do to bring about salvation for His people. It says over and over again, “I will do this. I will do this. I will do this.” It is not surprising then when you turn the pages of Scripture and see words like repentance and faith mentioned, describing them as gifts from God.

- In Jeremiah 31:18, *“I have heard E'phraim bemoaning, ‘Thou hast chastened me, and I was chastened, like an untrained calf; bring me back that I may be restored, for thou art the LORD my God.’”* So he is asking God to bring him back.
- Lamentations 5:21 Jeremiah says, *“Restore us to thyself, O LORD, that we may be restored!”* How can we be restored? God, if you do this work of restoration.
- Go to Acts 5. Now, we are in the New Testament. God exalted Jesus at His right hand as Leader and Savior to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. Did you hear that? God gives repentance.
- Acts 11:18. After Peter’s report to the church concerning Cornelius’ conversion the Bible says, *“When they heard this they were silenced. And they glorified God, saying, ‘Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life.’”* God has granted repentance.
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- Romans 2:4 talks about how God’s kindness is what leads to repentance. We repent because God’s kindness enables it.
- Second Timothy 2:25 Paul is addressing opponents of the gospel and he says, *“God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth...”* God may give them repentance. Clearly repentance is something we do. We are going to talk about that in a minute. It is a gift from God. Faith is the same way.
- Acts 14:27 says God, *“...opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.”*
- Ephesians 2:8, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God.”* Salvation from start to finish is a gift from God and not a result of your works so that nobody may boast.
- Philippians 1:29, *“For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake.”* It has been granted to you that you should believe in Christ.
- Hebrews 12, Jesus is the Author of our faith. All over Scripture repentance and faith are gifts of God’s grace.

That is what we mean by conversion is a divinely enabled work. Look at the very first picture of conversion we see in Acts 2. Three thousand people are being saved and verse 47 says, *“And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”* Who was adding to the church? “The Lord was adding to the church.” Conversion is a divinely enabled response to the gospel. It is not something that fallen sinners can accomplish on their own. According to Scripture, unregenerate people

were slaves to sin, unable to understand the things of God and unable to obey or please God. Justly, we are under His wrath. We are blinded to the gospel so that we cannot see it. We are not seeking God. We are running away from Him. We are dead in our sin. Apart from the gracious initiative of God no one can be saved.

Some people might hear that and think, “Was that a particularly narrow theology or version of theology you are promoting there?” No, this is the overflow of the gospel, the reality that apart from the work of God we are hopeless. Only God can save us.

Now, go back to the definition we are using in this phrase. Conversion is the divinely enabled personal response. It is not that we do not do anything. Of course we do. By the grace of God and His divine enabling we repent and we believe. These are the two dominant terms we see in Scripture when it comes to an individual’s response to the gospel. Repent and believe. Jesus’ initial invitation, Mark 1, the time is fulfilled, the Kingdom of God is near, repent and believe in the gospel. When you get to the book of Acts you see both words used at different times. Acts 2:38: *“And Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins...’”* You see it over and over. Repent. Acknowledge your sin before a Holy God and turn from it. Acknowledge your inability to save yourself. Turn from yourself. Isaiah 45:22: *“Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.”* I love 1 Thessalonians 1:9, it talks about how the Thessalonians turn to God from their idols to serve the living God. You see repent all over Scripture.

You also see believe. What did Paul say to the Philippian jailer and his family? *“Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved”* (Acts 16:31). Romans 10:9: *“...if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”* Belief obviously involves knowledge about Christ. We know it is more than that, though.

I was reading James 2 yesterday morning where it says even the demons believe in God and shudder. It is not just intellectual acknowledgement. It is more than that. It is trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord. Romans 10:9 makes that clear: *“Confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead. You will be saved.”* Repent and believe, all over the New Testament.

Look in Acts. Sometimes you will see just repent mentioned. Sometimes you will see just belief mentioned. Sometimes you will see repent and believe together. It makes sense. They go together. When you repent you are turning from something and to something else. You are turning from your sin and yourself and you are trusting in Jesus as Savior and Lord. When you believe and are trusting in Him that means you are turning aside from trusting yourself and turning aside from sin you have been following.

Conversion is a divinely enabled personal response of repentance and faith. This gracious work of God in conversion in no way minimizes or eliminates the necessity and responsibility of sinners to respond in repentance and faith. Repentance—turning away from sin and self—marks a radical break

from a life of rebellion against God. Faith involves not just believing that what the Bible says about Jesus is true but trusting in Him alone for salvation while entrusting your life to Him.

