

# EVANGELISTIC PREACHING IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY



**Allen M. Baker**



# **EVANGELISTIC PREACHING IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

The Reverend Allen M. Baker III

*“I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; From where shall my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”*

Psalm 121:1,2

The cover is a photo of the highest point of the Drakensberg Mountains (11,424 feet), the eastern portion of the Great Escarpment which encloses the central Southern African plateau. Nearby is the KwaZuluNatal Province where a mighty revival has been ongoing at KwaSizabantu since 1966.

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## **DEDICATION**

The book is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Ben Wilkinson, the long time Director of Presbyterian Evangelistic Fellowship who went home to be with the Lord in January, 2016. Dr. Ben was a powerful evangelistic preacher who was a powerful inspiration to my life and ministry. His zeal and love for the lost, whatever their station in life, has long challenged me to join in following his example (Philippians 3:17).

# FOREWORD

I very well remember in 1976, while working with Dr. Jim Baird at the First Presbyterian Church, Macon, Georgia, reading for the first time Arnold Dallimore's marvelous biography on George Whitefield<sup>1</sup>, perhaps the greatest preacher since the Apostle Paul. No other book, besides the Bible, has impacted me as much as Dallimore's two volumes on Whitefield. Dallimore gave me a vision for evangelistic preaching and revival which has never left me. Indeed, this vision and hunger has only increased over the last four decades. Dallimore referred to the preaching of Whitefield as that which startled a nation. Without question, the preaching of Whitefield and his contemporaries—men like Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, William and Gilbert Tennent, Samuel Davies, Howell Harris, and Daniel Rowland wrought a dramatic societal impact in England, Scotland, Wales, and Colonial America. This Great Awakening resulted in thousands of conversions in each of these countries and was remarkably used of God to bring these nations up out of debauchery and to spare them the ravages of the atheistic Eighteenth Century French Revolution.

Revival and evangelistic preaching, however, has fallen on hard times in the western world. The theological liberalism of the early Twentieth Century, the neo-orthodoxy of the 1940's to the 1960's, the church growth movement of the 1970's, the seeker friendly movement of the 1980's and 1990's, the emerging church movement of the first decade of the Twenty-first Century, the present emphasis on "hipster" Christianity and hyper-grace, and the Insider Movement (propagated by western missiologists) in the Muslim world all

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<sup>1</sup> *George Whitefield: The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the Eighteenth Century Revival*, Arnold Dallimore.

point to the dearth of Spirit anointed revival and evangelistic preaching. How so? Without confidence in the supernatural work of the Spirit to convict and convert sinners, it is only natural for church leaders to look elsewhere for societal impact. The neo-liberal hermeneutic is also at play in today's western church. In a desire to reach the secular unbeliever who rejects Biblical authority out of hand, in order to gain a hearing from "un-churched Harry," in order to appeal to the new atheist who embraces every manner of sexual perversion, in order to bring back into the church the de-churched millennial generation, pastors are interpreting the Bible differently. Some are saying that without an emphasis on social justice then we have no gospel message at all. Some are conveniently overlooking the clear teaching on the roles of husbands and wives in marriage, the prohibition against women's ordination to church offices, and the abomination of homosexuality and same sex unions.

God, however, has always used powerfully and persuasively the Spirit anointed preaching of Christ crucified. We see it clearly in the teaching of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. We see it in the early church fathers—men like Ambrose, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, and Chrysostom. We see it in powerful pre-Reformation preachers like John Wycliffe and John Hus. We see it in the great Reformers—Martin Luther, John Calvin, and John Knox.

Why should today be any different? Some are saying that times have changed, that we now live in a post-Christian world that is driven by entertainment. The United States Supreme Court has redefined the definition of marriage, something no nation has ever done. The crime, poverty, perversion, corruption in business and politics, the outrageous deficit spending by the United States government, the growing threat of fundamentalist Islam, and the weakening of America's presence in the world all make

living in the Twenty-first Century a debilitating and frightening reality for many.

The Apostle Paul, however, faced a very similar situation when he entered Pisidian-Antioch on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:13ff). The people were hard-hearted Jews and pagans, but Paul preached Christ crucified to them. He first preached to the Jews in the synagogue, reminding them of their glorious history as Yahweh's covenant people. He told them how God had fulfilled His promise and raised up Jesus. He proclaimed to them that Jesus had died for sinners, that He had been raised from the dead, that through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which they could not be freed through the Law of Moses. The Jews begged to hear more on the next Sabbath. A greater crowd gathered the next week to hear the word of the Lord, and many of the Jews became jealous and turned people away from Paul and his message. Many of the Gentiles, however, who were appointed to eternal life, believed. Consequently persecution arose but these new disciples of Jesus were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

My friends, we need Spirit anointed, revival and evangelistic preaching more than ever. My intention in these pages is to inspire, instruct, challenge, call, and deploy a new generation of evangelistic preachers like Samuel Davies, the Eighteenth Century Presbyterian evangelist used so powerfully by God in the Richmond, Virginia area. I will not deal with preaching in general. There are many fine books on the art of preparing and delivering sermons to a congregation.<sup>2</sup> Instead my focus will be on the necessity and methodology of evangelistic preaching. I will begin each

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<sup>2</sup> These include *Christ-Centered Preaching* by Bryan Chapell, *The Imperative of Preaching* by John Carrick, *Between Two Worlds* by John Stott, and *Preaching and Preachers* by Martyn Lloyd-Jones.



chapter with a lengthy biographical sketch of great preachers of the past, trusting that these will move you and inspire you to become a better, more qualified, more prepared, Spirit anointed preacher of the unfathomable riches of Christ. This book is meant to instruct and challenge any man who is called to herald the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ—whether or not he is an ordained pastor or a street preacher. How is one to preach evangelistically within the church, on Resurrection Sunday, during the Advent season, at funerals, or other special church services? And how might men, who sense a call to preach Christ on the streets of our cities and on the university campuses of our nation, best proclaim the glories of Christ’s finished work for sinners?

My earnest prayer for this book and those who read it can best be summed up by the words of Arnold Dallimore which I recite to myself, just prior to preaching:

*This book is written in the desire—perhaps in a measure of inner certainty—that we shall see the great Head of the Church once more bring into being His special instruments of revival, that He will again raise up unto Himself certain young men whom He may use in this glorious employ. And what manner of men will they be? Men mighty in the Scriptures, their lives dominated by a sense of the greatness, the majesty and holiness of God, and their minds and hearts aglow with the great truths of the doctrines of grace. They will be men who have learned what it is to die to self, to human aims and personal ambitions; men who are willing to be ‘fools for Christ’s sake’, who will bear reproach and falsehood, who will labor and suffer, and whose supreme desire will be, not to gain earth’s accolades, but to win the Master’s approbation when they appear before His awesome judgment seat. They will be men who will preach with broken hearts and tear-filled eyes, and upon whose ministries God will grant an extraordinary effusion of the Holy*

*Spirit, and who will witness 'signs and wonders following' in the transformation of multitudes of human lives.<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>3</sup> *George Whitefield*, Volume One Dallimore, page 16.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## EVANGELISTIC PREACHING, A DEFINITION

Just after his marriage in 1927 to Bethan Phillips, twenty-seven year old medical doctor, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, left a promising medical career in London at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, to take the pastoral position at a small, struggling Presbyterian mission in Aberavon, Wales, a place called Sandfields. While he was a moral man and had grown up in the church, Lloyd-Jones had only recently been converted. He began to sense God's call to preach the gospel. For a while, he hoped that he could both practice medicine during the week and preach on Sundays. However, he soon abandoned this notion and resigned his medical position and began preaching the gospel full time. Lloyd-Jones had no formal theological education and the Presbytery, the governing body of the Presbyterian Church in Wales, was rightly concerned about this issue. They reasoned, however, that this was only a small mission church in a small, economically challenged town. What harm could he do? So the Presbytery approved Lloyd-Jones to preach at Aberavon. Immediately the young preacher began a prayer meeting for Monday evenings. He abolished the choir and the drama team. He began a men's meeting for Saturday nights and he preached twice on Sundays. The morning sermon was to build up the saints. The Sunday evening sermon was always evangelistic.<sup>4</sup> Within a year of hearing her husband preach evangelistically, Bethan began to realize that though she had been in church all her life, if what he was saying a Christian

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<sup>4</sup> For a look at the power of Lloyd-Jones early evangelistic preaching, I suggest you read *Evangelistic Sermons Preached at Aberavon*. The depth and effectiveness of these sermons is quite remarkable, especially when we remember the young age of the man at the time he preached them.

is was really true, then she was not one of them. She soon was a true believer and hundreds more, over the next twelve years, were also converted through Lloyd-Jones evangelistic preaching.<sup>5</sup> In his first sermon at the church Lloyd-Jones said, “My one great attempt here at Aberavon, as long as God gives me strength to do so, will be to try to prove to you not merely that Christianity is reasonable, but ultimately, faced as we all are at some time or other with the stupendous fact of life and death, nothing else is reasonable. That is, as I see it, the challenge of the gospel of Christ to the modern world . . . that our only hope of peace is to be found in the crucified Christ.”<sup>6</sup>

So what was this preaching of Lloyd-Jones that affected so many people? How can we define evangelistic preaching? How does it differ from pastoral preaching? How is it different from teaching? Much of what is practiced in evangelical and Reformed churches today is teaching. Teaching is a dissemination of information to a congregation. Teaching is good and necessary. We must have Biblical and theological knowledge. Teaching, however, is not preaching. Preaching is something more and evangelistic preaching is still something more.

First, evangelistic preaching is proclamation. The Greek word *kerusso*, to herald or to proclaim, always with a sense of formality<sup>7</sup>, has the idea of a town crier, commissioned by the king, to make known his edicts to the people of the

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<sup>5</sup> *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The First Forty Years 1899-1939*, Iain Murray

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, page 136.

<sup>7</sup> Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, page 346.

town.<sup>8</sup> The herald is not at liberty to give his own message. He is not to give his own spin on the message. He is not to add to or detract from the edict. He is to deliver the king's announcement "straight up," no matter what the response of the people. We see this clearly in the Apostle Paul's message to the Areopagus at Mars Hill. He says, "That which you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you." Here Paul uses the word *kataangelo* which has a nuanced meaning of to announce, to promulgate, to declare, to make known, to proclaim publicly.<sup>9</sup> In his farewell address to the Ephesian elders at Miletus, Paul said, "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," (Acts 20:20-21). At times people rejoiced to hear Paul's message, and at other times they hated it and gnashed their teeth at it. Nonetheless, Paul was committed to proclaiming the very word of God to all who would listen. He never diluted the gospel message with his own opinions nor did he espouse the going view of the mainstream culture of the middle east. He determined to know nothing among the people except Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

Second, we can go further and say that evangelistic preaching is proclaiming the gospel, the *euangelion*, the evangel, the good news. In 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 Paul gives a succinct definition of the gospel. "Now I make known to you,

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<sup>8</sup> John Stott in his book *The Preacher's Portrait* writes, "the herald has good news to proclaim to the whole world. . . not a formal and theoretical discourse to a group of convinced believers but rather a proclamation made by a herald in the full light of day, to the sound of a trumpet, addressed to everyone because it comes from the king himself," page 34.

<sup>9</sup>Thayer, page 330.

brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” So, what is this gospel which Paul proclaimed to the people of Corinth? Paul lists three parts to it. First, Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. Second, He was buried. And third, He was raised from the dead on the third day according to the Scriptures. In other words, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ are the major components of the gospel and all three are prophesied repeatedly in the Old Testament. His death is prophesied by the prophet Isaiah, “He was pierced through for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him,” (Isaiah 53:5-6). His burial is also prophesied in the Old Testament. Isaiah goes further to write, “His grave was assigned with evil men, yet He was with a rich man in His death, because He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth,” (Isaiah 53:9). And Christ’s resurrection and ascension were also prophesied. King David wrote in referring to Christ’s ascension to the Father’s right hand, “I have set the Lord continually before me; because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken,” (Psalm 16:8). And later, in verse 10 of the same Psalm, David proclaims Messiah’s coming resurrection, “For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.”

Practically then, to preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ means that the evangelist is to proclaim the death of Christ. I will have much more to say about this later, but for

now, we must understand and proclaim with power that Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. He came to save sinners. His death satisfies the righteous judgment of God and without His death in our place, there is no hope. We are also to proclaim Christ's burial. People still alive are not buried. By proclaiming Christ's burial we are stating clearly and emphatically that Jesus really did die, contrary to what Muslims and many secularists believe. The death and burial of Jesus were a stumbling block in the day of the apostles and it remains one today as well. Many ask, "How can God die? Would a loving God really allow His only begotten Son to die? He died as a criminal a shameful death. How can He truly be the Son of God?" And, as Paul so eloquently states in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19, if Christ has not been raised from the dead then our preaching is worthless, our faith is worthless, so called believers are still in their sins, and we are of all people, most to be pitied for believing and staking our eternal destiny on such a preposterous lie.

Third, evangelistic preaching is also proclaiming the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. In Luke 24:47-49, after His resurrection and before His ascension, Jesus told His disciples that they were to proclaim repentance for the forgiveness of sins in His name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem. They would be witnesses (the Greek word for witness is martyr) of these things. He also told them that He was sending to them the promise of the Father, that they were to remain in Jerusalem until they were clothed with power from on high. The promised Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-32) would come upon them and empower them for ministry. Jesus promised the same thing to His apostles in Acts 1:8, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses." After His ascension the first one hundred and twenty believers gathered together for ten days of prayer, and they clearly



were asking that these precious and magnificent promises be brought to fruition. They were asking the risen and glorified Christ for the promised Holy Spirit to come upon them and empower them for their apostolic ministries. He came on the day of Pentecost and the formerly weak, cowardly Peter preached with glorious convicting and converting power (Acts 2:14-40). He did the same a few days later after healing the lame man when another crowd gathered to see the miracle of grace (Acts 3:11-26). We find the Apostle Paul on his first missionary journey, boldly preaching to the recalcitrant Jews and pagan Gentiles of Iconium, with complete reliance upon the Lord, testifying to the word of His grace (Acts 14:1-3). We could cite many other examples of the Spirit's anointing on the Apostle Paul's ministry, but consider just one more. He said, "My message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God," (1 Corinthians 2:4-5).

Church history is replete with examples of Holy Ghost power in preaching which brought remarkable and glorious conversion to millions of people, resulting in a mighty societal impact in various cultures. In reading the history of the Sixteenth Century Reformation with Luther, Calvin, and Knox; in reading of the Puritan revolution of the Seventeenth Century with men like John Owen, Cotton Mather, and Joseph Alleine; in observing the mighty works of revival in the Eighteenth Century Great Awakening through Spirit anointed preachers like Whitefield, Edwards, and Davies; and in studying the major players of the Nineteenth Century Second Great Awakening, men like Asahel Nettleton, Charles Spurgeon, and Daniel Baker, one thing is abundantly clear—all of these men knew and experienced the anointing of the Holy Spirit upon their ministries. There clearly was a mighty effusion of the Spirit upon them. There

is no other explanation. Perhaps due to modernity where we think we can reason our way to solve any problem, perhaps because of our confidence in our technology and management skills, we have tended to jettison the very source of power necessary and available to us in our preaching ministries. We must have the anointing of the Holy Spirit, but so few seek it and thus so few have the kind of effectual preaching ministry that so many in other times clearly possessed.

Fourth, we can go further in defining evangelistic preaching by saying that in our preaching we must make clear the attributes of God. In preaching to a hard-hearted covenant people, as impending Assyrian doom stood at the door of Israel, Isaiah proclaimed on behalf of Yahweh, "I am God and there is no other. The One forming light and creating darkness, causing well being and creating calamity. I am the Lord who does all of these," (Isaiah 45:6-7). Isaiah is proclaiming that only one God exists, and He the sovereign One who foreordains whatsoever comes to pass, who overrules the plans of men to accomplish His own purpose. We are to proclaim the greatness, majesty, and sovereignty of God. We are to put forth His holiness (Isaiah 6:1-5) and justice, that He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished (Nahum 1:3, Exodus 34:7), that He visits the iniquities of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Him, but who will show His lovingkindness and mercy to thousands (Psalm 103:11,17). We are to publish to all who will listen that He loves His people with an everlasting love, that He draws us with His lovingkindness, that He is full of mercy and grace, that He passes over the sins of His people by the propitiating, expiating blood of His Son, that He forgives transgressions, iniquity, and sin. To proclaim the attributes of God requires the evangelist to study both Systematic and Biblical Theology and for his study to move from his brain into his heart and out his mouth and actions

as he goes forth with the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus. The evangelist needs a deeper, fuller understanding of God's omnipotence (that He has all power), omnipresence (that He is everywhere at once, and His omniscience (that He knows all things). Indeed with the Psalmist the evangelist ought to be able to say, "Before there is a word on my tongue, behold, O Lord, You know it all. If I ascend into heaven, You are there. If I make my bed in Sheol, behold you are there," (Psalm 139:4-9). The evangelist ought to be able to expound in his preaching the goodness of God manifested in His beneficence to His creatures and creation, that man consequently is accountable to Him for His manifold goodness bestowed on everyone (Psalm 145:14-16).

Fifth, the evangelistic preacher must also be able to apply clearly the Law of God to the consciences of his hearers. Galatians 3:24 says the Law is a tutor to drive us to Christ. When preaching Christ it is not enough merely to say that Jesus came to save sinners. We must never assume our hearers understand what we mean by such a statement. Many think sin is something murderers, rapists, or terrorists do. One must truly sense his guilt before he will ever be able to grasp the heinous, seditious nature of his rebellion against the Holy One, the lover of his soul, the One before whom all guilty sinners will stand and face His awesome judgment seat. The evangelistic preacher needs to think through the Ten Commandments and be able to paraphrase them, using vivid imagery to drive home the true nature of the law and the consequences of breaking it. The evangelist must show how his hearers have erected other gods in place of the only true and living God, how they have dishonored their parents and others in authority over them, how they have made a mockery of the Lord's Day by neglecting to assemble themselves with the people of God, how they have engaged repeatedly in adultery by, at the very least, looking at women

with lust filled minds and eyes. They must see that they have stolen from their government, their employer, their friends and family. They must see they have ruined others with false accusations, that they have been jealous of others who have more than they do. Indeed the evangelist, in utter dependence upon the Holy Spirit to convict, seeks to drive home the truth that those listening to him are murderous, adulterous, disrespectful, rebellious, idolatrous, covetous, slanderous blasphemers. Consequently he must impress upon them that they have no hope, that they are without God in this world, that they are headed to perdition with their eyes wide open. Nothing less than preaching the Law of God in all its fullness will ever quicken the minds of the unbelieving who have convinced themselves that all is well with their souls.

Sixth, the evangelistic preacher must proclaim the fullness of Christ's person and work, stressing that Jesus alone is the only means of right standing with God. I will have much more to say about this later; but for now the evangelist proclaims the universality of sin—all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), that there is none righteous, not even one person. But then he rejoices to be able to proclaim that we are justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. This is the One whom God willed to make known to unbelievers the riches of His glory in Christ, the One whom the Father publicly displayed as a propitiation in His blood through faith. In so doing He demonstrated His own righteousness that in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed. He did so to prove Himself to be the just and justifier of those who have faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:23-26). Jesus exhorted His fearful disciples to not allow their hearts to be troubled, that He would not leave them as orphans, that He would come to them, that they would know where He was going. Thomas responded by saying they did

not know where He was going. They were confused. Jesus said to them, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me," (John 14:1-6). In other words Jesus was making clear that His finished work alone is mighty to save. No other religion will work. To suggest otherwise is to make clear that one does not know the depth and height of indwelling and actual sin, nor the necessity and efficacy of Christ's death for His people. To deny the necessity and exclusivity of Christ's atoning death is to admit that one knows nothing of the horror of indwelling sin and its consequences. John said that if someone says that he has no sin then he is deceiving himself and the truth is not in him. If he says that he has not sinned, then he is declaring God a liar who says we all have sinned. This proves His truth is not in those who claim their own innocence (1 John 1:8,10). The evangelistic preacher must proclaim as persuasively and powerfully as he can, under the leading of the Holy Spirit, this sobering reality to all who will listen. A superficial exposure of one's sin will not do. The sinner must not only see that Christianity is reasonable but absolutely necessary. He must realize his desperate situation. With the three thousand converted on the day of Pentecost he must say, "What must I do?" (Acts 2:37). The evangelist can then apply the balm of Gilead, that we have an Advocate with God the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, and He Himself is the propitiation or atoning sacrifice for all the sins of all His people of all time (1 John 2:1-2). The sinner must come to realize there is no other remedy, no other refuge, no other Savior. Only Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, can take away the sin of the world.

And seventh, it is never enough to lay out the attributes of God, the sinfulness and hopelessness of man, or the finished work of Christ at Calvary. After all of this, the evangelist must freely offer the gospel to all who will listen, urging them to repent and believe. We are always to preach

for a verdict. Just as a prosecuting attorney intends to convince the jury of the accused's guilt, so the evangelistic preacher is to convince the sinner that he stands judged before the holy tribunal of the holy, holy, holy God who will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. On the one hand, the convicted sinner is to fear judgment and to know that he will be speechless, that he can make no defense at all before the consuming fire of the Holy One. But on the other hand, after he has been leveled to the dust, he must then see the only hope he has—namely that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, that all who turn from their sin and trust only in Christ's propitiating and expiating death have right standing before God. It is all of grace and mercy. He can never earn it, nor can he ever procure it by his efforts or morality. God has justified him by the death of His Son, reconciled him by the blood of Jesus, declaring him not guilty, imputing to him the very righteousness of Christ, removing the just condemnation he deserves. He must stress repentance (again much more on this later) and the simplicity of faith. The sinner listening to the evangelist must know exactly what is expected of him—he must turn from his sins and run to Jesus Christ for refuge. As Jesus told His hearers as He began His earthly ministry, "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel," (Mark 1:15).

So to summarize, evangelistic preaching is to proclaim the whole counsel of God, focusing on the good news that Jesus Christ was crucified, buried, and was raised from the dead. It is to preach with complete dependence upon the Holy Spirit to bring conviction and conversion. It is to make clear the bigness of the true and living God, touching on His mighty attributes. It is to apply the Law of God to the conscience of the hearers, trusting the Holy Spirit to convince and convict them of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in ungodly ways, and of all the harsh things these ungodly

sinner have spoken against God (Jude 15). It is to put forth in a joyful and winsome fashion the unfathomable riches of Christ, the great lover of sinners who gave Himself willingly for all His people. It is to lift up Jesus with great joy—His incarnation, suffering, death, humiliation, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation to the Father’s right hand in glory. It is to preach for a verdict. People must be cut to the quick by the convicting and regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, where they cry out, “What must I do?”

This is evangelistic preaching. This is the great need of the day. This alone is God’s prescribed way to usher sinners into His presence, to turn them from darkness to light, to transfer them from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of Christ. For God declares that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. But then He asks, “But how can they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in Him in whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Indeed, how beautiful on the mountain are the feet of him who brings good news, but Isaiah asks, ‘Who has believed our message?’ So faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ,” (Romans 10:11-17). Bottom line my friends—God uses evangelistic preaching to usher people into His kingdom. It is His ordained means. So, as one called by God to proclaim the excellencies of Christ who called you from darkness into light; rejoice with fear and trembling. Glory in your privilege of proclaiming the excellencies of Christ to a lost and dying world moving rapidly to perdition.

But why evangelistic preaching? Aren’t there more effective means of communication? After all, we now have the internet and all the amazing technology that goes with it. We have music and drama skits, videos; and many churches and preachers make use of these things with seeming success.

Also we are told that people today want more “say” in their lives. They do not like to be “screamed at”, that perhaps, therefore, a more casual approach making use of dialogue may be a better way to go. And many today, both inside and outside the church, are pretty nervous about open air preaching. Some believers wonder if it is effective. Some say it actually is harmful, counterproductive. I remember preaching a while back at Yale University and a freshman female student who said that she was a Christian, in tears said to me, “We have been trying to reach the people of this campus in a more gentle way and you men have come here and destroyed all that we have been trying to do.” And to be sure, there is often tremendous opposition when street preachers are preaching Jesus on the college campus and at large sporting venues. To go farther, many evangelical pastors seem to think evangelistic preaching is generally unnecessary in their congregations. After all, they reason, our people are already Christians. “My job,” they say, “is to build up the saints. Besides, I believe we ought to earn the right to be heard by building relationships and being a presence in the community. Then we can share Jesus with people we have come to know.” So this means, in this line of thinking, that evangelistic preaching just does not work today. “Maybe it did up to fifty or sixty years ago, but now things have changed. We need new wine in new wineskins.”

So, what is the Biblical warrant for evangelistic preaching? First, consider the prophetic nature of evangelistic preaching. We know that Moses was a prophet and God told him that a greater prophet would come (Deuteronomy 18:15). Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the Lord, and the Lord appeared again at Shiloh, because the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord (1 Samuel 3:20-21). Both Moses and Samuel spoke forth the word of the Lord. They were commissioned by Yahweh to herald His truth. When Jeremiah was terribly discouraged at



the hardheartedness of the people of Judah, especially at the persecution he faced from Pashur the priest, Jeremiah wanted to quit. He wished he had never been born. The opposition was too great for him. His preaching had resulted in reproach and derision all day long. However, when Jeremiah wanted to pack it in and go home, he came to his senses and said, "But if I say, 'I will not remember Him or speak anymore in His name,' then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire shut up in my bones; and I am weary of holding it in, and I cannot endure it," (Jeremiah 20:9). He knew he must warn people to flee from the wrath of God that was coming, and to turn to Yahweh, the lover of their souls, for refuge. As Israel faced the impending invasion of the Assyrians, Isaiah received a prophetic word from Yahweh. "Comfort O comfort My people, says your God, speak kindly to Jerusalem. Call out to her that her warfare has ended, that her iniquity has been removed, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins," (Isaiah 40:1ff). Later he says, "Break forth, shout joyfully together, you waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord has bared His holy arm in the sight of all the nations, that all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God," (Isaiah 52:9-10). Isaiah goes on from there in putting forth the prophetic word by saying, "Who has believed our message, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, like a root out of parched ground . . . He was pierced through for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities, and the chastening for our well being fell upon Him . . . all of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way, and the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him," (Isaiah 53:1-6). The Old Testament prophets were called by God to proclaim His judgment and the way by which that judgment could be removed. They were to make clear the mind of God on all matters of life and death. Jesus fulfilled the Spirit

anointed office of prophet by His incarnation and, due to our union with Him, we are now prophets of God as well. This is true of every believer, not just evangelistic preachers. Everyone who has been born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is to proclaim Jesus. All who have been extracted from the domain of darkness and placed into the kingdom of God are to proclaim His excellencies.

Having noted that all believers are prophets, we can also say that God calls some men to be preachers of the gospel. That is, He has given certain men the speaking and evangelistic gifts to go along with the office of evangelist or pastor. Paul says that God gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors-teachers (Ephesians 4:11). While the office of Apostle and Prophet are no longer necessary since we have a full canonical and authoritative word from the Lord in the Holy Scriptures, God nonetheless does call and equip certain men to preach the gospel as evangelists or pastors-teachers. After seeing the vision of the thrice holy God in the temple, and after his mouth was cleansed by the burning coals from the altar, Isaiah told the Lord that he was willing to go for Him and proclaim the prophetic message. The Lord said to him, "Go, and tell the people . . ." (Isaiah 6:1-9). In the day of King Jehoiakim, around 626 B.C., Jeremiah received his commission from Yahweh. "The word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nation.'" Jeremiah balked at the idea because he was young and not a naturally gifted speaker. Yahweh rebuked him and said, "Do not say, 'I am a youth,' because everywhere I send you, you shall go, and all that I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you . . . Behold I have put My words in your mouth. See, I have appointed you this day

over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant,” (Jeremiah 1:5-10).

We see the same calling to preach in numerous New Testament passages as well. In fulfillment of Isaiah 40:3, John came into the district around the Jordan River, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3). Matthew tells us the content of John’s message. They were to repent for the kingdom of heaven was at hand (Matthew 10:3). Luke tells us that John came preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3). Later in His earthly ministry Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. He told them to go first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel to preach saying, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons . . .” (Matthew 10:6-8). While Jesus’ disciples were called and given authority as apostles we can nonetheless see that God called them to preach the gospel. Furthermore, Saul of Tarsus, on his way to Damascus to persecute believers met the resurrected Christ and was saved on the spot. God told Ananias that he was to fetch Saul, “. . . for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake,” (Acts 9:15-16). And later the church at Antioch, following the leading of the Holy Spirit, commissioned Paul and Barnabas to go to the Gentile world with the gospel of grace. And Paul exhorted Timothy not to neglect the spiritual gift within him, which he received by prophetic utterance by the laying on of hands of the Presbytery (1 Timothy 4:14). Near the end of Paul’s life, while languishing in the Roman prison he told Timothy, “Preach the word. Be ready in season and out of season.

Reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and instruction,” (2 Timothy 4:2). Peter reminds the faithful that they have this prophetic word made more sure, to which they would do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place (2 Peter 1:19). And John also says that he had received a revelation from Jesus Christ to make known the things which were shortly to take place (Revelation 1:1). In summary, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son call certain men to be preachers of His unfathomable grace.

It is absolutely fundamental and without equivocation that we understand the vital necessity of the Holy Spirit’s anointing on our preaching. What is the anointing and how do we preachers get it? In Luke 24:45-49, a passage noted earlier, Jesus is commissioning His apostles to preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins. They are to preach this message to all the world, but they were to begin right there in Jerusalem. Though they had been with Jesus for three years and were wonderfully trained by Him, witnessing His mighty miracles of healing, raising people from the dead, and casting out demons; though they had heard His marvelous sermons and been privy to private conversations about the meaning of the parables; though they saw Him numerous times after His resurrection; and though they saw Him ascend into heaven before their very eyes; Jesus, nonetheless, told them to remain in the city until they were clothed with power from on high. Again, just prior to His ascension, He said to His disciples, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth,” (Acts 1:8). In reminding the Thessalonians of the Spirit’s mighty work as Paul answered the Macedonian call, he wrote, “Our gospel did not come in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and with full conviction,” (1 Thessalonians 1:5). In other words, something

supernatural was going on. A mighty work of power and conviction, resulting in gospel transformation was wrought there in Thessalonica and the surrounding towns. When the Holy Spirit came upon the one hundred and twenty as they prayed in the Upper Room, Peter, as well as the other apostles, began preaching with power and authority. Three thousand were saved on the day of Pentecost. Within days the church had five thousand new believers. Then people were being added daily to the church through the preaching of the apostles. By the time Paul wrote his epistles to the Romans and the Colossians, some twenty years later, he could say that their faith was known throughout the entire world (Romans 1:8), that the gospel was constantly bearing fruit and increasing in all the world (Colossians 1:6). Quite literally we can confidently say that within fifty years or so after Christ's ascension, the entire world had heard the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>10</sup> The anointing refers to the Holy Spirit coming down upon the preacher and his auditors. It is a supernatural manifestation of God bringing to bear His word through the preacher. With the anointing the preacher speaks directly to the heart of his audience. The word comes with authority. Those hearing it know that God is speaking directly to them, that they must act upon what they are hearing. When the unction, another word for the anointing, is on the preacher those hearing him are drawn to respond immediately, "What must I do?" The preacher with the unction of the Spirit speaks with a clarity of mind and speech, with an enlarged heart of compassion, pathos, and zeal. He speaks with divine eloquence. His words flow from his mouth and go directly to the hearts and consciences of those hearing him. The people are not distracted. They do not fall asleep. Their minds do not wander. They are locked in on the word of God as it is coming to them.

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<sup>10</sup> Roland Allen in *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Early Church* puts forth his case wonderfully and powerfully.

Many preachers speak of it. Lloyd-Jones said that the anointing is the most vital thing a preacher needs. He defines it this way. “It is the Holy Spirit falling upon the preacher in a special manner. It is an access of power. It is God bestowing power, through the Spirit, to the preacher in order that he may do this work in a manner that lifts it up beyond the efforts and endeavors of man to a position in which the preacher is being used by the Spirit and becomes the channel through whom the Spirit works.”<sup>11</sup> Tony Sargent, in a book devoted to explaining the anointing by illustrating it in the preaching of Lloyd-Jones, goes into quite a bit of detail in defining it.<sup>12</sup> Briefly stated, the anointing in the Old Testament came upon those men who were placed in either the office of prophet, priest, or king. They were anointed with water or oil. In the New Testament this anointing was identified with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Paul says that he preached, not in persuasive words of wisdom but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that the Corinthian’s faith should not rest on the wisdom of man but on the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:4-5). Paul’s intention never was to communicate the gospel in any way that would draw attention to himself, flatter people, or manipulate others into “making a decision” for Christ. By preaching in the demonstration of the Spirit he meant, as Arturo Azurdia says, “proof, evidence, verification.” This term was used in a court of law for testimony to prove a point, suggesting that a compelling decision is demanded, that no one is able to refute the proof being presented.<sup>13</sup> Tony Sargent has

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<sup>11</sup> *Preaching and Preachers*, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, page 305.

<sup>12</sup> *The Sacred Anointing: The Preaching of Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones*, by Tony Sargent.

<sup>13</sup> *Spirit Empowered Preaching*, Arturo Azurdia, page 102.

observed that Lloyd-Jones was deeply intrigued by the preaching of Eighteenth Century Welsh revival preacher Howell Harris. While Harris took care in expounding Biblical texts faithfully, he also spoke of “the power coming” where words poured forth from his mouth. His preaching was heightened. He began in an ordinary fashion and then he was taken up and born along by the Spirit. He had received unction. Harris wrote, “I took no particular texts but discoursed freely as the Lord gave me utterance. As to the subject of my discourse, it was all given unto me in an extraordinary manner without the least premeditation. It was not the fruit of my memory. It was the effect of the immediate strong impulse felt in my soul.”<sup>14</sup> While it is true that Howell Harris later had severe problems with failure to submit to the brethren, and thus for a season was set aside by Whitefield and the other preachers; early in his ministry he was carried along by the Holy Spirit. Early on Harris had the anointing of the Spirit on his preaching. Planning out a year of sermons is not necessarily unspiritual, but at the same time, should not the preacher be open for the moment at which the Lord may lead him in a different direction? Preaching under the anointing of the Holy Spirit is not the same as a lecture or business presentation. There is a clear supernatural dimension which takes the ordinary words of a man and carries them deeply, fervently, and powerfully into the hearts of his auditors. There is nothing in the world like it, and it is desperately needed in our day.

There is only one way, my friends, in securing or obtaining the unction of the Spirit upon your preaching. You must earnestly seek God for it in prayer. In a time of desperation and uncertainty, when he was on the run from his enemies, King David prayed, “O God, You are my God; I will seek You

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<sup>14</sup> Sargent, page 35.

earnestly. My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. Thus I have seen You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory,” (Psalm 63:1-2). In other words, we see or experience the power and glory of God’s presence when we go into the sanctuary, when we seek Him earnestly, when our souls thirst for Him, when our flesh yearns for Him. I urge preachers to spend at least one hour in prayer, as close as possible to the time they begin to preach. They should pray over every aspect of their sermon—the introduction, the exposition of the text, the applications, the illustrations, asking the Holy Spirit to convict, convert, and sanctify, asking that the Holy Spirit carry them along and put His words into their mouths, that they lift up the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Savior, reconciler, and emancipator.

We can go further and say that evangelistic preaching is the means by which Christ builds His church. Jesus was preaching the kingdom of heaven. So were His apostles. Prior to His ascension the resurrected Christ told His disciples, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age,” (Matthew 28:18-20). In his farewell address to the Ephesian elders at Miletus, Paul said, “You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, bound by the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me



there, except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God,” (Acts 20:17-25). Paul wrote, “But how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Romans 10:14). By no means shall we discount the importance of one-on-one evangelism. This clearly is something every believer should do, and it is what the early church in Acts was doing (Acts 8:4, 1 Thessalonians 1:6-9). Having said this, however, the precedent in Scripture, both from the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles, is to preach to the multitudes. Paul went “door to door” and from house to house at the market place in Athens, but he also preached to the Areopagus on Mars Hill (Acts 17:17, 22).

And finally we can say that evangelistic preaching is powerful and effectual. Under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, it does its great work. At times the preaching of the gospel is a savor of life unto life, bringing conviction and conversion to those whom the Father chose and to those whom the Holy Spirit has prepared to hear the good news of the gospel. At other times it causes great division, a savor of death unto death, as the proud and recalcitrant reject the reconciling, propitiating death and resurrection of Jesus. The prophet Ezekiel gives us a vivid image of the impossibility of our task. In Ezekiel 37 he sees a vision of a valley filled with dry bones. He is told to prophesy or preach to the bones. Can anything seem more silly or foolish than preaching to dry bones, the very image of death? But he obeys the word of the Lord and the bones came to life, gained sinew, muscle, and skin and breath was breathed into the bones so that they began to live.

The key to evangelistic preaching is to grasp the futility of our call, the folly of it as far as the world is concerned, unless the anointing of the Holy Spirit falls on it. At the same time this is the beauty and romance of our task. You should go forth expectantly, trusting and believing that God will do a mighty work that very day, that some whom the Spirit has prepared will be brought under conviction and will repent and call on the name of the Lord to save them. There is no need to soft peddle the message, no need to flatter the hearers, no need to side step the issue of sin, death, hell, and judgment. There is no need to appear erudite and sophisticated. There is no need to seek a place at the table of the intelligentsia. When Paul went into any city he came preaching Christ crucified, trusting the Spirit to lead him to people whose hearts the Holy Spirit opened to receive the word of the Lord. Paul was not, therefore, ashamed of the gospel because he knew it was the power of God unto salvation for all who believed (Romans 1:16). He did not hesitate in preaching the whole counsel of God's word because he knew the word of the cross (proclaiming the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ to appease God's righteous anger and to reconcile sinners to the Holy One) is foolishness to all who are perishing but it is the power of God for those who are being saved. He knew that not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble are called and chosen (1 Corinthians 1:18, 26). He knew that in our weakness and frailty the gospel goes forth in the earthen vessels of our bodies so that the glory may come to God and not to us (2 Corinthians 4:7).

When Martyn Lloyd-Jones was at Sandfields in his first ministry, the Holy Spirit regularly attended his preaching with unusual authority and power. The growth of the church was truly astonishing, and can be nothing short of revival. Almost all the growth in the church between 1927 and 1939 was conversion growth, what Lloyd-Jones called "people from the

world.” In 1927 the beginning membership of the church of one hundred and forty-six grew to one hundred and sixty-five. By 1928 the church membership was one hundred and ninety-six. In 1930 there were seventy conversions, and in 1931 there were one hundred and twenty-eight.

My brethren, surely you will agree with me that this is the great need in our day. By all means, we need solid, Reformational theology. I am all for holding to our theological and confessional standards, but these in and of themselves do not have power. As John Calvin said, “The work of the Spirit, then, is joined to the word of God. But a distinction is made, that we may know that the external word is of no avail by itself, unless animated by the power of the Spirit . . . all power of action, then, resides in the Spirit Himself.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Cited by Azurdia, page 97.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE HOLY SPIRIT'S ROLE IN EVANGELISTIC PREACHING**

The small Presbyterian Church at Cambuslang, near Glasgow, Scotland, had been without a pastor for over sixteen years when young William M'Culloch arrived in 1731, and the church was languishing. The new pastor found that no child under the age of sixteen in the church had been taught the *Shorter Catechism*<sup>16</sup>, and on top of that there was a long-standing rift among several on the Session (the Board of Elders). The spiritual climate and ignorance were so pronounced, in fact, that for the first three years of his pastorate M'Culloch refused to serve the Lord's Supper. Moreover, we know that M'Culloch had serious reservations about his own suitability for pastoral ministry, for just a few years after coming to Cambuslang, he confided to an older minister that he felt totally inadequate for ministry, and in fact had run away from this church just prior to his ordination, being terrified at the prospects of such a calling.

At this time the skepticism of David Hume and the deadening effects of the Scottish Enlightenment had infected the people of Scotland, so that they were a godless, debauched people who had no fear of God before their eyes. The influence of the Puritans had faded in Scotland following the Covenanters' endurance of the "killing time" at the hands of the British army in the late 1660s.<sup>17</sup> Thus the influence of

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<sup>16</sup> The *Shorter Catechism* was written by Presbyterian, Anglican, and Independent theologians at the Westminster Assembly from 1643-1647. It is part of a much larger document called the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. There is also a *Larger Catechism* included with both documents.

<sup>17</sup> For more information see Jock Purves' *Fair Sunshine: Character Studies on the Scottish Covenanters*.

the gospel was severely eclipsed by the late 1730s, when God raised up George Whitefield, John and Charles Wesley, Howell Harris, Daniel Rowland, and William M'Culloch to be His mighty instruments for revival in the British Isles.

Though a devout and godly man, learned and well-versed in Scripture and theology, M'Culloch was at best an average preacher, even by his own son's testimony. In fact, during the annual five-day Communion season, during which preaching continued all day long as various ministers took the pulpit, the people found M'Culloch's turn a convenient time to get up and go for a little refreshment or rest. His sermons were neither profound in content nor eloquent in delivery.

By 1740, however, M'Culloch had a deep burden for the salvation of the people of his town. He had heard of the mighty workings of God in England, Wales, and America under the preaching of George Whitefield. He had corresponded with both Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards, and been deeply moved and encouraged by their reports of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In 1741 he attended several of Whitefield's meetings in Glasgow, saw remarkable conversions, and was profoundly inspired by what God had done there. He wrote to Whitefield, saying that he knew of at least fifty truly converted through his preaching, ten of whom were members in M'Culloch's own church. He began to pray regularly and earnestly, searching his own heart for sin, confessing and repenting of it, being filled up regularly with the glory of Christ and the power of His gospel. He developed a holy zeal for the lost and began to visit them regularly. He also began a prayer meeting at which a number of his elders and others from the church regularly attended. He records that his people became wonderfully given to public and private prayer, asking God earnestly for a visitation of the Holy Spirit.

Late in 1740 M'Culloch began preaching a series of sermons on the theme of the rebirth, explaining the nature of it, the necessity of it, and the means of gaining it. He spent a year plowing the fallow ground of the hearts of his cold, lethargic, ignorant people. Finally, by late 1741, his church was experiencing numerical growth with many who were awakened by the Spirit. In the early weeks of the following year, after a petition requesting regular preaching had circulated through the town and garnered many signatures, M'Culloch began preaching nearly every day. On February 18, 1742, he preached on Jeremiah 23:6, "And this is His name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness." Nothing unusual happened during the sermon, but as he closed the meeting in prayer, perhaps due to frustration or sincere grief over the listeners' hardheartedness, M'Culloch prayed, "O Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Where is the fruit of my labor among this people?" Immediately the room was filled with weeping and great anguish. About fifty, wounded in their souls, went next door to the manse, and there M'Culloch spoke with each about his or her spiritual condition, praying with and for them to be granted forgiveness of their sins. For the rest of his life William M'Culloch observed the Sunday nearest February 18 as a remembrance of the great work God began that day. From February until August, a period of 120 days, there was an average of five preaching meetings weekly. The burden of daily preaching and counseling the awakened must have been a huge weight for M'Culloch to carry, but he seems to have risen to the occasion. Evidently, God gave him supernatural strength and stamina to stay at this work and God also moved a number of ministers from nearby towns to help with the counseling and preaching.

By the spring of 1742, word of the revival was spreading far and wide—word of how God was using an obscure, ordinary

preacher in powerful ways. The preaching services began attracting thousands of people, and the number of those converted had grown to over three hundred. Some services attracted as many as ten thousand people. About this time M'Culloch wrote to George Whitefield, asking him to preach during the Communion season of mid July. Whitefield did preach several times. By now Whitefield had been in Scotland six months for this his second campaign there, preaching to even larger crowds than on his first visit. By the time he preached the finale of the Communion season on July 11, the crowd exceeded fifty thousand by some estimations, though Whitefield himself reckoned the count at thirty thousand. After this closing sermon Whitefield suggested to M'Culloch and his Elders that they hold another Communion season very shortly, striking while the iron was hot, so to speak, since the Holy Spirit was so obviously at work. Though it was not the custom of the Presbyterian Church to serve Communion within such a short interval, the Elders agreed and Whitefield returned on August 15 and preached to around thirty thousand again. Crowds came from nearby towns and from as far away as England and Ireland. The people were generally affected in two ways. First, many were deeply burdened by their sin, understanding their just condemnation for the first time, crying out to be saved. Others who already were in Christ were overcome with the joy of their salvation, finding their hearts wonderfully moved and energized to worship and serve God more fervently. To be sure, some mocked the proceedings, saying they were nothing but raw emotionalism orchestrated by Whitefield and M'Culloch. Others who had been opposed to the meetings, however, grudgingly admitted that those soundly converted, transformed by the preaching during the Cambuslang revival, numbered in the

thousands, and that the results of the revival lasted for another thirty years.<sup>18</sup>

I already touched on this briefly but we need to take this up in fuller measure at this time. What is the Holy Spirit's role in evangelistic preaching? To be sure, He is the one who brings the anointing or unction which carries the preacher to heights not formerly experienced, giving him unusual freedom of thought and felicity of speech. He is the author of the preacher's words. He speaks the gospel, not in word only, but also in the power, in the Spirit, and with full conviction. As God the Holy Spirit wrought a mighty work in the days of the Cambuslang revival under Whitefield and M'Culough, may He do the same today. What is the Spirit's role?

As a preliminary we need to understand the vital necessity of the Spirit's help in evangelistic preaching. Jesus both knew this and experienced it. When Mary asked how it was possible that she would give birth to the Messiah she was told by the angel, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you," (Luke 1:35). Just prior to beginning Jesus' earthly ministry and the temptation in the wilderness, at His baptism the Holy Spirit descended as a dove, and God spoke from heaven, confirming His call upon the Lord Jesus by saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," (Matthew 3:16-17). After His temptation Luke tells us that Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Holy Spirit, and went into the synagogue at Nazareth and read from Isaiah the prophet who said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me," (Isaiah 61:1).

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<sup>18</sup> *The Cambuslang Revival: The Scottish Evangelical Revival of the Eighteenth Century*, Arthur Fawcett, and *Scotland Saw His Glory: History of Revivals in Scotland*, compiled by Richard Owen Roberts.



The apostles also clearly understood the vital necessity of the Holy Spirit to come upon their ministries. In passages already cited (Luke 24:44-49, Acts 1:8, 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5, 1 Thessalonians 1:5) the apostles were praying for and waiting on power, the power of the Holy Spirit to fill them. They knew their work was impossible unless the Holy Spirit came down upon them and their hearers. Jesus had already told them that the world would hate them, even as it had hated Him (John 15:18-19). They knew none sought for God, that all had turned away from the Lord (Isaiah 53:6, Romans 3:10ff). No manner of skill, personality, training, or ministry plan can overcome the hardhearted unbelief of the lost sinner. He is prejudiced to the core against gospel truth. He is under the control of the evil one. He is a blind rebel and unwittingly on his way to hell and he is not the least bit concerned about his destination. How, then, can we ever reach him? Only the Holy Spirit can bring the change ushering in true salvation.

