

Sharing Our Faith

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[Scripture quotations taken from the NASB](#)

Previously, we learned from various passages of Scripture of the totality of man's depravity and his inability to come to Christ without being drawn by God the Father. We looked at what the Bible teaches about predestination and the calling of God, and we learned that the calling of God is always effectual in those who receive it, meaning that all of those whom God calls to faith in Christ do in fact come to Christ, and none refuse or resist this calling.

We have also studied several passages that teach us there are individuals whom God has foreknown from before the creation of the world, and these, His elect, He has predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son. In God's time, these individuals are born into the world, and then again in His time, He calls them to faith in Christ. It is these and only these to whom He shows mercy, while all of the others are left in their sins. Those who are left in their sins are hardened by God Himself, as Paul taught in Romans 9:18.

Further, we saw that the Bible teaches that those individuals whom God calls, He also justifies, and those He justifies, He also glorifies, which makes the salvation of man through faith in Christ God's choice and God's own doing from

beginning to end. Considering all of this we may ask ourselves why we should even bother to share our faith at all. Since God is going to bring to faith in Christ those whom He has chosen, while hardening the rest, then why do we need to be involved? The answer to this question is very simple. We are to share our faith with others because Jesus Himself has commanded us to do so.

In Matthew 28:16-20 we find what is known as the Great Commission, where Jesus commanded His disciples to go into the all the world and make known the Gospel. This Gospel is the Good News of God's provision for the forgiveness of man's sins, which comes only through faith in Jesus Christ. His blood shed on Calvary's cross was the atoning sacrifice that purchased reconciliation to God for everyone who believes in Him.

Jesus commanded the eleven apostles (at this point in time the Apostle Paul had not yet been brought to faith) to preach the Gospel, making disciples of all nations, not only from among the Jews, but also from among the Gentile races as well. This command to make disciples applied not only to the eleven apostles whom Jesus addressed at that time; it applies to all believers.

Our Personal Witness

The Apostle Peter exhorted us to be ready to share our faith when anyone asked us to do so. He wrote in his first letter: "but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame." (1 Peter 3:15-16).

Unbelievers who are aware of our Christian faith may be curious, and they may ask us to share our experience with them. They may notice some things that are different about us, maybe some ways of reacting to certain situations that may cause them to be curious as to why we are different. Could it be our Christian faith?

Peter exhorted us to share our faith with "gentleness and reverence" toward those with whom we share. Those who do not know Christ are spiritually adrift in the world. Many are completely unconcerned with spiritual matters on any level. These would consider themselves to be atheists or agnostics. Others may be aware of a void in their lives, which they may be trying to fill with some form of religion

or spirituality. Still others may adhere to certain pagan belief systems that are prevalent in the cultures in which they were raised.

The atheist or agnostic will likely show little interest in Christianity most times, but on occasion they may see something in us that sparks some questions as to why we do things and approach certain situations and circumstances the way we do. They may notice that we are not out to get all we can get for ourselves, and we are not concerned only for our own benefit like the rest of the world, and they may want to know why. They may wonder why we were looking out for someone else's interests or well-being in a certain situation, instead of just looking to our own self-interest. They may also see us experience trouble and difficulties in our lives and notice in us a measure of peace or contentment in the midst of our troubles, which in their understanding should not be there considering our circumstances, and they may wonder if this contentment has something to do with our Christian faith.

When opportunities do present themselves for us to share our faith with unbelievers, we should be aware that they will have no wisdom, insight or understanding of the word of God whatsoever unless and until God calls them to faith in Christ. We see that this will be the case, because as Paul taught: "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." (1 Corinthians 2:14).

All that unbelievers are able to discern or understand is whatever traits of character they may see in us as a result of our actions. This is why Peter exhorted us to "keep a good conscience" (1 Peter 3:15-16), which means that we should make every effort to order our conduct according to all that the word of God teaches.

