

# Evangelism in the New Testament

by Glen Davis (revision 2.0, 1/14/2008)

This is not an essay on how to share your faith effectively. Nor is this an essay telling you how the early church did it. If you are interested in the former, I can recommend no finer volume than Jim Peterson's *Living Proof*. If you are interested in the latter, I suggest Michael Green's *Evangelism in the Early Church* combined with Rodney Stark's *The Rise of Christianity*.

Rather than giving you a how-to manual or a historical overview, I simply want to examine what the New Testament says about evangelism, for I fear we have forgotten.

There are two sorts of evidence we must consider: what does the New Testament command us to do and what does the New Testament model for us? We will first consider the exhortations and then turn our eye to the examples.

## ***Exhortation: What Does The New Testament Command?***

Matthew 7:12 reads "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets." (NRSV)

In *everything*, Jesus says. So if we intend to obey our master, we must do evangelism in the exact same way that we would want it done to us. Instead, we tend to believe that the ends justify the means in evangelism. Churches frequently sanction behaviors that would cause them to go ballistic if practiced by a mosque or an atheistic group. This is hypocritical and wrong.

Along these lines, there are at least three ways Christians disgrace the gospel:

- Intrusive Evangelism
- Judgmental Evangelism
- Deceptive Evangelism

***Intrusive evangelism*** is all too common. Sermon illustrations celebrate brave souls who knock on strangers' doors. Youth groups hold outreach nights which make the adults in the congregation celebrate while cringing. In the post-outreach debriefing the ones with the most outlandish stories are rejoiced over - much as soldiers pat the backs of their foolhardy comrades.

What is wrong with knocking on strangers' doors? Simply this: you get annoyed when Mormons knock on your door<sup>1</sup> or when telemarketers call you on the phone. You don't want it done unto you, so don't do it unto them.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless, of course, you are one of those individuals who just enjoys arguing with cultists, in which case the parallel is a bad one. A better counterpart for you is to ask how you feel when the vacuum cleaner salesman knocks on your door.

I can hear the yowling response already: “But people get saved this way!” Irrelevant. We never do evil that good may result. Besides – the fact that some people get saved is only part of the truth. Intrusive evangelism has negative consequences as well – we have to be aware of the bridges we burn as well as the bridges we build. When we do not obey the Golden Rule in evangelism we forever alienate some people from the Gospel.

Consider the common outreach strategy of talking to strangers on the street. There is nothing necessarily wrong with this, but it can be done in a wrong way. Are there not times you have been stopped on the street by a marketer who gave you something you wanted (a sample of soda or candy, for instance)? In such cases you are happy to receive their sample and whatever literature accompanies it. Clearly, then, there is a way to talk to people on the street that does not automatically violate the Golden Rule.

But aren't there other times that you have been in such a hurry that you would not have stopped for twenty dollars lying on the sidewalk? Are there not times that you merely craved the privacy that a busy city sidewalk affords you? How would you respond if a marketer approached you? You would likely give them a curt nod, say “No thank you” and keep walking. And at this point you would not be frustrated. But say the marketer persisted. “No, this is the best soda you've ever tried.” At that point they have crossed a clearly-defined cultural line. They were well within societal norms to make the initial offer, and you were well within societal norms to politely refuse. But for them to persist is wrong. We feel it in our bones.

And so we see the underlying principle that links the examples: we should not intrude upon other people. If someone does not wish to be talked to, we should not talk to them.

Again I can hear the exasperated reply, “Don't you think you're taking this Golden Rule thing a little too far? How do I know they don't want to be talked to, anyway? You don't even have any verses that directly say what you're saying – you're really stretching here.”

Let us take a look at the New Testament and see what it actually says:

Always be prepared to give an **answer** to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with **gentleness** and **respect**,<sup>16</sup> keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. 1 Peter 3:15b-16, NIV

Notice the key words: answer, gentleness, and respect.

1. **Answer**: you are responding to their curiosity. You are not the intrusive initiator.
2. **Gentleness**: you are pleasant and agreeable. You are not harsh and aggressive.
3. **Respect**: you are polite and attentive. You are not rude or abusive.

