
Sharing the Evangel

As Christ's Ambassadors it is as if God were "entreating through us" (2 Corinthians 5:20-21). As His Ambassadors we represent Christ ... that is our commission while we have opportunity in this age.

If we consider the life of the apostle Paul, we will see that he represented Christ, and he shared the evangel (good news) of Christ at every opportunity. Whether in prison, in synagogues, in market places, before kings ... anywhere and everywhere Paul gave testimony to the good news of Jesus Christ. He was an Ambassador who never saw himself as being "off duty," and he is our example.

There is no single correct way to be an Ambassador. There is no magic "tract" to mass-distribute. There is no magic formula to read from in reciting the evangel. Paul did it differently in every circumstance. Before the Jews in the synagogues he cited from Scripture, because the Jews respected Scripture. But before the Greek philosophers at the Areopagus Paul never mentioned Scripture, and at one point even quoted from a Greek poet (Acts 17:18-34). To the Jews Paul became as a Jew ... to the weak he became as the weak ... to all he became all in order to save some (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

In short, the Lord prepared Paul, and Paul prepared himself (studying Scripture, reading from the Greek poets, etc), to be the best Ambassador he could be in all circumstances as each new opportunity presented itself.

As Ambassadors for Christ we have many opportunities in our daily lives to share the evangel, as did Paul. I wanted to share with you some of the things we have done; not that these things are so special, but just to give you ideas and motivation to explore ways in your circle of influence and your geographic area to also be effective Ambassadors for Christ.

WRITING PRESS RELEASES

We have a weekly county newspaper in our area. I submitted a press release that talked about my book; not that I was trying to sell more books but this was a good opportunity to present the full, correct evangel that is not proclaimed by most churches. I believe there are many people that will never set foot in a church and who will never pay heed to the message being proclaimed by most churches, but who will be intrigued by the correct evangel ... that God will ultimately save all mankind. Following is the press release as published in our local paper.

WILMORE PREACHER'S BOOK ARGUES: HELL IS NOT ETERNAL

A new book by a preacher from Wilmore challenges the common teaching of most Churches that hell is eternal. The author, Bob Evely of Wilmore, argues that the Bible reveals God's plan to ultimately save all mankind. Evely contends that the

Bible, when properly translated from the original languages, proclaims an end to hell.

His book is titled, “At the End of the Ages ... the Abolition of Hell,” and was recently published by 1st Books Library in Bloomington, Ind. It purports to present evidence supporting the conclusion that God does not punish and torture souls endlessly, but he disciplines and refines them for a time, ultimately saving all at the end of the ages.

Evely was an ordained minister within the United Methodist Church for 3-1/2 years, and then within the Free Methodist Church for 5 years. He stepped down as pastor of Open Door Free Methodist Church in Nicholasville, after becoming convinced that the church’s teachings concerning hell were incorrect. His beliefs also contradict the teachings of the United Methodist Church and other Protestant denominations in the Armenian theological tradition, as well as the beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church. Evely now leads Grace Evangel Fellowship, a home church in Wilmore. Its web site is at www.graceevangel.org

“At the End of the Ages” can be ordered from most major bookstores or through the web site.

Not exactly how I prepared the release, but not too many liberties were taken by the newspaper. A shorter edited version also was published in our Lexington daily newspaper.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A short time later a letter to the editor appeared in the weekly newspaper, condemning “modern day preachers” that didn’t think there was a hell, or that thought homosexual marriages were OK. This being an opportunity to respond, I submitted a letter to the editor that was printed as follows:

This is in reply to a recent letter concerning beliefs about hell. The Bible does refer to a judgment (“hell”), but it also speaks of God’s plan to save all mankind (1 Timothy 4:9-11; Galatians 6:10; 1 Timothy 2:4; Ephesians 1:11; 1 Cor 15:21-23; John 1:29; Colossians 1:16-20 and many other verses.)

Modern translations are part of the problem. The word “eternal” in most translations should be “age-abiding” or “for the eons.” The same Greek word is used in cases where even the popular translations use “age” or “world,” because from the context it is clear that “eternal” cannot be correct. The modern translations are not consistent. The bias of interpretation has clouded the translation! There are translations faithful to the original languages (Concordant Literal, Rotherham’s, Young’s Literal).

