

How Do We Evangelize?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 August 2008

Preacher: Aaron Hoak

[0:00] Acts chapter 4, Peter and John have entered into the temple and have just healed the beggar born blind and have been preaching to the crowd that then gathered in the temple.

! The apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. They seized Peter and John and because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. But many who heard the message believed and the number of men grew to about 5,000.

The next day, the rulers, elders and teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. Annas, the high priest, was there and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and the other men of the high priest's family. They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them. By what power or what name did you do this? Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, Rulers and elders of the people, if we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel.

[1:39] It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed.

He is the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone. Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together.

What are we going to do with these men? They asked. Everybody living in Jerusalem knows they have done an outstanding miracle and we cannot deny it. But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in this name.

[2:57] Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God.

For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard. After further threats, they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them because all the people were praising God for what had happened.

For the man who was miraculously healed was over 40 years old. On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. Sovereign Lord, they said, you made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them.

You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David. Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?

[4:12] The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his anointed one. Indeed, Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant, Jesus, whom you anointed.

They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.

Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant, Jesus. After they prayed, the place where they had been meeting was shaken.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. When I talk to my children, they need specific instructions for common, ordinary tasks.

I can tell them all day, clean your room. But they usually need something a little bit more pointed and some closer supervision than just clean your room.

[5:33] They might understand that cleaning their room is their job because we've told them to do it. They might even understand, although I sort of doubt it, why they should clean their room because they need to take care of their books and toys and so we have a neat and orderly house.

I really don't think they get that part. But they might understand why they're to clean their room. But if they don't know how to clean their room, all of the understanding of who should do it and why they should do it won't matter.

And so we have to tell them, you work on the Legos. You pick up all the Legos off the floor and put them in their bin. And you work on the puzzle pieces and put the puzzle pieces right in the right box. And when you're done with that, and you usually have to wait until they're done and remind them, now pick up the books and put them on the shelf and your blocks and put those in their bin. And so on. They need more specific directions than just go clean your room.

And so we try to do that when we remember. And as they get older and wiser, that declines somewhat. They understand better now how to clean their room than they used to. But at the beginning with children, you can't tell them just what to do.

[6:40] You have to tell them how to do it. Or imagine if you got a job. You got a job working at a local fast food restaurant. You went and you understood that it was your job. You had to do it. You needed to make the money. In order for the restaurant to work properly, you needed to do it.

You understood those things. It was your job and why you had to do it. And they said, all right, go work the cash register during our lunch rush. You've never worked a cash register in your life before. Ever. It's one of those computerized ones that's even more confusing than the old one where you just hit a few buttons.

Well, you're going to make the lunch rush a lot longer and a lot slower because you don't know how to work the cash register. Nobody ever showed you how. Nobody ever taught you how. And I think it's similar with evangelism in the church.

I don't want to compare you necessarily to children who need everything spelled out for them. But there are some comparisons. If you were to understand what evangelism is, something we've talked about, and why we're to do it, and who is to do it, and you believe that you're supposed to do it, but you don't know how to do it, then you won't be able to fulfill that God-given responsibility.

And so we want to take some time to answer the question, how do we do the work of evangelism? How do we go about telling other people about the good news of Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of sins?

[7:59] And in answering that question, we want to see several things. We want to see the means for evangelism, and we're going to talk about our strength for evangelism. And we want to see the message of evangelism, something that we've talked about some, but we want to flesh that out a little bit more.

And we're going to talk about the method of evangelism and the manner of evangelism. Four things I think we'll only, or I'm sure we'll only get to the first one tonight, the means, the power for it.

Maybe you'd like to run right into the method, get into the nitty-gritty. Tell me, how do I have a conversation like that, an evangelistic conversation? Well, we can't skip over the means, the power for evangelism. These things are indispensable.

And so we're going to start with that tonight in answering the question, how, how do we do the work of telling other people about Jesus? Let's start with our means. I'm talking about the strength, or the power, for evangelism.

We must do evangelism with a conscious dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit and with prayer. Those two things, the power of the Spirit and prayer, are how we do evangelism.

[9:03] Without these, our efforts at evangelism will be just that. Our efforts. And as with anything in the Christian life, whether it's trying to put sin to death, or fighting against temptation, or worshiping God, or seeking to honor Him, or anything in our Christian life, keeping His law, if we do it in our own strength, we'll fail.

We can't do it in our own strength. We're constantly dependent upon God and His power. And we express that dependence in prayer, asking Him for His help.

