

Evangelism in Action among Early Christians

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In this paper we shall point out men and women who, in the days when Christianity was young, acted as evangelists or Gospel-witnesses, in order to bring out what is instructive, edifying, and inspiring for us. We shall have to be selective because the Gospels and the Acts present more examples than we can accommodate in this paper of quite limited length.

One more preliminary remark is necessary. We shall not include those men who were carrying out their call as special messengers of God. We refer to such men as John the Baptist, the Apostles, and the Evangelist Philip. We also exclude Stephen. Though he was one of the seven deacons, he was so highly endowed with spiritual gifts and chosen by the Lord for such an extraordinary task of witnessing that he appears as one almost on a par with the Apostles. The reason for excluding these men should be obvious. We are looking for examples which will appeal to the layman-witness today, because the people held up to him for emulation occupied no higher position in the church and enjoyed no greater endowment with spiritual gifts than he does today.

Now we are ready for our topic: *Evangelism in Action among Early Christians*.

As Seen from the Gospels

The shepherds of Bethlehem have rightly been regarded as the first witnesses to the Savior in the New Testament age. The words which describe them acting as evangelists are these:

“So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child” (Luke 2:16,17-NIV).

“They spread the word.” We need only capitalize to make it read “the Word,” and we have concisely stated the task of the evangelist in every age. The Word is, of course, the revealed Word of the Scriptures. The shepherds had a knowledge of the Old Testament Word and the Messianic hope it creates. But even the word which God revealed through the angel (Luke 2:10-12) told them much. The One who dispelled their fear and put joy in its place was true man (“is born” - “a baby”), yet the promised divine Messiah (“Christ the Lord”). This was the Savior come for their deliverance (“born to you”). The shepherds also received a confirming sign for the faith which the angel’s good news had produced in their hearts: the babe lying in a manger, wrapped in strips of cloth.

The evangelist today has a fuller message. The Word he spreads includes all that the Child went on to be and to do and to endure for us sinners. It also includes more confirming signs: all the mighty miracles Jesus did and, above all, the resurrection, the sign that assures the hopelessly guilty: “Not guilty: Justified: Not the object of God’s wrath, but the cherished child of God, the apple of His eye:” (Rom. 5:25; Eph. 1:4-6) To spread this Word—no more, no less—Is the blessed assignment of the evangelist.

The example before us further brings out why the evangelist is eager to fulfill his assignment: “The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told” (v.20). These evangelists simply had to speak. The joy of salvation had to find utterance. Luther captured the idea perfectly:

“My heart for very joy doth leap, My lips no more can silence keep.” (LH 85:14)

By the way, Peter and John used the same Greek phrase, only reversing the verbs, when they answered the High Council's command to keep silent about the Savior: "We cannot help speaking about what we have heard and seen" (Acts 4:20).

We shall not cite Simeon as an example of evangelism in action. His glorious testimony to the Child Jesus was intended for the parents of Jesus, though it is likely that other parents with their babies were in the same Temple-court and heard his words.

But there was another present who well deserves the honored title of evangelist. The prophetess Anna came up to the group "at that very moment," very likely as Simeon was bringing his Spirit-inspired witness. She, a prophetess in fact as well as in name, grasped fully the saving mission of this Child, for "she spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38). She understood that this Child, grown to manhood, would bring nothing less than the sacrifice of His divine blood and life as a ransom for captive men. As such she spoke of Him to the devout Old Testament believers, that they might find in Jesus the Ransomer they were yearning for.

With that we have stated that the message of the faithful evangelist will center in the atoning life and death of Jesus Christ. His will be the mind of Paul, "I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2). That message includes, of course, the resurrection of the Crucified. Perhaps it is not superfluous to point out that the evangelist dare not cater to the taste of the world for a soft Gospel and, consequently, to avoid the "hard saying" or teaching that without the shedding of Jesus' divine blood there is no remission of sins, no life with God now and no eternal life in His presence.

