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Editorial on Evangelism

The Core Message

In the previous two issues of YPS we have focused on the core motivation for evangelism. In this editorial I want to look at the core message of evangelism and to focus on those who communicate the message. We also have an interesting account from Tim Coltman of Burton-on-Trent of how the Lord has provided an exciting and extensive opportunity for him to evangelize. Jeremy Singer continues to guide us through Adventures in Acts and we have a new series starting by Michael Buckeridge about thinking, so that should be interesting.

The core message of evangelism

The message of the gospel is both simple and profound. We must keep in the forefront of our minds that the message is described as 'the gospel', which means 'the good news'. We could easily fall into the trap of emphasizing sin and depravity so much that we fail to emphasize the attractiveness of the person of Christ and of the offer of salvation. Sin must be identified as well as the effect that it has in the life of the individual, so that they will appreciate the need for God's mercy and salvation. But 'the good news' is the core of the message and must be preached clearly!

Key texts include the following:

1. 'Preach the word', 2 Tim. 4. 2. The word of God must be the basis of all witnessing.
2. 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God', Rom. 10. 17.
3. 'We preach Christ crucified', 1 Cor. 1. 23. The Saviour and the work of the cross is the core of the message.
4. 'If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain', 1 Cor. 15. 14 – Christ's resurrection must be preached, as without it there is no gospel.

I find the words of the apostle Paul recorded in Acts chapter 26 verses 18-20 very helpful. He explains the message of the gospel as having the

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following effect:

- opening people's eyes;
- turning them from darkness to light;
- turning them from the power of Satan unto God;
- providing forgiveness of sins;
- securing an inheritance among the saints; sharing in all the eternal wealth of Christ;
- bringing about repentance and turning people to God; a change of mind in respect of God and sin;
- new believers perform deeds in keeping with their repentance.

Note that all of this happens as a result of faith in Christ!

The communicators of the message

The last issue I want to address in this editorial concerns who communicates the message of the gospel. We learned in the first article that the promotion of the good news of salvation was not restricted to apostles and evangelists. In general terms, there are two main channels for communicating this great message: individuals and local churches.

Local churches

The communities of believers that God has called together out of the world exist for the glory of God. They are the places where God chooses to dwell among men on earth, Eph. 2. 22. The following passages all describe the church as the body of Christ: Romans chapter 12, 1 Corinthians chapter 12, and Ephesians chapter 4. The local church is seen as a miniature representation of the whole church, i.e., the body of Christ.

One of the things that God has called the church to do is to speak for Him on earth. The church of the Thessalonians was very effective in this respect. It is said of them, 'For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing. For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God', 1 Thess. 1. 8, 9. They witnessed for God and their reputation had gone as far as Macedonia and Achaia.

They were a living testimony of the effectiveness of the gospel in changing lives.

The saints in Philippi also fulfilled this role with great enthusiasm. Paul thanks them in chapter 1 verse 5 for their 'fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now'. He also encouraged them to 'strive together for the faith of the gospel', Phil. 1. 27. When following the references to the assembly in the epistle, it is noticeable that gospel work is an essential part of assembly life. But please note that the behaviour of the Christians impacted on the effectiveness of the gospel, 1. 27, and that suffering was almost guaranteed, 1. 29. The assembly had a clear public witness, both in lifestyle and in preaching, 2. 15, 16, and both women and men were involved in this great enterprise for the Lord, 2. 25; 4. 3.

It is good to note a revival in enthusiasm to spread the gospel as part of the work of the local church in our day.

Individuals

We will not spend much time emphasizing this point as it is self-explanatory. The book of Acts is full of examples of individuals preaching and spreading the gospel. We must, of course, remember that the instruction of the Lord Jesus was to 'make disciples', Matt. 28. 19, and to teach 'them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you', v. 20. In the Acts of the Apostles, we see that the practice of the early church was to see souls saved and added to the church, Acts 2. 41; 9. 19, 28. In other words, individuals were not preaching only to see souls saved but to see them in fellowship in a local church and walking with God. It is important to note that new converts are often the most effective people in reaching out with the gospel. Having been freshly saved, they have lots of unsaved friends and are a living testimony to the effectiveness of the gospel.

Please bear in mind the overriding principle that we have been saved to serve God and to represent His interests in this world. May we have a passion and a vision for glorifying the Lord and reaching lost souls with the gospel.

Until the next YPS...