And so we want to talk about the power of the Holy Spirit tonight, and prayer is our means for evangelism. Without these things, our efforts will come to nothing, or we won't make the effort at all.

So let's start with the power of the Spirit. Gordon Taylor, at our Arbca General Assembly several months ago, spoke on evangelism and the Holy Spirit, and was helped by that.

And you'll hear some of that reflected here, but we must have the power of the Spirit if we're going to do evangelism. Only God working through His Spirit, we know, first of all, can change the hearts of sinners.

[10:14] We can't save sinners. Only God can. Only the Spirit can come and open men's eyes and open their hearts to receive the message and cause them to come in repentance and faith. Only the Holy Spirit can do that work of regeneration, of giving a new heart.

And so, we read in Luke 24 and verse 45, Jesus, He's talking to His disciples, and He's explaining from all of the Old Testament, what we know as the Old Testament, about Himself.

And we read that He opened their minds so that they could understand the Scriptures. Jesus, working by His Spirit, opens their minds. He's the one that does that work. Or when Paul is preaching in Philippi, in Acts 16, we read that one of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who is a worshiper of God.

The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. You know this. We're dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit for the results of our evangelism. He has to open eyes.

He has to change the heart. But as only the Spirit can open hearts and minds to respond to the Gospel, so too only He can open our mouths to speak that Gospel, to proclaim it to others around us.

[11:29] It is in His strength. You remember Acts 1.8, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, or in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

The power for us to open our mouths and speak comes from the Holy Spirit. And when we survey the New Testament, we find again and again that even the apostles needed the Holy Spirit in order to speak.

Jesus Himself needed the power of the Spirit. And so we're just going to take a flying look through some of the New Testament at instances where we see very clearly connected the power of the Holy Spirit in people opening their mouths and speaking of Christ.

Because it's only in His power that we'll be able to do that. We're here in Acts 4. Acts 4, Peter and John question about how they healed this crippled man. And Peter uses the opportunity to do what? To tell them about Christ. Look at verse 8. Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, rulers and elders of the people, and he tells them about Jesus.

[12:37] And he even tells them how they're responsible for Jesus' death. That's going to take boldness. It's going to take courage to do what He did. And He did it having been filled by the Holy Spirit.

Not in His own strength. Acts, you don't have to turn to all of these, but in Acts 6, Stephen was opposed by certain men. He's not an apostle, but an early leader in a church.

Of course, the first martyr of the church that we know of. Stephen was opposed. And we're told that these men began to argue with Stephen, but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom He spoke.

They couldn't resist the power of the Spirit. Yes, they couldn't resist His wisdom, and so when we go to evangelize and speak a word, we must be ready and we must be wise and we must choose our words carefully, but if we do it without the power of the Spirit, it will be entirely resistible.

It's in wisdom and the power of the Spirit that they couldn't stand up against it. Or when Saul was converted in Acts 9, Ananias comes and he lays hands on him.

[13:42] Brother Saul, the Lord, Jesus who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here has sent me here that you might see and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes and he could see again.

He got up and was baptized. And after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. At once, he began to preach in the synagogue that Jesus is the Son of God.

What happened before Paul preached that Jesus is the Son of God? He received the Holy Spirit. It was only in his power that he could do so. And so when he writes to the Romans, he says in chapter 15, I will not venture to speak of anything except that which Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done by the power of signs

and miracles through the power of the Spirit.

So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. What Christ had done through Paul was through the power of the Spirit, he says. Not including proclaiming the gospel.

Only in the power of the Spirit. We must have that. How do you do evangelism? Only with the power of the Holy Spirit. The Thessalonians. 1 Thessalonians 1 and verse 5.

[14:57] Because our gospel, Paul says, came not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. The gospel came to them.

Or Peter. Talking about how the prophets spoke of things they didn't fully understand. 1 Peter 1 and verse 12. He said, It was revealed to them, to those prophets, that they were not serving themselves, but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told to you by those who have preached the gospel to you.

That's our word. Evangelized. Those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

Those who preached the gospel to the readers Peter's writing to did so by the power of the Holy Spirit. Seems like I'm beating the same drum over and over, but I want you to see the uniform testimony of the New Testament.

Is that if you are going to evangelize, if you are going to tell others about Jesus, you must do so, and you can only do so. With the help, the power of the Spirit.

[16:03] Turn over to Luke in chapter 4. I want you to see with your own eyes that Jesus Himself did so in the power of the Spirit. Luke 4. Notice verse 1.

