

*Messiah, to go off and tell his brother Simon, and for Phillip to hurry to break the good news to his friend Nathaniel (John 1:40). They did not need to be told to do this; they did it naturally and spontaneously, just as one would naturally and spontaneously share with one's family and friends any other piece of news that vitally affected them. There is something very wrong with us if we do not ourselves find it natural to act in this way, let us be quite clear about that. It is a great privilege to evangelize; it is a wonderful thing to be able to tell others of the love of Christ, knowing that there is nothing that they need more urgently to know, and no knowledge in the world that can do them so much good. Dear friends, let us consider the great need of the lost people around us. How important and serious is the issue of salvation? We should consider it a great privilege to have the knowledge of Christ and on this basis, a great privilege to share it. Is it not the most important thing in the life of anyone we know? Will it not do them more good than anything else you can say or do for them? Is it not the highest act of love to tell them how to be saved and reconciled to God? It is indeed and therefore let us open up our mouths and tell of His wondrous grace! Furthermore, let us consider what a shame it is to withhold the Gospel from those who so desperately need it.....**J.I. Packer** goes on..... "We should not, therefore, be reluctant and backward on the personal and individual level. We should be glad and happy to do it. We should not look for excuses for wriggling out of our obligation when occasion offers to talk to others about the Lord Jesus Christ. If we find ourselves shrinking from this responsibility and trying to evade it, we need to face ourselves with the fact that in this we are yielding to sin and Satan. If (as is usual) it is the fear of being thought odd and ridiculous, or of losing popularity in certain circles, that holds us back, we need to ask ourselves in the presence of God: Ought these things to stop us from loving our neighbor? If it is a false shame, which is not shame at all but pride in disguise, that keeps our tongue from Christian witness when we are with other people. We need to press on our conscience this question: Which matters more – our reputation or their salvation? We cannot be complacent about this gangrene of conceit and cowardice when we weigh up our lives in the presence of God. What we need to do is to ask for grace to be truly ashamed of ourselves, and to pray that we may so overflow in love for God that we will overflow in love for our fellow men, and so find it an easy and natural and joyful thing to share with them the good news of Christ." Dear friends, let us find the courage needed to rise above our fear of man and to share the good news of our Lord's precious sacrifice. Let's face it. Jesus was a Gospel preacher and we are all followers of Him. I am not quite sure how you read this, but in my mind, that makes us all Gospel preachers to some extent or degree. Dear Christian, are you glad to have been saved by Christ? Good heavens man, tell somebody!*

God is Sovereign in Salvation

This brings us to the question then, how does evangelism work? Is it really our job to "save people?" Is the Gospel a tool in our hands that we use to save people and cause them to come to faith? Is it really our job to convince people somehow of their need to be saved and of Christ's provision for them to do so? Well, the very clear answer to these questions is NO of course not and YES of course! As paradoxical as this may seem let us not be confused by this but rather clearly understand the doctrine of salvation as the Bible teaches it. In short, God is the One who saves people through the life and death of Christ by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, but He uses the Church as a means of telling the message of Christ so that His elect people can be saved from every tribe and language, people and nation. Therefore, God is sovereign in who will be saved, but we are the means of bringing them to faith, by our obedience in sharing the Gospel with them which is "*the power of God unto salvation for all those who believe,*" regardless of race, class, or gender.

Romans 1:16 - 16 For I am not ashamed of **the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes,** to the Jew first and also to the Greek. NASB

In fact, right in the middle of Paul's definitive teaching about the doctrine of God's sovereignty in salvation (Romans 8-11), he clearly tells us of our great responsibility to be the means that God uses by preaching the Gospel.

