

THE DOCTRINES THAT MUST BE EMPHASIZED IN SUCCESSFUL EVANGELISM

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First of all, What constitutes successful evangelism? Some will answer, "Great audiences, eloquent preaching and soul-stirring music." But I reply, "We may have all these and not have real evangelism; as we may have successful evangelism without them." Others will answer, "Any movement that will add large numbers to the membership of the churches." I reply, "We may have successful evangelism and not many be added to the churches; and, we may have large numbers added to the churches' membership without successful evangelism." Yet others will answer, "A work or effort that will bring into the church people who will be steadfast." I reply, "We may have members added to the church who will hold out, and the work, evangelistically, be unsuccessful; and we may have a highly successful evangelistic work and the accessions to the churches from it not hold out for any great length of time."

Let us briefly consider three points:

First, No matter how great the multitude, eloquent the preaching and soul-stirring the singing, if the God-ordained conditions are not fully met, failure is inevitable. While these things are of value they are dispensable. Great successes have been achieved without them.

Second, I have known not a few evangelistic campaigns to be successful, as such, in a marked degree, and one or more churches identified with it, professedly, received but a few members, or none, from the movement. They united in the movement from wrong motives. They were not prepared for the work; were formal, worldly and unspiritual; were without faith. Putting nothing of value into the work, they got nothing out of it. Or the work was not properly followed up.

Also, I have known not a few widely advertised and thoroughly organized evangelistic campaigns, in which mere sentiment was far more conspicuous than the Holy Spirit, and the lachrymals more frequently appealed to than the intellect and conscience; and large numbers were added to the membership of the cooperating churches, who knew nothing whatever of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

Third, I have known not a few persons who have been faithful members of the church for many years and never been born again-- "had a name to live and were dead." There are many churches full of life, and apparently great successes, because of humanitarian, educational and socialistic matters in which they are engaged, and entertainments that they give from time to time; and some of the members who give most time and money to these things, and take most pride in them, are spiritually dead.

Also, I have known persons, who were, without doubt, saved and sincere, to unite with the church as a result of an evangelistic campaign, to run well for a season and then fall away; and the falling away was unjustly charged to the campaign. The real cause of it may have been one or more of the following reasons: First, The atmosphere of the church was not congenial, being unspiritual and cold. This is of vital importance to "babes in Christ." Second, In not a few instances the pastors, instead of "feeding the church of God," with "the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet 2:2), were like those mentioned in the twenty-third chapter of Jeremiah; or have turned their pulpits into lecture platforms, and the members going for bread received a stone; and in many cases were off after false teachers who promised them what they needed, and what they should have received at home. Third, The positively bad example set by a large majority of the members of most churches, in that they conspicuously fail to meet their solemn obligations to God and the church.

And there are yet other reasons for the falling away of the weak and inexperienced.

But again it is asked, "What constitutes successful evangelism?" I answer, "Preaching the Gospel according to divine conditions and directions." In the great commission, as given by Matthew, Jesus said, "Teach all nations." Make disciples, is what the word "teach" here means. Mark puts it in these words, "Preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mk 16:15). Luke states it thus, "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations." And in (Acts 1:8), Jesus said, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

THE CONDITIONS

What are the conditions? First, Discipleship. Jesus commissioned only such. One must know, experimentally, the power and joy of the Gospel before he is competent to tell it out.

Second, Power. The disciples were told to "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). Since the apostles and disciples of our Lord, who waited personally upon His wonderful ministry and witnessed His marvelous doings, were not qualified for testimony and service without power from on high, we, most surely, must have divine help. "Without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Third, Faith,-- since the Almighty One has said, "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater: so shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isa 55:10), the proclaimer need have no misgiving as to the result, knowing full well that "He is faithful that promised" (Heb 10:23).

THE DIRECTIONS

What are the directions? First, "Go into all the world" and tell it "to every creature." The field is the wide world; and the good news is for every soul of man.

Second, It is to be "preached." The God-sent preacher is a [keerux (grk 2783)]-- a herald. He has no message of his own. It is the King's message he is to proclaim. According to the heraldic law, if the herald substituted so much as a word of his own for the king's, he was beheaded. If this law was enforced in these days a lot of preachers would lose their heads, indeed many have lost their heads, judging by the kind of messages they are delivering.

