

Reaching Modern Evangelicals with the Lutheran Message

Modern Evangelicals are difficult to reach with the Lutheran message. This is true because of several reasons.

- The movement is still growing, especially in certain areas. This leads to a feeling that their success is because God endorses their theology.
- Any group that uses works as a basis of salvation will be very difficult to reach with the gospel. Jesus had lots of confrontations with the Pharisees, and didn't seem to have a lot of success with them. The leaders will be especially difficult to reach, since they have more success and have also developed a system of explaining away the verses in the Bible that clearly define the role of the sacraments in salvation. They do not believe that their system involves salvation based upon the law, but it does.
- The United States, and to some extent much of the world, is worshipping at the altar of "the freedom of choice". While choice can be a good thing, it is not the correct approach to salvation, or assurance of salvation. However, the mentality of our society will weigh heavily upon Evangelicals' evaluation of the Lutheran doctrine. They will not be able to comprehend it, at least quickly.
- The Evangelicals, by and large, present a simplified view of salvation (based heavily upon personal choice) and will have a hard time understanding the Lutheran's position on salvation also being received through the sacraments.

There is also some danger in engaging Evangelicals in debate. Sometimes it is best to leave the correction of the church to God, or at least to others he has directed, if dealing with them leads to more confusion in your mind.

Then, why should we be concerned with them at all? Jesus said to preach the gospel to the whole world. You will find the law, in various forms, taught and preached in all major religions of the world. However, peace with God only comes through the gospel. There are many Evangelicals who lack assurance of salvation, or whose assurance is built upon sand and will someday collapse. Many evangelicals are starved for the gospel, and probably don't even know it, even as those in the world often don't realize it. Only years or centuries from now will we know what effect their errors will create.

How should we reach them? Probably it is best to not continually engage those close to you in debate. You should live a life that will allow the joy of the gospel to show through your actions. That will attract them. They do not really believe that the Christian faith can spread without teaching others to trust conversion experiences, or a "personal relationship with Christ" for assurance of salvation. It will surprise some to find true Christians and churches that don't practice or believe this.

We need to exercise some caution in our dealings with the evangelicals. Their message will appeal to our own old nature. We would like to claim some action or decision was responsible for our salvation. Their leaders and speakers are often very dynamic and magnetic. They can quote Bible verses to substantiate their positions.

We also should not attempt to determine whether they as individuals are partakers of salvation. Even though we share convictions on many issues, and even some doctrines, our position is that they are in error doctrinally on important issues, especially on issues relating to salvation. We are not able and not permitted to decide their standing before God.

It is probably best to focus our evangelism on those who are unchurched. But, there will be some evangelicals that can be reached, also. Our approach to dealing with anyone should be loving, yet standing unmoved upon our Lutheran convictions.

Finally, pray for the church. Pray that God would bring the worldwide church back to a correct teaching and practice of the law and gospel.

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