We have two very instructive examples at the very beginning of Jesus' public ministry, namely, Andrew and John. The second day that the Baptist pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God (John 1:29, 35), two of John's disciples followed Jesus, literally. When Jesus noted that they were actuated, not by curiosity, but by the desire of beginners in the faith to learn more of their salvation from the very lips of the Savior, He graciously invited them to join Him in the place where He was staying. As a result they spent the greater part of the day with him. So soul-satisfying were those hours that the time of entering Jesus' abode remained permanently fixed in John's memory: "It was about the tenth hour" (John 1:37-39).

The other of the two disciples mentioned was Andrew, Peter's brother. (1:40) Now we hear: "He as the first found his own brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah.' Then he brought Simon to Jesus" (1:41,42). We shall give our reason for preferring this translation in a moment. For now, we want to catch the force of what Andrew did. Once he had gained a greater certainty from Jesus Himself, Andrew sought out his brother, Simon Peter. There was the joy of a momentous discovery In his voice as he announced: "We have found the Messiah!"

John the Baptist had nourished in his disciples the hope of seeing God's anointed and eternally appointed Redeemer in person. Now Andrew and the disciple who does not name himself had seen that hope fulfilled. Jesus of Nazareth *was* the Messiah, the One who satisfied the deepest longings of their souls.

The joy of hope so fulfilled cannot be caged and confined. It cries for early release. So it was with Andrew. Almost at once he sought out "his own brother Simon." Yes, almost at once. The day was far along when Andrew and his fellow disciple left Jesus' abode. Yet it must have been before the day was out that Andrew acted on the compulsion to share his tremendous find with Peter. We can be sure of this because John carefully marks off the incidents of each day. (See vv. 29,35,43.)

Now let us go back to the reason for translating: “Andrew as the first found his own brother Simon.” Practically all the translations have “Andrew first, etc.,” (or something similar). They follow the reading “*prooton*,” the adverb meaning ‘first.’

But one reading (the Sinaiticus) has ‘*prootos*,’ the adjective which we translated ‘as the first.’ This reading deserves strong consideration. For one thing, “Andrew first, etc.,” leaves things hanging in the air. We are inclined to ask: What did Andrew do next? The NIV translates, “The very first thing Andrew did was to find, etc.” While this translation is appealing, it puts a pretty hard stretch on the bare adverb ‘first.’

If we translate ‘as the first,’ we have the answer to the question: What about John? Did he do nothing to bear witness to *his* brother James and to bring him to Jesus? John must have been the unnamed disciple who, with Andrew, had that unforgettable visit with Jesus. (See 1:39: “the tenth hour” - the reporting of an eye-witness.) With typical modesty, to the point of self-effacement, he does not mention himself here by name, as he does not refer to himself by name throughout his Gospel.

Therefore, when John writes: “Andrew as the first, etc.,” he gives Andrew credit for being the first to seek out his brother. The emphatic “his own brother” fits in with this. What John, with typical reticence, leaves unsaid and only implies is that he in turn looked up *his* brother James. He must have brought the same testimony as Andrew, though perhaps not in the same words, for Andrew with his: “We have found the Messiah,” includes John in his joyous witness.

We realize the possibility that Andrew used many more words than are recorded; that he repeated to his brother much of what Jesus had attested concerning Himself in their lengthy conversation. But let us not conjecture. The thing to note is that Andrew’s testimony—and John’s as well—centered in the truth that Jesus is the divine Redeemer held forth to fallen men ever since God gave the promise of the Serpent-Crusher in Eden—and will be the only Savior of sinners until all who received Him as such stand in “the Paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7).

The very next day (John 1:43) Jesus called to discipleship another man from Bethsaida (and most likely, another disciple of the Baptist). This was Philip. Again we hear of a man newly come to faith “finding” another person with whom to share the indispensable Christ. To Nathanael Philip brought this witness: “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (John 1:45). Actually, Nathanael was saying the same thing as Andrew had with his: “We have found the Messiah.” In the title “Messiah” there is summed up everything that the Old Testament offered the faithful to nourish their trust in the Coming One.

The difference, for one thing, was that Philip testified more expressly that the One whom the God of grace had let him and the four others (“We have found”) find was the Savior whom He had been foretelling for centuries through the writings of Moses and the Prophets. For another, Philip directly identified the Christ as the One who was known as Jesus of Nazareth and had Joseph as his legal father.