Third, The preacher is to be brave, a witness-- [martus (grk 3144)]-- martyr. All the apostles, like our Lord, went to martyrdom for faithfully proclaiming the Word of God. The Master said, "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). And, "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets" (Luke 6:26). Paul said, "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal 1:10). The mind of the natural man is enmity against God; therefore the unsaved demand of the preacher, "Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits" (Isa 30:10); and a premium is placed upon finesse by many in authority in the church. Because of this, it requires as sublime courage in these days to speak faithfully the Word of God as was shown by Micaiah, when he stood before Ahab, Jehosaphat and the four hundred lying prophets; or Simon Peter when he said to the threatening, wrathful rulers of Israel, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20; 1 John 1:3). There never was so much need of fearlessness on the part of the servant of God as in these days; brave true men, who will not receive honors from people, or seek their own, are absolutely necessary to successful evangelism.

THE MESSAGE

Now then, as to the message itself: Timothy was commanded to "Do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim 4:5); and, in doing it, to "Preach the Word ... with all long-suffering and doctrine." Doctrinal preaching is therefore necessary to evangelistic success. But what doctrines? I answer, First, Sin-- its universality, nature and consequences.

(a) Universality. "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned, ... by one man's offence death reigned by one, ... by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, ... by one man's disobedience many were made sinners," etc. (Romans 5:12-21. See also Ps. 51:5; 58:3; Eccl. 7:20; Rom. 3:10; 1 John 1:8,10, etc.)

(b) Nature. There are numerous words in the Bible rendered sin; and these words mean iniquity, offence, trespass, failure, error, go astray, to cause to sin, and miss the mark. In 1 John 3:4 we are told that "Sin is the transgression of the law." The word rendered transgression is [anomia (grk 458)], and means lawlessness. Failure to conform to the law is as certainly sin as to violate the commandments of God. Unbelief is sin (John 16:9; 3:18).

In Genesis 6:5 we are told, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," and in Gen. 8:21, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." The word rendered imagination in these passages signifies also the desires and purposes of the individual. Therefore guilt lies in the desires and purposes as certainly as in the act. The common law requires that one shall have committed an overt act of violation before he can be adjudged guilty. But according to the divine law one is guilty even though he never committed an overt act, since guilt lies in the desires and purposes of the heart. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:15). "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:28). "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7). Because of the "lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," every mouth is stopped and the whole world is guilty before God (Rom. 3:19).

The Almighty and Sovereign Creator is infinite in holiness. Therefore His "law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom 7:12). Sin is ruinous, heinous and damning: the most awful thing in the universe.

(c) Consequences. Sin separates and estranges the sinner from God; and he becomes an enemy of God by wicked works (Rom. 8:7), has no peace (Isa. 57:21), no rest (Isa. 57:20), is polluted (Eph. 4:17-19), condemned (John 3:18), and without hope (Eph. 2:12). O the curse and ruin of sin!

If unrepenting and unbelieving, the future has for him, first, inexorable and awful judgment. (See Matt. 25:30-46; Heb. 9:27; Jude 1:14-15; Rev. 20:11-13; 22:11-15). Second, the wrath of God. (See Ezra 8:22; Ps. 21:9; John 3:36; Rom. 1:18; 2:5; 4:15; 5:9; 12:19; 13:4; Eph. 2:3; 5:6; Col. 3:6; 1 Thes 1:10; Rev. 6:16-17; 14:10; 16:19; 19:15, etc.) And third, eternal torments. (See Ps. 11:6; Isa. 33:14; Dan. 12:2; Matt. 3:12; 22:11-13; 23:33; 25:41,46; Mark 9:43,48; Luke 12:5; 16:22-31; John 5:28-29; 2 Thes 1:7-9; Heb. 10:28-29; 2 Peter 3:5-12; Rev. 19:20; 20:14-15; 21:8, etc.)

The preacher who ignores these three awful and inexorable truths preaches an emasculated gospel, be he never so faithful in proclaiming other truth. He who preaches the love of God to the exclusion of God's justice and wrath proclaims but idle sentiment. No one will ever truly desire salvation unless he first realizes that there is something to be saved from. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house" (Heb. 11:7); all of which symbolizes the sinner's condition, need, motive and hope. In no way can the love of God be so clearly, beautifully and convincingly set forth as in the fact that God makes plain to the sinner his condition and peril, and then

shows him the way of escape, having, in His great mercy, Himself provided it at infinite cost. Now, at this point the Gospel comes in as indeed good news, showing God's love for the sinner.

