



Light from the Word

Editor's Note: Each quarter of this year will feature articles related to the Four Pillar Mission of our church respectively: Presenting the Gospel, Nurturing the Believer, Preserving Sound Doctrine, and Offering Deeds of Service.

Presenting the Gospel

Key verse: *"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"* (Isa. 52:7)

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Sometimes referred to as the Great Commission, this commandment of Christ is unmistakable regarding its intent. Gospel literally means the "good tidings" of the Kingdom of God. The gospel of salvation is manifested through faith in the atoning death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4). God excludes no one from hearing and receiving this message, *"Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Tim. 2:4). A genuine belief in the gospel results in a spiritual rebirth, followed by God adopting us as His sons and daughters (2 Cor. 6:18). This opportunity is available to all regardless of our status or position in life. *"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"* (Gal. 3:26-28).

The Word tells us that we are "ambassadors for Christ," or someone who possesses both the experience and qualifications to represent Jesus Christ faithfully both by word and example (2 Cor. 5:20). Jesus gave a similar instruction to the disciples immediately before His advent into heaven, *"But ye*

shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Act 1:8). In this scripture, we understand that we are to be witnesses and examples beginning with our own families and homes at "Jerusalem" and then in ascending distance to Judaea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth. These would include our neighborhood, the workplace or school, and the marketplace. Samaria could be those places or people with whom we initially are somewhat out of our comfort zone. The "uttermost part of the earth" includes all nations on the earth. We are well advised to undertake these areas as directed by prayer, the Holy Spirit, and counsel with church leadership.

Although we may feel more comfortable sharing the gospel only when someone inquires of "the hope that is within us" (1 Pet. 3:15), there are times when a more proactive, Spirit-directed approach is appropriate. In at least three examples in the Scriptures, the disciples employed this method under the direction of the Holy Spirit. The disciple Philip followed the instruction of the angel of the Lord and travelled the approximately fifty miles from Samaria to the desert of Gaza. Once there, the Spirit gave him more specific instructions, *"Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot"* (Acts 8:29). As the opportunity opened up, Philip straightforwardly "preached Jesus unto the Ethiopian" (Acts 8:35). In a somewhat different situation, the Spirit directed Peter to travel thirty miles with gentile strangers even when doubts filled his mind at first. *"Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, ... the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them"* (Acts 10:17,

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Presenting the Gospel

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19-20). Paul and his companions also followed the Holy Spirit's leading during their second missionary journey into Greece. The prompting of the Spirit led them to avoid Asia and Bithynia and instead travel into Macedonia "to preach the gospel unto them" (Acts 16:6-7, 9-10). From the combined efforts of these three disciples an African palace official, a Turkish woman recently moved to Greece, a rough-hewn Macedonian jailer, and a centurion in the Roman army, along with many of their family members and servants were all baptized by faith into Jesus Christ.

While we may think our own qualifications pale in comparison with those of these men, the scriptures remind us that Paul also felt his unworthiness, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. 3:8). "And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:3-4). If we have

been converted, through faith in the shed blood of the Lamb, and are walking in the love, grace, and peace of God, and in the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, we are equipped to speak of God's wonderful plan of salvation.

What should we say, and where do we begin? We can begin by sharing our own experience with being cleansed from our sin and being reconciled with our Creator through Christ, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul" (Psalms 66:16). The Apostle Paul related his own conversion experience when he spoke to the Jews in Jerusalem and later to King Agrippa (Acts 22, 26). We can tell of God's abundant blessings, His kindness, and mercy in our life. "I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness ... which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses" (Isa. 63:7). Perhaps we, or a loved one, have experienced God's faithfulness through a great trial, and others would benefit from hearing of it. "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great

is thy faithfulness" (Lam. 3:22-23). Though many scriptures pertain to the spoken word, our example will often speak even more clearly, "... be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation (conduct), in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12).

The essence of the gospel message is love, which God manifested to us before we loved Him or even knew Him. As great as it is, God's love saves no one unless we reciprocate it back to Him as well as to our fellow man. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 John 4:11). Presenting the gospel message of salvation to others is just one of the ways we demonstrate our deep appreciation for "His great love wherewith He loved us" (Eph. 2:4).

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