

EVANGELISM

UPON THE ROCK

Nov 2001

Volume 4 Issue 11



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Upon The Rock
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THE GOSPEL IS FOR ALL

Number 555 in SACRED SELECTIONS FOR THE CHURCH is a song entitled, "The Gospel Is For All."

When I think of the title of this song, my first response is, "Why?" Why is the gospel for ALL? The Bible holds the answer to this question and there are, in fact, several reasons why the gospel is for all. Let us notice a few.

Jesus declared that the gospel is for all when he commanded his apostles "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16). Matthew records our Lord saying, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER I HAVE COMMANDED YOU (Matthew 28:19-20 — Emphasis mine — DE). Since we are commanded to observe all things that Jesus commanded them (the apostles) and they were commanded to go into all the world while preaching the gospel to all, it follows that this is also our commission as well.

The gospel is for all because, the Bible tells us, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23). Since sin is the transgression of God's law (I John 3:4), and sin is what separates us from God (Isaiah 59:1-2), mankind would be absolutely lost without the hope of the gospel (Colossians 1:5-6). The gospel IS God's power

to save man (Romans 1:16-17). Paul would write to the church at Corinth, “Moreover brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I declared unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.” (I Corinthians 15:1-4).

Notice in verse three the apostle stated that he himself had “received” the gospel (Compare Romans 6:3-6, 17). This, of course, occurred when the preacher, Ananias, came to him in Damascus and said, “And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins calling on the name of the Lord.” (Acts 22:16).

The gospel is for all because, as Peter noted, “... God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.” (Acts 10:34-35). Regardless of our race, our color, our national origin...God wants all to be saved. (2 Peter 3:9). The truth is, we all came from the same source anyway! And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitations” (Acts 17:26).

The gospel is for all because a failure to hear and obey it will result in eternal punishment and separation from God. This is precisely what Paul taught in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9. One cannot be saved without obedience to the gospel!

The gospel is for all because this was Jesus’ purpose in coming to this world. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10). Therefore, one of the primary works of the Lord’s people is to preach the saving message to the world.

The world is lost and condemned because of sin, and the gospel is the only solution to the problem. It is not an option because without it humanity is lost. It is, in fact, commanded! God has already decided this matter... it is not an option for us to decide! The only question

What a tragedy it is for anyone to be lost! Consider the lengths to which the Father was willing to go, the sacrifice of the Son and the revelations of His Spirit — all so that you might be drawn back into His marvelous fellowship. That is God’s Righteous intent! Help yourself by helping Him achieve His righteous intent!

UPON THE ROCK is published monthly for the purpose of setting forth sound biblical material concerning first principles and evangelism. We strive to print articles that are informative for Christians and non-Christians.

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hearts. Much as we sometimes desire the company of a friend or a family member, God longed for the closeness that He once had with man and was willing to do anything consistent with His character to restore that fellowship. He was determined to be “Just and the Justifier!”

Therefore, the concept of propitiation was mandated. Man could not pay; he was spiritually bankrupt. God could not continue to turn His head and overlook man’s sins as He had done under previous covenants. If the sin-debt was to be paid, it of necessity was going to be paid by someone else. Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God was the only one that was qualified to satisfy heaven’s demand for payment. Every other accountable person had their own debt, a debt that they could not pay. Jesus Christ, sinless and pure, stepped from the pristine portals of heaven into this sin-blighted sphere for the express purpose of becoming our sin sacrifice (read Philippians 2:5-11). Through Him, the Father could be what He longed to be, just and justifier!

Justification by Faith

“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.” (Romans 3:28). Of course, justification is apart from the deeds of the law. The law was the code that defined sin. It had no provisions for justification, only of condemnation. During that period of condemnation and prior to the propitiation, man’s hope was future. On the other hand, when the righteousness of God was revealed by the gospel (Romans 1:16-17), the hope of Israel was present reality; the acts of God essential for justification were accomplished. All that remains for God’s righteous intent to be accomplished rests within the hands and hearts of man.

