

The Church: How Jesus Builds It #5 - Ministry to the World

by Bob Hoekstra

The church's purpose is to make disciples by fulfilling the purpose of the church, which involves ministry to the church and ministry to the world, and we are sent into the world to be witnesses and evangelists.

Duration: 54:10

Scripture: Matthew 5:13-16, Luke 24:27, Acts 8:5, Acts 8:27-35, 2 Corinthians 2:14

Topics: "Evangelism", "Discipleship"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of evangelism and the role of every believer in sharing the gospel. He shares a personal anecdote about a friend with a gift of evangelism who quickly shared the gospel with someone they met. The speaker acknowledges that evangelism may not be everyone's gift, but encourages all believers to participate in the work of evangelism. He then moves on to discuss the ministry of witness, emphasizing the impact of our attitudes and behaviors on the world. The sermon concludes with a reference to Matthew 5:13-16, where Jesus describes believers as the salt of the earth and encourages them to let their light shine before others.

Transcript

This is the fifth of six studies concerning the church and how Jesus builds it. We're looking in this visit at ministry to the world. This is more study, of course, concerning the matter of the function of the church.

That is, what the church is to be doing. And the church should be doing those things that fulfill the purpose of the church. Our purpose is to make disciples.

Make disciples. See people meet the Lord and learn to walk with the Lord and follow the Lord. And that certainly involves ministry to the church, our last study, because that's the ministry of edification.

Edification, ministering one to another, seeing the body built up, that we might serve the Lord in the church and also in the world. But not only is edification involved in discipleship, but evangelism, witness and evangelism, seeing people come to the Lord Jesus Christ and begin their walk with Him. So this study, ministry to the world.

In John chapter 17 at verse 18, we see that we, the people of God, are sent into the world. We're sent out among unbelieving humanity. John 17 verse 18, Jesus praying to the Father says, as you sent me into the

world, I also have sent them into the world, referring to His disciples, His followers and really all of us who would follow Him through their ministry and witness.

And then again in John chapter 20 verse 21, so Jesus said to them again, to the disciples, peace to you, as the Father has sent me, I also send you. Just as Jesus was sent to reveal the Father, to expound on His truth of the way of salvation and to provide that salvation and then proclaim it, so we are sent into the world to speak of these things and be witnesses of these realities. This is part of our calling.

Yes, it is essential that we minister one to another, that the body might be built up, able to walk in the things the Lord has for us. But our calling in ministry is not just to minister to one another, we're also called to minister to the world. Now in 1 Corinthians chapter 5, we're reminded of a corollary truth and that is though we're sent into the world, we're neither to live in partnership with the world nor isolation from the world.

Being sent into the world certainly cannot be done if we're in isolation from the world. 1 Corinthians 5 verses 9 through 11, I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people, yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world or with the covetous or extortioners or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. Verse 11, but now I have written to you not to keep company, not to carry on business as usual as it would be with anyone named a brother who is sexually immoral or covetous or an idolater or reviler or a drunkard or an extortioner, not even to eat with such a person.

Those in the family of God who persist in walking in ungodliness, there's a measure of discipline, a chastisement as the fellowship of the saints are withdrawn, not out of cruelty but out of sobriety, out of conviction to show that there's a wrong and that there's consequence, that there's a disturbing of the fellowship with God and it shows up in the walk with His people. And the Lord doesn't want us to carry on with each other when we're in ungodliness as though nothing has happened. And so sometimes when a brother or sister will not respond to exhortation or the teaching of the word or the way of righteousness, there is a withdrawing from normal Christian fellowship.

But that withdrawing from the ungodly behavior of some was not pertaining to those in the world. If we were to withdraw from such people, we'd have to get out of the world. Everywhere we go, such people are in the world and they're the very ones we're sent into the world to reach.

So we're not to be in isolation from the world in spite of their outrageous ungodliness at times. Remember how outrageous it can be? Just remember your own walk before you came to the Lord. Mine definitely outrageous as far as righteousness goes, far from it.

Now on the one hand we're not to be in isolation from the world but 2 Corinthians 6 reminds us we're also not to be in partnership with the world. We're sent into the world neither to isolate from them nor to partner up with them, rather to reach them. 2 Corinthians 6.14, do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers for what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness and what communion has light with darkness.

