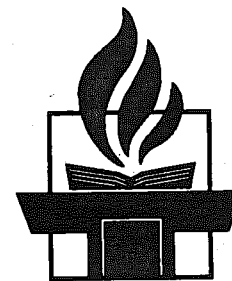


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No church is obedient that is not evangelistic.

John Blanchard

The driving force of the early Christian mission was not propaganda of beautiful ideals of the brotherhood of man. It was proclamation of the mighty acts of God.

James S. Stewart

Every single believer is a God-ordained agent of evangelism.

R.B. Kuiper

The command to evangelize is a part of God's law. It belongs to God's revealed will for His people.

J. I. Packer

When our hearts are filled with Christ's presence, evangelism is as inevitable as it is contagious.

Robert E. Coleman

Evangelism never seemed to be an "issue" in the New Testament. That is to say, one does not find the apostles urging, exhorting, scolding, planning and organizing for evangelistic programs. Evangelism happened! Issuing effortlessly from the community of believers as light from the sun, it was automatic, spontaneous, continuous, contagious.

Richard C. Halverson

When I mention the term "evangelizing," I know what comes to your mind. It is the same sort of thing that comes to my mind: first is the word guilt, and second is the word fear. If I enlarge that a bit and say you are not only responsible to evangelize but you are responsible for evangelizing all nations (Jesus did tell us in Matthew 28 to make disciples of all of the nations) we have even more guilt and even more fear. There is a great weight of responsibility put on top of us. We know that we are inadequate and we know every time we speak of Jesus Christ we flounder for words and cannot seem to get our thoughts together. We don't seem to have a feel for what it means to share the gospel effectively. Yet God has said that He has given us this message and He has given us this responsibility.

There is a fabricated story I heard years ago about the life of Jesus. He had lived, died, and returned to heaven. An angel came to Him and said, "What did You do?" He answered, "Well, I lived a perfect life on the earth. I obeyed everything that the Father told Me to do. I did it up to the very last moment. As the perfect Lamb, I sacrificed my life on the cross so that men's sins could be atoned for, satisfying My Father's wrath. I was buried, was raised, and ascended to be here. I have charged eleven men to carry the message of salvation through My name throughout the known world in such a way that it will continue to reproduce itself throughout all generations until I finally come back and the work is finished." The angel looked at Him with incredulity and said, "What if Your plan fails?" Jesus replied, "I have no other plan."

Starting from those original eleven men, God gave the responsibility to you and to me—He lays it on top of us. We have a tendency to feel very much under the pile about that sort of thing. But He has no other plan.

Missiologists tell us that the idea of "all nations" in the Scripture is synonymous with today's term "people groups."

People groups are groups of individuals who are in some sense unified culturally. For instance, in India there are many people groups isolated by their language. They need their own particular witness indigenously—through their own people and to their own people. When Christ and writers of the Bible spoke of evangelizing the world, they were talking about evangelizing people groups. God's intention is that people like you and me take on the responsibility of reaching every individual people group in all the world.

Though I am not always enamored by statistics, I want to give you some; and then I want to make a seemingly illogical, perhaps outlandish, but accurate statement. The Center of World Missions in California reports there are approximately 5.2 billion people on the face of the earth, and they are collected into about 24,000 people groups. To a missiologist, there are two types of people groups: reached people groups and unreached people groups.

We send missionaries to Brazil, but Brazil may have more Christians than we have here. We send missionaries to some parts of Africa, and Africa is one of the most evangelized and indigenously strong continents in the world. We send missionaries to some places that have more true Christians than we have in our own United States. We call each of these a reached people group, containing a self-propagating group of nationals doing the job of relating this vibrant gospel message of Jesus Christ to their own people.

But there are also the unreached people groups. These are the groups that do not have any viable self-propagating church or organizations spreading the news of Jesus Christ among their own people.

Of these 24,000 people groups, 12,000 have already been reached and have an established witness, be it ever so weak. But another 12,000 of these people groups have no indigenous witness. There are about 150,000 workers going to other places in the world to share the message about

Jesus Christ. Fifteen thousand of those workers are going to the unreached people groups, but 135,000 of those going are in the reached category. In other words, 90 percent of the people who go out and do the job of being a missionary in another land are going to the reached people groups while only 10 percent are going to the 12,000 unreached people groups in this world. Only 10 percent of those going out are going to these unreached areas where 50 percent of all people groups are to be found.

