

# Evangelism and the Holy Spirit

*Evangelism 101*

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Tonight, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the book of Acts 4 as we continue our study through a subject matter that literally is laced throughout scripture, the concept or the idea of evangelism, the idea of sharing one's faith with another individual.

Tonight, I want to begin with verse 31. The early church has found themselves at the hands of probably the primary wave of persecution, the initial one at least. In verse 31 it says,

31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

Tonight, we're going to discover that evangelism or the sharing of our faith does not happen if not for the movement of the Holy Spirit and the prayers of the Lord's people.

Let us pray.

*Heavenly Father, tonight as we continue our study, Lord, as we look at a multitude of passage, may we be completely dependent on your Holy Spirit tonight. Lord, may we never fall into the trap of thinking it's our own abilities, our own ingenuity, or our own concepts, whatever it may be. Lord, help us to lean on the truth of your word. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

Tonight as we deal with the concept of evangelism and the Holy Spirit, it's really going to be a twofold study. We're going to primarily deal with how is it that the Holy Spirit operates in and through our lives to win people to the Lord, but we're also going to address the necessity of prayer. We are, as believers, dependent on the Lord for guidance and for direction to share our faith as much as we are dependent on the Holy Spirit to convert the wayward soul. And so tonight as we look at a multitude of passages under this subject matter, I want to begin with how the Holy Spirit works in a believer's life, and then address how does the Holy Spirit work in a non-believer's life which, by the way, if you're a believer tonight, we're going to see how the Lord worked in your life before you were a believer.

So how does the Holy Spirit work in a believer's life particularly as it relates to the sharing of the gospel? Well, initially what we know as the Holy Spirit indwells and seals a believer in Jesus Christ. Now those words are important. 1 Corinthians 6 talks about that we as believers in Jesus Christ, we are the temple of the Holy Ghost. He dwells within us. But in Ephesians 1 it says that he seals us. In other words, we are secure in him. The analogy there is that the down payment has been paid. This is important because oftentimes the emotions of our life, the circumstances of our life, the environment that surrounds us causes us to question, to debate, or to be concerned about these facts, but we must begin with as a believer in Jesus Christ not only are we the temple of the Holy Ghost but he has sealed us to never leave us or to forsake us.

Now when it comes to evangelism, it is the Holy Spirit who fills us for his service. Now when I use the term being filled with the Holy Spirit, I don't want to get into a prolonged theological conversation this evening, but there's a lot of different opinions when it comes to this concept. In the early church, the disciples, the apostles have times previous to Pentecost that they were filled with the Holy Spirit, during Pentecost they were filled with the Holy Spirit, in chapter 4 of the book of Acts, they're filled with the Holy Spirit. There are many of these instances where they are "filled with the Holy Spirit." A couple of things I want to make note of. Number one is this: there is no record at all between the "fillings" that somehow they became void of the Holy Spirit. There's no record in scripture that somehow they strayed and were removed from being sealed with the Holy Spirit. There's no record, to use our vernacular, that they "were lost" in between the fillings.

So what does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? The best description or definition that I've ever heard is that the moment you got saved, you got all the Holy Spirit you're ever going to get, over time, the Holy Spirit gets more of you. Now if we were to go back several decades, we used to have a time in our church services that we called a rededication. If you're not familiar with that term, it was typically a believer who had been saved for some time, had gone somewhat wayward or become lax in their faith, and was renewed in their faith. It was not "getting saved again," it was a rededication. To be honest, biblically they were now being filled with the Holy Spirit. The purpose of the Lord filling the early believers, the purpose of him filling us is for his service. We do not and we never do share the gospel unless we are "filled with the Holy Spirit," dependent upon him, and are being guided and directed by him.

So how do you know? That sounds like somewhat of a rhetorical question but in Galatians 5 beginning in verse 27, it talks about the fruit of the Spirit. A couple of things I want to make mention of. Number one, it doesn't say the fruits plural, even though there are nine of them that are listed. It's singular and much like the illustration of agriculture, there is nothing that you can do to force fruit. In other words, when a seed is planted and with a combination of water and soil and sunlight, that organic entity begins the process of growing. There's nothing that tree can do to somehow force fruit out. Fruit is a natural response to the proper environment that it has been in for some time. Why is this important? Because when we talk about the Holy Spirit leading us to share our faith, oftentimes we try to force it, oftentimes we try to manufacture it, but the Holy Spirit

operates as fruit in our life which means that it is a natural outpouring, it is a natural response, or shall I say, a supernatural response.