Certainly God hates sin, but He loves the sinner. There will be a judgment. God will deal with sin. The judgment will not be pleasant, but it will not last forever. It will continue for an “age” or “ages,” however long God determines is necessary. And this punishment is for the purpose of refining, correcting,

disciplining – not to torture endlessly.

We believe the Bible is the perfect Word of God. It is God's revelation to mankind. We are "biblical universalists," seeing in God's Word His plan to eventually eliminate sin and evil from existence. A glimpse into this perfect ending is found in 1 Corinthians 15, where we read of the day when perfection comes; when every knee bows; when all are subjected to God; when the final enemy (death) is abolished, and when God becomes All in all.

These beliefs are not contrary to the Bible. There have been earnest Christians since the time of the apostles who have recognized God's plan to save all. Too much faith is placed in pastors and scholars instead of studying and thinking for ourselves! We invite any who are interested to visit our web site at www.graceevangel.org

Jesus Christ has accomplished much more upon the cross than most churches teach. What a wonderful gospel we find in God's Word, in His ultimate plan to save all!

Bob & Jill Evely, Wilmore

Any can feel free to use our letter as-is, or a variation, as you see fit. Again, here an opportunity presented itself to provide God's wonderful evangel thru the newspaper media. And don't be afraid to use your name in these instances. We must not be ashamed of the evangel! We had several people in our small town that afterwards talked with us after having seen the letter.

PAID NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENTS

My father recently split the cost with me for a 2 x 5 ad we ran in our local weekly newspaper. We ran the ad for 4 consecutive weeks, and the total cost was about \$200.

HELL IS NOT "FOREVER"

Most churches teach that those who do not "believe" in Jesus Christ in this lifetime will be tormented "forever and ever" in Hell. But this is **NOT** what the Bible says!

- We believe the Bible is the perfect Word of God, and
- When the Bible is **correctly translated** from the Greek & Hebrew, and when it is **properly studied & interpreted**, we see that the lake of fire ("Hell") is "for the ages," not eternal, and it is for the purpose of discipline & correction.

To see the evidence & decide for yourself, read:

"At the End of the Ages ... the Abolition of Hell"

A new book by Bob Evely, available by special order from Joseph Beth, Barnes & Noble, Amazon.com or www.graceevangel.org

FOR INFORMATION ON OUR CHURCH,
our weekly Bible study in Wilmore KY, or our publications, visit
www.graceevangel.org or write Grace Evangel Fellowship, P O Box 6, Wilmore,
KY 40390.

I would be happy to send a PDF file of the ad as required by most newspapers. Drop me a note asking for this at bob@graceevangel.org

LETTERS TO MAGAZINES

In a recent issue of Time Magazine there was an article entitled, “The Lost Gospels” that talked about non-orthodox beliefs. While I did not agree with much of the article, it did present an opportunity, and I submitted a letter to the editor.

To the Editor, Time Magazine. I very much appreciated the article entitled, “The Lost Gospels” in your December 22nd issue. I was raised within the traditional “orthodox” church (mostly Methodist), graduated from Asbury Theological Seminary in 1996 with an M.Div. degree, was an ordained minister in the United Methodist and Free Methodist denominations, and served as a pastor within those denominations for 8-1/2 years.

Raised within the church, and “indoctrinated” for years as I was, I thought (as many conservative Christians do) that I had all the answers, and that everyone else was wrong. I have since learned that “orthodoxy” does not mean truth as opposed to falsehood; it is simply the majority opinion.

The article commented that the “orthodox” stem gradually strangled or absorbed the other beliefs. How true! As a matter of fact there were many different viewpoints within the early church immediately following the death of the apostles. Around the time of Augustine (5th century) many things that had been previously accepted by many early Christians became “heretical.” Believers were banished, and writings destroyed. But enough remains for us to see that what is considered “orthodox” today was not the exclusive belief system in the early church.

I am perhaps one of the most “conservative” of Christians, in that I have considered the evidence and firmly believe the Bible is God’s revealed word to mankind; every word of it. But I have also come to find that even most modern translations of the Bible in use today reflect the opinions of man, and therefore the “orthodox” viewpoint. In the New Testament, for example, a single word used in the original Greek is often translated using several different English words with significantly different meanings. Conversely there are times when totally different words in the Greek are carelessly mixed together into a single English word, distorting or hiding the meaning found in the originals. Because of the desire for easier-to-read translations of the Bible, much is lost as the translators incorporate their own theology (the “orthodox” opinions) into the Bible.