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan where He was led by the Spirit in the desert where for 40 days He was tempted by the devil. His resisting of the devil's temptation was by the power of the Spirit who was indwelling in Him.

He's full of the Holy Spirit. You say, well, that doesn't have anything to do with preaching the Gospel. I just want you to see that He's full of the Spirit. Now, come over to verse 14. Luke 4 and verse 14.

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. And news about Him spread through the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues and everyone praised Him. He went to Nazareth where He had been brought up.

And on the Sabbath day, He went into the synagogue as was His custom. And He stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. Unrolling it, He found the place where it is written, The Spirit of the Lord is on me because He has anointed me to preach good news.

[17:09] That's our word. Evangelize to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind to release the oppressed to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

Then He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on Him. And He began by saying to them, Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.

What Scripture? The one that says, The Spirit of the Lord is on me and has anointed me to evangelize the poor. Jesus was the fulfillment of that prophecy.

It was by the power of the Spirit that Jesus spoke the Gospel about Himself to others. And the question is, if Jesus needed the Holy Spirit for this, if the apostles needed the Holy Spirit for this, then don't we?

And the answer is, of course, yes. if I try to get up here and to preach without the power of the Spirit, without the help of the Holy Spirit, I will fail.

[18:25] And if we try to share the truth of the Gospel without that power, we'll just be spinning our wheels. People will hear words without meaning, without power, without effect, without wisdom.

And the glorious news for us is that we do have this power. every follower of Christ is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. And so we ought to live that way. Remembering the power that we each have access to every day.

Well, how do we access that power? How do we evangelize in the power of the Spirit? That's great, Aaron, that we need the power of the Spirit. We know that. How can we have it? A couple of things. And I admit that I don't fully understand this. Part of the answer to that question, how can we have it, I don't fully understand it. But a couple of things I think will help move us in the right direction at

least.

First of all, when we evangelize, we must do it with conscious dependence upon the Holy Spirit. We go out thinking this is not about me, it is not about my wisdom.

[19:29] God, come and use my words. Help me. Holy Spirit, make my words effective. Pray for the power. We're going to talk more about prayer in a moment, but that's how we express that dependence on God.

We pray, God, help me. When we evangelize, we do so in faith, trusting God, not trusting ourselves and our gifts, but the Holy Spirit who enables us.

When we see fruit, we don't brag and take credit for it. Look at the souls I have won, but we say, look at what Christ has done through His Spirit in that person's heart, giving glory to God. Always and often be aware of your need.

Feel your inadequacy, your inability to do it. In 2 Corinthians 2, Paul's talking about ministers of the Gospel, but I think at least the principle applies to us. He's talking about being the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.

To the one, we are the smell of death. To the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task? I certainly am not. When we share the Gospel with someone, they will either reject it and be destroyed and die, or they will receive it and have eternal life.

[20:46] Trust in Christ. Who is sufficient for such a thing? We go conscious that I am not equal to be the aroma of life or death to these people. And so Paul comes in chapter 3 of 2 Corinthians and he says, and here is our comfort, our confidence, such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God.

Not that we are competent or equal to the task in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. There it is. I can't do it, but God working in me and through me, can we?

We consciously understand at every moment that we are dependent on the power of the Spirit.

That's how we do evangelism and access the power of the Holy Spirit.

At least in part, we are aware of our need of Him in our own inadequacy. And the second thing we do is pray. How do we do evangelism? We do it in the power of the Spirit.

Secondly, we do it with prayer. We'll talk in a few moments more about praying for the power of the Spirit. But listen to what Will Metzger says about prayer. Prayer for others is the supreme God-ordained method in evangelism.

[22:02] You say, I want to know how to do evangelism. Tell me how to do it. Okay. Pray. It's the God-ordained means of evangelism. Pray. He says, unless God changes a person's heart, nothing lasting will be achieved.

Prayer is a means of raising dead sinners to life. That's right. You want dead sinners to be saved?

Pray. Ask God that He would do that work. Pray that He would save sinners.

Because Jonah 2 and verse 9 says, Salvation comes from all of my good efforts at evangelism? My preaching to the Ninevites? No, salvation comes from the Lord.

Or John 6, 44. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up at the last day. Dear people, only God can save. And so we pray and ask that God would do that work.

If there's something that needs to be done that you can't do, who do you ask to do it? Well, you ask the person that's able to do it. Several weeks ago or months, I don't even remember now, our washing machine stopped working.