The supreme motive for the atoning work of our Lord was His infinite love for us. The supreme object had in view was to save us from eternal ruin. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Our Lord, while among men, had far more to say about the doom of the finally impenitent than about love and heaven. Is it not wise and safe to follow His example who said, "The word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me" (John 14:24). How can any minister reasonably expect to have evangelistic success if he fails to imitate the Master in this particular?

"When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand" (Ezek. 33:8).

Second, Redemption through Jesus' blood. "The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6). "The Son of Man came ... to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18). "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. 10:4). "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13). "And ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:20. See also Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22; Matt. 20:28; 26:28; John 3:14,16; Rom. 3:24-26; 5:9; 1 Cor. 1:30; 10:16; 2 Cor. 5:14-21; Eph. 1:7; 2:13-17; Col. 1:14,19-22; 1 Tim. 2:6; Heb. 9:12-14,24-26; 10:19; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2,18-19; 2:24; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 1:5; 5:9; 12:11). On no other ground than the cross can the sinner be justified and reconciled to God. If the atoning work of our Lord was not vicarious, then the sacrifices, ordinances, types and symbols of the old economy are meaningless and of no value. The moral influence theory of Bushnell is all right for the saint; but the atonement is of no value to the sinner if it is not substitutional.

More than thirty years ago, in Denver, Colorado, I met an aged Congregational minister, who was a pastor in Hartford, Connecticut, during Dr. Horace Bushnell's pastorate in the same city. He told me this: "I spent an hour with Dr. Bushnell the day before he died. He then said to me, 'Doctor, I greatly fear some things I have said and written about the atonement may prove to be misleading and do irreparable harm.' He was lying upon his back with his hands clasped over his breast. He lay there with closed eyes, in silence, for some moments, his face indicating great anxiety. Directly, opening his eyes and raising his hands he said, 'O Lord Jesus, Thou knowest that I hope for mercy alone through Thy shed blood.'"

Third, Resurrection. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain Ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor 15:14); and "they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that are sleeping" (1 Cor. 15:14-20). Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power ... by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). Therefore the apostles and disciples went everywhere preaching "Jesus and the resurrection." (See Acts 2:24-32; 3:15; 4:2,10,33; 5:30; 17:18,32; 23:6; 24:15,21; 1 Cor. 15:3-8; 1 Peter 1:3-5). "He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). "By the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities, and powers being made subject unto Him" (1 Peter 3:22). "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25).

Fourth, Justification. "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom.

3:24-26). "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight" (Col. 1:21-22). "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth" (Rom. 8:33), for "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus; for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:1-2). Believers are "not under the law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:14) and can rejoicingly say, judicially, of course, "As He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17).

Fifth, Regeneration. The unchristian man is spiritually dead (Rom. 5:12), and must be "born again," or "he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

Richard Watson defined regeneration as "That mighty change in man wrought by the Holy Spirit, by which the dominion which sin has over him in his natural state, and which he deplores and struggles against in his present state, is broken and abolished; so that with full choice of will and the energy of right affections, he serves God freely, and runs in the way of His commandments."

He who receives Jesus as Saviour and Lord, is made a "partaker of the divine nature" (John 1:12-13; 2 Peter 1:4): "He is a new creature (creation): old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

THE METHOD

The following is the method: The words of the Gospel "are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). If the repenting sinner receives them into his heart and life to believe and obey them (James 1:21); the Holy Spirit operating through them accomplishes the new birth (James 1:18), and he will be "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Peter 1:23). Saved, "By the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:4-7. See also John 1:12-13; Gal. 6:15; Eph. 2:1-3; Col. 2:13, etc.)

Sixth, Repentance. Repentance means a change of mind; and this change of mind is brought about by the Holy Spirit, through the knowledge of the sinner's condition, needs and peril, by which the sinner is convicted "of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8), and is induced to yield himself wholly, immediately and irrevocably to God. (See Matt. 9:13; Mark 6:12; Luke 13:2-5; 24:47; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 26:20; Rom. 2:4; 2 Cor. 7:9-10; 2 Tim. 2:25; 2 Peter 3:9).

