

The Kingdom of God The Government of God – Evangelists, Part 2

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Studio Session 52
08/2004

Jesus gave five gifts for the equipping of the saints, including the gift of evangelism. Now as simple as that statement is, you would think that we would see that this was a gift given to the church for the equipping of the saints. It is amazing how we understand the words but we don't understand what they mean and yet we think we do. If you were to ask someone, "Tell me what an evangelist does." The answer would be, "Well, they go and evangelize, of course." Well the Scriptures say: the gift of evangelism... the *gift* of someone as an evangelist. He gave some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. (Inserted – actual verse—**“This is why it says: ‘When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.’ (What does ‘he ascended’ mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” – Ephesians 4:8-13)**

The gift of an evangelist is a governmental gift and it is given for the equipping of the saints. Why? Because it is the saints who evangelize but they don't know how to evangelize so God gives them a gift to teach them how to evangelize. All of these five gifts are given by impartation; they are not by schooled processes. You don't have a class to which you invite someone to learn about evangelism. The person has a gift and the character of the person is himself the gift. What do I mean by that? Well first let's understand what the gift of evangelism actually is and then it is easy enough, then, to understand the person who evangelizes. What is the gift? An evangelist embodies the gift of God's love. What is meant by that is that "God so loved the world." (Inserted – actual verse—**“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” – John 3:16**) God loves people—the love of God for people is well-established, not just in the pages of Scripture but the specific incidences, referred to in Scripture that demonstrate the love of God, perhaps none greater than the cross.

Does God love people? Yes. Who does God love? Everyone. Who may be properly excluded from the love of God? No one. Why, then, are not our churches filled with all kinds of people, not just the ones we are like or who “do for us” the things that we want done? Why do we strive to have the “moneyed” people be the predominant constituency in the church? Why do we strive to have the same racial group as what we are comfortable with, when the truth, Scripturally, is that whoever comes to Christ is of a particular race—we are a *holy* race. (Inserted – actual verse—**“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”** – I Peter 2:9)

God does not count ethnic origins, the color of one’s skin, the background of one’s history—God does not count that as having any significance at all to how His kingdom is comprised. In fact we are specifically told that His kingdom was meant to be comprised of people of every tribe, language and nation. (Inserted – actual verse—**“And they sang a new song: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.’”** – Revelation 5:9,10) Oh, I know that there are teachings to the contrary but they are just simply wrong and we spend too much time contending with what is wrong and not saying what is right. Let’s let the wrong be wrong, let the one who is wrong, let him be wrong still. (Inserted – actual verse—**“Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy.”** – Revelation 22:11) You say what’s right; you practice what is true.

God loves people—that’s the base line of Scripture. The gift of evangelism is the gift of God’s love to the world. As I said, the church—the body of Christ—is sorely in need of being refreshed, renewed, sometimes even being acquainted with the love of God so God sends those who embody the love of God. That gift is called the evangelist. The impartation of this gift of love to the body is what equips everybody—male and female—to be able to bring forth the love of God in the requisite circumstance.

Now why is the church in America dwindling? Why is that we are confusing the rearrangement of the present membership from one congregation to another—usually from smaller groups to larger groups—why are we confusing that with church growth and /or evangelism when, in fact, very few new people are being brought in? And the answer is very simple. We sent the evangelist away... we sent them away. If you go to a country like Mexico, if you are working as I occasionally get to do, say in the very deep south of Mexico—states of Tabasco, Chiapas, down around the border with Guatemala—you will find that the people have a real sensitivity to Christ and a need to be saved and

in fact if you go and speak to the people there, over a period of time what you will typically find is that the same persons get saved again and again and again and the question is “Why?” The answer is simple: their only exposure has been to evangelists.

We, in America and in Europe, sent the evangelist away because our idea of evangelism was, “Hey, you love the lost; go find some lost people and win them to Christ.” We did not see that the gift was given to the church. As a result, today the majority of people sitting in the pews will never actively participate in anyone coming to Christ. That’s why the membership is drying up. The people have no burden for the lost. But getting up in the pulpit and telling them that they ought to have a burden for the lost will not work... doesn’t work. If it did work the results would be different now. We’ve had any number of people on television in the pulpits telling people to get out there and win people to Christ that any number of programs conceived... stacks of new literature being written to try to educate the mind of the unbeliever so that he would actually change.

