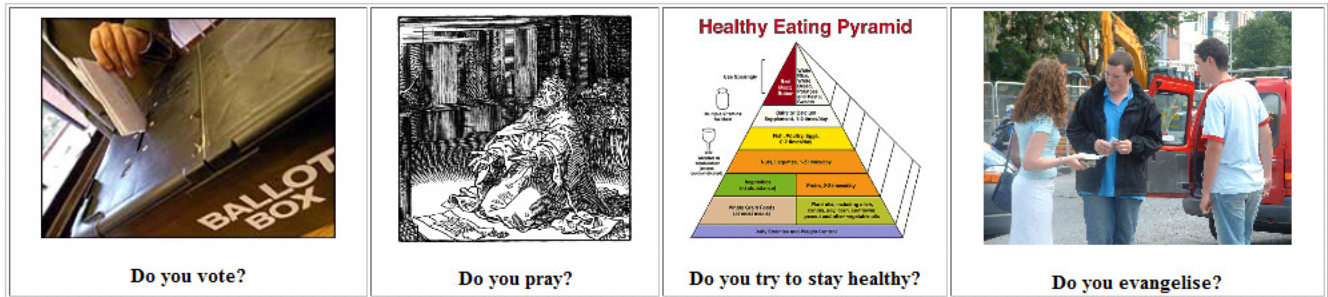


EVANGELISM - WHY BOTHER?

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Here's a thought for you. I'm sure you have heard/read the old anti-Calvinism argument that if God really has ordained that a certain number will be saved, and that they will invariably be gathered in - as Spurgeon words it: *We say Christ so died that He infallibly secured the salvation of a multitude that no man can number, who through Christ's death not only may be saved but are saved, must be saved, and cannot by any possibility run the hazard of being anything but saved* - then why bother evangelising? We give eight solid reasons in the article "Why Calvinists Believe in Evangelism". This article supplements the arguments found there.

If this non Reformed argument carried any weight, then we could also logically ask:

1) WHY BOTHER VOTING? The Bible says that *"the powers that be are ordained of God"* (Romans 13:1). God says, *"By me king's reign, and princes decree justice"* (Proverbs 8:15), *"the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will."* (Daniel 4:25) and that *"he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"* (Daniel 4:35) He ordained that Tony Blair would be the British Prime Minister again after the last election, that George W. Bush would defeat John Kerry in America and Bertie Ahern, here in Ireland, would be returned to Dail Eireann. He ordained the exact number of votes each candidate would get and who would vote and who wouldn't and why they so voted and why they didn't. He ordained the exact number of die hard voters each election would have, the not so dedicated ones and the "floating voters" who judge each election and candidate on its merit. Although there were many devices in a man's heart - and there is nothing like a good hard fought electioneering campaign to bring them out - nevertheless the counsel of the LORD stood (Proverbs 19:21) and there was absolutely no chance that it would be overthrown. *"There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD."* (Proverbs 21:30) This applies to good men getting into power and evil men - the final result is ordained of God.

Do we quit voting? Do we disenfranchise ourselves? Do we say "Why bother voting?" when the result is not only known in Heaven but also ordained? No we don't. We go out and we exercise our democratic rights, because we believe that God uses our votes to put the men whom He has ordained into power. He ordains the means as well as the end. We vote to put good men in and to keep bad men out. Our vote in itself may not amount to very much. Millions of other people with other agendas have the exact same voting power in the same election, but nevertheless, we know that every vote counts, especially when it is joined by others

for the same candidate(s). Nor does it negate our responsibility to vote according to our God instructed conscience. We ought to think twice about voting for those who are determined to push through God dishonouring agendas etc. We will give an account to God where we put our "X" on voting day. But if we applied this argument against Calvinism then we would argue that it is useless to vote.