What are you doing to help God achieve His righteous intent for humanity? Are you a Christian? Have you embraced the faith of the gospel by repenting of your sin, confessing the name of Jesus and being buried with Him in baptism? Does the Holy One of Israel order your life?

then is, Will our love for God, and our love for our fellow man constrain us to do what God has already called upon us to do? The First Century church of Christ did it. (Colossians 1:23).

Hear the words of the song... “Where sin has gone must go his grace: The Gospel Is For All!!!!” To that I say “AMEN!”

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SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR SPREADING THE GOSPEL

The commission is clear. We are to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature...to all nations. Our religion is a TAUGHT religion not a CAUGHT one! People must hear in order to believe the saving message of Jesus the Christ. (Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 10:13-17; John 6:44-45). If we do not obey the command of our Lord to go and teach people about Him, do we love Him? (John 14:15). Of course, the answer is “No...we do not love Him.” Furthermore, if we do not take the saving message to the lost, it is evident that we do not love them either.

I would like to give us some practical ways of spreading the good news about Jesus. You see, the main reason more in the world are not converted to Jesus, is simply because we are not taking the gospel. I was at one place what my “philosophy of evangelism” was. I was a little tickled at that terminology, but I just grinned and said, “Do it!” That’s my philosophy... JUST DO IT! Evangelism is people talking to people about Jesus and His Way. We need to understand that when we talk about “mission work” we are not limited to going to Ukraine, to Africa, to Cuba, to India, etc. Mission work is just working the mission, and the mission is to take the gospel to all the world. Your neighbor lives in the world, doesn’t he? The guy who works next to you... he’s in the world, isn’t he? Your children are in the world, aren’t they? TEACH THEM!!!

My Dad and Mom had eleven children. Four of us boys preach, and my sister is married to a preacher. In fact, now three of my nephews are doing some preaching...one is "full-time". I think Mom and Dad saw their mission field and took advantage of it. Mom and Dad were "missionaries". They worked the mission. You can too!

Of course, the most effective way of doing "mission work" is to live a life dedicated to Christ, and to allow others to see it. (Matthew 5:13-16). But watch your motivation here...don't do good works to be seen of men (Matthew 6:1), but do works so men will see them and glorify God. Live the life...walk the walk. (1 John 1:5-7).

Use good, solid tracts to help others see the Truth. Take them to work. Leave some beside your door at your house. Keep some in the car. Have tracts about the church, about salvation, about baptism. Aim these at people... Give them a tract and say, "Read this over and let me know what you think." You'll be surprised at how many responses you will get.

We have a wonderful festival here in Pikeville, Kentucky every April. It is called "HILLBILLY DAYS" and we will have nearly 200 thousand people here in our little town for three days. We have a "built in campaign". We have a booth on our parking lot, where we pass out literature about the Bible, and sign people up for Bible correspondence courses. We have over 600 currently taking the Bible correspondence courses here now. This is a wonderful way to teach others about the meek and lowly One!

We have a newspaper article in the paper here entitled "HAVE YOU WONDERED...?" In fact, I have been writing this little article continuously now for about 22 years. We currently have it in three different newspapers, in West Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee. It is a brief article, but it is designed to promote interest in the Bible and in Bible topics. I try to keep it current with things going on in our society. We always offer the FREE Bible correspondence courses there too.

a "Johnnie come lately scheme!" Rather, from eternity, He had stood as the "lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Revelation 13:8). Jesus was to be the means by which God's just demands for sin were to be satisfied!

