



"How God Uses the Church to Spread the Word-Pt. 5"

In Acts 12:25-13:52, there are 4 marks of faithfulness that invoke God's activity through the church to spread the word:

- I. The Church Must Faithfully Commission God's Appointed Messengers—vv.12:25-13:3
- II. The Church Must Faithfully Employ God's Astounding Word—vv.4-12
- III. The Church Must Faithfully Exalt God's Promised Savior—vv.13-43
 1. The setting of the proclamation that exalts Christ—vv.13-15
 2. The content of the proclamation that exalts Christ—vv.16-41
 3. The response to the saving proclamation—vv.42-43

(John 1:11-13, 3:19-20; Acts 11:23)

- IV. The Church Must Faithfully Pursues God's Open Doors—vv.44-52
 1. By knowing that God's power to save cannot be thwarted by jealous reviling—vv.44-48

(Mark 15:10; John 11:48, 12:42-43; Is. 49:6)

2. By knowing that God's power to sustain cannot be thwarted by enraged animosity—vv. 49-52

(Mark 6:11; Col. 4:2-6)

While we must always remember that it is our responsibility to proclaim salvation, we must never forget that it is God who saves. It is God who brings men and women under the sound of the gospel, and it is God who brings them to faith in Christ. Our evangelistic work is the instrument that he uses for this purpose, but the power that saves is not in the instrument: it is in the hand of the One who uses the instrument. We must not at any stage forget that. For if we forget that it is God's prerogative to give results when the gospel is preached, we shall start to think that it is our responsibility to secure them. And if we forget that only God can give faith, we shall start to think that the making of converts depends, in the last analysis, not on God, but on us, and that the decisive factor is the way in which we evangelize. And this line of thought, consistently followed through, will lead us far astray.

Let us work this out. If we regarded it as our job, not simply to present Christ, but actually to produce converts—to evangelize, not only faithfully, but also successfully—our approach to evangelism would become pragmatic and calculating. We should conclude that our basic equipment, both for personal dealing and for public preaching, must be twofold. We must have not merely a clear grasp of the meaning and application of the gospel but also an irresistible technique for inducing a response. We should, therefore, make it our business to try and develop such a technique. And we should evaluate all evangelism, our own and other people's, by the criterion not only of the message preached but also of visible results. If our own efforts were not bearing fruit, we should conclude that our technique still needed improving. If they were bearing fruit, we should conclude that this justified the technique we had been using. We should regard evangelism as an activity involving a battle of wills between ourselves and those to whom we go, a battle in which victory depends on our firing off a heavy enough barrage of calculated effects...

This shows us the danger of forgetting the practical implications of God's sovereignty...It is right to desire the conversion of unbelievers. It is right to want one's presentation of the gospel to be as clear and forcible as possible. If we preferred that converts should be few and far between, and did not care whether our proclaiming of Christ went home or not, there would be something wrong with us. But it is not right when we take it on us to do more than God has given us to do. It is not right when we regard ourselves as responsible for securing converts, and look to our own enterprise and techniques to accomplish what only God can accomplish. To do that is to intrude ourselves into the office of the Holy Spirit, and to exalt ourselves as the agents of the new birth. And the point that we must see is this: only by letting our knowledge of God's sovereignty control the way in which we plan, and pray, and work in his service, can we avoid becoming guilty of this fault. For where we are not consciously relying on God, there we shall inevitably be found relying on ourselves. And the spirit of self-reliance is a blight on evangelism. Such, however, is the inevitable consequence of forgetting God's sovereignty in the conversion of souls. (1)

¹ J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and The Sovereignty of God*, (IVP: 2012), 31.