So, what is the role of the Holy Spirit in evangelistic preaching? First, consider the work of the Holy Spirit upon the preacher himself.<sup>19</sup> Clearly the preacher's private time with the Lord is vital. This includes his own personal devotional time when God speaks to him in prayer and his own systematic reading of the word of God. The preacher must go deeply with Jesus and hide God's word in his own heart that he may not sin against the Lord (Psalm 119:11). So memorization and meditation on God's word are vital to prepare the evangelistic preacher to preach the unfathomable riches of Christ. But there is far more here to consider in this regard. Consider the work of the Holy Spirit

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<sup>19</sup> I am indebted here to Al Martin and his book *Preaching in the Holy Spirit* for the gist of these remarks of the Holy Spirit's work on the preacher as he preaches.

on the preacher in his actual delivery of the sermon. As the preacher stands up to preach in the pulpit or on the streets, assuming that he has the anointing of the Spirit upon him at that very moment, then his mind is affected. His mind is enlightened. The Holy Spirit gives him a quickness of thought and brings to his mind insight into a particular passage, or points him to a pertinent Scriptural cross reference which wonderfully sheds light on the passage from which he is preaching. Let's say you have planned to preach from Isaiah 53 on the prophecy of our Lord's atoning death for His people. You have studied the passage well. You have done your exegetical work, consulted your commentaries, forged a logical outline, thought deeply and practically on how you are hoping to present powerfully and persuasively the glory of Christ's death. You have found several illustrations that help magnify your points. You have found several Scriptural cross references which bolster your argument. You are "good to go". As you stand in the pulpit with your notes before you or on a step on a sidewalk in your hometown, you begin to preach, and something remarkable starts to happen. Your mind is very sharp. You not only are bringing forth what you planned in your sermon preparation, but you are going much farther, much deeper. You are finding insights you did not previously have. You are giving illustrations "on the fly" you have never before used. What is going on here? The Holy Spirit has come upon you and enlightened your mind.

We can go further and say that the Holy Spirit often enlarges your heart too. Let's face it, sometimes in your preparation you are just not "feeling" it. And as you stand to preach perhaps you slept poorly the night before, maybe your young child kept you awake all night, and your heart is cold. The passage which so moved you in your study a few days before seems lifeless as you stand to preach it. But in your physical weakness and coldness of heart you seem to catch

fire. As you look into the eyes of those walking by on the street, or the students at the university, or the teens in your church who seem to be so disinterested in Biblical themes, something amazing begins to happen. Your heart begins to overflow with love for your auditors. Perhaps even your voice trembles with grief as you explain the horrors of hell for those who reject the overtures of grace. As you watch for the countless time a woman walk into the abortuary to kill her child, you are overwhelmed with grief for her and her child. You know what this will cost her. You have seen the brokenness and calloused hearts so many times before. You know the guilt and shame with which this mother will live for many years. You know the sentence of death and condemnation is upon her, "Murderer," and your calm, calculated demeanor suddenly gives way to visible compassion. What is going on here? The Holy Spirit has come upon you and enlarged your heart. We see it happen repeatedly with the Lord Jesus and His disciples. Jesus wept over Jerusalem as He entered the city (Luke 19:41-44). Paul says that he had unceasing grief for his kinsmen and was willing to suffer hell if only they would repent (Romans 9:3). This, my friends, is the practical and powerful work of the Holy Spirit coming upon your actual activity of evangelistic preaching. Have you experienced it? I bet you have from time to time.

But if your mind is enlightened and your heart is enlarged, but your speech is not altered, then your sermon may be like a swollen river after a heavy July thunder shower. The vast volume of water has no place to go and backs up, flooding the surrounding area, bringing devastation. But when the Holy Spirit enlightens your mind and enlarges your heart, He also loosens your tongue. The former coward, Peter, spoke with boldness on the day of Pentecost after the Holy Spirit came upon him. He spoke with boldness before the Sanhedrin when they told him to stop preaching. In fact after

he and the other disciples assembled, Luke tells us that the place where they gathered was shaken and they began to speak the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:31). Paul asked the Ephesians to pray for him, that an open door for the gospel would be made available to him, that he may speak forth the mystery of Christ with boldness (Ephesians 6:19). The boldness (the Greek word is *parresia*) about which Luke and Paul speak means freedom in speaking, unreservedness in speech, without concealment, free and fearless confidence.<sup>20</sup> Though using a different Greek word in 2 Corinthians 6:11, we see an amplification of the same idea. Paul says to the Corinthians who had previously rejected his ministry, “Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide.” When the anointing of the Holy Spirit comes upon the preacher he is given a remarkable felicity of speech. His voice modulates effortlessly. There is a sharpness and crispness to his words. Emotion and passion emanate from his mouth. He has what I call “divine eloquence”. He does not stumble over his words. He does not search for the right word. It comes to him effortlessly. His wife is even surprised at his eloquence. This is something of the glory of the Holy Spirit energizing the preacher as he preaches the unfathomable riches of Christ.

This kind of Spirit anointed preaching deeply affects a congregation. They are moved by it. They immediately sense that this is not the norm. This is not a mere lecture on some obscure theological concept. This sermon is alive. It breathes. It moves. It transforms. When Charles Hodge was a young man he was able to accompany the great Presbyterian preacher Archibald Alexander on a preaching tour. Hodge was only fourteen years old at the time but

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<sup>20</sup> *Thayer's Green-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, page 491.

Alexander's preaching made a lifelong, life changing impact upon him. After hearing Alexander paint a vivid, powerful, and moving picture of Abraham offering up his son Isaac on the altar, young Hodge said those staid and proper Presbyterians were deeply affected.<sup>21</sup>

But what does the Holy Spirit do to the audience when the gospel is preached with unction from on high? First, He brings a deep, profound conviction of sin. The preacher is like a prosecuting attorney. If you have been charged with embezzling money from your company and I am a prosecutor for the state, then my job is to prove you guilty. I will try to convince the jury of your guilt. My intention is to put you away in jail for a long time. So, I will garner witnesses who will testify for the prosecution in hopes that I can present irrefutable evidence of your guilt.

Likewise, the evangelist, with total dependence upon the Holy Spirit, is seeking to bring a conviction. He wants the lost sinner to see his hopeless condition, that he is without God in this world, that he is under a sentence of eternal condemnation. The preacher is looking for the response that Peter had at Pentecost when his audience was pierced in the heart and cried out, "What must I do?" (Acts 2:37). How does the Holy Spirit bring about this conviction? Jesus told His disciples in His Upper Room discourse, "But it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away the Helper will not come to you, but He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. Concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me. Concerning righteousness because I go to the Father and you will no longer behold Me. And concerning judgment because the ruler of this world has been judged," (John

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<sup>21</sup> *Biography of Charles Hodge*, A.A. Hodge, page 46.

16:8-11). The Greek word for convict is *elegzo*—to convict, refute, generally with a suggestion of the shame of the person convicted. It also means to chide, reprove, admonish. Jude uses the same word in referring to those who are marked out for condemnation, ungodly persons who change the grace of God into licentiousness. The Spirit brings conviction on all the ungodly and all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way (Jude 14).

To be sure, the Holy Spirit is the author of conviction of sin, but what is the tool He uses to bring this conviction? Paul tells us that it is the Law of God, a tutor or schoolmaster to drive us to Christ so that we may be justified by faith (Galatians 3:24). Hendriksen tells us that a tutor in the day of the apostles was generally a trusted slave who would escort his master's child to and from school, who would watch over the child's conduct throughout the day. He was a disciplinarian to the child, often with a severe dimension to the discipline. This is precisely one of the purposes of the Law of God, readying our hearts to accept eagerly the gospel of justifying grace.<sup>22</sup>

So the Spirit of God uses the Law of God, preached by the servant of God, to convince the sinner of his condition. While he may think that he is rich and has need of nothing, as the Spirit does His work the sinner is soon convinced that he, in fact, is wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked (Revelation 3:17). So, how shall the evangelist wield the sword of the Law to bring a conviction? The exchange between Ray Comfort and several on the 180 video is priceless. He wields the Law skillfully. I urge you to watch this video and other resources from Ray Comfort to assist you in this regard. But it goes something like this as you are

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<sup>22</sup> New Testament Commentary: Galatians, William Hendriksen, page 148.

preaching—”The Bible says that all are guilty, that all have fallen short of God’s glory. You may say, ‘I am not so bad. In fact, I am better than most people. I am pretty sure God will accept me. I am not perfect but God is in the forgiveness business, right?’ But, my friend, have you ever told a lie, even what we might call a ‘white lie’? Have you ever looked on a young woman with lust, desiring her sexually? Have you ever stolen anything from anyone? Maybe a notepad from the office at work, maybe a tool on the job site? Have you ever been angry with anyone? Have you ever held a grudge, ever wanted to get even? Have you ever sworn and cursed God, blaming Him for your problems, rejecting Him because of the evil you have seen in the world? Have you ever said, ‘Jesus is a good man, but there are many ways to heaven.’ Have you ever said, ‘The Bible is not true. It is full of fairytales’? My friends, if you agree that you have done any of these things, and who among us can deny any of these, then you are, by your own confession a lying, fornicating, thieving, murderous, idolatrous blasphemer. And I can go further to say that God will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. Due to your own rebellion against the great lover of your soul, you stand condemned before Him. What shall you do?”

Though we ought to preach the Law to the unbeliever, the tone with which we preach is important. We ought to preach with tear filled eyes, being filled up with the love of Jesus in our hearts for the people to whom we are preaching. We must never give the impression that we are glad or even ambivalent about their eternal destiny. We need to connect with our audience. Look into their eyes. If they mock you or revile you, be patient with them. Do not take it personally. You must be “prayed up” before you preach evangelistically. When you have the people’s hearts, then you can tell them anything. To be sure, there are times that even with your Spirit anointed winsomeness, people will rise up in anger

against you. This happened times without number to the apostles. Nonetheless, your job is to preach the Law and Gospel with the joy of the Lord on your face and in your voice.

And as you preach the Law of God in the convicting power of the Holy Spirit at least three things happen. The Holy Spirit convinces the unjustified sinner, first of all, of his guilt, condemnation, and powerlessness. Paul the apostle is laying this out in Romans 1-3. He begins in chapter one saying, “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power, and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. They became futile in their speculations and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped the creature rather than the Creator. God then gave them over to degrading passions and women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way men exchanged the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire for one another, men with men, committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons, the due penalty of their error.” He proceeds from there to say that since they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, He gave them over to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not proper (Romans 1:18ff). These are vile, ungodly sinners who live in an ungodly way and incur the just wrath and condemnation of God upon their actions. But in Romans 2 Paul says that there are moral sinners as well. These are the ones who, though they may not know the Law



of God, who have never been exposed to true religion, are still moral and maintain some degree of obedience and commitment to their own moral principles. And in the latter part of Romans 2 Paul notes that there can be religious sinners as well. The Jews who had rejected Jesus certainly fit that description. But then in Romans 3:10-23 Paul says that all people, regardless of how vile or moral or religious they may be, are still guilty before God. There is none righteous. There is not even one. None understand. None seek for God. All have turned aside. All have become useless. Their throats are open graves. With their tongues they keep deceiving. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. The poison of asps is under their lips. Their feet are swift to shed innocent blood. There is no fear of God before their eyes. They all stand condemned before the tribunal of the only righteous judge who brings tribulation and distress on every soul of man who does evil, who will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, who will visit the iniquities of the fathers on the third and fourth generation of those who hate Him. Paul summarizes all he has said about the universality of sin, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," (Romans 3:23). The Holy Spirit works supernaturally through the Spirit anointed preaching of the evangelist to convince him that his situation is desperate, that he has no hope, that he is without God in this world, that when he stands before the righteous, holy, and just God who is a consuming fire, then he will be unable to make a defense. He will be speechless. He will know he faces a hellish, eternal judgment away from the presence of the Lord and His glory.

Not only is he convinced of His guilt, but he also knows without reservation that he is under condemnation. It is one thing for one to admit wrongdoing, perhaps even guilt over a matter; but it is quite another for him to be convinced that he deserves hell fire, and to be convinced that he is going there.

Jesus said that those who believe in Him are not judged. Those who do not believe in Him are judged or condemned already because they have not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (John 3:17-18). The Publican in Luke 18:9-13 knew that he was in trouble. While the Pharisee in the parable is stating wonderful and glorious things about himself, how he fasts twice a week, and pays tithes of all he gets, the sinner sat in the back, keeping his head bowed, and said, "God be merciful to me the sinner." Paul says that the Law speaks to those who are under the Law that every mouth may be closed and all the world become accountable to God (Romans 3:19).

A clear parallel exists between the German church in the 1930's and the American or western church today. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in November, 1933, after Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in January of that year, came finally to understand that his people were merely religious. Most of the pastors and church members were "caving in" to Hitler at every turn. Bonhoeffer noted how German believers enjoyed Easter and Christmas celebrations, that they had a bit of nostalgia about all these religious holidays and practices, and they even admired the teaching or ethic of Jesus. They, however, did not obey Him or delight in Him. The American church generally does the same thing. Almost daily I speak with someone who claims to be a follower of Jesus, and when I ask, to find if they really love Jesus and keep His commandments, "Are you fornicating?" more times and than not the answer is, "Yes." I point out to them that such behavior does not mark the life of a true believer (Ephesians 5:1-5, 1 John 1:5-2:2). In most cases, when I say such things to people, they are not bothered at all by my "judgmental spirit." Why not? They have not been convinced of their coming condemnation. If a twenty year old is told he has a death sentence of pancreatic cancer on him, that he must begin cancer treatment immediately, he will no doubt move

quickly to address the illness. He knows his situation is serious and needs radical, immediate attention. Until something happens to the unbeliever, until he is convinced of his own condemnation, he will be content to go to church on Sundays, to sing the praise songs, even to give his money, but he will not change his ways. There is no need, or so he thinks.

At the Spirit anointed preaching of the evangelist, the sinner is also convinced of his own powerlessness. Because man is born with a rebellious heart, what I call the cobra heart, which loves sin and hates God, he is controlled by a bad master. Every unbelieving person alive is prone to some sort of addiction. Perhaps it is money, work, exercise, sex, pornography, sports, closing business deals, shopping, or a myriad of other things. The problem with liberal theology, other religions, or moral transformation is that all underestimate the addiction holding the person captive. These addictions are debilitating, all consuming, dominating, enslaving. They regularly bring ruin to all who come under their sway. One of the ways we know that so few true believers exist in western churches is because many churchgoers generally act in the same way as non-churchgoers. Our rate of divorce, addiction to alcohol, drugs, pornography, and illicit sex is similar to those in the world. Vast sums of money are spent each year on “Christian drug rehab” centers. My friends, these things should not be necessary. “If anyone is in Christ, then he is a new creation. The old things has passed away and the new has come,” (2 Corinthians 5:17). The American ethos of pulling oneself up by his boot straps is alive and well. It takes profound humility for anyone to announce, “I am guilty and incapable of changing. Please pray for me.”

So, in summary, make sure you comprehend the Holy Spirit’s supernatural role in your preaching. He alone can

bring profound conviction of sin on the heart and mind of sinners. Only the Spirit can convince the sinner that he is guilty before God, that he truly deserves to go to hell when he dies, that he is incapable of “cleaning up his act.” Just trying harder will never work.

But the Holy Spirit also convinces the sinner that he is living under the wrath of God. Perhaps you will agree that most people in America today do not really believe in hell, or if they do, they think only the truly bad people like Adolf Hitler, Jeffrey Dahmer, Idi Amin, or Usama bin Laden actually go there. Recently I was speaking with an older woman about the gospel and she told me that she did not believe in heaven, that she had no interest in going there, if there was one. I said to her, “That is not what the Bible says. It says in Ecclesiastes that you have eternity written on your heart. And you also know there is a hell and that it is appointed for you to die, and then comes the judgment when you will give account to God for the deeds which you have done in your body, whether good or bad. The Bible also says that every word you have spoken, even your careless, unthinking ones, will be judged. It says the Lord will judge His people, that it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” On other occasions I have sought, with as much energy and skill as I can muster, to paint a vivid, horrific picture of the miseries of hell. I have pointed out that tribulation and distress are upon every soul of man who does evil, to the Jew first and also to the Greek, that wrath and indignation are upon the contentious, those who do not obey the truth, upon those who obey unrighteousness. I declare to them that the kindness of God was always meant to move them to repentance, but because of their stubbornness and unrepentant hearts, they are storing up for themselves wrath in the day of the wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God who will render to every man according to his deeds (Romans 2:4-9).

I tell them that one day the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9). I remind them of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, that the rich man was in hell, that he wanted to warn his family not to go there, that he only wished to have a little water put on the tip of his tongue to quench his thirst. In other words the Lord Jesus is saying that hell is a place of conscious, endless torment. Those in hell are subject to a fiery furnace that burns but never consumes them. It will be like a person placed in a furnace hot enough to melt iron who believes that after one minute he will be released from his agony. He soon discovers, however, that he will never escape the agony of hell fire. People in hell know exactly what has happened to them, that they deserve it, that the torment is worse than anyone can ever imagine. I tell them that Jesus said hell is the place where the fire is never quenched and the worm never dies. I explain to them that this means those in hell will constantly remember the opportunities they had to repent of their sins and to believe on the Lord Jesus, but they did not obey. They will beg for another chance but it will never come. The eyes that looked on pornography and perversion with delight will with unimaginable horror look on the damned who have no remedy for their misery. The ears that listened to wicked and vile jokes and blasphemies against the Lord and His Christ will hear the cries of the condemned in hell who are begging for mercy, but God is deaf to them. Their mouths, which were quick to speak ungodly things against the Lord of righteousness, will cry out for deliverance, but God will not answer. Their hands which loved to craft evil designs will reach out for mercy, but God will not come to them. Their

feet, which were quick to run to do evil with evildoers will run from misery but it will easily and mercilessly track them down. Their minds which devised vain and vile philosophies or heresies and which led countless souls into a Christless eternity will dwell forever in damned agony.

I tell them that those in hell would give anything they could to stay there for another million years, because they dread that day. What day? The day when the dead will stand before the judgment seat of Christ, where books are opened and where they will be judged according to their deeds. Death and Hades will be thrown into the lake of fire on that day which is the second death. They will stand before the pure, undefiled, righteous tribunal of the King of Glory and give account of their thoughts, words, and deeds. As their thoughts, one by one, are brought before their minds in the presence of the consuming fire of the God of holiness, they will be unable to make a defense. When their words are paraded before the One who judges justly, then they will be speechless. When their actions, both public and private, are examined in detail by the One who goes to and fro throughout all the earth, then they will know they are doomed. They will hear on that day, the most awful words imaginable, "Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity, into the everlasting fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels," (Matthew 25:41). At that time, the damed in hell, who are being cast into the lake of fire, will know without equivocation that they are getting exactly what they deserve.

Now I can say these things to the unredeemed all day long, every day, but they do not believe me. They are at ease in Zion. At this juncture in their lives everyone is so positive, so optimistic, so self-confident. No one wants to believe this will happen to them. They are like the five young soldiers, sitting together when their commanding officer says that in battle the next day, chances are forty percent of those fighting will

die. All five quietly think, "I am sorry for these guys sitting next to me." They just don't believe it could ever happen to them. The thought of death is frightening to most people. It is terribly unpleasant. Most live carelessly, without remorse, without repentance, without change. Those blessed with good looks, a good mind, money, prestige, or power perhaps believe in some obscure notion of a god who has made all of this possible. They jump from this to say, "If God has blessed me in this way, then He must be pleased with me. I am good to go."

So, as you say these things to people, warning them to flee from the wrath of God to come, urging them to flee to Jesus to be saved, they mock you, they ignore you. Times without number while preaching on the streets I have seen the drunkards, fornicators, and homosexuals come out of the woodwork, as it were. They always mock us as we warn them of the horrors of hell. My friends, it has always been this way, and will continue this way unless something remarkable and supernatural happens. Until the Holy Spirit comes upon the hard-hearted, careless sinner, bringing conviction of sin, convincing him of his perilous condition which is leading him to perdition, driving into his conscience his just condemnation, and promoting a strong sense of his own powerlessness to effect any change in his life, then he will continue as he is. But when the Spirit does His convicting and convincing work, then the sinner is able and willing to turn from his just condemnation and judgment and find refuge in the only savior of sinners, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now after the Holy Spirit has applied the Law of God to the hearts and minds of the damned, causing them to ask, "What must I do?", then the Spirit can begin to apply the glorious work of Christ's death to their souls. Nothing else will do. Nothing else is necessary. John tells us that if

anyone says he has no sin, he is deceiving himself and the truth is not in him, that if anyone says he has not sinned then he is making God a liar and God's word is not in him. However, if we confess our sins then God is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:8-10). How do we get to the place where we truly, in repentance, own up to our own sins and call upon the Father to forgive us through His Son? Only by the Holy Spirit applying the work of redemption to our souls, minds, hearts, and wills. John goes on to tell us that if anyone sins, then we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for those sins of the whole world (1 John 2:1-2). How does one move from saying hard-heartedly or mockingly, "Oh, whatever," to say reverently and with awe, "My King and My God?" Only by the work of the Holy Spirit.

My friends, the Mount Everest of the gospel declaration of liberation and joy is found in Romans 3:23-26. Paul says:

*all have sinned and fall short of the grace of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

God has what some theologians call a divine dilemma. A dilemma is two equally, unsatisfactory alternatives. On the one hand, God is mercy, grace, love, forgiveness, and compassion. The Scriptures are replete with references to these glorious truths. We see it in His dealings with Adam



and Eve after their fall into sin. We see it in His covenant grace with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We see it with His reconciling work with King David after his adultery and murder. By the way, the three most prolific writers in the Bible (Moses, David, and Paul) were all murderers before God's reconciling grace came to them. But on the other hand, God is so pure that His eyes cannot look upon evil (Habakkuk 1:13). He is a jealous, holy, just God who will by no means leave the guilty unpunished (Exodus 34:7, Nahum 1:2-3). So, while God is "in the forgiveness business", He cannot and will not deny His own character. He is holy and therefore cannot "look the other way" at our sin.

In July, 2007, one of the most heinous crimes in recent memory was perpetrated on the Pettit family of Cheshire, Connecticut. Two men, recently released from prison, invaded the Pettit home on a Sunday evening, beat Dr. Pettit with a baseball bat, bound him, put him in the basement, and proceeded to rape and then murder Pettit's wife and two teen-aged daughters. The men were arrested, put on trial, found guilty, and sentenced to death. But let's imagine, for a moment, that at the time of these murderers sentencing the judge said, "I am feeling merciful and gracious today. Let's forget the whole thing. You are free to go." We would all rightly decry the injustice of the judge. So then how can God forgive sinners who so clearly and consciously have broken His perfect and holy law, times without number? The answer is found in Romans 3:23-26.

The profound nature of this passage is truly awesome. Consider what God has wrought in the death of the Lord Jesus for His people. Understand that Paul is saying three things. First is the sentence upon all people, verse 23, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We may be immoral, godless sinners like those in Romans 1:18-32. We may be moral sinners like those in Romans 2:1-16. Or we

may be religious sinners like the Jews in Romans 2:17-29, but all of us have sinned, missed the mark of holiness. Second, Paul puts forth the remedy for this sentence in verse 24. These words are truly glorious. Each one is significant and ought to be studied in great detail. He writes, “being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.” For those who have faith in Jesus, for those who are born again, the declaration is this—the guilt and shame of our sin has been removed by the blood of Jesus, and we have Christ’s righteousness, His perfection, imputed to us. It’s like a rich uncle depositing \$1 million into your checking account. You once were “poor”, but now you are rich. This justification is a gift from God, something we can never earn or deserve. Furthermore, we receive this solely by the grace or undeserved favor of God. Remember, you were dead in your sins, engaging in the deeds of the flesh and mind, under the dominion of the devil, and facing eternal perdition, but God was rich in mercy. To go further, this came through redemption (God buying us back from the slave house of sin, Satan, and death by the blood of His Son). I will have more to say later about the details of Christ’s atoning death in the chapter entitled “Evangelistic Preaching: What It Promotes”.

And third, Paul tells us the means by which this great work of redemption is accomplished in verses 25-26. In referring back to Christ, Paul says, “Whom God displayed publicly (like billboarding Jesus, lifting Him up in public on the cross for all to see) as a propitiation (an atoning sacrifice).” This word is also used in Hebrews in referring to the mercy seat on which the blood of bulls was sprinkled seven times on the Day of Atonement. This symbolically said, “God’s wrath has been satisfied for one more year.” We know these sacrifices were looking to the day of fulfillment when the Lamb of God would take away the sin of the world. God’s wrath being satisfied, the propitiation, was wrought by the pure, undefiled

blood of Jesus (Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 2:13-14, Hebrews 9:13-15). Then Paul says this was to prove God's righteousness. In other words, this was to make clear that God is not unjust. He is not a judge who is partial, who takes a bribe, who shows favorites. He is perfectly righteous. Sin has been righteously judged in the death of His Son. He passed over (like when the Angel of Death passed over those of Israel who had placed the blood of lambs on the doorposts of their homes) the sins of His people. Paul reiterates, for emphasis, this glorious principle in verse 26, "for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He may be just (understood to be fair, impartial, not given to bribes) and the One who justifies," (who declares us not guilty, giving us the perfect righteousness of Jesus).

As you preach these glorious gospel truths, as the Holy Spirit applies them to the consciences and souls of the lost, they then begin to contemplate them. The lost embrace them as life itself. They begin to rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory. They are able to say with Paul, "Christ in you, the hope of glory," (Colossians 1:27).

And when the Holy Spirit drives home the efficacy of Christ's atoning death, He then opens the minds of the lost to the necessity of saving faith. As Jesus began His earthly ministry, Mark tells us He announced, "The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel," (Mark 1:15). Because the Holy Spirit gives new life in regeneration (John 3:3-5), the unbeliever's dead soul is made alive. He is given a new heart in regeneration which enables him truly and in saving fashion to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. After explaining the doctrine of justification by faith alone, through grace alone, Paul, in Romans 5:1-8, summarizes and applies it by saying:

*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we also have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

Only God can give peace. In fact Jesus told His disciples, "My peace I give to you. My peace I leave with you. Not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful," (John 14:27). The Holy Spirit applies the finished work of Christ's atoning death by giving the believer the faith to believe it will save him. Faith has three components. First is knowledge or facts. In order for anyone to be saved the person must know certain facts about God, Christ, and man. He must know that God is loving and merciful but also just and holy. He needs to know that he is a sinner, justly deserving God's displeasure and wrath. He needs to know that Jesus is 100% God and 100% man, that He died on the cross, was buried, and three days later He arose from the dead. He knows that He is saved only on the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. But mere knowledge of such vital facts is not saving faith. Everyone in America knows these facts about God, Christ, and man. More is needed, however. One must give assent to the facts of history. He must embrace them, be inclined toward them. Muslims have knowledge of God and Christ but they do not

give assent to them. Assent is to agree with those things the Bible says are true about God, man, and Christ. But the devil believes (has knowledge and assent) in God and trembles, and we know he is not saved. So something else rounds out saving faith. One must also trust totally in Christ's death and resurrection. If I am in Long Island Sound, off the coast of Connecticut in November in a small boat and the boat capsizes, hurling me into the frigid waters, and I am hanging onto a paddle from the boat, then I know I am in big trouble. The icy waters will lower my body temperature and within thirty minutes or so I will be dead. But a Coast Guard boat sees my perilous condition and throws a life preserver to me. It hits the water five feet in front of me. Now, when do I prove my faith in the life preserver to save me? I am not trusting in the life preserver if I only have facts or assent. I can say, "I know certain facts about life preservers. They are designed to save people." That's knowledge but knowledge will not save me. I may also desire for the life preserver to save me, but merely desiring it to do so is not enough either. I prove my faith in the life preserver when I let go of the paddle holding me afloat (one's own righteousness or some other religion are good examples of paddles with no power to save) and cling totally and unreservedly to the Lord Jesus and His finished work at Calvary.

It seems bizarre and illogical for another man's death to work effectually in someone else, but this is possible only because Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. He obeyed the Law of God perfectly and the Father made Jesus the last Adam, the One who follows the first Adam. As in Adam all die, also in Christ all are made alive (1 Corinthians 15:22). As you preach the unfathomable riches of Christ the Holy Spirit gives faith to those for whom Christ died, causing them to trust completely and unreservedly in His death and resurrection.

The second part of Jesus' equation in Mark 1:15 is also wrought by the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit enables the unbeliever to repent. The Old Testament prophets were constantly calling the people to repent and return to the Lord.<sup>23</sup> The Greek word for repent *metanoia* means to change one's mind, to be conscious of one's sins and to manifest sorrow for them.<sup>24</sup> John the Baptist told the Pharisees and Sadducees, whom he called a brood of vipers, that they were to bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance (Matthew 3:7-8). The twelve, sent out by Jesus, preached that men must repent (Mark 6:12). Jesus told those who asked about the tragedies which happened to those killed in the construction accident at Siloam that unless they repented they would likewise perish (Luke 13:3). At Pentecost Peter told those who asked what they must do to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38). He said to those gathered to hear him preach after healing the lame man, "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord," (Acts 3:19). When preaching to the Areopagus at Mars Hill, Paul said, "God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent," (Acts 17:30). Jesus said to the Ephesian church which had left its first love, "Remember from where you have fallen and repent, and do the deeds which you did at first. I am coming and I will remove the lampstand out of its place unless you repent," (Revelation 2:5). He says to the church at Sardis, "Remember what you have received and heard; and keep it and repent," (Revelation 3:3). And to the lukewarm church at Laodicea He says, "Those whom I love, I reprove and

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<sup>23</sup> For just a few examples see Isaiah 21:12, 44:22, 55:7, Jeremiah 3:12, 22, 15:19, 18:11, Ezekiel 14:6, 18:30, Hosea 6:1, 14:1.

<sup>24</sup> *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, page 405.

discipline. Be zealous therefore and repent,” (Revelation 3:19).

Repentance is the word of the gospel. Without it there is no holiness. The writer to the Hebrews exhorted the people to pursue peace with all men and the sanctification or holiness without which no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). And without holiness there is clearly no salvation. Here's what happens when the Holy Spirit comes upon the preaching of a man under the anointing of the Spirit. The sinner's mind and heart are moved, his will is touched, and because the Spirit has taken out the cobra heart and given the new heart of Jesus in regeneration, his eyes are opened and he sees the truth as it is in Jesus. He understands savingly, for the first time, that God is holy and just, merciful and gracious, that Jesus Christ the pure, undefiled Son of God died on the cross, taking his sins and the wrath he deserves, and suffered hell for him. He sees that he has offended the holy God of Scripture, that he justly deserves hell and condemnation. He admits his rebellion and evil deeds, speech, and values. He submits to God, promising to serve Him and obey Him from that day forward. If he has any known sins which come to his mind at that moment, he promises to forsake them. If, for example, he is in a fornicating or adulterous relationship, he breaks it off immediately. If he is stealing from his company he stops and makes restitution. If he has been looking at internet pornography he stops immediately. If he has been a chronic liar, he stops and seeks to tell the truth in every circumstance. As God reveals, over time, his myriad of sins, he is quick to surrender to the Lordship of Christ and to repent, turning from them and turning to Jesus for His holiness. He will sin over and over, but he comes to see his sin more quickly, more readily and he repents when made aware of them. He consciously desires to submit to God's

word and do what Christ is commanding him in every area of his life.

Repentance is like the man who gets in his car in Birmingham and plans to drive to Nashville. He gets on I 65 south and soon discovers his mistake. He is going in the wrong direction. No matter how sincere he is, he will never get to Nashville from Birmingham by going south on I 65. He must see his error, get off the interstate, and get back on I 65 and proceed north. He acknowledges his wrong, he changes his mind, and he begins to move in the right direction. There is also a turning from the certain danger and calamity that come from disobeying God. We reap what we sow. Israel was often judged and had pronouncements of judgment constantly proclaimed to them because they persisted in moving away from Yahweh, the only true and living God. Daniel makes clear in his remarkable confession that the calamity of seventy years in exile at the hands of the Babylonians came because of all their unfaithful deeds, because of their sin and rebellion, because they did not obey the voice of the Lord their God to walk in His teachings which He set before them through Moses, His servant (Daniel 9:7-14). Paul tells us that repentance is a gift from God, leading to a knowledge of the truth (2 Timothy 2:25). So God in His sovereign mercy, as the preaching of God's Law and the gospel of grace is put forth, works in the hearts of people causing them to repent of their sins and to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Repentance is often missing in evangelistic preaching. It must be stressed firmly when preaching on the streets or in pulpits. The only way we can have assurance that someone has indeed been born again by the Spirit is if he manifests fruits in keeping with repentance.



Back in the 1949 Billy Graham evangelistic campaign in Los Angeles, there clearly was a great work of God in progress. Many well known starlets and people of means in Hollywood were soundly converted. So there was a great deal of interest in Graham's ministry. Micky Cohen, a notorious gangster and mobster, knew that one of his top men had been converted. The man gave up his life of crime and Micky applauded him for his new life. Micky later met Graham and also said that he had become a Christian. People were amazed. The problem, however, was that Micky continued living the mobster and gangster lifestyle. Nothing changed except Micky occasionally went to church and was emotionally moved by sermons. After a year or so of this Mickey's friend said to him, "Mickey, you say that you are now a follower of Christ but you are still extorting money, racketeering, and busting heads." To which Mickey replied, "No one told me that my life had to change. I was told that I only had to believe in Jesus, and I have done that. Isn't it true that there are Christian athletes, Christian businessmen, Christian entertainers. Why then can't there be Christian gangsters?"

The Holy Spirit also convinces the newly regenerate believer that sin's dominion, rule, and reign has been broken. At the end of Romans 5 in verses 20 and 21, Paul the apostle writes, "The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." After making this statement, the great teacher and apostle anticipates at least two objections the Romans would have when hearing this portion of Paul's letter read to them for the first time. First, if the Law causes sin or transgression to increase, then doesn't that mean the Law is bad or evil? And second, if sin increases due to the Law how can it be that grace increases too? Doesn't that

mean, then, that we have a license to sin more and more so that we can gain more and more of God's grace? In the first objection, Paul addresses this issue in Romans 7. He asks, "Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law," (Romans 7:7). In other words, the Law of God makes us aware of our sin. If I drive daily at sixty miles per hour through town on my way to work, but do not see a road sign telling me that the speed limit is forty-five miles per hour, then I am unaware that I have broken the law. But when I finally see the sign then I know that I have broken the law times without number. Paul in no way is minimizing the Law, rather he is magnifying it, using it to shine a spotlight on our sinful attitudes, speech, and actions.

On the second objection—that where sin increased, grace abounded all the more—Paul uses Romans 6 to show that if we have died with Christ then we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father so we too might walk in newness of life. He says that the old man was crucified with Christ, in order that the body of sin may be done away with, so that we should no longer be slaves to sin (Romans 6:1-6). Since we have in fact been buried with Christ (Paul makes a similar statement in Colossians 2:12), it only follows that we also have been raised up with Him through His resurrection, which means we also, like Jesus, now walk in newness of life.

What does this mean practically? It means the rule, reign, and dominion of sin are broken in the believer. It means everything about him has changed. He has been delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of Christ. That is, sin shall no longer be master over any of us who are in Christ Jesus. Consider these comments by Martyn Lloyd-Jones on these verses:

*The man who died with Him also rises with Him. It is a continuous action . . . What then is the old man? First, it does not mean the carnal nature . . . Nor does it mean our moral being previous to our rebirth. Neither does it mean the flesh and its affections and lusts. Nor does it mean old in the sense of former . . . The old man is the man that I used to be in Adam . . . my old humanity . . . when Paul tells us to put off the old man he means to put off the characteristics of the life of the old man.<sup>25</sup> The first thing about the new man, says the Apostle, is that he is created . . . The Christian is not the “old man” improved. Something absolutely new is put in at the center . . . He has a new disposition—the life of God in the soul of man.<sup>26</sup>*

Practically and personally this means that everything has changed radically about you, if you are born again. You are a new creation in Christ, the old has passed away, and the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17). Therefore you are never to act like you once acted as an unregenerate sinner. We say to petulant grown ups, “Stop acting like a baby.” Why? Because they are no longer babies. And because you are a new creation, because the old man is dead, because you are united with Christ in His death and resurrection, you now have the ability, the capacity to obey God’s commandments, to yield to Him as a living and holy sacrifice. When the Holy Spirit regenerates those to whom you are preaching, the light goes on, and they come to understand something of the radical nature of their conversion. This is a message of great hope that you ought to proclaim in your evangelistic

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<sup>25</sup> *Exposition of Romans 6, The New Man*, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, pages 56-57, 62-64.

<sup>26</sup> *Darkness and Light: An Exposition of Ephesians 4:17-5:17*, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones pages 168-174.

preaching. The people who hear you, whether the ungodly sinner in the streets, or the secretly vile churchgoer, still tend to be controlled or addicted to bad masters like pornography, fornication, homosexuality, stealing, lying, cheating. They have tried everything but to no avail. These people have probably now convinced themselves that they cannot change, that God must in some way accommodate their lifestyles. They have given up on the possibility of change but you can proclaim to them that when the Holy Spirit regenerates, He gives new life. He enables them to walk in newness of life. He gives them everything they need pertaining to life and godliness, that as they grow in grace they will be fruitful and useful to the work of God's kingdom, helping others who also need to be delivered from the ravages of sin.

From there you are able to show them that the mortification or putting to death the deeds of the body is possible. Paul says, "So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh; for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live," (Romans 8:12-13). He also says, "Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry," (Colossians 3:5). Paul tells the formerly pagan worshippers of Diana, in whom God the Holy Spirit wrought such a work of grace, ". . . laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you to his neighbor . . . be angry and do not sin . . . do not give the devil an opportunity . . . he who steals must steal no longer . . . let no unwholesome word proceed out of your mouth . . . do not grieve the Holy Spirit . . . let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice . . . be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another," (Ephesians 4:25-32).

What, practically, does this all mean? Consider the words of the great Puritan theologian John Owen in his classic work on overcoming sin and temptation.

*Only the Holy Spirit is sufficient for this work (mortification) . . . How doth the Spirit mortify sin? By causing our hearts to abound in grace and the fruits that are contrary to the flesh . . . renewing of us by the Holy Ghost (Titus 3:5) is one great way of mortification . . . the Spirit efficiently works on the root and habit of sin, for the weakening, destroying, and taking it away . . . the Spirit brings the cross of Christ into the heart of the sinner by faith, and gives us communion with Christ in his death . . . If mortification is the work of the Spirit, then why are we exhorted to mortify the deeds of the flesh? He works upon our understandings, wills, consciences, and affections, agreeably to their own natures; He works in us and with us, not against us or without us; so that His assistance is an encouragement as to the facilitating of the work . . . those who are not in Christ are engaged in foolish labor, though convinced of sin, are not able to stand against the power of their convictions . . . they combat without victory, have war without peace, and are in slavery all their days.<sup>27</sup>*

Practically and personally this means, on the one hand, that the Holy Spirit works powerfully and effectually in you and every believer to promote progressive sanctification. Through faith you are justified and thus positionally sanctified where Paul says that we are saints, have been sanctified (see 1 Corinthians 1:2, Ephesians 1:1); but you also are progressively made more and more like Jesus Christ because you are alive in Him (2 Corinthians 5:17). On the other hand, this means you are to strive for Biblical

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<sup>27</sup> *Temptation and Sin*, John Owen, volume 6, pages 16-20.

holiness. You are to discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness (1 Timothy 4:7), and you are in your speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity to show yourself as an example of those who believe (1 Timothy 4:12). You are to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts (Romans 13:14). The problem too often in evangelistic preaching and one-on-one work is that we preach a justification only message, that we fail to emphasize the necessity of the new birth which takes away the cobra heart of rebellion and replaces it with the heart of Jesus, giving us the power and ability to walk in holiness. When you preach, “Repent, and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit,” (Acts 2:38), you are telling your auditors that the only way they can truly repent is if the Holy Spirit has regenerated them. Furthermore you are saying that if they have done so then they will want to be baptized which symbolizes the washing away of their sins by the blood of Jesus and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit in their lives. And finally receiving the promised Holy Spirit means they now have the power to obey God, to turn from their lives of sin and walk in gospel holiness. This is a three-fold gospel message of regeneration, justification, and sanctification.

And finally, the Holy Spirit’s role in evangelistic preaching is to apply Christ’s redemptive work, in all its fullness, to the sinner. John Murray, in his masterful book, *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied*, gives a comprehensive explanation of the glories of Christ’s redemptive work as it is applied to every believer, and I wholeheartedly recommend it to you.<sup>28</sup> In the following chapter entitled “Evangelistic Preaching: What It Promotes”, I will have much more to say

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<sup>28</sup>Murray’s *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied* is must reading for every evangelistic preacher.

on redemption accomplished. My purpose here is briefly to emphasize redemption applied. To portray something of the fullness of redemption applied, theologians often speak of the *ordo salutis*, the order of salvation—election, effectual calling, regeneration, conversion, justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification. To be sure, the detail of what follows is not a specific list found anywhere in Scripture but the concept is, nonetheless, clearly seen. The closest we come in Scripture to a full orbed *ordo salutis* is Romans 8:30 where Paul says, “. . . those whom He predestined, He also called; and those whom He called, He also justified; and those whom He justified He also glorified.” The purpose in putting forth components of the *ordo salutis* is to shine the spotlight brightly on the glory of the Triune God’s mighty work of salvation. God clearly chose His people to be His. “Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him, in love He predestined us to adoption as Sons through Jesus Christ to the praise of the glory of His grace,” (Ephesians 1:4-5). God also willed to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy which He prepared beforehand for glory (Romans 9:23). Jesus said, “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out . . . No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day,” (John 6:37,44). “You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear much fruit, and that your fruit would remain” (John 15:16). Simply put, God’s electing grace means that before the creation of anything, not based on any merit of our own, God in His sovereign mercy chose a people to be His.

But God not only elected us, He also effectually called us. People everywhere are called to repent (Acts 17:30), but not all repent and believe in a saving fashion. The effectual call means that the Holy Spirit opens the minds and hearts of the

elect, at the proper time appointed by God, to believe the gospel. Luke refers to this several times in Acts. He says that God opened the heart of Lydia to believe the gospel (Acts 16:14). He says that as many as were appointed to eternal life believed when they heard the gospel of grace proclaimed to them (Acts 13:48). Paul, in quoting Joel 2:32 says, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved," (Romans 10:13). And Jesus said to the seven churches of Asia Minor, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches," (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29, 3:6, 13, 22). How is it that people who were dead in their sins and who had no interest in the gospel suddenly, perhaps after many years of outright rebellion, believe the gospel? The Holy Spirit, through His regenerating work, causes them to hear the good news of the gospel and to be saved.

Then there is regeneration. The Holy Spirit quickens one's spiritual life, taking out the heart of stone, the rebellious, cobra heart, and supernaturally does a spiritual heart transplant, giving the heart of flesh, the heart of Jesus, that loves God and hates sin. Jesus speaks of the necessity of the new heart in regeneration, telling Nicodemus, "Unless one is born from above he will not see the kingdom of God," (John 3:3). Ezekiel prophesied the new heart in regeneration. "I will take out the heart of stone and replace it with the heart of flesh," (Ezekiel 36:26). Peter speaks of God's tender mercy in causing us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3-4). Paul said that God saved us, not on the basis of deeds we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).

And from regeneration it logically follows that the sinner, who now has the new heart of Jesus, is able and willing to repent



and believe the gospel. This is called conversion. There is no need to go back over the doctrine of conversion for we dealt with this earlier in this chapter. One point of application, however, is important here. Some in the church, beginning primarily with John Wesley and followed by Charles Finney, believe that conversion precedes regeneration. Simply put, they say that when man chooses to believe the gospel, when he decides to repent and believe, then the Holy Spirit moves into action and regenerates the person. This, however, is impossible. Scripture is clear that unregenerate man is dead in his sins, that he does not seek for God (Ephesians 2:1, Romans 3:10). To believe that conversion precedes regeneration has caused many evangelists over the years to manipulate people in order to get a decision from them. The havoc wrought on the church of Jesus due to this wrong teaching is impossible to overestimate.

From conversion comes justification, being declared not guilty, receiving the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1-3). From there God adopts His children into His family, making them heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ (Galatians 4:6, Romans 8:15-17). There is much here that needs much more detail but I will take this up in greater measure later. God also brings sanctification in a two-fold manner. First is what theologians call positional sanctification. He places us into the category of being sanctified. That is, He sets us apart, like a bird sanctuary is set apart for the security of birds. And second is progressive sanctification. With the new heart of Jesus and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the believer begins to grow in grace. He sees growth in holiness. The body of sin, that is the sin in the members of our body—our mind, eyes, tongue—are slowly put to death and rendered less and less powerful. The believer also has a responsibility to mortify the deeds of the flesh, to put off the old man and to be renewed in his mind. And finally, after our deaths, we have the hope of

glorification. We will be like Him for we will see Him as He is (1 John 3:2). The perishable will put on the imperishable and the mortal will put on immortality (1 Corinthians 15:53).

And practically, what does the *ordo salutis* mean for you in your evangelistic ministry? Well consider this as only one example of how you may apply the glory of our great salvation to sinners as you herald the good news.

An estimated one in four women, and one in six men have been sexually assaulted before the age of eighteen.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps you were sexually molested as a child. If so, then the chances are pretty good that you battle with a deep sense of shame. If this is you, or if you know people who are victims of this wretched ordeal, then dealing with it is problematic. No one can live with shame for long. People attempt to rid themselves of it some way or another. Those who have engaged in great sin, for example, often convince themselves that God does not exist. After all, if there is no God, then there is no law; and if there is no law then there is no judgment; and if there is no judgment there is no hell; and if there is no hell then there is no need for a Savior. Living without God or a sense of eternity will bring hopelessness sooner or later. Others seek to live moral lives and reach significant goals in the business world or in their family. Those victimized by the shame of sexual exploitation often live with a sense of self-loathing.

Perhaps you grew up in the church and walked with Christ for many years, but then found yourself engaged in adultery, fornication, or pornography and you have walked away from the Lord. You no longer call yourself a Christian. I bet you know people who fit this description as well. It may be that

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<sup>29</sup> The Children's Assessment Center <cachouston.org>

you now question the authority of Scripture, that you no longer believe you are a child of God, that you doubt God's existence and you cannot imagine that He is interested in you or will again work in your life as He once did. You remember the times you led people to Christ, how you delighted in public worship, Bible Study and prayer. You so enjoyed Christian fellowship, but these things are long gone in your life. You just are not there any longer.