Q&A INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

Thoughts about Thinking

BY MICHAEL BUCKERIDGE NOTTINGHAM

Q *The mind of a believer is obviously an important part of the spiritual battle going on in the world – what thoughts do you have on the danger of being conformed to this world?*

A I believe it's a matter of relationship – Jesus said, if you love me, keep my commandments and James warned us that friendship with the world is enmity with God, Jas. 4. 4.

Can I suggest four questions we could ask ourselves?

1. *Who* are we trying to please?
2. Where, or with *whom*, do we find truth?
3. What/*who* fills our vision?
4. *Who* do we spend the most time with?

How we answer these questions will demonstrate our mindset, and whether it is worldly or not. Do remember that Satan is sometimes blunt in his attacks, but he more often takes a subtle approach. As we live in a worldly culture, it is very easy to be moulded by it without realizing it's happening.

Q *Did you have anything particular in mind?*

A I've been pondering the dangers of four things recently, which, I think, link with those questions I have just asked: **consumerism**,

multiculturalism, the visual media, and modern communications. The articles, which will follow in later issues of YPS will address these issues.

Let me answer the four questions we need to ask ourselves.

Q *Who are we trying to please?*

A A consumer culture is trying to please the consumer, and the consumer expects to be pleased! This is great in one way, because it leads to greater availability, wider choice, and better prices of goods, but even this can provide a danger for the believer. One study shows¹ the average child in the United States sees 40,000 adverts in a year! Is there not the risk that our minds become taken up with things that the Lord told us not to worry about – the temporal things of life, Matt. 6. 30-34? If we think that we can 'pick 'n' mix' to suit ourselves on the practical issues of life, the greater danger is that we will, or have we already begun, to transfer this thinking to moral and spiritual issues? Am I free, for example, to wander the aisles of churches just as I would a supermarket until I find the one that just suits me? If Jesus really is Lord, then pleasing Him is part of the transformation of the mind Paul speaks of, Rom 12. 2, in contrast to conformity to a world that exalts self to the top slot?

Q *Where, or with whom, do we find truth?*

A It seems that, in increasingly multicultural societies, the only truth is that there is no truth. Everything must be given approval and anything can be redefined. The pressure, along with the potential to keep our faith private, is increasing. However, if we love the One who said, 'I am the truth', we will respond to the command to go into all the world and preach the gospel. Will our minds bow to the world's pressure to be 'tolerant', in the way tolerance is now defined, or to the Christ who said, 'I have overcome the world', John 16. 33?

Q *What/Who fills our vision?*

A The apostle John tells us that part of the essence of worldliness is the 'lust of the eyes', 1 John 2. 16. It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words. We need to remember the type of minds and imaginations from which most of these pictures come from, i.e., carnal minds, which are enmity against God. How easy it is for an image to enter our imagination without being filtered by reason and, is it possible, that our morality is softened through regular exposure to the world's morals? A recent series of a popular 'family' TV show provoked a response from viewers² who were unhappy that there was a brief kiss between two female characters. No words, but one brief image that entered the minds of thousands of youngsters! Does this bring general acceptance that a multitude of arguments or words will struggle to dislodge? Where should our eye be? 'Looking unto Jesus' is the exhortation of scripture.

Modern communication methods and technology are incredible, and have vast positive possibilities for both evangelism and Bible study, but are we communicating

with and knowing God as we should? Is that next tweet, email, post more interesting than 'the word' that the living God provided, or our response in prayer? Do we follow the multitude of links on any given subject to an ever-increasing knowledge about it, but not of God? In the rapid responses that we expect and give, is there a danger that this mindset flows over into our study and expectations in prayer? Surely the Alpha and Omega cannot be reduced to a mere sound bite, and if the Word is eternal He is going to take some time to get to know! In seeking a sound mind, we will benefit from regularly shutting out this world's 24/7 culture of communication and information to find ourselves alone with the Omniscient.

Q *Who do we spend the most time with?*

A We are told that 'who you know' is more important than 'what you know'. We tend to become like the people we spend time with. So, to truly have the mind of Christ, our goal should be to know Him. To know Him we will have to be with Him. As you said in your original question, this is a spiritual battle, one in which we need to strive to bring every thought into captivity to Christ, but it will be worth it; to be able to love the Lord our God with . . . all our mind.

To be continued.....

