

"Why Preach the Gospel?"

Occasionally people ask why churches win souls to Christ. Well, we're not trying to impose our faith on anyone, but we do want people to know the truth. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're asking the question, "Why do churches evangelize?"

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. People wonder why we preach to the lost. In fact, they question if anyone is really lost. One famous preacher said he believed that people who had never read a Bible or heard the name of Jesus were members of the body of Christ and saved anyway because they believed in a God. Well if this is the case, then there would be no reason to reach out with the gospel. Now this may be popular thinking, but it's not God's thinking? Is anyone really lost today? Yes. Does it matter whether people ever know the Scriptures? Yes. Does it take the gospel to save? Yes. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be part of your life each week.

For many people, the words "gospel" and "evangelism" are negative words associated with being judgmental. Today many think that the worst sin of all is to be "judgmental." So, the idea of evangelizing, telling people the gospel of grace and salvation, implies they are lost and in need of saving. Well this offends them, and so they don't like the idea of evangelizing. They're content to stay where they are and not hear about Jesus from Scripture. Well I can't think of anything sadder than not knowing about the Lord Jesus or the grace that He offers.

The gospel is by definition "good news" not bad news. Yes, people in sin are lost and need saving; but that's every one of us. Paul said in Romans 3:23, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Well that's you, that's me, that's everybody! You see, we're all in the same boat, needing the grace of God and salvation. There's no disgrace in saying that we need salvation. What is a disgrace is to claim that we're above sin and have no need for salvation!

Now we offer this study free on the need to preach the gospel. And if you'd like a printed copy of our study and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Romans 1:14 to 17, and explore why we preach the gospel.

Our reading today comes from Paul's epistle to the Romans where he explains his obligation to preach. Romans 1, verses 14 to 17. "I'm under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, for my part, I'm eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. For I'm not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.'" That's Paul's explanation for his need to preach.

Let's pray together. "Oh Father, help us always to listen to the gospel, the good news of Jesus, and help us to be obedient to Your will, and to love you always. In Jesus name, Amen."

1 John 1:8 says that “If we say that we have no sin, we’re deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.” Again, he says in verse 10, that “If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.” I’m amazed at how some think that everyone is saved, and no one is lost. When I’ve taught people in one-on-one studies, I use the ‘Upon the Rock’ Bible study. And you can find these studies online at searchtv.org. And it often shocks people when they get to Matthew 7:13 to 14, which says, “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.” You see, they don’t realize most people take the easy road to destruction rather than the narrow road to heaven. The reason for this program is to help people go to heaven and to avoid the road to destruction. We’re in the saving business.

For people to be saved, they must first understand and deal with the fact that they are lost. People need Jesus. They don’t always know that. They believe if they have a good life, help their neighbor, and pray, and then they believe they’re going straight to heaven; but you see, the Bible tells us differently. We must realize that we all need the blood of Jesus to cleanse us from sin. Hebrews 9:22 says, “Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.” Now Jesus shed his blood to save you and me from our sins. 1 Peter 2:24 to 25 says that Jesus “himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. For by his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”

Some people say, well aren’t good people saved? Well Acts 10 verses 1 and 2 tells of a good man. It says, “At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God.” Well this good man was devout, generous, and prayerful; but that didn’t save him. He still needed what everyone needs, the grace of God in the blood of Jesus. And all his good works, praying, and devotion didn’t take away his sins. Only the blood of Jesus can do that. My friend, you can’t find the salvation of your soul apart from Jesus. It takes His blood. The good news is that He loved you enough to die for your sins and to give you eternal life. You can’t earn salvation, you can’t win it, and you don’t deserve it, so God graciously gave you an opportunity to find salvation through grace in the sacrificial death of Jesus.

Romans 5, verses 6 to 9 says, “For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.” This passage tells us four things about ourselves. First we were weak or helpless, like an infant. We couldn’t save ourselves, by ourselves. Second, we were ungodly; that is, we didn’t have God in our lives. Third, we were sinners. We had sinned against God. And fourth, we were enemies of God, and hostile to God’s will.

God loved us anyway. He loved us in our weakness, as ungodly people, sinners and enemies. Now who would think of dying for the sins of your enemy? Well, God thought of it! And that’s how God is, and what Jesus did! He loves us even when we don’t deserve it. Paul knew this personally. He said in 1 Timothy 1:12 to 16, “I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged

me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life." I tell you, if Jesus could love the chief of sinners and save him, He can also love and save you. He used Paul as an example for all of us, so that He could show His perfect patience and love for us.

Well what is the gospel? Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:1 through 8, he said, "Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. And then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all (Paul says), as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me." Now the gospel tells the story of the death, burial, and resurrection, and the appearances of Jesus. That powerful story can impact our souls.