Shame is rampant in any culture. These scenarios are severe cases of it, but shame comes in a plethora of forms. I remember a friend in high school making a speech in front of the entire student body and she completely forgot her speech and stood silently before hundreds of her peers, ashamed and embarrassed.

How can we overcome shame? Marcus Warner, in his book *Understanding the Wounded Heart*, speaks of WLVS and how utterly devastating this can be to people. W stands for wounds. Perhaps you were sexually, physically, or verbally abused; or you were violated by your participation in a cult and you were emotionally wounded by such things. Martyn Lloyd-Jones<sup>30</sup> reminds us that we are not merely a physical body. We also have a soul and we have emotions and a psyche which all work together to make us who we are. So deep trauma, as noted above, can have profound and debilitating effects on people, robbing them of their sleep, their ability to think or speak coherently, and rob them of proper emotions. When an occasion, like a funeral of a child, ought to elicit sadness, the parent, pastor, or friend may maintain a perpetual smile. Or he may never or rarely cry about anything. Or perhaps it is the opposite and he cries

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<sup>30</sup> Lloyd-Jones masterfully addresses this issue in his 1974 Rendle Short Memorial Lecture in *The Best of Martyn Lloyd-Jones*, pages 51-84, compiled by Christopher Catherwood, Baker Books.

incessantly, in every situation. L stands for lies. The person begins to listen to the lies of the great accuser of the brethren, the serpent of old, who is called the devil and Satan (Revelation 12:10, 20:2). The lies may go like this, “I am worthless. I am damaged goods. God does not exist. God has rejected me. There is no hope for me. God could not possibly love me again.” If we keep telling ourselves lies then we sooner or later begin to believe them. The V stands for vows. “I vow to kill my brother who violated me. I will get him back if it is the last thing I do . . . I will never allow another man to touch me . . . I will never attempt another speech in my life . . . After what my husband did in humiliating me by going after that other woman, I can never trust another man . . .” And the S stands for Satanic strongholds. The Puritan Richard Baxter, in his monumental *A Christian Directory*, devotes numerous pages of small print on how the devil tempts us to sin and degradation. The devil comes at us through the eye gate. Eve saw the fruit and desired it (Genesis 3:6). Achan saw the things on the ban, desired them, and took them (Joshua 7:21). David saw Bathsheba bathing and desired her and lay with her (2 Samuel 11:2-4). With the issue of shame the devil comes at us a bit differently. He begins to work through the imaginations. He begins to gain a stronghold in various areas of one’s life. This is Baxter’s second observation. “The sinfulness of the memory is in its retentiveness of evil, or things hurtful or prohibited . . . The affections or passions . . . are habitually prone to the carnal or fleshly.”<sup>31</sup> The mind begins to play back vile wicked things done to us, or things we have done, or things we are contemplating doing, fueled by the eye gate. This leads to the passions being aroused—bitterness, wrath, anger, lust, and hatred, just to name a few illicit passions. As one continues to allow his passions to be

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<sup>31</sup> *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter*, Volume One, pages 80, 93. Published by Soli Deo Gloria Publications.

inflamed to evil and licentiousness, the will is then affected. Man is ready now to act upon what he sees, imagines, and feels. Then his mind convinces himself that his proposed action is perfectly acceptable. "I am justified in hating that person or killing him . . . I am totally worthless and unredeemable . . ."

So how can you overcome shame? There is only one way, my friends. Regardless of what religions or psychologists say, there is only one way to get rid of shame and that is through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. After the exile, after Yahweh had brought his people back into Israel, they continued to live with a deep sense of sin, guilt, and shame because of their idolatry and consequent judgment of God upon them. Judah was a mere shell of what she had once been. God used the prophet Zechariah to renew the hope of His covenant people by declaring to them a better day. "The Lord will possess Judah as His portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem," (Zechariah 2:12). "I am going to bring My servant the Branch," (Zechariah 3:8). "Behold I am going to save My people from the land of the east . . ." (Zechariah 8:7). "I will pour out on the house of David . . . the spirit of grace and supplication so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced," (Zechariah 12:10). All of these prophecies are looking to the incarnation of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus. In Zechariah 3 the prophet has a vision of Joshua the High Priest being accused by Satan. Joshua is in the temple and ought to be clothed in pure white linen. Instead he is covered in the filth of excrement. Yahweh symbolically takes away the filthy garment and clothes him with white garments. His shame was taken away. This clearly points to our blessed, Lord Jesus Christ, the pure and undefiled Son of God, who took the filth, guilt, and shame of your excrement past upon Himself, dying in your place on the cross of Calvary.

If you are in Christ Jesus, then reckon this to be so. Dwell on it. Glory in it. Tell yourself daily that the shame of your nakedness has been removed by the white garment of Christ's righteousness imputed to you when you repented and believed the gospel. No other religion can deliver on this score. Nor can any psychotherapist. The truth of the gospel of grace must penetrate deeply into the mind, heart, passions, and will. This may take a while, but stay at it. Glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, the One who took away your sin in a single day (Zechariah 3:9).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **EVANGELISTIC PREACHING: WHAT IT PROMOTES**

More than ever, we need evangelistic preachers. This begs the question—what are they to preach? Before taking up this issue, consider the preaching of Daniel Rowland as an example and inspiration in this regard.

Daniel Rowland, the marvelous Anglican preacher from Llangeitho, Wales, was converted in 1735 while listening to the evangelistic preaching of Griffith Jones. Through the preaching of Daniel Rowland, Howell Harris, Howell Davies, William Williams, Peter Williams, David Jones and countless other exhorters, Eighteenth Century Wales was delivered from ignorance, superstition, and debauchery. Wales in the Eighteenth Century, prior to the Revival which began in 1735, was largely a rural, agrarian society but little farming was actually done. Farmers plowed only the land close to their homes, throwing down a little seed, putting up no fences to keep out animals, and generally did nothing but drink and gamble. In their ignorance they would stand outside local churches on New Year's Eve, waiting to hear ghosts tell them which of their friends would die that coming year. They went to church on Easter morning in their stocking feet, believing the ground on which the church stood to be consecrated ground. On Christmas morning they insisted that before daybreak they would see the Rosemary bush bloom, but always by sunrise the buds seemed to have disappeared. They were largely illiterate and completely ignorant of Biblical Christianity. The Church of England generally kept the people in ignorance. The curates preached ten minute sermons and then afterwards joined their parishioners at the local pub. When God raised up Rowland, Harris, et al, the curates almost without exception, along with the gentry of the countryside, stirred up hatred

toward these Methodist preachers.<sup>32</sup> Street preachers take notice—Howell Harris was beaten repeatedly by angry mobs. On one occasion the local curate placed a keg of beer on the wall next to where Harris was to preach, urging his parishioners to drink as much as they wanted. By the time Harris came to preach the angry mob was incited to rush him, beat him, and destroy the house in which he went to seek refuge. On another occasion one of Harris' followers, William Seward, was hit in the head by a stone while standing with him as he preached. Seward died a few days later. By the late Eighteenth Century, however, the whole nation of Wales had been delivered from ignorance, superstition, and debauchery.

What was it that transformed Wales? There can be no doubt that the preaching of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist preachers was the catalyst which God used to effect the remarkable change. And what kind of preaching was it? Well, it was quite different from what we largely hear today. Perhaps due to the influence of Dallas Theological Seminary's emphasis, in the 1960's and 1970's on teaching as opposed to preaching God's word, and perhaps due to evangelicalism's uneasiness with neo-Pentecostal excesses, and perhaps due to a residual of Sandemanianism (an Eighteenth Century heresy in England and Scotland which stressed a calm, rational acceptance of Christ, devoid of conviction or emotion) in Reformed Churches we have gradually lost the true essence of Biblical preaching. One cannot help but see in the preaching of George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, Howell Harris, and Daniel Rowland that

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<sup>32</sup> They were pejoratively called Methodists by many who mocked their disciplined and principled approach to following Christ. The Methodists in Wales were largely Calvinists who followed George Whitefield while those in England were Arminians who followed John and Charles Wesley.



these men did not preach like so many of us do today. John Stott, in his book *The Preacher's Portrait*, has observed that four Greek words *oikonomos* (steward), *didasko* (teaching), *kerusso* (proclaiming), *euangelizo* (evangelizing) are all present in biblical preaching. It is not accurate, therefore, to think of preaching to believers as only *didasko*, or to unbelievers as only *kerusso*.<sup>33</sup> All are to be present in every sermon.

However it seems to me that our evangelical and Reformed preaching today is largely without persuasion, force, or emotion. We in Reformed circles especially seem to be nervous about unloosing our emotions when we preach. Robert Rayburn, in an essay at a Banner of Truth Conference entitled *Preaching As A Mystical Event*, said that true preaching causes the present world to disappear and the invisible world to be seen, that a true encounter with God happens in true preaching, that one hears His voice and nothing else, that there is the impression of truth upon the heart. He said that when the central affirmations of the faith are brought to bear on the heart, then their application and the consequent repercussions on every part of life will follow. It is the impression made at the time that is crucial, not a remembrance afterwards. If this is true, and I believe it is, then taking notes in a sermon, for example, to review them later is not the main thing about which a congregation ought to be concerned. Preaching is not mere acquisition of new knowledge. It is a deep, abiding awareness that God is speaking to us by the preacher through the Holy Spirit.

I remember being mystified years ago when I first read Martyn Lloyd-Jones' *Preaching and Preachers* at his dissatisfaction with people recording his sermons so that

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<sup>33</sup> Stott's book is a classic and I highly recommend it. See pages 33-59 for a more full explanation of these important terms.

they could listen to them later. I thought, “What’s the problem with that?” People can continue to learn after hearing the sermon. After all, we only remember 5 % of what we hear anyway.” But ML-J was after something far more important than dissemination of information. He was after what Rayburn calls *a true encounter with God*, and he said this only comes by being present when the sermon is preached, when the Holy Spirit can work directly on one’s heart and soul. Obviously I am glad people risked ML-J’s wrath and recorded his sermons, and if you have ever listened to him preach, then you know he had remarkable unction, even in his recordings. I am glad we have his sermons, not so much for their content (we have that in his books) but for the unction they convey. This is the same reason Whitefield could say to Benjamin Franklin, “You may certainly print my sermons but the printed page can never catch their thunder.” In Hughes Oliphant Old’s five volume work *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church* he repeatedly draws attention to a myriad of preachers who claimed that preaching was the highest form of worship, not only for the preacher but also for those who are present in preaching. Consider an observation in *The Calvinistic Methodist Fathers of Wales* in regard to Daniel Rowland’s preaching:

*The overwhelming power of the mighty influences of the Spirit in his ministry came on gradually, in manner like a wave of the sea, increasing more and more. He commenced his address calmly, but as he advanced, both his matter and his manner increased in interest. His congregation, which was always of immense numbers, would look. . . with pleasure upon him as he proceeded so excellently. Their thoughts and feelings would be carried along with him in the most sweet and powerful way, being quickened to a high degree of spiritual excitement. Then, at length, his eloquence attained its climax, and then his preaching under divine*

*influence would most nobly break forth like the rising of the swell of the sea, and would overwhelm the great concourse of people in an astonishing manner. The intensity of their feelings found relief in the same moment in a simultaneous burst of hallelujahs and ascriptions of praise to the most high God. The preacher would then pause for a short interval, until the people had enjoyed the feast; indeed, he would not have been heard had he continued. It was necessary also for their enthusiasm to pass, in order that they apply themselves with profit to the remainder of the sermon. They therefore sought to restrain their feelings, and to quieten down, being anxious to enjoy the repast prepared for them by the wonderful ambassador of heaven, who had been so signally gifted.<sup>34</sup>*

Wouldn't you love to see your congregation caught up in glorious worship of Christ as they hear you proclaim His excellencies? Wouldn't you love to see people stop in their tracks at the college campus or at a sporting event and listen with rapt attention at such glorious preaching of Christ crucified? We all know how many churches are able to evoke great emotion from their congregations through music. This is not all bad, but certainly it can easily lead to manipulation. How much more glorious if the same response of heartfelt worship came from those who heard the preaching of the word and were moved to awe, wonder, amazement, love, fear, and tears of rejoicing!

Thomas Charles, another of the great late Eighteenth century Welsh preachers, in seeking to describe Rowland's preaching, wrote to a friend saying, "Rowland preached repentance until the people repented; he preached faith until men believed. He portrayed sin as so abhorrent that all

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<sup>34</sup> *The Calvinistic Methodist Fathers of Wales*, volume one, John Morgan Jones and William Morgan, page 95.

hated it; and Christ so glorious as to cause all to choose him.”<sup>35</sup>

Early in his ministry Rowland thundered the law of God with great earnestness and effect. The response from his hearers was sheer terror at being damned. He listened to the advice of the Reverend Pugh who said, “Preach the gospel to the people. Apply the balm of Gilead to their spiritual wounds, and show them the necessity of faith in the crucified Savior.” When Rowland said that he doubted he had that faith in full active strength himself, Pugh responded, “Preach it until you feel you have it. If you continue to preach the law in this way you will kill half the population of the country. You thunder forth the threatenings of the law, and preach so fearfully, that no one can stand before you.” Rowland later became a *Son of Consolation* and the response from those who heard him changed from terror to overwhelming joy and humility at the grace of God in Christ.<sup>36</sup>

Rowland preached with unusual unction from the Holy Spirit and surely every preacher ought to seek the same. Remember, this unction is a gift from God and we cannot “make it happen.” Nonetheless, like seeking God for revival, we have a part to play in making ourselves ready to receive the Spirit’s anointing. And what is that? First, we must view preaching as worship, an opportunity to drive into the hearts, minds, and wills of the people the doctrine of God, man, Christ, and the fullness of salvation. Preaching is not merely a time to teach truth. Certainly truth is essential, but preaching is far more than that. Like those who heard Rowland preach, your congregation or auditors ought to be caught up in the worship of God, moved in their hearts, in

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<sup>35</sup> *The Works of Thomas Charles*, page 115.

<sup>36</sup> *The Calvinistic Methodist Fathers of Wales*, volume one, page 71.

the very essence of their souls, by what they are hearing of Christ and His glory. That's what William Arthur was after when he wrote:

*The feeling of every man standing up in the Lord's name ought to be, "I am not here to acquit myself well, nor to deliver a good discourse; but after having made my best efforts to study and digest the truth, I am here to say just what God may enable me to say, to be enlarged or straitened, according as He may be pleased to give me utterance or not," . . . He is trusting for utterance to help from above, and not insuring it by natural means, either a manuscript or memory.<sup>37</sup>*

You cannot expect worship to take place in your preaching until the text you are preaching has gripped you and moved you to worship in your sermon preparation. Lloyd-Jones had this to say from his *Preaching and Preachers*:

*When you yourself are gripped and moved in preparation you will generally find that the same happens in the preaching. I emphasize that it is when you are gripped and moved, not when you have composed well. It is when you have been stirred in this way, when the message you are preparing comes with power to you, that it is likely to do the same to the people.<sup>38</sup>*

Second, you must draw your sermons to a climax by exalting Christ. Surely this is what Paul meant when he told the Corinthians that he determined to know nothing but Christ

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid. page 96.

<sup>38</sup> Chapter Five, The Art of Preaching from *Preaching and Preachers*, by Martyn Lloyd-Jones is a must read on this matter of preaching with power, authority, and unction, pages 81-99.

and Him crucified. Whatever the text, whatever the thematic statement, whatever the illustrations and applications, you must distinguish yourself from moralistic preachers by preaching Christ. You should meditate on various stories or sayings of Christ from the gospels, or Old Testament types or prophecies which point to Christ, thinking on them deeply, allowing these stories to grip your own heart, moving you to deeper affection for Christ, so that as you conclude your sermon you are given eloquence you did not think possible. As evangelistic preaching promotes the doctrine of God and Christ, then truth joined with the heart and emotion will rain down on your people.

Third, you need to learn to trust God in your preaching. What does this mean? Whether you use an outline, a manuscript, or preach from memory you need to preach with freedom. You ought to get to the point where you trust the Holy Spirit to lead you in what you are to say. At the most you should use your notes, manuscript, or memorized outline as a guide, but never slavishly depend upon them. This is what Theodore Cuyler was after when he wrote:

*When truth gets full possession of a man's conscience; when his sensibilities are aroused and his sympathies in full play; when the soul becomes luminous, until the interior light and glow blaze out through every nook and crevice; when, from head to foot, the whole man becomes the beaming, burning impersonation of truth, then is he honestly, naturally, irresistibly, eloquent. To this a great head is not always essential; a great heart is, and must be.*

Perhaps you object to this freedom from notes by saying this is merely “winging it” or urging less sermon preparation. Actually the opposite is the case. You must still work diligently in your exegetical work, using your language helps and commentaries, seeking to discern the essence of the

text, developing your sermon outline, illustrations, and applications; but you must go much further. You need a much more thorough practice of Biblical meditation on the text, asking the Holy Spirit to work the truth of the passage existentially into your soul. You must have a supernatural encounter with God in your personal study, prayer, and meditation. Until you have this, you are not ready to preach. On behalf of those who hear you, you should pursue a deeper, more abiding, life changing impression through your preaching which simultaneously strikes the mind and heart, moving your people to joyful obedience and holiness, moving them to a profound corporate worship experience.

So, what should be the content of your evangelistic preaching? You must always begin with God. The Westminster divines asked, "What is God?", to which they masterfully answered:

*God is a Spirit, in and of himself infinite in being, glory, blessedness, and perfection; all sufficient, eternal, unchangeable, incomprehensible, every where present, almighty, knowing all things, most wise, most holy, most just, most merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.*<sup>39</sup>

Systematic Theology begins with the Doctrine of God, and most theologians start with the existence of God and the knowability of God. They also highlight the names of God, followed by a general statement on the attributes of God, usually differentiating between the so-called communicable and incommunicable attributes.

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<sup>39</sup> Larger Catechism, Westminster Confessions of Faith, Question and Answer Seven.

We will take a brief look first at the names of God. Unlike the “local, tribal, Johnny come lately deities” of pagan nations or the mythical Greek or Roman gods, given their names by local writers using their own creative imaginations—the true and living God reveals to us, through Holy Scripture, His names. That is, they come by divine origin. To be sure, these names use human language and often describe God in human terms (at the right hand of God, the breath of God, the arm of the Lord, the ear of the Lord, etc.), but they, nonetheless are given to man by God in the Scriptures.

First, consider a few of the Hebrew Old Testament names of God found in Scripture. The first is *El*, *Elohim*, or *Elyon*. These names are all transliterated from the Hebrew Biblical text. *El* means Creator God and *Elohim* (the root *alah*-to be smitten by fear) means the strong and mighty one who elicits fear and reverence. See Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The plural form, *Elohim*, derived from the singular *El* also gives the idea of intensity. *Elyon* means God as the high and exalted One. *Elyon* is used, for example, in Isaiah 14:14, “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.”

Then there are *Adonai*, *El Shaddai*, and *Yahweh*. The Hebrew root word for *Adonai* means God as almighty ruler, the One to whom all mankind and creation are to submit. Often it is translated as *Lord*. In the Song of Moses *Adonai* is used, “You will bring them and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, the place, O Lord, which You have made for Your dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established,” (Exodus 15:17). *El Shaddai* is derived from *shadad*, to be powerful, and points to God as having all power in heaven and on earth. When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to him, and said, “I am God Almighty (*El Shaddai*); walk before Me and be blameless,” (Genesis 17:1). The name *Yahweh*, commonly



translated in most English Bibles as Lord, has its origin in the Hebrew verb *hayah* which means to be. When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush He told him to tell His people that the God of their fathers had sent him to them. Moses was to say, "I AM has sent me to you," (Exodus 3:13-14). The ancient Jews were uncertain how to pronounce these four Hebrew consonants but the best guess is to pronounce it *Yahweh*. The name *Yahweh* stresses the covenantal faithfulness of God. Often *Yahweh* has other modifiers attached to it to give a different nuance of God—*Yahweh Sabaoth*, the Lord of hosts; *Yahweh Jireh*, the Lord provides; *Yahweh Tsidnu*, the Lord our righteousness.

Even if you are unable to read Hebrew you are still able to gain good insight into these Hebrew names of God by using *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*. When you come across Lord, Lord God, or God in a particular text, you are able to find the Hebrew word used in that text. You can then go to the back of Strong's and find the definition of the word. Knowing the meaning of the names of God, and meditating on the practical implications of those names, can add power and context to your preaching. When, for example, I AM or *Yahweh* appeared to Moses at the burning bush, giving him his marching orders to go to Pharaoh, demanding that he let His people go, the encouragement and persistence needed by Moses to deliver the message and to lead Israel came from the God of the covenant. He swore by Himself, since He could swear by no one greater, that He would fulfill His promise to be a God to His people. This meant their deliverance, His protection and provision in the wilderness, their occupation of the promised land, and the coming of Messiah to save His people from their sins and to rule over them magnanimously.

Then a growing knowledge of the attributes of God can work powerfully in your preaching, to help you make more clear the power and might of the true and living God. The incommunicable attributes refer to those characteristics which only God possesses. Consider the following:

—God’s self-existence or what theologians call His aseity (from the Latin word *aseitas*, self-originated). Another way of referring to God’s aseity is to speak of His independence. Practically speaking, God’s aseity means that He does not need us. He is totally sufficient in Himself. He is not helped or made more whole by anything we do, nor is He hindered or discouraged by anything we do not do. God is not dependent upon us, but we are totally dependent upon Him.

—God’s immutability or unchangeableness. He is incapable of changes in His being or purpose. He foreordained whatsoever will come to pass. He is in heaven and does as He pleases (Psalm 115:3). His moral principles will remain forever the same. Many Biblical passages teach God’s immutability. Here’s one, “Who has performed and accomplished it, calling forth the generations from the beginning? I, the Lord, am the first, and with the last, I am He,” (Isaiah 41:4). It is also true that certain passages seem to contradict God’s immutability. Jonah 3:10 says that when Yahweh saw that the wicked Ninevites turned from their sin that God relented, changed His mind, and did not destroy them. How do we explain these apparent contradictions? People often hear me speak of the complementarity of truth. On the one hand, God foreordains whatsoever comes to pass. God chooses people to eternal salvation. On the other hand, whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. God is completely sovereign and immutable while at the same time allowing man the freedom to go his own way. God’s ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:8-9). “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed

belong to us and our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law,” (Deuteronomy 29:29). These two truths do not fit in the brain. They do not make sense to us. However they do fit in the regenerate heart. At the end of the day, since the Bible teaches both God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility, the Christian can accept both; knowing that one day these issues will be perfectly clear to us when they are unveiled in all their glory by our great God of all power and authority.

—God’s infinity. God is free from all limitations. He is not limited nor confined by the universe. He is in no way is restricted by time and space. He is eternal and He possesses immensity. By immensity we mean God transcends all spatial limitations. He is omnipresent, everywhere at once. While infinity and omnipresence are somewhat synonymous there still is an important distinction between them. Infinity speaks of God’s transcendence, that He is beyond us, wholly separate from us; and His omnipresence refers to His immanence, that He is here with us at all times, to comfort us as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death or anytime we face hardship and difficulty.

Then briefly consider the communicable attributes of God, those characteristics of God which can be communicated to man, which can and should be present in us. We can divide these into two categories—the intellectual and moral communicable attributes.

Consider first the intellectual communicable attributes of God:

—God’s knowledge. Berkhof defines this as the perfection of God whereby He, in an entirely unique manner, knows Himself and all things possible and actual in one eternal and

most simple act.<sup>40</sup> That is, God knows all things (He is omniscient) at once, simultaneously, not successively. In other words, God knows and sees everything which He has foreordained as happening all at once. All of history is before Him. In the mind and actions of God everything is in the present tense. This is very important and has practical implications for preaching. When you are speaking to atheists who claim they reject God because of the suffering of innocent children, you are able to say to them, “Wait a second. You need to know that God will rectify every unjust situation on the great day of His judgment when He will render to every man according to his deeds. All that happens in the world, the good and the bad, is presently happening before God, right this very moment. He is not caught by surprise on anything that happens. He sees it all—the injustice but also the restoration of all things to the praise and glory of His grace.”

—God’s veracity or truth. He cannot lie (Numbers 23:19, Titus 1:2). Everything about God is completely reliable. He never contradicts Himself. He never paints an untrue picture of people or events. He does not exaggerate. Therefore He is the source of all truth, filled with lovingkindness and truth (Exodus 34:6). Therefore He is faithful and will completely keep every aspect of His covenant with His people. When you have not been faithful to keep the covenant, He has always been faithful to keep you in it. This, by no means, gives a license to sin more and more; rather God’s veracity should act as a motivator to keep you in the game of gospel holiness.

—God’s wisdom. God knows all things. This refers to His veracity. Wisdom is knowledge applied. It is practical. It is

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<sup>40</sup>*Systematic Theology*, Louis Berkhof, page 66.

one thing, for example, for a nuclear engineering student to know all the mathematical equations and prove how a nuclear submarine works. It is quite another to be placed on the submarine and solve a problem which is keeping the crew underwater, and could eventually result in their deaths. We see God's wisdom manifested in how He always uses the right means to accomplish His purpose in every situation. Paul gets at this issue in Romans 8:28, "and we know that God causes all things to work together for good, to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

Then consider the communicable moral attributes of God:

—God's goodness. There are several aspects to God's goodness, but generally speaking, the goodness of God refers to how God in every way, in every situation, is as He should be. God never has a "bad day." He is intimately acquainted with all our ways (Psalm 139:3). We can, more specifically, speak of God's goodness toward his creatures. "Taste and see that the Lord is good," (Psalm 34:8). "The Lord is good to all and His mercies are over all His works," (Psalm 145:9-10). We also know that God is love (John 3:16, 1 John 3:1, 4:10). While we can say that God loves all people in a general fashion, much more importantly we can say that God has a special, eternal, covenantal love with His people, having bestowed on all of us the riches of the glory of His magnificent salvation (Ephesians 1:3-14). Then there is the grace of God, His undeserved favor or goodness given to His children. Then also, in the context of God's goodness, we must consider the mercy of God. He shows Himself to be compassionate, especially toward the downtrodden, disenfranchised, the widow, and the orphan, those who are in misery and distress. The long suffering of God refers to His remarkable patience with sinners who are

living in continual disobedience. He speaks through Ezekiel who says that He does not delight in the death of the wicked. Instead God desires that they turn from their evil ways and live (Ezekiel 18:23).

—God’s holiness. There is both the ethical holiness of God (freedom from sin of any kind) and the majestic, awe-inspiring holiness of God. In referring to the former, Elihu says, “Far be it from the Almighty to do wickedness, and from the Almighty to do wrong,” (Job 34:10). God also says of His majestic holiness, “For thus says the high and exalted One who lives forever, whose name is Holy. I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit, in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite,” (Isaiah 57:15). Isaiah 6:3 reports the cherubim declaring, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.” None of God’s other attributes have this three-fold distinction. There is also the idea of separation in God’s holiness. He is separate from sinners, in no way tainted with their sin, in no way can He ever be accused of injustice or evil. He is absolutely, without equivocation, pure and undefiled, without even a hint of wrongdoing.

—God’s righteousness. While similar to God’s holiness, His righteousness more specifically means being in total conformity to His law. The apostle Paul spoke of the imputed righteousness of Christ (Romans 4:3) coming to those who believe in the Lord Jesus; and Christ’s righteousness is what J. Gresham Machen called “Christ’s passive obedience.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> On his death bed, Machen said, “I thank God for Christ’s active and passive obedience. By active obedience he meant Christ’s lifelong submission and obedience to the Law of God; and by His passive obedience he meant Christ’s willful submission to His Father on the cross in His humiliation and death.

He obeyed the Law of God perfectly throughout His whole life. God is righteous in all His ways and kind in all His deeds. That is, He perfectly lives in conformity to all His revealed will in His word. The righteousness of God also has the idea of justice. To not obey His righteousness is to incur His justice. He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. To obey Him will result in rewards to angels and men, flowing from His love for them. “And men will say, ‘Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely there is a God who judges on earth,’” (Psalm 58:11).

—God’s sovereignty. God is in complete control of all that happens in the world, in all of creation. He is the final cause of all things, and that includes creation, fall, redemption, preservation, and restoration. Some theologians find it helpful to speak of the decretive and preceptive will of God. The decretive will of God refers to the decrees of God in election (choosing His people out of the world), reprobation (choosing to pass over all others), and His dealings with raising up nations and bringing them down (Jeremiah 1:10). Nebuchadnezzar knew all about this (Daniel 4:3, 34-35), and God also reveals His decretive will later in Daniel 9 with the history of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. The preceptive will of God refers to the manifestation of His mind and heart found in the prescriptions or directives of His word. Paul puts it this way, “This is the will of God for you, your sanctification, that you abstain from sexual immorality,” (1 Thessalonians 4:3). When we speak of the decretive will of God some get nervous, because this seems to teach that God is the author of evil. We must always remember that God has not told us everything. He has His secret will and does not make us privy to all His ways. We can say, however, that God can never be charged with doing or ordaining evil. He is positively and perfectly holy. There is no sin in Him at all. We must finally say that we cannot fathom the mind of God on such matters. We must be content to

trust Him who does all things well, who will cause everything to work together for good to those who love Him and keep His commandments.

As we begin with the doctrine of God, we must continue with the doctrine of man's fall into sin. We know that God made man in His own image (Genesis 1:26-27), meaning that no other creature rivals man. He is the crown of God's creation. God has made him a little lower than Himself and crowned him with glory and majesty. God has made him to rule over all His works and He puts all things in subjection under man's feet (Psalm 8:5-6). Genesis 1-2 make clear that God created man to rule over His creation and to subdue it (to make it useful for man's improvement) to multiply through marriage and the rearing of children. By the time we get to Genesis 3, however, we find that Adam has blatantly disobeyed the Lord's directive to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Consequently the sentence of death came upon Adam and Eve and their posterity (Genesis 3:16-19). Paul practically applies this in Romans 5:12-21. Paul is teaching that there are two federal or covenant heads over mankind. The first was Adam. He was to obey God's law, and if he succeeded, then all his posterity would have reaped the benefits of his righteousness and lived forever. If he failed, and we know he certainly did fail, then all would suffer the same sentence of death placed on him. At first glance this seems like a terribly unfair sentence. After all, some may reason, why should we all suffer due to one man's disobedience? But this principle of covenant headship is found everywhere in creation. A father who sins by abandoning his children causes them to suffer. A company owner who squanders the profits, refusing to reinvest them, runs the company into the ground, causing his employees to lose their jobs and ability to provide for their families. A President of a nation who pushes through



unjust legislation is bringing hardship on all who live within the bounds of that nation.

Paul says in Romans 5:12, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.” Notice the digression. Sin entered the world through one man’s disobedience. The result of this sin was death, not merely to Adam, but to all his posterity. Why has death come upon all men? Paul answers by saying, “Because all sinned.” The Greek construction of this verb is aorist, active, indicative. In other words, all mankind sinned at a particular place and time. This is a statement of certainty. Hence the indicative mood of the verb. Bottom line—when Adam ate the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, we sinned in him, our federal head. We all are born sinners, having the sentence of death upon each one of us.

This has profound implications for evangelistic preaching. We will take a much deeper look at the nature of sinful man later, but for now, understand that the imputation of Adam’s sin means that man is born a rebellious sinner, that he cannot obey God’s law, though he is required to do so. Furthermore, he has no appetite for the law of God or the gospel. He is dead in his sins. He is without hope and without God in this world. He is not “buying what you are selling.” If you speak to a corpse and offer it a hot dog, what happens? Nothing. Why? Because the corpse is a dead body and is incapable of eating. The same is true with sinners in the world. They have no hunger or thirst for God and His word. That’s why you meet with so little interest or great hostility when you preach on the streets.

So obviously this drives us to our only solution—we must pray for the Holy Spirit to prepare people to hear the gospel,

to work in them so that they want to hear the gospel, to direct them to us so that they can hear it.

When Wini and I moved to West Hartford, Connecticut in 2003 we soon realized that only one percent of Connecticut is evangelical and West Hartford is one of the most affluent and liberal towns in New England. We knew the people would not naturally want to hear the gospel from us. So I told our core group that we must do two things consistently, with total dependence upon the Lord. We must pray and we must then evangelize. Our weekly prayer meetings were, without question, the power source in our church. And our evangelistic work, including door to door survey evangelism, eventually bore fruit of salvation in many people. The surprising result was that our people evangelized with great boldness, what I like to call the “divine swagger.” That’s because they knew the people would not be interested unless the Holy Spirit was drawing them. So there was no temptation to “water down the message” in order to gain a hearing from them. To deny the imputation of Adam’s sin opens a Pandora’s box of false ways to draw crowds and get a following. If man’s mind and will have not been rendered incapable of responding to the gospel, as Arminianism teaches, then preachers and evangelists can and do use any means possible to “get decisions.” This has proven to be a terrible blight on the evangelical church in America. It seems that many young people who attend church regularly and show great emotion in worshipping God, view fornication as a sin of choice. They apparently do not understand that without sanctification, holiness, no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14); that one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep God’s commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him (1 John 2:4).

Evangelistic preaching also promotes the doctrine of God’s free grace and mercy. God’s grace and mercy are not merely

a New Testament truth. We find God's mercy and grace on nearly every page of Holy Scripture. After Adam's fall into sin, when blatantly disobeying the God of true beneficence, Yahweh put forth the first mention of the gospel. In speaking to the devil and his sentence of condemnation, the Lord said, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between her seed and your seed. You shall bruise Him on the heel, and He will crush your head," Genesis 3:15. Later after the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually, after He was sorry that He made man, after being grieved in His heart, the Lord brought a universal flood which covered the entire earth. Every living thing which could not live outside of water, was destroyed, except for the animals on the ark. "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord," (Genesis 6:8). Only Noah, his wife, and their three sons and their wives were spared in the flood. But we see God's mercy and grace on Adam and Noah and their families. Then when the people sought to construct a temple that would reach to heaven and thus rival God, He dispersed the people and confused their languages as a form of judgment. The Lord continued to manifest His mercy and grace by calling Abram from the land of Chaldeans, modern day northern Iraq. While we know nothing specifically of Abram's religious practices, we know that his people were given over to child sacrifice. God made known His mercy and grace to Abram by saying "I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you will be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed," (Genesis 12:2-3). The Lord continued to unfold His covenant of grace to Abram by reassuring him, "On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram saying, 'To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates,'" (Genesis 15:18). Later He reaffirms the

covenant with Abram saying, “I am God Almighty (El Shaddai); walk before Me, and be blameless. I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly,” (Genesis 17:1-2). Yahweh continued to unfold His covenant of grace with Abraham’s son Isaac, then with Jacob and Joseph. Then He does the same with King David and his son, Solomon, telling Solomon that if he remained faithful to the Lord he would never lack for a son on the throne of Israel (1 Kings 9:4-5).

The Psalms are also replete with references to the Lord’s mercy and grace. The Psalmist addresses the Lord Jesus, “You are fairer than the sons of men; grace is poured upon Your lips; therefore God has blessed You forever,” (Psalm 45:2). “For the Lord is your sun and shield; the Lord gives grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly,” (Psalm 84:11). “Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to Your lovingkindness remember me, for Your mercy’s sake,” (Psalm 25:7). “Show us Your lovingkindness, O Lord, and grant us Your salvation . . . Lovingkindness and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other,” (Psalm 85:7,10).

And even after many years of rebellion against the Lord of the covenant, after Yahweh sent them one prophet after another, we find Him promising better days through the prophet Jeremiah. “. . . I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah . . . I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people . . . for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more,” (Jeremiah 31:31-34). The same is true with Daniel in the words of his corporate confession of sin, “To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him,” (Daniel 9:9). And after the exile, on

their return to Jerusalem, Yahweh promised the coming Messiah and the restoration of His kingdom in the minor prophet Zechariah. He says, "I will return to Jerusalem with compassion; My house will be built in it," (Zechariah 1:16). "Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the Lord. Yes it will be the temple of the Lord," (Zechariah 6:12-13). There are many more beautiful prophecies in Zechariah concerning the mercy and grace of God, but here's one more, "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a first born," (Zechariah 12:10).

The grace and mercy of God are also clearly in view in the New Testament. In John's prologue he says, "The Law was given through Moses. Grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ," (John 1:17). When the Lord Jesus was reclining at table with tax-gatherers and sinners, knowing how indignant the Pharisees were with His actions, He said, "I desire compassion, and not sacrifice, for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners," (Matthew 9:13). After hearing that she would bear the Messiah of all the nations, Mary said, "And His mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear Him," (Luke 1:50). Paul most often begins his epistles with salutations referring to the grace and mercy of God. "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ," (Romans 1:7, 1 Corinthians 1:3, 2 Corinthians 1:2, Ephesians 1:2, Philippians 1:2, Colossians 1:2). The apostle Peter gives similar greetings, "May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure," (1 Peter 1:2, 2 Peter 1:2). He also writes of God's great mercy which has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3).

Paul speaks of the riches of God's grace (Ephesians 1:7), that we are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8), that grace be with those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love (Ephesians 6:24). James says that God gives a greater grace to those who humble themselves before God (James 4:6). And Peter urges his readers to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). The writer to the Hebrews says that we have a high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God. We therefore are able to draw near with confidence to the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace in time of need (Hebrews 4:14-16). And Jude urges his readers to keep themselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. Consequently they are to have mercy on some who are doubting (Jude 21, 22).

What does the mercy and grace of God mean for your evangelistic preaching? My friends, immerse yourself in the doctrines of God's unmerited grace and favor. Understand that you have received mercy. You were wretched, poor, blind, and naked. You had no hope. You were without God in this world. You were a child of wrath, just like everyone else. The best of you were hell bound sinners, blind rebels, and sons of the devil. You did not seek for God. You had turned away from Him. You were arrogant, insolent, boastful, haters of God, gossips, slanderers, inventors of evil. You were without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful. You were murderous in your speech, values, and actions toward others. You were adulterers, fornicators, liars, thieves, and drunkards. You were on the road to hell and you surely would have gone there, if God had not reached down and shown you His unmerited free grace and mercy. Therefore you are, like the apostle Paul, under obligation. You are to take the gospel to the world. God has called you

to preach the unfathomable riches of His grace to any who will listen.

We can go further and say that evangelistic preaching is to promote the doctrine of Christ's person and work. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* reminds us that "the Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon Him man's nature . . . which person is very God, and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man."<sup>42</sup> How glorious is our Savior! There is so much to say here and I can only scratch the surface. You may wish to read Paul Washer's *The Gospel's Power and Message*<sup>43</sup> to get a fuller presentation on this important doctrine. The greatest privilege any evangelistic preacher has is to lift up the Lord Jesus. Every time I go to the streets to preach I am filled with profound joy. What really gets me going is Romans 3:23-26, what Lloyd-Jones calls the vindication of God.<sup>44</sup> As we have seen already, the preacher must "own" the message of the cross in his heart and mind, if he is to preach with earnestness, which hopefully will have the Spirit's anointing on it. So, what are you to proclaim concerning the Lord Jesus? Theologians often divide Christology (the doctrine of Christ) into two major streams. First is what they call the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The second is the work of the Lord Jesus. Consider these glorious truths about His person. First we must acknowledge Christ's deity. John, in his prologue writes, "In the beginning was the Word and the

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<sup>42</sup> *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter VIII, paragraph 2.

<sup>43</sup> Chapters 20-26 of Washer's book are especially helpful in this regard for he writes on the cross of Christ, the vindication of God, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the ascension of the Lord Jesus.

<sup>44</sup> His sermons in Romans 3, *Romans: Atonement and Justification*.

Word was with God, and the Word was God,” (John 1:1). A word communicates what is in the mind of the speaker. God is declaring all of His attributes, the entirety of His eternal purpose, in the person of Christ. John is saying in John 1:1 that the Word created all things, that He is co-equal with the Father, that He is Almighty God. John further emphasizes this point in verse two, “He was in the beginning with God,” stressing Christ’s eternity. John goes even further in verse three, stressing Christ’s active work in creation. “All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.” In verse four John proclaims Christ as the source of all life, but also as the only source of light and truth in the world. To reject Christ is to walk in darkness and never know the goodness, mercy, and grace of God. In verse fourteen John proclaims that this Word who is the eternal, unchangeable, Creator became flesh in due time. “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth,” (John 1:14). God ripped open heaven and came to earth as a baby, fully God. He was wrapped in cloths by His mother and placed in a stone cattle trough. Isaiah predicted that this beautiful Savior would be despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. That is, His entire earthly life would be one of rejection and humiliation.

There are so many other passages of Scripture which teach the deity of Christ. Consider both Matthew and Luke’s gospel accounts of His virgin birth. Matthew straightforwardly tells us that before Joseph and Mary were married she was found to be pregnant by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18), meaning there was no human father of Jesus. Luke writes that Gabriel, an angel, told Mary that she would conceive in her womb and bear a Son and she was to call Him “Jesus”, (Luke 1:31). Upon seeing the infant Jesus, Simeon referred to Him as the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy, “A Light of



revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of God's people Israel," (Luke 2:32). Anna the Prophetess spoke of Jesus to those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. In other words, she was proclaiming that this Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. After Simon Peter had been fishing all night and caught nothing, Jesus told him to go into deeper water and to cast his nets there. At first Peter resisted. After all, he was a fisherman and Jesus was a carpenter. He obeyed, however, and caught an abundance of fish. Peter, after witnessing this display of Jesus' power, fell down at His feet and said, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man," (Luke 5:8). Peter and his friends were amazed and they left everything and followed Jesus.

In John's gospel we see further evidence of Christ's deity. We find there the seven "I Am" passages. "I am the bread of life that came down from heaven," (John 6:41). He says that those who come to Him will not hunger and those who believe in Him will never thirst. No mere man can make such a statement unless he is mentally unstable. In John 8:12 Jesus says, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life." When the Pharisees vehemently resisted Jesus' statement, saying that His testimony was a lie, Jesus said that He was not alone in His true judgment of being the Light of the world. In fact His Father who sent Him fully agrees with Jesus. He closes out His dialogue with the Pharisees by saying, "He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him," (John 8:29). John reports that because of this dialogue many came to believe in Jesus. In John 10 we find two I Am statements. In John 10:7, in the parable of the Good Shepherd, Jesus said, "Truly, truly I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me,

he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture,” (John 10:7-9). Jesus is claiming to be the Savior of the world. And in John 10:11 He says, “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” A hired hand will not protect the sheep when the wolves come. He will preserve his own life. Not so the shepherd. This, of course is a reference to Christ’s impending death on the cross.

After these two declarations Jesus asserts His deity at the Feast of Dedication, saying that the works that He was doing in the name of His Father, testify about Him. The Jews are not buying it because they are not sheep. Sheep hear the voice of their shepherd. The Jews are not responding, further proving they are not sons of God who is in heaven. Jesus directly says that He gives eternal life to His sheep. Only God can grant eternal life or judgment. He finally concludes by saying, “I and the Father are one,” (John 10:30). The Jews were then seeking to kill Jesus, proving they knew exactly what He was claiming, that He is God in the flesh.

After the death of Lazarus, Jesus went to the tomb and found Lazarus’ sisters, Mary and Martha, along with many others grieving his death. Jesus comforted them by declaring, “I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in Me will live even if he dies,” (John 11:25). To prove His declaration Jesus commanded dead Lazarus to come forth from the grave and he did so. In John 14:6, as He begins His comforting words to His disciples on the night of His betrayal, Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” Note that Jesus says He is *the* way, *the* truth, and *the* life. Emphasis is on the word *the*. It is like saying, “He is *the* best ball player.” There is no dispute nor rival. Peter, bearing testimony of Jesus before the rulers, elders, and scribes said, “There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other

name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved,” (Acts 4:12). It is a word of singularity and exclusivity. In a world of competing religions and ideologies, not only in His day, but now, this is a profound and polarizing statement. Jesus is claiming to be the only way to the Father. In other words, no other religion will do, no matter how sincere, humble, or religious people may be. Jesus is teaching exclusivity. A man who makes such statements, as C.S. Lewis has said<sup>45</sup>, is either mentally unstable or a lunatic, a liar who seeks to deceive people for his own gain, or actually who he said he is. And Jesus also says later in the same discourse, “I am the true vine and My Father is the vinedresser,” (John 15:1). Isaiah refers to Israel as the vineyard of the Lord (Isaiah 5:1) and Jeremiah rebukes wayward and destructive shepherds who have ruined the Lord’s vineyard (Jeremiah 12:10). So His disciples would have immediately understood our Lord’s reference to being the vine. He is saying that He is the source of all life for His people, that there is hope of sustenance and life in no one else but Him. Paul says something similar, “In Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” (Colossians 2:3).

The apostles also readily declare Christ’s deity. Paul says that Jesus was declared to be the Son of God through His resurrection (Romans 1:4). He says that as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive (1 Corinthians 15:22). Paul also speaks of His deity by declaring that Jesus, who knew no sin became sin on our behalf, that we may become the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21). In other words, Christ Jesus took the sins of His people upon Himself in sacrificial love and for the satisfaction of God’s perfect righteousness and judgment. He

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<sup>45</sup> *Mere Christianity*.

declares that in the fullness of time God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that He might redeem us from the works of the law (Galatians 4:4). He says that though Jesus existed in the form of God, He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped or held onto. Instead He emptied Himself (not of His deity for this is patently impossible, but of the trappings of His deity). In His flesh He did not always know everything (Mark 5:30). He became hungry, thirsty, and sleepy; and though He was a Son, He learned obedience through the things which He suffered (Hebrews 5:8). Paul says that Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation . . . in Him all things are created . . . He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together . . . He has come to have first place in everything . . . it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross, (Colossians 1:15-20).

The writer to the Hebrews, in seeking to show that Christ Jesus is above men and angels, says that the Father has appointed Jesus heir of all things, that through Him He made the world, that He is the radiance of His glory, the exact representation of His nature, that He upholds all things by the word of His power, that all the angels are to worship Him (Hebrews 1:2-3, 6). Peter says that he and other believers living at the time were eyewitnesses of His majesty, Jesus having received glory and honor from His Father who said, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased," (2 Peter 1:16-17). And John refers to Jesus as the Word of Life who was from the beginning. John and the disciples saw Him with their eyes, touched Him with their hands and thus proclaimed Him to all everywhere (1 John 1:1-3). John also refers to Jesus as the propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world (1 John 2:2). In the Revelation John tells us that Jesus is the faithful witness,

the first born from the dead, the ruler of the kings of the earth, the One who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood (Revelation 1:5). John also tells us that he saw no temple in the New Jerusalem because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple . . . that there was no need of the sun or the moon to shine on the city because the glory of God has illumined it and the lamp is the Lamb of God (Revelation 21:22-23).