We're not to partner up with the world, we're to go out there and reach the world. Certainly the most profound partnership would be the one of marriage and believers not to partner up with unbelievers. But sometimes work in business and project partnerships are so deep as though you're going in it almost as a unit and equality of decision making and responsibility and consequence and all that.

And those partnerships need to be taken before the Lord to see if we're joining up with the world. We're not to be in isolation but we're not to be partnering up either. What are we to do? Reach them.

And basically involved in that are the ministries of witness and evangelism. They're related but they're different from each other. Witness and evangelism.

First, the ministry of witness. That is impacting lives in the world by the attitude and behavior that develops in our lives. As contrasted from the ministry of evangelism which witness should lead to really.

And that is in evangelism the impact upon lives by the message of the gospel. First, the ministry of witness. Matthew chapter 5, a good place to begin.

Matthew chapter 5 verses 13 through 16. Jesus speaking to his followers, he says, you are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

You, the followers of Jesus, you are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket but on a lampstand and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works.

See this isn't a message, this is a certain kind of behavior. That they may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven. The witness of salt and light impacting lives by attitude and behavior and conduct and character.

Spiritual salt in our lives. Salt is that which preserves and purifies. Oh in the world all around us there is such impurity, such spiritual decay.

The salt of the lives of believers can have a preserving impact on the world holding back that decay. Holding up purity with God as a path, a life that God offers. Also another interesting thing about salt, it creates thirst and when our lives are real salty, we can create a spiritual thirst in the lives that we are around.

We don't want to lose that savor, we want a salty bite in our lives. Not a mean harshness but just a spiritual sharpness and of course that comes from us being members in the body that hold fast to the head that life in Christ is the salty life we need. But also light, not just salt, light.

The glorious thing about light is it both drives back the darkness but it also shows the way. And oh how light does that in witness. Driving back the darkness that people are in that they might have a glimpse of the way that the Lord has for them to walk as they come to Him and follow Him.

Salt and light, it's part of our witness as we minister to the world. Philippians chapter 2 elaborates on this matter of being shining lights. Philippians chapter 2 verses 14 and 15.

Do all things without complaining and disputing that you may become blameless and harmless children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom you shine as lights in the world. In every day and age the world without the Lord is a crooked and a perverse generation and we are to be living among them, not like them but not isolated from them, not partnering up with them in the ultimate sense of joining fully in life and direction and purpose but among them. But as we are among those in the world we are to shine as lights in the world.

It's interesting here how we shine as lights in the world. Verse 14 describes it. Do all things without complaining and disputing.

The crooked and perverse generation that we all live in, generation after generation as the world is dead in sin and trespass, that crooked and perverse generation is complaining and disputing all the time, griping and arguing everywhere you turn. Have you noticed it in the world? Everywhere you turn people are griping and if they take a break from their griping it's because they want to argue a while. And once they get that out of their system then they can go back to griping, you know, and back and forth it goes, griping, ah everything's lousy, nothing's right, everyone's wrong, of course except themselves maybe, you know, and arguing, not that way, this way, you're wrong, I'm right, griping, fussing and feuding.

It's the way of the flesh. The flesh loves it, thrives on it. And look at the world, they're dead.

All they have is that life they got from Adam and it's a fallen, broken life unlike what God created for us to find and walk in. So when we, as the children of God, living right among such spiritual twistedness and perversity, when we do all things without complaining and disputing, it's like, whoa, what is that? What is that shining out of your life? Well, part of it is the absence of complaining and disputing, you know, that darkness isn't there when we're walking rightly with the Lord. If we want to undermine our witness just like that, all we need to be doing is complaining and disputing.

We'll be, we will appear in our behavior as dark as the world and our witness is undermined. The Lord has called us to do all things without complaining and disputing. What a vision of witness that is.

Oh, Lord, God Almighty, work in us that way. Lord, forgive my complaining. Lord, forgive my arguing and fussing.

Change me, Lord. Make me a witness that does everything without complaining and disputing. That sounds exciting to me.

That draws my heart, which is one reason, another testimony of the Spirit that we know the Lord. If this draws our heart, it's the Lord at work. This is not the way of natural man, you know.

We don't want to give up those complaints and disputes. I mean, we've got a right to it, you know. It's an inherent human right.