In light of the apparent impossibility of our reaching all the people groups, a statement needs to be made, and it is a true one regardless of what it seems to be when you first hear it. The statement is this: We are winning the battle of global evangelization. God is right on target. He's not one soul or one moment late in doing what He has planned to do! This statement is not based on statistics or on any human projections. It is a statement taken from the Bible. You say, Now wait a minute—that's no way to motivate me to evangelize the world. You are to tell me how bad things are and how far behind we are and what tremendous need we have. But God is not behind—He's meeting His schedule for reaching the world's people groups with perfect timing.

The way to find out if this is actually going to happen is to go to the end of the book. So we will go to the last book in the Bible, to the end of time, and we will see what the angels are singing in Revelation 5:9-10:

And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because You were slain, and with Your blood You purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

What does this mean? If it's our responsibility to go to all the nations and every people group—all 24,000 of them—

and we go to the back of the Book and we find that it is going to happen, can we accept the fact that God is right on target in doing this mission task? He is. You can be sure He is. He is not a moment late in carrying out His plan for global evangelization. Not one moment.

Now look at Revelation 7. It is a settled fact that God is doing what He plans to do to reach every tribe, every language, every tongue, every nation. Revelation 7:9 says,

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count [no one could readily count—God knew how many were there], from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. . .

You may have this sort of idea: you imagine God is fretting and stewing about this thing. He's so worried. He's handed this great task to eleven men and they have passed the torch on down the line, but now it's come to you and He's really concerned about you because He doesn't think that you are going to get off the dime and get moving. You are sitting there with all your inadequacies; and so God is up there fretting and stewing.

But God is not fretting and stewing. God is not worried. God is doing exactly what He plans to do in terms of bringing this world to Himself.

We have the beast or the antichrist spoken about in Revelation 13:5:

The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander His name and His dwelling place and those who live in heaven. He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not

been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.

Here we have the greatest opposition that this world will ever know against Jesus Christ, the Lamb—the beast, the antichrist. When we speak of the beast and the antichrist in the book of Revelation, we are talking about the greatest opposition that Christians and the Christian cause will ever face. In various places we read in the Old and the New Testaments that this beast takes domination over all the inhabitants of the world except those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. He never gets their allegiance, though he takes the lives of many Christians.

What does it mean when we put these Scriptures together? It means that when the greatest force outside of Jesus Christ, this great deceiver, Satan himself, is carrying out through this antichrist the worst opposition against Christians, so that they are physically conquered and are killed—while all of this is going on, Jesus Christ is still not daunted and put off and worried and fretting because He is still going to have people from every tribe, every nation, every language, every people group, in heaven. God is a compassionate God, but He is not wringing His hands—He's not worried—because He's going to do exactly what He plans to do.

Matthew 24:9-14 also speaks of this opposition:

Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of Me. [Remember that all of the nations are under the control of Satan according to 1 John 5:19.] At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other [this is the apostasy—that falling away by people who thought themselves to be Christians and find out in the time of stress that they really are not], and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who

stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Here in the front part of the New Testament we find Jesus Christ Himself saying out of His own mouth that this gospel is going to be preached to all nations of the world and then the end will come. Luke 24:44-49 says,

He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms [i.e., the Old Testament, the Bible they had in their hands]." Then He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what My Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

Jesus said that what was spoken of in the Old Testament is going to happen. Here's what it says and this is what is going to happen. I am going to die, He said; I'm going to rise again, and repentance and faith in Me are going to be preached to all the nations, beginning right here in Jerusalem.

You see, then, what God says will happen will happen. We see the whole picture now. We are going to reach all the people groups of the world. In Matthew 13 Jesus Himself said that the kingdom of God would start small like a mustard seed, and that smallest of all seeds will grow to be the largest plant in the garden, and that is actually what is going to happen. It is going to permeate all of society. So God is getting the job done, contrary to what we might think.

But do you think God is going to do that because you are

so faithful to carry the good news of Jesus Christ to every place that you are supposed to carry it? Rather, if God had to depend upon whimsical you, the job would never get done. So what has He done? The Bible teaches us that He has secured His prophetic statements by giving you the Holy Spirit. He is confident because He has put His Holy Spirit inside of you.

Look at Acts 1:8. Jesus said, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

If we look closely at the grammatical construction, we realize this is not a command of God but a statement—a declaration. Although He does command us to be witnesses, here He is declaring what will happen—we will be witnesses. This will happen by virtue of the Holy Spirit given to us.