From this example we glean this truth pertinent to the work of the evangelist: His message must include the important truth that Jesus is the Promised One. He must let God accomplish what He intends by presenting Jesus as the Fulfiller of the Old Testament promises. What is the divine purpose in this? Why, to assure the sinner: Your faith is not misdirected, but is eternally right, for it has as its object the One whom I, through prophecy after prophecy given over many centuries, have marked as the only Savior I will ever send. Look at My Son, Jesus,

and see how His life, His Person and His work tally in every detail with what I have foretold of Him.

We find further instruction in Philip's reply to Nathanael's skeptical question: "Nazareth: Can anything good come from there?" (John 1:46) Philip answered: "Come and see." We know what the outcome was. Jesus revealed to Nathanael such things as only the all-knowing eye of God can perceive. As a result, Nathanael exclaimed, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel" (John 1:49). At this point someone might say: But those early evangelists had it easy. They could take another person directly to Jesus. We can't.

Is that true? Only in the sense that we cannot lead anyone into the physical presence of Jesus. But the evangelist today can still invite a person without Christ to "come and see." He does so by asking that person to take a walk through certain areas of Scripture with him. Upon the other person's consent, the evangelist can then guide him to see Jesus, the God-Man, the Savior of sinners. Of course, only the Holy Spirit can cause such seeing of Jesus to result in the worship of faith: "You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel."

The Samaritan woman of John 4 is a shining example for all in the work of evangelism. We have neither time nor cause to sketch the whole course of the fascinating dialogue between her and Jesus. It is enough for our purpose to look somewhat closely at the motivation for her witness to Christ and at her method of bringing it.

In His conversation with the woman of Samaria, Jesus first spoke pure Gospel to her, the Gospel concerning the living water which He Himself would give and which would become in the believer "a spring of water welling up to everlasting life" (John 4:4-15). Then He applied the Law in all its rigor to her sordid past. (John 4:16-18) In this way He led her from one step of spiritual understanding to another. Finally He had guided her thoughts to the coming Messiah "who will explain everything to us" (4:25). At this point Jesus revealed Himself to her: "I who speak to you am he" (4:26).

The effect of Jesus' self-attestation was startling: "Then leaving the water jar, the woman went back to the town" (4:26). Faith had been born in her heart. The conviction that none other than the Messiah had spoken to her and was making His promise of giving living water to the parched soul come true for her—that conviction so gripped and agitated her that she forgot all about her purpose in coming to the well. Instead, she was bent on one thing: to share her all-important find with others. She demonstrated the truth of the words: "The things that fill the heart to overflowing must pour out over the lips" (Matthew 12:34 - our translation). When the woman had arrived in the town, she simply had to speak of the Savior she had found.

Consider how she worded her testimony: "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" (John 4:28) First she simply stated the fact of the supernatural knowledge displayed by the man who had conversed with her. She wanted her fellow Samaritans to conclude two things: that Jesus was more than a man and that He was the very Messiah. Wisely, she did not ask: "Isn't this the Christ?" In other words, she did not try to enforce acceptance of her belief upon them. However, she did not present the matter as open to honest doubt by asking, "This couldn't be the Christ, could it?" By wording the question as she did, she effectively put the question before them as one demanding further thought and investigation, as if to say, "Weigh it: Make further inquiries from Jesus Himself." ("Come, see")

Her witness went home. Many of the Samaritans in her town came to faith in Jesus "because of the woman's testimony" (v.39). Indirectly her testimony led to further conversions. Upon the pleading of the first believers, Jesus stayed in the town for two days. (4:40) "And because of his words many more became believers" (4:41).

The Samaritan woman's manner of testifying can teach us something. It is: as we bear glad witness to our Lord, we should be careful not to come on too strong. Now, there has been some disagreement among us as to how far to go in gaining a definite response from the object of our witness. But we surely can agree that it is wise to follow the course the Samaritan woman took. It is good to ask the same question she did, perhaps changing it to: Could this be your Savior? Could He be the answer to the uncertainty, unrest, and fear you have expressed in our conversation? Her "Come, see" could be put in this way: Won't you let me come back to tell you more about the Savior? In other words, the example before us should caution restraint. It should counsel us against witness bearing that arouses resentment and resistance in our prospects, not by what we say, but by our over-aggressive manner of saying it, by a style that is too much like that of the high-pressure salesman.