Throughout the Old and New Testaments, Scripture repeatedly declares and affirms that Jesus of Nazareth, who was born of the virgin Mary, who lived a perfect life, who was adored by many and hated by many more, was God in the flesh. He became man. He was 100% God and 100% man. He is the God man. Consequently you must never question or deny our Lord's deity. Without it we do not have a sinless Savior and without a sinless Savior we have no means of true and eternal salvation.

We can also say at the same time that the Bible teaches Christ's humanity. He was also 100% man. He was born as an infant, totally dependent upon His parents for food, drink, shelter, and clothing. He was circumcised the eighth day, like any other Jewish boy. Circumcision was symbolic of the need for regeneration. Think about it. Jesus, who had a perfect, sinless heart, willingly took on human flesh and went through a rite which He did not need as an example for those who did need it. His mother wrapped Him in cloths the night He was born because He was cold. He was taught to read and write, to pray as any good Jewish boy would do. He was a carpenter by trade and had to learn how to drive nails and saw boards correctly. He had to learn His trade through apprenticeship just like any other common worker. When He stayed behind in Jerusalem after one of the annual feasts to speak with the religious leaders, His parents were perplexed and concerned. To begin His earthly ministry He

needed the Holy Spirit to come upon Him to strengthen Him for His labors as Messiah. After His forty day fast He became hungry and was tempted by the devil. During His ministry many in His hometown mocked and rejected Him, including His own siblings, thinking that He had lost His mind. He slept. He ate. He was tempted to sin. He had to learn obedience through suffering. He was falsely accused as a wicked sinner because He was often seen with such people. He wept at the tomb of Lazarus. He wept over the city of Jerusalem because of her hardheartedness. He was angry with His disciples for their unbelief. He was angry with the religious leaders who refused to show compassion for those in great need. He suffered on the cross, like any other man suffers, only far worse. His suffering was estrangement from His Father in heaven, where He experienced hell for the sins of His people. No other man has ever died like Jesus. He died horrifically and was then buried in a tomb.

To deny His humanity is to make Jesus something like a ghost who appeared and then vanished quickly. He had to be a man in order to be tempted in all things as we, yet without sin. He had to be a man in order to suffer the punishment and wrath of God that we deserve, having our sin imputed to Him. The first Adam led us into sin, death, and judgment, while the last Adam makes possible the gift and grace of God in justification. The incarnation of Christ, when He became man after being eternally with the Father in heaven, is unprecedented. It is a fact of history. Christianity is not speculation. It is not philosophy or religion. It is founded upon fact. Jesus of Nazareth was really born of the Virgin Mary. He really lived thirty-three years on earth. He performed many miracles. He preached powerful sermons. He incurred unjust suffering and death at the hands of the Jews and Romans. He was crucified on a Roman cross at Golgotha. He really died, the proof being the Romans needed not to break His legs to hasten His death, for He was

already dead when they came to finish Him off. Further proof was the spear thrust into His side where blood and water flowed, a sure sign that the pericardial sack had ruptured. He was placed in a tomb by Joseph of Arimathea. He appeared in resurrection glory on several occasions to His disciples over forty days before His ascension. He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time. His resurrection is also a fact of history. He ascended into heaven before the very eyes of His own disciples. They all went to their deaths believing and proclaiming the truth of Christ's resurrection. Our union with Christ in His resurrection guarantees that we too walk in newness of life, that we receive glorified bodies which are imperishable, undefiled, and which will not fade away. We therefore are able to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labor in the Lord is never in vain.

Hebrews tells us that Jesus was tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). All the synoptic gospel writers speak of Christ's temptation at the hands of the devil, after the Holy Spirit had come upon Him after His baptism. The temptation of Christ in the wilderness is a parallel with what Adam experienced in the Garden. Adam was tempted to eat the forbidden fruit and God judged him when he gave into the temptation. As a result all his posterity likewise is under the sentence of condemnation and death. As Paul says, "Through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners; even so, through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous," (Romans 5:19). Christ, on the other hand, did not fall for the temptation of the Evil One, and He consequently fulfilled God's Law. He was qualified to be the only Mediator between the Holy God and sinful men.

After fasting for forty days, the devil suggested to Jesus that the Father was no longer concerned about Him. Had He not left Him alone in the wilderness without food? Jesus

immediately recognized the temptation to deny His heavenly Father's manifold goodness. The devil suggested that Jesus take matters into His own hands and turn the stones into bread. Jesus rightly responded, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceeds out of the mouth of God," (Matthew 4:4). Then Satan took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command His angels concerning You;' and 'On their hands they will bear You up so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.'" The devil is suggesting here to Jesus that the Father may not deliver on His promises to protect Him. He ought to make sure of it. To this Jesus replied, "It is written, 'You shall not put the Lord Your God to the test.'" Jesus is reiterating to Satan His utmost confidence in His Father's loving care and provision in every way. Finally, the devil took Jesus to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. He said to Jesus, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me." Jesus had already been promised all the nations in Psalm 2:8, "Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession." However Jesus was to receive these nations as the reward for His faithful and sacrificial work on the cross to purchase our redemption. "As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied," (Isaiah 53:11). So Satan was seeking to give Jesus a short cut. If Jesus would bow to the devil then the devil, who at the time was the god of this world, promised to give up his rule over the nations. Jesus saw through the temptation, however. He knew there was no other way but the cross. He quoted Deuteronomy 6:13, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only."

Matthew tells us that the devil then left Jesus and angels came to minister to the Lord, to strengthen and encourage Him as He moved forward in His earthly ministry.



Jesus was constantly exposed to the devil's temptations to move away from God's intended purpose for Him and the world. However one other temptation stands out like a high mountain. In the Garden of Gethsemane, on the night our Lord was betrayed, the reality and the horror of Christ's impending suffering and death came upon Him with full force. He was sweating drops of blood, a sign of severe spiritual, emotional trauma. Jesus asks that His disciples stay and pray with Him but they all fall asleep, since it is about midnight at the time. So Jesus prayed by Himself and the full horror of what awaited Him was now consuming Him. He wished to be relieved from the impending pain, asking if the Father would take away the cup of humiliation, grief, and suffering that was soon to overwhelm Him. But Jesus finally submitted to the foreordained plan of God saying, "Not My will but Your's be done." For Jesus to have submitted to the temptations of Satan would have left all of us in sin, misery, and condemnation.

Remember that you now have authority over the devil. Christ has defeated him on the cross. He is bound and can no longer deceive the nations. "The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever," (Revelation 11:15). Go forth every time you preach, believing that God will shatter the unbelief of some who are listening to you, that Christ will begin to rule in their hearts by faith, that they will be rooted and grounded in love, being able to comprehend the height and depth and breadth and length of the love of God in Christ Jesus. Jesus told the seventy as they returned from their ministries into southern Galilee, "I saw Satan falling from heaven like lightning," (Luke 10:18).

Finally, evangelistic preaching is to promote the doctrine of Christ's work on the cross and the efficacy of His blood.

Jesus spoke of the new covenant in His blood (Luke 22:20) and of drinking His blood to gain eternal life (John 6:54). Paul spoke of Christ purchasing the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28), of the propitiation in His blood through faith (Romans 3:25), of being justified by His blood (Romans 5:9), of gaining redemption through His blood (Ephesians 1:7), of being brought near by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:13), and of gaining peace through the blood of His cross (Colossians 1:20). John wrote of the blood of Jesus cleansing us from all sin (1 John 1:7); and of the three that testify of gaining victory over the world—the Spirit, the water, and the blood (1 John 5:5-8). Peter speaks of the sanctifying work of the Spirit to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood (1 Peter 1:2), of being redeemed with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:19). The writer to the Hebrews refers to the blood of the covenant (Hebrews 9:20), that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (Hebrews 9:22), and of having confidence to enter the the holy place by the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 10:19). And John in the Revelation speaks of Jesus as the One who released us from our sins by His blood (Revelation 1:5), who purchased with His own blood men from every tongue, tribe, people, and nation (Revelation 5:9), of the saints who have gone through the great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14), that they overcame the devil by the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 12:11), that Jesus came to wage war against His enemies with a robe dipped in blood (Revelation 19:13).

Jesus, by His blood shed at Calvary, expiates our sins. In other words, He takes them from us. John the Baptist said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,” (John 1:29). King David said, “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us,” (Psalm 103:12). Isaiah said “Lo, for my own

welfare I had great bitterness; it is You who has kept my soul from the pit of nothingness, for you have cast all my sins behind Your back,” (Isaiah 38:17). In prophesying about the coming new covenant, Jeremiah said, “For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more,” (Jeremiah 31:34). Paul said to the religious leaders at Pisidian Antioch, “Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses,” (Acts 13:38-39). The Lord Jesus washes away our sin by His blood. Ezekiel put it this way, “I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols,” (Ezekiel 36:25).

Always remember that as you preach, all those listening to you have a filthy past. All have sinned. All have done shameful, wicked things, even the best and most moral of people. Some are filled with a sense of guilt and shame because of things done to them, like child molestation or living with physically abusive parents or with an alcoholic father. Psychotherapy seeks to expunge guilt and shame but this will never do. What can wash away our sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. This is astounding good news! Imbibe deeply on this glorious truth. Pray that God will cause it to grip your heart, soul, and mind, and then open your mouth and proclaim the excellencies of Christ’s expiating, atoning death.

We can go further to speak of Christ’s propitiating death. Romans 3:25 declares the propitiation in His blood through faith. The apostle John uses this word twice. He wrote, “He Himself is the propitiation for our sins,” (1 John 2:2). And in 1 John 4:10 John said, “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Propitiation, in the Biblical sense of the word,

means the satisfaction of God's divine and just wrath. God is angry with the sinner everyday. He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. The Lord, however, in tender mercy, satisfies His just wrath and condemnation by crushing His Son. "The Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief if He would render Himself as a guilt offering," (Isaiah 53:10). This is what theologians call the penal substitutionary atonement of Christ. The wages of sin is death, but Christ Jesus paid the penalty of death for us by undergoing death on the cross. Liberal theologians have long objected to this doctrine of propitiation and penal substitution. They speak of it as being barbaric. They ask, "How can a loving father subject his son to such suffering and horror?" They like to say that Jesus' death is an example of sacrifice, of how we all ought to live. The Scriptures, however, paint a far more vivid and awe filled portrait of One offering Himself up in our place, of incurring the wrath of God.

Paul says that God sent Him who knew no sin to become sin on our behalf (2 Corinthians 5:21). The Psalmist says that God hates all who do iniquity, that He abhors the man of bloodshed and deceit (Psalm 5:5,6). When our Lord Jesus was on the cross, taking upon Himself the sins of all His people, the real, unmitigated wrath of the Holy One, fell upon Him. In distress and horror, the beloved Son of God cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" The Son was asking for mercy from His Father but His Father remained silent. Instead, for those three hours Jesus hung on the cross, the Father abhorred the Son. He hated Him. He cursed Him. He damned Him. Justice must be satisfied. For God to simply declare all sins forgiven would be to deny His attribute of justice. Sin must be accounted for, and either we account for it ourselves by our deaths and eternal separation from the Father; or the Son does so in our place. He experienced the real hell of separation from His Father so that we would not.

As you preach the glories of God's unfathomable grace, you begin with the holiness and justice of God in the context of man's willful disobedience. All are guilty. All are under condemnation. You must labor to paint this picture clearly and powerfully. Only then can the power and efficacy of Christ's propitiating and expiating death come with saving force on people.

I remember preaching at the Kentucky Derby when a rather inebriated young man with his girl friend stopped to mock as I was preaching. He told me that he had sex with his girl friend that morning, and he wanted to know if he was going to hell. I said, "Yes, but not just for that sin, but for every idle word, vain imagination, and sin of omission and commission that you ever did." I told him with great soberness that he is under the wrath and condemnation of God and that he will perish, he will die in his sins, if he does not repent. I went further to say that Christ took the wrath and condemnation for such sin upon Himself. There was no need for him or anyone else, for that matter, to go to hell. Christ has paid the penalty for our sin. He seemed to listen intently for a moment, but then went on his way, still in his sins.

Christ's death is also a reconciling death. Paul says that it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Christ, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross. He goes on to say that God reconciled us to Himself through Christ's fleshly body in death, in order to present us before Him holy, blameless, and beyond reproach (Colossians 1:19,20,22). Paul also says that God reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting our trespasses against us, having committed to us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). The

idea of reconciliation is that two enemies, two parties who are at odds with one another, are being brought to a place of peace and tranquility. It is not merely that we need to be reconciled to God, though this is certainly true. After all, we have separated ourselves from Him because of our iniquities (Isaiah 59:1-2). But God is also estranged from us. He cannot look upon evil. He is light and we are darkness. Light has no fellowship with darkness. If someone says that he has fellowship with God and yet walks in the darkness, then he is a liar and truth is not in him (1 John 1:6).

It is like the rebel leader who has brought death and destruction to the good king's just dominion. He is being tracked down by the king's best sniper. The sniper has the rebel in his sights and all that is left is for the king to tell the sniper to pull the trigger. At the last moment, however, the king shows mercy and relents. But the wicked rebel leader has done great harm. Justice must be satisfied. Reconciliation between the two must take place. In order to facilitate this reconciliation the king has the sniper shoot his only son, and his son willingly submits to the execution. Justice has been served. True reconciliation can take place.

The implications of Christ's reconciling death are practical and endless. Everywhere I go in the world I find racism and discrimination. I see it in the tribal disputes of Africa. I see it in the caste system in India with Dalits (the outcasts in Hindu culture) becoming Christians and still feeling unwelcome in established caste churches. And of course it still exists in the United States with our racial tensions. Because Christ can truly reconcile us sinners who deserve separation forever from the Father, He also can tear down the middle wall of separation between Jew and Gentile, between black and white, between high and low caste, between tribal entities in Kenya or Uganda.

Christ's death is also a redeeming death. Paul says that in Christ we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our sins according to the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7). He says that God rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us into the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:13-14). He says that we are justified, as a gift, by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:24). There are at least two dimensions to the redeeming work of Christ. When Naomi moved back to Judea from Moab after the deaths of her husband and two sons, Ruth, one of her daughter-in-laws, followed her there. Due to her poverty, Naomi had lost control of her land handed down to her from the days of Joshua who parceled out the land when Israel came into the Promised Land. God had made provision for the land to be returned to her through a kinsman redeemer, a male family member who was willing to purchase the land on her behalf. Boaz did so and also married Ruth to raise up the name of Elimelech, her deceased father-in-law. The Lord Jesus Christ is our kinsmen redeemer. We had forfeited any right whatsoever to the "land of Canaan". We were estranged from God. We had no hope of heaven or living on the new earth, and we were without God in this world. But the Lord Jesus redeemed us by His blood, making possible our eternal dwelling with Him.

We can also say that all of us were enslaved to the devil. We were living in his dominion, but the Lord Jesus paid the ransom price with His blood to buy us back from our slavery to sin. In the ancient Roman and Greek world soldiers were rarely paid adequately and many supplemented their income by kidnapping the sons of rich kings they had just conquered. They would send word back to the king that they had in their possession the king's beloved son. They would give him back for a ransom price. The king would pay the

price and the soldiers would divide the ransom price amongst themselves.

As you preach you can stress to people that they have squandered God's goodness to them. Perhaps they are addicted to drugs, pornography, alcohol, money, or material possessions. Maybe they have lost their children, their spouses, their friends. Maybe they think there is no hope at all. But you can proclaim to them that Jesus died to purchase their redemption, to buy them back from slavery to sin, to restore to them the years that the locusts have eaten.

Perhaps you know the story of Louie Zamperini, the great Olympic runner who was adrift at sea during World War II, who was tortured in a merciless fashion at the hands of the Japanese, but who was released at the end of the war. Louie came home as a hero, married a debutante, but suffered what we now call post traumatic stress syndrome. He began to drink heavily and his marriage was near the end. He attended the Billy Graham tent revival in Los Angeles in 1949 and God saved him, redeemed him, and gave him a new life. Louie never had another nightmare. He was able to forgive his torturers, and he lived a long, productive, and joyful life in Christ.<sup>46</sup> The reconciling work of Christ in one's life makes possible reconciliation with others.

Christ's death is also a justifying death. Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:6). Paul the apostle picks up this theme in Romans 4, telling us that Abraham was not justified by works. If this had been the case then he could have boasted of his position before God. He says, "Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited by a favor, but as what is due. But to the one

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<sup>46</sup> *Unbroken* by Laura Hillenbrand



who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness apart from works,” (Romans 4:4-5). In making application to this glorious doctrine, Paul says that having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ . . . that having been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him (Romans 5:1,9). Paul tells the Corinthians that no unrighteous person will inherit the kingdom of God . . . neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). He says in Romans 3:23-24, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.” What is justification? The Larger Catechism, Question and Answer 70, of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* says:

*Justification is an act of God’s free grace unto sinners, in which He pardons all their sins, accepts and accounts their persons righteous in His sight; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them, and received by faith alone.*

There are two major components of justification by faith alone. First, God pardons sinners of all their sins, accepting them, therefore as righteous, without sin, in His sight. You were, as it were, in a negative position before God. You must be righteous in order to gain heaven but you were far from it. But having your sins pardoned by the death and resurrection of Jesus lifts you out of the negative position. However you are only at zero. You must be positively righteous. This leads

to the second part of justification. Imagine you have a rich uncle who texts you one day and says, "You may wish to get on line and look at your checking account." You do so and discover that he has made an electronic deposit of \$1 million into your account. Now everything has changed about you. You are now a millionaire. You do not deserve it. You did not work for it. You did not earn it. You cannot boast about your wealth, but you are, nonetheless, the beneficiary of his magnanimity. An alien \$1 million has been given, imputed or put into your checking account. Something far greater than money has been graciously imputed to you. The very righteousness of Jesus Christ, His complete obedience to the Law of God, has been given to you. Now, the Father looks at you through the lens of Christ's righteousness and He sees you as righteous, innocent, undefiled. This is why David is able to exult in God's free grace after his horrible sin of adultery and murder, "Deliver me from blood guiltiness O God, the God of my salvation; Then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness," (Psalm 51:14).

As you preach, after directly applying the Law of God to sinners, as the Holy Spirit brings conviction upon their consciences, to then be able to declare to them that their sins can truly be pardoned, that they can be given the very righteousness of Christ by His sheer mercy and grace, is a profound privilege, and a liberating message for anyone who wishes to start over. God wipes the slate clean. He no longer remembers their sin. Their sins are washed away by the expiating, propitiating, reconciling, redeeming, justifying blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. I remember preaching to a group of men recovering from alcohol and drug addiction, whose lives had been destroyed by their slavery to sin. I was able to proclaim to them, "You can start over in Jesus. He will cleanse you and forgive you. He will reconcile you and make you righteous. What must you do? Repent and believe

the gospel.” They were locked in on the gospel message. I could see hope spring up in their eyes.

Christ’s death is also one which yields our adoption as sons. Paul says to the Gentile Galatians who have been told by the Jewish believers that they must act like Jews and adopt their customs, “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise,” (Galatians 3:28). In other words being a Jew or Gentile is not the issue, but faith working through love (Galatians 5:6). Paul says that even though a child may be the rightful heir to his father’s fortune, until the hour of “cashing in” on the inheritance comes, he is like a slave who works for his father. Likewise Paul says that the Gentiles, who were like the child still under guardianship and not able yet to receive the benefits of his inheritance, when the fullness of time came, were adopted into the family of God. “Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba Father!’” Larger Catechism Question and Answer 74 defines adoption as:

*Adoption is an act of the free grace of God, in and for His only Son Jesus Christ, whereby all those that are justified are received into the number of His children, have His name put upon them, the Spirit of His Son given to them, are under His fatherly care and dispensations, admitted to all the liberties and privileges of the sons of God, made heirs of all the promises, and fellow heirs with Christ in glory.*

Our legal understanding of adoption is very similar to the Roman idea of adoption at the time of Paul’s writing. The Romans held that an adopted son had all the same rights as a naturally born child in the family. There was no difference. So, your adoption into the family of God means that all the Father promised Christ is yours as well. You have the Spirit, the Father’s care and provision, and all the liberties and

freedoms our Lord Jesus now enjoys are yours as well. That is, every spiritual blessing in Christ is yours. Due to His poverty you have become rich. The Father promised His Son the new heavens and the new earth. He promised that He would rule over all things. You will live with Him on the new earth. You will rule with Him forever. You will receive a glorified, resurrection body like the Son received. “Eye has not seen, nor has ear heard, nor has it entered the thought of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him,” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

In a world where so many strive for God’s acceptance through one’s work, a gloriously liberating truth is that we have our right standing now before God. We can do nothing to lose it, gain it, add to it, or sustain it. This is not, however, a license to sin or laziness. It does mean, however, that failure to reach earthly goals or accomplishments in no way robs one of his right and just standing before the Holy God who loves His people with an everlasting love.

Christ’s death also provides our sanctification. Theologians usually speak of two aspects of sanctification. The first is positional sanctification, of being set apart by God. We speak of a sanctuary for worship, or a bird sanctuary, or one who is being persecuted seeking sanctuary in a foreign country. The first part of Question and Answer 75 of the Larger Catechism of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* captures this idea:

*Sanctification is a work of God’s grace, whereby they whom God hath, before the foundation of the world, chosen to be holy.*

We see this in many of the salutations of Paul’s epistles. He could address the Corinthian church which had many severe problems as “those who have been sanctified in Christ

Jesus, saints by calling,” (1 Corinthians 1:2), “the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia,” (2 Corinthians 1:1). To the church at Ephesus which struggled with impure and covetous members, he said, “To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus,” (Ephesus 1:1). By virtue of our union with Christ in His death and resurrection, we are put into a category of saints. We are sanctified.

We can go further, however, and speak of progressive sanctification. The second part of Question and Answer 75 addresses progressive sanctification:

*. . . are in time through the powerful operation of His Spirit applying the death and resurrection of Christ unto them, renewed in their whole man after the image of God; having the seeds of repentance unto life, and all the other graces, put into their hearts, and those graces so stirred up, increased and strengthened, as that they more and more die unto sin, and rise unto newness of life.*

The Confession also states that the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified; and they more and more are quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.<sup>47</sup>

In other words, due to one’s union with Christ and the Holy Spirit’s progressive work gradually to weaken and kill the various lusts which wage war against the members of one’s body, the true believer makes progress in gospel holiness.

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<sup>47</sup> *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter XIII, paragraph 1.

The implications for evangelistic preaching are obvious. So many today in our country are religious and have some sort of nominal relationship with a church. These people may firmly believe they are Christians. However, when you apply the Law directly to their hearts, minds and consciences by asking questions like, "Do you habitually lie? Do you regularly look at pornography? Are you fornicating with your girl friend?" then you are exposing their lack of gospel holiness. You must bear down on this theme, trusting the Holy Spirit to bring direct and profound conviction of sin which leads to heartfelt repentance.

And Christ's death also provides for our glorification. Paul, in seeking to prove to the Corinthians the resurrection of the dead, used Christ as the prime example. Knowing that He had in fact been raised, appearing to all the apostles and more than five hundred people at one time, Paul said, "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive," (1 Corinthians 15:20-22). Due to the fall into sin, all die, but all will be raised. The souls of those outside of Christ, upon their deaths, go directly to hell, a place of unutterable contempt and horror. The souls of those who die in Christ go immediately to heaven, what theologians call the intermediate state. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). They are conscious. They are with Jesus. It is a place of indescribable joy. As good as this is, it gets much better. They will receive glorified bodies upon Christ's return. In other words there will be a bodily resurrection of all the saints. Their natural bodies were sown perishable bodies but they will be raised imperishable ones. They were sown in dishonor but they will be raised in glory. They were sown in weakness but they will be raised in power. They were sown natural bodies but they

will be raised spiritual bodies (1 Corinthians 15:42-44). Berkhof puts it this way, "According to Scripture there will be a resurrection of the body, that is, not an entirely new creation, but a body that will be in a fundamental sense identical with the present body."<sup>48</sup> Our resurrected bodies will be very much like Jesus' resurrected body. He immediately looked different to the disciples because of the glory of His body, but they soon recognized Him.

When preaching, those who object to the existence of God by arguing that all the evil, suffering, and injustice in the world prove that God does not exist, you can counter by saying that the doctrine of glorification makes clear that He will wipe away every tear. He will sum up all things in Christ. The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that awaits us.

And those with frail, weak, diseased bodies, who are in Christ Jesus, can take great comfort to know they will receive glorified bodies, free from sickness, pain, weakness, and death. I remember preaching on this theme one time when a woman in our church with a Down's syndrome child came to me after the service with tears in her eyes, saying, "This means, then, that my daughter will be whole one day. Is that right?" I was able to say quite emphatically, "Yes. This is the great hope of everyone in Christ." Hallelujah!

To summarize, as one called to preach the unfathomable riches of Christ to people, you are to exalt God in the glory of His wondrous salvation. This mighty work of salvation—regeneration, expiation, propitiation, reconciliation, redemption, justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification is all of God. "No one can come to Me unless the

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<sup>48</sup> *Systematic Theology*, Louis Berkhof, page 722.

Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day,” (John 6:44). Paul declares that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, to the praise of the glory of His grace; that Christ redeemed us in His blood, granting us a magnificent inheritance, making us heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, all to the praise of the glory of His grace; that we are granted the Holy Spirit of promise, given as a pledge of our inheritance, to the praise of His glory (Ephesians 1:3-14). “Oh the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways,” (Romans 11:33). Indeed this is the manifold wisdom of God made known through the church to the rulers in high places (Ephesians 3:10). Eliphaz says that He does great and unsearchable things, wonders without number (Job 5:9). Elihu tells Job to stand by and consider the wonders of God (Job 37:14).

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, in speaking of what he calls the romance of preaching, hits on this glorious privilege of lifting up Christ by way of preaching. He writes, “. . . the romance of preaching! There is nothing like it. It is the greatest work in the world, the most thrilling, the most exciting, the most rewarding, and the most wonderful . . . especially when you feel that you have a message from God and are longing to give it to the people.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *Preaching and Preachers*, page 297.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THE HEART OF THE EVANGELISTIC PREACHER**

We have a definition of evangelistic preaching. I gave it in chapter one. Evangelistic preaching is to proclaim the whole counsel of God, focusing on the good news that Jesus Christ was crucified, buried, and was raised from the dead. It is to preach with complete dependence upon the Holy Spirit to bring conviction and conversion. It is to make clear the bigness of the true and living God, touching on His mighty attributes. It is to apply the Law of God to the conscience of the hearers, trusting the Holy Spirit to convince and convict them of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in ungodly ways, and of all the harsh things these ungodly sinners have spoken against God (Jude 15). It is to put forth in a glorious and winsome fashion the unfathomable riches of Christ, the great lover of sinners who gave Himself willingly for all His people. It is to lift up Jesus with great joy — His incarnation, suffering, death, humiliation, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation to the Father's right hand in glory. It is to preach for a verdict. People must be pierced in the heart by the convicting and regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, where they cry out, "What must I do?"

We have also studied the Holy Spirit's role in evangelistic preaching. He brings conviction of sin. He convinces the sinner of his guilt, condemnation, and powerlessness to save himself or to affect any change at all in his character or behavior. He convinces the sinner of God's wrath, that he will soon be a just recipient of it unless mercy and grace are given to him. The Holy Spirit also convinces the sinner of the efficacy of Christ's expiating, propitiating, and justifying death. He convinces the sinner that he must have saving faith which is a gift from God. He must move him to repentance, to turn from his sins and run to Christ for refuge.

He must convince the sinner that upon God's justifying work, sin's dominion, its rule and reign over him, is broken. He is a new creation in Christ. The old has passed away and the new has come. Everything has changed about him. And the Holy Spirit finally applies this great, redemptive work of Christ's death and resurrection by causing him to be born again to a living hope.

We also have studied what evangelistic preaching promotes. The evangelistic preacher must know his theology well. He must promote the doctrine of God and all His attributes. He must clearly put forth the doctrine of man's fall into sin as well as the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin. All are born rebellious sinners, and consequently we live as blind rebels, hell bound adulterers, and sons and daughters of the devil. After vividly portraying these sobering realities the evangelistic preacher then begins proclaiming the good news of the gospel. He preaches the doctrine of God's free mercy and grace in Christ Jesus. He makes clear the magnificent doctrine of Christ's person—His deity, humanity, incarnation, and temptation. Then he must also preach the doctrine of Christ's work and the efficacy of His blood. He must powerfully proclaim, illustrate, and apply the expiating, propitiating, reconciling, redeeming, justifying, adopting, sanctifying, and glorifying death of Jesus, the second person of the Godhead, the great lover of our souls.

But what should be the condition of his heart as he preaches the unfathomable riches of Christ? As an example, consider the great Presbyterian preacher, evangelist, and college president, Samuel Davies. He was born of Welsh descent in November 1723, at New Castle County, Pennsylvania. Davies was the only son of a godly mother who had him educated by Abel Morgan, a Baptist preacher. Later young Davies was a student at the Classical School run by William Robinson. He was converted around the age of fifteen, a few

years before the Great Awakening began in 1741. In 1740, just a year before that period of revival, Robinson, Davies' teacher, was ordained into the Presbyterian ministry and became a mighty instrument of God in revival preaching in the Middle Colonies. He made his way down the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia and across the state to Williamsburg, where God used him powerfully in four days of preaching in July 1743. He died in 1746 after only six years in the gospel ministry, leaving a legacy of great preaching that Davies and many others embraced. About the time Robinson left his school to preach, Davies moved to an informal theological college run by the Reverend Samuel Blair at Fagg's Manor. Since many in the Middle Colonies did not trust the education which ministers were receiving at Yale or Harvard, and because there was no college at the time in the Middle Colonies, men often trained for the ministry in what were pejoratively called "log colleges". Fagg's Manor was one of them. Davies' mother had left the Baptist Church when he was eleven, settling in with the growing Presbyterian movement of the 1730's. Subsequent to both that move and his own conversion, Davies heard and was profoundly affected by the preaching of Samuel Blair, who modeled a heart-searching, white-hot, Christ-centered, fervent preaching of the new birth that so marked the Great Awakening.

In February 1747, at the age of twenty-three, Davies was ordained into the gospel ministry. He was sent to Hanover, Virginia, just outside of Richmond, where he built upon the remarkable preaching ministry of William Robinson four years earlier. Virginia, at the time, claimed that the state church was the Church of England and strictly regulated all dissenters. Since almost everyone at the time belonged to a church, at least through baptism, there was a great deal of lukewarmness toward the Christian faith; and Samuel Davies was deeply burdened that men, women, and children would

enter eternity without giving serious consideration to the state of their souls. After preaching for several weeks in Hanover, Davies returned home to New Castle in August 1747 to find that both his young wife and unborn child had died suddenly. This deeply affected his preaching, driving home to him the brevity of life. Eleven months later he became the pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Hanover and his church quickly grew to over 300 families, including forty black, slave families. It seems that his congregation was almost exclusively landed gentry and black slaves. The Anglicans were not at all happy with Davies, accusing him of stealing sheep, but he always countered by saying that denominational affiliation meant nothing to him, that he was concerned about the salvation of people's souls. This burden took him throughout the state of Virginia preaching primarily to nominal churchgoers, calling them to search their hearts to see if they were lacking in true conversion.

Davies remarried in October 1748, making Jane Holt, from a well-to-do Williamsburg family, his wife. Jane's brother, John Holt, was the publisher of the *Virginia Gazette* and had many of Davies' sermons published.<sup>50</sup> Davies' ministry was interrupted for fourteen months, beginning in December 1753 when he and Gilbert Tennent traveled to England to solicit Christians for financial aid to build the College of New Jersey, Princeton. While there Tennent and Davies, though welcomed by George Whitefield into his home, chose deliberately not to be seen publicly with him. They knew Whitefield had both his admirers and detractors and they sought to stay out of the controversy he had ignited. Tennent and Davies were able to raise four thousand pounds, a huge sum of money in those days, to build the first

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<sup>50</sup> *Soli Deo Gloria*, a publisher of old Puritan and Reformed works, has reprinted three volumes of Davies' sermons and they ought to be required reading for any preacher, especially those learning to preach.

building at Princeton, Nassau Hall. The second President of Princeton, Aaron Burr, Sr., died in the fall of 1757 and his father-in-law Jonathan Edwards took over as President but also died in March 1758 from complications of a small pox inoculation. Shortly thereafter Davies was elected President of Princeton at the age of thirty-six. For years his health had been suspect, and he too died a year later at the age of thirty-seven.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones said that Davies was the greatest preacher this country has produced. John Angel James said that he came to understand the importance of earnest, awakening preaching through reading Davies' sermons. He said, "I have made the conversion of the impenitent the great end of my ministry." Young Patrick Henry attended the Forks Presbyterian Church in Virginia where Davies regularly preached. Though Henry's father was an Anglican, his mother was a Presbyterian and she regularly took her young son to hear Davies preach. Upon returning home from church, Patrick was made by his mother to recite the text and main points of Davies' sermons. He later declared Samuel Davies to be the greatest orator he had ever heard. No doubt that is not an empty remark from one of the greatest orators our country has produced. Henry, of course, was the author of "Give Me Liberty, Or Give Me Death," the speech that ignited the American Revolutionary War. No doubt Patrick Henry's ideas of religious liberty were learned by hearing Davies and also there can be no doubt than Henry was inspired by Davies' oratory.

Davies' sermons were written manuscripts that he took into the pulpit with him, and he reportedly spent thirty hours of preparation for each sermon. The three volumes of his sermons are profound. His method of preaching followed the Puritan style of expounding the text in the beginning of the sermon, and then making specific application, drawn from

the text. Because he preached largely to many who were at best nominal members of the Anglican Church, Davies focused on their tendency to assume too much about their status before God. Hence, in volume one of his sermons, several of his titles address this deadly presumption, “The Divine Authority And Sufficiency Of The Christian Religion,” “Sinners Entreated To Be Reconciled To God,” “The Nature And Universality Of Spiritual Death,” and “The Nature And Danger Of Making Light Of Christ And Salvation.”

What can you glean from Samuel Davies’ preaching that may be of practical help in your ministry? First, there is so little evangelistic preaching today, especially in the Reformed world. Thus we need Biblical models for it. It seems as though Reformed pastors have very few mentors of how Reformed evangelistic preaching ought to be practiced; and because we do not want to be charged with Arminianism we tend to shy away from it altogether. Furthermore, we tend wrongly to assume that most, if not all, who hear us on a Sunday morning are already Christians. This is a faulty assumption. Surely the plethora of discipline cases we have experienced in our churches and the numerous people who give up the faith should convince us that “not all who are of Israel, are Israel.” It also should be noted that most of the evangelistic preaching we hear today is rather shallow, failing to strike at the conscience and heart, failing to apply the law of God to both. Without the terrors of the Law, without having visited Mt. Sinai first, going to Mt. Calvary will seem unnecessary to most of our hearers.

Davies was at his best in appealing to the conscience, painting vivid pictures of his hearers’ lost condition, urging them to put away their sin and come to Christ for refuge. In “Sinners Entreated To Be Reconciled To God,” after listing several reasons why they ought to be reconciled and what this would entail, he then says, “Now the overture of peace is

as really made to you by the blessed God and His Son Jesus Christ, as if it were expressly proposed to you by an immediate voice from heaven. . . Therefore, however lightly you may make of a mere proposition of mine, can you disregard an overture from the God that made you, and the Savior that bought you with His blood! In which I am but the faint echo of their voice from heaven?"

This leads to a second benefit from Davies' preaching: It was thoroughly Calvinistic. He practically applied what Augustine said, "Lord, grant what Thou commandest, and command what Thou dost desire." Pelagius, of course, could not stomach Augustine's prayer, saying that surely God would not require something which man was unable to do. Of course we know that God's law, regardless of man's fall into sin which makes him unable to respond to the gospel, has not changed. Davies, the ever-faithful Calvinistic evangelist, called men and women to do the impossible, namely to repent and believe the gospel of Christ, to be reconciled to God. He knew the Holy Spirit must regenerate and he was thus totally dependent upon God's grace to be at work in his hearers. We see, therefore, in Davies an utter confidence in the simple preaching of the gospel.

This is the great need today in the world and in the church. We tend, do we not, to trust our own personalities and plans, acting as de facto Pelagians. Consequently we lack boldness in our preaching. We seem fearful of what the postmodern skeptic will think of it. We seem to lack confidence in the word of God, under the heart searching preaching of Christ crucified, to humble prideful man and draw him savingly to God. We lack the unction of the Spirit, and we thus are generally powerless to see conviction of sin leading to repentance and faith.

In the life and preaching of Samuel Davies there is a passion for the lost and an unbridled zeal to make Christ known to the nations. His sermons often stress the brevity of life and the reality of standing before the great Judge of all, who will pronounce a sentence of condemnation and judgment on the impenitent. Davies also had an extensive and highly effective ministry among African slaves in Virginia. This most loquacious and eloquent preacher, the greatest orator of the day, could speak effectively both to the highly literate, landed gentry and the poor, illiterate slaves. The unction or anointing of the Holy Spirit with which he spoke shattered their unbelief and broke through the ignorance of his hearers and gripped their hearts and souls. Do we not all need the same? Could this be true of us, regardless of the culture or educational standing of those who hear us? Can the unction of the Spirit break through the cultural barriers, pride, unbelief, and rebellion of people in your church, in your town? Preachers are to be the conscience of the nation. How shall we be effective in this calling?

How shall we gain the unction as Samuel Davies? Certainly we acknowledge the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit in these matters. God gives gifts to men as He wills, both in kind and in degree. We also acknowledge the day in which Davies lived was different from our own. He preached at the end of the Great Awakening in a nation that at least paid lip service to the authority of Scripture. Our day is very different in that regard. However, you ought not to presume that God is finished with your nation. Dare not embrace the present cold, worldly, and postmodern notion that all roads lead to God as the final word in your nation. By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century America was almost completely swamped in the philosophy of Voltaire and Rousseau that spawned the French Revolution. At the time, to confess faith in Christ was seen as the height of foolishness, something educated people did not do,



something only “Methodists” embraced. By the time Timothy Dwight became President of Yale in 1795 there were fewer than twenty Christians in the entire college. Yet God raised up mighty preachers of the gospel, in response to the prayers of godly men and women in Scotland and the American Colonies to usher in the Second Great Awakening. Men like Daniel Baker, Timothy Dwight, and Asahel Nettleton were used mightily of God to usher in the Second Great Awakening which began in 1792, one year after John Wesley’s death, and continued until at least 1863 in the Army of the Confederacy.

Are you preaching with an evangelistic passion? Are you assuming too much, assuming that all who hear you on Sunday mornings are already Christians? Do you expect people to be saved when you preach on the streets? Do you grieve when you see little or no fruit of conversions? Do you prepare your sermons and do you preach them with the lost in mind? Do you have confidence in the simple preaching of the gospel? Are you keeping short accounts with God? Are you allowing sin and unbelief to rob you of Holy Ghost power and unction in your preaching? Are you an empty vessel? Do you spend time each day, seeking the anointing of the Holy Spirit on your ministry? Do you urge your officers, staff, wife, children, church members, and fellow preachers to pray for your sermon preparation and delivery? If you are a pastor, do you go outside the confines of your church office and seek weekly opportunities to preach the gospel to the lost? Find a venue to do this. Find a street preacher who can bring you along and get you in front of people on the streets. Many street preachers I know would love to help you with this. It is so easy for pastors to go weeks without direct contact with lost people. This sounds strange to people who are not pastors, but you know this is true. We tend to have little time with unbelievers. The modern notion of ministry, all the administrative work and counseling, tends to mitigate

evangelistic outreach and zeal. And finally, do you have a regular prayer meeting at your church where you earnestly pray for the lost and for revival, where repentance for sin is encouraged, where people sense the grace of God to such a degree that they feel comfortable “confessing their sins to one another”?

So, what is the heart of the evangelistic preacher? Preaching is not teaching. You are not engaging in a lecture. You are not teaching a class. You are not giving out mundane information. You are proclaiming the excellencies of Christ who called you from darkness to light. Consider these seven qualities which ought to mark the life of every evangelistic preacher.

First, an evangelistic preacher must preach with solemnity. While on his way from Macedonia to Achaia at the end of his third missionary journey, the apostle Paul stopped near Ephesus at Miletus. He met with the elders there, knowing that was the last time he would see them. He reminded them of how he served the Lord with all humility and tears and trials which came upon him at the hands of the Jews. He told them that he never shrank back from declaring to them anything profitable, teaching them publicly and from house to house. He then told them that he had solemnly testified to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He knows not exactly what he will encounter when he gets to Jerusalem, except the Holy Spirit has solemnly testified to him in every city that bonds and afflictions were waiting for him. Having said this, however, Paul is rejoicing, for he does not consider his life of any account as dear to himself. The reason? So that he may finish the course and the ministry which he had received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:17-24). Luke tells us that when Silas and Timothy joined Paul, coming down from Macedonia to

Corinth, he began devoting himself completely to the word of the Lord, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ (Acts 18:5). We see a similar idea in Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus, when the rich man in Hades cries out in his anguish to Abraham, asking him to warn his five brothers so they will not also come to the place of torment. Paul says that preachers are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma of life to life (2 Corinthians 2:15-16).

While it is certainly true that preaching the gospel is a thrilling and romantic calling, as Lloyd-Jones puts it, it is nonetheless also true that it is a daunting task. While no man ever has an excuse for rejecting the knowledge of God and Christ the Savior, it is also true that when one hears the clear preaching of the gospel, he is held more accountable for the light he has received. This is what Paul means in 2 Corinthians 2:15-16. When you stand to herald the truth as it is in Jesus, you are emitting a fragrance. For those who are believers, who love to hear the preaching of the word, you are a sweet aroma, like roses in a garden on a warm June day. However to those who reject the gospel, who despise the Lord Jesus and the preaching of His gospel, your preaching is anathema to them. It is like the stench of decomposing flesh at an airliner crash site. They hate it. They mock it. They despise you. Why? They are like the strong man who fully guards his house. Consequently his possessions remain undisturbed. However when a stronger man comes in and begins to plunder his house, his possessions are disturbed and he begins to fight back, to try to defend his turf (Luke 11:18-23). When the gospel begins to prick the conscience of the unredeemed a sure sign you are getting to them is when they react so violently against the word they hear. This preaching also says that a continued rejection of the truth means the unbeliever is

storing up more and more wrath which eventually will be poured out to the utmost. His sentence of condemnation in hell is far worse because he has heard the gospel. No wonder Paul asks, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

In other words you are to preach with solemnity because you are addressing life and death issues. You are not lecturing about politics, sports, or economics. You are not a stand up comedy routine. You are proclaiming life and death, heaven and hell, eternal verities. While preaching with solemnity does not mean the preacher must have a stern countenance, never smile, or never crack jokes, it does mean that he preaches with a clear understanding that he will stand before God and give account of his life and words. He is never to be flippant, casual, ambivalent. His demeanor, nor his use of words, nor his dress, nor anything else is to detract from the clear preaching of Christ crucified.

Second, an evangelistic preacher must preach with joy. Joy is a recurring theme in Paul's letter to the Philippians. He says he was always offering prayer with joy (1:4). He says that he is rejoicing in his imprisonment because the gospel is going forth (1:18). He is convinced that he will remain and continue with them in their progress and joy in the faith (1:25). He asks them to make his joy complete by being of the same mind toward one another (2:2). He rejoices because he is being poured out as a drink offering and he encourages them in the same way to share their joy with him (2:17-18). He sends Epaphroditus to them all the more eagerly so that they will rejoice and he may be less concerned about them (2:28). He tells them to receive Epaphroditus with all joy (2:29). He tells them twice to rejoice in the Lord (3:1, 4:4), knowing that rejoicing is a safe guard for them and no trouble for him. He calls the Philippians his joy and crown (4:1). And he tells them that he has rejoiced in the Lord greatly because they have revived their concern for

him (4:10). James tells us to consider it all joy when we encounter various trials (James 1:2). Peter says that because we have received an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for us who are being protected by the power of God for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time, that we ought greatly to rejoice, that we can have joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of our faith, the salvation of our souls (1 Peter 1:4-6, 8,9). In referring to the great atoning work of the Lord Jesus, the writer to the Hebrews says that Jesus, for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2).

What is Biblical joy? The Greek word for joy *karas* means gladness. Joy is not happiness. One is happy when his child is born but he is not happy when the child dies. The same father, however, can be filled with joy in each of these circumstances. After all, James says, "Consider it all joy when you encounter various trials," when the hardships of life come out of nowhere to make life exceedingly sorrowful and difficult. Christian joy is a deep seated, profound peace and trust in God's promises and the hope that awaits us. That's why Paul could write so thoroughly about joy while in the Roman prison. James can tell us to be joyful when trials come because these produce endurance, making us perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. Peter could rejoice in the midst of trial because he was certain of an imperishable and undefiled inheritance, looking forward to the full salvation or deliverance of his soul in the presence of Jesus. That's why Jesus could suffer the pain and condemnation of Golgotha, knowing that He would justify His people and bear their iniquities, obtaining for them eternal life and the promise of His Father, that He would sit down at His right hand in glory. And even though Paul referred to himself, Apollos, and all preachers as those condemned to death, bond slaves, a

spectacle (the Greek word is theatre) to the world, fools (the Greek word is moron), the scum of the earth and the dregs of all things, as those who are roughly treated, hungry, and thirsty, he is able to rejoice nonetheless.

Why? How possibly can a preacher rejoice? Often you are mocked. Perhaps you face severe trials in your personal life and you barely can make ends meet. Perhaps family members think you have lost your mind in preaching. They wonder why you don't get a real job and provide more abundantly for your wife and children. You are able to rejoice, to live with a calm assurance of the fulfillment in due time of God's magnificent promises because you know you are called by God to preach. You are like Jeremiah who wanted to quit but could not because the word was like a fire in his bones and he had grown weary of holding it in. Your calling as a gospel preacher is supernatural and you know you must preach. Do so, therefore, my friends with great joy, looking to the day you will hear your Savior say, "Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," (Matthew 25:34).

Third, an evangelistic preacher must preach with dependence upon the Lord. Even Jesus, the second person of the Godhead, very God of very God, God incarnate, who had lived eternally with His Father, who lived perfectly as a man on earth, did not begin His early ministry at the age of thirty until the Holy Spirit had come upon Him at His baptism. Though the disciples had been with Jesus three years, had been trained and discipled by Him, had been given apostolic authority, had already been involved in preaching, teaching, evangelizing, casting out demons, healing people, and raising others from the dead, they nonetheless were told by Jesus to remain in the city until they had been clothed with power from on high. Jesus told them, just prior to His suffering on Calvary, "I am the vine, you are the branches;

he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing,” (John 15:5). Peter, the one who denied Jesus three times, fifty days later preached with great boldness and efficacy, seeing three thousand converted in one day. Paul, one of the greatest and most intelligent men who has ever lived, who was well schooled in rhetoric and philosophy and Pharisaical Judaism, nonetheless was able to say, “I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling and my message and my preaching was not in persuasive words of wisdom but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men but on the power of God,” (1 Corinthians 2:4-5).