Another uncommon phrase in this text is "set forth." It appears only 3 times in the Greek New Testament. God set forth (i.e., publicly proclaimed and put on display for all to see), Jesus as the means by which sin's penalty was to be paid. His nation cried for salvation from physical oppression and the Roman government, but He had a higher mission that they did not understand. Every demon in hell sought to blur His focus and make Him an unfit Lamb, but He clearly perceived His mission. His disciples begged Him to turn away from Jerusalem so that He would not face the punishment that they knew awaited Him there, but His face was set to go. His friends and family tried to use their influence to call Him away from His Divine appointment with the cross, but He would not be deterred. Truly He was "set forth" as a propitiation!

"That He [God] might be Just and the Justifier" (Romans 3:26)

God desired to be the "the justifier," that is, the One who declared or pronounced the fact that sinners are righteous. However, by definition, sinners are not righteous. The two, sin and righteousness, are mutually exclusive - opposites if you will. Yet, God was determined to do whatever it took to provide mankind a means to justification. As you think about God's desire to be the justifier, consider the nature of God. God cannot do evil. He cannot lie. He cannot be unrighteous. He cannot act in any way that is unjust, that is, shady, dishonorable or that isn't right and proper. Therefore, He could not just "act as if man were not guilty." He couldn't pretend that man had never sinned. God isn't an actor. For God to be God and for God to be satisfied, man had to be justified; he had to be declared, "Not Guilty!"

The character of God and His intense desire to have fellowship with man are two great principles behind the gospel. Without understanding these two concepts, one can never fully appreciate the nature and motives of the gospel. However, when one comes to see these concepts, the depth of the Father's love begins to dawn in our

Revelations from Romans (4 of 12)

The Revelation of the Righteous Intent of God (Romans 3)

Romans 3 contains the Gordian Knot of humanity; the spiritual problem for which there is no human solution. Thankfully, it also contains the record of how man's sin problem (his Gordian Knot) was solved. Consider the following texts from Romans 3. "As it is written: 'There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit; The poison of asps is under their lips; Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; Destruction and misery are in their ways; And the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes...' For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (vv 10-18,23). The problem — We all are sinners; The solution — Read on!

"God set forth [Jesus Christ] as a Propitiation" (Romans 3:25)

Propitiation is an uncommon word with a very special spiritual meaning. Basically, it means to appease or satisfy. God demands that sin's penalty be paid. Sin's penalty is death (Romans 6:23). All have sinned. Given these few facts about God, sin and man, the dilemma is obvious; the Gordian Knot of sin spells man's doom!

How could the demand for sin's penalty be satisfied? God's love for his creation begged for a solution other than eternal death. God's love for each person cried for a solution that humanity could not provide. Hence, the concept of propitiation; God's demands for justice could be satisfied by another much as the debt of another can be paid by anyone with the resources to pay. But in this case, no one had the resources to pay! No mere mortal, that is, had the ability to pay.

With this backdrop and otherwise bleak picture, Jesus Christ entered the world for the express purpose of propitiation. His mission was not

We also have something we call "LUNCH-TIME BIBLE STUDY" here at Main Street in Pikeville. It is a free lunch, provided by our ladies here and we offer it to the community every Thursday at noon. The catch? Those who come must listen to me teach a Bible class for about 35 minutes. I always provide an outline of the lesson for them to take with them. We will have between 30 and 50 each Thursday. These are people who work in and around Pikeville, people who are retired, etc. Since beginning this effort, we have had 4 baptisms as a direct result of it.

In addition to these local efforts, the church at Main Street is involved in many other local and world-wide mission efforts. We support several preachers financially. We are experiencing a "preacher shortage" among the churches of Christ right now. It is important that more be trained and sent into the field. This is why we have our APPALACHIAN BIBLE INSTITUTE here. We have classes two weekends each month. Right now we have 6 or 7 men who are out in the field working to preach the gospel of Christ.

The key to doing mission work...or evangelism... IS TO DO IT! That is it. Really. It really is that simple...it really is that hard! Just Do It! Reach out with the gospel to a lost and dying world. We are not doing enough... must do more. Do it! "Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (I Corinthians 15:58)

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THE MISSION FIELD: WHY DO WE GO?