So when we talk about evangelism and the Holy Spirit, when we address the fact of actually communicating the gospel to somebody, if we have the Holy Spirit within us, if we are yielded to him on a daily basis, the book of Ephesians 5 talks about watering with the word of God, that as the light of the light of the world and the water of the word comes into our life, guess what naturally will occur? Naturally or supernaturally fruit will come forth and the gospel will go forth.

But what are the hindrances? What are the things that can infiltrate our life that will keep us from bearing fruit, will keep us from witnessing? In Ephesians 4:30 it says grieve not the Holy Spirit. This would be what we would call sins of commission. In simple terms, that means sins you know what you're doing, you know you shouldn't do it, but you do it anyway. You literally, you are aware of what you're doing. When you know you shouldn't go there, when you know you shouldn't do that, when you know you should not participate, whatever that might be, according to the Bible you grieve the Holy Spirit. Now let me use that agricultural illustration. It's kind of like the branches begin to wilt a little bit. The tree is still there, the relationship is still there, but the production of fruit will be greatly hindered.

The Bible also speaks in 1 Thessalonians 5, it says quench not the Holy Spirit. Oftentimes we relate this to the sins of omission, not the sins that we know what we're doing and we're not supposed to do so, but according to the book of James 5, it says he that knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin. The sin of omission is not purposely violating the precepts of God but it's not going where God wants you to go, it's not doing what God wants you to do. It's saying, "No, God, I'd rather do what I want to do." Quenching the Spirit of God is that picture is of a flame that's had water placed upon it, it just doesn't have the light or the heat that it once was.

So again, even though we're indwelt, even though we are sealed, even though we have the opportunity to bear fruit and to be filled, it is because of sin whether by commission or omission that we either grieve and/or quench the Holy Spirit in our life. So how do we receive this filling? Acts 4:31, what did they do? It says that when they prayed. It says when they prayed the building shook, and it's said that when that took place, it said they were filled with the Holy Ghost and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Now allow me to reverse engineer that for a moment. I think we would all agree that evangelism, sharing the gospel, is an act of boldness, that that act of boldness is not going to take place unless we're filled with the Holy Spirit and we're not going to be filled unless we pray. So oftentimes we question, we wonder why do we not see fruit, why do we not see souls saved, why do we not see life transformation? And it's so easy to point the finger "out there" when it may be best pointed right back here. That boldness happens after the filling of the Holy Spirit. That filling of the Holy Spirit takes place when one prays.

So presuming that one does pray, we'll talk about prayer a little bit more in just a moment. It is the Spirit that gives gifts, what we call spiritual gifts. 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12 and a variety of other places, the Bible says that the Lord operates and works within us at his choosing and at his will. Now when we talk about spiritual gifts, when you go through those lists, I want to be clear: a spiritual gift is not your talent, a spiritual gift is not your research capacity, a spiritual gift is not something that you can "exercise." In fact, the Bible makes it clear that the Lord at his will and his discretion gives us the ability to do what is listed. Sometimes it's the gift of discernment. Sometimes it's the gift of exhortation etc. etc. Why do I share that? Because it doesn't matter where you look in the Bible, you will never find evangelism as a spiritual gift and here's why: because if we claim that evangelism is a spiritual gift, none of us would claim to ever have it. Evangelism is not a spiritual gift, it is a supernatural fruit of the Spirit. So irrespective of your spiritual gift, my spiritual gift, all of us no matter what our "giftedness of the Lord" is, we've all been called to share the gospel.

Now in Ephesians 4, it does say that the Lord called some to be apostles, some to be prophets, and some to be evangelists. I would state tonight that there is a distinct difference between the office of an evangelist and the call to evangelism much like there's a difference between the office of a prophet and the spiritual gift of prophecy. And so just because one may not possess the formal office does not dismiss what you and I know as the Great Commission.

So within our lives as a believer in Jesus Christ, putting kind of all those pieces together, how does the Holy Spirit from our perspective work behind the scenes to make all this happen? Remember our definition of evangelism a couple of weeks ago? One beggar telling another beggar where to find food. So how does the Holy Spirit work all that out? Well, number one, it empowers you as a believer to share the gospel. Without the Holy Spirit, there is no power to share. In fact, in Acts 1:8, remember what the Lord said? He said, "Wait here for when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, then you shall receive power." There is no power, there is no spiritual authority to share the gospel if one does not possess the Holy Spirit. It is what empowers us to even share the truth of Jesus Christ.