Repentance and faith are not separate or disconnected action but two sides, in a sense, of the same response of turning away from a life of rebellion against God in repentance and in the same act turning to God through faith in Christ. Neither repentance nor faith is adequate without the other. They go together. Conversion is a divinely enabled personal response to the gospel.

There are a couple of implications of this that are really significant. First, this gospel must be proclaimed in order for anybody to be converted. People cannot come to Christ without hearing the gospel. They cannot be saved apart from receiving, understanding and believing the gospel. That makes the task of evangelism critically urgent. Connect the dots between evangelism and conversion. People will only be converted when we evangelize. That is basic but huge. The people who live around you and work with you will only come to Christ if somebody proclaims the gospel to them. It is true for them and for people around the world. There are six thousand plus people groups in the world, spanning about 2.8 billion people who have little to no knowledge of the gospel. They have never heard the gospel. Nobody has ever proclaimed the gospel to them. They cannot be converted if they do not hear the gospel, if it is not proclaimed to them.

I will talk with pastors sometimes who will say to me, “Hey David, I hear stories about dreams and visions and God is revealing Himself in all kinds of way to all kinds of different people in the world so maybe He is getting the gospel to them even if we do not go to them.” I hear that with sadness and this always leads into a conversation where I say, “Just look at Scripture because you will not find one verse in the book of Acts where the gospel is going forward in the world apart from a human instrument proclaiming the gospel.” Yes, you see dreams and visions but take Peter and Cornelius. Yes, Cornelius has a dream but God says to Peter. “Go and talk to Cornelius. Proclaim the gospel to him.” I hear stories of dreams and visions from our missionaries around the world. They tell all kinds of stories but it is always accompanied by proclamation of the gospel by someone speaking the gospel to them.

Could God make the gospel known through all kinds of different ways? Dreams, visions and all kinds of ways? Well, sure He can. God has all kinds of power. He could write the gospel out in the sky tonight in the stars and make Himself known to everybody just like that. God could totally do that, but He does not. Instead He chooses to use you and me to proclaim His gospel, to do the work of evangelism. If we do not do the work of evangelism people will not be converted to faith in Christ. It is that simple. We must do evangelism.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we are plan A for the spread of the gospel to other people. There is no plan B. We must do evangelism and in that evangelism we must proclaim the gospel as Scripture reveals it. As members of the church here and as missionaries around the world, it is absolutely essential

that we get this message right, especially in light of all kinds of distortions of the gospel that are popular here and around the world. Any gospel message that denies or dilutes the full deity and humanity of Jesus, that identifies the human problem as anything else or anything less than sinful rebellion against God, that does not major on the substitutionary death of Jesus, the reality of His bodily resurrection—any gospel that does not teach that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone—is an unbiblical gospel that will not lead to biblical conversion. This is why we need to be clear about these terms because we need to make sure when we are saying this is the gospel that what we are saying is true, accurate and faithful to Scripture. When we are saying turn and trust in this we need to make sure we are emphasizing what is true and right according to God's Word. We need to get the gospel right. We need to proclaim it with zeal and urgency that others might come to faith in Christ.

I want to make a couple of other clarifications that will look forward to the next definition in next message in the series. I think it is worth saying as we are talking about conversion that one, conversion is radical. The Bible uses extreme language to describe conversion. Somebody who is converted has died to everything they used to be and has received new life in Christ. They have been crucified with Christ, created all over again. They have been born again. Conversion is neither casual nor superficial. It is noticeable. No believer is going to attain perfection in this life, but a converted person is a changed person which is evident in a Christian's belief in the gospel, love for God's people and growth in holiness. There is an idea that is too common in the church, teaching that you can come to Christ and afterward your life will look pretty much the same as it did before. It is just not true. Conversion leads to total life transformation, as we saw in the "L" of gospel—life transformation.

Many people who say they are Christians but their lives do not reflect the reality of a relationship with Christ should at least cause question. Is there true faith there? Has there been repentance and belief? Has someone truly been converted? That is not to say we cannot have assurance of salvation. We absolutely can according to Scripture because Scripture teaches conversion is permanent. When we turn and trust in Christ God never lets go of or loses anybody who has been truly converted. Yes, some people may profess faith for a time and then fall away but their very departure from the faith, as 1 John teaches us, means they have never been converted in the first place. God alone knows the condition of a person's heart, but it is not biblical or safe to assume that somebody who has denied the faith, whose life is showing no evidence of regeneration, or who has even voluntarily abandoned fellowship in the body of Christ is actually converted, no matter what they have said or done in the past. We will talk about that more when we get to disciple.