Indeed, who is sufficient for these things? Man is dead in his trespasses and sins. He does not seek for God. He is blind. He does not have the mind of Christ. The gospel is foolishness to him. In an increasingly secular, post everything world where people brazenly embrace atheism, for you to speak of the Bible as the inspired, inerrant, and infallible word of God, to speak of God being the One who created all things out of nothing, who sent His Son born of a virgin, who suffered and died and was raised again from the dead, that repentance and faith in this one man could redeem people from their sins and give them eternal life, seems like a fairy tale. No one wants to hear they are sinners, justly deserving God’s wrath and vengeance. No one wants to hear that Jesus is the only way to the Father, that people actually go to hell, even good people, because they reject the only Savior. This is just too much to ask of intelligent, well educated, prosperous people who think life is all about the latest vacation in Europe, the latest wine, or chic restaurant.

Who are you kidding? Your good looks, good personality, charm, money, style, logic, intelligence, or scheme cannot

save or convince anyone. All outside of Christ, no matter who they are or what they have accomplished, are still wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. You, my friend, are absolutely, completely dependent upon the Holy Spirit to enlighten your mind, enlarge your heart, and loosen your tongue. Without the Spirit's presence, power, and regenerating work you are helpless, like one commanding a corpse to rise up out of the casket in front of the church. Impossible! You are like the vision Ezekiel received from the Lord, "Prophecy to these bones." It is laughable. Only God can raise the dead and He does so through the weak preacher who acknowledges his complete and utter dependence upon the Spirit's anointing.

Fourth, an evangelistic preacher must preach with boldness. After Peter and John had suffered at the hands of the Sanhedrin, as the church gathered for prayer and rejoicing, the place where they gathered was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of Christ with boldness (Acts 4:31). The former coward Peter spoke with great boldness at Pentecost, before the Jews at the temple, and before the tribunal of the Sanhedrin. Stephen spoke with boldness, calling the Jewish leaders stiff necked, uncircumcised in heart and ears, those who always resist the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51). Paul spent time in Iconium speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, testifying to the word of God's grace (Acts 14:3). Paul spoke boldly to the demons inside the slave girl, commanding them to come out of her (Acts 16:18). Paul boldly wrote his severe letter to the church at Corinth and was able to rejoice when they turned back toward his ministry (2 Corinthians 7:8). Paul, while in prison, asked the Ephesians to pray for him, that utterance may be given to him in the opening of his mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which he was an ambassador in chains (Ephesians 6:18-20). He strongly exhorted Timothy to preach the word in season and



out of season (2 Timothy 4:1-5). And while Paul was in great fear and uncertainty the Lord Jesus appeared to him at Corinth, “Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city,” (Acts 18:10). The Greek word used for boldness in Acts 4:31, *parresias*, means free and fearless confidence, cheerful courage, boldness, assurance.<sup>51</sup> Peter and John were observed as confident or bold men, *parresias*, mere fisherman, untrained or common men (the Greek word is idiot) who had been with Jesus. When told by the Sanhedrin to quit preaching in the name of Jesus they replied, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard,” (Acts 4:13,19,20).

When you have seen and heard what Peter and John saw and heard, namely the glory of God in the face of Jesus, coming upon you, rescuing you, delivering you from darkness, cleansing you, giving you new life, pardoning all your sins, giving you a calling and the equipping of the Holy Spirit to carry out that calling, then you cannot help but speak boldly the gospel of the Lord Jesus. You cannot help but have the divine swagger like the apostles had. By this we do not mean vain, fleshly confidence. There is nothing natural about this kind of swagger. It comes upon one who is walking in the light, who is enjoying fellowship with Jesus and His brethren, who is sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, who is quick to confess his sins, claim his cleansing by the blood of Jesus, to seek the empowering and anointing of the Spirit. A preacher with boldness shows kindness and respect to all, but he also does not fear anyone. He is bold as a lion and gentle as a dove.

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<sup>51</sup> Thayer, page 491.

Fifth, the evangelistic preacher preaches with humility. Simply put—humility is keeping forever in mind that God is all powerful and we are not. James tells us that God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble. We therefore are to submit to God (James 4:6,7). A few verses later James tells us to humble ourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt us (James 4:10). After stating the same thing, that God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble, Peter therefore commands us, saying, “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,” (1 Peter 5:5,6). After the parable of the laborers in the vineyard where Jesus concludes that the first shall be last, and the last first, the mother of James and John asks Jesus if her two sons can have the privilege of sitting at both His right and left hand. Jesus tells her that that decision is left to His Father in heaven. The other disciples are indignant concerning her request and Jesus rebukes them all by saying, “. . . but whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave,” (Matthew 20:20-27). When the disciples were arguing amongst themselves about who was greatest in the Kingdom of God, Jesus rebuked them, saying, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called Benefactors. But it is not this way with you but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant. For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the One who serves,” (Luke 22:24-27). When John the Baptist’s disciples told him that his own disciples were now following Jesus, John humbly responds, “A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven.” John goes on to say that he is not the Christ, but that he was sent ahead of Him to announce

Him. John was content with his place in God's plan of redemption and he summarizes all he says by saying, "He must increase and I must decrease," (John 3:25-30).

Those who truly understand that salvation is completely of the Lord, who realize that they were stiff necked, uncircumcised in heart and ears, always resisting the Holy Spirit, who if they had heard Stephen say those things to them, know they too would have stoned him to death, know there is never any place for pride. We of all people should be the most humble, the most gracious. However our fleshly tendency, is it not, is to lord our authority over our wives and children, to want the bigger church, more notoriety, the accolades from others. We tend to feel rejected, overlooked when we are not invited to preach at a particular church or conference. When other preachers are gaining a bigger hearing than us, we tend to feel slighted, perhaps even depressed. My wife has noticed how far too often, when sitting down to eat a meal with friends, I fail to wait for the hostess to begin eating first. I just dive right into the meal. Not good. When I am off preaching somewhere and staying with a family, she asks if I ever offer to wash the dishes. She reminds me of the necessity of writing thank you notes to those who show kindness to me. Too often I have failed in these things. While attending a Christmas program at Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama, I noticed after the program, as hundreds of people were still standing in the sanctuary talking with each other, that Dr. Frank Barker, the eighty year old pastor emeritus of the church, was on the platform, assisting in replacing furniture in its right place. Stories of Dr. Barker's humble service are legendary. One of my favorites is that of a rather troubled, self-absorbed woman who had recently begun visiting the church. She was a pretty demanding person, and she called Dr. Barker, who at the time was the Senior Pastor of the four thousand member church. She was going out of town for the

weekend and wanted to know if Frank and Barbara would keep her dog while she was gone. Frank said, "Of course."

Paul told the Philippians to do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind they were to regard one another as more important than themselves, they were not merely to look out for their own personal interests, but also for the interests of others (Philippians 2:3-4). Peter told husbands to live with their wives in an understanding way, because their wives are weaker vessels, to show them honor as fellow heirs of the grace of life. To fail here could cause their prayers to be hindered (1 Peter 3:5,6).

Humility will manifest itself in the tone of the evangelistic preacher. To be sure he is to preach the Law of God and consequent guilt and condemnation, and he is to warn people of hell. To speak of these things in humility means the preacher is keenly aware that without the intervention of divine mercy, he too would still be under the wrath of God. So the preacher is like a beggar showing another beggar where to find bread. His tone is to be one of genuine love and compassion for the people, weeping, if not literally, certainly figuratively for those who reject the good news of the gospel.

Sixth, the evangelistic preacher carries out his ministry in Biblical love. In 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 the apostle Paul is writing about the spiritual gifts given by the Spirit to the church. He says that there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. From there Paul goes on to say that to each believer is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:4-7). After listing the various gifts and how the greater and lesser gifts all are to work together in the body of Christ, he urges the Corinthians

earnestly to desire the greater gifts, saying, “And I show you a still more excellent way,” (v.31). In chapter 14 Paul tells them to desire earnestly spiritual gifts, especially that they may prophesy (v.1). In the midst of all this he makes clear this more excellent way. He says:

*If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).*

In other words, we may have remarkable and measurable gifts which have been profitable in the kingdom of God, but if we do not have love then such gifts are for nought. These gifts are worthless. Good for nothing.

So the evangelistic preacher must preach with the love of Christ welling up in his heart. The love of Jesus must be in his eyes, on his face, in his tone of voice, in all his actions. And what does this love look like? You know the passage well:

*Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a).*

There are, of course, many applications to this definition of love, but consider one for you as an evangelistic preacher.

As you are preparing to preach some Sunday morning or at a sporting event and you are getting your mind and heart in the right frame through prayer and meditation, and one of your young children needs a diaper change, or one of your teenage children needs a few minutes of your time, or your wife asks you to make up the bed, or your wife is really stressed over the fast pace of getting kids to school; then the patient thing to do is to drop what you are doing and direct your attention to your family's needs. When an unbeliever mocks you on the street as you preach or hand out tracts then kindly smile at the person and say, "God bless you. May I pray for you?" When you are preaching and it becomes clear to you that the new guy who has joined your team is remarkably gifted and others are telling him so, sort of leaving you in the background, then the loving thing to do is to rejoice with him at God's blessing on his life and ministry. Pastor, when you were contacted by a larger church for their vacant Senior Pastor role and it came down to you and one other man, and they chose him, the loving thing to do is to resist the temptation to be jealous and then pray for his success. If you have a time of great freedom and power in preaching and people are being converted through your ministry, the loving thing to do is to not brag, as though you are responsible for what just happened. The loving thing is to resist the temptation to be arrogant, to think you now deserve "props" from other believers, that you ought to deserve special treatment, or more attention from others.

This kind of love does not act unbecomingly. It never "throws anyone under the bus", especially another brother in the Lord. The evangelist, in this regard, must be above reproach with money and women. He must never give anyone any reason to blaspheme God by his own actions and irresponsibility. He is careful with his speech. He never uses questionable words while preaching and he steadfastly turns away from filthiness, silly talk, and coarse jesting, which are

never fitting. He never participates in the unfruitful deeds of darkness. To go further, the evangelistic preacher must never seek his own desires above those of his wife, children, pastor, or fellow preacher. He waits until others have their food before he serves himself. He allows others to preach before him, to have the better venues for preaching. And he is never provoked. We all know how people on the streets often seek to anger us, to provoke us to argue with them, or to hit them, to curse at them. There is never any place for this. And when a policeman comes to us while we are preaching, answering a complaint from someone who was just walking by, even when we are within our rights to be in that particular public place, we must not act in any way which would impugn the name of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ and His gospel.

And when someone in your church has been causing you trouble, maligning you, raising up opposition to your ministry, perhaps even using social media with all manner of unfounded, harmful accusations, you are never to take into account the wrong being suffered. You are never to hold it against the person. You are never to take your own revenge. If your enemy is hungry you are to feed him. If he is thirsty you are to give him something to drink. You are never to pay back evil for evil to anyone. If possible you are to be at peace with everyone. You are to release that person of his debt to you. You are to put all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice away from you. You are to be kind and tender-hearted, forgiving the person, just as God in Christ Jesus has forgiven you.

I remember a particular colleague in ministry who caused me great harm, in a particularly embarrassing fashion. For a number of years, every time I thought about what he had done, I could feel anger and resentment welling up in my heart. I finally, very consciously and deliberately said to God,

“I forgive him for what he did to me. I release him of the debt he owes me.” I was able to do that, of course, because Christ has given me new life and forgiven me all my transgressions against Him. Every now and then my flesh and the devil bring the man and what he did to my mind, but I am always able now to say, “Wait a minute. I have released him of his debt. He no longer owes me. I have forgiven him. There is no longer any reason to dwell on that event.”

And you are not to rejoice in unrighteousness. Instead you are to rejoice in the truth. We know the wages of sin is death. We know that whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. Eventually a time comes when one who has wronged you suffers the consequences of that or some other wrong. The fleshly tendency for us is to rejoice in the hardship that person is facing. We may be tempted to say, “Well, I see that he received what was coming to him.” After David had suffered for years under the relentless and unfounded pursuit of Saul to kill him, upon Saul’s death David celebrated his life in a funeral dirge, “O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you luxuriously in scarlet, who put ornaments of gold on your apparel. How have the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle,” (2 Samuel 1:24,25). You are never to rejoice in the demise of your enemies. In discussing Judas’ death after his betrayal of Jesus, after he committed suicide, the apostles referred to him as one who had gone aside to his own place (Acts 1:25). Instead, love means that you find things in your enemy’s life which are noteworthy, admirable. Again we see it with David celebrating Saul’s magnanimity to Israel. And Paul, near the end of his life, while in the Roman prison, sends greetings to the Colossians from Demas (Colossians 4:14); but at pretty much the same time Paul told Timothy that Demas had left him for this present world (2 Timothy 4:10). There was no evidence of a judgmental tone in his letter to Timothy.



Though no doubt heart broken, Paul still took the high road and commended Demas as best he could.

And love finally means that you bear all things, believe all things, hope all things and endure all things. Love never fails, no matter what has happened. Let's say you have a good friend in ministry who is married to a dear woman and they have four children. You begin to hear that he had a brief adulterous affair, which he has vehemently denied. The rumors persist however. You choose to bear his burdens with him. You choose to support him and defend him against his detractors. You choose to believe the very best about him. You cannot imagine him falling into such devastating folly. The rumors continue and then you hear that a series of condemning e mails and text messages have surfaced. You have not read them but you still choose to believe the best about your friend. After all, he told you he is innocent of all these accusations. But finally the hard evidence is unmistakable. Your friend in fact is guilty. He lied to you. He has cut you off from any interaction with him. But in love you choose to endure the defamation of his character when everyone else has deserted him. You do not condone any of his sin, but you choose to stand by your friend as he lives out the consequences of his actions. Your love for your friend bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. It never fails, no matter what he has done. This is the of love every evangelist needs if he is to live for the Lord Jesus and lift Him up in preaching.

And seventh, an evangelistic preacher must preach with power. Jesus told His disciples to preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem. He also told them to remain in the city until they were clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:49). Just prior to His ascension, the risen Christ said to His apostles, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you," (Acts

1:8). Paul told the Corinthians that the word of the cross was to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. He says that he determined to know nothing among them but Christ Jesus and Him crucified, that he was with them in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling; that their faith would not rest on the wisdom of men but on the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18, 2:4,5). He told the Romans that he was not ashamed of the gospel of God because it is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes (Romans 1:16). He reminded the Thessalonians that the gospel he preached did not come in word only, but in power, in the Holy Spirit, and with full conviction (1 Thessalonians 1:5). The Greek word translated power is *dunamis*, from which we get our word dynamite. Only the power of God made manifest in the Holy Spirit's convicting, regenerating, converting, justifying, and sanctifying work can bring a dead, recalcitrant, hard-hearted, unbelieving, stiff-necked sinner to new life. As an evangelistic preacher you must be keenly aware, at all times, of your weakness, frailty, and powerlessness to effect true change in anyone. Indeed you are like Ezekiel in the valley of dry bones, preaching to raise the bones to new life. Seeing people converted and saved today is no more difficult than it was to raise bones to natural life.

So, go forth my friends, in the power of the Holy Spirit, believing that God will use you as an instrument in His mighty hand. Seek Him, my friends. Go into His sanctuary and see there His power and glory. Preach with solemnity, joy, dependence, boldness, humility, love, and power.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **EVANGELISTIC PREACHING, A CATALYST FOR CHANGE**

John Wesley<sup>52</sup> was born four months before Jonathan Edwards in 1703 and outlived him by more than thirty years, having died in 1791, three months short of his eighty-eighth birthday. For forty years he traveled to his preaching destinations on horseback, covering over 250,000 miles, averaging at least 20 miles per day. He read on horseback and composed thousands of letters that way as well. He preached 42,000 sermons and wrote more than 200 books on a variety of subjects including Biblical commentaries, gospel tracts, and histories of the Roman Empire and England. He wrote books on health, physics, and logic. He wrote grammars for Hebrew, Greek, French, and English, and he wrote an excellent English dictionary. His collected works are in thirty-two volumes. He was as comfortable in the Greek New Testament as he was his English Bible. He at one point had seven hundred Methodist preachers under his charge. Through the writing and selling of his books John Wesley made, in 2016 U.S. dollars, \$2.8 million per year and lived on the equivalent of \$60,000 annually. In 1751, at the age of forty-eight he married his nurse, Mary Vazeille. At the time he said that he saw no reason to alter his lifestyle one bit, that he would continue his itinerant preaching ministry and give away almost all of his money. There can be little surprise that his marriage was a disaster. His wife finally left him after twenty years. John Wesley stood 5 feet, two inches tall and weighed one hundred and twenty pounds, and though he had several severe illnesses, including

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<sup>52</sup> Much of this biographical information comes from Basil Miller's biography entitled *John Wesley*, published by Bethany House.

tuberculosis, he worked hard, traveling and preaching until the very end of his life. He was autocratic (it was his way or the highway), opinionated (he wrote a scathing rebuke of the American colonies in their quest for independence), and an inveterate Arminian (though J.I. Packer says he freely offered the gospel like a Calvinist).

What was it that drove John Wesley? How did he maintain his remarkable work load for so long? How was it that God used him so mightily in revival? There can be no doubt that his remarkable mother, Susannah Wesley, was a powerful influence on his life. Susannah's father, Dr. Annesley, was a leading Puritan preacher in English Non-conformity, who taught his daughter Greek, Hebrew, and French. She read the early church fathers and was conversant on the leading metaphysical issues of her day. She birthed nineteen children (nine died before adulthood) and found time to spend one hour per week with each child. She homeschooled all her children until they were old enough to go off to boarding school. Her husband, Samuel Wesley, was a preacher in the Anglican Church at Epworth who could not stay out of debt and consequently had several stints in debtor's prison. He was seldom at home, often conjuring up reasons why he needed to be in London on church business. On one occasion he left home for several months because when praying for God's blessing on William of Orange as King of England, Susannah refused to say, "Amen," thinking William was not a legitimate heir to the throne. While Samuel was away on church business Susannah began Sunday afternoon sessions at their modest home where she read a sermon and made comments. She was so effective that people from the community began attending, swelling her audience to several hundred. She divided them into small groups, or classes and John later remembered this, using it as a model for the small groups which made his ministry so powerfully effective.

Charles Wesley once said that there were true gospel ministers on each side of his family for at least a thousand years. Perhaps that was an exaggeration but clearly their grandfathers and great-grandfathers were Puritan preachers. So John and Charles were reared in a God fearing home where morning and evening family devotional times were observed daily. John learned from his mother to discipline his appetites and use of time from a very early age.

At the age of five, John Wesley was mistakenly left in their house at Epworth when a fire raged through it. Susannah had thought all her children were safely out of the burning house, but then realized she had miscounted. John, or Jackie as he was then called, was in an upstairs bedroom. One of the neighbors stood on the shoulders of another and was able to reach Jackie, bringing him to safety, just as the house collapsed. John never forgot the incident, saying that he was a brand plucked from the burning. He believed, therefore, that God's hand was on his life, and Susannah always encouraged that notion.

John Wesley's conversion is well known. It is important, however, to remember that prior to it John was zealous for God, that he was earnestly seeking to serve Him in Georgia, both at Savannah and Frederica Island (now called St. Simons Island). He also served a small congregation near Oxford for a while. But he had no assurance of salvation and the Moravians played a wonderful role in bringing him to understand that salvation was by the grace of God through faith alone. After his failure in Georgia, and his return to London where he was hearing of the remarkable preaching ministry of his good friend, George Whitefield, Wesley's heart was strangely warmed at Aldersgate while the Holy Club was reading the preface to Martin Luther's *Commentary on Romans*. From that time onward, having

assurance of his salvation and believing in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, Wesley went forth with the gospel for another fifty-three years.

There can be no doubt that John Wesley's usefulness in Christ's kingdom was a remarkable evidence of God's providence. He was wonderfully gifted as a leader, organizer, writer, and preacher, possessing an indomitable will. Having said that, however, there are earthly reasons for his usefulness, and we ought to focus on a few of them, things which will challenge us to greater usefulness in Christ's kingdom as evangelistic preachers. How was Wesley and his preaching a catalyst for change in England?

When asked one time how he expected Methodism to survive after his death, John Wesley had this to say, "The Methodists must take heed of their doctrine, their experience, their practice, and their disciplines. If they attend their doctrines only, they will make the people Antinomians; if to the experiential part of religion only, they will make them enthusiasts (our modern word would be mindless fanatics); if to the practical part only, they will make them Pharisees; and if they do not attend to their discipline, they will be like persons who bestow much pains in cultivating their gardens, and put no fence round it to save it from the wild boars of the forest."

Let's look at this statement in some detail and apply it to our present situation in the American, evangelical church. The four components Wesley mentions, to insure the progress of Methodism, kept in proper balance, are doctrine, experience, practice, and discipline. By these he means theological accuracy and fidelity, personal and heartfelt experience of doctrine, the practical application of said doctrine, and spiritual disciplines which subdue the flesh. Our American church history is replete with mighty movements of God,

coupled with a drift into theological liberalism. The Fundamentalist, Modernist controversy of the 1920's did much to polarize the church. There can be no doubt that striving to maintain theological and Biblical integrity was a necessary battle. We have a long history of taking pains to maintain doctrinal fidelity, but sometimes we can take this too far. Wesley attended several General Assembly meetings of the Kirk of Scotland and noted their "desire for controversy on doctrinal points". Sometimes we too, who take our theology seriously, can be overcome with pride and a combative spirit. My brethren, these things ought not to be.

On the surface it may seem that we in the evangelical church are still maintaining our doctrinal fidelity. After all, it is rare to find evangelical pastors who deny the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. These men would not deny the cardinal doctrines of Scripture—justification by faith alone, the exclusivity of Christ, Christ as the God-Man, and Christ's atoning death. Nor would they deny the reality and significance of Christ's resurrection. Having said this, however, we do have a problem with the very thing Wesley warned would happen if Methodism lost her doctrinal integrity—namely the problem of Antinomianism. Great Christian leaders of the past—men like Charles Hodge, J. Gresham Machen, Billy Graham, and Jim Elliot—after a night of preaching, would never have dreamed of capping off the night with a few drinks at a cocktail lounge. They would never return to their hotel rooms and watch lascivious television programming. They would never demand the salaries that many untested and inexperienced men today are demanding and receiving from their churches. When starting Briarwood Presbyterian Church in 1960 in Birmingham, AL, Frank Barker would never have gone to his Presbytery and asked for money to fund events with beer and cocktails in an attempt to reach unbelievers. In a desire to connect with lost people, these men would never have

used swear words. They certainly would never use such words from the pulpit. All of these things are being done today in evangelical churches in America. We have a problem with Antinomianism and we, of course, communicate this damning heresy by word and deed to people in our congregations. Is there little wonder we are seeing so little gospel, societal transformation in evangelical churches!

Wesley said that Methodism would not last if they focused only on experience, that it would lead to fanaticism. Well, we certainly don't have to worry about this one. Most evangelicals are not in danger of becoming wild eyed, crazy charismatics, but here we do see the root of a serious problem we do have. Some of us in evangelicalism are so doctrinally tight that we tend to not allow our doctrine to move from our minds into our hearts. By and large we still attract middle class, well educated, Anglo, professional types to our churches. We tend to attract those already predisposed to conservative values, people who watch Fox News instead of MSNBC or CNN. We seldom see the unwashed peoples of our communities attend our churches. This is not easy to accomplish. A church's style of worship and location in an affluent community make it very difficult for some people to enter our world. Your church's leadership will need constantly to discuss this. The inherent danger in my strong Reformed theological tradition is to view doctrine as a nice hobby, a noble intellectual pursuit. Iain Murray's biography on Martyn Lloyd-Jones (ML-J) reports that once ML-J preached in Holland, and afterward many of the ministers took out their pipes and discussed theology in a merely academic fashion. ML-J was stunned by this response to the glories of the gospel. Are we not guilty of the same thing! Consequently we are a tame movement. The devil is probably not too concerned about the American



evangelical church, generally speaking. Certainly there are some wonderful exceptions.

Then Wesley warned that holding only to the application of their doctrine, without maintaining a balance of doctrinal integrity and experiential religion, would result in them becoming Pharisaical. This seems not to be as big a problem as it was twenty or thirty years ago. Perhaps this will serve to illustrate the point within the Reformed and Evangelical branch of the church. Back then with the shift from a more broadly evangelical position held by men who began the Presbyterian Church in America (my own denomination), to a more distinctively Reformed position led by men like Rushdooney, Bahnsen, Morecraft, Sproul, et al<sup>53</sup> we began to find churches using modern day shibboleths. Badges of orthodoxy like embracing paedocommunion (infants or small children taking communion), advocating membership in the *Southern League*, disavowing the *Four Spiritual Laws*, requiring parents to place their children only in Christian schools and colleges, and alternately condemning or supporting *Operation Rescue* all determined one's Reformed pedigree. And with the passing of the Auburn Avenue theology and the new perspective on Paul losing strength, we seem to have largely overcome Pharisaism. But have we? Didn't Jesus take the Pharisees to task for narrowing the commands in Matthew 5? They thought they were righteous because they had not committed murder or adultery, but Jesus told them they were guilty of both if they had anger or lust in their hearts. We all know men in the

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<sup>53</sup> Rushdooney, Bahnsen, and Morecraft may be unknown to many of you but they were major architects of thought in the 1970's within the Reformed and Presbyterian world. Forgive me for focusing in on this branch of the church, but I know this one far better than I do other branches of evangelicalism.

ministry who outwardly have held high standards of Biblical holiness, but whom we later discover were in adulterous affairs or using their office computer to browse pornographic websites instead of preparing Christ exalting sermons. Biblical holiness, not mere outward conformity to Biblical standards, is still the great need for gospel preachers.

And finally, Wesley was concerned that a lack of spiritual discipline would destroy the Methodist movement, likening it to one who works hard in his garden but refuses to place a fence around it, inviting wild boars to consume the fruit of his labors. This, I suggest, is a serious problem within the evangelical church of the twenty-first century. How many evangelical pastors can honestly say they spend at least one hour per day in personal devotional reading and prayer? How many of our men can say they actively and intentionally share the gospel with people each week? How many of our men eat too much, drink too much, sleep too much, work too little? How many are grossly overweight and in poor physical condition? How many can say they are disciplined and prudent in the use of their money? How many are in serious financial debt, failing to live within their means? How many actually tithe their incomes back to their church? How many have a rigid schedule of work which includes regular office hours, pastoral visitation, and evangelistic work? How many view themselves as the CEO of their local corporation and approach ministry as though they are running a multi-million dollar company? How many take too much time off playing golf or pursuing some other hobby?

Then there is the rampant problem of marital infidelity and pornography within the evangelical church! I know it is a problem everywhere, but I am talking about the church, the bride of Christ, the people of God for whom Christ shed His blood. And then are we not guilty of viewing our ministries as merely careers, looking for the next best opportunity to get

more money and a larger church, to gain prestige in the eyes of those whom we respect? Whatever happened to the sheer discipline of principled obedience?

Brethren, we must repent. We must repent of laxity in doctrine, of disdain for experiential religion, of the pride of Pharisaism, and of our tendency to confuse spiritual discipline with legalism. Can we not maintain a Biblical balance between all four? If we do not, then surely we will go the way of Methodism which today is a shell of what it was two hundred years ago.

Another way of addressing disciplined obedience in the life of the preacher is to pursue, what I call, a personal inquisition of the heart. Solomon says, "Watch over your own heart with diligence, for from it flows the springs of life," (Proverbs 4:23). I have known men who began well, who began their careers and families with a steadfast commitment to honor God, to be faithful to their wives and children, and to keep a lid on their fleshly desires. Sadly, many of those men, as their careers wind down and they move into their retirement years are divorced, estranged from their children, and giving little evidence of the commitment to Christ they so long ago professed. I have often wondered, if asked to preach their funerals, what I would say. Would I tell their loved ones and friends, "Yes, I know he was a Christian and I can give you Biblical assurance that he is now with Jesus." Would I be able to say that?

What went wrong? How did this happen? And what can I say to exhort you so that the same does not happen to you, so that you finish your race well without bringing shame to Christ, your family, or yourself? Solomon is instructing his son on how to live in the midst of a plethora of temptations, not the least of which are lurid women and bad friends.

Within this context he tells his son what he must do, how he must do it, and what results from it. Note first of all his instruction. “My son, watch over your own heart.” By *heart* he means the very citadel of his soul, the gateway to the rest of his body. A citadel is a military fortress which serves to protect an army and the people they serve. We know the heart is key to Biblical holiness from what follows in the succeeding verses where Solomon speaks of the eyes, the mouth, and the feet, calling us to discipline these members of our bodies, something Paul also told the Romans to do (Romans 6:12-13). Jesus told us to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Matthew 22:37). Joel says, “Rend your hearts, and not your garments,” (Joel 2:13). David says, “Thy word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee,” (Psalm 119:11).

To watch over one’s heart is to pursue a personal inquisition of the heart. David asked God to search him, to know his heart, to try him and know his anxious thoughts, to see if there is any hurtful way in him, and to lead him in the everlasting way (Psalm 139:23-24). And in order to pursue this personal inquisition of the heart you must know yourself well—your sinful proclivities, your patterns of recurring sin, those things that seem constantly to bring you down. A recovering alcoholic knows he cannot be around alcohol or anyone who drinks. He must stay away from them. A man who is tempted to sexual sin while on business trips must ask his friends to pray for him, even to check in with him each night in his hotel room, or if possible and practical to take his wife with him. A man tempted to spend money frivolously learns that he cannot carry a credit card with him, except perhaps his business credit card, that he must pay cash for only what he needs.

And how can you guard your heart, the citadel of your soul? Solomon says we do it with all diligence. I suggest three

things, the first of which I have just mentioned. First, you must nightly pursue a personal inquisition of the soul. By this I mean, at the end of the day, as you prepare for bed that night, ask yourself a series of questions like these—“how have I sinned in my speech today, how have I sinned in my thoughts, what have I done contrary to God’s law, what are the deep seated idols that manifest themselves in sinful values, words, and deeds?” And when the Holy Spirit shows you your sin, be quick to humble yourself, to confess it as sin, to ask Jesus for His grace and holiness, and once again to claim Christ’s mercy and renewal. Second, you must daily pursue a personal visitation of the Holy Spirit. Paul tells us to not quench the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19), to not grieve the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30), and to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). Just as a man who offends his wife with unkind speech finds a wall of separation between them, so our sin breaks fellowship with God (Isaiah 59:1-2, Psalm 66:18). You are still married and you still love your wife when there is tension, but you nonetheless know things “just aren’t right.” And so it is with God and your sin. Your sin brings a degree of separation from Him which can lead to a lack of power over sin, a decrease in passion for Christ and His kingdom, and a downgrade of purity in thought, word, and deed. So each day, when you detect that God is far away from you, when you sense dryness or coldness to the things of God, then be very quick to repent, to ask for the Spirit’s filling.

And third, you must regularly pursue personal holiness, for without this you will not see God (Hebrews 12:14). It is wonderfully and gloriously true that no one can snatch the believer from God’s hand (John 10:28-29), that nothing will separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39), that we are born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, that we will receive an inheritance that will not fade away (1

Peter 1:3-4). But it is also true that one who goes on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth will find that there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain, terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire that will consume God's adversaries; that while one who sets aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses, so one will incur a stricter judgment who tramples underfoot the Son of God, who ignores the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and who insults the Spirit of grace, for it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:26-31).

This means, my dear friend, that you should ask God to keep you from presumptuous sins (Psalm 19:13). Do not presume upon God's grace. You are being presumptuous in your sin when you have no remorse, no repentance, and no change in behavior. Your decision for Christ, your emotional experience, your knowledge of God and salvation may not mean anything. "You believe that God is one. You do well, but the demons also believe and tremble," (James 2:19). Well, then, how can you know that you are a true Christian? How can you be sure that you will finish the race well? A seldom discussed, but vital principle is that your assurance of salvation goes up or down with your obedience. In 1 John 3:17-22 the Apostle says, "If any among you has the world's goods and sees a brother in need and closes his heart to him, then how can the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us love, not in word or tongue, but in deed and truth. By this (by our love in deed and truth, by our obedience to God's law) we will know that we are of the truth, and will assure our hearts before God in whatever our hearts condemn us for God is greater than our hearts and He knows all things." On the one hand, the Christian knows he belongs to God because his sin condemns him. He knows he is guilty. Those for whom I worry the most are the

professing Christians who never admit wrong doing, who never apologize, who are always in the right, who walk aimlessly and blindly through this life, giving no evidence of humility or meekness. John goes on to say, “Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.” So, on the other hand our obedience causes our confidence, our assurance that we truly belong to God, to increase. Note also that the true believer can be displeasing to God, that He may frown upon our actions, values, and attitudes, something some pastors today say is impossible.

So my dear friend, will you nightly pursue a personal inquisition of the soul, will you daily pursue a personal visitation of the Spirit, and will you regularly pursue personal holiness? Run back to Jesus in sincere repentance, claiming His blood for your forgiveness and the Spirit’s presence and sanctifying power. You will need to do this daily, many times each day, and in so doing you will finish your race well, hearing those blessed words, “Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,” (Matthew 25:34).

A holy preacher is a mighty instrument in the hand of God. God uses holy men to be catalysts for change in any culture. Paul told Timothy to pay close attention to himself and to his teaching, to persevere in these things, so that he may insure salvation for himself and for those who hear him (1 Timothy 4:16). Evangelistic preachers generally fall for one of two reasons. First is their doctrine, their teaching. Falling into heresy has destroyed many a preacher. But not paying close attention to himself, his own personal walk in holiness, has brought even more preachers down. Moral failure, namely

sexual sin, is devastating to any minister of the gospel and ought to disqualify him from ministry.

So, with Wesley's life as a backdrop, with a call to personal holiness and theological orthodoxy clearly in view, how does evangelistic preaching work as a catalyst for change? What can we expect it to change? Consider first the Biblical data. After His baptism, forty days of fasting, and triumphing over the three-fold temptation of the devil, the Lord Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Holy Spirit and was teaching in their synagogues. He came to His hometown of Nazareth and entered the synagogue on the Sabbath day, stood and read from Isaiah 61, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord," (Luke 4:18,19). He sat down and then told the crowd that that day this prophecy had been fulfilled in their sight. In other words, He is declaring to be the long awaited Messiah prophesied by Isaiah and the other prophets. The people were stunned by His claim, asking if this was not the son of Joseph. In essence they were saying, "We have known Him all His life. We changed His diapers when He was a baby. We remember Him running and playing in the streets as a young boy. We remember Him as a teenager just getting started in His Father's carpentry business. How can He be the long awaited Messiah? Impossible." He then healed Peter's mother-in-law and many other people. After a long and exhausting day of ministry, the Son of Man was seeking a secluded place to pray but the crowds demanded that He stay with them. He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose," (Luke 4:43). Christ Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. He came to proclaim release to the captives, and actually, by His death and resurrection, to



accomplish their deliverance. He came to redeem sinners and to turn back the ravages and devastation of the fall into sin, bringing to bear the kingdom of God, the practical and present rule of Christ in the world on behalf of His people. The good news of new life in Christ was to transform individuals, families, and communities.

In Acts 4:12, after healing the man lame since birth, after preaching to the large crowd which gathered, after having been arrested and harassed by the Sanhedrin, after Luke states how the church had very quickly grown to at least 5000 men, after being filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter speaks to the religious and political leaders in Jerusalem saying, “. . . let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this name this man stands here before you in good health. He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved,” (Acts 4:10-12). The apostle Peter is laying down the glorious truth of Christ’s exclusivity. There is one true and living God and His Son is the only Savior of sinners. He is unique, and He cannot be duplicated. Luke is putting forth the sure and certain foundation for the building up of the church. There is no other way of salvation. In Christ Jesus we have our redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of trespasses according to the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7). The saving work of Christ in individual lives is the foundation for the change every community needs.

In 1 Thessalonians 2, Paul is reminding the believers there of the suffering he experienced when he came there preaching the gospel of grace on his second missionary journey. Even though the opposition he faced was severe, he

still had the boldness in God to speak to them the gospel of God. He reminds them that his exhortation to them did not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit; but just as he had been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel he spoke it, not as one who sought to please men, but God, for God alone is the one who would examine his own heart and motives. He goes on saying that he never came with flattering speech, seeking to manipulate them in order to gain anything from them. He did not come to them seeking money or prestige. He came with gentleness, like a nursing mother who tenderly cares for her own children. Because he loved them and had such a fond affection for them, he was more than happy not only to preach the gospel to them but to give his very life, if necessary, for their spiritual welfare. He was fond of recalling for them how he labored among them as a tentmaker, so that he would not be a burden to any of them. He reminded them of his impeccable character among them. No one could accuse him of any kind of impropriety whatsoever. He was devout, upright, and blameless. He was constantly encouraging, exhorting, and imploring them to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel of the One who had called them into His own kingdom and glory (vs.1-12). Godly, sacrificial character and conduct by the preachers of the gospel is also foundational for the change every community needs. Ungodly, worldly preachers ought to be an oxymoron. Vile, heretical preachers are like hidden reefs in a church's love feasts; like dark clouds without water, carried along by the wind; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever (Jude 12,13).

How does evangelistic preaching serve as a catalyst for change? As the Holy Spirit is poured out on the preacher and his auditors, He is pleased to bring conviction of sin to

some. With this comes the regenerating work of the Spirit which causes the sinner to repent and believe the gospel, to call on the name of the Lord so that he may be saved. From there he is justified, sanctified, adopted, and eventually glorified in heaven. We have already looked at these components in some detail. Let's drill down a bit in only one area, namely sanctification. While writing to the church at Corinth (2 Corinthians 8), asking them to make good on their previously promised gift to help the saints in Jerusalem during a time of suffering and famine, Paul commends to these Corinthian believers the example of the saints of Macedonia. In their great ordeal of affliction, their abundance and generosity overflowed in the wealth of their liberality of giving. They gave freely, without coercion, to this particular need in Jerusalem according to their ability and beyond their ability. They begged for the opportunity to participate in the support of the saints. They gave themselves to the Lord and then to Paul. Later, while in prison, Paul is writing to the Philippians, part of the church in Macedonia, once again commending them for their generous support of his ministry, that they were the only church to give to him after he had left Macedonia, that more than once they gave to him while he was in Thessalonica (Philippians 4:15-16). The believers in Macedonia were partly Jews who came to understand that Jesus is the Christ, but mainly the church was comprised of Gentiles, those who formerly had been pagans, those who had turned from their idols to serve the true and living God. They had received the word of the Lord in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit. As a result they had become an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thessalonians 1:6-9). The preaching of the gospel and its convicting, regenerating, and sanctifying power caused these believers to be imitators of the churches of God in Judea. That is, they also suffered joyfully at the hands of their own countrymen, just as the churches in Judea did with the Jews (1 Thessalonians 2:14). Due to this great work of

transforming grace the Thessalonian believers were to abstain from sexual immorality, to love one another, to admonish the unruly, to live in peace with one another, to encourage the fainthearted, to help the weak, to be patient with everyone, to never pay back evil for evil to anyone, to rejoice always, to give thanks in everything, to not quench the Spirit, to not despise prophetic utterances (the preaching of the word in today's context) but to examine preaching very carefully, to hold fast to what is good, and to abstain from every form of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:12-22).

By 1735 England, Scotland, and Wales were drowning in debauchery. One in three homes made and sold gin. The country was overrun with drunkenness and all that goes with it. Lawlessness was so rampant that at least twelve criminal offenses garnered the death penalty. One adolescent boy was executed for stealing a loaf of bread. In that year, however, three major catalysts of the Great Awakening were converted—George Whitefield, Howell Harris, and Daniel Rowland. Each became mighty preachers of the gospel which wrought thousands of conversions in America, England, Scotland, and Wales. These conversions altered the very face of these nations.

We can go further and say that evangelistic preaching also upgrades a culture through societal transformation. When Paul came to Ephesus on his third missionary journey he found a city absolutely steeped in idolatry. The fertility goddess Diana was worshipped there. In fact one of the world's ancient wonders was there, the Temple of Diana. Worshippers came from long distances to worship her there and to participate in fertility rites and cult prostitution. We also know that demonic possession was a major problem there. Many exorcists plied their trade and had compiled a massive book they called the *Ephesian Writings* which housed numerous canticles and sayings used in the work of

exorcism. When Paul came there he found a number of disciples and asked if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed. They responded by saying, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." Paul wanted to know into what baptism they had been baptized. When they said, "John's baptism," Paul baptized these formerly pagan Gentiles in the name of the Lord Jesus and laid his hands on them and the Holy Spirit came upon them, just as He had done earlier with the Jews at Pentecost in Acts 2, like with the Samaritans in Acts 8, and like with the God fearing Gentiles in Acts 10. Jesus' promise in Acts 1:8 of the gospel going to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth was already a reality. Paul stayed there two years preaching and teaching and obviously planting churches. We know this because Asia Minor had churches not only in Ephesus but also Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Nympha (Revelation 2,3, Colossians 4). The Spirit of God was present in Ephesus with great power. Extraordinary miracles were occurring there at the hands of Paul. Handkerchiefs and aprons were carried from his body to the sick and their diseases left them and evil spirits were cast out of them. One rather comical account is given of the seven sons of a man named Sceva, probably himself a false prophet. They had no doubt watched Paul cast out demons. So they found a man demon possessed and said to him, "In the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches, we command you to come out of him." The demons within the man responded by saying, "Paul we know. Jesus we know, but who are you?" The demons beat the seven sons of Sceva, stripped them naked, and they ran away wounded. So many exorcists were coming to Christ in conversion, wanting to distance themselves from their former way of life, that they brought all their fetishes used in their demonic trade, including their book of *Ephesian Writings* and burned them. Luke estimates that the value of all the religious artifacts was fifty thousand pieces of silver, or fifty

thousand drachmas. One drachma was equal to one day's wage.

Luke goes on to tell us that the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing, breaking down the pagan religious establishment of Ephesus. The societal impact on Ephesus was so far reaching, so profound, that the religious and tourist industry built around the worship of Diana was taking a major hit. One of the leading silversmiths in town, Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Diana which the merchants sold to the religious pilgrims, stirred up these merchants. He said, "Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business. You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods at all. Not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana be regarded as worthless and thus she whom all of Asia and the world worship will even be dethroned from her magnificence." This was too much for the people and a riot broke out in the local sports stadium and for two hours the people were whipped up into an emotional frenzy crying out, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." If they had found Paul they would have killed him. What a mighty societal impact the gospel had in that wicked city! It reminds me of what the gospel of grace could do if the Spirit fell with similar power on Las Vegas or Salt Lake City.

After the framers and signers of the Declaration of Independence left Philadelphia in early August, 1776<sup>54</sup>, they

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<sup>54</sup> Only John Hancock, President of Congress, signed the Declaration of Independence of July 4, 1776. All but one of the other fifty-six signers did so on August 2. *Lives of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence*, page 10.

in effect went back to their own colonies without state governments. So they began quickly to write their individual state constitutions. Though the Great Awakening had pretty much subsided by 1755, the effects of this mighty movement of God were, twenty years later, still being felt powerfully amongst the leaders of this new nation. While John Locke believed that good laws guaranteed good government, our fathers of American Independence knew that good men were the only guarantee that good laws would mean good government. William Penn put it this way:

*Governments, like clocks, go from the motion men give them... Wherefore governments rather depend upon men, than men upon governments. Let men be good and the government cannot be bad... But if men be bad, the government will never be good... I know some say, 'Let us have good laws, and no matter for the men that execute them.' But let them consider that though good laws do well, good men do better; for good laws may lack good men... but good men will never lack good laws, nor allow bad ones.'*<sup>55</sup>

So as these godly men returned home to carve out their own state governments, they did so keenly aware of the vital necessity of godly leaders. Consider Article 22 of the Delaware constitution:

*Every person, who shall be chosen a member of either house, or appointed to any office or place of trust... shall... make and subscribe the following declaration, to wit, "I do profess faith in God the father, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, and in the Holy Ghost, one God, blessed forevermore, and I do acknowledge the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by divine inspiration.*

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<sup>55</sup> *Keys to Good Government: According to Our Founding Fathers*, David Barton, pages 4-5.

Then there is Chapter II, Section 10 of the Pennsylvania constitution:

*And each member of the legislature, before he takes his seat, shall make and subscribe the following declaration, viz; "I do believe in one God, the Creator and Governor of the universe, the rewarder of the good and the punisher of the wicked, and I do acknowledge the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by Divine Inspiration."*

I could cite many more such examples, but here's just one more from "A Constitution or Frame of Government Agreed Upon by the Delegates of the People of the State of Massachusetts Bay", Chapter VI, Article I:

*All persons elected must make and subscribe the following declaration, viz. "I do declare that I believe the Christian religion and have firm persuasion of its truth."*<sup>56</sup>

The societal impact of evangelistic preaching was felt even earlier in our country. Thomas Hooker, the great Puritan preacher, pastor, and evangelist was born at Marfield, England in July, 1586 and was much loved and respected for his many years of effective ministry in England prior to his migration to the Massachusetts Bay Colony. His prominence only increased while living in New England the last fourteen years of his life. Hooker was one of the most famous Puritan divines or theologians of his day and was a major architect of the New England theology as well as the founder of Hartford, Connecticut in 1636.

Hooker was admitted to Christ College, Cambridge in March,

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. pages 5-6.



1604, a few months before his eighteenth birthday. Cambridge was a hotbed of Puritan theology and activism at the time and the English crown, then under the control of James I, was suspect of it. James was anti-Roman Catholic and was at least outwardly sympathetic to the Puritan cause but in the end was loyal to the Anglican Church instituted by Henry VIII many years before. Finally, Puritan activity was gaining too much of a following and James I cracked down, removing the Puritan influence at Christ College. Shortly thereafter Hooker migrated to Emmanuel College where he spent the next fourteen years of his life, both as a student and tutor. Eventually one-third of those men who studied with Hooker at Emmanuel College migrated to the new world.