Is Peter's advice a Biblical anomaly? Let's see what Paul has to say.

We reject all shameful and underhanded methods. **We do not try to trick anyone**, and we do not distort the word of God. We tell the truth before God, and all who are honest know that. 2 Cor 4:2, NLT

“We do not try to trick anyone,” the apostle boasts. Would that all Christian ministries could say that with integrity!

How do we trick people?

- By using fake surveys to create pretexts for evangelistic conversations.
- By inviting people to a free meal without telling them they have to sit through a sermon while they’re eating.
- By hosting a recreational haunted house and turning the last room into a real choice.

That is Paul’s negative advice – “we reject underhanded methods”. Here’s what he says positively. Notice how similar it sounds to Peter’s instruction.

Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time.<sup>6</sup> Let your speech always be **gracious**, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to **answer** everyone. Col 4:5-6 NRSV

Again, notice the word: “answer.” It presupposes an existing relationship and dialog. And the conversation should be gracious, not obnoxious. It should be flavorful and interesting.

So the voice of the apostles is consistent – and our Master Himself commanded us to follow the Golden Rule in everything. So what does He say when speaking specifically of outreach?  
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the believer **except** when there was a preexisting relationship or when there was a miraculous leading from God.

This table makes the pattern easier to see:

<b>Approached By Unbelievers</b>	<b>Initiated by Believers</b>
As a stranger, Nicodemus approached Jesus. As a stranger, the rich young ruler approached Jesus. As a stranger, Cornelius approaches Peter who responds because of a special vision from God. As a stranger, the jailer asks Paul and Silas how he can be saved. As a stranger, Felix beckons Paul to explain the faith. As a stranger, Agrippa invites Paul to explain the gospel.	Levi invites his friends to a party. As a friend, Philip approached Nathaniel. Led by the Spirit, Philip approached the Ethiopian eunuch. Empowered by the Spirit, Jesus witnesses to the Samaritan woman.

So unless we already know someone or unless we have a special prompting from God, we should walk very carefully in our evangelism.

So that is the Biblical model we have of interpersonal evangelism.

But what about mass evangelism (preaching) in the early church?

### ***Examples: Evangelistic Sermons in the Book of Acts***

In Appendix B, I list and analyze each of the examples of group evangelism in the Book of Acts. If you study the appendix, you will notice that these New Testament preachers followed similar guidelines for mass proclamation to those they advocated for interpersonal witnessing.

Again, this chart will be helpful:

	<b>Where</b>	<b>Why (if the text says)</b>
Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2)	In a public place	The crowd was curious about the apostles' bizarre behavior
Peter addresses the crowd (Acts 3)	The temple	A crowd gathers in response to a miracle
Stephen addresses the Sanhedrin (Acts 7)	The council chambers	He was on trial
Paul in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13)	A synagogue	As a visiting rabbi, Paul was invited to share

Paul in Iconium (Acts 14)	A synagogue	
Paul in Lystra (Acts 14)	A public place	Paul and Barnabas are mistaken for Greek gods after a miraculous healing
Paul in Philippi (Acts 16)	A place for prayer	
Paul in Thessalonica (Acts 17)	A synagogue	
Paul in Athens (Acts 17)	On Mars Hill, the place where ideas were debated	Paul was invited to share by the town's intellectuals
Paul at Corinth (Acts 18)	Starts in a synagogue and then uses the home of a nearby seeker	
Paul at Ephesus (Acts 19)	Starts in a synagogue and then uses a lecture hall daily for two years	
Paul before the Jewish Leaders in Rome (Acts 28)	In Paul's home	Paul invited key religious leaders over so he could talk with them about Jesus

The general rule of the apostles seems to have been to begin preaching in a place where people expect to hear about new ideas: synagogues, the temple, philosophical debate areas, and lecture halls. Rarely did they begin preaching in the streets, and when they did it was in response to a miracle. Almost always they began preaching because they were invited to do so (although they would often skillfully arrange for an invitation to be given, Paul was particularly good at this).

This is all well and good, but what of our prayer life? That is the heartbeat of evangelism, after all. What do the evangelistic prayers of the New Testament have to teach us?