[23:06] And I like to think that I can fix things around the house. And I do fix some things around the house occasionally. And so I went down and Aaron had told me it wasn't working.

The clothes came out soaking wet and the spin cycle wasn't working. I went down and I turned it to the spin cycle and sure enough, when I did it, it didn't work either. Remarkable.

And so I started looking at that washer and I looked at the back and maybe I can take the back off of this thing, but I know nothing about washers. I know that when the clothes go in, they're dirty and when they come out, they're clean.

And I actually know how to work the washer. But I don't know anything about the guts of a washing machine. I've never looked inside one before. I don't know how to fix it. And so before I took the back off, which I found out later would have been a tragic mistake, I did some calling around.

And the people to whom I described the problem said, oh, it sounds like the transmission. I didn't even know my washer had a transmission. Is that like my car? But anyway, I was like, that was at the point at which I knew I certainly should not try to touch it.

[24:18] If it's got something I didn't know it had, hands off. And so you know what I did? I asked somebody that didn't know to come look at it. I had an appliance repairman come. And he came and he looked at my washer and you know what?

You don't take the back off a washer. The little console at the back, that just flips up and the casing around the tub comes off and everything's down underneath. Wow! I learned from watching him. But anyway, I didn't know the first thing about it so I asked him to do it. And he did. And he told me what was wrong with my washer. I could have tried all day to fix that washer on my own and it never would have gotten fixed.

Because I can't do it. And you can try all you want to save men's souls. But you can't do it. Only God can.

And so, instead of expending all that effort that will result in futility and false conversions and fame for your name, go straight to the expert. Go straight to the only one that can save sinners.

[25:17] And ask him to do that work. Remember what Paul said in Romans 10. Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. Salvation was what Paul wanted and so what did he do?

Oh, he asked the one that could save. He prayed. This was true of the apostles and of Jesus. Go back with me now to Acts 4 for a moment.

Acts chapter 4. Just after Peter and John are released, we read in verse 23 and 24, on their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.

When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. Sovereign Lord, they said, and they go on and they pray. But you hear what they do? They raise their voices together in prayer to God.

And what happened after that? Drop down to verse 31 when they prayed. After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God boldly.

[26:29] You see that progression? They felt their sense of need. They prayed. They were filled with the Spirit and they spoke boldly. See that connection again between the power of the Holy Spirit and the ability to speak the Word of God and to do so boldly.

When the apostles, when deacons were chosen in the church in Acts chapter 6, what did it free up the apostles to do? It freed them for prayer and the ministry of the Word.

Without the formal, without prayer, the ministry of the Word will be ineffective. They must go hand in hand. And so we must pray if we are going to share the Word with others. What about our Savior even?

Mark 1 and verse 35, very early in the morning while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went off to a solitary place where He prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for Him. And when they found Him, they exclaimed, Everyone is looking for you. Jesus replied, Let us go somewhere else to the nearby villages so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.

[27:30] So He traveled throughout Galilee preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons. Before Jesus moves on to those other towns to preach further about the Gospel, what does He do?

He goes out while it's still dark. He gets alone and He prays. As He carries out His earthly ministry, making known, bringing the Kingdom of God, we read in Luke 5, verse 16, But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

What do we pray for? What do we ask God for with respect to evangelism? Some might pray, Lord, make me a witness for You. Make me to be a witness for You.

But Ernie Riesinger, and I agree with him, he thinks that that misses the point. We are witnesses. You remember Acts 1 and verse 8, You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses.

You are witnesses. Listen to Riesinger. He says, They began with a prayer meeting, Acts 1.14, but they didn't pray for 20 years, Lord, make me a witness. He already did that.

[28:36] And if you are a Christian, you need not pray, Lord, make me a witness. He has already done that. We might need to pray, Lord, make me a more effective witness. Make me a more bold witness. Make me a more willing witness.

Make me a better witness than I am. But you are one. The question is, are you a good witness or a poor witness for Christ? If you are a follower of Christ, you are a witness for Him. People look at you and they make a determination about Christianity.

That is a witness. Is yours a good one or a bad one? Pray that you would be a faithful witness of Christ. Pray for larger measures of the Spirit's power.

It is what we began with, the power of the Spirit. Pray that He would enable you to boldly witness to others of God's salvation. We must have the power of the Spirit then we'd be fools not to ask for it. Pray, God, give me Your Spirit. Give me the power of the Spirit in order to speak the truth to others. Pray for it every day. You don't know when you might have an encounter, an opportunity to speak.