- 1 S. CLAVERT, *Children as Consumers: Marketing and Advertising*, Spring, 2008.
- 2 Ofcom – complaints about the first in the 2014 Dr Who Series. Interestingly, the final episode produced a far higher response after reference to the dead being conscious. Perhaps an indication of the fear man has that death is perhaps not the final word!

ADVENTURES IN ACTS

Acts 16 - European Evangelism –
God sends reinforcements

BY JEREMY SINGER BRIDGE OF WEIR, SCOTLAND

After the debacle in Antioch, Acts 15. 39, the trio from Paul's first missionary journey has disbanded. However, God forms a new team to accompany Paul on his next journey. *Silas* is Paul's new preaching companion. Silas is an encourager, like Barnabas, 4. 36. Silas encourages individuals, for instance when he and Paul strike up a song in the middle of the night in Philippi's jailhouse, 16. 25. Silas also encourages churches, for instance when he and Paul give departing words of encouragement as they leave Philippi, v. 40.

Timothy is a replacement for John Mark. Paul refers to Timothy as his 'genuine son', 1 Tim. 1. 2. We deduce that Timothy was saved during Paul's first visit to Derbe and Lystra, Acts 14. 6-7. Since that time, Timothy had been growing spiritually, 2 Pet. 3. 18. Although he comes from a mixed-religion household, Acts 16. 1, he has made good progress as a believer. God blesses people who, through no fault of their own, belong to difficult households. The young man has a good reputation among local churches in the area, v. 3. Paul sees Timothy's potential and invites him to join the missionary team. It is good when young and old can work together; their strength and wisdom can be combined, Prov. 20. 29.

Luke is an additional member of the party. He is the author of the Luke-Acts narrative. The recorded visit to Philippi is clearly a first-hand account, notice the 'we' personal pronoun, e.g., Acts 16. 11. God takes this diverse group of people, unites them in faith, Eph. 4. 5, and their desire for outreach, Acts 16. 10.

God gives directions

The missionaries make several attempts to travel north and west. However, these plans are abortive, either due to immediate circumstances or a direct revelation from the Holy Spirit, vv. 6-7. The prophet Balaam had to take a detour because of his disobedience, Num. 22. 23. Paul's situation is entirely different; he is obeying the Lord's great commission, Matt. 28. 19, but it is not clear where he should go. Eventually, Paul receives a night vision, asking him to 'come over into Macedonia', Acts 16. 9. Note that evangelism is described as 'help' from a human perspective.

Who is this distinctively Macedonian man that Paul sees? Some scholars suggest Luke, the Philippian jailor, or Alexander the Great. It is not clear from the text, but the message to



Paul is clear – Macedonia needs to hear the gospel. Bruce comments that ‘the missionary journeys of Paul exhibit an extraordinary combination of strategic planning and keen sensitiveness to the guidance of the Spirit of God’.

Paul and his companions respond to the vision in a spiritually reflective way. ‘Assuredly gathering’, v. 10, implies that they carefully considered their current context and God’s guidance before coming to a sensible conclusion. We must do the same whenever we need direction – blending God’s word, past experience, the advice of fellow believers, and the immediate circumstances.

God saves people

The team sail across the Aegean Sea to Macedonia, v. 11. The cities mentioned in the rest of the chapter are in the modern-day Balkans and Greece, sunny Mediterranean holiday destinations via Easyjet. The gospel has reached Europe, following its roadmap to the ‘ends of the earth’, 1. 8. Philippi is a Roman colony, situated on the *Via Egnatia*, a Roman ‘Route 66’.

At Philippi, the team sets about preaching ‘the way of salvation’, 16. 17. They speak to small groups by the river, v. 13, where they also engage in prayer, vv. 13, 16. The evangelists are steadfastly honest, v. 28. Ultimately, all these activities aid the spread of the gospel, but it is the sovereign God who opens hearts to receive His word, v. 14. Paul later writes about this ‘first day’ when God began to operate in lives at Philippi, Phil. 1. 6. Paul assures the believers that God will continue this work to its completion.

Notice the sheer diversity of people who ‘believe on the Lord Jesus Christ’, Acts 16. 31. There are men and women, young and old. They are drawn from different social backgrounds. Lydia is a respectable businesswoman. The slave-girl is poor and abused. The jailor is a Roman blue-collar worker, probably ex-military.¹ People commonly say that ‘it takes all sorts to make a world’.² Well, it takes all sorts to make a church too. ‘All’ is a key word in the Philippian letter, where local church unity is the main theme. Look around your assembly and thank the Lord for so many different people who worship and serve together.