### ***Examples: How Do The Apostles Pray For Evangelism?***

Contrasting the evangelistic prayers of the modern church with the evangelistic prayers of the New Testament is fascinating. I've analyzed each evangelistic prayer in the New Testament in Appendix C (and two that seem to be but aren't are included in Appendix D), but this overview should be helpful.

Acts 4:23-31	"enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."
Romans 10:1	"my prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved."
Ephesians 6:19-20	"pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should."
Colossians 4:3-4	"pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in

	chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.”
2 Thessalonians 3:1	“pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you.”

The New Testament prayers for evangelism are almost uniformly messenger-centered. Our typical prayer should be that God gives us boldness and effectiveness in proclamation to nonbelievers. Not that he will “just save them.”

However, Paul’s prayer for Israel and Paul’s prayer request from the Thessalonians demonstrate that there’s nothing wrong with praying for the conversion of people in aggregate.

With that caveat, it is surprising that there is no hint of what we call “intercessory prayer” in the New Testament. Nowhere do believers gather to pray for unbelievers by name. And when Paul singles out a group of easily nameable individuals for prayer (kings and those in authority), he doesn’t ask the church to pray for their salvation but rather that God would restrain them from meddling with the church.

## So What Does This Mean For Us?

We must pray earnestly to the Lord for boldness. We need to share our faith actively and aggressively. But we need to do so in a way that honors God and honors His Word.

The last two verses of Acts are instructive for us: “<sup>28:30</sup>Paul lived there two whole years in his own rented quarters and **welcomed** all who came to him, <sup>28:31</sup>proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with **complete boldness** and without restriction.” (New English Translation)

There is no contradiction between being a bold witness and being responsive in evangelism. Paul built the New Testament church using this approach.

So let us welcome all those who come to us, and let us be wise in discerning the most culturally acceptable ways to go to them. In this way, we will build more bridges than we burn, and more will be joining us in heaven.

## **Appendix A: Examples of Interpersonal Evangelism**

There are many examples of interpersonal evangelism in the New Testament. Let us consider some of the most prominent.

In each case, consider the following aspects of the encounter:

1. Was there a previous relationship between the two parties?
2. Who initiated the conversation?
3. Was there a miraculous component?

### **Jesus & Nicodemus (John 3:1-21)**

Nicodemus sought out Jesus at night. The conversation was philosophical and explanatory. Whenever Nicodemus asked follow-up questions Jesus answered them. Nicodemus does not appear to have converted immediately after this conversation.

- 1) Was there a previous relationship? No.
- 2) Who initiated the conversation? Nicodemus.
- 3) Was there a miraculous component? No.

### **Jesus & Samaritan Woman (John 4)**

Jesus asks an ethnic rival for a drink of water. The conversation shifts direction abruptly when Jesus speaks prophetically to her. Before it was playful and bantering – afterwards it became much more serious. At the end, she placed her faith in Him.

- 1) Was there a previous relationship? No.
- 2) Who initiated the conversation? Jesus.
- 3) Was there a miraculous component? Yes – Jesus received prophetic insight about the details of her life.

### **Jesus & Rich Young Ruler (Mark 10:17-31)**

A wealthy young leader approaches Jesus to be His disciple. Jesus challenges the young leader to give all his wealth away and the young man decides not to follow Jesus after all.

- 1) Was there a previous relationship? No.
- 2) Who initiated the conversation? The young ruler.
- 3) Was there a miraculous component? No.

### **Levi & Friends (Luke 5:27-32)**

Levi met Jesus, and so he threw a banquet and invited all of his friends to meet Jesus too.

- 1) Was there a previous relationship? Yes.
- 2) Who initiated the conversation? Levi.
- 3) Was there a miraculous component? No.

### **Philip & Nathaniel (John 1:43-51)**

Philip sought out Nathaniel to invite him to meet Jesus. Jesus convinces Nathaniel that he is the Christ.

- 1) Was there a previous relationship? Yes.
- 2) Who initiated the conversation? Philip.
- 3) Was there a miraculous component? Yes, but only after Nathaniel met Jesus.  
Philip's conversation with Nathaniel was very normal.

