

We are starting a series we'll be in for the next four weeks called iGo and the whole sense of the series; the whole theme really revolves around one word and it's a word that often strikes fear in the heart of believers. It definitely creates emotion. It is the word evangelism. When you hear that word what response, what emotional response goes off inside of you? What visceral feelings do you have? We're going to come back to that in a moment. Actually the word evangelism does not appear in the bible. It doesn't appear in the Old Testament. It doesn't appear in the New Testament. It's nowhere in the bible. The closest thing we have to evangelism is actually the word evangelist, which is taken, kind of morphed from the word **εὐαγγελιστής** means the Gospel or the Good News. So, an evangelist is one who declares the Good News.

Now, we only have the word evangelist occurring in the New Testament on three occasions. It's in Acts 21:8 – where Phillip is called the evangelist. In Ephesians 4:11 – where we learn of the offices of the church; that God gave the Apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and the teachers to church. And in 2 Timothy 4:5 where Paul says to Timothy as a pastor do the work of an evangelist. But, the word evangelism does not appear in scripture. The meaning of the word, and this is just my own definition I think in the most basic, clearest terms is simply telling another about Jesus. That's evangelism. It's just simply telling someone else about what you know about Jesus or about salvation or about His grace. It's not a program. It's not a church ministry. It's not a campaign. It's just simply a conversation. It's telling what you know.

The word witness is probably the closest correlation to the concept of evangelism and that's actually found in the book of Acts. If you have your bible I want you to turn to Acts, chapter 1, verse 8. Acts chapter 1, verse 8 is that the last recorded words of Jesus before His ascension. He's talking to His disciples and He's giving them the marching orders. He's passing the baton. The ministry now is going to continue in their hands. His earthly presence will no longer be with them and He says, but, even though I'm not here you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. The Holy Spirit will be with you. That's what He's saying. And you'll be my witnesses. There's the word that we're going to focus on...in Jerusalem and in Judea and in Samaria, and to the end of the earth. It's like concentric rings that go out when you put them on a map. Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the uttermost parts of the world. Says you're going to be my witnesses.

Now, what is it to be a witness? Well, a witness in the technical sense means you confirm something. It means you tell something that you know. You tell something that you experienced. In just the simplest concepts a witness is really, when you're a witness you're just simply communicating what has occurred in your life, what you know to be true, what you have experienced. You're just kind of re-counting the details. That's what it means to be a witness. That's our closest correlation to the concept of evangelism.

Now, back to that question – what emotion do you feel when you hear the word evangelism? Do you have the emotion of fear? Common emotion. It may be the idea that you're not going to be able to answer their questions or you're not going to be able to stand up to their scrutiny; they're going to look into your life and they're going to see something that's inconsistent with what you're saying. Or, maybe it's anxiety that they're going to ask you a question that just stumps you or maybe even make you doubt your own faith. They're going to ask you something, in other words you can not answer. Or maybe it's the feeling

of uncertainty just about your own understanding of who Jesus is in the Gospel. Perhaps it's guilt. I know a lot of believers who carry the emotion of guilt when you talk about evangelism because they know witnessing is something that should be a part of their life. It's not a part of their life and so they feel guilt about it.

Now my goal in this whole teaching series is essentially to change your emotional reaction when you think about evangelism so that evangelism is not something you fear to do but actually it's something you naturally do. It's just a part of who you are. It's not that you have all the right answers or you have all the right sequence or you have the right nice little boxes or the nice little program but, rather, evangelism is not something you feel forced to do as if humanity hangs in the balance on whether or not you convince them about Jesus Christ, but rather, it's just something you're naturally a part of as a Christ Follower. And so, in essence what I want to do is I want to do a giant mind-shift when it comes to this concept of evangelism.

