

#### 4. Evangelism and Witnessing as a Lifestyle (2Q 2012—Evangelism and Witnessing)

**Biblical material:** 2 Cor. 3:2, 3; Matt. 9:36-38; 1 Cor. 9:20-22; Mark 5:1-19; John 17:11-19, Acts 9:36.

##### Quotes

- The Spirit of Christ is the spirit of missions, and the nearer we get to him the more intensely missionary we must become. *Henry Martyn*
- Evangelism, like charity, begins at home. *Arthur Skevington Wood*
- Evangelism for the early Christians was not something they isolated from other aspects of Christian living in order to specialize, analyze, theorize and organize. They just did it! *Roy Joslin*
- Evangelism should be an attitude permeating all the activities of the Christian. *Bryan Green*
- Evangelism is still God's Word for this hour. *Alan Walker*
- Evangelism never seemed to be an 'issue' in the New Testament. That is to say, one does not find the apostles urging, exhorting, scolding, planning and organizing for evangelistic programmes... Evangelism happened! Issuing effortlessly from the community of believers as light from the sun, it was automatic, spontaneous, continuous, contagious. *Richard C. Halverson*
- Witnessing is not something we do; it is something we are. *Anon*

##### Questions

How have we separated our beliefs from how we live our lives? What big difference do you see in the early church from the church of today? What should be the primary motivation in our lives, and how does this work out in practice? If we are witnesses for God and what he is, what do people see when they look at us?

##### Bible summary

Paul writes to the Corinthians that *they* are his letter (2 Cor. 3:2, 3)—in other words, people are the message to the world of God's healing power. They were not simply "doing" evangelism, they were sharing their trust in God as part of who they were. As Jesus went through the towns and villages of the land (Matt. 9:36-38) he had compassion for the people, and sought to change their lives, not simply "give them a message." Paul sought to be like the people he was trying to reach (1 Cor. 9:20-22), not compromising his principles, but wanting to remove any possible barriers to their acceptance of the good news he was sharing with them. The story of the healing of the demoniac in Mark 5:1-19 shows the power of God to totally transform lives. Once he was healed, the former demoniac wanted to live his experience. He asked to go with Jesus, but Jesus told him to go and witness to his people. He did this very effectively—for his very life was his message! Jesus' prayer for his disciples in John 17:11-19 showed that he expected them to be truly living their convictions. He wanted them to be one with him—not only in nature and character but also in mission. This is what Dorcas did—living to help those in need, not as some activity but because of who she was (Acts 9:36).

##### Comment

At the heart of the Christian message is an assertion of truth, known personally, of which we witness. For you can argue about this belief and that, over points of doctrine and dogma, but no one can argue with your own experience of God.

But, I wonder, how often do you share that very personal information? We get embarrassed talking about ourselves. We don't want to share our problems that God has helped us with. We feel others wouldn't want to know, perhaps.

Yet according to the New Testament, we *are* visible—in fact we are in a theater! So big it only just fits into the world—because it *is* the world! Consider this: “We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men.” (1 Corinthians 4:9 NIV). Paul is talking about himself and the other leaders of his day, but it applies equally to us now.

So what is this spectacle? It's a demonstration, something that people can see and understand. Look again at this word spectacle. This is where the theater comes in, for if you read Greek, that's exactly the word used here: *theatron*. A place where you go to see a *spectacle*.

Look at Acts 19:29, 31—the story about the problems Paul had in Ephesus. Remember the silversmiths, and the fear they had for their trade in little silver statues of the goddess Diana, or Artemis? How they grabbed Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions, and rushed them into the theater. What was this theater? Not some small hall with a few seats. This was a huge amphitheater that seated 24,500 people. You can still see it there in Ephesus today. And the word used for this amphitheater here in Acts is the same as that for spectacle in 1 Corinthians 4.

Do you see what we are? We are like this great theater. How? In what we demonstrate, in what we portray. For the word *theatron* didn't just mean the building. It also referred to the play, the event, the spectacle that was presented.

On stage! Shakespeare said that “All the world's a stage.” We all are the players. The great drama is the universe-wide controversy between Christ and Satan, with its focus being this earth. We are all part of the great “show” of the universe! This is no mere entertainment. “The whole universe is looking with inexpressible interest to see the closing work of the great controversy between Christ and Satan.” (Ellen White, Testimonies Vol. 5, 526). We are the spectacle, the demonstration to the whole world, to all the unfallen beings, to all the angels too! An inspiring thought...

So what are we demonstrating? What is this drama all about? What is its theme? Remember the charges of the Devil. How he charged God with being unfair, with being selfish—which were the faults the Devil himself had! How does God reply? Through the proof of himself through his people. That's his chosen way, the only way.

### **Ellen White Comments**

Our work for the tempted and fallen will achieve real success only as the grace of Christ reshapes the character and the man is brought into living connection with the infinite God. {Te 102}

Every student of the Bible who not only becomes familiar with revealed truth through the education of the intellect, but also through its transforming power upon heart and character, will represent the character of God to our world in a well-ordered life and a godly conversation. {SpTEd 218}

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