**What Is Personal Evangelism?**

*by John Isaac Edwards*

Evangelism is the personal responsibil­ity of every Christian. We have been saved to save (1 Timothy 4:16), taught to teach (2 Timothy 2:2), and won to win (Proverbs 11:30). Per­sonal evangelism is described different ways in the Scriptures. In this brief writing, we capture three snapshots of personal evangelism:

***Personal Evangelism Is Sowing Seed.***In the Parable of the Sower, the word of God is set forth as seed and the different soils represent the hearts of men and women (Luke 8:5-15). Since we do not know men’s hearts, we must put the word in every heart possible, and pray the seed lodges in good soil and God will see fit to give “the increase” (1 Corinthians 3:6). The Psalmist said, “He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (Psalm 126:6). As Haggai asked, “Is the seed yet in the barn?” (Haggai 2:19), we must get the seed out of the barn and into the soil!

***Personal Evangelism Is Fishing for Men.***As Peter and Andrew, two Bible fishermen, were casting a net into the Sea of Galilee, Jesus said, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men (Matthew 4:18-19). In Luke’s account the Lord said, “...Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught...And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes...” (Luke 5:4, 6). Peter was told, “...from henceforth thou shalt catch men” (Luke 5:10). On the day of Pentecost, Peter let down the net and “inclosed a great multitude of fishes” as “about three thousand souls” gladly received his word and were baptized (Acts 2:41). If we want to see a great “draught” (catch or haul of fish), we must launch out and let down the net! Gone fishin’ lately?

***Personal Evangelism Is Winning Souls.***Wisdom literature teaches us, “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise” (Proverbs 11:30). Daniel 12:3 re­cords, “And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; And they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” Winning souls is turning souls to righ­teousness through the power of the gospel (Ro­mans 1:16). In the words of the song *Lead Me to Some Soul Today*, “Open hearts of those I love, to hear and heed the gospel call; May they start to heaven above, and may they never fall.”

That’s personal evangelism!

**Are You A Legalist?***by Brett W. Hogland*

Most Christians have, at one time or another, been accused of being a “legalist”. Of course, the term legalist is used in derision intending that we would run backwards in horror of being connected with the denominational implications of this word. In most religious circles, the term legalist is connected to the Pharisees and its meaning is assigned as being necessarily devoid of love or any proper motive. Obviously then, no one wants to be characterized as a legalist. But have you ever stopped to think about what legalist really means?

***What does “legalist” mean?***

First, it is important to realize that this word is not even used in the Bible. Since the word is not found in the Bible, we will have to define it from the English language. Webster defines legal as: “*deriving authority from or founded on law”; “conforming to or permitted by law or established rules”*. So then, a legalist is one who *derives his authority from law, or founds his authority on law*. The true legalist *conforms to the law or established rules*. He does those things that are *permitted by law or established rules*. Now you will obviously see that, while this word is not found in the Bible, the concept of “legalist” is definitely found there (Col. 3:17; Heb. 8:5; Jn. 4:24; Matt. 28:18-20).

**“…*teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you”*** (Matt. 28:20). It is also interesting that the *concept* of legalism or legalist is not used in derision in the Scriptures! We can often learn a lot about a term or a phrase by examining its antonym or opposite. The opposite of legal is illegal. There is no such word as “illegalist” (which is what our accusers really are) so what is a person who is not a legalist? We can see from the definition that one who is not a legalist is one who DOES NOT *derive his authority from law*. He DOES NOT *conform to the law and*DOES NOT *do only those things permitted by law*. The Bible actually has a term that describes a person who does not *found his authority upon law* – that term is “lawless”. This word is used in (Matt. 7:23) where Jesus says “depart from me, you who practice *lawlessness*”. The KJV translates this word “iniquity”. It is the Greek word *anomia* which means *without law*. A legalist conforms to law, thus one who is not a legalist is essentially *without law* or *lawless* – a *spiritual outlaw*! John tells us that “whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness” (1 Jn. 3:4). The Bible tells us that Jesus “hated lawlessness” (Heb. 1:9). Would that make Jesus a “legalist”? You see a legalist is not necessarily devoid of love or any proper motive.

The word “legalist” simply describes a person who finds it important to conform to the proper law or authority. A man’s motive, love or lack thereof does not inhere in the word. There is no doubt that our motive to keep God’s law must be love (Matt. 22:37), but love without law keeping is condemning (Lk. 6:46) and really isn’t ‘love’ at all (Jn. 14:15). Jesus did NOT rebuke the Pharisees for their strict attention to law. When He spoke of their tithing of mint, anise and cummin (Matt. 23:23), He did not criticize their tithing but their failure to show mercy, justice and faith. Jesus said “these you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone”. We should not pursue law keeping and ignore justice, mercy and faith, but neither should we pursue justice and mercy while ignoring law keeping. Jesus never criticized law keeping, but rather, He himself kept the law perfectly. I ask again, was Jesus a legalist? I believe He was and I am satisfied to be as Jesus. The alternative to being a legalist is to be lawless, which is the reason that many who hate legalism will also tell us that we are not under law. This effort to escape the accountability of Christ’s law is lawlessness and lawlessness is sin. Are you a legalist or are you lawless?

We are thrilled to have John Isaac Edwards and Brett Hogland with us again for this year’s preacher training program! We are also excited to have each of the students for the program this year! Let’s make them all feel welcomed and happy that they are working with us throughout this week!