Now, to start we need to answer a critical question. We need to answer the question why. So today what we're going to work on is why to tell. Next week we're going to work on what to tell, then how to tell, and then who to tell. That's our series but this morning – why. Why do we tell? Now, for many of you might think well, that's easy. No brainer. If we don't tell people go to hell. If we don't tell people who Jesus Christ is, if we don't tell them the Gospel, if we're not a witness for the cause of Christ then people go to hell and that's a very popular concept. The idea is that the burden of people's salvation is placed on us. And this is a great burden. Some people have the burden so much so that they carry it around and that's where I think that sense of guilt comes. They carry it around as if eternal life hangs in the balance on whether or not they get everything right or they have the opportunity or they put forth the effort for someone to hear or someone to receive or someone to accept Christ. All of the burden then is carried on our shoulders but is that biblical? You know the way we have to offer this is who's the offer of our salvation? Who is the one who starts it all? Who contains it all? Who is the author of our salvation? Now, we're going to be working through a number of passages this morning so get ready. Let's start by looking over in Ephesians, Ephesians, chapter 1 to answer the question who is the author of our salvation?

We're in Ephesians, 1 and what we're going to see starting in verse 3 are three words back to back to back, words that are important, that point towards something. Any time you see the same word used three times in a small context you ought to take good notice. It's the scripture writers way of making emphasis. Now, look what Paul says. Blessed be the God our Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing. Clearly the word is blessing. He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly place. Now, what blessing have we received? Look at verse 4, in him before the foundations of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him. That in love He predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of whose will? His will, not my will, not their will, not whoever will you're talking about but HIS will. Now, don't get tripped up on two theological words - the idea of Him choosing us before the foundation of the world and predestining us. I know. There's all kinds of controversy about that. There doesn't need to be. It's very scriptural. We don't have to shy away from this. This is simply speaking about the sovereignty of God in our salvation and what does it say? It says before we ever existed; before we ever had a chance to say yes or no. It didn't

hang on the balance of someone convincing us of the truth but before the foundations of the world He chose us and what did he choose us? He chose us in love. He predestined us. It speaks of the heart of God.

Now if this doesn't do it for you the next passage probably will and this is Romans and so move from Ephesians to the book of Romans. Romans chapter 9. Now it's important to go to Romans 9 because I'm actually going to move away from Romans and come back to Romans so if this is the only passage you find, find Romans 9. You're going to get the majority of what we're going to study in this passage. Romans, 9. Paul is writing about the sovereign choice of God and in verse 14, well, what shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? You know, if there's something inside you that's rising up when you hear about the sovereignty of God and you say this just isn't fair. Paul speaks to that. He says, what shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means. For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. In other words, it's God saying I'm the one who sets the course of life in motion. I will have mercy on whom I have mercy. Verse 16, so then it depends not on humans will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. Who is the author of salvation? God. The scriptures make it very clear that God is the definitive beginning and end and everything in the middle that is required to understand salvation and its completion. God is sovereign.

So, you get to this - what is a logical conclusion about evangelism? Remember, that's what we're talking about so let's stay on task. What is a logical conclusion about evangelism in light of these verses? Why bother? Why bother being a witness for Christ is it's all so not tied up, put together in eternity's path? Why bother? This is a question that we always ask when we come to this point in our Reformed Theology class that I teach at the Classes at Crossroads. We usually teach it annually. It's a class we teach, basically the theology of the church. The church is reformed in its theology so we talk about what it means to follow after a sovereign God; what it means to be a part of the predestined nature of God and we always come to this concept, sooner or later. Someone in the class is going to ask; put their hand up kind of sheepishly and say, well, if we serve a sovereign God why evangelize? And I love that point in the class because then there's a convergence of life and theology at this question and it's as if if we don't answer it with a sense of depth, a sense of biblical understanding; if we cop out then it will leave us hanging. So, I understand the importance of the question. Why bother? Usually we'll go around the class. We'll talk about it for a bit. Eventually, some timid soul will say - well, I know this is not really the answer you're looking for and this probably doesn't give us everything we want to know about this but doesn't the bible say that we should evangelize? Doesn't, they'll say, doesn't God command us to evangelize. I know that's not everything you want but doesn't it? I'll stop. I'll say, you're kidding me? You mean just because commands us to do something wouldn't that be enough? Have you ever had one of those conversations with your kids, you know, when you want them to do something and you've explained it to them but they still come back and say why do I have to do that? And you get frustrated and you finally say because I'm your father. That's why. Just do it. That's often how we think of obedience.

