

Christian Ambassador Training

The Gospel Is Not – Week 4

^{ESV} **2 Corinthians 5:17-21** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Review

- Definition of an ambassador- One who stands between two parties with a message to communicate: the Sovereign being represented is God and the foreign subject is the world.
- We already are ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5)
 - We carry the Message of reconciliation (a.k.a. the *gospel*)
 - Clear parallels to being a witness/defender of the faith (apologist)
- What are the three essentials for a Good Ambassador?
 1. **Knowledge**
 2. **Wisdom**
 3. **Character**
- **Knowledge** - An Ambassador knows his King, his King's message, and the subjects of the foreign land (their language and culture) so that he can communicate the King's message to the people in a winsome and understandable way.

Knowledge – “An accurately informed mind”

Know God (your Sovereign, the King that you represent) (His character, attributes & message)

- **HOW DO WE KNOW GOD?**
 - **Doctrine of Revelation**
 - **General** = Creation, Providence (protective care) and our Moral Conscience
 - **Special/Specific/Particular** = Historical (visions, miracles, prophets), Christ, Scripture
 - **Sola Scriptura -**
 - Ron's: “(Sola Scriptura) means that Scripture is our sole basis for authority in terms of doctrine (truth). We don't look to tradition (the past), or own human reason, logic, or common sense (looking within ourselves), we only look up, to God. And how do we do this? By looking at what He has revealed, which we call the Bible.”
 - **Sufficiency of Scripture**

- **KEY - anytime we are tempted to seek a 'new' or 'unique' communication by God, and worse, elevate this 'new' or 'unique' revelation above that which we have in Scripture, we should stop and remember that God has already spoken to us, in a very clear, and authoritative, and sufficient way.**
- **Psalm 119:1, 2 Peter 1:16-21**
- **WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT GOD?**
 God is loving, holy, just, righteous, sovereign

Preview

Know God's Message (of reconciliation – the gospel)

Recommended Resources:

- "The Gospel for Christians" seminar by Ryan Kelly. (links on our site or DSC)
- "The Gospel and Personal Evangelism" by Mark Dever
- "Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God" by J.I. Packer
- "Tell the Truth" Will Metzger

But before we talk about what the Gospel IS, we must talk about what the Gospel IS NOT

What The Gospel IS NOT:

...a life **enhancement** program (Just add Jesus and everything will get better)
 ...or **product** to be "**sold**"

- The Gospel is never simply an **addition** to our life. Rather, it is a radical transformation.
 - We are called to take up our **cross** and **die** to self (Matt 10:38-39)
 - Scripture says that Christ causes us to be a **new** creation (2 Cor 5:17)
- The Gospel is not that we are **OK**.
 - We are dead in sin (Eph 2)
 - We are in need of a whole **new** life (John 3) or to be re-created (1 Cor 15).
 - In fact, in order to understand the good news, we must first understand the **bad news** and that is "We are NOT ok."
 - In fact, by nature, we are **trouble**, and we are in **trouble!**
 - Jesus says in John 3 that for the man who does not believe "the wrath of God remains on him"
 - Paul says in Romans 1: But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.
 - And again in Romans 2: for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.
 - In Ephesians 2 Paul says we "were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind."

- He says in Ephesians 5: the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.
- And in Colossians 3: On account of these (laundry list of sins) the wrath of God is coming.
- Paul says to the Thessalonians: It is Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.
- It has been said that it is easy to get a man **saved**, what is hard, is getting a man **lost**.
 - For once he is lost, and feels the impending, just, wrath of God brought on rightly because of his own disobedience, salvation in Jesus Christ is the most desirable thing in the universe!
- We should be **careful** not **deceive** people by pretending that the Good news is that we are OK.
- The Gospel is not simply that God is **love** (1 John 4:8).
 - He is love, but He is also holy, faithful, just, righteous, sovereign, and even jealous (some of these we listed last week).
 - And a holy, just, righteous God cannot allow sin to go unpunished. See the OT Riddle.

The Riddle of the OT: The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.” Exodus 34:6-7

- The Gospel is not simply that Jesus wants to be our **friend** or **example**; the **cross** is the focal point of the Good News.
 - Jesus is our friend and our example, but more importantly, He is our Savior. Saviour from what? From God and His right punishment of our sins. JESUS SAVES FROM GOD'S WRATH VERSE
- The Gospel is not that we should **live right**.
 - Living right is a **result** of transformation, not a **cause**.
 - I appeal to you therefore, brothers by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:1-2
 - Obeying God's law through good works, good deeds serve as implications and affirmations that we have been saved, they are not the means through which we are saved.

