

## Paradise Lost and Restored: What is Evangelism? (Part 2)

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### I. Introduction

Sharing your faith can be done by sharing passages of Scripture which show that Jesus, through the Cross, is able to grant anyone who believes in Him everlasting life. But it can also be done by showing them how Jesus, through the Cross, saves them right now.

### II. Sharing Your Faith Can (and should) Be Relational

I said before that Jesus never talks about life after death or hell when evangelizing people. He actually does; in fact, it's in one of the most famous evangelistic verses, John 3:16. But notice that in that same verse He mentions everlasting life. What is everlasting life? An eternal relationship with God and His Son that begins right now, John 17:3, 20-26. So Jesus' Gospel, His Goodnews, is not just about hell. In fact, it's often about saving people from their problems right now:

**How did Jesus evangelize?** *A man who's been an invalid 38 years, John 5*, out of all the people waiting to be healed by the pool of Bethesda, Jesus picks out a man who's been an invalid 38 years. He asks him if he wants to be made well and then heals him. But then Jesus walks away. Why? This was a perfect opportunity to give the man "the Gospel"? Perhaps Jesus feared being arrested since this was the Sabbath? Actually, He wasn't; this is clear from the fact that He goes back and has a long argument with those who didn't like what He did on the Sabbath. Further, Jesus runs into the man a second time. OK, now Jesus will give him "the Gospel message," right? Nope, He doesn't. Instead, He tells him not to sin again, lest a worse thing happen to him. What?!

Did Jesus give this man "the Gospel"? In the ensuing dialogue with His adversaries, Jesus reveals some interesting things: He and His Father, God, have been giving life to people ever since the beginning (5:17, 21). Didn't Jesus give the man life—his body was unable to walk, now it is? The life Jesus offers does more than just save us from hell, John 10:10. Finally, if the man stuck around for this dialogue between Jesus and His adversaries, then he likely believed in Jesus. But even if he didn't, the miracle Jesus did for him was designed to make him believe in Jesus, 20:30-31. Thus, eventually he would've realized that Jesus was not just another miracle worker who fixed his body, but his Savior.

*The woman caught in adultery, John 8*, trying to get Jesus to say something against the Mosaic Law, the scribes and Pharisees bring a woman who was caught in adultery. The Law demanded her death, what would Jesus say? First He ignores them, but they persist. So He says to them, "He who is without sin, cast the first stone." Everyone walks away in shame. Since Jesus just saved her life, surely He's going to give her "the Gospel." What does He do? He asks where her accusers went and, "Has no one condemned you?" She replies, "No one, Lord." Then Jesus says, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." What?! As with the rich young ruler, Jesus starts talking about doing good works. Shouldn't that come second, after they believe in Him? Not if you see the Gospel as Goodnews that brings life, period. Did Jesus give this woman life? Yes! In fact, He then says, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." Jesus is not telling her to work for her salvation. He's inviting her into relationship with Him. He's saying, "If you want any kind of life, you won't find it anywhere else but with Me."

The man born blind, John 9, when Jesus and His disciples pass by a man born blind, they wonder if he or his parents sinned for him to end up this way. Jesus reveals that no one sinned. Instead, God made this man blind so that He could reveal Jesus as the One who turns back darkness and brings light to the world. Jesus then proceeds to heal him but interestingly enough, He lets him go without giving him the “Gospel.” What?! In the meantime, the Pharisees interrogate him because Jesus healed him on the Sabbath and because they were afraid that some might accept Jesus as the Messiah (Christ). They kept asking him to repeat his story, but they refused to believe it. They finally kick him out of the synagogue. Jesus hears about it, runs into him, and asks him, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” The man says, “Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?” Jesus replies, “You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you.” The man says, “Lord, I believe!” Why did Jesus let him go the first time without a “Gospel message?” What’s the Gospel? If you think that the Gospel is a formalized message you give to people, Jesus’ actions won’t make sense to you. But if you see the Gospel as Goodnews that Jesus came not just to save us from hell but have an eternal relationship with us, then you’ll see that Jesus was establishing a relationship with this man that began by Him giving his dead eyes life. Eternal life is not an object; it’s a Person by the name of Jesus Christ, 1 John 1:2. And He came not only to save us, but to dwell with us forever.

**Elijah shares his faith with a non-Christian, 1 Kings 17**, Elijah is about to share his faith with a widow who’s in a desperate situation. But in order to share your faith, you have to have something to share. What does God teach Elijah in 17:1-7, which he will later share with the widow? That God can keep you alive; whatever you need to live, He can provide. Having taught Elijah this lesson, God sends him to a desperate Gentile widow who does not believe in Elijah’s God. When he gets there, Elijah discovers that the widow who’s supposed to provide for him is about to die of starvation. But God has already taught Elijah this lesson when He miraculously kept him alive. So Elijah tells the woman not to worry, that the last bit of flour and oil will not run out until God ends the drought devastating the land. So she latches on to Elijah’s faith and does as he says. And it happened just as Elijah said it would: the flour and oil lasted many days. God is inviting the woman into relationship with Him. Through Elijah He’s telling her, “I am your source of life.” But she doesn’t quite believe that yet. She can see that Elijah’s God is strong, but she hasn’t switched her allegiance from her false god to Elijah’s God.

Next, her son becomes so ill that he dies. This causes her to walk further away from God and back to the place where she was when Elijah got there, death, 17:18 (17:12). She believes a lie, that God sent Elijah there to kill her son, something she needs to repent of. So Elijah takes her son and now it’s Elijah’s turn to repent—to ask God, “What just happened?”—and to ask Him for the truth. And he does, he asks God to bring the boy back to life and God does so causing the widow to believe in Him. She believes what God is telling her through Elijah: “I am your source of life and not even death can stop Me.”

The Gospel is that God wants an eternal relationship with you where He brings life to your dead world. Yes, the life Jesus gives saves you from hell. But it also saves you from much more. And if you have an opportunity to share your faith like this, the non-Christian will not only realize that Jesus saves them from the lake of fire, they’ll see that He came to save them from everything else too, He came to give them an abundant life with Him forever.

### III. Conclusion

*.... I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*