We should show gentleness and respect to others when we have the opportunity to speak to them about our faith in Christ, so that those in the world who observe our lives and our actions will not be able to find fault with what we say or do. They should find no reason to see our conduct as hypocritical or contrary to what is considered to be good, kind, upright and just behavior.

When we share our faith, we are as the sower who sows the seed of the word of God, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Some of the seed that we sow will fall upon "good soil", which is to say in the sight or hearing of God's elect. And in His time, God will cause this seed to spring up and bear a harvest of fruit born His glory (Matthew 13:1-23).

Jesus' Admonition in Matthew 7

When we are considering sharing our faith with others, we should be very careful and discerning, as Jesus taught us in the Sermon on the Mount when He said: "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces." (Matthew 7:6).

To be obedient to our Lord's command here, we are going to have to make some assessments as to where the "dogs" and "swine" are, and where they are not. We should not approach just anyone to share our faith, because if we do, we may be approaching one of those whom Jesus referred to as dogs or swine, and they may indeed "turn and tear us to pieces". Instead, let us look for an open door of opportunity to share our faith as God provides such opportunities.

As we have discussed before, and as we should understand when sharing our faith, the Bible teaches that God has mercy on some, and the rest He hardens (Romans 9:18). We should also understand that unregenerate man does not have the capacity or ability to receive the Gospel message unless it has been granted to Him by God to do so (John 6:65).

The ones to whom God shows mercy are called to faith in Christ and they receive the Gospel message. One evidence of their calling by God is that they believe in Christ. Other evidence is that they will have a genuine love for other believers, which will be demonstrated by their actions. The others, whom the Scripture says that God hardens, are left in their sins and have no hope of understanding or receiving the Gospel message (Matthew 13:11, John 8:42-47, 10:22-26).

We should not volunteer to share our faith with anyone who is a member of a pagan faith, unless they show a sincere interest in the Gospel message, and because they are aware that we are Christians, they approach us with questions about our faith. Those who display an open hostility toward the Gospel we should avoid, and not give them what is sacred or cast our pearls to them, while at the same time understanding that they may not always remain hostile to the Gospel of Christ. We should also avoid sharing our faith with those who are atheistic and display a callous indifference to the Gospel message.

This is not to say that someone who is indifferent or even overtly hostile toward the Gospel will not at some point in the future come to faith in Christ. Once again we recall that Saul, who would later become the Apostle Paul, was travelling on the Damascus Road on his way to continue his efforts to persecute the Church when he was struck down and called to faith in Christ apart from any decision of his own, even while he was still intent on opposing the Gospel (Acts 9:1-9, Acts 22:1-10). Sometimes those who are openly hostile toward the Gospel message are indeed numbered among God's elect. In His time, God will call these individuals to faith in His Son, just as was the case with the Saul.

Every believer is given one or more spiritual gifts to use in God's service in order to build up the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:7-11, Ephesians 4:11-13). Some are given the gift of evangelism. Those with this gift will go forth with the spoken or printed Gospel message, or both, outwardly calling men to faith in Christ.

Some evangelists operate from the pulpit in a church, and others will work through various other media. Some even have street ministries where they will sing hymns and spiritual songs on the streets, while those working with them will hand out small printed booklets with various presentations of the Gospel message to those who want to take them. Even these street evangelists will not try to force the Gospel message on anyone, but they make themselves available to those who show an interest in the message of God's salvation, which is obtained only through faith in Jesus Christ.

God's "Severe" Mercy in Bringing Some to Faith

Many times, God will work to bring one of His elect to faith through troubles or hardships that reveal one's own inadequacy to face the circumstances with which they are confronted. In His time, God mercifully reveals to one whom He has foreknown since before the creation of the world that Jesus Christ is their only source of strength and hope. Their own strength and resources, which may have served them well in managing life before, will no longer be adequate to sustain them through their present troubles. As Jesus said: "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30).