While orthodoxy teaches that all who do not believe in Jesus Christ **in this lifetime** will spend eternity in hell, the Bible when correctly translated and studied tells us that God

will ultimately, at the end of the “eons,” save all of mankind and reconcile the entire universe to Himself (see 1 Corinthians 15). Our present day notions of hell come more from pagan writers than from Scripture itself. And the word translated “forever” or “forever and ever” in the Bible should be “for the age(s)” or “for the eon(s).”

Even the form of our present-day “churches” comes more from the history and tradition of mankind than from Scripture. The Bible shows us a very simple, uncomplicated group of Believers, mostly meeting in homes and sharing their lives together in simplicity. No huge mega-churches, building programs, paid staffs, articles of religion to sign, or meaningless rituals.

I invite you to visit our web site for more details, since it is impossible to give this issue complete justice in such few words. And thanks again for your article that will perhaps cause your readers to think that maybe there is truth outside of “orthodoxy.”

Bob Evely, Pastor
Grace Evangel Fellowship, Wilmore KY
www.graceevangel.org

Time Magazine did not publish this letter, but I did receive a short note that it had been received and was being reviewed. There were at least a few, therefore, that had opportunity to see these viewpoints, perhaps for the first time.

OTHER IDEAS?

These are just a few of the things we have done locally. I cannot say we have had a huge response, but we have had some inquiries, and we are planting seeds without knowing exactly who is hearing the evangel thru us. Ours is not to tally “conversions” ... it is merely to be faithful Ambassadors.

Our web site was designed by Jill who knew little about PC’s until she began to look into it. Now she updates the web site regularly, and does a great job. The site costs us \$30.00 per month, and we have had a significant number of inquiries thru it. You can design your own, or if you wish you can direct anyone you’d like to ours: www.graceevangel.org

We send our newsletters whenever we feel there are things to say. Feel free to use anything you find in our letters, and re-package under your own signature or logo if you wish. Or, feel free to simply pass along our newsletters to whomever you would like.

I wrote “At the End of the Ages” not to make money. I wanted to have the biblical evidence in support of the salvation of all, as completely stated as possible but still basic and easy to read, to distribute to whoever will read it. Many of you have bought copies to give away to others, and we have also given away copies here locally. If you want 5 or more copies we can provide them at \$11.00 each including shipping.

We also have two small tri-fold brochures ... one entitled “Why I Believe God Will Eventually Save All!” and the other “Is Hell Eternal? What Does the Bible Say?” I can e-mail these either in Microsoft Word or PDF format. You can distribute these as-is, or use portions with your own logo or ID information.

Any of you who do not feel comfortable asking people to contact you for further information, feel free to direct them to Grace Evangel Fellowship.

STUDY GROUPS & HOME CHURCHES

If you are gifted as a leader or teacher, you can use brochures, ads, letters and word of mouth to invite others into a weekly Bible study group or home church gathering.

“NOT ASHAMED OF THE EVANGEL”

The most important element of being an Ambassador is to simply talk freely about your beliefs, and share the evangel thru letters, copies of books, or simply opportunities for conversation.

PLEASE SHARE YOUR IDEAS & SUCCESSES WITH ME

As you try other ways to proclaim the evangel, please share with me some of the things you’ve done, and your successes. I would like to share these with others as well.

When Paul returned from his first journey, we read in Acts 14:27-28

“Now coming along and gathering the ecclesia, they informed them of whatever God does with them, and that He opens to the nations a door of faith.”

Likewise let us share with one another whatever God is doing with us, as we serve as Christ’s Ambassadors as if God were entreating thru us!

- Bob Evely -

Kentucky Bible Conference in February

We will be hosting the second annual Bible Conference in the Lexington, Kentucky area on February 27-29, 2004. The announcement, with directions and lodging possibilities, is being sent to all on our distribution list. Write to bob@graceevangel.org with any questions you may have.

Forward to others if you wish!

Feel free to forward this newsletter to others if you wish. If any others would like to be added to our distribution list, have them drop us a note at bob@graceevangel.org