That’s not what wins somebody to Christ. Someone is brought to Christ when he encounters the love of God. Simple... simple. “Once I was blind; now I see.” (Inserted – actual verse—**“A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. ‘Give glory to God,’ they said. ‘We know this man [Jesus] is a sinner.’ He replied, ‘Whether he is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!’” – John 9:24,25**) “Zacchaeus, come down. I’m coming to your house today—today salvation is come to your house. Go and sin no more.” (Inserted – actual verse—**“Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.’ So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, ‘He has gone to be the guest of a ‘sinner.’ But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, ‘Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.’” – Luke 19:1-10**)

Shall I go on? I mean this is why these things are written in the Scriptures—for our learning—that we might see how Jesus approached sinners. Jesus came to the house of a man named Simon and a prostitute wept on his feet, washed his feet with her tears and then dried them with her hair and poured ointment on His feet. And Jesus explained it this way when the high and mighty looked down on Jesus for not sending her away: Jesus explained that He had driven many demons out of this woman—she had been forgiven much, so she loves much. (Inserted – actual verse—**“Now one of the Pharisees**

invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself. 'If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner.' Jesus answered him, 'Simon, I have something to tell you.' 'Tell me, teacher,' he said. 'Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?' Simon replied, 'I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled.' 'You have judged correctly,' Jesus said. Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little.' Then Jesus said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.' – Luke 7:36-48) That's why He said, "The publicans and the harlots will come into the Kingdom before you."—speaking to the religious people—because He understood that desperate humanity, touched by the love of God, will change. (Inserted – actual verse—"Jesus said to them, 'I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you.'" – Matthew 21:31b)

Evangelism is about the love of God being shown to people. God gives the gift of evangelists to the body... not to the world. He gives the gift of "*the* evangelist"—someone filled with the love of God, someone embodying the love of God—gives that person into the church to "infect" them with the visual presentation of the love of God. And when you see that, it changes *you* because the Spirit of God bears witness in your spirit and it awakens in you—it awakens in your spirit—God's love for the lost, a thing that can grow cold. Love grows cold over time if it is not exercised and the church in this country has become so "self-focused" and evangelism has been such a "packaged" and "sanitized" thing that nobody actually *goes* to the lost, we go to the saved to try to get them to be of our "brand" and the reason we can't find many in this country who would just restore to our understanding—restore to our emotions the love of God—is because our view of evangelism is if somebody is an evangelist, send them away, send them "out".

"For the equipping of the saints" is what the Scriptures say—the gift was given to equip the saints. When you send them away, they will equip wherever they go. That's why people in Mexico and in other foreign countries now are equipped to evangelize. They

are not mature; they don't know what else to do other than win people to Christ because they have only received the evangelist. The other notion that we have that goes along with that is this: that it is better to have an evangelistic campaign, an evangelistic crusade and bring them in that way than it is to equip the saints to win the lost. Well, let's run some numbers for a moment; let's think about that, since the goal in that thinking is, "Let's get more people 'in'." If that is the goal then we ought to be impressed with the method that brings people "in", shouldn't we?

The typical concept of evangelism today is to go and hold an evangelistic crusade. The history of that has to do with anyone from Charles Finney to Billy Sunday to Oral Roberts to Billy Graham and to the various ones today who are continuing the genre. Now God, in His goodness, will let a thing go until He introduces that which represents His more perfect, more complete will and so I am not saying people weren't saved by that process but you'll notice there is no one coming up to replace the old evangelists in that style of evangelism. Does that mean that evangelism has stopped? No, it means that the government of God is functioning and instead of holding evangelistic crusades and motivate, trying to get the city to come together to get people to be saved, God wants the saints to do the work—you and me and all the tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, millions of us to do the work of the ministry. And to that end He gave an equipping gift, which is the gift of love demonstrated through someone who *embodies* the love of God for the lost. That's what the evangelistic gift is.

Let's look at the numbers for a moment. I read these numbers from a Billy Graham Association report. The numbers are that five years after an evangelistic crusade occurs, less than 10% of those who made a profession of faith are found to have any active membership in a church or anyone can find them or even account for them. And 10 years later—10 years after the campaign—less than 5%, so it reverses. Less than 5% of the people who made a profession of faith can be found in any way continuing their walk with God. So, the numbers again: 5 years out from a campaign, less than 10% of the people can be accounted for. Ten years out, less than 5% of the people. All right, let's run some numbers. Let's say that in a city, 10,000 people responded and made a profession of faith after a campaign—10,000. I think by any stretch of the imagination that would be considered a very successful campaign. So 5 years later, 10%--so we have 1,000 of the 10,000. Ten years later we have 500, so the numbers drop from 10,000 to 500 in 10 years.

