

EVANGELISM – PART 1

DEFINITION

The word in English is defined primarily in Christian terms as “the preaching or promulgation of the gospel; missionary zeal, purpose, or activity.”

In the Greek scriptures, the root word is “εὐαγγελίζω *euangelizō*.” This is a compound word that means good announcement. This is the verb form and means to announce good news. The noun form is “εὐαγγέλιον *euangelion*” and means good news, often translated *gospel*. The term *evangelist* “εὐαγγελιστής *euangelistēs*” means one who announces the good news. *Evangelist* is only used three times and is set apart from other teachers (Ephesians 4:11).

THE BELIEVER’S RESPONSIBILITY REGARDING EVANGELISM

Many teach that it is everyone’s responsibility to be an evangelist, to evangelize, and to be ones who announce good news. Is this correct? At the onset, this sounds good. We have been blessed with the greatest gift of all time; we should not only hold onto that gift but share it as well (Matthew 5:16; James 2:1).

Paul encourages and praises those who participate in the Gospel

1. Romans 10:14-17 – Paul encourages the Roman believers to be helpful in evangelism. The phrase *good news* here is a participle of the verb “εὐαγγελίζω *euangelizō*.”
2. Philippians 1:5-7 – Paul is both thankful to God and praising the Philippian believers for their participation in the Gospel.
3. Colossians 1:5-6 – Having taken the concept of production (bearing fruit) and applying that to the hope that they have by means of the Gospel indicates that the church of Colossae has multiplied those who have heard and understood the message.
4. 2 Timothy 4:5 – Paul instructs Timothy to do the work of an evangelist. This is a unique instruction given to Timothy. We must be careful to not apply this command to all believers or all pastors. The point is that being an evangelist is a good thing.
5. συνεργός *sunergos* – Paul uses *fellow worker* to extol many people in his letters, 14 different people. The common thread seems to be that they work for God in preaching the Gospel. Those who support the Gospel are not called fellow laborers but participates.

Most use Christ’s command to the apostles to demonstrate that all believers are commanded to evangelize (Matthew 28:16-20; Luke 24:48-49; Acts 1:8). Throughout the lives of all the apostles, each one of them left and went out and proclaimed the truth of Jesus Christ to the entire known world.

We must differentiate between what was expected of the apostles, what is expected of the “ekklesia” as a whole, and what is expected of individual believers.

Jesus expected and commanded the apostles to be a witness for Him in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and even to the remotest parts of the Earth. There are no texts anywhere in the Bible where individual believers are commanded/expected to go and leave their homes to proclaim the Gospel.

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The church as a whole does have some expectations. Some of these actions are individualistic, but they are given to the group as a whole.

1. Philippians 1:27 – How a church acts in the public square reflects directly to the Gospel of Christ. Paul states that he desires to hear that “you stand firm....” This portrays not only standing up but also persistence. The church is to stand firm in “one spirit.” The word for *spirit* indicates breath or soul. Furthermore, Paul states “with one soul.” Each individual that makes up the body of believers must be in agreement regarding “the faith of the Gospel” to be effective. “The faith” is defined as the doctrines of God that are or are intended to be believed. A church must be in full agreement with the truth by which men are saved.
2. Colossians 4:2-6 – First, the church is to pray for those giving the Gospel that:
 - i. Through God, opportunities may arise.
 - ii. The truth may be spoken.
 - iii. The message is made known. *I may make it clear* is one word in Greek, “φανερῶω phaneroō.” Paul had no cause to pray for clarity within himself; he was praying for success regarding the content being made known. Notice that he does not pray that many will be saved but that the message will be made known.

Verses 5-6 are about what the church should do. Literally in Greek, this phrase is “In wisdom, walk towards the ones outside, redeeming the time.” This indicates that our manner of life should be proper towards those outside. Our ministry to those who are outside is not only in conduct, but also the assumption here is that we are conversing with them. Therefore, our responsibility with the unsaved is to speak with grace, knowing how to answer each one. With grace means there is a way that information should be presented—speaking in ways they do not deserve.

3. 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5 – that the “Word of the Lord will spread rapidly.” *Spread rapidly* is “τρέχω trechō,” the word for run. Figuratively, of course, this means to make progress or strive to advance, but also with a sense of quickness (urgency). The request also includes safety from opponents to the Gospel. As individuals become effective in spreading the truth, opposition will grow and potentially become dangerous.
4. 1 Peter 3:8-15 – Peter states that it is necessary to have a better attitude than that of the lost. We’re not to return evil for evil or insult for insult but give a blessing instead. The word for *blessing* is “εὐλογέω eulogēō” or good word. This is a nominative participle and should be understood as not speak well of them but rather give good words. Verse 15 is well known, and the principle is consistent with instructions to the church. A few observations on this verse:
 - i. The hope being visible is assumed
 - ii. There is a responsibility to provide reason for what you believe
 - iii. Once again, both content and the manner given are addressed
5. Jude 20-23 – Have mercy on some who are doubting. The word for *mercy* is “ἐλεέω eleeō” and means to be compassionate to a less fortunate person. *Doubting* is taken from the term meaning to

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deliberate. “Who are deciding” is a better translation. Jude’s instruction is to help those who need your help.

CONCLUSION

These are not the only verses concerning this topic. There are many others for us to consider as well. These passages and our careful look at others lead us to a consistent understanding. The intent for believers is that everyone contributes to the spreading of the Gospel in one way or another. However, the expectation is not for everyone to go be an evangelist nor is there an expectation that each body of believers is to send out evangelists or missionaries. If someone desires to go out and spread the Gospel, that is a good thing; it is honorable and must be encouraged. As a whole, there are expectations:

- i. Pray for and support those actively spreading the Word so that the truth may be known.
- ii. Be prepared and capable to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- iii. Show compassion to those who are deciding on the truth.
- iv. Love those who oppose the truth.
- v. Teach others about the Gospel when opportunities are presented.