Those are some clarifications which lead to a challenge that is two-fold. First challenge is this: Do you know Christ? I am not asking if you prayed a prayer at some point in your life or you raised your hand or made a decision when you were young. Do you know Christ? Have you repented of your sin?

Have you turned from your sin and yourself? Have you trusted in Jesus as Savior and Lord? Repentance and belief. Are these a reality in your life? Did it happen at a point in time when you chose to repent and believe in Christ in a way that now carries out a process over time when you are continually repenting and believing in Christ, not that you are being converted over and over and over again. Conversion happens at a point in time but it leads to a process over time when you are continually returning from sin and yourself, trusting in Jesus as Savior and Lord. I ask you, has that happened? Has that point in time happened in your life? If not, I urge you to repent and believe. The good news is God loves you so much and has made a way for you to be saved from all your sin, to be reconciled to Him for all of eternity. Repent and believe. Save yourself from the effects of your sin to use language from Acts 2. By the grace of God in your life turn from your sin and yourself. Repent and trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord, receiving His gift of life—life now transformed and life forever in eternity with Him. Do you know Christ? If not turn and trust in Christ. Repent and believe in Him.

Then the second challenge for all of you who know Christ, whether you are missionary serving somewhere in the world, you are a member of a church here in the United States, anywhere in between, are you proclaiming this gospel? You have the Spirit of God inside of you for the purpose of making this good news known to other people.

I was so convicted recently when I read an article by a guy named Douglas Murray from the U.K. In that article he was talking about the growth of Islam in the West—in Europe and America. Murray wrote how he was struck by accounts of those who are converting to Islam because of how similar they are to each other. They often go along the lines of “I had reached X age, oftentimes twenties or early thirties, I was in a nightclub. I thought life must be about more than this.” Murray continued, “Almost nothing in our cultures says, ‘But of course this is not all. Instead the voice of our culture says repeat, repeat.’ In the absence of such a voice, they search and they have discovered Islam.”

The question he is asking in this article is why are these seekers choosing Islam in Europe and America and not something else? Why not Christianity? This was his conclusion: “At least in part it is because most branches of mainstream Christianity have lost the confidence to proselytize.”

He went on and here was his observation. He started talking about how Christians do either one of two things today in much of Europe and in America. He said either they deny the gospel and fewer Christians are actually believing the gospel or they sit silent with the gospel. They believe it but they do not share it. He made the observation that the reality is whether they deny the gospel or sit silent with the gospel, both of which lead to the exact same result. People are not being persuaded to believe it, either because people are denying the gospel or they are sitting silent with it.

I urge you Christian to 1) believe the gospel. Do not deny this gospel, believe it, and 2) let us not sit silent with it. Let us proclaim it. Just think who today, who this week, can you intentionally share this gospel with and be bold. Pray for boldness. Be loving, kind and go proclaim it.

Let us pray.

God help us to evangelize so that people might turn from their sin and themselves, trusting in Christ as Savior and Lord and receiving the gift of eternal life that He has made available to us.

God, I pray for myself. I pray for every person who has listened to this that You would help us grow in our faith and belief in the gospel. Help us to repent and believe daily. Lord, for some the first time to repent and believe but then for all of us just to continually turn from our sin and ourselves and trust in You as Savior, Lord. Then God help us, give us boldness, to proclaim this gospel. Help us not to be silent with it.

I pray for brothers and sisters who are living around the world right now as missionaries that You would give them boldness to proclaim the gospel, that You would open doors for the proclamation of the gospel, that they would proclaim it in the power of your Holy Spirit with the aim of persuading people to repent and believe in Christ. I pray that people this week would be saved—converted—to Christ and become followers of Christ as a result of their evangelism.

I pray the same for us in the U.S. God, help us to be bold and compassionate in our evangelism. Deliver us from the fear of man, the fear of awkwardness, all fear. God, help us to proclaim this gospel in the power of Your Holy Spirit with the aim of persuading people to repent and believe in Christ. We pray that this week through our lives people come to Christ. I pray this knowing only You can do this by Your power. Use us to do this we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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