Upon receiving his B.A. Hooker stayed on for another ten years or so as a tutor. In the English system of education a tutor was one who met outside the lecture hall with a number of students in his college, training them and reiterating what had been said in earlier lectures, seeking to explain more fully or accurately the material already given. Historians are unclear when and how Hooker's conversion to Christ took place but it was certainly during his tenure at Cambridge. He rarely spoke of it, but we do know he came under a terrible conviction of sin, the terror of God's law brought him low, causing him to see his utter inability to save himself. God eventually invaded his heart, taking away his fear and shame, giving him a wonderful sense of God's presence and grace. Most Puritans at the time, while believing salvation could be instantaneous, as in the case of the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus, taught that preparation for the coming of Christ to the soul was the norm. Later Hooker would develop a well structured plan of preparation which he believed all should seek.

Sometime after his conversion Hooker believed God was

calling him to preach the gospel. He received a call to a church in Esher, England and Sir Francis Drake was prominent in executing this call. Drake's wife, Joanna, while growing up in the Reformed Church, was deeply depressed, even suicidal, having convinced herself that she was lost forever, having committed the unpardonable sin, and was destined for hell. Drake, obviously a kind and gracious husband, sought help for his wife from a number of pastors. He finally heard of Thomas Hooker's preaching and pastoral expertise, and urged him to take the pastoral position at Esher, a very small church, which would allow Hooker to spend a great deal of time with his wife, seeking to help her out of her despair. As was the custom of the day, Joanna's marriage to Sir Francis was arranged by her parents, and she apparently married Drake against her will as a dutiful daughter. As their marriage progressed, due to her depression, Joanna eventually refused to attend divine services on Sunday, and though she would listen to preachers as they sought to help her, none were able to move her out of her despondency.

Then Thomas Hooker began to work with Joanna Drake. At first he listened to her, urging her to tell her story, and eventually he used his training in logic and rhetoric to help her out of her depression. He presented his arguments in a logical fashion, thinking beforehand of objections she may have, even raising them to her before she could speak them. He then dismantled her arguments, showing that the very essence of her unbelief was pride, thinking she was too far gone for the mercy of God. He had to dismantle her faulty views of Christianity, and then patiently, logically, and persuasively show her the truth as it is in Jesus. Eventually Joanna came to full assurance of her salvation and became a member of the local congregation, living faithfully and patiently until her death a few years later. From his experience in helping Joanna Drake, Hooker eventually

wrote *The Poor Doubting Christian Drawne Unto Christ*, a book based largely on his experience in helping Joanna Drake. Most, if not all the people of England in that day, had been baptized into Christ in the Anglican Church. The Puritans, who were zealous in reforming the church back to the word of God, took exception with many of the Anglican practices of the day. Perhaps the most important was the Anglican practice of admitting baptized children and adults to be full members of the church, being allowed to take the Lord's Supper. The Puritans were concerned about mere head knowledge and sought to make Christianity an experience of the heart. They were after the conversion of professing Christians in their churches, to move their parishioners from cultural faith to experiential faith. This problem has plagued Reformed pastors and theologians since that time. How are pastors to maintain the purity of the church while at the same time urging people to make sure of their election and calling, to prove their baptism was effectual? This led Puritans like Hooker to stress a subjective element to the proofs of salvation. Later Hooker would lock theological horns with a friend and contemporary, John Cotton, who developed seven tests or proofs of regeneration. Hooker and other Puritans preached the terrors of the law of God, hoping the Holy Spirit would bring deep fear and conviction of sin, the first step on the long road of preparation for regeneration. They emphasized the need to practice repentance, to ask God to show one his sin, and to repent of it. This could take months, if not years. It was not uncommon to find only thirty or forty percent of the baptized members of a New England Congregational Church who took the Lord's Supper. In a day where little was known about psychology, Hooker was a leader in appealing to the conscience, stressing the terrors of God's law, but then bringing to bear the objective work of Christ on the cross to the despondent church member.

It now appears to many people, even within the Reformed tradition which has generally been very favorable toward the Puritan movement, that the Puritans over complicated the doctrine of salvation. When speaking and preaching about free grace they seemed inadvertently to teach a works oriented salvation—namely that those who had prepared themselves by going through the steps of preparation, may have reason to believe they are accepted by God. Even though there were grave weaknesses in this New England theology, it is also true to say that their title of *Physicians of the Soul* is justifiable. They were masters at diagnosing spiritual and emotional problems, bringing to bear the balm of Gilead, the blood of Jesus sprinkled on an unclean conscience.

Hooker met Susanna Garbrand, Joanna Drake's maid, while ministering to Mrs. Drake at Esher. After three years they were married on April 3, 1621. Hooker took the pastorate at Essex in 1628 and his fame as a gospel preacher continued to grow. About this time William Laud, the Archbishop of Canterbury and a vibrant adversary of the Puritans, began harassing Hooker. Laud believed the Church of England alone was the catalyst for salvation and sanctification, while Hooker and the other Puritans believed holiness came only through the preaching of God's word, applied to the heart and conscience by the Holy Spirit. Laud summoned Hooker to London, asking him about his preaching ministry, finally suspending him from it. The people of Essex were distraught, but Hooker obeyed the terms of the suspension and discontinued his preaching and pastoral ministry. He provided for his family by teaching students in the classical model of education which he had earlier learned. Finally Laud summoned Hooker again, and Hooker knew that to appear would mean at the very least his imprisonment. He thus fled for his life with his wife and children to Amsterdam in 1631 where many other Puritans were living in

exile. Hooker was in the Netherlands for two years, waiting for a ministry, which never came. Eventually he believed God was calling him to migrate to the new world, as John Winthrop and others had done in 1630. So in the spring of 1633 Hooker made his way secretly with his family back to England to take a ship to Boston.

Hooker, along with his wife and five children, sailed on the *Griffin* in July, 1633 under false names. When several hundred miles out to sea, he then revealed his true identity. With him on the *Griffin* were two other great Puritan preachers, John Cotton and Samuel Stone, also migrating with their wives and children. Soon all three men were preaching daily on board the *Griffin*—one in the morning, one in the afternoon, and one in the evening. The *Griffin* arrived in Boston on September 4, 1633, losing only four people on board. Many of Hooker's church members from Essex had preceded him to the new world and eagerly awaited their pastor to Newtown, near Boston. Hooker began almost immediately taking up his pastoral duties, preaching twice on Sundays, giving a lecture on Thursday, and catechizing the families during the week. He knew societal transformation came through preaching and applying the gospel of grace.

A year or so after arriving in Newtown the people there were unhappy with the small amount of land they had to farm and keep their cattle. They petitioned the General Court, giving several reasons why they should be allowed to migrate to the Connecticut River valley. The main reasons were the poor quality of the land at Newtown for farming and the need to have more land for their growing population. John Winthrop, Governor of the Bay Colony, spoke against the move, citing the need to give protection to the people, something which would be very difficult to give in Connecticut, especially due to the threat of Indian

attacks. Winthrop's other reason to deny the request was their need of Thomas Hooker, not only as a preacher and pastor, but also because of his ability to broker peace agreements with parties of people antagonistic to each other. The General Court approved the migration in 1634 but Winthrop vetoed it. To further complicate matters, the same General Court approved the migration of the people of Roxbury and Watertown after Winthrop had vetoed the migration of Newtown people. Finally a small band of people, around sixty plus their cattle, left for Connecticut in October, 1635, hoping to begin a more prosperous life there. Hooker and his family, along with another one hundred people, left in May, 1636, traveling westward to East Longmeadow, then turning south at the Connecticut River, walking south on the east side of the river, crossing over at Windsor, finally settling in modern day Hartford, named for the hometown in England of fellow minister and colleague, Samuel Stone.

A controversy arose concerning the massacre of the Pequot Indians and Hooker has been vilified for his leadership in the ordeal. As in so many other similar circumstances, it is not always easy to know how such things began and who is most culpable. It appears, however, that a number of Massachusetts men had raided a Pequot village (the Pequots were mainly in and around what is now Old Saybrook, Connecticut), killing a few Indians. The Pequots, a fierce tribe, retaliated by raiding a village of the English. Some time later John Oldham, a trader in the Bay, was murdered on Block Island, off the coast of Narragansett, the home of the Niantic Indians, who were allies with the Pequots. The General Court, in August, 1636 directed John Endicott to subdue the Indians. He with a small band of militiamen landed at Block Island but found no Pequots. He burned down several homes and moved on. Sometime later the Pequots countered by raiding another village near Saybrook, causing the English settlers there to live in

constant fear throughout the succeeding winter. Finally, in April, 1637 the Pequots came inland to Wethersfield, killing nine people and capturing two girls. For the Pequots to be on the coast and causing trouble was one thing, but now, that far inland, and near the newly formed settlement at Hartford, was too much to bear. The General Court in Hartford declared war on the Pequots and commissioned an army of ninety-nine men, under the leadership of Captain John Mason, to remove the Pequot nuisance. Thomas Hooker, the preacher to his people in Hartford, preached a farewell sermon to these men from Numbers 14:9, "Only rebel ye not against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us; their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us; fear them not." He then prayed and sent them on their way. This was the extent of Hooker's involvement in the massacre. Mason and his men sailed past Saybrook and the Pequot nation to Narragansett in order to attack the Pequots from the rear, traveling toward them from the east. They surrounded the fort at dawn and attacked with their allies, the Mohegan and Narragansett Indians (the Pequot were ruthless not only to the English but also toward the Mohegans and Narragansetts). Eyewitnesses reported that of the four hundred to five hundred Pequots only four or five survived. Several other skirmishes ensued over the next several months but the Pequots were pretty much annihilated by this first attack.

About the same time another threat to the welfare of the people of New England developed but of a far more serious nature. Anne Hutchinson had migrated to Massachusetts Bay with her husband in 1634, following John Cotton, her favorite preacher. Hutchinson was a very astute theologian with unconventional theology. She taught a midweek Bible study, attended by as many as eighty to ninety women and some men. She discussed Cotton's sermons from the previous week, working from extensive notes she had taken

of his sermons. She rather quickly moved toward her unusual doctrines, what came to be known at the time as a form of antinomianism, a denial of the law of God in the life of the Christian. Her views were summarized by John Winthrop under two main categories. First, she taught that the person of the Holy Spirit dwells in a believer in such a way that He speaks directly to the justified person, negating the necessity for the Ten Commandments and any other commands in the Bible. In effect, this rendered unnecessary, in her mind, the laws of the Massachusetts Bay. In other words, a believer had a law within him which overruled any outward law in the Bible or any given by the state. Thus a believer was free to act anyway he chose, as long as it was from the Spirit. Second, Hutchinson taught that sanctification is no proof of justification. Actually John Cotton taught a form of this, saying that due to the depravity of one's heart, a person could be deceived about the nature of his good works. Just because one gives outward evidence of faith is no guarantee of saving faith. Cotton's teaching on this is not unorthodox but Anne Hutchinson took it much further, saying that there is no reason at all for a believer to be concerned about keeping God's law at any point. Many of those attending Hutchinson's Bible study were the wives of prominent men in and around Boston, and even some of the husbands of these women were attending. The threat was that this would cause a general lawlessness in the Bay, undermining the authority of the state and church. Hutchinson was banished to Narragansett, later known as Providence, R.I.

John Winthrop summoned Thomas Hooker to work through the issues coming out of Anne Hutchinson's views. Hooker's involvement was also to arbitrate the concerns other ministers had with John Cotton's views on salvation. Cotton taught that man was completely passive in salvation, while Hooker and the other New England Puritans believed in



preparationism. That is, while man received salvation solely on the basis of Christ giving him eternal life through the work of the Holy Spirit, they still believed man was responsible to seek after God, to put away his sin, to clear the deck, so to speak, so that Christ may visit him in due time with salvation. If Cotton's views took hold, then this passivity could lead, as it surely did with Anne Hutchinson, to extrabiblical revelation, visions, and other so-called subjective words from God. This, in turn, would propagate the problem they had just squelched from Hutchinson. Cotton's views would also lead to antinomianism, living apart from any adherence to God's word and law. Hooker expertly, over several public meetings, showed Cotton and his followers his error. Cotton eventually amended his views and thus was more acceptable to the mainstream of Congregational theological thought.

The Puritans have long been accused of neglecting evangelistic work and there is some degree of truth to this charge, at least in a general sense. However Thomas Hooker does not fit this profile. He was clearly a powerful evangelistic preacher who called the baptized people of his church, as well as those unbaptized and outside the covenant, to faith and repentance. Hooker preached that the covenant should be viewed in two parts. He taught that the true believer, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, who had been baptized as an infant, was truly in Christ. All others who had been baptized were in the outward covenant. Though not truly in Christ, these had the benefit of being exposed to the gospel and were consequently more open to the ministrations of soul searching preaching. Hooker always appealed to these people in the outward covenant. Keep in mind that nearly everyone in town would attend church on the Lord's day. The outward covenant was important to the general welfare of the town. We see the same idea in the

Netherlands at this time, for the Dutch believed they were in covenant with God and their prosperity and peace depended upon obedience to God's law. The children of those in the inner covenant had the privilege of federal holiness, meaning they were inclined toward God and thus were more open to regenerating grace. So Hooker directed his sermons to these children as well. Finally, Hooker was also aware of children and their parents who were outright pagans, and he prayed for them and directed his sermons to them too.

Thomas Hooker is a great example of how an evangelistic preacher can be a catalyst for societal impact. Hooker illustrates this in at least two ways. First is the benefit of a consistent, theologically driven ministry. Hooker was privileged to receive a theological education from some of the greatest Puritan minds of his time. He lived and served Christ in the midst of the Puritan revolution which lasted for one hundred years in England, until 1662 and the Act of Uniformity under Charles II, which demanded that Puritan pastors swear allegiance to the Church of England. He lived and served in the new world at Massachusetts Bay, at the very beginning of her existence, one clearly and consciously founded on the vibrant, God-centered, Christ-exalting Puritan theology which magnified God and debased man. This is not to say, of course, that Hooker was not without his theological problems and inconsistencies. It may be that the later rejection of Calvinism by New England in favor of Arminianism and later Unitarianism can partly be laid at the feet of Puritans who taught preparationism. In a desire to purify the church, they seemed to deny simple faith in Christ which sometimes marks one's life in this world. One does not necessarily need to be a theologian to be a sincere believer. They tended to view conversion as a long process of soul searching conviction of sin. To them this was the norm, not the exception. Thus, unless one had a similar experience, then his conversion to Christ was suspect. The

continental Reformers in Geneva and Holland saw it a bit differently, trusting the work of Christ through infant baptism, trusting that the Holy Spirit worked normally within the family as the father instructed his children. As the children grew up in the church hearing God-honoring, soul searching sermons, it was assumed they were in Christ unless they clearly turned away from faith and obedience. This is similar to the modern day controversy over so called Federal Vision theology.

Even though Hooker was a product of Puritan preparationism and its consequent problems, there is little doubt that his was an experiential theology, believing in a sovereign God, all powerful Christ, and effectual ministry of the Holy Spirit in regenerating and sanctifying the elect. Our great fault today is the loss of such a God-centered theology, which leaves man with the last word on salvation. Thus we have opened the door to all manner of methods which compromise the doctrine of God, the sufficiency of Christ, and our complete dependence on the Holy Spirit's presence and converting power.

More specifically we see the benefit of a theologically driven ministry in Hooker's pastoral counseling with Joanna Drake, and his book, *The Poor Doubting Christian Drawne To Christ*. Ministers would do themselves and their congregations a huge favor if they would read and apply the numerous books on pastoral theology which Hooker and his fellow Puritans wrote, men like Richard Baxter and his *Saints Everlasting Rest*, William Gurnall's *The Christian in Complete Armor*, and William Brooks' *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*.

The importance of a theologically driven ministry is seen also in how to handle theological controversy. Hooker was consistently called upon by John Winthrop to sort through

the controversies of their day. He did this with his friend John Cotton in the Arminian controversy, with Roger Williams and the threat of separatism and fanaticism, and with Anne Hutchinson and her extra-biblical revelation and antinomianism. Throughout church history we have seen the vital role theologians have played in pointing out error and cogently pointing us back to the truth. Now, as much as ever before, we need pastors who ground their ministries on theology and do not succumb to the whims and passing fads of our day.

We also need theologically driven ministries in the area of evangelistic outreach. The last two hundred years of western church history has marked a loss of Calvinistic theology. One of the vital foundation stones of this theology is the total inability of man to believe the gospel. In its place we have the ancient heresy of Pelagius firmly entrenched in the life and ministry of the church, teaching that man decides on his own free will to believe in or to reject Christ. This has resulted in a shallowness of ministry which has robbed God of His glory and the Lord Jesus of His exalted place as Savior of His people. It has moved us to prayerlessness. If man holds the “ace” card then the decision to believe rests on him alone, rendering prayer virtually unnecessary. This has also produced a low level of experiential holiness. A small god makes for small believers who casually and flippantly attend worship from a man-centered position, crafting worship services for the unbeliever, all the while forgetting that only believers can truly worship God. Hooker’s God-centered theology, if followed uncompromisingly, would bring great liberty to pastors, evangelistic preachers, elders, and church members, for it would put us where we so desperately need to be—utterly and completely desperate for a touch of the Holy Spirit upon our ministries, driving us to prayer and holiness of life, knowing that unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.

And second is Hooker's Biblical and Puritan view of the state which has served as the foundation of our nation. This is unmistakable in Hooker and largely overlooked by those who study him. Some historians have noted the conflict of thinking between John Winthrop, Governor of Massachusetts Bay, and Thomas Hooker, founder of Hartford. Winthrop followed an aristocratic view of government, which he brought with him from England, meaning a King, or someone akin to one, ruled the state. Hooker, on the other hand, believed in democracy, the consent of the governed. Winthrop wrote, "Democracy I do not conceive that ever God did ordain as a fit government either for Church or Commonwealth." To this Hooker wrote Winthrop, saying among other things, ". . . a general counsel (governance) chosen by all . . . is most suitable to rule and the most safe for relief of the whole." On May 31, 1638, one year after arriving in Hartford, Hooker preached, or more accurately lectured, from Deuteronomy 1:13, "Choose wise and discerning and experienced men from your tribes, and I will appoint them as your heads." Hooker's main point in his lecture was that the choice of public magistrates belongs to the people by God's own allowance. The General Court took Hooker's words to heart and one year later established the Fundamental Laws which served as the first democratic constitution. One historian wrote, "That sermon by Thomas Hooker from the pulpit of the First Church in Hartford, is the earliest known suggestion of a fundamental law, enacted not by royal charter, nor by concession from any previously existing government, but by the people themselves, a primary and supreme law by which the government is constituted." Another said that Hooker's sermon was the germ of the idea of the Commonwealth, and it was developed by his hearers into the Constitution of 1639. That's why Connecticut is known as the Constitution State.

So we owe a great debt of gratitude to Thomas Hooker, founder of Hartford, theologian, pastor, scholar, and preacher par excellence. He was a mighty preaching evangelist whom God used as a catalyst for societal impact. May God raise up many who will follow in his train, seeking to live by Holy Scriptures, bringing to bear the weight and truth of God's word in a just and righteous society.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Much of this material on Thomas Hooker came from two sources: *Thomas Hooker, 1586-1647* by Frank Shuffelton, Princeton University Press, 1977 and *Magnalia Christi Americana* by Cotton Mather.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SEEKING A VERDICT IN EVANGELISTIC PREACHING

Asahel Nettleton knew how to seek a verdict in his evangelistic preaching. Because he understood the total inability of man to believe the gospel and the power of God in salvation which must come if anyone is to be saved, he consistently and Biblically preached with powerful results. Nettleton was born on April 21, 1783, in North Killingworth, Connecticut, the second born of six children and the eldest son. Nettleton's parents were professors of true religion and attended the local Congregational Church, having their children baptized under the halfway covenant.<sup>58</sup> Asahel was taught the doctrines of the church from an early age. One fall morning in 1800—when the second Great Awakening was beginning to be felt throughout New England and the west, especially in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Indiana—seventeen-year-old Nettleton was fondly remembering a Thanksgiving party of the night before when he came under heavy conviction of sin. He began to wonder how his actions that night would stand under the scrutiny of a holy God on judgment day. He continued in deep conviction of sin, reading the sermons of Jonathan Edwards and his grandson, Timothy Dwight, then the President of Yale. His fear and concern for his soul continued for nearly a year when finally he was overwhelmed with a sense of God's grace and love for him. A year later his father died and, since he was the eldest son, care for the family farm fell on his

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<sup>58</sup>This practice began in New England Congregational churches in the 1660s. The vast majority of religious professors in those days had not made a public profession of faith and therefore were not allowed to take Communion. They were allowed, however, to have their children baptized as long as they agreed with the covenant of the church.

shoulders. Nettleton later recalled long days of plowing in the fields, wondering how in a million years the usefulness of his life would be viewed by God. At that point he prayed, asking God for the privilege to preach his glorious gospel to the heathen. Nettleton had read David Brainerd's journal and been deeply affected by the piety and zeal Brainerd possessed for the American Indians.

Without money and with very little prospect of admission, Nettleton pursued an education at Yale, arriving in the fall of 1803, himself being the only professing Christian in his class at the time. Those who knew him then said that he was a young man of unusual zeal, solemnity, honesty, and Biblical holiness. He was not, however, a very good student, and some have suggested two reasons for this. First, he was a shy, withdrawn young man and obviously felt very uncomfortable in making the public recitations that were so much a part of the educational philosophy of the day. Second, he was very sickly and often missed classes due to illness. During his junior year at Yale he was given permission to return home until he healed from his latest illness. During his junior year, through the preaching of Dr. Timothy Dwight, the Holy Spirit began to fall with great power on the students. During that year some seventy-five of the two hundred and thirty students professed faith in Christ, giving evidence of sound conversion and joining local New Haven churches. Over the next twenty years hundreds of men, upon graduation from Yale, entered the gospel ministry and were used powerfully of God during the second Great Awakening.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> See J. Edwin Orr's *Campus Aflame: Evangelical Awakenings in Collegiate Communities*, page 26ff.



On May 28, 1811, the ministerial association of New Haven licensed Nettleton to preach, and he commenced immediately to preach from town to town throughout Connecticut. He was not ordained to the office of Evangelist until the summer of 1817. His hope of becoming a missionary to the heathen Indians was not allowed because of debt he had incurred in his Yale education. Unwilling to ask anyone to cover the debt for him, he decided to postpone missionary work until he had paid the debt. In God's gracious providence, this forced Nettleton into the Evangelistic preaching at which God greatly used him. Within the first couple of years Nettleton traveled all over Connecticut, to towns such as Southington, New Britain, East Granby, North Killingworth, Bolton, Manchester, Granby, Salem, Danbury, Monroe, North Lyme, Bloomfield, Milton, and Litchfield.<sup>60</sup> His preaching almost always and immediately provoked solemnity in his hearers, which he believed to be a mark of the Spirit's unction on his preaching. His common practice was to stay in a town for an extended period of time—as long as one month—preaching daily, trusting the Holy Spirit to bring conviction of sin and thereby cause his hearers to be fearful for their soul's eternal destiny. He preached intense, practical, straightforward sermons, making use of the terrors of the Law, showing how men had failed to keep it, how they were thus under just condemnation, how they were utterly helpless to deliver themselves from their condition.

Nettleton's practice was to disavow any emotional disturbances while preaching. If a hearer began to weep or

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<sup>60</sup> Lyman Beecher, the great Calvinistic preacher from Litchfield, played a significant role in this work by urging churches through Connecticut to receive Nettleton and to encourage his ministry among their people.

otherwise cause confusion, he would immediately have the person removed from the meeting to the pastor's manse next door. He wanted nothing to distract people from the issue at hand. He did not use the altar call, nor did he "have a prayer for people to invite Jesus into their hearts". Instead, after the services he held meetings in the parlor of the manse for those awakened and concerned for their souls. Here they sat in a circle as he came and spoke briefly to each one, determining the status of their concerns, praying for them that the Holy Spirit would give them peace through the new birth. He was careful not to give anyone premature hope of salvation, and he constantly warned against the tendency toward self-deception. He was decidedly Calvinistic in his theology, stressing the doctrine of God's sovereignty and unconditional election, as well as man's total depravity. He did not tell jokes or anecdotes while preaching. He stressed the Law of God and then brought to the people the glory of God in Christ crucified, offering salvation to all who would repent and believe. On one occasion, a man, who was distraught over his soul's condition before God, wanted to chauffeur Nettleton around town in his wagon, simply enjoying Nettleton's presence. Nettleton refused the man's offer, believing that he may possibly be looking to Nettleton for peace rather than to Christ.

In December of 1818, Nettleton came to the Congregational Church in Eastford, Connecticut, a church which four years earlier had a Universalist pastor. He arrived to find only twenty members, six of whom were male, and all very aged. He began preaching the doctrines of grace and immediately the people felt the weight of their sins upon them, knowing that if they were ever to be saved from their depravity and wretchedness it must be by sovereign grace. Nettleton made practical application to the hearts and consciences of his hearers in a plain and forceful manner, saying that the only way to acceptance by God was unconditional submission to

Him. By the following June, fifty-eight people had become members of that church by profession of faith. In April of 1819 Nettleton began preaching at Bolton, and by August, fifty-nine people had joined that local Congregational Church through profession of faith. The teens especially had come under conviction of their sin, having previously been very careless about their souls.

While Nettleton sought to preach in a full orbbed Biblical fashion, another evangelist arose with a different theological perspective. By the mid 1820's powerful and popular Charles Finney had burst onto the scene of New England. The former lawyer, also from Connecticut like Nettleton, while a Presbyterian, also like Nettleton, openly defied the doctrinal standard of the Presbyterian Church, the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. Finney had no formal theological education. He simply felt the call to preach and he began. By 1826, while Nettleton was preaching in Jamaica, Long Island, New York, he heard of Finney's preaching in and around Troy, New York. He was receiving reports of how Finney "crushed" all opposition to his ministry. If a local pastor resisted him, Finney would find a few people within the local church who supported his "new measures" and turn them against their pastor. If the pastor continued to desist in supporting Finney, then he would publicly denounce that pastor as an enemy of revivals. Many a pastor caved into the pressure and supported Finney's ministry. Finney often, while preaching, called out the names of ministers and individuals in the community, praying for them by name to be saved or to support the work of revival. In other words, he was a master manipulator using guilt and intimidation to secure or keep an audience. Of course he also used what he called the "anxious bench" in his preaching. At the end of his sermons Finney had people come forward and kneel at the altar or in front of the church, often playing on their emotions to "wrench" a decision out of them to follow Christ. He

assured them their decision guaranteed that they were saved. He welcomed, some would say initiated or inflamed, emotionalism in his hearers. Some, supposedly in the throes of conviction and concern for their souls, fell to the floor and wailed loudly about their spiritual condition.

Finney's approach to evangelistic preaching was very different from Nettleton's approach, which was marked by order, solemnity, and reverence. Finney, believing that revivals could be orchestrated, embraced the New Haven theology, which mitigated traditional Calvinism and owned a more Arminian approach to ministry.<sup>61</sup> This New School Presbyterianism was soundly resisted by Old School men like Nettleton. Many who heard Finney said that they have never heard the names of God uttered with such irreverence. His sermons contained very little doctrine, and that which did appear was far from the Calvinism of the first Great Awakening and the preaching of Samuel Davies, Jonathan Edwards, William and Gilbert Tennent, and George Whitefield.

Asked to speak to the matter of Finney's new measures, Nettleton resisted for over a year, wanting to get more information, and actually speak with Finney face to face. From having preached in Rhode Island, near the border of Connecticut, many years before, he knew of the negative residue of unfaithful revival preaching. James Davenport, who preached at the time of Edwards and Whitefield, was given over, in his preaching, to excessive emotionalism and extra-biblical revelation with dreams and visions. The result was a whole region of people who had no use for Christianity. In their minds they "had been there, done that,"

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<sup>61</sup> New Haven theology. For a succinct summary see *An Uncommon Christian: James Brainerd Taylor, Forgotten Evangelist in America's Second Great Awakening* by Francis Kyle, III, pages 39-45.

and it did not work. They consequently had moved on to other pursuits. Nettleton held two face-to-face meetings with Finney, hoping to persuade him that his methods were harmful to the body of Christ. He got nowhere with Finney. Finally Nettleton wrote a lengthy letter to a friend, stating his concerns about Finney and his ministry. The letter is filled with respect for Finney, always referring to him with deference and kindness, never questioning his motives or zeal for Christ; but at the same time it states the dilatory effects Finney was having— bringing strife, discord, and division to many churches and ministers. He pointed out that even many of Finney's supporters were secretly warning their friends in other cities not to support Finney when he came to their towns.

An example of Finney's power and influence is the ministry of Lyman Beecher. While at the Congregational Church in Litchfield, Connecticut, Beecher was a vibrant supporter of Nettleton's ministry, strictly opposing Finney, saying that when he crossed the border into Connecticut he would oppose him every step of the way. Years later, after Beecher had taken a church in Boston, he firsthand saw the outward results of Finney's ministry and became a supporter, thus turning away from Nettleton, much to the latter's great heartache.

What can we learn from Nettleton's ministry to help us become men whom God may use powerfully in evangelistic preaching? Consider these three observations, especially in light of his disagreement with Finney. First, theology drove Nettleton's methodology of ministry. His Calvinism supported all he said and did. Because he practically understood the total depravity of man, the imputation of Adam's sin, God's sovereign grace in election, and the vital necessity of the new birth, he preached with utter dependence upon the Holy Spirit to awaken the sinner and to regenerate him. Because

he knew that God must speak to the mind, he refused to allow any emotional disturbances to cloud people's thinking. He knew that God must reach the heart and mind before the will could naturally follow. Because he understood the deceitfulness of sin he was careful with new professors of faith in Christ, not too quickly "laying hands on them," being slow to suggest to them that they had been savingly wrought upon by God. At that juncture they were merely "hopeful converts." Time would tell if they had been given the heart of Jesus in regeneration. He continually exalted the crucified and risen Christ as the only refuge for sinners, stripping away even the slightest confidence one may put in the flesh. May theology, in the true sense of the word, drive your ministry—the preaching, teaching, evangelizing, counseling, leading, equipping.

Second, Nettleton was unafraid, though careful, in confronting error. His interaction with Charles Finney is a wonderful illustration of the way a Christian leader ought to deal with heresy or other forms of division. His desire was always the unity of the true Christian church and the glory of God. His ministry transcended denominations and he was very astute in seeing the effects of unbiblical ministry. He was slow to speak on such matters and would do so only after studying the facts, running them through the grid work of Scripture. He patiently but directly dealt with error. Instead of speaking about Finney, he went directly to him with his concerns, agreeing where he could, hoping they might be able to work together. He pointed out the error and where it would lead. He grounded his observations on what he knew of Davenport's ministry in Rhode Island and Connecticut. When necessary, may God give you His wisdom to confront error humbly, graciously, and firmly!

And third, Nettleton was a tireless, fervent, reverent, and confident preacher of the gospel, totally dependent on the

ministry of the Holy Spirit to convict and regenerate. It is obvious, from his days at Yale when he was a hesitant and fearful student in class recitation, that he was not a naturally gifted communicator. This all the more makes his preaching ministry remarkable and should serve as an encouragement to reticent, introverted men who shy away from the task of preaching. A man filled with the Holy Spirit, regardless of his natural tendencies, is a powerful instrument in the hands of God. We need to remember that we are co-laborers with God (1 Corinthians 3:9), and this means we have an authority from God. We come in the name of Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, proclaiming the inspired, inerrant, and infallible word of God. This means we ought to have a godly and gentle swagger. We should expect people to respond to the authority of the preached word of God!

We cannot help but envy the time in which Nettleton, Whitefield, Edwards, and Davies preached—times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord—and certainly we know we are not in that time in our day, at least not in the western world. Having said this, however, we can still imitate their zeal and fervency of ministry. Nettleton was a preacher and evangelist. He was not an after-dinner speaker, sage, clown, or guru of pop psychology. He preached with great solemnity. Certainly there is a place for humor, but preaching is not that place. The issues at hand, having eternal implications, are far too serious to be presented in a frivolous manner. Seek, with a new level of solemnity, the Holy Spirit to attend your preaching, moving your hearers to listen to God, so that the Holy Spirit may have His way with each of them, whether it means repentance leading to eternal life, or repentance for greater personal holiness.

What we are after, my friends, is revival, evangelistic, anointed, white hot preaching. Consider these words of Isaiah which bear on the subject—“Cry loudly, do not hold

back; raise your voice like a trumpet, and declare to My people their transgression, and to the house of Jacob their sins,” (Isaiah 58:1). The kind of preaching done by Jesus, His apostles, the prophets, and men like Nettleton, Edwards, and Whitefield is sadly lacking in our day. True preaching divides. It comes as a savor of life to some and a savor of death to others. What kind of preaching did these revival, evangelistic preachers do? What kind of preaching generally prevails today, and what needs to change?

Consider first Yahweh’s words to His servant Isaiah. He was to cry loudly, to raise his voice. He was to charge Yahweh’s people with sedition. He was to enunciate their sins, calling them to repentance. Even a cursory look at Jesus’ teaching reveals that He taught, not as the scribes, but as one having authority (Matthew 7:29, Mark 1:22, Luke 4:32, John 7:46). So what gave Him His authority? To be sure He was and is the Son of God, the very Word of God (John 1:1,14), and this was His ultimate authority. However there was something in what He said, how He said it, and directed it that added powerfully to His authority. People knew they must obey. Note how He dealt with three different people or persons in John’s gospel. He made extensive use of the second person pronoun. To Nicodemus Jesus said, “Truly, truly I say to *you*, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,” (John 3:3). To the Samaritan woman He says, “*You* have well said, ‘I have no husband’; for *you* have had five husbands, and the one whom *you* now have is not *your* husband; this *you* have said truly,” (John 4:17,18). And to the Pharisees He says, “*You* are from below, I am from above, *you* are of this world, I am not of this world . . . *you* shall die in your sins; for unless *you* believe that I am He, *you* shall die in your sins,” (John 8:21, 23-24). We see the same direct and pointed application in the preaching of the apostles. Peter said, “This Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, *you* nailed to a cross by the



hands of godless men and put Him to death,” (Acts 2:23). Stephen said, “*You* men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and your ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; *you* are doing just as your fathers did,” (Acts 7:51). And Paul said, “What therefore *you* worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to *you*,” (Acts 17:23). We see the same kind of preaching among the Hebrew prophets. Jeremiah said, “An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, the priests rule on their own authority; and My people love it so! But what will *you* do at the end of it?” (Jeremiah 5:30-31). And Isaiah said, “If *you* consent and obey, *you* will eat of the best of the land; but if *you* refuse and rebel, *you* will be devoured by the sword,” (Isaiah 1:19-20). Specific, pointed, discriminating application is vital to evangelistic preaching, and this is precisely what we need in our day, not just by itinerant evangelistic preachers but also by faithful pastors preaching week by week to their people in the church.

Two other vital characteristics also marked Jesus’ preaching and that of His apostles and prophets. First, all were under the authority of the Holy Spirit. They were commissioned by the Father and they had the unction or anointing of the Spirit upon them. The Spirit came upon Jesus at His baptism (Matthew 3:16), the apostles at Pentecost (Acts 1:8, 2:4), and the prophets when called by God to their task (Isaiah 61:1, Ezekiel 3:24,27). True revival, evangelistic preaching is a miracle of God’s grace where the Holy Spirit takes the words of men and applies them to the hearts of people. And second, all these men used the law of God powerfully, effectively, and savingly. They used it to show the wretched sinner his hopeless condition of judgment before the Holy One, moving him to regeneration, conversion, and justification (Galatians 3:24); to reveal to nations how to live in peace (the covenant code of Exodus 21-23); and to make known the guilt of wretched saints to promote sanctification

(Romans 7:18-25). They all knew that through the Law comes the knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20).

All the great revival and evangelistic preachers understood these things and used them powerfully in their preaching. Iain Murray has observed that the preaching of the Eighteenth Century revival preachers like William and Gilbert Tennent, Jonathan Edwards, and George Whitefield was vitally different from the status quo preaching of their day.<sup>62</sup> Prior to these men the commonly accepted preaching was not calculated to break through the prevailing formalism and indifference. Archibald Alexander, writing in the Nineteenth Century, said that the habit of preachers was to address their people as though they were all true Christians and only needed instruction and confirmation. It was not a common thing to proclaim the terrors of a violated law and to insist on the absolute necessity of regeneration. Though a remarkable scholar himself, J.A. Alexander, Archibald's son, was also a great revival preacher who made use of the second person pronoun, preaching for conviction and conversion, as well as for Biblical holiness in true believers.<sup>63</sup> He constantly said, "You have broken God's law. You must repent. You must call on the name of the Lord to save you."

So what kind of preaching prevails today? If you listen carefully to many evangelical preachers today you will hear a common theme. Most preachers assume those present are

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<sup>62</sup> For a very helpful and enlightening look at this issue see Murray's *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography*, published by Banner of Truth. Pages 124-133 are a must read for any preacher wanting to change his ways.

<sup>63</sup> *Theology on Fire: Sermons from the Heart of J.A. Alexander I* have been challenged and edified by reading these sermons.

already true believers. So they preach merely to instruct, to inform, to impart information. They tend to preach to the mind, convinced that by doing so they can affect the will. This is not how Jesus, His apostles, or prophets preached. They bore down on the conscience and heart. They reached the mind and will by going straight for the heart. Most preachers today major on the indicatives (all the great doctrinal truths in the Bible) but rarely preach the imperatives (the commands in Scripture). Consequently there is very little pointed application, very little use of the second person pronoun, very little use of the terrors of the law of God to convict of sin and judgment, very little preaching for a verdict, moving people to do something with what they have just heard. As a result our churches are more than likely filled with many false professors, what Jude so graphically calls “. . . men who dream, defiling the flesh, reviling angelic majesties, those who revile things they do not understand . . . by these things they are destroyed,” (Jude 8-10). Does this not help explain the low level of gospel holiness in our churches? Though vast numbers may be in church the required obedience to God is lacking. The church seems to be no different from the world. John said, “The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him,” (1 John 2:4).

What needs to happen? We must have revival, evangelistic preaching! Edwards said, “I know it has long been fashionable to despise a very earnest and pathetic (impassioned) way of preaching, and they only have been valued as preachers who have shown the greatest extent of learning, strength of reason, and correctness of method and language. But I humbly conceive it has been for want of understanding or duly considering human nature that such preaching has been thought to have the greatest tendency to answer the ends of preaching, and the experience of the

present and past ages abundantly confirms the same.”<sup>64</sup> In other words, we need to get away from the casual, hand-in-the-pocket conversational style of speaking that talking heads on television do. With Isaiah you ought to cry out with a loud voice and not hold back, lifting up your voice like a trumpet, declaring to people their transgressions. There ought to be fervency and urgency in your preaching. If a preacher does not feel what he is preaching, then how can he expect his people to feel it? Isaac Watts, the great Eighteenth Century hymn writer, also said, “Too many persons have imbibed and propagate this notion, that it is almost the only business of a preacher to teach the necessary doctrines and duties of our holy religion by a mere explication of the word of God, without enforcing these things on the conscience by a pathetic (impassioned) address to the heart.”<sup>65</sup>

So practically speaking—if you are a church member then pray for your preacher! Pray that he will either continue or begin to preach to the conscience and heart, not merely to the mind or will. This is the great bane of Reformed preachers. We tend to be far too cerebral. Pray for him to so live in the text he is preaching that he is caught up in the glory of it, that he sees the law of God in it, that he digs deeply into his own heart and conscience, that God would work in him a powerful conviction of personal sin and repentance, having tasted of the glory of Christ’s person and work, that he might, therefore open his mouth so that the Lord may fill it with His words. Pray that his supreme desire

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<sup>64</sup> Cited by Murray in his biography on Edwards, page 126.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

in preaching will be to glorify God by preaching the law and the gospel, expecting regeneration and urging repentance and faith leading to justification and sanctification. Pray for God to give him the anointing of the Holy Spirit so that when he proclaims the gospel he is, as it were, a minister of fire, having come from the presence of God where he has just received the burning coals from the altar on his mouth.

And if you are a pastor or street preacher, then resist the temptation to appear learned, erudite. Resist the temptation to think that all you must do is impart knowledge, to instruct. Your people's indwelling sin as wretched saints is far too strong. It cannot be broken by mere dissemination of information. And the enslaving sin of the unregenerate in your congregation and on the streets, the blinding effects of the evil one, are far too consuming to fall away by your own paltry efforts of appealing to their minds and wills. You must proclaim the terrors of the law, trusting the Holy Spirit to bring conviction, showing them Jesus, moving the people to cry out as those did at Pentecost, "Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

What, specifically then, do we wish to see from evangelistic preaching? Consider the preaching of the prophets, apostles, and the Lord Jesus Himself. When hearing these men preach, the people were never ambivalent. It was never received with a yawn or a "so what" response. Their hearers either loved it or hated it. It was a savor of life unto life or a savor of death unto death. In Acts 2, at the end of his marvelous sermon on the day of Pentecost, when the people were pierced to the heart, or more literally, wounded in conscience, they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles standing with him, "Brethren, what shall we do?" When Stephen preached a similar message to the Sanhedrin in Acts 7 they were cut to the quick and began gnashing their teeth at him. They soon stoned him to death. When Philip

was directed by an angel of the Lord to go south from Jerusalem on the road leading to Gaza, he saw an Ethiopian eunuch in his chariot, reading Isaiah the prophet. The Spirit led Philip to go into the eunuch's chariot and he asked if he understood what he was reading. From there Philip preached Jesus to him. As they went along, clearly the man was under conviction of sin and had believed on Christ because he asked Philip if he could be baptized in water nearby. While Peter was at Joppa he fell into a trance and saw unclean animals coming down on a sheet and a voice cried out, "Peter, kill and eat." This happened three times. Cornelius met Peter in Joppa and told him how the Lord had led him to Peter. Peter went with Cornelius to Caesarea and told the God-fearing Gentiles that the Lord does not show partiality, that in every nation the man who fears Him and obeys Him is welcome to come to Him. While preaching to them the Holy Spirit fell on the God-fearing Gentiles and Peter ordered them to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, just like the Jews and Samaritans before them. When Paul preached on his first missionary journey at Pisidian Antioch the Jews became jealous and stirred up opposition against Paul. Because they repudiated his message he turned to the Gentiles who heard him gladly. The Jews, however, were not finished with raising up opposition against Paul, and they eventually drove Paul from Pisidian Antioch and he traveled from there to Iconium. He met opposition there too and traveled to Lystra and Derbe. Paul was stoned nearly to death in Lystra but got up and continued preaching the gospel. Just about everywhere he went he was persecuted. Many believed the gospel in these towns, while others vehemently and violently rejected the gospel message.

When Paul answered the Macedonian call in Acts 16 and began his ministry in Macedonia, we know he was mistreated in Philippi and Thessalonica. He had a divine

appointment with Lydia, the business woman, who was listening as Paul proclaimed Christ. She responded positively to the message because the Lord had opened her heart to respond to Paul's preaching. She and her household were baptized. After Paul and Silas were miraculously delivered in the Philippian jail, Paul preached to the jailer who said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Obviously the man knew a response was needed. Paul had preached for a verdict, a conviction, and the man knew he was guilty and undone before God. Paul simply said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household," (Acts 16:31). That very hour, in response to the word of the Lord, the jailer and his entire family were baptized. When Paul preached at Athens to the Areopagus he drew the net at the end of his sermon by saying, "God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through One whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead," (Acts 17:30-31). The response was immediate. Most sneered and mocked Paul, but some said they would think it over and get back to him. A few others actually believed on Christ and became His disciples. After Paul's arrest in Jerusalem, as he was brought before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, he preached Jesus in every circumstance, giving reason for his ministry, calling these men and others with them to believe his message of salvation in Christ. Paul zeroed in on Agrippa and said, "King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do." To this Agrippa replied, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian." Paul countered by saying that he wished Agrippa would believe now or later and be just like him, minus his chains (Acts 26:27-29).

We could cite many other examples but here's the point—the evangelist is to preach for a verdict. He wants a conviction.

He prayerfully desires that people hearing the gospel will be burdened, threatened, made very uncomfortable, even fearful of their perilous condition. If they die today, without God's gracious intervention they will die in their sins. Please note also that this message of Christ which exalts God and debases man causes a strong response from its auditors. That response is life unto life or death unto death.

There are many churches in the United States today in which vast crowds gather to worship. While certainly everyone ought to feel welcomed to church, including unbelievers who are living in clear disobedience to the word of God, sooner or later those people ought to feel extremely uncomfortable at the preaching of God's word. If they are fornicating, doing or selling drugs or cheating people in business, then the preaching they are hearing ought to elicit a response of either anger, causing them to leave the church, or humility and conviction leading to repentance and faith. The fact that so many can attend these kinds of churches without the slightest sense of guilt speaks volumes on what they are hearing. Something is amiss. Either the people are not listening or the preacher is not preaching for a conviction. Every sermon should bring, on the one hand, conviction of sin, and on the other hand, comfort. The preacher is to serve as the covenant prosecutor. The audience is the accused and God is the judge. The preacher paints a vivid picture of the Law of God, seeking to bring a conviction, hoping to convince the accused that he in fact is guilty before the judge, that his only hope is to run to the judge for refuge; and the judge has made provision for his sin. He sent His Son to die in our place, thus satisfying His divine justice, being both the just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Are you preaching for a conviction? Are you specifically and graphically applying the Law of God in your preaching? Only



until your audience on the streets or in the church says,  
“Okay, I see now that I am in big trouble. What must I do?”,  
will you be able to apply the balm of Gilead, the Lord Jesus  
Christ as the Savior of sinners.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **THE “HOW TO” OF EVANGELISTIC PREACHING**

James Alexander Bryan, known by everyone in Birmingham, Alabama as Brother Bryan, was born in Kingstree, South Carolina, March 20, 1863, in the middle of the War Between the States. His family suffered severely from the war and Reconstruction, but God graciously supplied for his education at the University of North Carolina and later at Princeton Theological Seminary where he studied under some of the great men of the Nineteenth Century—William H. Green, Casper Wistar Hodge, Francis Patton, B.B. Warfield, and John D. Davis. Brother Bryan came to Third Presbyterian Church in downtown Birmingham in June, 1889 and served there until his death in 1941. While fully subscribing to the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, including a strict Lord’s Day observance, morning and evening family worship, and teaching the children of the church the *Shorter Catechism*, Brother Bryan was a man of profound faith, prayer, evangelistic zeal, and tireless service to rich and poor, black and white. By 1926, thirty-six years into his ministry (he still had another fifteen years to go) the *Birmingham Post-Herald* newspaper wrote that Bryan had—officiated at 4589 weddings and 7926 funerals, preached 49,120 times (that’s nearly four times daily), and led 7627 people to faith in Christ (one every two days).<sup>66</sup> On his death bed, his son heard him whisper, “Too many people.” His son thought Bryan was referring to too many people in the room, that perhaps he wanted them to leave, to which Brother Bryan said, “No, too many people without Christ.” By the way, all six of his children loved Jesus and served Him faithfully. Brother Bryan was a tireless, evangelistic preacher,

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<sup>66</sup> Cited in *Religion in Shoes: Brother Bryan of Birmingham*, by Hunter Blakely, page 17.

taking every opportunity he could, around Birmingham, but also in other places, to preach Christ crucified.