Our last selection from the Gospels may surprise you. We place before you Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea as witnesses for Christ. Scripture records no words which either one spoke to confess or extol Jesus as his Savior. But the Bible ascribes to them an act which testified most powerfully to their faith in Jesus. Both men had become disciples of our Lord, but concealed the fact for fear of the Jews. (John 3:3; Luke 19:38) However, the death of Jesus compelled them to come out into the open for their Lord.

Dr. Adolph Hoenecke, referring to Joseph particularly, says with his simple eloquence: "It (the death of Jesus) endows men with a great and bold courage." After quoting the passage from Luke describing how Joseph obtained permission to bury the body of Jesus, he goes on: "That was risking a great deal. In so doing, Joseph of Arimathea stood up against the world as one who confessed loyalty to Christ and regarded Him as the Messiah and Redeemer. It must have been just the death of Jesus that gave him such courage. 'He waited,' we read, 'for the kingdom of God.' This hoping and yearning had not been changed to doubt by the death of Jesus. The disciples of Jesus had fallen into despair because of the death of Christ. But the very death of Jesus had made Joseph courageous as never before. He, as a member of the High Council, as a highly respected man, had much to lose by confessing himself loyal to Jesus. But he dared it." ("Glorified in His Passion," NPH 1957, pp. 94,95)

The point in this example is evident. We have evangelism in action whenever Christians give testimony of their faith by a courageous confession. That confession may not be as striking as the one laid down by Joseph and Nicodemus. But living a thoroughly Christian life in a hostile, sneering world is also a confession, in fact, a witness making a powerful impact. The converse of this is that the evangelist whose life does not jibe with his words creates a grave credibility gap for his witness. In a thoroughly Christian life we include a willing obedience to the injunction: "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15), whether one is involved in the congregation's organized evangelism program or not.

As seen from the book of Acts

As previously noted, we shall not treat the witness brought by the apostles and other leaders in the early church. We have chosen to concentrate on the witness-bearing by the rank and file of the believers. However, we shall need to refer to the witness of the Apostles, especially that recorded in the early chapters of Acts, since without it we cannot understand the evangelism exercised by the lay evangelists.

First we direct our attention to Christians in the Jerusalem church (or churches) as Luke pictures them in Acts 2:42-47. True, nothing is said at this point about an oral witness brought by

these members of the infant New Testament church. Yet their life together made such an impact on the non-believers that it is fully justified to call them active evangelists.

We cannot treat the passage before us in detail. But let us note the various features characterizing the life of the Jerusalem Christians. The first-mentioned is basic: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, and to the breaking of bread and prayer" (2:42). Their life together centered in the Gospel proclaimed in Word and Sacrament, and it drew its strength from these Means of Grace. The "apostles' teaching" designates both what they taught and their activity of teaching. The apostles' doctrine was not their own, of course, but the doctrine which the Lord had entrusted to them for transmission to others.

That the early Christians "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching" therefore tells us two things about the Jerusalem Christians. First, It means that they busied themselves day by day with what the Apostles, their called teachers, taught them ("every day" - v.46). Secondly, they adhered to the apostolic doctrine. They held to it because to lose it would be to lose Christ, their Life, their All.

Their common faith in the Savior produced a life of fellowship among them. They knew themselves to be fellows, sharers in something beyond price. They perceived themselves to be one, because they all confessed Christ publicly and were devoted and clung to the one saving doctrine of Christ. Knowing themselves to be members of one spiritual body, they treated each other as such.

"The breaking of bread" does not refer merely to eating their meals together, as it very likely does in verse 46. From the very beginning, we know, the common meal was followed by the eating and drinking in the Lord's Supper. Linked with this is "prayer." The word for 'prayer,' however, is often used in the wider sense of "worship." So we take it here.