### **Philip & Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-40)**

The Lord tells Philip to travel along a certain road, where he overhears a man reading the Bible. Philip asks him about it and soon leads the man to faith in Christ and baptizes him.

- 1) Was there a previous relationship? No.
- 2) Who initiated the conversation? Philip.
- 3) Was there a miraculous component? Yes.

### **Peter & Cornelius (Acts 10)**

Peter is fasting when God speaks to him in a vision telling him to go to Cornelius' house and preach the gospel to them. Not only do they convert, but they are filled with the Holy Spirit.

- 1) Was there a previous relationship? No.
- 2) Who initiated the conversation? Cornelius sends for Peter.
- 3) Was there a miraculous component? Yes.

### **Paul To His Jailer (Acts 16)**

Paul and Silas are thrown into prison after casting a demon out of a young slave. As they sing praise to God in prison, God sends an earthquake to open the doors. The jailkeeper is so startled that he runs to the missionaries and asks what he must do to be saved.

- 1) Was there a previous relationship? No.
- 2) Who initiated the conversation? Tough call, but I'd say the jailer.
- 3) Was there a miraculous component? Yes.

### **Paul Before Felix (Acts 24)**

Paul is arrested and his judge, Felix, asks him to explain the gospel.

- 1) Was there a previous relationship? Sort of. Felix never met Paul until Paul was arrested, and after hearing his defense wanted to hear more about the faith.
- 2) Who initiated the conversation? Felix.
- 3) Was there a miraculous component? No.

### **Paul Before Agrippa (Acts 26)**

Felix sends Paul to Agrippa for consultation, and Agrippa asks Paul to explain the gospel to him. Agrippa does not convert.

- 1) Was there a previous relationship? No.
- 2) Who initiated the conversation? Agrippa.
- 3) Was there a miraculous component? No.



## **Appendix B: Evangelistic Sermons In The Book of Acts**

In the following section, we will investigate each of the recorded evangelistic sermons in the book of Acts. There are many additional side references to evangelism, but generally they have so little detail as to be unhelpful for our purposes. As with the interpersonal examples, we'll ask key questions of each incident and then see if a consistent pattern emerges. We'll consider the following questions:

- 1) Where did the preaching occur?
- 2) Why did the preaching begin?
- 3) How did the message match the audience?
- 4) How was it received?

### **Peter on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2)**

The Holy Spirit comes with power upon the gathered believers. The crowd is puzzled and Peter explains the gospel to them.

- 1) Where did the preaching occur? The preaching occurred in a public setting.
- 2) Why did the preaching begin? The crowd was curious.
- 3) How did the message match the audience? Peter, speaking to pious Jews in town to celebrate a religious festival, began with the immediate circumstances and made extensive use of the Old Testament.
- 4) How was it received? Thousands got saved.

### **Peter Addresses the Crowd (Acts 3)**

After healing a man, Peter and John begin to explain to the gathered crowd what has happened.

- 1) Where did the preaching occur? In the temple area.
- 2) Why did the preaching begin? In response to a miraculous healing.
- 3) How did the message match the audience? Peter spoke to Jews in Jerusalem, and he started with the immediate circumstances and built upon scriptures from the Old Testament.
- 4) How was it received? Peter and John were arrested. Many got saved.

### **Stephen Addresses the Sanhedrin (Acts 7)**

After performing many miracles, Stephen is engaged in a debate by some in the crowd. Unable to defeat him, they seize him and drag him before the Jewish ruling council. They ask him to explain his faith and he does.

- 1) Where did the preaching occur? In the council chambers.
- 2) Why did the preaching begin? Stephen was asked to explain his doctrine.
- 3) How did the message match the audience? Stephen, speaking to a devout religious crowd, tells the whole history of Israel and builds up to Jesus.
- 4) How was it received? Stephen was stoned to death.

### **Paul in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13)**

Paul and his companions visit a synagogue and are invited to preach.

- 1) Where did the preaching occur? In a synagogue.

- 2) Why did the preaching begin? As guests, Paul and Barnabas were invited to share in the synagogue.
- 3) How did the message match the audience? Because they were gathered to study the Scriptures, Paul made extensive use of Old Testament texts.
- 4) How was it received? Many were interested (“almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord” Acts 13:44), but Paul and Barnabas were driven out of the city by jealous leaders. Many were saved before they left.