It is an act of divine mercy for God to bring one of His elect to faith in Christ through adversity and need, revealing to them that the grace of Jesus Christ is sufficient for their every need (2 Corinthians 12:7-10, Philippians 4:11-13), because God does not do this for everyone. Many are left in their sins and find themselves to be among the wicked as Job described them in Job 21:7-16, and as Asaph described them in Psalm 73:1-9.

They are not afflicted like others, but everything seems to go their way in life, and therefore pride, arrogance, callousness, conceits, scoffing and malice characterize their lives. They find that they can get all they need and more by their own strength, and they either see no need of God in their lives, or they imagine that God must be pleased with them since they have been blessed with so many benefits in life.

Such thoughts and reasoning are a deception, and for God to allow these individuals to continue in this deception is one way in which He hardens those to whom He shows no mercy but leaves them in their sin. They seem to do well for themselves in this life, but ultimately and eternally their fate is a tragic one, and they will one day find themselves not among those who are blessed, but among those upon whom Jesus pronounces woes, as He tells them that they have already received their consolation in full (Luke 6:20-26).

Open Doors of Opportunity

If an unbeliever approaches us with some burden they are carrying, knowing that we are Christians and perhaps hoping we will have some word of encouragement for them, this could very well be an open door of opportunity that God is providing for us to share our faith in Christ. Perhaps we can share with them how we take all of our burdens to the Lord in prayer, and that we rely upon Him to sustain us through the troubles that we face in this life.

We will have to use wisdom as to how much detail of our personal lives that we share with them. However, to communicate that we face life with the strength of the Lord and not with our own strength can plant a seed that God may use in bringing this person to faith, if indeed he is one of those who has been appointed to eternal life (Acts 13:48).

Once again let us recall Peter's exhortation to each of us as believers: "sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to

everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you.” While we should always be ready to share our faith, giving an answer to those who see the hope that we have, we should never worry about our presentation or about how awkward we may be in sharing with them.

Our own eloquence, presentation skills, or persuasiveness has nothing at all to do with whether someone will be saved. If those with whom we are sharing our faith are numbered among God’s elect, they will be brought to faith in Christ, in God’s time. If we have shared our faith with them, then we have been given the privilege of being used by God to help bring the Gospel message to them, and we will have helped to fulfill the Great Commission.

Whether those with whom we share our faith ever come to believe in Christ or not, the sharing of our faith brings the outward call of the Gospel message to those who hear it. The results, however, are entirely up to God. And His word, as it has gone out through us as we share our faith, will not return to Him void but will accomplish the purpose which He intends (Isaiah 55:10-11). In sharing our faith, not giving what is sacred to dogs or casting our pearls before swine as Jesus said in Matthew 7:6, but as God opens doors of opportunity, we are obedient to the Great Commission.

The Parable of the Sower

The Parable of the Sower taught by Jesus in Matthew 13 illustrates the results of the Gospel of Christ being preached among men in the world. We have touched upon this passage before, but let us now look at it in greater detail because there are several interesting points to be made about sharing our faith in Christ, and what we can expect to see as a result.

Jesus first gave this teaching to a crowd that had gathered to hear what He had to say, as we read in Matthew 13:1-9. He gave the teaching in the form of a parable, using analogies or metaphors to convey His message. And then later we see that He explained the meaning of the parable to His disciples in Matthew 13:18-23. Between these two passages, Jesus revealed to His disciples that the understanding of His teachings has been hidden from many (Matthew 13:10-17).

Speaking to the crowd as recorded in Matthew 13:1-9, Jesus taught using the analogy of a farmer sowing or spreading seed over the ground, expecting to later reap a harvest from the plants that spring up from the seeds. The sowing of the

seed is the metaphor that Jesus used to symbolize the proclaiming of the Gospel message, which is the outward call for men to repent and put their faith in Him for the forgiveness of their sins and reconciliation to God. Many hear this proclamation of the Gospel, or this outward call, but it has only been given to God's elect to be able to come to Christ (Matthew 22:14), and only these will bear spiritual fruit to the glory of God.