1 John Riddle certainly thinks so, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Ritchie, 2012.

2 http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/it_takes_all_kinds_to_make_a_world.

AN EXCITING AND EXTENSIVE

Opportunity to Witness

BY **TIM COLTMAN BURTON UPON TRENT**



The words of Mark chapter 16 verse 15, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel', are clear and well known to most of our readers. Despite being familiar words, they bring a great challenge.

Are we utilizing every opportunity that is available to us to spread the greatest yet simplest message in the world?

Our family has been given some unique opportunities to preach the gospel. I appreciate that; but I trust that as I explain what we are currently involved in that each one of us will seek to discover fresh opportunities to tell others about our Saviour!

August 2014 marked the centenary of the commencement of the Great War, World War One, 1914-1918. It was during that war that my great grandfather, William Harold Coltman, was awarded, among a number of other medals, the Victoria Cross, the highest award for bravery that can be given to any soldier. He served as a stretcher-bearer, refused to use a gun and kill because of his faith in Christ. He was, however, willing go to war to help, and save lives.

As a result of his courage, bravery, and devotion to duty, he is now described as 'The highest decorated non-commissioned officer of the British army'.^{1,2}

Graeme Paterson from Plains, Scotland, heard the story of William Harold Coltman and had

the vision to organize the development of a professional powerpoint presentation which could be used in a wide range of situations. We now have the privilege of using this all over the country to spread the gospel. We are very grateful for Graeme's vision and assistance.

Alongside the presentation, a tract has been written entitled *For Valour*, the two words which are inscribed on a Victoria Cross medal. This tract has been distributed at many events over the last twelve months.

The presentation not only describes the type of man William Coltman was, and how bravely he behaved on the battlefield, but it also gives historical details of the war. This is why schools have a particular interest in the material. Thousands of children have seen the presentation and, as a result, have heard the gospel. We have had the opportunity to run school assemblies and classroom workshops to raise awareness of the horrors of war. Schools right across the United Kingdom have been interested, and new schools are regularly being contacted to arrange further visits during 2015, God willing.

Early last year a military concert was held in the Town Hall in Burton-upon-Trent. Part of the concert was dedicated to William Coltman, so we sought to find the organizer, who agreed for all 500 who attended the concert to receive a copy of *For Valour*.

In Lichfield, Staffordshire, is the Staffordshire

Regiment Museum. Here they have built a replica World War One trench, which is named the 'Coltman Trench'. Having been refurbished recently, the family was asked to attend the reopening, and, again, we were able to give out *For Valour* tracts to all who attended this event.

During remembrance week, November 2014, the presentation was shown in schools throughout Burton, but also at the National Memorial Arboretum. This is a national place of remembrance where there is also a tree planted in memory of William Coltman. Each day the presentation was shown to groups of children. I was then invited back to the Arboretum in March 2015 as a guest speaker at their 'Friends and Family' day. Forty people were present to see the story of William Coltman, and many tracts were taken.

In November 2014 the family were invited to the opening of the 'Coltman Peace Wood', which is in the village of Winshill, just down the road from the Gospel Hall, and hundreds of tracts were distributed.

The close of 2014 brought further opportunities to speak to a group of young soldiers at the Territorial Army, and also the Western Front Association at their annual meeting. Both were very receptive to the message.

Over the last twelve months we have also been asked to show the presentation in many gospel meetings. This has been very effective in the spread of the gospel.

As far as future opportunities are concerned, we have just emailed the HQ of the Women's

Institute (WI) in Staffordshire and Derbyshire and we await their reply.

A date has also just been arranged for the presentation to be shown at the local library in Burton to give the people of the town the opportunity to come along and hear the story for themselves.

With all of these events over the last twelve months, over 10,000 people have been reached with the gospel, and 2015 looks to be equally busy with many opportunities to spread the good news. While we appreciate that we are in a unique position, you could also be presented with possibilities to spread the gospel that others don't have!

The questions are:

Are we investigating every avenue and looking for fresh opportunities to send out this great message?

Are we pushing doors to see if the Lord will open them and that this may lead us to fresh opportunities to witness for our Saviour?

We are told so often that we are living in dark and difficult days, but on the contrary I think that we are living in days of great opportunity! Let us ask God for the courage to go out and preach the gospel where the opportunities arise.

1 The Register of the Victoria Cross (This England, 1997).

2 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Harold_Coltman.