If God didn't do it this way, Christianity would have folded up hundreds of years ago. But it is going on. We've always had lazy people and inadequate people. We've always had people of the worst sort among us. Yet God is still getting His job done. And increasingly the gospel is permeating the whole globe, and the good news is coming to every people group just as God intends. God is doing it by His own Holy Spirit. What He commands He will do because it is what He set out to do by the Holy Spirit whom He put within you. That God can get that done through me and through you is quite astounding, isn't it? But the Bible teaches us that God "works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose" (Phil. 2:13). In this great work of permeating the globe with the gospel, things that we cannot understand happen in us and through us by His Holy Spirit.

The New Testament leaders were not commiserating together after they had had a foray out into the world. They didn't come back together out of tremendous frustration.

They didn't always talk about how they were just a little minority. They didn't talk about losing the battle; that kind of talk is not found in the Scriptures. Instead, they talked about the tremendous privilege it was to be in on a flood tide of what God was doing. They knew they were being allowed to be part and parcel of the work of God as He carried out His great work of reaching the whole world just as He intended. They knew God was speaking through them and that God was doing the work through them in some mysterious way. But I must illustrate this mystery in a way you will not forget.

To Illustrate

One snowy morning in the last century, 15-year-old Charles Spurgeon decided to go to church in Colchester. In Colchester, England, the snow was so bad that he couldn't make it to his original destination and turned aside to attend a little Methodist church.

The name of that Methodist church was the Artillery Street Primitive Methodist Chapel. They were a very humble group of people, as was the building in which they met, but they were also very excited and zealous. As Charles Spurgeon turned into this little chapel, there was only a handful of people there, perhaps fifteen or twenty. The pastor didn't show up because he was snowed in. Eventually one of the deacons—a very tall man—stood up, opened his Bible, and in rough language began to preach a gospel message.

He preached for only about ten minutes on the text, "Look unto Me all the ends of the earth and be saved" (Isa. 45:22). According to Spurgeon, he said something like this:

Now lookin' don't take a great deal of pain. It ain't lifting your foot or your finger; it is just "Look." Well, a man needn't go to College to learn to look. You may be the biggest fool, and yet you can look. A man needn't be worth a thousand a year to look. Anyone can look; even a child can look. But then the text says, "Look unto Me."

He was at the end of his tether after about ten minutes, having preached everything he knew. Then he looked out across the audience of about fifteen people and saw, of course, this one man who was obviously a visitor. He looked right at that young man named Charles Spurgeon and said, "Son, you look miserable." (Those Methodists were pretty strong folks back then, and they had just as soon corner you with the gospel as look at you!) Spurgeon said that he did look miserable, and he felt miserable, but he wasn't used to anyone saying so to his face. Somehow that struck a chord in his heart, and he just melted before the Lord. He said of that moment, "Oh, I looked, until I could almost have looked my eyes away."¹ This was the date of Charles Haddon Spurgeon's conversion.

He said that little church was a church where the people sang so loud that it made your head ache. That's where Charles Spurgeon, the great Baptist, was converted—in a Methodist church. If you know anything about Spurgeon, you know that through the ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon the world was touched with the gospel of Jesus Christ. His sermons are still being printed to this day. They have gone all over the globe. In South Africa his colporteurs who came out of his school of preachers were some of the first people to minister to the Hottentots there. In Australia the first Baptist work was begun by people who came from Spurgeon's College. He began the institution to train men—men who eventually ministered all over the world, some through the China Inland Mission, some through the London Missionary Society, and some through the Baptist Mission Union in America. They went every place around the globe.

Here was a little church, where they sang so loud it made your head ache, reaching the world for Jesus Christ.

A few years ago, while representing the International Congress on Revival, I met with the president of the Hungar-

ian Baptist Union in Budapest, John Viczian. As we sat in his office and had tea together, I asked him how the Baptist work started in Hungary. He smiled and said, "Well, this is old history." He then told me this story: Back in 1842, one third of Hamburg, Germany, had been burned. Hamburg issued a summons over the European world for workers to come to Germany to help them rebuild the city of Hamburg in exchange for good wages. Some young men left Hungary to find their fortunes in Hamburg.

In Hamburg, they met a merchant turned itinerant Baptist preacher named Johann Gerhard Oncken. He was a zealous Baptist who worked principally among the working class people. And now the world was coming to him! He befriended them and brought them into his little Baptist church. And some of those people were converted to Jesus Christ.

He told his people, "Every Baptist a missionary!" He zealously encouraged them with this motto and tried to enthuse them with the idea that they could return to start churches in the countries in which they lived. So some of these young men who had been converted in the ministry of Oncken went to the outskirts of Buda (Budapest is divided into two sections, Buda and Pesh, which have a river running between them) and said, "We now establish the first Baptist church of Hungary." Now there are eleven or twelve thousand members and twenty thousand in attendance. It's an active work for God, but it all began back there with Johann Gerhard Oncken. It was through the ministry of Johann Gerhard Oncken that the gospel and the Baptist message began to be spread throughout Europe.