It would be a human rights violation if I couldn't complain and dispute all I want to. Oh, there's something in us, the Spirit of God in the heart of the new creation. Here's that call, do all things without complaining and disputing.

Oh, yes, Lord. Yes. That's the way I want to walk.

Do what is necessary, Lord, that I might walk that path. What a witness, what a bright light in a griping and arguing world. The ministry of witness, salt and light.

Another beautiful glimpse at the ministry of witness is in 2 Corinthians 2. 2 Corinthians 2, verse 14. Now thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. Well, this is a powerful verse.

Two mighty works of God in and through the people of God are listed here. Each a great cause for thanksgiving. One, God always leads us in triumph in Christ.

Whenever the people of God let the Lord lead, He always leads them in victory. Whenever the body pulls fast to the head, Jesus Christ lets the head be in charge. The head always leads us in the victorious path that is provided in the way of salvation.

Secured in the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. A resurrection victory over sin and self and death and the world and the flesh. When we let the Lord lead, He always leads us in triumph, in His victory that is there in Christ.

And we who are the body of Christ are joined to Him, we are in Christ. And here's another thing that God does. God through us diffuses, emanates the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.

It would be the pleasure of the Lord for you and I, for all of us, to walk so closely with Jesus Christ the head, holding so fastly to Him, that a fragrance of life would develop through our relationship with Him, our getting to know Him. And consequently, wherever we would walk, God could diffuse right through our lives, cause to flow forth a fragrance of the fact that we know the Lord. How's this for a witness? Having God every place we go.

Diffusing through us, causing the waft off from our lives. A spiritual aroma, a sweet smelling savor that says this person knows God. Now I'm not saying that I do this all the time or know the depths of all of its significance or practice even.

But it brings to my mind something that happened when my wife and I went to Minnesota for a reunion of her clan. And I loved her clan very much. Just a blessing to be around.

And we were having a great time at this family reunion. And not that all the clan knew the Lord. I'm thinking in particular now of one uncle there, who was kind of a leader in many ways and quite respected.

Not a guy we had such fun with, but sort of moderated the whole thing. We were eating one meal one day, the clan together. And he turned to me, and I was early in ministry, and he goes, Well, let's give, I don't know whether he said give thanks or say grace for this meal.

And he turned to me and said, Bob, why don't you lead us? You're the professional here. And I prayed for grace not to show an irked countenance, you know. That's one of the things that grieves my heart.

I believe it does God's too, maybe yours. And that is fleshy professionalism in ministry. I don't mean that we should not be good stewards, but professionalism.

You know, like pastoring is my career. And this is my uniform. And this is my on-the-job vocabulary.

You know, and all that. Oh, it's just obnoxious. Anyway.

So, but I, you know, I was glad to pray. I said, oh, yeah, I'd love to pray. I said, praying is one of my delights.

Yeah, let's pray. And we just started praying. I thank God for this dear clan and just what a joy they were.

And I thank God for this, oh, I mean astounding Minnesota feast that the Lord had put on the table for us. And we went on and had a great meal and a great time. After the meal, this dear man came up to me and kind of pulled me aside with kind of hallowed tones, you know.

I thought, uh-oh, something serious is up. This was a man with a great wit and great sense of humor, and we were laughing more with him than anything else. Pulled me aside and he said, Bob, I want to ask you something.

He said, when you prayed this afternoon for the dinner, he says, something about it, he says, you prayed like you knew God. I think this is it. This is the aroma.

This is the fragrance. And I said to him, well, you know, I do. I do.

And my wife and I witnessed to him much and also to his dear brother that very day. And the witness came, an even opportunity to go on to evangelism and share the gospel because of the reality of witness that God alone can really produce. See, this is not us spraying on some evangelical cologne, you know.

Notice the verse. Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ and through us diffuses. Who's doing the diffusing? God.

And God diffusing through us the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. This is something God is doing in us. Oh, this fits perfectly the very foundation the Lord laid in the Scripture of our study of the church and how He builds it.

The church is the body of Christ. Our Lord is the head. As we relate to Him, hold fast to Him, get to know Him, His life touches ours with a fragrance that others notice.

This is not pumping up a religious air. This is walking with God, letting Him make it clear to those around us there's something about this person and it has to do with their relationship with the Lord God Almighty. God sending forth from our lives a spiritual fragrance that results from knowing Him, from having an acquaintanceship with Him.