When we read on: "Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miracles were done by the apostles" (v.43), we need not guess who is meant by "everyone." The Greek in verse sets all "believers" in contrast to "everyone." Therefore "everyone" designates Jews who did not believe in Christ. Now observe that the statement "everyone was filled with awe" looks both backward and forward. The nonbelievers looked at the godliness of the highest order prevailing among those in the new "Jesus movement" and found themselves asking in awe: Can such a life have its source among men? When they witnessed the miracles performed by the teachers of this new faith, their awe was intensified to the point where they felt: this whole movement must be of God.

The Jerusalem Christians were so keenly conscious of the bond of fellowship uniting them that they "kept together" as one, though they came from widely diverse backgrounds. (See 2:5.) When they saw a fellow believer in need, that need became their need, for "they had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to everyone as he had need" (2:44,45). Outsiders also observed how often the Christians gathered in the Temple for worship and ate together in each other's homes. What struck them especially about the followers of Jesus was that they were joyous and contented and full of praise to God. (2:46)

Now comes a most significant addition: "enjoying the favor of all the people" (v. 47a). Why significant? For this reason: "And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved," or better simply: "the saved" (2:47b). The favorable impression which the Christians made on those outside the church was a strong factor in the growth of the church.

We dare not conclude from Luke's silence that these Christians made no oral confession of their Savior. In a moment we shall hear of the oral witness brought by many of these same

Christians. The point of Luke's picture of them in Acts 2 is: the genuinely Christian life they led spoke a powerful word for their Lord Jesus to those without the church.

The scene shifts from one of the church at peace to one of the church at war. The sporadic persecution of the Apostles by the Jewish leaders turned into a massive, deadly persecution spearheaded by the fanatic Saul. (Acts 4-7) Did the phenomenal growth of the church come to a halt? Was evangelism stifled? Quite the contrary.

Saul ravaged the church, seeking to eliminate it from Jewish life. But what do we hear? "Those who had been scattered abroad preached the word wherever they went" (Acts 8:4). Here we must define some terms. "They *preached* the word" should not lead us to think that the Christians dispersed by Saul's persecution set themselves up as full-time ministers of the Gospel. The word translated with 'preach' is the same as the angel used when he told the shepherds: "I bring you good tidings" (Luke 2:10). It is difficult to translate what we have in the Greek. But we can come close with: "they brought the good news, the Word," or: "they told the Word as good news."

Let us try to visualize the situation. The Christians must have attracted the attention of their fellow Jews as they fled through the countryside, perhaps with a bag of belongings on their backs. Those Jews would ask the Christians, after hearing that they were from Jerusalem: "Why did you leave the Holy City?" In answer the Christians would give their testimony to the Savior. They did what every Christian ought to be prepared to do. (1 Peter 3:15) Note, however, that they proclaimed what they believed concerning Jesus Christ as the *good news*. They did not speak of their faith half-apologetically or with an air of regret that they had embraced beliefs which had brought persecution on them. No, they testified with the joy of people who had found the Pearl of Great Price. Moreover, they spoke with the eager manner of men who had something great and precious to share with those who were still poor toward God. They bore witness with the aim of arousing faith in others through the powerful message of the Gospel. (Rom. 1:16)

We must marvel at the effectiveness of their witness. The far-reaching results their testimony brought about are easily overlooked. This is so because Luke here in Acts 8 chooses to mention only the evangelistic work in Samaria. (vv. 9-25) But in 11:19-21 Luke gives the astounding outreach achieved by the "wandering evangelists" from Jerusalem: "Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, telling the message *only to Jews*. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak *to Greeks also*--get the significance of the italicized phrases!--"telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord." News of this Gospel success soon reached Jerusalem. Barnabas was sent to be in charge of the work in Antioch. Barnabas, in turn, enlisted Saul to help with the burgeoning work. And the end result was that the Antioch congregation became the base from which Paul went on his three missionary journeys.

How shall we account for the amazing effectiveness of the witness brought by these lay witnesses? These people were fresh converts to the Christian faith, and it was not long after their conversion that they were driven abroad by persecution. We should not put them in the same class as many converts today, many almost devoid of religious background and knowledge and others deeply entangled in this or that 'ism.' Many of the early Christians had been devout Jews and had a good knowledge of the Old Testament. But the main reason must be found in something we have already discussed, the statement of 2:42: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' doctrine." These people had a training for evangelism second only to that given by

Jesus to His Apostles. We need hardly add that a thorough training program is absolutely imperative for effective evangelism work.