It is the Holy Spirit that gives us wisdom. In fact, in Luke 12:12, Jesus made this very intriguing statement. He said that the Holy Spirit when he comes will teach you all things. Now don't get me wrong, there's a lot of different strategies that one can learn regarding sharing their faith, there's different metrics, there's different presentations, there are different ways of doing so, but ultimately at the end of the day when you as a beggar are telling another person or beggar where to find food, it is the Holy Spirit that gives you guidance, that gives you directions, that gives you insight into what to say, sometimes even what not to say and how to say it.

It is only the Holy Spirit as we read in Acts 4, that can give us boldness. You know, earlier in Acts 4:12, it says neither is there salvation in any other whereby men must be saved but the name of Jesus Christ, and in our world today that is becoming more and more of a bold statement. You do understand that in a world that celebrates plurality, in a world that celebrates bringing down the barriers of philosophical and faith-based

distinction, for you to stand up, metaphorically speaking, and declare that Jesus Christ is the only way, that is a leading of the Holy Spirit in your life because no person apart from the Holy Spirit of God would ever make that declaration in this world today.

Yet it is the Holy Spirit that guides us and helps us as we pray, not just in the everyday issues of life but particularly for those who we are sharing the gospel with. In Romans 8:26 it says when we know not what to pray for, ask of the Holy Spirit and he will intercede for us. I cannot share with you how many times I have enacted this verse in my life, whether I'm preparing to have a conversation with someone, whether I've just dealt with a piece of information. I've claimed this verse, "Lord, you say if we don't know what to pray for, Holy Spirit, we can yield to you and you will intercede on our behalf." There have been times where having a conversation with somebody, I don't know what to say to show them the truth. I don't know what to say to lead them unto truth. And so what do we do? We yield to the Holy Spirit. We pray for the Holy Spirit to intercede or become that middle person in the equation.

And it is the Holy Spirit and only the Holy Spirit that can give you a burning desire to see souls be saved. You know, in that passage in Acts 4 where it says when they prayed the building shook, they were filled with the Holy Spirit and they spoke the word of God with boldness. If you go back to verse 29 it says, "And now, Lord," this is their prayer, "behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word." This was a group of believers who had just gotten out of prison, this was a group of believers that persecution was ever-increasing. What did they pray? They prayed for boldness and it is the Holy Spirit who only alone can give us that burning desire, that desire to go forth as has been quoted somewhat tritely in the past, to storm the gates of hell with a water pistol. That burning desire can only come from the Holy Spirit.

So that's on "our side" of the equation, so how does the Holy Spirit work in an unbeliever's life? How does the Holy Spirit prepare the heart and the soul of one who will hear the gospel being shared? Number one, the Holy Spirit always precedes your gospel witness. I hate to burst your proverbial bubble but when you share the gospel with someone, the groundwork has already been laid. Now you may have been the very first person to voice the gospel but I can promise you there's somebody who beat you to it and that person is the Holy Spirit. That famous story of Cornelius in Acts 10 who called out and he prayed to the Lord, "Send a witness. Send somebody to share with me the truth." The Lord had been working on him for a long time. How else do you explain that he gave his alms or his financial resources? How else do you explain that he prayed regularly seeking the face of God? The Holy Spirit had prepared his heart. It had tilled the soil of his heart long before Peter showed up to share the gospel witness.

It is only the work of the Holy Spirit that can convict an unbeliever. In fact, in John 16 when Jesus made the statement it is actually more beneficial that he depart than he stay with us because he would then dwell within all of us, he said the role of the Holy Spirit is to convict us, to show us the error of our way. Now I know many of you are very good with oratory and skills of speech, but there's not one of us, myself included, who has the authority or the ability to convince a lost person to be saved. You don't possess it and

neither do I. We cannot talk somebody into heaven. Only the Holy Spirit can take a hardened heart and break it open like the soil to be fed with the Holy Spirit.

What does John 16 say the Holy Spirit does? It convicts a lost person of their sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Now that is a threefold message in and of itself because the lost world thinks they're doing everything they're supposed to be doing to get whatever they claim to be getting. It is the Holy Spirit that shows us that we have rebelled against God. It is the Holy Spirit that shows us that the only thing righteous is Jesus Christ. And it is the Holy Spirit that says if we do not repent of our sins, judgment is coming and it will not go well.