Romans 10:12-15 - 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; 13 for **"Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved."** 14 **How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent?** Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" NASB

In fact, it is because God has elected people from every tribe and language that we are guaranteed some level of success in evangelism. Consider these words from John Stott from his commentary on Ephesians pg 48 in regard to this matter.... *"Let no one say . . . that the doctrine of election by the sovereign will and mercy of God, mysterious as it is, makes either evangelism or faith unnecessary. The opposite is the case. It is only because of God's gracious will to save that evangelism has any hope of success and faith becomes possible. The preaching of the gospel is the very means that God has appointed by which he delivers from blindness and bondage those whom he chose in Christ before the foundation of the world, sets them free to believe in Jesus, and so causes his will to be done."* Therefore it is important for us to grasp the concept that it is God working in the hearts of those He is calling to salvation who will eventually respond to our preaching and be saved. We cannot convince anyone to be saved apart from God's work in regeneration. This is because the natural man does not receive and CANNOT understand the things of God apart from regeneration. Only the Christian has received the Spirit of God and with Him the supernatural ability to **"know the things freely given to us by God."**

1 Corinthians 2:12-15 - 12 Now **we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God,** 13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. 14 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. 15 But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. NASB

This is why it is often so difficult for us to persuade and convince people of their need to be saved. It is also what we pray for when we ask God to save people. We are asking for God to regenerate them and give them the gift of faith by the power of the Spirit so that they can believe and be saved. This what Jesus meant when He said to Nicodemus, **"unless you are born again you cannot see the kingdom of God."**

John 3:3- 3 Jesus answered and said to him, **"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."** NASB

Furthermore, this is why we receive so much resistance when telling people the Gospel. To people who God is not calling to faith, they have no ability in their natural selves to receive or understand the things of God and the Scripture says that **"the word of the cross is foolishness to them."** Therefore God must enable them by regeneration in order to have this supernatural ability. This is how God works out salvation in people's lives by the effectual calling of the Spirit. For more on this topic see the following....

- **Natural Inability** - http://www.heavenslight.org/salvation/Natural_Inability.pdf
- **Regeneration** – http://www.heavenslight.org/salvation/Regeneration_2007.pdf
- **Effectual Calling** - http://www.heavenslight.org/salvation/Effectual_Calling.pdf

Consider how clearly this matter is stated in 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 where Paul gives us some definitive statements about God's Sovereignty in Salvation.

1 Corinthians 1:18-31 - 18 For the word of the cross is **to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.** 19 For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,

And the cleverness of the clever I will set aside." 20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 **For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.** 22 For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; 23 **but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, 24 but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.** 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 26 **For consider your calling, brethren,** that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; 27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28 and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, 29 that no man should boast before God. 30 **But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus,** who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, 31 that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord." NASB

Consider what is meant by the phrase in verse 18 ... ***“the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”*** Paul is here making a distinction between two kinds of people, those who are ***“perishing”*** and those who are ***“being saved.”*** But consider how he describes the distinction between them. The person who is perishing thinks ***“the word of the cross (that is, the Gospel) is foolishness,”*** and to the one who is ***“being saved”*** it is the ***“power of God.”*** He continues to draw this out in the following verses stating that ***“the world through its wisdom did not come to know God.”*** This is to say that it is not a matter of intellectual assent to some common facts about knowing God, for if it were, the world could come to know God simply by reasoning about the facts. He points out that the message indeed does seem like ***“foolishness”*** to the world and it is through this ***“foolish message”*** that God is ***“well pleased to save those who believe.”*** Then in verse 24, he makes the key distinction between those who ***“perish”*** and those who are ***“being saved.”*** He describes those who are ***“being saved”*** as ***“the called”*** and explains that to them ***“Christ is both the power and the wisdom of God.”*** He then goes on to describe that the ***“calling”*** of the ***“brethren”*** is not because they were ***“wise, mighty, noble, or strong”*** but instead that ***“God has chosen”*** the ***“foolish, weak, base and despised”*** things of the world in order to ***“nullify”*** the wisdom of men so that ***“no man should boast before God.”*** In summary, God has chosen those whom He saves and does affect that salvation in their life by a ***“calling”*** to salvation that causes them to see Christ as wisdom and power, granting them an ability that worldly people who are ***“wise, mighty, noble and strong”*** do not have. His point is that God saves the ***“foolish, weak, base and despised”*** in order to show that it is ***“by His doing”*** that people are ***“in Christ Jesus.”*** This is his summary point of this passage in verse 30, ***“but by His doing you are in Christ Jesus who became to us wisdom from God.”*** By God’s sovereign grace has He called those who are being saved, and He has done this in such a way as to nullify the world’s wisdom with the foolish word of the cross in order to close the mouth of boasting men, so that no one can boast about salvation but rather only give praise to God for what He has done to save. Therefore he reasons, ***“let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.”*** verse 30. People do not come to Christ by wise intellectual assent but rather by God’s divine calling to salvation which opens eyes to see Christ as His wisdom and power to save. In fact, in the entire chapter of 1 Corinthians chapter 2 Paul is explaining this point, making it clear that the only way we come to know and accept the depths and things of God, namely Christ and Him crucified, is by the power of the indwelling Spirit who gives us a supernatural ability to understand and know the things freely given to us by God. This truth about God’s sovereignty in salvation is a common theme in the entire Bible and a key to understanding how evangelism and the Gospel work in order to save those who God is calling to salvation. We cannot discern who they are, we only know as they respond with supernatural power and understanding of Christ as Savior. Therefore it is this understanding that we seek to