Jesus said that as the farmer went out to spread the seed, it fell upon different types of soil. Some of the seed fell beside the road, and the seed that fell there was eaten by birds. Some of the seed fell in places where the soil was rocky, and the seeds sprang up quickly but were scorched by the sun because the soil they had fallen upon was shallow. Other seed fell among thorns, which choked the plants. However some seed fell upon good soil where it produced a harvest, yielding thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times what was originally sown. Jesus ended His parable by exhorting whoever in the crowd had ears to hear, meaning whoever was able to hear, let him hear and understand the lesson that He taught.

After Jesus had given this teaching, His disciples asked Him why He spoke to the people in parables (Matthew 13:10). Jesus' parables used metaphors and analogies to convey spiritual truths, and they were often not easily understood. His disciples were likely curious as to why He chose to use this method in His teaching, and why He did not communicate to the crowds in terms that they could more readily understand. Jesus explained why He spoke to the people in parables when He answered His disciples: "...To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted." (Matthew 13:11).

Jesus' reply is very revealing, and it is in complete agreement with several Scriptures that we have considered previously regarding God's sovereign choice of those to whom He shows mercy, while others are left in their sins. The ability to come to Christ and to understand God's word is given only to God's elect, to those whom the Father has given to Jesus (John 6:37). These are the ones whom God foreknew from before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:3-11). In His time, God calls all of His elect to faith in Christ, justifies them, and will ultimately glorify them (Romans 8:29-30). For all the rest, Jesus taught that it has not been granted to them to understand the Gospel message and the word of God as revealed in the Scriptures, which He referred to as "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven".

Continuing in this passage of Matthew 13, after Jesus answered His disciples as to why He spoke to the people in parables, He then quoted from a passage in Isaiah 6:9-10, which speaks of God's hardening of some individuals. Though they hear the words of the Gospel message, they do not understand, and though they see, they do not perceive. This is the way it is with those to whom it has not been granted to understand the Gospel message from the Scriptures. These are the same individuals whom Paul spoke about in Romans 9:18. God has willed not to show mercy to them, but to harden them.

Those whom God has decided to harden are not among those who are appointed to eternal life (Acts 13:48). Rather, they are among those who are appointed to disobey the Gospel message, as Peter taught (1 Peter 2:8). Their own will, desire, or decision in the matter has nothing at all to do with their salvation (John 1:13, Romans 9:16). They do not believe because God has not granted to them to come to faith in Christ (John 6:65). As Jesus said, it has not been granted to them to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 13:11).

After Jesus gave His parable to the crowds, He then explained the parable to His disciples, as we read in Matthew 13:18-23. Let us now look closely at each of the four cases in this parable of an individual hearing the Gospel message, and let us consider the results in each of their lives.

In the first case the seed fell beside the road where it was devoured by birds. Jesus said that this represents one who hears the Gospel message, but he does not understand it. In this case the devil comes and steals the word that was sown in his heart. This individual was unable to understand the word of God and is not saved, and he was therefore unable to bear any good fruit.

In the second case, the seed fell upon rocky places. Jesus taught that this symbolizes the man who hears the word, and he immediately receives it with joy. However, he has "no firm root in himself", as Jesus said, and he only perseveres in his faith a short time, quickly falling away when troubles or persecutions come into his life because of the word.

We can interpret this second case as an individual who is not saved because God's elect always persevere in their faith, and they never fall away, as we learned previously when we discussed the eternal security of the believer. Our perseverance in our faith is brought about by God Himself (John 6:37-40, 1 Corinthians 1:8-9, Philippians 1:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, others).

This second case also illustrates that there can be an apparent conversion in the lives of some people; they and others may believe that they are saved, when in fact they are not. Jesus taught about these individuals in His warning about false prophets in Matthew 7:15-23. In this second case, just as in the first, the seed that was sown bore no fruit, because the individual who received the seed of the message did not in fact come to faith in Christ.