*This list from the wonderful brothers at 9Marks ministries.

Where did we go Wrong?

- The goal of contemporary evangelism is to **make** the **sell** or **close** the **deal**. To get the hearer to “raise their hand,” “walk the aisle,” or “come up front” so they can “pray the prayer,” to “make a decision for Christ,” or “ask Jesus into their heart.”

SHOW OLSTEEN’S CLIP

- This approach has been a *disaster for the Kingdom of God, yet it is still used almost exclusively in evangelical circles.

*Statistics from major crusades show that the vast majority 90%+ of people who go forward and pray the prayer fail to ever get plugged into the church and are now, nowhere to be found in the community of faith¹

It’s tempting at this point, to say, well, aren’t the other 10% (or less) true conversions worth it? Parachute analogy: if 1 out of 10 parachutes actually open do we praise the 10% success rate or admit there is a serious problem?

10 Thoughts on “Altar Calls” from Ryan Kelly

1. The altar call is simply and completely absent from the pages of the N.T.
2. The altar call is historically absent until the 19th century, and its use at that time (via Charles Finney) was directly based upon bad theology and a man-centered, manipulative methodology.
3. The altar call very easily confuses the physical act of “coming forward” with the spiritual act of “coming to Christ.” These two *can* happen simultaneously, but too often people believe that coming to Christ is going forward (and vice-versa).
4. The altar call can easily deceive people about the reality of their spiritual state and the biblical basis for assurance. The Bible never offers us assurance on the ground that we “went forward.”
5. The altar call partially replaces baptism as *the* means of public profession of faith.
6. The altar call can mislead us to think that salvation (or any official response to God’s Word) happens primarily on Sundays, only at the end of the service, and only “up front.”
7. The altar call can confuse people regarding “sacred” things and “sacred” places, as the name “*altar* call” suggests.
8. The altar call is not sensitive to our cautious and relational age where most people come to faith over a period of time and often with the interaction of a good friend.
9. The altar call is often seen as “the most important part of the service”, and this de-emphasizes the truly more important parts of corporate worship which God has prescribed (preaching, prayer, fellowship, singing).

¹ See *Way of the Master*, Ray Comfort, 2004, pp. 61-64 for multiple sources.

10. God is glorified to powerfully bless the things He has prescribed (preaching, prayer, fellowship, singing), not the things we have invented. We should always be leery of adding to God's prescriptions for His corporate worship.

When well-intended evangelists sell Jesus as though He were a commodity, any form of manipulation is justified as long as they can get people to walk the aisle or pray the prayer. Millions do walk the aisle and pray the prayer and **what is the result?**

If the statistics mentioned above are accurate, then this means there are Millions of false converts with a false sense of security based not on Christ's work on the Cross (as it should be) but rather, on their action of walking up to the front, or praying the prayer. This false assurance of salvation can lead to them becoming inoculated to the Biblical gospel.

SHOW PAUL WASHER'S CLIP

Most of them will go directly back to their worldly lives while most of those who remain are set up for the surprise of their lives.

- Matthew 7:21-23 are probably the **scariest** verses in the whole Bible.

^{ESV} **Matthew 7:21-23** "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² 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?' ²³ And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

- Things to notice from Matthew 7:
 - There are many who **think** that they **knew** God
 - They are **surprised** that they did not.
 - Their blood is on the hands of those who **taught** them the **false** gospel
 - (teachers/preachers/elders are accountable before God – see James 3 and Hebrews 13)
- One theological error involved here is one of salvation by **grace**, through **faith** versus salvation by **works**.
 - While all of us would agree that we are saved by grace, through faith, and not by works, the salesman-evangelist immediately turns around and makes faith into a **work**. "Praying the Prayer" has been turned into **something that you do to be saved**. One very popular TV preacher (as we saw earlier) even goes so far as to say at the end of each of his broadcasts "if you prayed that prayer we believe you got born again."
- Another, closely related theological issue is the relationship between **man's** role in evangelism and **God's** role in evangelism.
 - Anyone who believes that a person's salvation hinges fully on their ability to somehow talk a non-believer into believing, failing to depend on God and His sovereign **prerogative** and **ability** to make someone's heart new and cause them to