Now here is the interesting thing: When Oncken was a young man, he lived in England, where he attended and was converted at the Artillery Street Primitive Methodist Chapel.²

I sat down with a veteran itinerant preacher in Europe one day and mentioned this story. I then asked him if he had

ever heard of Oncken. He said that some of the greatest work in his childhood home of Latvia was begun by Johann Gerhard Oncken. He was very familiar with his name. As a young man, having been converted through this same stream of God's work during a time of revival in Latvia (where God did a great work), he went with his family and about a thousand others to Brazil. There is still a strong Latvian mission in Brazil, and people are being converted as part of the string of events to this day.

While in Czechoslovakia I was told by a man that I was speaking in the oldest Baptist church in Czechoslovakia. It was begun through the disciples of Johann Gerhard Oncken. Everywhere you go throughout that part of the world you find the name of Oncken, who was converted in that little primitive Methodist chapel in England. It is said by many that the first Baptist work in Sweden as well was begun by Oncken in 1839.

But then there's Christoph Mueller. He was a German who was also converted at the Artillery Street Primitive Methodist Chapel when he was a young man.³ He became the father of German Methodism. (Now finally the Methodists began to help the Methodists instead of the Baptists!) It was through German Methodism that Methodism spread to Switzerland and to all the large Austrian empire during those days. There is no way to determine how many people were reached for Jesus Christ. That work still goes on.

And so, you ask, how does all of this happen? Did somebody sit down and work out a plan for all of this to take place? What's the secret of being that kind of church? Well, it's obvious: We need to sing so loud that it makes people's head ache!

No, the secret is found in Mark 4:26-29:

He [Jesus] also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether

he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

I love the little phrase, “How it grows he does not know.” He really doesn’t know. If he gets up in the night to check on it, if he frets or bites his nails about it, if he worries about it, it doesn’t make any difference: he puts the seed into the ground and “how it grows he doesn’t know.” But grow it does. In terms of method, there has to be seed, and there has to be somebody sowing the seed. But how it happens you don’t even begin to know.

You are part of a grand missionary work by the missionary Spirit Who has been put in you by the great sovereign God, and you don’t begin to know how things happen. Perhaps you work with a group of 10-year-old boys in a Sunday school class. You don’t know what God is doing. You don’t know but that the one 10-year-old boy who is the biggest discipline problem in the group isn’t another Christoph Mueller or Charles Spurgeon. Do you know whether he is or isn’t? No—you don’t even begin to know. You don’t have the slightest idea but that God is going to take the most disobedient, most difficult person, possessing the most fractured personality, and touch the world through that individual. That individual may be the one who opens up great areas of new people groups to the gospel. And you would be involved, because of the sovereignty of God, in the great mission enterprise that reaches the world for Christ.

You may talk to your little daughter about Jesus Christ. Some of you grandparents may talk to your grandchildren about Jesus Christ. A little child sweetly comes to know Christ at some point in her experience after God has dealt with her. She grows up in the church and becomes one of the steady girls who loves God. She has her down times and

her up times, like every other child. And when it comes to that time to get married, she has built into her a need to marry a Christian. So she marries some young man who is a Christian, and they enjoy a Christian marriage and attend a Christian church. Soon the next generation comes along. Here’s another girl and another boy in that family. Having grown up in the atmosphere of the Lord, they come to know Jesus Christ. One of them is called to do mission work. He goes to a mission field somewhere in some unknown part of the world. From a human view of things, he doesn’t have a very fruitful ministry, but he does have the privilege of leading one native to Jesus Christ. That native also sees his whole family converted, and one of his children is a young man whom God calls to preach. That young man—now about four generations down the line—opens up great portions of the world with the gospel and is instrumental in ways that we cannot even imagine.

Why? Because God has planned to do what He has planned to do, and He is not going to fail to do what He says He is going to do in the book of Revelation. It will happen. How it is going to happen you cannot even begin to put together. You help support some missionary off in some field. Maybe you go yourself on a short-term mission. You are a retired person and you say that you can be a librarian in some place in Bolivia. You happen to put up on the shelf one day a particular book just at the right time before another man comes along—he is discouraged in his walk, trying to be a young preacher. But because he reads this book, his life is transformed. He gets a model, he gets an idea, he gets what he needs from God out of that book. He becomes a flaming tool in the hands of God. You never dreamed that God would be using you. Yet He did. When you put the book on the shelf at just the right time, God used you. How He does it you don’t even begin to know.

