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With hope for all, why share our faith?

QUESTION: Evangelism seems to have been endemic in early Christianity, the Apostle Paul being perhaps the most outstanding example.

If you have hope that all might come to Christ (ultimate redemption) why share our faith?

RESPONSE: We share the good news for the same reasons that compelled Paul. Namely, **1. Because Christ is the most wonderful person in the universe and knowing**

him IS eternal life. Not just when you die, but in the abundance of this life, the fullness of our inheritance in the gospel and in the depth of relationship Christ opens to God as *Abba*.

While Paul calls Christ “the Savior of all,” *it’s knowing Christ that brings truth into our experience in the here and now.* Sharing the good news means announcing how, in Christ, we can experience deeper intimacy with God, the assurance that our sins are forgiven, the freedom of being washed of shame, fearlessness before death, etc. So, why wouldn’t we tell people this good news?! Yes, knowing Christ is eternal life!

2. Because so many people experience the human condition as alienating, as perishing, as hell on earth. I meet so many people who struggle to find meaning, peace and belonging—tormented souls who end up medicating their weary, broken hearts with false comforts and toxic distractions. In other words, it’s clear to me that regardless of how wonderfully Christ will restore all things in the end, people desperately need him today!

Life is hard and people feel “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” Besides these two key reasons to share the good news, I also come at it from another angle. IF God shall indeed redeem all of humanity, our Scriptures and our experience tell us he does so by specific means. IF Christ is Savior of us all, how so?

- ◆ By revealing God’s infinite love and grace.
- ◆ Through Christ’s decisive victory over Satan, sin and death in his Passion and Resurrection.

- ◆ Via the witness of those who faithfully announce the good news (there’s your evangelism).

- ◆ In answer to our prayers that all people, everywhere, would be saved (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

- ◆ By the grace of the Holy Spirit.

- ◆ Through a faith response to Jesus Christ.

- ◆ And as a result of the refiner’s fire judgment (Malachi 3 / Mark 9 / 1 Corinthians 3).

These are among the means by which anyone is ultimately saved.

Sadly, I meet many Christ-followers who see no reason to share good news beyond hell avoidance. Why not?

- ◆ We’ve been soured to the Great Commission because modern evangelism has become so ugly. Instead of shining brightly with truly good news, our focus shifted to argumentative apologetics or threatening ultimatums. No thanks.

- ◆ We’ve become awake to God’s all-inclusive love but lost the uniqueness of the Incarnation as the Way access to God as *Abba* comes about. We forgot the true means to the end.

- ◆ We’ve not actually connected with Jesus in a way that makes Christ real to us. We can’t proclaim what we haven’t experienced. Are we tempted to trade away the transforming power of authentic relationship with the living God? Are we out of touch with humanity’s existential crisis and adopted a faith not much worth trumpeting? These are real questions for self-examination. In short, how do we deal with the reality of a Christendom that signs off on a prayer or creed without having yet met Christ?

It is striking to me that when the evangelists of the book of Acts preach the gospel (MANY times to Jews and Gentiles, including to the Jewish Sanhedrin and Greek philosophers) they *never once address hell* as a motivation in their evangelism.

It’s all about what Christ has done for us and the hope he gives us now. Following him today is the good news that changes everything. That’s a gospel I can (and do) preach. □