2) WHY BOTHER PRAYING? God knows what we have need of before we ask (Matthew 6:8) He declares in the most definite of language, *"And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."* (Isaiah 65:24)

Do we quit praying? Do you cancel the prayer meeting in our church? Do we refuse to go through all that getting alone privately into the closet and struggling against the flesh and the devil and all the distractions, when God knows everything and has already ordained the outcome? Do we ignore the prayer cards of missionaries with their well ordered and specified little lists of prayer requests? Do we throw away your books like EM Bounds on *"Power through Prayer"* and have no regard for the great prayer warriors whose praise in the churches? No we don't. We pray because God ordains the means as well as the end. We obey the precepts to pray, noting the additional instructions like *"ought always"* (Luke 18:1) and *"without ceasing"* (1 Thessalonians 5:17). We note the great examples which are given in Scripture (Acts 12:5/2 Thessalonians 1:3) and the great promises (James 5:17) and we pray. But if we applied this argument against Calvinism then we would argue that it is useless pray.

3) WHY BOTHER SOWING? God says that the harvest will not cease (Genesis 8:22)

Do we quit ploughing the fields and sowing the seed and getting it watered and trying to keep the birds away? Do we just stand in our field or in our garden and think positively that the harvest will not cease and wait for the green shoots to appear? No, we don't. We notice that Genesis 8:22 says that *"seedtime and harvest"* will not fail. We only reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7) We read the Book of Proverbs about the satisfying lot of the diligent man and the blasted loss of the sluggard, noting that *"the sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing."* (Proverbs 20:4) We take the time to sow the seed etc., because God ordains the means as well as the end. If we scatter but a few seeds, we will reap but a few sheaves (2 Corinthians 9:6) but if we applied the argument that is applied against Calvinism, then we will smirk at those who argue that we must sow in order to reap.

4) WHY BOTHER STAYING SAFE AND HEALTHY? The day of your death is appointed of God (Hebrews 9:27) You will not die one split second before your God ordained time. *"A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee"* (Psalm 91:7). We may not know the day of our death (Genesis 27:2) but we know that God knows, and God knows because it is written down in His diary in indelible ink. God has never missed an appointment yet. Doubtless, you have heard this old story, but I repeat it again and slip in the reminder that the one who decides where and when is not fate, but God:

Death speaks: There is a merchant in Baghdad who sent his servant to buy provisions from the market and in a little while the servant came back, white and trembling, and said, "Master, just now when I was in the market-place I was jostled by a woman in the crowd and when I turned I saw it was Death that jostled me. She looked at me and made a threatening gesture; now, lend me your horse, and I will ride away from this city to avoid my fate. I will go to Samarra and there Death will not find me."

The merchant lent him his horse, and the servant mounted it, and he dug his spurs in its flanks and as fast as the horse could gallop he went. Then the merchant went down to the market-place and he saw me standing in the crowd and he came to me and said,

"Why did you make a threatening gesture to my servant when you saw him this morning?"

"That was not a threatening gesture," I said, "it was only a start of surprise. I was astonished to see him in Baghdad, for I had an appointment with him tonight in Samarra."

Do we quit eating and drinking? Or looking both ways when we cross the road? Do we stop avoiding notorious areas at night or wrapping up in suitable clothes in cold or wet weather? No, we don't. If we are ill, we go to the Doctor. We take the prescribed medicines and tablets or go to hospital and consent to surgeons etc., operating upon our bodies. We know it would be foolish to disregard those warning notices that adorn electric boxes or other dangerous sites. We do not swim out of our depth or pick fights with violent people. Why not? Because we know that God has ordained the means as well as the end and that our health and safety is, under God, dependent upon our own actions. But if we applied the argument that is applied against Calvinism, then we will cease observing such common sense matters and by the evening we might well be dead or fighting for our lives in some hospital bed.

WHY BOTHER EVANGELISING? Because it pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to save those that believe (1 Corinthians 1:21). That these believing souls have been ordained to such saving faith is undoubtedly true (Ephesians 1:4). That they will infallibly come is also true (John 7:37a - the bit many folk leave out) but they will come through the means of our evangelism, therefore we do not quit evangelising and seeking by all means to save some, just as we do not quit voting etc., just because the result is ordained of God.