### **Paul in Iconium (Acts 14)**

Paul and Barnabas arrive in Iconium and stay until they are threatened with violence.

- 1) Where did the preaching occur? “At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue.” (Acts 14:1).
- 2) Why did the preaching begin? The text does not say.
- 3) How did the message match the audience? The text does not say.
- 4) How was it received? “they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed.” (Acts 14:1).

### **Paul in Lystra (Acts 14)**

Paul and Barnabas are preaching when a man was remarkably healed. The crowd tries to honor Paul and Barnabas as gods.

- 1) Where did the preaching occur? It’s not clear, but apparently near the edge of town. There were already believers in the city (verse 20), so perhaps Paul was talking with them and the disabled man overheard them.
- 2) Why did the preaching begin? It’s not clear how the first message began, but the second message began in response to Paul and Barnabas being mistaken for Greek gods.
- 3) How did the message match the audience? We have no details about the first message, and the second message doesn’t seem to have been particularly adapted to the audience.
- 4) How was it received? Not well. Paul was stoned and left for dead.

### **Paul in Philippi (Acts 16)**

Paul and his companions seek out a place of prayer and “we sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there” (Acts 16:13).

- 1) Where did the preaching occur? At a place people gathered to pray.
- 2) Why did the preaching begin? Paul was looking for an opportunity to share the gospel.
- 3) How did the message match the audience? Since Paul wasn’t in a lecture-hall setting, he sat down and talked casually to the women who were gathered there.
- 4) How was it received? A lady named Lydia comes to faith and then her entire household is baptized. A little while later we see that there are many believers in town meeting at Lydia’s house (Acts 16:40).

### **Paul in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9)**

Paul arrives in Thessalonica and chooses to stay because there’s a synagogue.

- 1) Where did the preaching occur? “As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue” (verse 2)
- 2) Why did the preaching begin? The text doesn’t say, but presumably Paul was invited to speak.
- 3) How did the message match the audience? No details of Paul’s message are given.
- 4) How was it received? “Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women.” Acts 17:4.

### **Paul in Berea (Acts 17:10-15)**

Paul, fleeing persecution in Thessalonica, fled to Berea. He found a synagogue and started preaching until his Thessalonian rivals pursued and found him.

- 1) Where did the preaching occur? “On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue.” Acts 17:10
- 2) Why did the preaching begin? The text doesn’t say, but presumably Paul was invited to speak.
- 3) How did the message match the audience? No details are given, but apparently Paul referenced the Old Testament scriptures extensively, because the Bereans searched the Scriptures to see if what Paul said was true.
- 4) How was it received? “Many of the Jews believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.” Acts 17:12

### **Paul in Athens (Acts 17:16-34)**

Paul is talking with people in the marketplace when some intellectual leaders in Athens overhear him. They invite him to explain his philosophy to the gathered leaders of the community. He does so without reference to the Bible, quoting rather pagan poems about Zeus to establish his points. Some converted at the end.

- 1) Where did the preaching occur? On Mars Hill – the place new ideas were discussed.
- 2) Why did the preaching begin? The philosophers were intrigued.
- 3) How did the message match the audience? Speaking to skeptical pagan philosophers, Paul began with a cultural reference (altar to an unknown God) and then used key quotes from pagan hymns to Zeus.
- 4) How was it received? Some got saved.

### **Paul at Corinth (Acts 18)**

Paul, separated from his companions, makes tents and preaches in the synagogue when he can. Once they arrive and can work to support him, he devotes himself to preaching full-time (one implication is that tentmaking is always a second-best option for Paul).

- 1) Where did the preaching occur? Paul started in the synagogue, but once his preaching wasn’t wanted he set up shop in a nearby home.
- 2) Why did the preaching begin? The text doesn’t say, but presumably he was given an invitation to speak at the synagogue just as he was in Acts 13.
- 3) How did the message match the audience? No details of Paul’s proclamation are given.

- 4) How was it received? The leader of the synagogue and many others converted. Paul stayed in Corinth for over a year.