And finally, though you may be the instrument that the Lord uses, you may be the voice that he utilizes, only the Holy Spirit can regenerate or save a soul. That famous nightly conversation where Jesus and Nicodemus sat on the rooftop, Jesus made that grand declaration that you must be born again, that one must be born of water and of the Spirit, one must have not just a physical birth but there must be a spiritual rebirth to be born again. Yes, the Lord has commissioned us to share, yes, he has equipped us to share, but the Holy Spirit precedes our witness, the Holy Spirit is the one who takes our words and convicts of sin, righteousness and judgment, and it is the Holy Spirit who ultimately saves one's soul.

So how does the Holy Spirit work in a witnessing encounter as far as a collective group of people? I want to introduce you to a concept you may or may not have heard of, it's called the concentric circles of concern. I know that sounds somewhat formalized and it's because a professor gave it that title. His name was Oscar Thompson. Unfortunately, Oscar Thompson passed away at a very untimely age, at least to the majority of us. But Oscar Thompson was not only prolific in personal evangelism but he was a professor therein and here's essentially what he shared, is that each and every one of us has layers of relationships. We have our immediate family. We have our friends. We have our coworkers. We have those that we deal with randomly throughout the days. And then ultimately you get to just person X, somebody you meet just what appears to be randomly out there "on the street." But the thing that he shared was this and this is what's critical, that the person who may be your person X, someone you meet one time unannounced to you and unpredictable by you, is somebody else's family member, is somebody else's coworker, and much like when you throw a rock in the water and it has those circles or ripples that go out, if we were to take collectively all the relationships that we have and put all those "rocks in the water" at the same time, all those ripples would intercede with each other.

Why is that critical? Because I think sometimes we know about a person of a distant relationship or maybe somebody we occasionally meet, and we think to ourselves, "Well, how effective can my gospel witness really be? I mean, they don't know me, I don't know them. It's very casual." Yes, but what you don't know is that the Holy Spirit may have been using their family member, the Holy Spirit may have been using their coworker and that ripple or concentric circle of their lives is going to intersect with yours. Why is this a critical piece of the equation? Because I think oftentimes we only think of the Holy Spirit

moving in those strategic conversations that we're having with specific people and we forget that there's other people, other believers having strategic conversations that may be our person X or maybe a person we see casually, or maybe a person that we only know visually and we may not know in an interpersonal relationship. Why is this critical? Because that means that the Holy Spirit is working in all places, on all people, at all times, not just the personally conversations that we have the privilege of having.

So we know that boldness comes from the filling of the Holy Spirit but we know that does not come apart from prayer. So how does prayer figure into this mix? One of the heroes of my faith is a man by the name of E. M. Bounds. If you're not familiar with E. M. Bounds, he actually was a Presbyterian pastor who served as a chaplain during what we know as the Civil War, but probably one of the most prolific writers in regards to prayer. Though I could quote him many times tonight, allow me to give you just one grand statement. When faith ceases to pray, it ceases to live. We could chew on that for hours, could we not? When faith ceases to pray, it ceases to live. Remember the illustration of being agricultural, of bearing fruit? That if we cease to communicate with the Lord, if we cease to pray, then how could we ever expect to have fruit as a byproduct? In recent days, a modern-day hero, at least of my faith, Dr. Billy Kim of South Korea, said with much prayer comes much power, little prayer will produce little power.

And so when we desire to share the gospel, when we desire to promote the truth of God's word, yes, he utilizes our availability, yes, he utilizes our willingness, but we must be prayerful. Jesus was our example. Obviously he modeled what we know as prayer. In fact, in John 17, no offense to what we call the Lord's Prayer, John 17 is really the Lord's Prayer. It's the prayer of the Lord in the garden of Gethsemane the night before his crucifixion. You know, it's interesting in that whole chapter he only has one request for himself. Just one, verse 5, but the rest of it he is praying that the disciples will have an impact with the gospel, and then later he prays that you and I that would follow them would impact the world with the gospel. Jesus modeled for us him speaking to his heavenly Father that he prayed that we would win the world with the gospel.

Obviously, we know that he spent time with the Lord. In Mark 1:35 it said he got up early in the morning to spend time in prayer. We know that important events in his life, much like the garden of Gethsemane in Matthew 26, he strategically spent time in prayer. And then what we commonly know as the Lord's Prayer which, by the way, the disciples said, "Teach us how to pray," he said, "When you pray, do so in like manner." Not only practice, not only advocated but taught as well.