Of course, the more we know Him, the stronger the fragrance. The more we walk with Him, the closer the greater aroma, that sweet-smelling savor of Christ in our lives. Next chapter, chapter 3, also speaks of a witness that's very special.

2 Corinthians 3.3 Clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. Here's a very special work of God, even contrasted with a once long ago very special work of God, the finger of God writing the law of God on stone for man to read. But here's a work more personal, more living, an internal work by the Spirit of God.

Clearly you are an epistle of Christ. What a witness this is. As we let the Spirit of God internally work and write on our heart the very character and message and reality of Christ, make us like Jesus from the inside out, in other words.

It makes us a letter of Christ. How many people would not pick up one letter in this Bible and read one word of it? And yet it may be that every day we're next to them on the job and we're the only letter of Christ they're reading. But they're reading us, especially if they know we're believers.

They're reading us, maybe not always for the best reasons. They're looking for some bad punctuation in that letter, some bad grammar. But sometimes they're watching because they see something that their heart is aching for.

And either way, as a letter of Christ, we can have an impact upon their lives in witness. The Holy Spirit being allowed to inscribe the character of Jesus upon our inner man to come forth as we walk among the world. What a witness that is.

And in all of these things of witness, 1 Peter 3.15 gives us such great counsel. 1 Peter 3.15, But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and always be ready to give a defense or an answer, an explanation to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear, doing it with a humble, gentle attitude. Oh, how this relates greatly to witness.

It speaks of you and me. Within the deepest part of our being, our heart, our inner man. Committing ourselves to God.

Sanctifying Him as Lord and Master. Deep within our being saying, The Lord God Almighty is the Master of my life. Christ is my Lord.

And in doing that, that both touches our life and puts the Lord in charge of it increasingly. And this will cause people at times to come up to us and say, What is it about you? I'm one of those in this hopeless world and I watch you. You seem to have hope in your life.

What's the reason for this hope within you? In fact, we should even anticipate that people will say that if we're sanctifying Christ as Lord in our hearts, if we're setting apart within our very deepest being that throne room for the Lord God Almighty to dwell and rule, it'll change our lives, it'll give us hope. People might say, people will say one way or another, Why are you different? You seem to have hope when everything looks so hopeless. Your life has expectation where all around is discouragement.

Part of our witness is just being ready, doing the right thing inside with God and then being ready for someone to notice the consequences of it and say, What's going on in you anyway? Of course, the reason for the hope within us, you may remember from the end of Colossians 1.27, Christ in you, the hope of glory. Ultimately, when people want to know why we have such a hope in our lives, it's because we have Christ who is our hope living in our lives. He's the one who gives us expectation, confidence, a sense of guarantee concerning the things of God.

A certain expectation of glory someday with Him and a confidence in Him all along the way that He can do glorious things and bring glory to His name. Christ in us, the hope of glory. That's the ministry of witness.

Lives being impacted by attitude, behavior, character marked by God flowing from Christ out through our lives to the world around us. Now for a few moments, the ministry of evangelism, which is related. But whereas the ministry of witness is impacted by attitude and behavior, the ministry of evangelism is impacted upon the world by the message we share, by the gospel that we get out.

Praise God for the opportunities to be a witness, but we want them to lead to that opportunity of evangelism where the message comes, where they say, What's going on? And we say, It's Christ. And here's how you can share in that great reality. The ministry of evangelism.

Acts chapter 21, verse 8. Acts 21.8 On the next day, we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea and entered the house of Philip the evangelist who was one of the seven and stayed with them. Philip the evangelist. They visited this missionary team, visited Philip's home.

Philip was an evangelist. That was his ministry. That also was his spiritual gift.

Evangelism being one of the spiritual gifts. We'll be reminded in a moment that all of us are to be and can be involved in evangelism, but some have the spiritual gift of evangelism. Philip did.

He was the evangelist. One of the seven. That takes us back to Acts 6 where the seven were chosen and appointed for ministry.

Acts chapter 6, verse 5. The early church was growing and there were some growth pains and some of the widows, the Hellenistic widows, the widows with sort of a Greek background because they were not getting the daily distribution of food as the Hebrew widows with a Hebrew background, the Hebrew Christian widows were. So they sought out seven spiritual men among them. Not just capable food service agents.