I'm going to tell you two things of why to tell. Number one the scripture says, we witness, we evangelize out of obedience to God; because it's what the Word of God calls us to be, calls us to do. R.C. Sproul writes this, great noted theologian of our time: How can we believe in the sovereignty of God and despise the mandates of a sovereign God? Obedience is no small reason to evangelize. It is the reason to evangelize. And the Word is filled with the commands. We saw it last week - Matthew 28:19 Jesus says go, make disciples of all nations. What is that? That's a command. We're to go. Mark 16:15 Jesus says go into all the world. Proclaim the Gospel to the whole of creation. A command. Go. You ought to write this passage down. 1 Peter 3:15. Put it in the leaf of your bible. Put it somewhere. How do we honor Christ? 1 Peter 3:15 tells us always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope

that is in you. Always be ready Peter says to be a witness. That means when your child across from your kitchen counter asks you a spiritual question you're ready. That means when you're out in the community with a friend and they've seen the transition in your life and they begin asking, they begin probing. What is this going on with you? You're ready. That means when you're at your work place and someone, a coworker you work with comes up and asks you about spiritual things, you're ready. This is how we honor Christ.

Obedience to being ready is no small reason to evangelize but, let's be just gut honest. Let me be gut honest. I know obedience is no small reason to evangelize but to be honest it's not the most compelling reason to me to witness. I mean for me to put myself out there; to be in a place uncertainty; to be in a place where I'm not in control of the outcome and it might look really bad on me I'm not sure if obedience alone is the motivating factor. And even today that's not the motivating factor. In fact, you know what compels me to tell others about Christ? It's actually found, hold your place in Romans because we're going to come right back to it. Over one book, if you go to the right. One book. You're in Corinthians. We've been there for months and months. Corinthians chapter 3. I know you probably don't remember this passage because we taught it just ages ago but let me just bring it back to your memory. I I Corinthians, chapter 3 the Corinthians are going through division in the church. Remember that? And they're asking Paul well, who should be follow? Do we follow Paul? Do we follow Apollos, do we follow Peter. Really. Who is it? And there was all this division around the leaders. And so what does Paul say? Paul says something that compels me when I read it to be involved in the telling of others about Christ. Paul says, chapter 3, verse 5. What then is Apollos? What is Paul? What are we as leaders? That's what he's saying to the church in Corinth. Servants. And remember what we learned about the word servants? This word servant is not just the sense of slave servant but the idea behind servant is kind of like galley slave or like table setter or waiter. That's what Paul is equating himself. He's says all I am is a waiter for Christ. I'm a servant but watch this. Through whom you believed. And then he goes on - as the Lord assigned to each. Do you hear what Paul is saying? Now Paul is the author of Romans. Paul is the author of Ephesians where he's talking and teaching us about the sovereignty of God and what does he say to the Corinthians? He says, what are we as people who proclaim the Gospel? We're just servants but he understands his role, doesn't he? He goes on to say it's through, it was through them. It was through Paul, it was through Apollos that the Corinthians became believers so God not only orchestrates their salvation but what does He do? He's also involved in the means to their salvation so the sovereign God before eternity passed did not only plan their salvation but planned the how of their salvation and how was their salvation realized? But through someone else. Through Paul. Through Apollos.

You see, we do not contribute to the finished work of salvation. We are invited to cooperate in the process. That's the beauty of being called a witness of Christ and so I said two reasons. Number 1 - out of obedience but the second reason and the most compelling reason for me to be involved in evangelism is because it's a privilege. It's a privilege to be used by God and I think that's the sense of the divine when He says in a command out of obedience to evangelize you're just not going out spreading any message. You're spreading the greatest message of humanity and it's a privilege to be used by God for someone to come to the understanding and knowledge of Grace.