However, one area of prayer I want to address tonight is this, particularly when it comes to evangelism, is the relationship of prayer and spiritual warfare. Now remember we said that only the Holy Spirit can convict a soul, only the Holy Spirit can convict them of sin, righteousness and judgment, but according to 2 Corinthians 4:3 and 4, that those who are lost, those who are not believers, according to the word of God, they are blinded, they are spiritually blind. This explains why sometimes when the truth goes forth, you say, "Why can they not see it? How can they not see it? It's right there in front of them." Well, according to 2 Corinthians 4, it says that Satan has blinded their eyes. We have the

privilege of praying that God will take the scales off and to be quite honest with you, according to Ephesians 6, we are at war. It says we do not fight against flesh and blood but against powers and principalities and rulers of darkness.

So if those unbelieving individuals in our life, in our community, and in the world are blinded by Satan and the Holy Spirit has prepared their hearts for the gospel witness, then we must be in prayer that they will heed the leading of the Holy Spirit and respond appropriately. In addition to that, can I make the statement that preaching is spiritual warfare. Why? Because anytime somebody whether in a public setting as this and, by the way, you do know the word "preaching" does not mean a sermon, the word "preaching" means "the proclamation or the telling of truth." So when you have a conversation at work with someone over a break, or you come to a gathering such as this, biblically speaking it's the same thing, it's preaching.

To communicate the word of God to somebody who is lost is spiritual warfare. How do we know that? Number one, they're blinded. Number two, the Holy Spirit is working on them. And number three, the enemy does not desire them to be saved. So we are "at war." So how do we pray for the lost? You know, there's a little acronym I'm sure many of you are familiar with, it's called the ACTS acronym. By the way, this is so profoundly simple. I learned this in fourth grade and I haven't forgotten it since. I learned this as a 9 year old and the Lord just burned it in my mind and in my heart. Here's what the ACTS acronym does. When you pray, you begin by adoration, the A, acknowledging the Lord for who he is, his qualities, his attributes. Then you confess, that's the C, you admit your shortcomings, you admit your failures, you admit your rebellion of commission as well as omission. Then you thank him, that in spite of all that you've just confessed, that he loves you unconditionally, that he continues to work in your life. And finally you get to the S which stands for supplication, to request something of the Lord.

You know, when we speak about praying for the lost, when we speak about praying for those whose minds have been blinded, one of the things that I have to question is, is our lack of prayer for them because we haven't bothered with the A, the C and the T, we haven't acknowledged the Lord, we haven't confessed or owned sin, we haven't thanked him for working in our lives so why would we have a burden to pray, why would we have a desire to go on behalf of those that have been spiritually blinded when we haven't even dealt with our own shortcomings?

And last but not least, some years ago, my family and I had the privilege of attending a corporate public prayer service that was led by none other than Franklin Graham, the famed son of Dr. Billy Graham, who gathered in really a downtown area of the city in which we lived. You know, he and his dad are known for being evangelists, they're known for sharing the gospel not just through Samaritan's Purse and Operation Christmas Child, but large crusades that Billy Graham had years and years and years ago. In fact, I would say at least in Western culture, when you say the word "evangelist," you typically use the last name Graham somewhere in the vernacular. It's just kind of what we know. I think it's interesting that when he led that prayer service, when he led that time to pray for the city, he spent the overwhelming majority of the time having us pray to confess our



sins, our shortcomings, our rebellion of days gone by as well as day present, and if I were to give you a percentage, maybe 10% of that prayer service was to pray for the lost.

You say, "Well, why didn't you spend the whole time praying for the lost?" Because it goes back to the beginning of tonight's study. If we are not a vessel that is clean, if we are not filled with the Holy Spirit, if we are not going forth in boldness, then how can we ever expect the Lord to maneuver the conversation as we would desire? And so if we desire that the word of God go forth with boldness, we have got to be filled with the Holy Spirit and that's only going to come when we seek the Lord by acknowledging who he is, confessing our sins, thanking him for that which he's done in our life, and then praying that he will supernaturally arrange opportunities for the gospel to go forth to those who are in our family and to those who we work with, to those we go to school with, and even possibly those we've never met before who may just be the coworker of another believer who has been working the soil of their soul for years and years and years.

In Acts 4:31 when they prayed, the place shook, they were filled with the Holy Spirit and they spoke the word of God with boldness. May it happen in our lives as well.