When one envisions the mission field he must picture the whole world! There is not one populated spot on our planet that can be excluded. Too often when one thinks of the mission field, he thinks in terms of foreign fields, and forgets what a wonderful fertile mission field surrounds us daily.

There are also those who do not concern themselves with spreading the gospel of Christ. They leave it up to others, and make excuses. They assume their excuses are sufficient, but there is no real excuse for not teaching others about Jesus.

Some do not understand why we go. The plain and simple reason is because Jesus said “Go...” It is a command from the Lord. (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16). Our love for God and for our neighbors must not be suppressed. (Compare Matthew 22:37-40).

The Lord said, “Go”. He did not say “Wait and the people will come to you.” There are those who think that if we erect a building the people will come. The commandments and the examples we have in the New Testament are of a going people, not a waiting people. Our Lord is our example. He set the example by coming to this world to “seek and to save the lost.” (Luke 19:10). His gospel is the only thing that can save man. (Romans 1:16-17). If we sit back and wait for something else to save mankind, they will perish!

Our Lord also set the example of praying. It takes prayer to do real mission work. However, praying for it and doing nothing about it would be like praying for bread without working. Faith without works is dead! (James 2:17). Jesus said we are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. There is no greater love., no greater give one can give and/or receive than the gift of eternal salvation. Our Lord and Savior is willing to give this to all who will obey Him. (Hebrews 5:8-9).

When this gift is received through humble submission to His Will for us, it makes good sense that we would want to share this wonderful news with everyone. Can you imagine receiving the greatest news of your life and not sharing it with others? If one had the knowledge to save their children, their families, their friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc. from everlasting destruction, don't you think it would be reasonable to assume that they would tell them this news? The world is in desperate need of Jesus. The gospel of Christ will fulfill this great need!

“The mission of all God’s children is to persuade others to be God’s children. The Lord gave us this task: ‘Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.’ (Matt. 28:19-20). This command has the ring of challenge in it, the fire of compassion, the breath of life, the spirit of conquest, the call of sacrifice, the vision of the world, the objective of God Himself is in it.” — Harold Thurman

Commenting on Mark 16:15-16 and Colossians 1:23 — “These Scriptures do not say that everyone was converted, but they do say that ‘every creature’ heard. Not more than one hundred twenty disciples received the original commission, and within thirty years these statements were made.” — Otis Gatewood

“It is possible to evangelize the world today as it was years ago because we have examples and a pattern given the same Book that tells us how to worship and gives the right plan of salvation.” — Ivan Stewart

“The Great Commission given by our Lord was never intended to be ‘exclusively for the clergy.’ Jesus was speaking to disciples (Matthew 28:18-20). This not only placed a responsibility on those who heard Him there, on all who should afterwards be taught by them. Although we have decried the ‘clergy system,’ we’ve often been guilty of fostering it by simply forcing on preachers the whole burden of evangelizing the world! The Cause of Christ must be represented by every soul who embraced it. Thus no Christian is excluded, and no Christian is excused, from this work. All have received the charge, even as all have received Christ. Each has the same story to tell; the same message of salvation for dying men. Each one in Christ has his own sphere of influence where he can evangelize, and which is fenced against others! YOU can reach someone with the gospel by your personal interest that no ‘big name preacher’ will ever influence!” — Dillard Thurman

“Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.” — Caleb

Some Selected Quotes On Evangelism

“Souls are valuable in the sight of God. Souls need salvation. God wants men to be saved. He has developed the sacred plan and has charged that it be preached to every creature in all the world. The gospel of Christ is God’s only saving power, and it is for all men everywhere. (Romans 1:16)”— Roy Deaver

“The end to be achieved through all the works of the church — self-edification, benevolence and evangelism — is the salvation of souls. But *evangelism* is a direct involvement in the work of winning people to Jesus Christ by the teaching of the gospel... it must be done!” — Thomas B. Warren