Now, you're in Corinthians. Flip back to Romans. You were in 9. I want you to look in Romans, chapter 10. Now that you know why to tell is out of obedience and because of a privilege, an honor you've got to remember what it is that we're honored, that we're privileged to tell about. So, Romans chapter 10, Romans 9 we learned about the sovereignty of God. Romans 10 we learn about the Gospel itself and I'm going to start in verse 9 but you know what I'd rather you do is not look because there's going to be a time for you to look at the scriptures but listen. Just listen to this. Paul says if you confess with your mouth that

Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved, for with the heart one believes and is justified and with the mouth one confesses and is saved for the scripture says everyone who believes in Him will not be put to shame for there is no distinction between Jew and Greek. That same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing His riches on all who call on Him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Isn't that a beautiful passage of scripture? You know why? Because it's the Gospel. You know there's no reading between the lines. There's no exception. There's no clause off to the side. It just says listen, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. It's the simple Gospel.

Now, now I want you to look. Look at verse 14. On the heels of this amazing passage he says, but, but...how are they to call on Him whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching and how are they to preach unless they are sent? We just got done with chapter 9 in the sovereignty of God and now in chapter 10 he's saying how can they hear unless you be the witness? Do you hear what's going on in chapter 9? It lays down the foundation. God's in control of salvation. But He uses you. The burden is not on you to convince somebody. The burden is not on you to try to bring them out of the grips of hell into eternity with Christ. That's not your burden. That's the burden of God. Your only burden is actually, not a burden at all. It's a privilege to be able to just tell. Just tell the glorious, grace of God and look. What does it say? Verse 15, end of it. How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news? Now, this is not talking about the physical feet of someone who brings good news. You look down after someone tells you and you say my, nice pedicure; nice toes. No. It's not that. It's metaphorical. It's this idea of the person who's bringing the news.

Actually, this comes out of Isaiah 52:7. Now, let me just read Isaiah 52:7 to you in context. It says this – how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.” Isaiah was writing during a time when Israel was displaced out of their land. And he’s writing at that time and he’s saying there’s a promise, that you Israel will be brought back into the land and how beautiful it will be when you hear those people announcing victory. You see, you have to understand it in historical context. You see, when a city would go to battle they would send their men out and then they would wait because there wasn’t any CNN. There wasn’t any Fox News. There wasn’t any cell phone coverage. They had to wait for news from the battleground to see whether or not they, as a people were going to survive; if their city was going to survive; to see what was next in their future. They had to wait. And ultimately, during the battle, if the battle was going one way or the other and it was close to either victory or defeat they would send out a runner and the runner would head back to the city and there would be sentinels placed along the way. And as the runner was approaching the city they would yell up and say how is he running? In other words, is he running fleet of foot? Is there a sense of joy in his stride because he’s coming to deliver good news or is he heavy of foot? And he’s down-trodden because he’s bringing news of defeat? How is he running? Because if he’s running with a sense of victory how beautiful is his feet that come to bring good news. That’s the context and what Paul is saying it’s a beautiful thing to hear the news of grace. How beautiful are those who bring you the news.

I don't know if you remember who it was or the occasion but someone told you. I remember very distinctly first understanding, I mean, really grasping the news of grace and I remember the man who brought it to me. His name is John. He actually was an acquaintance of mine during high school. Now if I can just back up the clock for a few moments I went to a Christian high school. For the majority of my high school experience I was in a private, Christian school and I was in a, what I would term as a semi-Christian family. We went to church on Easter and Christmas. My grandparents were really the patriarchs of the Christian faith and so I just went along with it and I remember making a profession of faith at an early age but to be honest it never really permeated inside of me. I really wasn't living a life for Christ. I wasn't being a Christ follower. And actually, if truth be told, as I was approaching my senior year I wanted nothing to do with Christianity. In fact, I wanted as far away from the confines of Christianity and sure enough, as soon as graduation happened I bolted. I was out. I was out doing what I wanted, when I wanted, with whomever I wanted. And there was a great sense of freedom. But I remember that time because along with the freedom came this nagging sense of despair. It usually struck at night, right after I had been out doing whatever I wanted to do. I'd lay my head down on the pillow and there was just this sense of emptiness and I couldn't shake it. No matter what I threw at that hole, at night, when I would lay down there was just this sense of emptiness.