They didn't just go to the local delicatessen with catering. And just get seven people who know how to get food out. Ministry on every level must involve spirituality.

It must involve spiritual character developing in the person serving or disaster is coming. This is the end of side 8. To listen to the rest of the message, please turn the tape over now. So they sought out seven spiritual men among them.

Not just capable food service agents. They didn't just go to the local delicatessen with catering. And just get seven people who know how to get food out.

Ministry on every level must involve spirituality. It must involve spiritual character developing in the person serving or disaster is coming. So they chose these seven.

And verse 5 says, And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith, and the Holy Spirit, and Philip. And then Procorus and the rest are listed.

So Philip, the evangelist, early in his ministry was involved in providing food for the widows. Sometimes Christians want, say, the evangelist ministry. And we'll see that Philip had a very, very fruitful ministry as an evangelist.

But many aren't willing to start, say, serving at the widow's table, or in the children's ministry, or in the just picking up, cleaning up, or helping, or carrying, or hauling, or giving someone a ride to the hospital. Philip started at the widow's tables and look in Acts 8. The extension of his ministry, not that the ministry at the widow's table was beneath Philip or ever needed to be greater to be a great servant of God. But God, what does He say? If you're faithful in a little, I'll give you more opportunity.

And so He did to Philip. Acts 8, verse 1. Now Saul, this is right at the end of Stephen's martyrdom. Now Saul, who would become the apostle Paul, Saul was consenting to his death, Stephen's death.

At that time a great persecution arose against the church, which was at Jerusalem. And they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria except the apostles. So persecution came, and the church is scattered out of Jerusalem.

Remember, the Lord said start in Jerusalem, but get out to Judea, Samaria, the uttermost parts of the earth. They were sort of camped in there at Jerusalem. The Lord had a mobilization plan.

It's called persecution. And they were scattered. Verse 4, Therefore, those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the Word.

Then Philip went down to the city and preached Christ to them. So the church is scattered, and as they went, they were preaching the Word. Praise the Lord, the Word's getting out.

Philip, he went down to Samaria. That's north of Jerusalem, but it's down out of the mountains, down to the lower lands. Philip went down to the city of Samaria.

What did he do? He preached Christ to them. We know from Acts 21, he was doing not just what we're all told to do, but he was doing what his very gift was. This is what pounded in his heart every day.

He had the gift of evangelism. Oh, Samaria? He couldn't wait. He's preaching Christ to them in Samaria.

Verse 12, But when they believed Philip, as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. So there was fruit. They believed Philip.

They believed the message they heard. When he preached the things about the kingdom of God, that God could come to rule in the hearts of men, bring them forgiveness if they would repent, and all in the name of Jesus Christ, many believed and both men and women were baptized. They believed on the Lord, and then publicly were identified with Him in water baptism.

Just as Jesus said, go out baptizing and teaching. The teaching is the in-family edification. The baptizing, get the witness and the message out so people can turn from darkness to light, from those who are in the self to those who will come to Messiah and stand with Him in public waters of baptism, confessing the faith they had put in the Lord Jesus.

That's exactly what happened. This is Philip using his gift of evangelism in what we might call today crusade evangelism. This was a city-wide outreach to Samaria.

But this man was willing and enabled by the Spirit of God to use his gift of evangelism in one-on-one evangelism as well. Later in this chapter, verse 26, Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is desert.

So here is an evangelist with a successful city-wide crusade stirred by the Spirit of God to leave the city, go out to an isolated place. Why? God wanted to reach one man. It shows the ways of God.

Also shows the heart of Philip. No record here of him refusing the Lord. They're asking me to extend the crusade seven more nights.

Gaza? It's a desert. No. Verse 27, So he arose and went.

And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, he was the national treasurer, and had come to Jerusalem to worship. He was a God-seeker. He was returning and sitting in his chariot.

He was reading Isaiah the prophet. He had a scroll of the book of Isaiah. In the next verse, we're told the Spirit prompted Philip to run up and join that chariot.

And in verse 35, Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this scripture, that is, right in Isaiah, what we would call chapter 53, beginning at this scripture, preached Jesus to him. You know that section? He's led as a sheep to the slaughter, a lamb before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. That messianic prophecy of Messiah dying for the sins of all that was given 700 years before Jesus came.