Another question begs for an answer. It is raised by the statement: “they preached (or: spread) the Word.” These words prompt us to ask: What was the content of their witness? Well, they were trained in the apostles’ teaching. What that teaching was, can well be illustrated by this passage from Peter’s Pentecost sermon: “Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge, and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead”

Then, after showing that David’s words in Psalm 16:8-11 could not apply to David, Peter went on: “But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised with an oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of *the resurrection of Christ*, that he was not abandoned to the grave nor did his body undergo decay. God has *raised this Jesus to life*, and we are all *witnesses to the fact*. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, and has now poured out what you now see and hear... Therefore let all Israel be *assured* of this: God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:22-24; 30-33; 36).

This must be the never-changing content of the evangelist’s message. It includes the preaching of the Law, as Peter’s sermon did. The Law cuts to the heart and makes men cry out: “What shall we do?”—as Peter’s blunt accusation did. But this part of the message only paves the way for the good news of forgiveness in Christ. It is necessary because otherwise the sinner is left hanging in the air, so that he asks: “What sins?” But then the Gospel in all its fullness and sweetness is to follow. Fear of proclaiming a “cheap grace” dare never lead to withholding any of the good news from anyone to whom we witness.

We cannot refrain from emphasizing the point we tried to anticipate by our underscoring in the lengthy quotation above. This point is: Let us not fail to give the resurrection of Jesus its full due in our witness. To that end, let us realize once again the central, pivotal place the Scripture gives to Christ’s resurrection in Christian preaching and for Christian faith. It loomed so large in Apostolic preaching that Luke could describe it thus: “With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 4:33 -compare 4:2), presupposing His redemptive death. And Paul could write: “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9) -- omitting, but presupposing faith in the Christ crucified for our sins.

If we neglect to give Jesus’ resurrection its rightful place in our witness, we are taking from our message some of its power and withholding from the sinner some of the assurance and certainty which divine grace aims to give him. If we slight Jesus’ resurrection in our witness, we are like the man who engages in public debate and forgets to use the “clincher,” the most telling fact or truth in support of his position.

The last example we have selected from Acts is that of Aquila and Priscilla. There has been much debate as to whether they were already Christians at the time Paul became acquainted with them in Corinth. (They had come there after the Emperor Claudius had banished all the Jews from Rome. Acts 18:2) They could have been, because the Roman church, or, more accurately, churches go back to an earlier date. But those who believe that Aquila and Priscilla were devout Jews, but not Christians at the time have just as good grounds for their position. For our purpose it makes little difference how we answer the question.

One thing is certain: through their daily association with Paul (Acts 18:3) they became Christians with an unusually full and firm grasp of Scriptural truth and the ability and eagerness to impart it to others. Only a few years later we find them in Ephesus. There they became acquainted with Apollos, the gifted, yes, brilliant Jew from Alexandria. His knowledge of Scriptures was extensive, but his knowledge of Jesus and His redeeming work was incomplete. When Priscilla and Aquila noticed this defect while hearing Apollos preach in the synagogue, “they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately” (Acts 18:26) God blessed their witness to him, for when Apollos a little later went to Corinth, “he was a great help to those who by grace believed” (Acts 18:2-7).

We venture to class Aquila and Priscilla as evangelists, though they did not witness to a man outside the church. Surely, we could call a person a good witness for Christ if he possesses and uses the gift of instructing a churchmember whose beliefs are sketchy or erroneous and leading him to a better knowledge and a firmer faith. And we certainly value highly a witness who exercises this gift in making his calls on non-churchmembers.

The evangelist often encounters people with a fragmentary, faulty knowledge of the saving truth or of the work and purpose of the church. Blessed is the evangelism team with several members who have the ability to “straighten out” such people and thus make them more receptive to the positive truths of salvation.

Each one of us makes these words his own: “I believed; therefore have I spoken” (Ps. 116:10). Our prayer is that this study of evangelism in action among the early Christians has in some measure proved instructive and inspiring to you who heard it and will prove to be so to those who read it, so that both they and we may grow in the desire and ability to bring a good witness for Jesus, our Savior and our King.