One of these days when we get to heaven, we will stand

before the Lord Himself and we will say, "Lord, what did I have that I didn't receive? Why, if I received it all from You, did I act like I had it in me? Because to You belongs all of the glory. Because from You, and through You, and to You is the glory. It came from You, it was Your idea, You carried it out through Your own instrumentality in the life of a believer who didn't even know what was going on. Through You and to You is the glory."

I think at that point we will say, "Lord, it amazes me because even my failure is the thing that You used." There will be some people who will look at your life and say, "I'd never be a Christian like that," or "I'd never be like my granddaddy." Because they never want to be like their granddaddy, they become somebody better in God's family who loves God in a more faithful way. "I don't want to be cranky like him. I don't want to be ugly like him. He calls himself a Christian, but this is what a Christian is. . . ." and God turns his heart, precisely because of your failure, to follow Jesus Christ and to become an instrument in God's hand. In some way in which we cannot figure out, God will do His work. We will look to God and say, "God, this is some majestic plan. It's all of You, from You, through You, to You—all of it."

This is the sovereign plan of God. It's a plan we don't know. Occasionally there are glimpses. Jesus gave glimpses through prophetic statements. However, normally we don't know the plan except as we look back. That's the sovereign will of God. He will evangelize all people groups, and representatives from every people group will be in heaven.

That's the sovereign will of God; that's a mystery. It's the "hidden" will, as some people say. But there's another will of God in the Bible. It's the moral will of God. That's the will that has to do with commands and obedience and responsibility toward God. Yes, God even uses Judases to get His plan done in His sovereign will. You'll never figure that out.

We need to look to it occasionally to be built up in our spirit to overcome fear and guilt and to realize that God is doing something with us right now. We need that. But we need to come to the other side and say that God has also given us His moral will. He has commanded me to be a witness. I've got to be responsible and obedient so that I will be the kind of person that I need to be. Both of them together is what it means to be in missions for God.

End Notes

1. Arnold Dallimore, *Spurgeon: A New Biography*, pp. 18-19. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1985.
2. Paulus Scharpff, *History of Evangelism*, pp. 90-91, 205. Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1966.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91, 201-202, 205.

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In the Bible, election and evangelism meet with joined hands, not clenched fists.

John Blanchard

You cannot evangelize in a doctrinal vacuum.

Anonymous

My main business is the saving of souls. This one thing I do.

C.H. Spurgeon

He succeeds best who expects conversion every time he preaches.

C.H. Spurgeon

Every gospel imperative is full of the divine power of grace to effect what it demands. If I counted on even the least power in the sinner it would never secure the least effect.

R.C.H. Lenski

The person who is unconcerned about those who are perishing may well wonder whether he is a Christian.

William Hendriksen

You can have evangelism without revival, but you cannot have revival without evangelism.

Brian Mills

Evangelism that does not lead to purity of life and purity of doctrine is just as faulty and incomplete as an orthodoxy which does not lead to a concern for, and communication with, the lost.

Francis Schaeffer

The Dangers of the Invitation System

Jim Ehrhard

As a young minister, I once made the "mistake" of closing a Wednesday evening service without extending a public invitation.¹ Early the next morning, an irate husband came to my office. For the first time in years, his unsaved wife had come with him to church. "If you had only given an invitation," he angrily explained, "she would have gone down the aisle."

I explained that if the seed of God's Word had been planted in her, then she would come to faith. Then she could "go down the aisle" on Sunday and share what God had done. My explanation fell on deaf ears. I had missed the opportune time, and if she never came to Christ, I would have to bear her damnation on my conscience for eternity, he retorted.

In the ensuing months, God granted me many opportunities to speak personally with this lady about her spiritual condition. Not only was it obvious that she was not under conviction of sin; but she had little real understanding of the gospel. Through our conversations, she came to see her sin and real conviction made her life miserable. One morning she called and said, "I've finally come to Jesus. Now I understand what you've been talking about."

This experience, and many similar that followed, led me to reexamine my views of the invitation system that I had always assumed were as much a part of the gospel as the death and resurrection of Jesus. My involvement with Campus Crusade, attendance at a number of schools of evangelism, and my denominational traditions had led me to see the public invitation as vital to evangelism. Studying the Scriptures and the history of preaching and revivals began to lead me to a different conclusion. But the process of laying aside something that was so "normal" to me was a great emotional struggle. I needed to know that the dangers of such a system outweighed the benefits that everyone claimed.² I needed to know that I could still be evangelistic