[29:42] And we must always be ready to give an answer. And I think part of being ready is having prayed and being dependent upon the power of the Spirit. Ask for it each morning. Pray at specific times when you know you're going to have an opportunity.

When you're going to have lunch with a friend or a co-worker that you know is unconverted. Lord, give me the power of Your Spirit and boldness to be able to speak. When you're going to go pass out some tracts, invite some people to church, pray for God's help for large measures of the power of the Spirit.

That's one of the ways we access the power of the Spirit. Conscious dependence on Him in prayer. Pray for boldness. You remember the Apostles' prayer here in Acts 4, verse 29.

Now, Lord, consider the threats and enable Your servants to speak Your Word with great boldness. And God answered their prayer. They were filled with the Spirit. They boldly spoke the Word of God.

Only as the Spirit aids us that we can be bold and courageous. So in some ways, it's the same as the previous request. Lord, give me the power of the Spirit. Make me bold. They go hand in hand. But we must have this.

[30:50] You know, you can go out armed with the very best of intentions. Armed with the finest evangelistic literature. The most clearly thought out gospel presentation. You might even have your method down.

You know how to engage someone in an evangelistic way. But if you don't have the courage to open your mouth in the first place or to extend your hand and give them that piece of literature, then all of the know-how in the world isn't going to do anything.

You can say, God, give me boldness. Give me courage. And God answers those prayers even as He did here in Acts 4. Pray that God would give you the right words to speak.

Paul asks for prayer in Ephesians 6 and verse 19. And what does he say? Pray also for me that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the Gospel for which I am ambassador in chains.

Pray that I may declare it fearlessly as I should. Whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me. Pray that God would give you the right words. I don't know what to say. Pray. God, give me the words in the right moment at the right time.

[31:56] Pray for opportunities to share the Gospel with others. Paul asks the Colossians to pray in chapter 4 and verse 3. And pray for us too that God may open a door for our message so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ for which I am in chains.

Pray for those opportunities. And more, go back to the prayer request for boldness because I think many times we have opportunities. At least this is true for me. The opportunities are there and I don't take advantage of them like I should.

Lord, give me the opportunity and the grace to use it for your glory. Pray for the ones who will be receiving the Gospel. Pray that God would prepare their hearts to receive that message that they would be favorably disposed to it and open, not closed and hardened to it.

You can do that before a church service. Pray that all that come that here would be ready to receive it. You can do that for a missionary. You can pray for the people to whom they're ministering. Lord, prepare their hearts to receive it.

You can pray that for yourself. You know that you're going to be with an unconverted friend. Lord, ready them to receive whatever words I'm able to speak. Pray for them after that encounter. For the

people that have received the Gospel.

[33 : 10] Once you've had an opportunity to share it with them or following a church service or you read a missionary letter and you read about this one with whom they've had opportunity to speak of Christ. Pray for those that they would respond to the message.

That they wouldn't quickly forget it. That they wouldn't put it out of their mind. That they wouldn't be able to sleep at night because they're thinking about it. Pray that they would read that tract that you gave them and not just throw it away. Pray that they would accept the invitation and come to church and hear the truth of the Gospel.

Pray for the people to whom you wish. If people just go out and they do the work of evangelism and they don't pray before and they don't pray after then they're not going to be very effective at all. Because God is the one who is making these things effective in their lives and we must ask Him to do it.

And so, finally and most obviously, what do we pray for? We pray that God would save sinners.

That God would do His work. That His kingdom would come.

2 Thessalonians 3 Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored. Just as it was with you. The message of the Lord honored it when people come in repentance and faith in response to it.

[34 : 19] I wonder if we don't see more sinners saved because we don't pray more. If you don't take time in your personal prayer life to pray for the salvation of sinners, for the efforts of yourselves and other brothers and sisters and pastors and missionaries to spread the gospel of Christ, why don't you?

If you don't gather together with God's people to pray for these things, why not? You know that every Wednesday night we gather for that purpose. One of the things we pray for is the salvation of the lost.

If you're missing that stated meeting of the church, you're not using one of the means God has given for the advancement of His kingdom. It was when the early church was all gathered together praying that the place where they met was shaken.