But notice, beginning at this scripture, Philip preached Jesus to this man who was going back home after seeking after the Lord in Jerusalem. When Jesus walked down the road to Emmaus with the two disciples, He started with them back in the books of Moses, the first five books of the Bible, and showed the things about Himself to them through all of the Scriptures. It's possible to start in any section of the Word of God and begin to preach the Lord Jesus Christ.

Either promised or prophesied or pictured or typified, or in the New Testament, gloriously hear and explain then by the apostles. In both cases, in the citywide crusade, mass evangelism, as well as in the one-on-one evangelism, here was the distinctive thing about evangelism. Christ was preached.

In witness often, Christ is just on display in attitude, character, and behavior. But in evangelism, Christ is spoken of in terms of the Gospel. Look at verse 5. Chapter 8, verse 5, Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them, proclaimed the Lord Jesus.

That's essential for evangelism to be complete. Then verse 35, with the one individual person out on the desert. Then Philip opened his mouth and beginning at this scripture, preached Jesus to him.

This is evangelism coming to fruition. Even the word evangelism has to do with the evangel, which comes from that Greek word which means the good news. Evangelism is sharing with people the good news of Jesus Christ.

If we come short of that, we're really still mainly in witness. But when we come through that to the message that brought us to where we are in forgiveness and new life, it will be capped with the evangel, the good news, the proclamation of Jesus Christ. Who He is? The Son of God.

What He did? He died for the sins of the world. And He rose again to give victory over sin and death. And believing in His name, there's forgiveness and new life.

The evangel, the good news, the gospel. Now one might think at this point, that's all well and good, but I don't think I have the gift of evangelism. Well, I don't think I do either.

But notice carefully 2 Timothy 4.5 Nowhere are we told that Timothy had the gift of evangelism. We're clearly told and shown in the epistles written to him that he was a pastor, a pastor teacher. In 2 Timothy 4.5 But you, Timothy, a pastor, not an evangelist, a pastor, but you be watchful in all things endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Great all-round ministry, counsel and instruction there. But just this one phrase for our purpose now. Do the work of an evangelist.

To one who was a pastor and gifted in that arena, the word of the Lord to him was, here's another responsibility and opportunity. Do the work of an evangelist. Though Timothy was a pastor gifted to do that, he also was to be involved in the work of an evangelist.

And that applies to all of us. Obviously, if you have the gift of evangelism, that will become the primary area of ministry and labor and harvest and fruit in your life under the Lord. But in any given part of the body of Christ, only a certain proportion might have the gift of evangelism.

We all have different gifts. But for all of us, even without the gift of evangelism, we all can and should be involved in the work of an evangelist. What is that work? Getting out the message of the good news of

Jesus Christ.

Now, your gift may not be evangelism, but the Lord has probably used you not only to witness to some, but to go on through to evangelism, getting the good news out, and they responded and came into the kingdom with new life in Christ. I've had that same experience. It's not my gift, but I've seen the Lord use me to witness and then evangelize and see harvest.

An illustration maybe of the difference, how this works, when I was pastoring, ministering in Dallas, Texas, across the hall in this business center where our church office was, was a CPA office. And I met the man who owned and operated this partnership, and I was witnessing to him in behavior, attitude, a word here and there. And the months were rolling by, and I was witnessing.

Didn't see him a lot, but now and then in the hall and other places and chat. But I did not evangelize him. One day, a dear friend of mine who was in the church that I pastored there, a dear black brother who we as a church ordained and sent out as an evangelist eventually.

Oh, it was so obvious that he had the gift of evangelism, whether with one or a class or a group. He led people to the Lord as easily, simply, naturally as it has become in my life to perhaps open the Bible and share out of maybe one of my favorite verses in the whole Bible. You know, just, okay, yeah, let's talk about this verse, you know.

Because of gift and inclination of heart. So, the day came when this dear brother was to meet me at my office for something. I was a little late.

He was a little early. It was right at closing time in the CPA office, and this man was leaving. Between the 15 minutes when my friend arrived, this dear black brother with evangelistic gift, when he arrived and I arrived, he had met this CPA man and in 15 minutes met him, shared the gospel with him, and prayed with him.