Daniel Baker was another great Nineteenth Century evangelistic preacher. Baker was born at my favorite place in the world, Midway, Georgia, on August 17, 1791, and grew up in the Midway Congregational Church. The Calvinists at Midway came there in 1751 from Dorchester, South Carolina, and before that from Dorchester, Massachusetts, and Dorchester, England. They were New Light Calvinists (following the theology and practice of Whitefield, Edwards, and Tennent) who embraced the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and lived a godly, experiential, Christ-centered Christianity. Though the Midway Church was Congregational, all their ministers were Presbyterians and they produced some of the most powerful and effective Presbyterian ministers of the day—men such as Thomas Goulding, Daniel Baker, Charles C. Jones, John Jones, R.Q. Mallard, James Stacy, Jedediah Morse, and Samuel Eaxson. The Midway Church also planted numerous Presbyterian Churches in the surrounding towns, including Walthourville, Flemington, Dorchester, and Midway. The Midway Presbyterian Church was an African-American congregation that met in the Midway Church after the War Between the States.

Baker was educated at Hampton-Sydney College and was there when a powerful revival broke out among the students. He also witnessed numerous revivals at the Midway Church while growing up there. He married Elizabeth McRoberts at Hampton-Sydney College in 1816, and God blessed the couple with four children. He graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary and was ordained in the Presbyterian Church. Baker served pastorates in Harrisonburg, Virginia, the Second Presbyterian Church of Washington, D.C., and the Independent Presbyterian Church of Savannah, Georgia,

as well as one in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and Frankfort, Kentucky. While preaching at the church in Washington his congregants included President John Quincy Adams and General Andrew Jackson, both of whom spoke of the unusual efficacy and power of his preaching. Baker's greatest success, however, was in revival and evangelistic preaching. He never stayed long at any church as pastor, often experiencing what he called "divine discontent" that pulled him away from pastoral ministry to itinerant evangelistic work. Of course this meant he left attractive places of service and comfortable salaries for travel to destitute regions, often sleeping under the stars, being in peril of dangerous men and animals, spending long periods of time away from his wife and children, and earning barely enough money on which he could survive.

His first full-time evangelistic ministry was in Virginia, Ohio, and Kentucky, with at least 2500 professing faith in Christ within the first two years. He then preached for several weeks at a time in Memphis, Mobile, New Orleans, and many places up and down the Mississippi River Valley. God used his evangelistic preaching to establish many new Presbyterian Churches in west and north Alabama.<sup>67</sup> It seems everywhere Daniel Baker preached revival broke out. On one occasion, when asked the secret of his efficacy, he replied, "If my preaching was crowned with a remarkable blessing, I believe one reason was this: bearing in mind that the word of God, and not the word of man, is quick and powerful, I was a man of one book, and that book the Bible; and taking the hint from an inspired Apostle, I made Jesus Christ and him crucified my constant theme." Ernest Trice Thompson, in his book *Presbyterians in the South, Volume*

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<sup>67</sup> *The Presbyterian Church in Alabama*, James Williams Marshall, page 194.

*One*, asserts that no other Presbyterian preacher has won more converts to the church of Christ.<sup>68</sup>

What was his preaching like? We have but a few of Baker's sermons in an old publication by the Presbyterian Board of Missions, Philadelphia, 1858, but an excerpt from the *Southern Presbyterian Review*, 1847, on a review of several of his evangelistic sermons says these sermons, "Bring afresh before us the impassioned preacher and the thronged assemblies whose hearts were then moved as the trees of the forest are moved before the wind. Still our ideas of what belongs to good taste are not met by these discourses. They abound more in anecdotes, in exclamations, and free colloquialisms, than suit our views . . . Apostrophe, and other strong figures of rhetoric, are too freely used, and carried beyond the bounds of propriety . . . And yet these discourses were blessed in their first delivery, to men of all descriptions, learned and unlearned, cultivated and uncultivated. The vivid moral painting, the fervid impassioned appeal, and the rhetorical mode of presenting argument, are infinitely more likely to move an audience, than a style more rigidly correct, and reasoning more technical and abstract."<sup>69</sup> Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, in *The Mind of the Master*, says that even Arminians could not resist going to hear Baker preach.

The excerpt above implies that Baker preached in a colloquial, anecdotal style that lacked the polish of other accomplished southern Presbyterian preachers of that day, namely men like James Henley Thornwell and Benjamin Palmer. Nonetheless, Baker's preaching connected with people. His passion and fervent appeal bore down into the hearts and minds of his listeners. He preached heart to

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<sup>68</sup> Presbyterians in the South, Thompson, page 429.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

heart. He was a master storyteller who could paint vivid word pictures through illustrations which opened up Biblical concepts to the lost. Having in mind the urgency and helplessness with which one ought to come to Christ, Baker told this story:

Several people were shipwrecked and in the ocean, seeking to make their way to the only lifeboat. The lifeboat could hold eight people and no more, and the boat had all it could take. In desperation a man swam to the boat and tried to make his way into it. He reached one hand on the side of the boat and a man already in the boat cut off his hand with an axe, knowing that to take one more would cause the boat to sink, bringing death for everyone on board. The man, being desperate to save his own life, put his one remaining hand on the side to get into the boat and this hand was cut off as well. Finally, in utter desperation, the man took hold of the boat with his teeth. At this point, the man with the axe relented, and brought the man into the boat. A lost man must see his desperation and inability and then God will show him mercy.<sup>70</sup>

In 1839, Dr. John Breckinridge made a plea for Presbyterians to go to the Republic of Texas and engage in missionary work there. He said to Daniel Baker, “Brother Baker, you are the man.” Daniel Baker responded to the call, knowing that any man who got to Texas prior to January 1, 1840, would be given six hundred and forty acres of land. Due, however, to the many calls on his life to preach, Baker did not reach Galveston until February 1840, thus forfeiting

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<sup>70</sup> Told to me by my friend Pastor Roland Barnes

his opportunity for land. This did not deter him from moving from town to town, sleeping in the wild by night, narrowly escaping many dangerous moments from wicked men and wild animals. In fact, a rumor circulated all the way back to Washington, D.C. that Baker had been murdered. That he was still very much alive frustrated some wonderful obituaries written on his behalf in newspapers across the nation. He performed the first Protestant baptism and Communion service in Texas.

Baker's method, when coming into any town, was to ring a bell or beat a triangle, and go house to house, door to door, rounding up as many people as he could for a preaching service. Usually very few attended the first meeting or two, but then word quickly spread and whole towns would turn out to hear him preach Christ crucified. He planted numerous churches throughout Texas and became Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Galveston in 1848. Again, though, his divine discontent did not allow him to stay long in that church.

He was a great promoter of education, beginning the first Sunday School in the south in the late 1820's in North Carolina, patterning it after one he had seen in Princeton. These early Sunday Schools were for children, teaching them to read and write as well as to learn the Bible and be saved. As was typical of many Presbyterian preachers of the day, when Baker planted a church he also planted a school. He believed the state ought to fund education and allow the church to teach her doctrine in it. He believed that a great need in Texas was a college to provide further education for men there. He established Austin College in Huntsville, Texas, raising \$100,000—a huge sum in those days—by traveling throughout the South. Baker died on December 10, 1857, in Austin, Texas, and had engraved on his tombstone, "Here lies Daniel Baker—Preacher of the Gospel - A Sinner

Saved By Grace.” The House of Delegates in Texas, upon hearing of Baker’s death, adjourned for the day, calling his death a public calamity.

What can we learn from the life and ministry of Daniel Baker? Consider four things. First is his boldness. He was fearless, going where angels fear to tread, so to speak. He was bold to answer difficult calls, consistently leaving the comfort and security of nice pastorates and salaries, serving well-to-do people in various towns, for the hard, dangerous task of incessant travel and little money. He put the gospel before his own personal needs, as when he failed to make it to Galveston prior to January 1, 1840, so that he could procure free land. He was unafraid to take huge risks, going into towns to speak with godless and profane people, boldly calling them to forsake their sin and to believe on Christ. He went after people. He would not simply announce that he was to preach at such and such a time, in such and such a place, but he would go door to door, inviting people to hear him preach. He feared not rejection. He did not allow his Calvinism, especially the doctrine of unconditional election, to keep him from his task to offer the gospel freely to everyone who would listen.

Are you bold in ministry? Boldness comes from the filling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:32). Do you fear the face of man? You are not to be belligerent or caustic in your preaching. You also are not to look for trouble, but you are to be bold in seeking out the lost in your community.

Second, Baker had vision. He was not a pessimist. He looked to what God could do, not to how man may limit Him. He saw opportunity where other men saw obstacles. When challenged by John Breckenridge to go to Texas he quickly answered the call. He saw a vast republic with little Protestant, gospel witness. He saw the future of this vast



land, knowing it would be a powerful force in the world, knowing it needed the gospel of grace as its foundation. He was not unaware of the predominant Roman Catholic persuasion of those living in the region, but this did not daunt him. He quickly saw the long-term needs of Texas, namely quality education if the people were to prosper and succeed. When he mentioned in passing the need for a college, local people in one town raised \$8000 immediately. Baker responded by going throughout the South to raise another \$100,000. He was a man of action, not a man of letters. He was an evangelist, not a theologian. He knew his gifts and calling and gave himself unreservedly to them.

Are you a man of vision or of pessimism? Do you have a clear sense, based on your gifts, passions, and place of ministry and the needs present in your community, of what God wants you to do there? Your purpose is that of any other pastor or evangelist—to fulfill the Great Commission. You are to prepare people for eternity, to be ready to meet God. The way you may go about that task, however, will be very different, even unique, from other men in ministry. When a preacher has a clear sense of his own vision for ministry, given by the Spirit of God, then he will be supremely motivated to carry out that vision, no matter what the opposition.

Third, Daniel Baker was unmistakably, undeniably mission minded. One can only imagine the destitute and dangerous environment of Texas in 1840. On top of this, there was great tension between the Mexican and American governments, leading to war a few years later. Yet in this context Baker readily and willingly left the comforts of pastoral ministry and became a missionary to Texas. He believed his doctrine—that those without Christ perish for eternity in hell. He knew the gospel of Christ was the only remedy for sin, and he put feet to his doctrine by taking the gospel to as many people

as he could. He trained other men to carry on his ministry by establishing Austin College.

Are you unquestionably mission minded? Are you consciously and deliberately involved in discipling the nations? Are you moving your church to considerable investment of time and money in world and home missions? Are you moved by the lost condition of mankind and his unalterable and intolerable future in hell? Are you zealous to preach Christ to him?

And fourth, Baker was a preacher of great power, in the tradition of so many other great Nineteenth Century Southern Presbyterian preachers such as James Henley Thornwell, Benjamin Palmer, John Girardeau, and R.L. Dabney. If Thornwell and Palmer possessed uncommon eloquence, precision, and logic in their preaching, and if Girardeau and Dabney preached with a marvelous practical grasp of Reformed Theology, then Baker preached with a down-home, colloquial style that, united with his passion and zeal, made him a preacher people heard gladly. He had not the intellectual capacities of a Thornwell, Palmer, or Dabney, but he knew himself; and he preached in his own style, according to his own gifts and experiences, all the while maintaining fidelity to doctrine and Scripture. What set him apart from so many preachers of our day is that he *preached*. He did not simply teach or impart information. He preached for a verdict. He was simple, direct, passionate. He knew exactly what he wanted from each sermon and he would not relent until people knew exactly what that sermon demanded of them. He knew man's great need was for repentance from sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He never assumed his audience was all Christian. He forced the issue with them. He preached Christ crucified—the sinfulness of man, the just condemnation of God upon sinful man, wrath removed by the propitiating death of Christ, and

the vital necessity of each man, woman, or child to close with Christ in repentance and faith. He did not preach moralism, “Just try harder to love to God.” He preached Christ. Baker expected people to be moved, to be saved by his preaching, and he was grieved if they did not repent and believe.

Do you expect the same? Are you yourself when preaching, or are you trying to copy someone else? Do you know exactly the objective you wish to elicit from your hearers? If you don't know the objective of your sermon, then surely your listeners will not know it either. Again it is clear that Baker had Holy Spirit unction upon his ministry, and clearly this is the great need in our day. Will you believe and seek God for it in your own preaching?

So, very practically, how are you to preach evangelistically in the church or on the streets? We need first to get a few preliminaries out of the way. I have already written extensively on the necessity of the Holy Spirit in preaching, so I will not spend much more time on the issue, though it certainly is a vital one.

As Paul, the apostle, began his second missionary journey from Jerusalem, his intention was to visit the churches established in Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe on his first missionary journey, and then to make his way north into Bithynia (the modern day Istanbul, Turkey region). He was forbidden by the Holy Spirit to go there. The Spirit also did not allow him to go into Asia (Asia Minor, modern day western Turkey). He passed through the Galatian and Phrygian regions and finally made his way to Troas. There he received the Macedonian vision, “Come over to Macedonia and help us,” (Acts 16:9). Paul then followed the Spirit's leading into Europe where he preached the gospel of grace in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. He always began

with the Jews but they soon rebelled and he then preached to the Gentiles. Everywhere he went Paul met with terrible persecution, beatings, and imprisonment. He then made his way to Athens and received a cold reception, with only a few believing the gospel. Paul continued south into Achaia and established a church in the wicked city of Corinth. After completing his ministry in Corinth, Paul sailed across the Aegean Sea and stopped briefly in Asia Minor at the prominent and important city of Ephesus, one of the top five cities of the Roman Empire. Paul continued back to Jerusalem to report to the church leaders of the mighty things God wrought on his journey. On his third journey Paul made a straight line from Antioch to Ephesus and stayed there for three years, eventually teaching daily in the school of Tyrannus. Upon his arrival Paul found some disciples of John who received John's baptism. He asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They said, "No, we do not even know if there is a Holy Spirit," (Acts 19:2-3). Paul laid hands on these formerly pagan, Gentiles and they received the Holy Spirit (as the Jews did at Pentecost in Acts 2, the Samaritans did in Acts 8, as the God fearing Gentiles did in Acts 10). So the gospel had gone from Jerusalem and Judea to Samaria, and to the utter most parts of the earth, as Jesus promised it would when the Spirit came upon them in power (Acts 1:8).

Then Luke recounts the amazing work of grace wrought by the Holy Spirit through Paul's ministry in Ephesus, the center of culture and worship of the cultic, pagan goddess Diana. The Temple of Diana was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world (it was 225 feet wide, 425 feet long, with 127 marble pillars supporting the roof, each 60 feet tall). The church at Ephesus became an "epi-center" church where at

least nine more churches were planted in Asia Minor.<sup>71</sup> Demonic possession was exposed and overcome by the gospel. Those engaged in witchcraft repented and put away their idols to serve the true and living God. The silversmiths lost business because so many were converting to Christ and no longer buying the silver trinkets of the goddess. A riot broke out in the local sports stadium, lasting two hours, as the city fathers tried to stir up resentment toward Paul and the gospel, seeking to garner support for the goddess. An amazing transformation took place there.

How did it happen? While on his way to Jerusalem, after completing his third journey, Paul called for the Ephesian elders to meet him at Miletus. He then reminded them of his ministry among them, how he labored in humility and tears, facing opposition and persecution from the Jews and Gentiles, how he did not shrink from declaring anything profitable to them, how he publicly and from door to door preached repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, not counting his own life as dear to himself so that he may carry out God's call upon his life, namely to testify solemnly of the grace of God in Christ Jesus (Acts 20:17-24).

But why was this ministry successful? The only explanation is the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

My brethren, you must ask for the Holy Spirit. After all, you are carrying this glorious gospel message in your earthen vessel—your frail, weak, fleshly body. After all, the gospel is veiled to the unbelieving by the devil so that they cannot see the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus. After all, this

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<sup>71</sup> Revelation 2,3 tells us of seven—Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. Then we know of at least three more cited in Colossians—Colossae, Hierapolis, Nympha.

gospel you preach is a savor of life to some and a savor of death to others. Who is sufficient for these things? You have agnostics, atheists, vile and immoral sinners, self-righteous, religious, and irreligious people in your communities. How possibly can you reach them—by your good looks, your winsome personality, your great music ministry, your wonderful master plan, your gifted expository preaching, your theological acumen, your years of experience in ministry? What are these in the face of unbelief and hostility to gospel truth?

My friends, you must have the Spirit and you must ask for Him. When His disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, He taught them to pray using the Lord’s Prayer. He illustrated the need for persistence, by telling the story of the man who was in bed at midnight, and his friend knocked on his door, wanting to borrow bread for a late night guest. The man on the inside told his friend to go away, to come back in the morning. After all, they were all asleep in their beds. But the man continued knocking and his friend finally got out of bed and gave his friend what he requested, not because of their friendship but because he was so persistent. He would not leave unless he had his request answered. Jesus then drives home a very practical application—“Ask and you shall receive. Seek and you shall find. Knock and the door shall be opened to you.” He then applies it powerfully by saying, “If you, being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?” (Luke 11:1-13). Persistence in prayer, illustrated by asking, seeking, and knocking, clearly is to yield the Spirit’s convicting and converting power. Leonard Ravenhill repeatedly said, “Little prayer, little power. More prayer, more power. Much prayer, much power.”<sup>72</sup> The

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<sup>72</sup> Cited *In Light of Eternity: The Life of Leonard Ravenhill*, Mack Tomlinson.

Spirit's presence is certainly the only explanation for the ministry of men like Martyn Lloyd-Jones, George Whitefield, John Wesley, Asahel Nettleton, Jonathan Edwards, Samuel Davies, Howell Harris, Daniel Rowland, Charles Spurgeon, James Henley Thornwell, John Girardeau, Brother Bryan, and Daniel Baker. This all came by prayer as they and others asked for the Holy Spirit to fall upon them, their preaching, and their audiences.

What results from the Spirit's presence and power? At the very least you will experience personal revival. You will find an increased joy, boldness, power, and efficacy in your daily walk and ministry. You will find that the Spirit will go before you, preparing open doors of ministry, making you a catalyst for help, comfort, sanctification, conversion, or whatever work of grace the Spirit sovereignly designs to accomplish. You may see something similar happen to your friends or family members, to your church if you are a pastor or elder. In other words, you may find God coming down upon your church or community in a mini-revival. And then, perhaps God in His great and tender mercy will visit us again with showers of blessing, an outpouring of the Spirit on the dry, parched ground of the western world, a place where once the revival fires burned brightly, altering the landscape of our nations.

By all means, hold onto your Reformed Theology, read your good, theological books, but realize mere preaching, planning, programs, and personalities will never bring the change so desperately needed. You must have the Spirit and you can have Him today, everyday, if you want Him, if you seek Him in repentance and faith. "If you seek Him, you will find Him, if you seek Him with all your heart," (Jeremiah 29:13).

If the filling of the Holy Spirit yields conviction of sin, conversion, and sanctification; if the preacher can expect his words to bring forth Holy Spirit fruit, then this begs at least two questions—how do we tap into this power and what can prevent His power in our lives and ministries? If you are in Christ Jesus then the Holy Spirit resides in you, but you can live without His felt presence and power. Therefore you must consciously ask for the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:1-13). You must believe He can fill you and work through you. When you are filled with the Holy Spirit you should expect people to come under conviction of sin as you preach or share Jesus with them. You should expect people to call on the name of the Lord to be saved. And you should expect believers to be challenged and moved to greater holiness by your words and exhortations from Scripture.

Each morning, in my personal devotional time, I pray something like this, “Good morning, Holy Spirit. I ask You to fill me today. I ask that You direct my path and bring me into contact with someone who needs Jesus. If You open the door for gospel conversation, then I will go through it. And when I preach today, I ask, Holy Spirit, that You fill me, empower me. I need Your anointing, Your unction on my preaching, on my life and ministry. I have nothing to offer in my flesh. I can do nothing apart from You. So please come upon me and empower me for Your glory. Open my mouth and fill it with Your word.” And I find myself praying this repeatedly throughout the day.

Do you lack power in your life? Are you ineffective in telling people about Jesus? Does your preaching or teaching seem to lack supernatural power? Do people seem ambivalent, rarely moved to action by your teaching or preaching? Do people continue in their sin, rarely being convicted to repent and run to Jesus for the refuge of salvation or sanctification? If so, consider this—is it possible that you do not really



believe anything can happen in and through you? Maybe you say you believe in the Spirit but are you actually trusting in your own experience, ability, gifts, or training? Maybe you have fallen into the trap of rationalism, a scourge of modernity—that mere dissemination of information is all that is necessary. So begin here—do you really believe in the Holy Spirit?

But let's assume you, in fact, do believe in the Spirit, that you do expect Him to work in and through you, but you know you are still seeing very little happen. What then? I suggest you ask yourself—"Is it possible that I have grieved, quenched, or even insulted the Holy Spirit?"

What does this mean? Literally the Greek text of Ephesians 4:30 reads, "Grieve not the Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God." This is quite emphatic. This is a present tense command, meaning we are always, everyday commanded by God not to grieve the Holy Spirit. So, how do you know if you are grieving the Spirit? The context of this verse gives us the answer. In verses 17-32 Paul lays out a series of commands on how the believers in Ephesus were to live. He begins in verse 17 by saying, "So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you no longer walk as the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their minds, being darkened in their understanding, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their hearts . . ." From there Paul commands them to put off the old man, to be renewed in the spirit of their minds, to put on the new man, to lay aside falsehood and to speak truth to one another, to be angry and not sin, to not give the devil an opportunity, to not steal, to not speak unwholesome words, to put aside bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice. So to grieve the Holy Spirit is to disobey God in these specific commands. You can be sure that any sin grieves the Holy Spirit. Martyn Lloyd-Jones also says that grieving the Holy Spirit is to disappoint Him, to not

listen to His promptings that come to your heart and mind.<sup>73</sup> This is like a wife who publicly embarrasses her husband. He is grieved. The Holy Spirit can be embarrassed by your actions. And while you still belong to God, the result of grieving the Spirit, besides short-circuiting power in ministry, is losing His gracious influences. The more you sin the less sure you are of God's love for you, the less joy you have, the less faith you have to believe God will answer your prayers.

But we can also quench the Holy Spirit (1Thessalonians 5:19). What does this mean? The context, again, gives us a clue to its meaning. Verses 20-22 say, "Do not treat prophecies with contempt, but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil." Prophetic utterance has the idea of speaking forth the word of God. So one is quenching the Spirit when he resists the preaching of God's word, when he mocks it, criticizing the preacher who is doing his best to preach accurately and faithfully the Biblical text. By all means, we are to make sure a man's preaching is Biblical and theologically sound, but to reject, mock, or criticize true preaching just because someone does not like the delivery style is a serious matter indeed. To not hold onto the good word that is preached, to disobey the preacher's clear exhortation to reject every kind of evil to which the Biblical text is speaking, is to quench the Spirit. The Spirit is seeking to work in and through the preacher to promote holiness in his hearers, and anyone who takes lightly the speaking forth of God's word is throwing water on the fire of the Holy Spirit.

And then every believer is commanded not to insult the Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:29). The writer here is putting forth a severe warning to second generation believers who have

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<sup>73</sup> *Darkness and Light: An Exposition of Ephesians 4:17-5:17*, pages 264-277.

continued sinning willfully, blatantly, and consciously without the slightest desire to repent and return to the Lord. He says they have rejected the person of Christ (trampling under foot the Son of God), rejected the work of Christ (regarding as unclean the blood of the covenant by which they are sanctified), and insulted, mocked, and ignored the Spirit (God's gracious source of power and ability to obey Him).<sup>74</sup> The Holy Spirit is the One who brings to us regenerating grace, who applies the fullness of Christ's redemptive work (regeneration, justification, reconciliation, adoption, expiation, propitiation, and sanctification) to every believer. To reject consistently<sup>75</sup> the marvelous overtures of the Spirit's gracious work is the height of rebellion and folly. When the Spirit is prompting His people to put away a specific sin, and they continue in it, unabated and unrepentant, then they are in danger of insulting the Spirit. We love to hear of the mercy and grace of God, but we also must remember the severity of His judgment and wrath upon the unrepentant.

So, if you lack power in your preaching ministry, ask yourself- "Have I grieved the Spirit, have I quenched the Spirit, am I in danger of insulting the Spirit?" Remember - the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses (2 Corinthians 10:4).

Roy Hession, the author of the devotional classic *The Calvary Road*, admitted that he was lacking power in his

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<sup>74</sup> *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of Hebrews*, Simon Kistemaker, page 295.

<sup>75</sup> That is, if we go on sinning willfully, after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain, terrifying expectation of judgment, Hebrews 10:26-27.

evangelistic ministry. The fruitfulness of his ministry had waned and he did not know why. On one occasion he was with some African pastors and they were discussing this problem. They said, “We are not sure of the reason you are lacking power, but perhaps it is because of the way you speak to your wife. We noticed that you seem to speak to her like she is your secretary.” Hession sought the Lord on the matter and became sorely convicted of his sin. He confessed his harshness and neglect to his wife and repented, asking for the filling and empowering of the Spirit.<sup>76</sup> Hession reminds us that revival begins at home. If we cannot get it right in our marriages and with our children, then why should we expect gospel power in the world and church.

How are things in the home? It may be that your wife has been saying to you, “You always run roughshod over me. You never listen to me. It is all about you and your schedule. You put your tasks and schedule before people all the time.” Perhaps you get around to confessing your sin and apologizing, but nothing seems to change. You go back to the same old thing. Perhaps you should say to your wife, “I am going to pray about this for a couple of days, asking the Holy Spirit to show me my sin. I will get back to you on this.” It may be that God begins to show you the ugliness, pride, and arrogance of your self-absorption. You may find that the Holy Spirit reveals to you that it does seem to be “all about me.” Often, however, the reason we continue going back to the same sins is because the evil one has a stronghold on us in a particular area of our lives. We break this stronghold, by the work of the Spirit, as we make restitution, as we bring forth actual fruits of repentance. Jesus said that if our brother has something against us, then we are to leave our offering

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<sup>76</sup> *The Calvary Road*, page 15.

at the altar, go be reconciled (literally to become friends again), and then come and present our offering (Matthew 5:23). If for example, you accidentally break your wife's favorite vase, and this is not the first time this has happened, but you seldom, if ever, apologize or buy her a new one, perhaps you need to make restitution by replacing the various items you have broken over the years of your marriage.

We need Holy Ghost power in our families and in ministry. Business as usual is not working. We have that power available to us, but sin is blocking the flow of that power. Imagine that you are in your church's Sunday morning worship service and Jesus is bodily present (He is, of course, present spiritually) and Jesus is walking through the pews with a silver pitcher filled with the living water of the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39). He walks up to each one in the service, intending to fill each believer's cup with the water of the Spirit. To one, He says, "Okay, receive the Holy Spirit," but to another, He silently passes by without filling his cup. What's the difference? One person's cup is clean and the other person's is not." The Psalmist says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me," (Psalm 66:18). Our sins make a separation between us and our God (Isaiah 59:1-2). Husbands who refuse to live with their wives in an understanding way will have their prayers hindered (1 Peter 3:7). If we say that we have no sin then we are deceiving ourselves (1 John 1:8). God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6). What, then, must you do? You must ask God the Holy Spirit to convict you of your sin (to convince you that your actions and attitudes are sin, no matter how small or petty they may seem). You must sincerely grieve over them (blessed are those who mourn, Matthew 5:4), repenting, humbling yourself before God, agreeing with Him that your behavior is rebellious and prideful. Then comes the beauty of sanctifying grace. "If we

confess our sins, then God is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,” (1 John 1:9). This is revival, beginning in the home—what the brethren of the East African revival used to call “repenting and rejoicing.” In an instant, upon sincere contrition leading to confession and asking for the cleansing blood of Jesus, the repentant believer is filled with the Spirit.

Another analogy is the highway of holiness (Isaiah 35:8). This highway leads up to Zion, the new Jerusalem. There is only one entrance ramp onto the highway of holiness and it is the cross of Christ, and the cross has a small door at its base. One must bow down low to the ground to enter the narrow gate through the cross. As we do so, we then are walking in the light, as Jesus is in the light, having fellowship with our brothers and sisters, being constantly cleansed by the blood of Jesus. So, Jesus is walking with us on the highway of holiness, as are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Each side of the highway has utter darkness and we can easily stray off the road into that darkness. One knows he is there when he tries to hide his sinful attitudes and actions from God and others, when he tries to downplay them, projecting them onto others, calling them mistakes, poor acts of judgment rather what they are—rebellion against the great lover of his soul. A person will also know he is off the highway of holiness when he is having tension with loved ones, especially family members. When you are on the highway of holiness you are enjoying sweet fellowship in Jesus. When you get into the darkness off the highway, you must repent. How? By going back to the entrance ramp, the cross, bowing down and crawling through on your knees.

One more analogy. God sovereignly bestows spiritual gifts as He wills (Ephesians 4:7, 1 Corinthians 12:4-7). We have no control over the gift we receive nor of the degree it is given to us. For example, you may have the gift of teaching

like R.C. Sproul but you may not have it to the large degree that he has it. In other words, your spiritual gift of teaching, evangelism, or mercy ministry comes from God. Think of your gift as a pipe and the diameter of the pipe is the degree to which you have that gift. The diameter of the pipe of your teaching gift may be one foot, while Sproul's may be three feet. You have no control over that. God is sovereign. However you do have the responsibility of keeping the debris out of your pipe so that the water of the Holy Spirit may flow unrestrictedly in and through your life. So, ask the Holy Spirit to ransack your heart (like the TSA agent who takes you out of line, opens your suitcase, and rummages carefully through all your stuff), to show you any hurtful way in you and to lead you in the everlasting way (Psalm 139:23-24).

This is the way to a powerful preaching ministry. This is the way to Spirit anointed preaching which the world so desperately needs. This is not rocket science. Ask God to show you your sin, especially in your marriage and with your children, those closest to you. Ask the Spirit to bring deep conviction and contrition, that you truly feel the weight of your sin, that you humbly confess your sin to your wife and children, even if they do not reciprocate. Then immediately claim the cleansing blood of Jesus and the filling of the Holy Spirit. This is revival power—repenting and rejoicing, repenting and rejoicing.

We need to address one other preliminary item before moving into specifics on the *how to* of evangelistic preaching. We cannot emphasize enough the necessity of divine eloquence which every preacher needs. This is not a “Johnny-come-lately-emphasis” found only in charismatic churches. We have seen earlier that unction or the anointing is in fact a Biblical doctrine. Consider briefly several preachers of the past and present who have sought and experienced the anointing on their ministries.

*I affirm that ordinary preaching produces ordinary results. Those who purpose to sound good when they preach may anticipate compliments. Those who seek to impart knowledge may expect to succeed. Those who yearn to see transformed lives and preach the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit will be prepared to see conversions and growth in personal holiness among their hearers.<sup>77</sup>*

Martyn Lloyd-Jones has this to say about Spirit anointed preaching.

*So-called “intellectual preaching” was patently at variance with the Bible. “As I read the Gospels,” he told his congregation as he began his second year in Aberavon, “any man who gives the impression that the mind of Christ is open only to scholarship and learning is false to the very fundamentals of Christ’s teaching... Yet despite its uselessness, this learned style was sometimes treated with respect.<sup>78</sup>*

*Modern preaching, Dr. Lloyd-Jones believed, had gone fundamentally wrong. He saw the main proof of that fact in the failure of the pulpit to recognize that the first work of the Holy Spirit is to convict of sin and to humble man in the presence of God... C.H. Spurgeon declared, In the beginning, the preacher’s business is not to convert men but the very reverse. It is idle to attempt to heal those who are not wounded, to attempt to clothe those who have never been stripped, and to make those rich who have never realized their poverty. As long as the world stands, we shall*

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<sup>77</sup> *Revival!* Richard Owen Roberts, page 17.

<sup>78</sup> *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The First Forty Years, 1899-1939*, Iain Murray, page 205.



*need the Holy Ghost, not only as the Comforter, but also as the Convincer, who will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.*<sup>79</sup>

In his chapter on “Preaching with Authority”, Don Kistler writes,

*Jesus preached with authority. Why? Because He had authority. And the preachers of old preached with authority. They preached, ‘Thus saith the Lord.’ We have lost that today, I’m afraid. Our preaching reflects it and the lives of our people reflect it as well. They live as if the pastor had no authority, as if the elders had no authority and even more appalling, as if the Word of God itself had no authority<sup>80</sup> . . . We can preach with authority because Christ has given us authority<sup>81</sup> . . . When Jesus preached, He didn’t wait for someone to validate His message or authority . . . Too often preachers give their people the impression that all they need to do is think about what has been said . . . Fine, think about it and then do it. God never gave us His Word to think about, God gave us His Word to obey . . . Preachers must preach for conviction and change.<sup>82</sup>*

*The power of the pulpit is indicated by those immediate and direct influences, which it exerts in producing and sustaining*

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid. page 206.

<sup>80</sup> *Feed My Sheep: A Passionate Plea for Preaching*, Don Kistler, page 219.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. page 222.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. page 225.

*the interests of truth and godliness among men, and fitting them for a higher and nobler state of being.*<sup>83</sup>

In commenting on the difference between reading a preacher's sermons and listening to him preach in person, Gardiner Spring says:

*When you read the discourses of Whitefield, you can scarcely be persuaded that he was the prince of preachers; and that the author of those printed pages was the man who collected 20,000 hearers in the open field at Leeds; who fascinated all ranks of society; who held Hume in profound admiration; and who brought the infidel Chesterfield to his feet, with outstretched arms, to rescue the wanderer from the fold of God, whom the preacher represented in the act of falling over the precipice. You read his sermons, but the preacher is not there . . . That voice, at a single intonation of which a whole audience has been known to burst into tears, is not there. That instant communication between the living speaker and his hearers, which creates so powerful a sympathy, is not there.*<sup>84</sup>

Edward Donnelly in *Peter: Eyewitness of His Majesty* includes a chapter titled "Spirit- filled Preaching," in which he describes how the Holy Spirit might affect the pulpit today. He wrote,

*"Most true preachers have had experience of this marvelous enabling. Its coming is unpredictable, often unexpected. Suddenly the minister's heart is aflame and his words seem clothed with a new power. The congregation is strangely*

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<sup>83</sup> *The Power of the Pulpit: Thoughts Addressed to Christian Ministers and Those Who Hear Them*, Gardiner Spring, page 5.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* page 59.

*hushed or moved. There is a palpable sense of the presence of God. The Spirit exercises a melting, penetrating influence so that all are aware that momentous issues are before them . . . Such an experience is unforgettable, addictive, a day of heaven on earth. Once a preacher has known the richness of God's enabling, he can never again rest satisfied without it.*<sup>85</sup>

Marcel defines unction in terms of "the freedom of the Spirit."

*It is the extraordinary development of the faculties: the soul, the tongue, the mind, the affections. This unction "belongs only to the spoken style" . . . Many times such unction comes in declaring the glories of Christ or in application of the truth, especially to the unconverted . . . Unction can be defined as the preacher and the congregation experiencing the truths of 1 Corinthians 2:4, 1 Thessalonians 1:5, 2:13, and 1 Peter 4:11.*<sup>86</sup>

*God-owned biblical preaching, which reaches people with the truth can be pictured as a convergence of two forces, one from above, one from underneath. The force from above is the unction of the Spirit, the felt power of the truth, which comes mightily on the man of God when preaching. The force erupting from underneath is the man of God's own biblical theology of preaching, which is always beneath him, but in the act of preaching, combined with the force from above, serves to propel the man of God in such a way that preaching becomes "truth on fire."*<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> *The Holy Spirit*, Geoffrey Thomas, page 235.

<sup>86</sup> Cited in *My Heart for the Cause: Albert N. Martin's Theology of Preaching*, page 50.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* page 128.

*Pray for and expect the aid of the Spirit in suggesting additional applications in the act of preaching . . . This is part of what has been called “unction” or the “anointing.” Anyone familiar with extemporaneous preaching should be familiar with this peculiar work of the Spirit. If there is to be true Spirit-empowered preaching, then there must be earnest, prayerful, heart-felt dependence on the Spirit.<sup>88</sup>*

*Sermons succeed when the Holy Spirit works beyond human craft to perform his purposes . . . We serve best when we not only depend on the Holy Spirit to empower our words, but also craft them so as to honor him.<sup>89</sup>*

*Preaching, which is, properly speaking, the word preached, depends entirely on the Spirit.<sup>90</sup>*

David Eby also cites Marcel:

*Living under the dispensation of the Spirit, it is of capital importance for us to remember that we are absolutely dependent on a divine Person who grants or withholds his presence according to his pleasure, that he can be grieved and offended, that his presence and his gifts must be sought with humility and great seriousness, and cherished constantly. Every good intention, every upright thought, every grace and every kindness, all strength and comfort,*

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid. page 172.

<sup>89</sup> *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, Bryan Chapell, page 257.

<sup>90</sup> Cited by David Eby in his *Power Preaching for Church Growth: The Role of Preaching in Growing Churches*, on page 86. *The Relevance of Preaching*, Pierre Marcel

*the conquest of souls for Christ, etc. can and must be imputed only by the Spirit.*<sup>91</sup>

Now, what about the actual act of evangelistic preaching? How do we do it? After asking for the anointing of the Spirit, we must understand there is one message in evangelistic preaching. When preaching to a congregation of believers, whether topical or expository preaching through books of the Bible, the central message will change from sermon to sermon. For example, in preaching through Ephesians a pastor will find that his sermons in Ephesians 1-3 will be more doctrinal in nature. That's because Paul is laying down marvelous doctrine on the nature of our glorious salvation. In preaching from Ephesians 1:3 he will emphasize the glory of our spiritual blessings in Christ. In verses 4,5 he will emphasize the doctrine of election. In chapter two, verses 1-3, he will stress our former, lost condition. In verse 4 he will proclaim the beauty of "But God." When coming to Ephesians 4-6, however, he will bear down on the commands which fill these chapters, all of which flow from the glories of our stated salvation from Ephesians 1-3. A sermon from Ephesians 4:1,2 will be on the vital necessity of striving for unity in the body of Christ. Later, when he comes to verse 31, he will call his people to put away bitterness, anger, wrath, clamor, slander, and malice. In chapter five he will preach on the roles of wives and husbands, and in chapter six on children, and workers. He will preach on spiritual warfare and praying in the Spirit.

But evangelistic preaching is different. There is one note and one note only. It is a message of proclaiming Christ Jesus and Him crucified. More specifically, it is heralding the nature of the Triune God, the depravity of man and his consequent

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid. page 138.

judgment, the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the call to repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, consequently receiving the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We see the beginning of this message in the Old Testament prophets. Isaiah says, "Come now, and let us reason together," says the Lord, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool," (Isaiah 1:18). Jeremiah proclaims, "Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place," (Jeremiah 7:3). Ezekiel wrote, "I am not doing this for your sake," declares the Lord, "let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel," (Ezekiel 36:32). Jonah said, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown," (Jonah 3:4). Daniel says that those who lead the many to righteousness will shine brightly like the sun forever and ever (Daniel 12:3). Zechariah says, "Return to Me," declares the Lord of hosts, "that I may return to you," (Zechariah 1:3).

The overarching message of evangelistic preaching is more fully developed in the preaching of the Lord Jesus. He said, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the gospel," (Mark 1:15). A little later He said, in reading in the synagogue from Isaiah, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor," (Luke 4:18). Later still He said, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest," (Matthew 11:28). He told His disciples, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me shall live, even if he dies," (John 11:25). He said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Me," (John 14:6). And we find this one message to the lost throughout the book of Acts. On the day of Pentecost, when the promised Holy Spirit had come, when

the people were deeply convicted by Peter's preaching, crying out, "What shall we do?" He replied, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit," (Acts 2:38). When Peter was brought before the Sanhedrin due to his street preaching, when filled with the Holy Spirit, he said, "He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved," (Acts 4:11-12). Philip went down to the city of Samaria from Jerusalem and began proclaiming Christ to them (Acts 8:5). Philip was also directed to the Ethiopian eunuch who was reading Isaiah 53 and did not understand it. Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from Isaiah 53, he preached Jesus to the man (Acts 8:35). On his first missionary journey, at Iconium, Paul and Barnabas spent a long time there speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was testifying to the word of His grace (Acts 14:3). On his second missionary journey, Paul met Lydia and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul (Acts 16:14). Later, while imprisoned, after the earthquake which freed them, Paul responded to the question of the jailer, "What must I do to be saved?". He said "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household," (Acts 16:30,31). Paul told the Areopagus at Mars Hill, "Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent," (Acts 17:30).

And the epistles of all the apostles make clear this one message of evangelistic preaching. Paul told the Romans, "I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to all who believe," (Acts 1:16). He said that all have fallen short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus

(Romans 3:23-24). Paul said, "I determined to know nothing among you except Christ Jesus and Him crucified," (1 Corinthians 2:2). He said, "Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord we persuade men . . . we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God," (2 Corinthians 5:11,20). He told the Ephesians that he was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ and to bring to light what was previously hidden in God who created all things (Ephesians 3:7-9). He said to the Colossians, "We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom so that we may present every man complete in Christ," (Colossians 1:28). Paul reminded the believers at Thessalonica that as he had been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so he spoke, not as pleasing men but God who examines our hearts (1 Thessalonians 2:4). Near the end in Rome, just prior to his martyrdom, Paul told Timothy, "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction," (2 Timothy 4:2). Hebrews asks, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" (Hebrews 2:3). James tells us to receive the word implanted which is able to save our souls (James 1:21). He also tells us that if one strays from the truth and someone turns him back, then that person's soul will be saved from death (James 5:20). Peter tells us that the word we preach is a prophetic word, made more sure, that no prophecy of Scripture is ever a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by act of the human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God (2 Peter 1:19-21). John said, "This is the testimony we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all," (1 John 1:5). He also said, "The witness is this, that God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life. He who does not have the Son of God does not have life," (1 John 5:10-12). An angel spoke to the Apostle John saying,



“Worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy,” (Revelation 19:10). He said, “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star,” (Revelation 22:16). The evangelistic message, throughout the Bible is one—“We preach not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your bondservants for Jesus’ sake,” (2 Corinthians 4:5).

Now let’s get very specific and practical concerning this one message. First, we must preach to the affections of the unbeliever. Josh Moody and Robin Weekes<sup>92</sup> define the affections as the movement of our thoughts, feelings, and will toward a desired object, person, or event. An affection, they say, is what inclines us to something (whereas an effect is what results from something). In other words, affections are what move us towards action. We do what we love or begin to love. Preaching to the affections is preaching to the heart. The heart is the center of our being, the core, the very essence of who we are. “Watch over your own heart with diligence, for from it flow the springs of life,” (Proverbs 4:23). In the Old Testament the personal, emotional, intellectual, and volitional are all encompassed in the notion of the heart.<sup>93</sup> In the New Testament we see the idea of the heart more fully developed to include emotions and thoughts.<sup>94</sup> So, to preach to the heart is to preach for transformation. Teaching and preaching are not the same thing. Teaching yields information while preaching produces transformation.

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<sup>92</sup> *Burning Hearts: Preaching to the Affections*, page 14. For a much fuller discussion on preaching to the affections, I heartily recommend this book.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* page 16, Exodus 9:12, Judges 18:20, Deuteronomy 7:17, 1 Samuel 2:35, 1 Samuel 16:7, 1 Kings 3:9.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.* Mark 2:6, 8, Mark 3:5, Luke 24:32.

Preaching reaches the affections or heart which consequently moves the mind, emotions, and will to a pursuit of God. In the context of preaching to the lost, such preaching often moves the unconverted sinner to repent and believe the gospel. In the life of the believer, such preaching moves him to repentance and gospel holiness of life. To be sure, the unbeliever's heart is deceitful and wicked. He does not know the truth. His mind is blinded by the devil so that he cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God. He is dead in his sins. His foolish heart is darkened. He is helpless, totally unable and unwilling to call upon the name of the Lord to save him. He has no hunger for the truth. He cannot comprehend it because the word of the cross is foolishness to him. Nonetheless, your job is to appeal to his affections—his heart, mind, and will, in this order. One of the greatest weaknesses in modern day preaching is the mistaken notion that we are first to appeal to the mind. Doing so will never convince a person to change, to repent, to call upon the name of the Lord. Jesus said that we are to make disciples of all nations, teaching them to *observe* all that He has taught us. Action, change, transformation is what we are after. In evangelistic preaching we are after the souls of men. We want conversions. Think of it this way—if my young granddaughter is visiting us and we teach her how to make her bed, are we then sure that she will make up her bed when we ask her to do so? No. Something must happen between her mind and her heart. She must be willing to make up her bed. An appeal to her affections, which in turn moves her mind, emotions, and will is necessary. Likewise, simply informing people about who Jesus is, what He did, their sin, the judgment under which they are living, the necessity of faith and repentance, will not be enough to bring sincere conversion. Their hearts must be touched, moved, to action. The heart is the very core of one's being. It is central to who we are in God's image.

So, how do you preach to the heart? First, as in everything else connected to your preaching ministry, you must be aware of your inability to change anyone. You must gain a sense of deep desperation. This alone will drive you to earnest prayer where you ask for the Holy Spirit, His anointing, to visit your preaching. I have already written at length concerning the anointing so make sure you go back over that material. With this you must daily obey the commands of Scripture. You must labor for a clean conscience before God, meaning you must ask for a tender conscience which causes you to tremble at the word of God. When the Spirit brings conviction of sin you must then quickly run to Jesus in contrition, confession, repentance, and surrender. The moment you do so you are filled with the Spirit and the blood of Jesus has once again cleansed you of all your sin.