And they spoke the word of God with boldness. Brothers and sisters, if we would see sinners saved, if we would see the very foundations of hell shaken, the gospel spread to all nations, the gospel shared with our neighbors, if we would see radical conversions and conversions of complacent sinners, if we would see the emboldening of God's people and the opening of our mouths, if we would see these things, then we must pray.

We must ask God. And so let us give ourselves to the work of prayer, the means that He has given us. Let us pray fervently.

[35 : 55] Let us pray frequently. Let us pray together. Let us pray as individuals. May God make us a people of prayer. Because without it, and without the Spirit of power, all of our efforts, the preaching of the Word, individual efforts at evangelism, all of it will be for nothing.

It will be a waste of time if it is in our own strength and without the blessing of God. So let us ask for the power of the Spirit and let us pray.

Just a note as we close tonight on what our strength is not. When we fail to remember and depend on the power of the Spirit and when we fail to pray, we'll start to seek the strength for our evangelism and our efforts from ourselves.

And that will lead to inappropriate, man-centered methods. And so I just want to remind us tonight, even though we've spoken of it already, of what our strength is not.

You see, the danger is we try to do the work of evangelism. We preach evangelism and we don't see results. And instead of praying for greater strength and power and wisdom, we say, we must be doing something wrong.

[37 : 10] Let's tweak it. Let's change it. Let's change our method. And then we become focused on our strength and our ability. And so our power is not, for example, emotional manipulation.

We'll talk about the place of appealing emotionally to lost sinners, but the strength of our witness is not in making people have warm feelings through a soothing voice or certain kinds of music.

We don't manipulate emotionally. That's not the strength of our witness. Psychological pressure is not the strength of our witness. Oh man, there's so many ways to put pressure on someone psychologically and emotionally again.

You can do it publicly in a meeting. You can do it privately, one-on-one. The calling forward of sinners under some sort of conviction creates enormous pressure on others. If you use the right words, you can make the ones who aren't coming forward feel uncomfortable and guilty. And you can make them feel as though they haven't responded to God just because they haven't walked up to the front of the building. That's not the strength for evangelism. That's not the way it's done according to God's power.

[38:15] Such pressure is unnecessary. You can do that personally, one-on-one. You can make the person feel like if they don't bow their head with you and repeat after you and say this prayer with you that they haven't and they won't respond to the message.

You can put enormous pressure on people. And you can get some sort of result. They'll say what you say. They'll come forward. But it's not the power of God. Pressure like this is unnecessary. We must be urgent in our presentation but manipulation is never right or appropriate. We have the Holy Spirit to apply just the right pressure in His time.

There's even been a view that was made popular by a man named Charles Finney of revivalism. If you set up a service in just the right way, if you have just the right lighting and just the right music and you say just the right words and even he had what he called the anxious bench for inquirers and you set it up in just the right way, then people will come.

And you know what? We could do that here. We could do all of those. We could say all of those words and we could create that effect. And people will come and they'll say things and they'll make decisions and they'll pray prayers.

[39:27] But all of it is man-made. To do these things seems to me like it's reducing God to being a well-trained dog.

It's like if you snap your fingers, your dog knows to sit down or you hold out your hand and he sits. And it's like that. If I have the right music and lights and words and just the right setting, then God will come and He will save people.

God doesn't work that way. He works in His own time. He works in His own way. He does use us to do us, but we cannot limit God and His working where and when He will.

To do these things is to elevate man and bring praise to Him instead of to God. It's rubbish. It's garbage. And so our method must not be man-centered. It must not be in our own strength.

If we just do things this way, all will be well. No, if we do things in the power of the Spirit. And depending upon God in prayer, then He will bring the results He desires.

[40:34] And so there's great comfort for us here. The results of evangelism are not in our hands. It's not up to us to save sinners. And that's a good thing.

That's not our strength. And that's good because I'm not strong enough. It's an overwhelming task when we look at it from our perspective, but in the hands of a mighty God, it's not an overwhelming task.

He is able to do that work. And so find comfort in the power of the Spirit tonight. Say, oh, I could never tell somebody about the Gospel. I just can't do it. God working through you can.

And so rest in Him. Pray to Him. And notice that prayer is the work of evangelism. At least it's part of it. And so if you're praying for lost sinners, praise God.

Thank you for doing the work of evangelism. Press on. If you need more of that, pray that God would make you more of a person of prayer to enter into the work in that way.

[41:32] And so may the means of our evangelism, the strength for our evangelism, always be these two things, the power of the Spirit and prayer. And let us trust God with the results.

Thank you.