

"A MANIFESTO ON EVANGELISM (Romans 1-11)

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*How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.
Romans 10:5*

Convinced that God has a future for both Jews and Gentiles, and that their growth into "fullness" will be brought about by evangelism, Paul makes a forceful statement of its logic (10:14f.) and alludes in other ways to the spread of the gospel. From these chapters, therefore, it is possible to summarize Paul's teaching on evangelism to form an eight-point manifesto.

1. *The need for evangelism: evangelism is necessary because until people hear and receive the gospel they are lost.*

This recognition of the gravity of the human situation, which Paul argued in Romans 1-3, is indispensable to evangelism. All human beings in God's sight are sinful, guilty and without excuse. If they are to be saved, they must call on the name of the Lord (10:13), but in order to do this, they must be given an opportunity to hear the good news (10:14f.).

2. *The scope of evangelism: the whole human race must be given the chance to hear the gospel.*

Just as the heavens proclaim God's glory throughout the earth (10:18), so Christian witnesses must proclaim his grace worldwide. All nations must hear the gospel (1:5; 16:26). But so must Israel, for neither her unique privileges (9:4f.) nor her religious zeal (10:2) can be a substitute for faith in Jesus (11:23). So there is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles in respect either of their sin (3:22f.) or of the means of their salvation, for the same Lord Jesus "richly blesses all who call on him" (10:12). There can be no question of two ways of salvation, one for Gentiles and another for Jews.

3. *The incentive to evangelism: evangelism arises from the love and the longing of the heart.*

Paul the patriotic Jew showed no sign of impatience, bitterness or scorn that his compatriots had rejected their Messiah. As Dr Lloyd-Jones has put it, Paul 'displays no trace of annoyance with them. There is not a suspicion of any contemptuous attitude towards them. He does not dismiss them, denounce them, attack them; he is not even irritated by them.' Instead, he wrote both of his heart's anguish that they were lost (9:1f.) and of his heart's longing that they might be saved (10:1). He would be willing even to perish if thereby they might be saved. Evangelism lacks authenticity if it is not inspired by the same love.

4. *The nature of evangelism: evangelism is sharing with others the good news of Christ crucified and risen.*

Evangelism means spreading the evangel. Consequently, we cannot define the former without defining the latter. In 9:30-10:13 Paul sets over against each other the false and the



true ways of salvation, and we must do the same. In particular, we need to focus on Christ and his accessibility, for he has already come, died and risen, and is readily available to simple faith (10:6ff.).

5. *The logic of evangelism: evangelism demands the sending out of evangelists, so that people may call on Christ for salvation.*

There can be no salvation without calling on Christ's name, no calling on his name without believing what it implies, no believing in Christ without hearing him, no hearing without the preaching of the gospel, and no preaching without preachers being sent (10:13ff.). Although all Jesus' disciples are expected to share in evangelistic outreach, he gives to some the gift and calling of an evangelist, and these the church must solemnly commission and authorize to preach.

6. *The result of evangelism: evangelism brings such blessings to those who believe, that it arouses the envy of others.*

Three times in these chapters Paul employs the same Greek verb *parazēloo*, to 'make envious' (10:19; 11:11,14). Envy is the desire to have for oneself something possessed by somebody else. If that "something" is salvation, it is understandable that people envy those who have received it, that is, desire it for themselves. Many have been converted through 'envy'. One such was Robert Robinson, who later became a Baptist minister, author and hymn-writer. In 1752, at the age of seventeen, he went to hear George Whitefield preach in London, and was converted. He wrote to Whitefield: 'I went pitying the deluded Methodists; but came away envying their happiness'.

7. *The hope for evangelism: evangelism has hope of success only if it rests on the election of God.*

Election and evangelism are not incompatible. These very chapters which contain strong teaching on election also contain clear references to the necessity both of prayer-evangelism (interceding for people to be saved, 10:1) and of preaching-evangelism (sharing the good news with others, 10:14f.). Our responsibility is to see that the gospel is preached throughout the world, so that everybody is given the opportunity to hear and to respond. For the Word of God is his appointed way of awakening faith (10:17, NEB) and so of saving those who believe. Not that everybody will respond. God himself knows the painful and even humiliating trauma of patiently holding out his hands to a disobedient and obstinate people (10:21). In sum, 'so far from making evangelism pointless, the sovereignty of God in grace is the one thing that prevents evangelism from being pointless'.

8. *The goal of evangelism: evangelism introduces converts into the people of God, and so brings glory to God.*

Evangelism is not an end in itself. It also unites us with the people of God. Into God's one olive tree believing Gentiles are grafted and believing Jews are grafted back, so that we all share in the same history (going back to Abraham) and the same geography (extending throughout the world). We thus rejoice in both the continuity and the solidarity of the people of God.

But the ultimate goal of evangelism is the glory of God. The gospel displays his power, proclaims his name, makes known the riches of his glory, and reveals his mercy (9:17, 22f.; 11:30ff.). There is no room for boasting; only for humble, grateful, wondering adoration. To him be the glory forever! Amen.