### **Paul at Ephesus (Acts 19)**

Paul arrives at Ephesus and discovers some believers who didn't understand the whole gospel. He explains the Holy Spirit to them and they speak in tongues and prophesy. Paul then enters the synagogue and preaches for three months until his preaching is no longer wanted, so he sets up shop in a lecture hall and preaches there daily for two years.

- 1) Where did the preaching occur? At first in an unknown place where "some disciples" were gathered, then in a synagogue, and then in a lecture hall.
- 2) Why did the preaching begin? The text doesn't say. Presumably the believers wanted to hear from Paul and the synagogue no doubt extended him an invitation as a visiting rabbi as in Acts 13.
- 3) How did the message match the audience? No details are given, except we know that he just focused on the parts of the gospel that the first group misunderstood in his first message.
- 4) How was it received? "all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord" (Acts 19:10), and eventually the idol makers began to see their business suffer so a riot broke out and Paul had to move on.

### **Paul Before the Jewish Leaders in Rome (Acts 28)**

Paul was under arrest in Rome, but was allowed to rent an apartment rather than languish in prison. Three days after arriving he sent invitations to the Jewish leaders of the community.

- 1) Where did the preaching occur? In Paul's home.
- 2) Why did the preaching begin? Paul invited key religious leaders to his home to talk with them.
- 3) How did the message match the audience? Paul was speaking to the leaders of the Jewish community in Rome and built his sermon around the Old Testament.
- 4) How was it received? Unclear. The text does not say. This is where Acts ends.

## **Appendix C: Evangelistic Prayers of the Apostles**

In this appendix, we will investigate each of the apostolic prayers that relate to evangelism. In each case, we'll consider the following aspects of the prayer:

1. Is the prayer asking God to save the lost or is the prayer asking God to empower believers?
2. Are there any miracles requested?

### **The Believers Pray After Persecution (Acts 4:23-31)**

The apostles are released from arrest, and they pray that God would “enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

- 1) What is being asked for? The apostles pray for boldness.
- 2) Are any miracles requested? Yes.

### **Paul Prays For His People (Romans 10:1)**

Paul, in between explaining God's sovereignty and our need to send missionaries, says “my prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.”

- 1) What is being asked for? The salvation of Israel.
- 2) Are any miracles requested? No.

### **Paul Solicits Prayer for His Ministry (Ephesians 6:19-20)**

As he is concluding the letter to the Ephesians, Paul begs them to “pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.”

- 1) What is being asked for? Boldness for Paul.
- 2) Are any miracles requested? No.

### **Paul Solicits Prayer for His Ministry (Colossians 4:3-4)**

As he is concluding his letter to the Colossians, Paul asks them to “pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.”

- 1) What is being asked for? Boldness for Paul.
- 2) Are any miracles requested? No.

### **Paul Solicits Prayer for His Ministry (2 Thessalonians 3:1)**

After praying for the Thessalonians, Paul asks them to “pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you.”

- 1) What is being asked for? Effectiveness in outreach. The emphasis here seems balanced between the proclaimers and the unbelievers.
- 2) Are any miracles requested? No.

## **Appendix D: Prayers Which Seem To Be About Evangelism But Which Are Not**

While compiling the above list, I ran across two prayers that seem to be about evangelism but which are not.

### **Paul Does Not Pray For the Conversion of Leaders (2 Tim 2:1-1)**

This one is a bit of a surprise – when I am in a gathering of believers and someone says that the Bible commands us to pray for our civic leaders, the prayers that ensue are almost entirely evangelistic.

But looking at Paul’s command, a different set of prayers emerge: “I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.” In other words, Paul tells Timothy to pray for the separation of church and state and not for the conversion of the leaders. He wants government to leave Christians to live peacefully.

### **Paul Prays For Philemon to “Share His Faith” (Philemon 6)**

Paul, writing to Philemon, says something in Greek that is a tad misleading in most English translations. “I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.”

Reviewing the scholarly literature on this verse, I was disappointed to discover that “sharing your faith” didn’t mean the same thing in this letter that we mean by the same phrase today. A paraphrase would be, “I pray that you fully live out the shared faith that you have with me, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.”

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