Seventh, Conversion. Conversion means to turn about or upon. When the unsaved sinner is convinced of sin and resolves to turn from his transgressions and commit his ways unto the Lord, he has repented; and when he acts upon that resolve, and yields himself to God in absolute self-surrender, he is converted. (See Ps. 19:7; 51:13; Matt. 18:3; Acts 3:19; James 5:19-20).

Eighth, Faith. Until the sinner changes his mind with regard to his relation to God, and resolves with all his heart to do it, his faith is a vain thing, he is yet in his sins; but, when he sincerely repents and turns to God, and believes the record God has given of His Son, his faith is of the heart and unto righteousness. (Rom. 10:9-10. See also Heb. 11:6; Rom. 10:17; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 2:8; Gal. 3:6-12; 2:16-20; Rom. 4:13-16; 3:21-28; Acts 16:30-31; John 6:47).

Ninth, Obedience. Faith is a vital principle. "If it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (James 2:17-18). Two things are required of the believer, immediately upon his profession of faith in Jesus as Saviour and Lord, namely, verbal confession and water baptism. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:10. See also Ps. 107:2; Matt. 10:32-33; Rom. 10:9; 1 John 4:15, etc.) "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). The believer is not saved because he is baptized; but, baptized because he is saved. We are saved through faith alone, but not the faith that is alone, because "Faith without works is dead, being alone"

(James 2:17). Water baptism is a divinely ordained ordinance whereby the believer witnesses to the world that he died with Christ, and is risen together with Him," an habitation of God through the Spirit. (See Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:38,41; 8:12-13,16,36,38; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:15,33; 19:5; 22:15-16; Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21; 1 John 2:3; 3:22).

Tenth, Assurance. Salvation from spiritual death by the new birth, and from the guilt of sin in justification, immediately follows "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). "For by grace have ye been saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8). "These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:13). It is here stated that certain things are in God's Word by which the believer is to know he has eternal life. Here are some of them: "He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life" (John 5:24). "He that hath the Son hath the life" (1 John 5:12). "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God" (1 John 5:12-13. For confirmation see 1 John 2:3; 3:14,24; 4:20-21; etc.).

"And by Him every one that believeth is justified" (Acts 13:39)-- an accomplished work. So the Bible uniformly teaches. Believing these words of assurance, one finds peace and joy. It is the business of the preacher to make this matter plain to converts, that they may be surely and safely anchored; and "that their hearts may be comforted, they being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, that they may know the mystery of God, even Christ, in whom are all the treasures of knowledge hidden" (Col. 2:2-3).

There are some other doctrines, of a persuading character, such as Love, Heaven, Hope, Rewards, that may be emphasized to advantage in an evangelistic campaign; but, those I have enumerated will most surely be owned of God in the salvation of souls, if proclaimed as they should be.

In going about among the churches as I do, I find three things increasingly true. First, Ministers and people in large numbers are awakening to the fact that the so-called "new theology" and up-to-date methods are utterly barren of spiritual results. Professor A. H. Sayce once said, "Higher criticism saves no souls." Second, Because of this indisputable fact, very many are turning again to the doctrines of the historic faith, for it is seen that they are still workable and produce results as in former times. Third, Great numbers of ministers are seeing that their ministry is a failure unless it results in the salvation of souls. They really feel as did the late Henry Ward Beecher. While conducting an evangelistic campaign in Brooklyn Tabernacle I one day met Mr. Beecher. As he held my right hand in both of his, he said: "I hear you are having a great blessing in your meetings with Dr. Talmage. I very much wish we could have you for a campaign in Plymouth Church." He trembled as he held my hand. He then said, "But I fear my people would not stand for it." Then, after hesitating for a few minutes he added, "I would like to see an old-time Holy Spirit revival in Plymouth Church before I go hence." He then broke down and cried as if his heart would break Three weeks later, to a day, his body was laid in the grave.

Life and opportunity are ours. Men are dying, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one, lost in the ruin of sin. Redemption is an accomplished fact, and salvation is possible for all. We have been chosen to tell out the message of life and hope; and are assured of glorious success if faithful; if unfaithful we had better never been born.

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