Alright, run the clock ahead three years I'm out, I bump into my friend John. Now, I always knew John was a committed believer and he said hey, how are you doing? And we started talking. He said we ought to get together and I said I'd love to get together. He said let's plan it. I said ok – Friday night. I will be at this bar called Diablo's, which ironically means devil and I said I will be there occupying my favorite stool. Let's meet. Now, I was kind of waiting. I knew this was probably not a place he would frequent and John says, alright. I'll see you Friday. So, there I am, Friday night, on my favorite bar stool and I'm just keeping an eye on the door. Nine o'clock rolls around and in walks my friend John. Sits down beside me at the bar and we start having a conversation. And the conversation lasts well into the evening and it was light, it was just kind of friendly banter and talking and I never felt like I was a project. I never felt like he was there for a notch in his belt. He was just being a friend and over the course of that night things in our conversation strangely moved to things that were serious, telling and things about God and where I was and I was honest with him about that sense of despair. And he spoke into my life the Gospel. Now, to be honest with you I thought I had run the gamut of God's patience and He probably really didn't want anything more to do with me. I systematically attempted to break every command that I could think of that would not land me in jail. And so, I'm thinking God probably does not want anything to do with me.

Do you remember in John, chapter 8 when Jesus was out teaching and the Pharisees brought the woman caught in adultery and threw at her at His feet? Now, she's caught in the middle of adultery. That's embarrassing enough, right? But, it really wasn't about the woman. It was about Jesus. The Pharisees wanted to entrap Him. And they bring this woman, drop her at His feet and say the law says that we should stone this woman because she was caught in adultery. What do you say? That's all they want to do. They wanted to trap Jesus because if He said yes, we should stone her they would say well you can't be the Messiah. There's no ounce of compassion in you whatsoever. If He said no. We can't stone her. They would say well, you don't follow the Mosaic Law. You can't be the Messiah. He can't win either way. He says, alright. Tell you what. All of you lined up here who brought her. You want to stone her?

Let's start a new line right here. If you don't have any sin get in line. Throw your rock. And what happens? One by one they drop their rocks, right? And then they disappear until only the story is left – Jesus and the woman and He bends down to her. Now, at this point if you ever wondered what the divine was thinking at a particular sin or a life gone awry here is the moment.

In fact, let's just take this one step further. I want you to imagine in your mind the most heinous sin you ever committed. We all have them. We've all done something. We've all said something, acted out something. We all might confess that and seek forgiveness and we know God takes it from the east to the west and parts it and doesn't remember it but we do. And we hide it back into that closet of skeletons and we would never want anyone to know it. And when I say your most heinous sin I bet you can nail this down pretty closely to what is in that closet. Now, imagine after just finishing that sin your life ended and you were standing before God the Father? What would you imagine Him to say to you? Would He say, I expected a lot more out of you? Would He say, this doesn't surprise me. I've reached my limit. Off to hell with you. What would he say? How do we know? We know by what Jesus in that moment, kneeling down before this woman caught in the middle of adultery. We know by what He said to her. What did He say to her? Did He say I'm ashamed? I can't even believe that you did this. What did He say? You know what the text says? He didn't say anything. He didn't even mention it. He said you are forgiven. Now go. Sin no more.

How beautiful are the feet of the one who brings the message of Good News. You see that's why we tell. We tell because it's happened to us and now we want it to happen to those around you. Yes. I know. The emotion of stepping out in faith and obedience to tell is trying at every level. But you know what I've found? Those emotions slip away when you put before you the privilege of telling your friend who does not yet know Jesus. Or when you go, you stand up. You walk across the room and you start that friendship with an old acquaintance. Or when you're at your work and that person who seems that their life is spinning out of control and you have the answer. That's why we tell. Now, we just have to learn what to tell and how to tell. So, you have to come back and we'll pick it up here next week.

Will you pray with me?