“Acts 2:40 — ‘Save yourselves...’ has some very important implications. Man has a self worth saving. Man has a responsibility in his own salvation. Men must gladly receive the word in order to be saved. (James 1:21). God’s grace, mercy and love make possible man’s salvation. In ‘gladly receiving God’s Word’ men save themselves from the condemnation of a wicked generation!” — Tom Holland

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We can answer God’s commandment, and express our undying love by fulfilling the mission given to us. The world is lost without Christ, and we have been given the power through God’s Word to save all who will obey. We are debtors to the whole world. (Romans 1:14-16). The world will not come to us...we must GO to them! The world is there...waiting for us to bring the gospel to them. We have the saving message, and we must share it with others!

Chuck Damron, Elder — Main Street Church of Christ; P.O. Box 2747; Pikeville, Kentucky 41502

SEVENTH ANNUAL MISSIONS WORKSHIP

February 22nd, 23rd, 24th

Friday, Saturday, and Sunday

Main Street Church of Christ

198 Main Street — p. O. Box 2747

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ELDERS LEADING IN MISSION WORK

Quite often, when we think of elders in the Lord's church, we think of the qualifications as listed in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Indeed, these passages do describe the character of a man who is to serve our Lord's church in that capacity. However, the work and attitude of an elder in the body of Christ is seen also in I Peter 5:14. Perhaps this is even a better description of what the elder is to be doing and his attitude while doing it. Peter says, "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers... not as being lords over those entrusted to you but being examples to the flock..." (NKJV)

What does it mean to shepherd the flock? Let us consider what Jesus, the Chief Shepherd, said about it. In John 10:27, He said, "My sheep HEAR MY VOICE and I KNOW THEM and THEY FOLLOW ME." (Emphasis mine — HJ). Since Jesus is the Chief Shepherd and He has left us an example that we should follow in His steps (I Peter 2:21), is this not a pattern for those of us who serve as shepherds in the Lord's church today? Let's look a little closer at this point. The sheep "hear our voice". As elders, our relationship with our congregation must be such that they will hear our voice; that they will listen when we speak. They will know that we are not serving our own interests but that which is best for the Lord's work. When we ask them to carry out a work they will know that we have given it serious, careful and prayerful thought.

"And I know them..." How well do we know our sheep; those that have been placed under our care? This is one of the many problems I have with appointing a man to serve as an elder within a short time after he has moved into an area and placed membership with the congregation. First of all, the sheep need to have time to get to know anyone before he is appointed to the work. Secondly, and just as important, he needs to know the sheep. He needs to know the attitude of the congregation: how they will respond to a request, how they will react to various problems that might come up and develop, etc. He needs to know, not just the congregation as a whole, but each individual member and how they will react and respond. Only then can he be an effective shepherd. In order for our congregations to know us, we must be active and visible.

"And they follow me..." The implications here are far reaching and I would like to consider some of them. First of all, it implies that we know them and they know us well enough that they will want to follow us. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." (I Thessalonians 5:12-13). This also implies that they respect us enough to follow us. We are to be doing the leading, for our members cannot follow unless we take the lead. Leadership is an active role, and it involves being out in front. Peter said that we are to lead by "being examples" to the flock. Nowhere is it implied that an eldership is to be a "board of directors." It has been well said, that an effective eldership must "smell like the sheep." We must be personally involved in the work.

We must be an example in missionary zeal. Elders must have a burning desire to save lost souls. The great commission is not an option... it is a commandment. If the elders do not get excited about evangelism, it is a foregone conclusion that the congregation will not be excited.

We must be examples in vision. Solomon said, "Where there is no vision the people perish." (Proverbs 29:18). We must have the vision to recognize opportunities. We have all heard the expression, "We should be ready when opportunity knocks." The problem with that is that opportunity seldom knocks; it is elusive. We must pursue it. It is all around us but we must train ourselves to recognize it. As elders, let us always take our place out in front, leading by example.

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