give them by the message of the *“word of the cross,”* that is, the Gospel. And to this understanding we all pray. Consider what it is that you pray for when you pray for someone to be saved? And if it be by the power of intellectual assent that people are saved, why do you beseech God for this? For if it be true that it is just a matter of intellectual assent verses divine enablement, then it is simply a matter of your persuasive words in order to bring them to faith by the *“wisdom of the world.”* Of this fact Paul speaks explaining that he did not use *“superiority of speech or of wisdom,”* that his *“preaching and his message were not with persuasive words of wisdom”* but rather he simply presented *“Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”*

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 - And when I came to you, brethren, **I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom**, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. **2** For I determined to know nothing among **you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified**. **3** And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. **4** And **my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom**, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, **5** that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. NASB

This is because people come to believe by the power of divine enablement (effectual calling) not by being persuaded to some intellectual assent unto the glory of the cross by superior speech. But even as we consider this, we all know the folly of it, because it is only by divine enablement that anyone comes to know God and believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ with saving faith, because saving faith is the gift of God and no one can employ it until it be given to them by God. Of this fact of divine enablement (regeneration & effectual calling) the Bible speaks clearly.

Ephesians 2:8-9 - **8** For **by grace** you have been saved **through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God**; NASB

Matthew 13:11 - **11** And He answered and said to them, **“To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.”** NASB

John 6:44 - **44** “No one can come to Me, **unless the Father who sent Me draws him**; and I will raise him up on the last day. NASB

John 6:65 - **65** And He was saying, “For this reason I have said to you, that **no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father.**” NASB

Acts 16:14 - **14** And a certain woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; **and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.** NASB

Romans 8:28-30 - **28** And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those **who are called according to His purpose. 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined** to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; **30 and whom He predestined, these He also called**; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. NASB

1 Peter 1:3 - **3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has **caused us to be born again** to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, NASB

James 1:18 - **18** **In the exercise of His will He brought us forth** by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures. NASB

Therefore as we consider the Gospel and evangelism it is important to understand that it is God that saves those whom He has called by the power of His Spirit at work within them. And it is our privilege to participate in this supernatural work by simply presenting Christ Jesus and Him crucified to people and helping them by explaining the simple facts of the Gospel to them. It is God then, that *“causes them to be born again”* by *“the exercise of His will”* as He *“opens their heart to respond”* to the things that we tell them. We then can rest even in the face of resistance and opposition to the Gospel because we are simply the means of bringing the message and they do not come by our superior speech or fancy words of worldly wisdom but rather by power of God’s Spirit in regeneration. This confidence then in God’s purpose and will should help us to be both bold and patient with those to whom we witness of God’s saving work in Christ. It is our responsibility to be a witness, but it is not our responsibility to save anyone because that is God’s work. Therefore let us simply present Christ and Him crucified and leave the results to God.