In the third case the seed fell among the thorns. Jesus said that this symbolizes those who hear the word, but the worries and concerns of this life and the deceitfulness of worldly riches choke the word, and it bears no fruit in their lives either. We can interpret this third case also as an individual who is not saved because a genuine faith in Christ will always be manifested by good works, and these good works are themselves fruit born to the glory of God.

As we consider this third case, let us remember that James taught: "...faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself." (James 2:17. See also the entire passage of James 2:14-26). This is to say that a genuine faith in Christ is always accompanied by good works done in obedience to God's word. These good works are spiritual fruit born to the glory of God, and they will always be manifested in the life of a believer. Conversely, works themselves do not earn salvation for an individual, but a genuine faith in Christ will always be accompanied by good works. As James said, if someone claims to have faith but has no good works, his faith is dead; it does not exist.

Finally, in the fourth case the seed fell upon what Jesus described as "good soil". The good soil symbolizes the man who hears the word *and understands it* (again, consider Matthew 13:11), bearing a harvest of good fruit, producing a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

In each of the first three cases, no fruit was born; no harvest was produced. However in the fourth case where the seed fell upon the good soil, fruit was born and a harvest was realized. The "good soil", as Jesus used the analogy, symbolizes God's elect. God's elect are those who hear and are able to understand the Gospel message, which is symbolized by the seed being sown, and they are those who do indeed come to faith in Christ and bear fruit. Their genuine faith will always be accompanied by good works, or a love that manifests itself by its actions, and these good works are themselves fruit born to the glory of God.

Jesus said: "My Father is glorified by this, ***that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.***" (John 15:8). We show ourselves to be Jesus' disciples

by the fact that we bear fruit. We demonstrate that we have indeed been called to faith in Christ and are in truth His disciples by bearing spiritual fruit to the glory of God, whereas all of the others bear no fruit.

Therefore, when we share our faith with others, the “seed” of the Gospel message that we share with them will fall upon different types of soil, so to speak. However, the only place where individuals will in God’s time be brought to faith in Christ is where the seed falls upon the “good soil”, which is to say where the seed of the Gospel message is proclaimed in the hearing of God’s elect.

In Conclusion

Jesus said to His disciples: “...The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.” (Matthew 9:37-38). With the Great Commission, Jesus commanded all of us who are brought to faith in Him to be involved as workers in His harvest field, sharing our faith. We can share our faith in different ways, and at times we may not even be aware that through our actions which others observe, we are bearing witness to our faith in Christ.

We can share our faith one-on-one with someone who shows an interest, someone who may perceive something different and good in us. These, knowing that we are Christians, may want to know more about our faith in Christ.

We can share our faith with others when they see us “taking the high road” so to speak, being obedient to the principles in Scripture when it would be so easy for us to realize some personal benefit by doing otherwise, as all the rest of the world would do. When unbelievers who know us to be Christians see this, they may wonder if it is not our faith in Christ that causes us to act differently, doing what many would consider to be “the right thing to do”, when doing something else would be much more expedient and personally profitable. We can also be obedient to the Great Commission by financially supporting those who preach and teach the Gospel message of the forgiveness of sins and salvation through Jesus Christ and through Him alone.

Even though the Gospel is proclaimed widely in the world today, and many hear the message outwardly, only God’s elect will be effectually drawn to Christ, as we have discussed in detail previously. These elect, these chosen by God, are symbolized by the “good soil” in Jesus’ Parable of the Sower. When the seed of

the word of God is sown in their hearts, these and only these are the ones who are able to hear the word and understand it. Having received God's call to faith in Christ, we will always manifest our genuine faith by good works done in obedience to the word of God, and these good works are themselves fruit born to His glory.

God is going to save those whom He has foreknown from before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4), and there is nothing anyone can do to change that (Romans 8:28-39). Jesus has, with His command to go and make disciples of all nations, given to us as His people the privilege of working in His harvest field to bring the Gospel message to His elect, who will themselves as we have done before them, hear the word, understand it, and yield a harvest, bearing spiritual fruit to the glory of God our Father.