Paul said in Romans 1:14 to 16, that he was "under obligation both to Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. (He said) So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. For I'm not ashamed of the gospel, for it's the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." The gospel is powerful, because it's God's good news. And it can save, because it tells that story of Jesus and tells us what we must do in response to Jesus. Gospel preaching opens the door to the knowledge of God. 1 Corinthians 1:21 says, "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, (and so) it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe." You see, the gospel message saves! It's that message of love and grace and hope! And it's necessary for your soul!

The gospel gives us the opportunity to be forgiven, to change our lives, to have the past no longer held against us, and to be born again. That's good news! Have you ever wanted a chance to start over, clean and fresh? Now let's stop here for a minute. Think with me. What sins have you committed in your lifetime? Have you lied, or gossiped, cheated, broken a law, lusted, used foul language, coveted, envied, or hated someone? If you made a list of all the sins that you've ever committed, you might be surprised at how long that list is. If you took your sins seriously, you'd probably be ashamed of yourself and wonder how you could have been so evil. Sin is a terrible thing. It offends God, it hurts others, and makes a person feel small in his own eyes. When people sin, they separate themselves from God.

Isaiah 59:1 and 2 says, "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear." You see, sin builds that barrier that keeps us from pleasing God. And when sin enters our lives, God no longer hears our prayers but turns his face and favor away from us. Sin has eternal consequences as well. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6, verses 9 to 10, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God."

I tell you, you can't hang on to sin and expect to be right with God. Now the good news is the passage doesn't stop there. 1 Corinthians 6:11 says, "But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." You can be washed clean of sin, sanctified or made holy, and justified or declared righteous by the Lord Jesus. And no matter who you are or what you've done, you can be saved, my friend, when you're washed in the blood of Jesus Christ. You don't have to be lost eternally. You don't have to miss heaven. Because of the grace of Christ, you can find salvation!

Now, what kind of person would I be, if I knew how people can go to heaven and live with God eternally but never told anyone? I'd rather tell people the truth about sin and salvation, than to remain silent while people are lost in sin. I'd rather point to Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life than leave people on an easy road to destruction and hell. I'd rather say Jesus is the only way to heaven (John 14:6 and Acts 4 and verse 12) than leave them ignorantly thinking that they can save themselves some other way. Some people think it's unkind to tell people about sin; but remaining silent about sin will condemn you eternally. Ignoring the danger of sin is more than unkind—it's criminal.

The gospel message has God's power to save. The most important work in all the world is to tell the story of Jesus. And we must tell sinful men to respond in faith and repentance to the gospel and be baptized into Christ. I can't think of anything more important than to hear the gospel and obey it, before it's everlastingly too late. Today is the day of salvation. Now don't say no to God. Say yes and obey Him.

Jesus Christ died for our sins. He was buried in the tomb on the third day, and God raised Jesus from the dead. His death and resurrection fulfilled prophecies in the Old Testament. Now because he died for our sins, we can find forgiveness and live in the grace of God, enjoying every spiritual blessing. Because He arose from the dead, we can have life beyond this life, and hope. We can live in heaven with Christ forever. And that's great news! When a person dies with Christ and is raised with Christ in baptism, he becomes a new creature; he's born again, free from sin, washed in the way all of those sins gone. I tell you, you can start over, you can be born again, and when you put your trust in Jesus Christ, repent of your sins, confess Jesus as the Son of God and when you are baptized into Christ, you can be washed clean, and start over. So respond to the Lord Jesus, and He will wash away your sins!

Let's pray together. "Father, we're thankful for the gospel message, and we're thankful for the death of Jesus for our sins, and for the resurrection that we might have hope. Father help us to respond with hearts filled with faith, help us to turn from our sins, and help us always Father to be obedient to Your will, and to love You every day of our lives. Father we're thankful for good news, and help us to take it deep into our hearts and to believe it. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen."

How do I unite with Christ and how is it that I can be "in" Christ? Well Paul answers in Galatians 3:26 to 27, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." Faith and baptism are here described as the means to become a child of God and how we put on Christ. Paul makes it even more clear in Romans 6:3 to 7, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of

His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.”

Now every soul needs to hear this good news. Sadly, some people are unwilling to listen or respond to the gospel. Some love their sins or their pleasures too much to give them up. They would rather travel the easy road than travel the narrow one. You may not want to hear sin will cost you your soul, but would you rather that I lied to you? Would you rather hear the truth that sets you free or hear a lie that will please you today but cost you your soul in eternity? Don't risk your soul. Come to the Lord and obey the gospel today.

Now we hope that today's study about following the Lord and about obeying the gospel has stirred you to consider your soul. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area. You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Why not subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry" and like the video. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

Focus your heart on God today by worshiping at church. Everyone needs a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ in your area. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. Keep searching God's Word with us, tell a friend about the program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.