Now, that's the gift of evangelism. I mean, I was headed there, but give me some time, will you? That's not my gift. Now, I'm not saying that I haven't seen at times God hasten that process in my own life and maybe you too, but that's perhaps a picture of the difference.

Praise God for those with the gift of evangelism, but let's not leave all the harvest to them. The harvest is great, but the laborers are so few. Let's all be doing the work of an evangelist.

In conclusion, a couple of thoughts. Remember Colossians 2.19, which we visited earlier in a previous study, which speaks of the need by inference to be holding fast to the head from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God. When the body holds fast to the head, ministers one to another, the body ends up growing with the increase that is from God.

Well, witness and evangelism are part of that process of the body growing. It's that part that involves the quantitative growth of the church. Lives being added to the family of God.

Do you know when we hold fast to the head, we are actually spiritually cooperating in something that the Lord declared in His Word in Acts 1.1 that He wants to be doing supernaturally all through the age of the church. Acts 1.1 The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach. The former treatise, the former account, that was the Gospel of Luke.

Luke also wrote the book of Acts. He wrote Luke to tell all that Jesus began to do and to teach. What does it infer here about Acts? He's writing this book to explain what Jesus will continue to do and to teach.

How? Through the lives of His people, through the lives of disciples, through the lives of His body. How? By the work of the Holy Spirit making the heart, mind, life, resources of Jesus Christ available to, flowing in and through, the body of Christ. Colossians 2.19 Holding fast to the head that the body might grow fits beautifully with what Acts 1.1 is inferring.

That now as the church, Jesus the head wants to keep on doing what He once did. That is, when He was first here on earth in a physical body, now He wants to continue to do through a spiritual body, us, the body of Christ. This will bring quantitative growth to the body of Christ.

And witness and evangelism are directed at quantitative growth. Edification, ministry to the church, that's aiming at qualitative growth in the church. Acts 2.47 And the Lord added to the church daily those who are being saved.

It's the work of the Lord in and through His people, His body. It's His work to add to the church those who are being saved through witness and evangelism. Our last verses sort of remind us how this takes place.

Acts 4.31 And when they prayed, the disciples prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. They'd been threatened by the leaders who said, stop proclaiming this name of Jesus. They couldn't stop that.

They had to speak the things the Lord had put in their lives, plus He commanded them to. They were about the work of an evangelist, whether they had the gift or not. And they gathered together and cried out to God.

He filled them with His Spirit, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness. A bold proclamation that brings evangelism to a conclusion, to fruition, is that which is to flow out of the fullness of the Spirit of God. If we want to see a full work of evangelism, both through the gifted ones and those of us who are doing the work of an evangelist, it comes in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Praise God if we want to do it. Praise God if we're dedicated to it. Praise God if we're saying, I'm going to do it.

But let's not forget the resource so that it really does get done. Another way to say all this is verse 33, And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. When we hold fast to the head, want to walk in His will, but also by His resource and power, great proclamation of the risen Christ goes forth by great grace being upon us.

Just another way to think of what flows to the members of the body when they hold fast to the head of the body. The heart of Christ, the character of Christ, grace. And He loves to pour it out, not only forgiving sinners, us and those we want to reach, but by His grace enabling us to function.

God's grace is both His willingness and provision to forgive, but also His capacity of empowerment to let us get the message out there to those who need forgiveness. Praise the Lord for this great ministry to the world. It all fits in the same picture of the head, the body, member-to-member ministering, all that we get from the head, but as we're equipped, walking in witness and evangelism that the Lord might add to the church daily those being saved.

May we humbly, earnestly seek such in our lives, both witness and evangelism, and cry out to the Lord Jesus, hold fast to Him, for He will be the affecting power by His Spirit, by His grace to let it come to fruitfulness. Praise God. Let's pray together.

Lord, we thank You so much that You call us to minister to one another, but also to the world. And in both ministries, we rejoice and thank You that the same Lord Jesus is the head. And we thank You too, Lord, that the resource to minister to one another not only comes from You, but the life we need, the gifts and the empowerment to reach the dead, lost world comes from You as well.

We exalt You as the head, the Lord of the harvest. Lord, send us forth into the harvest. We beseech You.

Be our life, our character for witness. Be our enabling, our strength, our convicting power in proclamation of evangelism. And add to the church these days, Lord, in and through our lives, those that should be saved.

We pray in Jesus' mighty name, Amen.

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