Let's look at a different model for a moment. Let's say that you didn't do it that way, but some guy decides that he is going to disciple—let's pick a number—12 guys and let's say that he spends three years at this and at the end of three years one of these 12 is lost. So you have 11 guys plus the original one. So 3 years—compare that to 5 years—1000. That model, the crusade is way ahead. So let's double up; let's have another 3 years and now let's take those 12 and have each one disciple 12 and you kick 1 out because it appears that you will lose at least 1. So 6 years in, you have 144. That's still

well below 5 years and 1,000. Well let's run the numbers again; another 3 years, each of the 144 has 12; now you're at 9 years into the process—that's approaching 1,500. What's the numbers? Ten years, 5%, five years, 10%, so at 9 years you have exceeded by half as much again the best results of 5 years later. But have you noticed something? One model represents a declining result; the other model, over time, represents an ascending result.

This isn't rocket science. Which model works? The evangelistic campaign by the very best known evangelist or a model by a guy who lived about 2,000 years ago who started small and lo and behold His name, His work, His kingdom has spread throughout the whole earth for centuries and it keeps getting stronger, not weaker. Maybe this Jesus actually knew something about the love of God and the power of the love of God and maybe with our campaigns we simply don't understand. We've come up with a model to use current advertising jargon that gives us a big "pop" right away—10,000, that's a pretty big "pop", you can write that out. But over a period of 10 years when it goes down to 500, that represents an enormous waste of resources and nothing we should be proud of. The results are not anything we could be proud of.

Why do we keep doing it? Perhaps because we don't understand the government of God. When you involve yourself with another to show the love of God to them, you are investing in a permanent result and that's why it continues to improve. No, it's not an immediate "pop", but 2000 years of the model of Jesus Christ leaves no doubt that that's the way to do it. The government of God exists to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, not to produce super-heroes. Our model of the evangelistic campaign produces the super-hero and hardly anything else. That's why God is not allowing it to continue and it's also why God is changing it by reintroducing this generation to the understanding of the government of God. The evangelistic gift is meant for the equipping of the *saints*; the gift of the evangelist is meant to impart to the average believer something of the flavor of the love of God for the lost. We have considered evangelists as only those people who come to our meetings to try to raise money so they could go back to the field. We need to change our thinking.

An evangelist in the 5-fold ministry—in the governmental ministry of the Kingdom—is not sent to the world. He's sent to the church for the equipping of the saints. He [God] gave five gifts: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. The evangelist is given to impart the love of God to the saved, so that the saved—the saints—might in turn impart the love of God to those that God would bring to them like a man in a tree, a woman by a well, a man by the gate of the temple. God is drawing people to himself. The problem today is that fewer and fewer people are available to show the love of God and part of the reason is that we've sent away the evangelist.

Another reason is that we're concentrating only on the final result. We do not see that when you plant the seed of the love of God, it may not—in that day—produce a result

that you can see. And you may die, you may move on, you may change venues and not know what came from the work that you did in that day. But if it is the seed of the love of God, planted in the heart of a desperate person, one thing is sure: that God is faithful to water it, watch over it, tend it and eventually grant the increase. If you are not concerned about whether or not another notch is cut in the base of your pistol or another star is added to your chart and you'll simply do the work that's before you to do then you may be someone who plants the seed of the love of God in a person's heart or someone who comes along and waters it. Or you may be the one who comes at the end of the process at where the people are coming in.

However it happens, evangelism is not to be judged by any particular result. Evangelism is the impartation of the love of God for the lost. Now if you see it this way then we are constantly sowing and we're constantly reaping. The Scriptures prophesy that in the last days, the sower will overtake the reaper. (Inserted – actual verse—“ **‘The days are coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills.’**” – Amos 9:13) That means that there is so much to harvest, but the cycle of planting is so great, that the sower overtakes the reaper. If it's the other way around—the reaper overtakes the sower—then, indeed, you have nothing to reap eventually. But it's the sower who overtakes the reaper. Evangelism is sowing the seed of the love of God in the hearts of people. Let's receive the evangelist and let them charge us again with the love of God and we'll see new people coming in to the body of Christ. I'm Sam Soleyn and I'll talk to you more about the government of God.

Scripture References:

Ephesians 4:8-13

John 3:16

I Peter 2:9

Revelation 5:9,10

Revelation 22:11

John 9:24,25

Luke 19:1-10

Luke 7:36-48

Matthew 21:31b

Amos 9:13