- understand and respond to the gospel, is going to chase meaningless **methods** of manipulation until they find just the right one that will ‘work’ by talking people into believing.
- We must remember that it is **God** who **draws** men to himself.
 - He gives them eyes to see, ears to hear, and brings them from death to life.
 - It’s important to remember **order**.
 - **Regeneration** happens first (God gives new life, awakens a dead soul) then belief and repentance are a **reaction** by the regenerated heart. (John 6:65, Phil 1:29, Eph 2:5, Acts 16:14, Luke 24:45, John 11:43)
 - John 6:65 – Jesus says “no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”
 - Phil 1:29 – “it has been granted to you, not only to believe...”
 - Eph 2:5 – “even when we were dead in our trespasses, (God) made us alive together with Christ”
 - Acts 16:14 Paul was preaching to several women, but ‘The Lord opened (Lydia’s) heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.’ And she was converted and baptized.
 - Luke 24:45 – When Jesus appears to his disciples after his resurrection it says that “he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” and connected all the OT to himself, his Gospel, and the command to repent and believe. Something spiritually had to change before they could fully understand and be saved, and this is God’s act on unbelieving souls.
 - John 11: 43 “Lazarus come out” (dead man cannot obey a command from God. God must first make him alive, then he will obey)
 - It’s tempting at this point to think: Then why should we even **evangelize**?
 - If God must first draw men, open eyes, recreate hearts, etc. before a person can believe, why do we evangelize? Can’t he do all of that without me?
 - God has ordained that this (drawing, regeneration, awakening, recreating) happen through the **proclamation** of His **word**, by His **people**.
 - (Notice all of the previous examples involved proclamation of God’s word, empowered by God’s handiwork in the ‘spiritual background’)
 - We are commanded to “Go and **tell**” not “Go and **sell**.”
 - We must faithfully, and clearly **communicate** the Gospel to everyone, and trust God that he is the **converter** of souls.
 - In 2Corinthians 5:11 Pauls says “Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others.”
 - But we persuade fish with nets, not with power bait.
 - Nets and fish = Evangelism and men
 - Matthew 5: 4And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” 5 And Simon answered, “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.” 6 And when they had done this,

they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. 7 They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." 9 For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, 10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." 11 And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

SHOW PIPER'S SOV OF GOD AND RESPONSIBILITY OF MAN

For more: See J.I. Packer's *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*

- A couple of commonly **misquoted** verses:
 - *Romans 10:9* says: if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.
 - This has too often been used as an easy ticket to heaven.
 - *This was **never** intended to be turned into some sort of magical incantation* that one says and is saved; it is a description of the things that a regenerate person does (as a lifestyle, not as a one time punch-your-ticket event).
 - *Ref Matt 7 above*
 - *Ref Luther's 1st Thesis*
 - When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, said "Repent", He called for the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.
 - 1 John 1:9 – "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive us of our sins and purify us of all unrighteousness" ...
 - The sense of this verse is that of continual confession, an attitude of confession, a lifestyle of confession and repentance, a state of being, not a one time act.
 - 1 John 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.
 - In 2Cor13 Paul's call to the Corinthians to "examine yourselves..." to test whether Christ is in them or not is clearly in the context of his call for them to repent. Repentance is proof that Christ lives in them. Failure to repent is proof that Christ never lived in them.

- *Revelation 3:20 says: Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.*

This verse is too often used as a picture of Jesus, knocking on the door of a non-believers heart, hoping desperately that the person will submit, come to the door, and open it so that he can come in.

- But this verse is often taken WAY out of context.
 - *Rev 3:20 has nothing to do with individual salvation or doors to hearts. You find it right after the stinging rebuke of the church of Laodicia. This was an invitation to the churches and the door is to the church.
 - In fact, this section of Revelation 3 is a vision of Christ, speaking (in critical language) to the Loadicean church (a real church in history) who had forgotten Christ and become a lukewarm, self centered, self sufficient, Christless group.
 - And Jesus was not coming as a stranger or a transient to ask for permission to enter a person's heart, hoping that someone will do him a favor and open up. He was rather, coming as the master of the house (the church), expecting his servants to be alert and responsive to his command. And clarifying that with alertness and responsiveness to Christ comes true, personal fellowship (meal).

The truth is, Jesus is not humbly standing at the door of your heart *knocking. He is the sovereign King commanding from his throne for "all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). The take away on these verses relates to our discussion about

Discussion Questions:

- How many people do you know that claim to be Christians *because of* a one time act of 'praying the prayer' or 'walking forward' or 'raising my hand' but do not seem to be living like a true Christian (not bearing fruit, don't seem to know God, obey His word, etc.?)
- Are there people you know that may be very surprised when they die, or when Christ comes back to find out that they really never trusted Christ?

Have you ever felt compelled to talk someone in to believing the gospel?

- Does it give you a sense of freedom to know that God is ultimately responsible to convert a person from darkness to light?