To go further, to preach to the heart means that you trust the Holy Spirit to connect your heart with your audience. Your words must be energized by the Spirit. You must preach with passion and zeal, with humility, and love. You must learn to use word pictures, vivid imagery in your preaching. For example, in telling stories or using illustrations, picture the event in your mind and then describe what you are seeing. Go into detail. Be careful. You never want to manipulate your audience, but at the same time you want to draw them to your preaching. Unconsciously, as they are walking by at a sporting event or standing before you on a college campus, or having come to a Christmas Eve or Easter Sunday worship service, with their arms figuratively or literally folded in front of them, they are thinking, "Why should I listen to this man?" So, instead of simply telling people that they are living under the wrath of God, you must paint a picture for them of just how awful that is. In speaking of their rebellious heart which loves sin and hates God, you should use graphic imagery which registers with their hearts. I refer to the

rebellious heart as a cobra heart. When speaking of the sin, shame, guilt, and condemnation under which people live, I say they have a filthy past, like a pit latrine. When seeking to reveal the damage they have done to others with their lives, I say they have a poisonous life. They leave, in their wake, destruction and misery in broken relationships. In speaking of the propitiating death of the Lord Jesus, that by His death and resurrection He removed the just condemnation we deserve; I speak of how Psalm 5 says that God abhors or hates the man of bloodshed and deceit. I then refer to 2 Corinthians 5:21 where Paul says that God sent Jesus who knew no sin to become sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God through Him. I point out that for the three hours Jesus hung upon the cross, He took the sins of all His people for all ages, and thus during His time on the cross, He became our bloodshed and deceit. In other words, for His time on the cross the Father abhorred His Son because He had become sin for us. You must also “feel” the text you are preaching. As you read, study, and meditate on the text, look for the emotive words there. You must smell the sulfur coming up from hellfire. You must envision yourself standing at the gate leading to hell, warning people to not go there, to run to refuge from sin, to the only Savior of sinners, the Lord Jesus Christ. You must feel the marvelous love and sacrifice our blessed Savior made on your behalf. You should put yourself at the cattle trough on the night the Lord Jesus was born, seeing Mary wrap her cold, helpless baby in swaddling cloths. You should get inside the heart and affections of our crucified Savior as He, in utter anguish, cried out, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” You should seek to feel the joy and amazement of Mary as she saw the risen Christ on that Easter morning. With Robert Murray M’Cheyne you want to preach as a dying man to dying people as though you will never preach again. Preach like you will go to heaven tomorrow!

And you must also labor diligently to preach Jesus Christ. It seems that many preachers preach information about Jesus. They preach the doctrine of Christ, and of course, there must be solid Biblical content in our preaching. What I am after, here, however, is something far more. While I am not in favor of “Redemptive, Historical Preaching” of the Old Testament and believe the older, more accepted Reformed “Exemplary” approach to preaching the Old Testament is far more accurate<sup>95</sup>, nonetheless we must still seek to apply Christ in every sermon we preach. For example, in preaching on David’s adultery with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11) the Exemplary method begins with the “blood and gore” of the text and stresses David’s fall into his grievous sin, warning us “to not go there” ourselves. To preach Christ in this context is to say that when we are tempted in like manner as David, we must run to Jesus, wrapping our arms, as it were, around Him, asking Him for His sustaining and sanctifying grace. In applying this text to the unconverted, after telling the story in affective language, painting vivid word pictures of the tension of the moment, you then should say, “Of course, you are no better than David. Perhaps you have done the same thing he did. You certainly are capable of doing so, and you surely have done so in your own heart and mind. You are guilty, just as David was. What should you do? Do as David. We find in both Psalm 32 and 51 that he confessed his sin to the Lord, asking for His compassion, mercy, and grace. When he asked to be purged with hyssop this reminds us of how Jesus on the cross was offered bitter wine on a stick but He refused it. He took your sins in His body on the cross so that He might reconcile you to the Father.”

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<sup>95</sup> For a very helpful discussion of why “Exemplary” preaching is the way to go, I urge you to read John Carrick’s *The Imperative of Preaching*. It is truly an outstanding book on Biblical preaching.

Moody and Weekes suggest, as we prepare to preach and then to deliver the sermon, that we consider the context, the content, Christ, and then the consequences. In other words you must always remember the context of the passage from which you are preaching. You must then exegete the text and be very, very clear on the content. That is, what is God saying in that particular text of Scripture? You must labor to be as accurate as possible. But then, you are to bring Christ into the passage. Go to His person and work. Pick some aspect of His atoning death and focus on it. There is so much in the Scripture on Christ's passion. I find Paul Washer's *The Gospel's Power and Message: Recovering the Gospel*, to be most powerful in this regard, especially his section on Christ's propitiating death. I also find the Puritan John Flavel's work, *The Fountain of Life*, a veritable treasure trove of knowledge for experiential, Christ-centered preaching. Read often and deeply on the person and work of Christ. Allow these truths, first of all, to grip your heart. Get them deeply into your affections. Make these words and their truths your own. Then bring them out to your auditors, all the while trusting the Holy Spirit to give you the exact words you need at that very moment. But then you must also make clear the consequences, the application of the passage. In evangelistic preaching, the application is always the same—you are calling people to repent and believe the gospel. A secondary application, to the believers in the audience, is always appropriate and it generally is a single application as well. Namely, the believer ought to be amazed, humbled, and awed that God loves him as He does. He should be brought low in sincere gratitude for all that God has done for him in Christ. He should always live with humility, holiness, and honesty before the King of Glory and the watching world.

You must also appeal to the conscience of your hearers. Every unbeliever has a guilty conscience. No one can live long with one, so men are always seeking ways to mitigate their shame and guilt. Your job, again by the working of the Holy Spirit, is to awaken within your hearers, a deep, abiding, and terrifying sense of judgment. As Jude put it, we are to bring judgment upon all, convicting all the ungodly of all the ungodly things they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things ungodly sinners have spoken against Him (Jude 15). The Spirit is the One who convicts or convinces a person of his sin. You cannot do this, though you may very well be the instrument God uses. Your God-given instrument to evoke a guilty conscience is the Law of God. Paul says that the Law is a tutor or schoolmaster to drive us to Christ (Galatians 3:24). At times, simply stating the Ten Commandments or what Jesus has to say about them in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:21-48), may be sufficient. But don't trust that this alone will work. Learn to define clearly, deeply, and practically the abhorrent nature of the violations of God's law. A helpful exposition of the Ten Commandments is found in the Larger Catechism of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Questions and Answers 101-150. Study these definitions and then put them in your own words, paraphrasing them, illustrating them with contemporary stories or anecdotes.

Next you need to appeal to their minds. Again, this is impossible unless the Holy Spirit is working to enlighten their minds, since they consider gospel language as utter foolishness. They cannot understand because these truths are only discerned through the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:14). Martyn Lloyd-Jones defined preaching as logic on fire. John Girardeau, the great Nineteenth Century Presbyterian preacher from South Carolina preached with vivid imagery, appealing to the heart and then the mind by use of Scripture and sound theology. When once preaching on the last

judgment to the South Carolina state legislature, Girardeau went on for a full hour, painting a vivid picture of the judgment when all will stand before God and give account of all their deeds done in the body, whether good or bad. He then applied the sermon with great force for another thirty minutes. The entire sanctuary at First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, South Carolina was filled, with everyone literally leaning forward in rapt attention. When Girardeau finished the people sat back in their seats and gave a collective sigh of relief. George Whitefield also appealed powerfully to the mind through detailed and vivid word pictures. Once he was preaching on the uncertainty of life and the truth that the end can come quickly without warning. He was spinning a story of a blind man on a narrow path, walking more and more closely to the precipice. As he had the man about to misstep to his death, Lord Chesterfield, who was present at the preaching cried out saying, "My God, he is gone." This kind of preaching grips people. Many will stop and listen to such preaching.

And finally, after appealing to the heart, conscience, and mind, we must also appeal to the will. Those who go straight to the will, by-passing the heart, conscience, or mind, will only succeed, at best, in making legalists of people. Some will "buckle under" the preaching but the change is only temporary. Many legalists become a bigger object of hell than they were in the past. But if God is gripping the heart, if He is bringing conviction of sin to the heart and mind, if the person's conscience has been pricked to the point where he says, "What must I do?", then God is ready to do a great work of regeneration. When Isaiah or Jeremiah call people to repent and return to the Lord, when Jesus says, "Repent and believe the gospel," when Paul says, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved", then these are valid examples of appealing to the will. They are able to repent. They are able to return to the Lord. They are able to call



upon Him because God has supernaturally worked to bring regeneration, justification, adoption, and sanctification in the person.

After preaching to the heart, conscience, mind, and will, after vividly putting forth the holiness of God and the fact that He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, you must then give them the unvarnished good news of Christ's incarnation. Jesus came to save sinners. Tell the gospel stories of Jesus healing lepers, raising the dead, accepting sinners like the Gerasene demoniac and the woman at the well. Find ways to speak vividly of the love of Jesus for sinners. Prepare your heart by meditating on what He has done for you, how He delivered you personally from the domain of darkness and transferred you into the kingdom of His beloved Son. Remind yourself that you were far away from God, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in this world, but God was rich in mercy and made you alive together with Him. You are a remarkable example of His unparalleled grace. Get filled up with the love of Jesus, that your heart may be overflowing with grace and love. You must spend extended time in prayer and meditation just prior to preaching in order for this to consume and dominate you. After all, we are preaching good news. To be sure, one cannot appreciate the good news until he is firmly convinced of the bad news, but do not stop with the negative. Lift up our glorious Savior. I like to spend a great deal of time meditating on Romans 3:23-31 and Ephesians 2:1-13 just prior to preaching. These passages always warm my heart, enlighten my mind, and loosen my tongue.

And finally, you must preach Jesus Christ crucified. You are not to put forth your political, economic, or geo-political ideas. No one needs your opinions or speculations on issues not specifically germane to the issue at hand, and the issue at hand is preaching Christ crucified. You are to preach the

sinlessness of Jesus, that He was tempted in all things like us, but He never sinned. You are to herald His incarnation, His suffering, His death, His temptation, His mighty deeds and miracles, His atoning, propitiating, and expiating death at Calvary. You are to herald His resurrection from the dead which proves the Father's acceptance of His death. You are to proclaim the practical benefits of His ascension to the Father's right hand, that He always lives to make intercession for us, that consequently He will never leave us nor forsake us. You are to proclaim Jesus' authority over sin, sickness, Satan, death, and judgment.

In stressing all of this, it is clear that you must "dig the well deeply." You need to memorize lots of Scripture and ask the Holy Spirit to bring to your mind what you need as you preach. You ought to learn to preach extemporaneously, without notes. No doubt this is terrifying as you contemplate such a move, and you will convince yourself that you must have a crutch of a manuscript or outline. However, you will be much more powerful and authentic when you preach, looking into the eyes of your hearers, not down at your notes.

Once on a flight I was sitting next to a young woman who was a District Attorney. In our discussion of her work I asked if when making her closing argument to the jury if she used notes. She quickly said, "On no. Never." I asked, "Why not?" To which she replied, "I want to look the jury straight in their eyes and I want to speak to their minds and their hearts. I want them to know that I truly believe what I am seeking to prove to them." Should preachers do any differently? You are much more convincing when you look your audience in the eyes as you preach to them the unfathomable riches of Christ.

# **CHAPTER EIGHT**

## **PRACTICAL EXAMPLES OF EVANGELISTIC PREACHING**

I desire now to be exceedingly practical. What does evangelistic preaching look like? How does it differ from pastoral preaching to the saints? What follows are nine sermon outlines with an evangelistic objective. I hope you can get a feel for the content and flow of evangelistic sermons. I have chosen one sermon outline for each of the major genres of Scripture—from the Old Testament narratives, the Psalms, the Old Testament prophets, the New Testament gospels, the parables of Jesus, the sermons of Jesus, the Acts of the apostles, the Pauline epistles, and the book of Revelation. Again, I am not suggesting you take these outlines into the pulpit or to the street when you preach. These are only meant as a practical guide to help you form evangelistic sermons.

As you consider the introduction to your evangelistic sermon, try to create a reason in the minds of your auditors as to why they should listen to you. I consider the main thrust of the sermon and from that I seek to create a point of tension in the minds of those hearing me. Often I ask a question to produce that tension. Notice that in each of the introductions in the outlines which follow.

My approach is to expound the text after the introduction. I do not expound a verse or two and then illustrate and apply it, as many preachers do today. Instead, I follow the methodology of the Puritans who mainly expounded their entire text first. You will note that I always begin the exposition with seeking to explain the context of the passage from which I am preaching. From there, I move into the explanation of the text. After expounding or explaining what

the text means, I then draw the central idea of the text from the passage itself. I am asking the question, “What is God saying through the Holy Spirit in this passage?” From there I translate the central idea of the text into a thematic statement— a short, succinct, memorable present tense, declarative sentence. For example, in the first sermon listed below from Numbers 25:1-13 the theme is “You have no power to resist the ravages of sexual sin.”

Now, after laying out the thematic statement I begin to put forth the implications of this statement. I see evangelistic preaching as very different from preaching to edify the saints. In evangelistic sermons I seek to enter a kind of dialogue with the audience. I am putting forth declarations and seeking to raise their objections and then to answer them. I try to imagine a one-on-one conversation on a park bench with a person on this evangelistic theme. Notice this in each of the following outlines.

I will also from time to time use cross references to bolster my argument but usually not as much as I do in preaching to the saints. I also never give the book, chapter, and verse. This seems extraneous to me because I am assuming they do not know the Bible nor where passages are in the Bible. But I am seeking to bring to bear the full authority and power of the inspired, inerrant, infallible word of God.

I will also, throughout the sermon, stop and ask questions of application—”Does this make sense? Do you understand what I am saying? Do you see how important this is? What about you? Do you see that you are guilty? What are you to do? How does Jesus address this issue?” You must keep the attention of your listeners, and raising questions and objections is a very good way to keep them listening.

And then I always seek to bring in as vividly as possible some aspect of Christ's person and work, especially His crucifixion and resurrection. I want to speak to their hearts about the love Jesus has for people in offering Himself up as the propitiation and expiation for our sins. I meditate quite a bit in my own personal devotional times, as I read John Flavel, John Calvin, Paul Washer, and other great writers on Christ's death and resurrection. I want to be filled up with the glory of the cross. I want to mine more and more deeply the unfathomable depths of Christ's death and resurrection and the practical and eternal implications of both.

And finally, the close of the sermon is vital. Earlier in the sermon you will find yourself using more third person pronouns (he, she, they) in describing the context of the passage and expounding the text. In the introduction you may find that you use first person singular and plural pronouns (I, we) in speaking of our dilemma in the world, our particular problems. But as you progress through the sermon, particularly as you unpack the thematic statement, and as you bear down with the application and closing, you must use the second person, singular and plural pronoun (you, you all).

You are making an appeal. You want them to close with Christ. You are not merely giving them information which they can consider at a later time. No, you are asking for a verdict. In the parlance of a salesman, you are asking for the order. What will your auditors do with what they have just heard? While you are not to manipulate, beg, or intimidate, you are most certainly to use the art of persuasion. As you preach in the power of Holy Spirit, use logic. Try to make the point of the sermon irrefutable. Do all you can to show them that to deny and reject what you are saying is utter folly and eternally damning.

Close your sermon by asking them to repent, to believe, and to call on the name of the Lord. Illustrate what you mean by each of these statements. Make your appeal winsomely, reverently, joyfully, lovingly.

## FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVES

### The Danger of Sexual Sin, Numbers 25:1-13

**Introduction:** We live in a sex saturated world. What does God think about sexual immorality?

#### **I WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE STORY? Please note:**

*A. The context, Numbers 24:25. Balak was unsuccessful in moving Balaam to curse Israel.*

*B. Israel's grievous sin, 1-3.*

- 1.They engaged in fornication with wicked, vile, Moabite women, 1.
- 2.Balaam suggested that Balak present Moabite women to sons of Israel, Rev.2:14.
- 3.Their fornication led to Idolatry, 2.
- 4.Thus Israel fell into grievous sin, receiving the righteous judgment of God, 3.

*C. Yahweh's remedy, 4-5.*

- 1.Execute all the leaders, 4a.
- 2.Why? To appease the fierce anger of God, 4b.
- 3.Why? Judges were to execute any who had joined themselves to Baal Peor.

*D. Phinehas' zealous deed, 6-9.*

- 1.Bold blasphemy by the enemies of God, 6.
- 2.A righteous execution, 7-8. The plague was stopped.
- 3.The horrible consequences of sin, 9.

*E. The consequences of such zeal, 10-13.*

- 1.God's wrath is turned away, 10-12.
- 2.God's promise is eternal, 13-14.

**Theme:** You have no power to resist the ravages of sexual sin.

#### **II YOU KNOW VERY WELL THIS IS TRUE, MY FRIENDS.**

*A. Many of you have engaged in fornication, adultery, homosexuality, pornography, or maybe even pedophilia.*

1. You have tried to convince yourselves that this is no big deal. Everybody is doing it.

2. But deep down in your hearts, you know this is wrong, even sinful.

a) You have tried to hide your sin from your spouse, children, or parents.

b) You have tried to hide your guilt from God. How?

1) You try to convince yourself that God does not exist.

2) After all, if there is no God, then there is no sin; and if no sin, then no guilt; and if no guilt, then no hell; and if no hell, then there is need for a Savior or any kind of religion.

3. You also know that you are powerless to break the habit of your sexual sin.

a) You promise to break off the harmful relationship but you repeatedly go back to it.

b) Or you move onto another toxic relationship which further hardens your heart and increases your deception of self and your loved ones.

*B. Perhaps you are not guilty of actually engaging in fornication or any of the other sexual sins, but you still have to admit that you would like to engage in these things if the right opportunity came along.*

1. We live in a sex crazed world. Sex sells. Sex is every where.

a) Marketing, music, cinema, websites all sell sex.

### **III AND KNOW THIS FOR SURE, SEXUAL SINS WILL RAVAGE YOUR LIFE. HOW SO?**

*A. First of all, sexual sin alters your view of God. This happening to Israel in our story.*

1. You convince yourself that the Bible is not true although the Bible clearly condemns any kind of sexual activity outside the bounds of a monogamous, heterosexual marriage.



a)The God of the Bible, One who is holy and just, who will by no means leave the guilty unpunished; becomes a benevolent grandfatherly type who winks at your sin.

b)This reduces Christianity to a justification by works religion.

1)“I will join a mega-mega church where I can serve the poor in a soup kitchen and still shack up with my boyfriend. I feel good about myself because of my work for the poor and thus figure that God is pleased with my life.”

*B.Second, sexual sin enslaves and robs you of boldness, freedom, and the sense of God’s presence.*

1.Boldness. You know you are guilty and cannot expect to approach God, nor experience His power, and love in your life and ministry.

2.Freedom. You are enslaved to your sin and guilt. You are under condemnation. You live in fear of being found out. You regret your actions but know not how to extract yourself from the situation.

3.Sense of God’s presence. Your sins have separated you from God so that He does not hear you when you pray, Ps. 66:18, Is.59:1-2.

*C.Third, sexual sin robs you of healthy, meaningful relationships.*

1.You become a user of people, a manipulator.

a)You get what you want and then discard people.

2.You become a victim of those using you and discarding you.

a)Sooner or later you will loathe yourself for your abominations and iniquities.

b)But you will sink only further and further into degradation and shame.

c)You know this is true, deep in your heart, though you probably right now are scoffing at this statement. You are trying to convince yourself that you are justified in your sinful actions. You deserve this fun, so you think.

## **IV WELL, WHAT ARE YOU TO DO? IS THERE ANY WAY OUT?**

*A. Yes. There is one way and one way only out of your enslavement to sexual sin.*

1. You must finally admit that your behavior is in fact sin against God, the Holy One.

a) Sin is disobedience to God in any way.

2. You must admit you have no power to break your sinful addiction to sex. Why not?

a) Because you were born with a rebellious heart which loves sin and hates God, Rom.3:10ff.

b) You are powerless to overcome sin because the heart of the problem is the problem of the heart. You must be changed on the inside, a miracle of God's grace.

3. You must repent of your sin, Mark 1:15.

a) Come to grips in your mind and emotions that your behavior is in violation of God's law. You have sinned against God. You are consequently under His wrath.

b) You must ask God for the gift of repentance, that you can turn away once and for all from your sin.

4. You must ask God for a new heart. Unless you are born again you will not see the kingdom of God. He works regeneration in you for His glory.

a) This is what theologians call regeneration.

b) He takes out your rebellious heart by killing it on His cross.

c) By virtue of His resurrection, He can give you His heart so that you can walk in newness of life.

5. You must call on the name of the Lord to save you, Rom. 10:13.

a) To call on the Lord for salvation is to believe in His name, Jn.6:37-39.

b) He is quick and ready to heal, restore, forgive, and transform.

6. Come to Him now. Do not delay. You have no power to save yourself. You have no power to overcome your sexual sin, but Jesus can transform you.

# FROM THE PSALMS

## Kiss the Son, Psalm 2:10-12

**Introduction:** Jesus is the best known person to ever live. He did remarkable things. He makes strong claims. What are we to do with Jesus?

### I WHAT IS DAVID TELLING US? Please note:

*A. The context, 2:1-9.*

1. The question, answers, and evidence, 1-3.

a) Why are the people, the nations in rebellion against the Lord?

b) Answer—kings and rulers stand against, consort together.

c) Against the Lord and His Anointed One, the Lord Jesus.

d) There is a mighty battle against the Triune God.

e) The evidence—”Let us break free from the rule and reign of God.”

f) Revelation 12:1-6.

2. The Lord’s response, 4-9.

a) He laughs at their impotent rebellion, 4.

b) He speaks in His righteous anger and fury, 5.

c) And what does He say to them? 6.

1) ”My King, My Redeemer is king over you and all the earth,” Ps.47:7-8.

d) And what does Jesus say to them?

1) This is what God says.

2) I am the Son.

3) I am to ask of Him.

4) He promises to give Me the nations as My inheritance.

*B. Their necessary response, 10-12.*

1. They are to heed carefully what the Lord says to them, 10.

a) Discernment.

- b) Heed the warning.
  - 2. They are to submit to all His holy will, 12a.
    - a) Worship reverently.
    - b) Rejoice with trembling.
    - c) Kiss the Son.
  - 3. Why are they to kiss the Son? 12b-13.
    - a) Lest they perish.
    - b) Why would they perish? Because His wrath will soon break forth.
    - c) The only place of refuge is in the Son.
- Theme:** Kiss the Son lest you perish in your sins.

## **II WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO KISS THE SON?**

*A. Literally, to do homage to the Son.*

- 1. To acknowledge His person and work.
  - a) His humiliation.
    - 1) His incarnation.
    - 2) His suffering in His earthly life.
    - 3) His crucifixion and death.
    - 4) His descent into hell for His people.
  - b) His exaltation.
    - 1) His resurrection.
    - 2) His ascension.
    - 3) His intercession at the Father's right hand.
    - 4) His return.
- 2. To submit to all He is commanding you to do.
  - a) To repent and believe the gospel.
  - b) To be baptized in the name of Jesus.
  - c) To deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and to follow Jesus without reservation.
  - d) To obey His word in all He says and is commanding.

## **III WHAT RESULTS FROM KISSING THE SON?**

*A. You obtain right relationship with God.*

- 1. Your sins are forgiven.

a)He promises to take them as far as the east is from the west.

b)He promises to give you eternal life.

c)He promises you His presence in times of trouble and turmoil.

2.You receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

a)You gain power over indwelling sin.

b)You gain power over your poisonous life.

c)You gain power to perfect holiness in the sight of God.

Apply: Do you presently possess these great blessings?

Have you kissed the Son or do you remain hard hearted against His benevolence?

#### **IV WHAT, MY FRIENDS, MUST YOU DO TO KISS THE SON?**

*A. You must see your need of Him?*

1.You have lived far from Him far too long.

a)You have ignored His overtures of grace.

b)You have hardened your heart against Him.

c)You are totally incapable of removing your guilt and shame from your sin.

d)Your morality will not work. Your religion of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, or nominal Christianity will not work.

e)You are morally and spiritually bankrupt. You are out of options

Apply: Do you see it? Do you acknowledge that you are far from the God who loves you and whose Son died for you?

*B. You must run unreservedly to Him for grace and mercy.*

1.Don't hesitate. Don't wait. Pursue Him now, this very moment.

a)Is the Spirit drawing you? Are you seeing His beauty and mighty power to save you?

b)Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near.

c) Forsake your evil ways, your evil thoughts, and seek Him until He allows you to see Him and apprehend Him by grace.

# FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS

## The Wrath of Almighty God, Nahum 1:2-3

**Introduction:** People joke all the time about hell. *Far Side* comics are a classic example. But hell is no laughing matter. What is hell like and who goes there?

### I WHAT IS GOD'S IMPORTANT MESSAGE THROUGH NAHUM? Please note.

#### *A. The context.*

1. Preaching to a nation which one hundred years earlier experienced mighty revival.

- a) Nineveh saved through the preaching of Jonah, 3:4-10.
- b) He is calling them back to their earlier commitment.

#### *B. What is Nahum's message?*

1. Note his declaration of God's character, 2-3a.

- a) He is jealous, 2.
- b) He is avenging, 2.
- c) He is wrathful, 2.
- d) He is slow to anger, 3.
- e) He is great in power, 3.

2. Note his declaration of God's actions, 2-3.

- a) He takes vengeance of His adversaries, 2b.
- b) He reserves wrath for His enemies, 2-3.
- c) He does not leave the guilty unpunished, 3b.

**Theme:** Flee from the certain, awful wrath of God.

### II MY FRIENDS, DO NOT TAKE THIS MESSAGE LIGHTLY.

#### *A. You must listen with sober hearts and minds.*

1. Do not harden your hearts as Israel did at Meribah when they perished.

- a) Do not be like the sons of Korah who perished in rebellion.



b)Do not be like Sodom and Gomorrah who perished for lack of repentance.

d)Do not be like Esau who engaged in wickedness and sold his birthright for a single meal.

e)Do not be like angels which abandoned their proper abode and are now bound in chains in darkness, waiting for the judgment of the great day.

2.What is the evidence of your hard heart? You are:

a)Not listening to God's clear, distinct word which explains perfectly your standing.

b)Focused on the temporal, not looking to the eternal which is able to save your soul.

c)Not building yourself up in the love of God. You are careless. You neglect the ordinary means of grace—public and private worship, preaching, prayer, Bible study.

d)Not waiting anxiously for the mercy of eternal life. You are living for the now, indulging the flesh and its desires.

e)Not moved by the preaching of the word. You are ambivalent. You are cool, detached, not invested emotionally or spiritually.

### **III AND WHAT IS THE MESSAGE? FLEE THE CERTAIN, AWFUL WRATH OF GOD.**

*A. You must flee. Judgment is coming.*

1.In what way?

a)Jesus will come when the world least expects it, like a thief in the night.

b)He will come to you in your death. If you not in Christ, your death will send you directly to hell. Like the rich man of Luke 16, you will know you are alone in torment, having forsaken your opportunity to close with Christ. You will live with awful regret.

c)Wrath and indignation will be your lot.

d) Tribulation and distress will be yours all your days, but especially at your death.

e) He will come to you in the resurrection. He will raise you up to face the Great White Throne judgment.

f) You will be judged according to your deeds. .words. .and thoughts.

g) After being in hell for perhaps a thousand or more years, you have always dreaded the day of judgment. It has finally come and you are filled with terror.

h) You will hear, "Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the everlasting fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels."

*B. And where do you flee to?*

1. Into the refuge, the everlasting arms of the Lover of Your Soul, the Lord Jesus.

a) God is a refuge for us, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear.

b) You are in trouble. Flee to Christ for refuge.

2. How? Ask Him for mercy. Plead His grace, forgiveness, and powerful presence of the Spirit.

a) He promises to grant you forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

#### **IV AND HOW DO YOU GAIN FREEDOM FROM THE CERTAIN WRATH OF GOD?**

*A. Look at Christ Jesus.*

1. My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?

a) He justifies us by His grace.

b) This justification, being made right with God, is a gift.

c) This redemption, being put back into the family of God, is purchased with Jesus' blood shed at the cross.

d) How? Jesus was made a propitiation, an atoning sacrifice for us.

f) But how? God passed over our sins, because Jesus became Passover Lamb for us.

g)God's grace is effectual because the penalty for our sin was paid by Jesus.

*B.He suffered hell for you. He took upon Himself the just condemnation and wrath of His holy Father in heaven which you deserve.*

1.God hates the man of bloodshed and deceit, Psalm 5:5-6.

a)Christ Jesus took your murderous bloodshed and deceit upon His own body.

b)Thus for the three hours Christ hung on the cross the Father hated His own Son.

c)Such mercy, such love, such grace!

d)Where else will you find a Savior like Jesus? There is none.

2.Flee to Christ. Run to Him now in faith.

a)Abandon your false religion, your confidence in your good deeds.

c)Repent now. Call on the name of the Lord. He will save you.

## FROM GOSPEL NARRATIVES

### Desperation, Matthew 15:21-28

**Introduction:** We seem to be a culture of addictions—sex, porn, work, drinking, eating, leisure. Is this something we should be concerned about? If so, what can we do?

#### I WHAT DOES THIS STORY TEACH US?

*A.About the daughter.*

- 1.She is possessed by demons.
  - a)Put yourself in this mother’s place.

*B.About the mother.*

- 1.She is a pagan.
  - a)A Canaanite.
  - b)A Syrophenician.
- 2.She is desperate.
  - a)Her daughter is demon possessed.
  - b)In tremendous turmoil.
- 3.She believes Jesus can help her.
  - a)“Have mercy on me.”
  - b)“Lord.”
  - c)“Son of David.”
- 4.She begins to cry out. .continuously. .
  - a)She persists when Jesus did not answer her.
  - b)Desperate. .hopeful. .humble. .persistent. .faith filled. .

*C.About Jesus.*

- 1.Why did He at first not answer her?
  - a)Testing her faith. .her persistence. .her desperation. .
- 2.His disciples viewed her as an intrusion.
  - a)Send her away. .she keeps shouting at us. .
- 3.“I was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”
  - a)Order of priority. .Jews first. .then Greeks. .
- 4.She persists. .bowed low. .Lord help me. .

a)She looks foolish. .a mother does not care what it looks like. .all about her child.

5.Jesus, “Not good to take children’s bread and throw it to dogs.”

a)Dog—pet dogs, but we feed our pets too, but stand in line. wait your turn.

b)Her amazing faith.

c)Your faith is great. .child healed. .

**Theme:** Only Jesus can set you free.

## **II MY FRIENDS, THOUGH YOU KNOW IT NOT, YOU ARE IN TROUBLE.**

*A.How so?*

1.You are enslaved to sin, death, and Satan.

a)Perhaps you are stunned, angry, upset at such a declaration.

b)After all, you rightly observe that I do not even know you.

2.But I can speak of your enslavement to sin, death, and Satan because you are like everyone else. You are no different from the woman in this story.

a)You cannot deliver yourself from your three mortal enemies.

b)You need supernatural strength, ability to do so and you do not possess it.

3.So, how are you enslaved to sin, death, and Satan? What is the evidence?

a)To sin—you cannot break your sin patterns. Even if you conquer alcohol or drug abuse you become prideful, looking with disdain on others who cannot seem to break the habit. You have tried various remedies but you always go back to some unlawful activity or attitude which controls, dominates you.

b)To death—you do your best not to think of death, seeking to convince yourself that you have nothing to worry about it. But secretly you are terrified. You are careful with

your diet, exercise, with regular doctor visits, but you know you will die at some point.

c) To Satan—though you probably are not a worshipper of Satan, you, nonetheless, are under his dominion. How do I know? Because he has blinded you to the truth of the gospel in Christ. You mock it. You despise it.

*B. And your enslavement to sin, death, and Satan threatens to undo you, to destroy you. How so?*

1. It causes you to focus on lesser things. What does this mean?

a) You are like the people in the day of Noah who were eating, drinking, marrying, giving in marriage, and then the end, the flood, came. You live as though this world is all there is.

b) Though you know your college or NFL football team is not really very important, you invest far too much time, energy, and perhaps even money in pursuing your idol.

2. It causes you to prolong the inevitable, to kick the can down the road.

a) You know you will meet God, will give an account of your actions and values.

b) But you choose not to think on such things, choosing instead to enjoy, what the writer to Hebrews calls, the passing pleasures of sin.

c) You are like the man who has very little money and therefore decides he will plunge further and further into credit card debt. He cannot arrest himself from his trouble so he continues to deceive himself by spending himself into ruin.

3. My friends, you are storing up for yourselves wrath.

a) You will stand before God and give account for all you have done in violating God's law.

b) You will be judged also for what you did not do, but should have done, like helping a needy person on the street, like investing time in your spouse or children.

### **III WHAT MUST YOU DO?**

*A. You must be like the Syrophenician woman.*

1. See your desperate need for Christ's healing and deliverance.

a) Seek Him. Pray to Him. Delight in Him. Spend time with Him.

b) Believe in Him, that He can in fact save you, set you free.

c) Persist. Seek Him until He allows you to find Him.

d) Desire Jesus more than your necessary food, more than your hobbies, or anything else.

2. Say to Jesus, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me."

After all, He is:

a) The Lord of Lords. He has all authority and power.

b) The King of Kings. He alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light. He is God and there is none other.

c) The merciful and faithful high priest, the One who can save you to the uttermost because He always lives to make intercession for you.

d) The Advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the atoning sacrifice for your sins.

3. Cast yourself at the feet of Jesus and stay there until He delivers you from sin, Satan, and death. After all, union with Christ means:

a) You have died to sin and you now live to Christ. The rule and reign of sin is broken in the true believer's life.

b) You have been delivered from Satan's domain. He no longer rules over you.

c) You have conquered death through Christ's resurrection. Death is now swallowed up in victory. You can say, "Death where is your victory. Death where is your sting?"

# FROM THE PARABLES OF JESUS

## Do You Have on the Wedding Clothes? Matthew 22:1-14

**Introduction:** Are you ready to meet God? Are you sure? What will you say?

### I WHAT IS JESUS SAYING? Please note:

#### *A. The context.*

1. The opposition by religious leaders to Jesus' ministry continues to escalate.

- a) His triumphal entry has caused the crowds to exalt Him.
- b) The religious leaders continue to be fearful and jealous of His popularity.
- c) Jesus cleansed the temple, furthering their hatred of Him.

d) Jesus continued to heal the lame and blind as children called "Hosanna."

e) The scribes and chief priests were indignant.

2. Jesus is seeking to win over the religious leaders with signs and parables.

a) Jesus was hungry. .fig tree without fruit. .cursed it. .withered. .

1) A picture of barren Israel cursed by God.

b) Again chief priests and scribes challenge Jesus. "By what authority. .?"

c) The chief priests and Pharisees knew from these parables Jesus speaking to them.

d) They wanted to seize Him and kill Him.

e) They were reluctant because the people thought He was a prophet.

#### *B. Consider the parable of the wedding feast.*

1. A picture of coming judgment day. Are you ready to meet God?

a) Kingdom of God like a wedding feast.



- b)The father in joyful extravagance and openness to all:
- 1)Invites all nearby people to wedding feast for his son, see Rev.19:9.
  - 2)He sent his slaves to invite the people.
  - 3)They are unwilling to come.
  - 4)He sends more slaves who are to proclaim his extravagance.
  - 5)Dinner. .oxen. .fattened livestock. .all is ready. .
- c)Their response.
- 1)Paid no attention. .preoccupied with the good, not the best. .
  - 2)Seized his slaves. mistreated them. .killed them. .
  - 3)A picture of God’s prophets, Christ’s apostles. .
- d)King’s response—enraged. .sent army. .destroyed murderers. .burned city. .
- e)The king’s persistent, extravagant grace.
- 1)Those invited not worthy of his grace.
  - 2)Invite others far away. .invite them all to the feast
- f)The slaves went out and brought in the good and bad, filled wedding hall.
- 2.The wedding clothes, absolutely essential.
- a)A man was there without the wedding clothes.
  - b)Why do you not have on the wedding clothes?
    - 1)Speechless.
    - 2)Taken to outer darkness, weeping, gnashing of teeth.
  - c)Many called from near and far, few chosen.
- C.What does this tell us about:*
- 1.The people.
    - a)Indifferent. .presumptuous. .I am in good standing. Nothing to worry about.
  - 2.The slaves.
    - a)Faithful. .zealous. .persecuted.
  - 3.God.
    - a)Grace. .extravagance. .wrath. .justice. .
- Theme:** You must have on the wedding clothes.

## **II FIRST SCENARIO.**

*A. The world tells you:*

1. Make a name for yourself. Accomplish great things. Attain wealth, prominence.

a) So you worked hard to gain a good education from a prestigious university.

b) You joined a fraternity, sorority in college to give you good contacts down the road.

c) You had good connections to get you the right interview to land the right job.

d) You worked seventy hour weeks, played hard, partied hard, and made your way up the ladder in your profession.

e) You had your children after you and your spouse had accumulated some wealth and a comfortable lifestyle.

f) You gave your children everything they needed to succeed.

g) You spent your vacations on exotic European, Caribbean destinations.

2. You have now arrived, that you have a good life, that you should take your ease.

a) Eat, drink, live life to the fullest. After all, you will die and then the end comes.

*B. But a Christian neighbor and work associate, whom you actually admire and respect, seems to live by a different set of values.*

1. Yes, he works hard but he seems to be able to leave the work at his desk when he goes home in the evening.

a) He seems to have a peace you do not possess.

b) His children seem to be a little better adjusted to life than your's do.

c) He spends his vacations serving the poor in developing nations.

*C. Recently you were diagnosed with stage four cancer and this has rocked your world.*

1. Now it seems that all of your possessions and accomplishments ring hollow.

a) You sense now, for the first time in many years, that you are in trouble, transient.

b) You are looking for answers.

*D. God is merciful to you, opening your heart to hear the good news of life in Christ and the forgiveness of your sins through your Christian work associate and neighbor.*

1. You repent and believe on Christ.

a) God saves you, forgives you, justifies you, adopts you into His family, and gives you the Holy Spirit so that you can live out your new life in Christ.

b) By God's grace alone, you have come to understand that nothing is more important than having on the wedding clothes.

*E. But then you become increasingly debilitated by the cancer.*

1. The doctors have tried everything, but none of it works.

a) You pass away, with your spouse and children, your pastor and some Christian friends from your church at your bedside.

b) At your death, your soul immediately is transported by angels into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

c) He asks you, "Do you have on the wedding clothes?"

d) You do, so you are brought into heaven where myriads of angels are giving praise to the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

### **III SECOND SCENARIO.**

*A. Everything just mentioned is the same.*

1. You work, marry, rear a family, have success in work, get cancer, find a church, and die.

2. You are transported into the presence of Jesus by angels and He asks, "Do you have on the wedding clothes?"

a) You are speechless, for you now know you are lacking the most important thing in all the world.

b) You are then cast into hell, a place of outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. You find hell to be a place of unimaginable horror and suffering.

#### **IV MY FRIEND, NOTHING IS MORE IMPORTANT. DO YOU HAVE ON THE WEDDING CLOTHES?**

*A. This begs a vital question. What are the wedding clothes?*

1. The wedding clothes are the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

a) Jesus obeyed the Law of God perfectly. He never sinned though He was tempted in every way as we are.

b) Therefore, as the perfect, sinless, unblemished Lamb of God, He was qualified to die in our place.

c) He performed a double transfer.

1) He gave us His perfection, His righteousness, His obedience to the Law of God.

2) He took our sins upon Himself. He became sin for us. He took the wrath of God which we deserve.

2. Paul tells the Romans that we are justified by faith, not by our works.

a) God credits our account, as it were, with the righteousness of Christ.

*B. What, then, must you do?*

1. You must make sure you have on the wedding clothes?

a) Are you trusting Christ and His finished work on the cross to save you?

b) Are you giving evidence of new life in Jesus, where you are progressively hating your sin and loving Jesus. Is your life one of general, growing obedience to God's word?

2. Well, do you? Do you have on the wedding clothes? If not, then:

a) Repent of your sins this very moment. Do not delay. Run to Jesus for refuge.

b) Believe on Christ, trust Him completely, trust His death at Calvary and His resurrection three days later to give you newness of life.

c) Call on the name of the Lord with a sense of utter desperation. Unless God gives you the righteousness of Christ in grace and mercy, you have no hope.

## **From Gospel Sayings of Jesus**

### **Refuge Only in Christ, Matthew 24:15-28**

**Introduction:** If I was walking by your house at night and saw it on fire. Would I warn you? Yes, of course. The world is heading for judgment. Should I not warn you?

#### **I WHAT IS JESUS TELLING US? Please note:**

*A. The context—the Olivet Discourse, Mt.24:1-25:46.*

1. He is prophesying the coming destruction of Jerusalem.

a) False Christs would come prior to Jerusalem's destruction.

b) Many signs—wars, rumors of wars, earthquakes, famines. .

c) False prophets will arise. .believers will fall away. .many will die. .

d) The end of the age (O.T. dispensation), destruction of sacrificial system would occur when the gospel had been preached to all the world.

*B. Then what?*

1. The believers were to flee from Jerusalem when destruction came.

a) How would they know when to flee?

b) When they saw Daniel's prophecy of Abomination of Desolation fulfilled, Dan.9:27.

- 1) Sacrilege. .destruction of sacrificial system.
2. Where were they to go? To the mountains, away from the city.
  - a) They must leave quickly.
    - 1) Don't go back to your house. Leave immediately.
    - 2) The greatest tribulation ever.
    - 3) Josephus says one million Jews died there through Titus of Roman Empire.
    - 4) Don't believe any who say they are the Christ. They are false prophets, messiahs.
    - b) Jesus is telling them this in advance some forty years before it was to happen.
      - 1) Do not believe anything these false prophets will say.
      - 2) Listen to Me. .Believe My words. .
      - 3) My coming in judgment on Jerusalem is certain.
      - 4) Like lightning coming from the east.
      5. Like vultures gathering at corpses.

**Theme:** Judgment is coming. Flee to Christ for refuge.

## **II MY FRIENDS, ARE YOU READY TO MEET GOD?**

*A. You know you will stand before God and give account for your life.*

1. You really do not want to think about that, but stop for a moment. Give it some thought. Think back over your life, as though it was passing completely before you. Do you remember when:

- a) You were cruel to the child in third grade who had physical deformities?
- b) Another child in sixth grade was being bullied and you did nothing to help him?
- c) You shoplifted in eighth grade?
- d) You sexually took advantage of your girlfriend in tenth grade?
- e) You began blaspheming God, using foul language, and deceiving your parents?
- f) You were hooked for a period of time on illegal drugs.

g) You were repeatedly, for many years, overcome with too much alcohol?

h) You used sexual innuendo at work, when you verbally abused fellow workers.

i) You made racially charged and bigoted statements about a neighbor?

2. I could keep going, but you know you are guilty.

a) You also know that you are to be perfect, even as God is perfect.

b) You are to be holy, law abiding, righteous, just as God is holy.

c) You know you are guilty, that you are accountable to God, that He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished.

3. My dear friends, you will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give account

a) Of your deeds performed in the flesh.

b) Of every careless word you have ever spoken.

c) Of every thought you have ever had.

4. Are you able to stand in the day of His coming?

a) Are you able to withstand the flaming eyes of the One with whom you have to do?

b) He is a consuming fire who will by no means leave the guilty unpunished.

c) Yes, as sure as there is death and taxes, you will stand before the tribunal of God and give account of all your words, deeds, and motives.

### **III WELL THEN, IF JUDGMENT IS COMING, YOUR ONLY HOPE IS TO FLEE TO CHRIST WHO IS YOUR ETERNAL REFUGE.**

*A. You are like the mother hen who hides her baby chicks under her wings.*

1. Jesus is calling you to find your rest, your salvation, your peace in Him.

a) He took your sins upon His body, yes, every last one of your sins.

b)He experienced the just wrath, judgment, hell, and condemnation reserved for the devil and in angels.

2.Just as Jesus warned the Jews of His day to wait until the judgment had come.

a)When they saw the abomination of desolation, they were to flee the city.

b)You must flee as well. Do not wait. Do not gamble with your life.

c)Humble yourself in the presence of God.

3.Place yourself under the blood of Christ.

a)God poured out His wrath on His Son that you may become a child of God.

b)Christ's blood, applied to your heart and mind, assuages, satisfies, removes the condemnation for sin which you deserve.

*B.If God was to hold you accountable for your sin, you would be cast into hell this very moment.*

1.But God has had mercy on you.

a)Put away vain or false notions about many ways to find God.

b)There is only one way, one savior, one redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ.

c)Come to Him now. Do not delay.

*C.And what does He promise you?*

1.You will be in the family of God.

a)No one can snatch you out of the Father's hand.

b)He will never leave you nor forsake you.

c)He will save you to the uttermost.

2.Therefore, trust Him now. Do not delay.



# FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

## How to Be Saved, Acts 2:37-39

**Introduction:** God loves you. He loves the world. He wants you to experience His abundance. What is it? What keeps you from it? How do you get it?

### I WHAT IS PETER SAYING? Please note:

#### *A. The context.*

1. The day of Pentecost has come as promised, Joel 2:28-32, Luke 24:47-49.

a) The 120 had been praying for ten days since the ascension.

b) A violent, rushing wind, tongues as of fire, all filled with the Spirit.

c) Jews from many nations were in Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost.

d) The bewildered crowd heard the 120 speaking in other languages.

e) They were proclaiming the mighty deeds of God.

f) Some were amazed, others mocked. "They are full of sweet wine."

2. Peter preached. What did he say? He proclaimed:

a) This to be fulfillment of Joel's prophecy.

b) Jesus was delivered up by God's predetermined plan.

c) You nailed Him to the cross and put Him to death at hands of godless men.

d) He proves this by citing Ps. 16:8-11.

e) David had died, was buried in Jerusalem. He was looking to Jesus, Son of David.

f) Jesus was raised, as Peter and his fellow apostles were testifying.

g) Their response—pierced in the heart, what shall we do?

3. Peter's response.

- a) Repent.
- b) Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for forgiveness of your sins.
- c) You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- d) This promise is for you.
- e) This promise is for your children.
- f) This promise is for those who are far off.
- g) As many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.

**Theme:** Repent and receive the fullness of God's glorious salvation.

## **II JESUS SAID THAT HE CAME TO GIVE LIFE, AN ABUNDANT LIFE.**

*A. Paul said that in the fullness of time God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, that He might redeem us from the works of the Law.*

1. As the disciples were fishing one day after Jesus' resurrection, after they had already been together several times in the post resurrection, Jesus gave instruction.

a) They were to throw their nets on the other side of the boat. They had been fishing all night and had caught nothing.

b) They did so and John reports a full net's worth of fish, that they caught 153 fish.

c) To state the actual number speaks of John's awe and amazement and Jesus' abundant provision.

d) The word for fullness in the Greek N.T. is *pleroma* and is very descriptive.

e) We speak of a glass full of water, meaning it is filled to the brim.

f) *Pleroma*, used in Galatians 4:4, is picture of a glass under a running faucet, water filling the glass and cascading down the side. A vivid picture of abundance.

2. God loves you. God wants you to know the fullness, abundance of life in this world.

a)He wants you to live life to the fullest, to experience His goodness in creation.

b)He wants you to enjoy good health, family, well being, the Hebrews call it *Shalom*.

c)God is not miserly. He is not a cosmic being who wishes to inflict misery on people.

d)He promises to bless, to lift you up above all other nations if you will obey His Law.

*B. The problem, however, is that you think you know best. You go our own way, do your own thing, devise and carry out your own plans.*

1.He says that if you choose to disobey Him, to go your own way, then He will bring curses upon you.

a)This is a basic principle in all of life. What you sow, you will reap.

b)If you sow obedience, then you reap blessing, peace.

c)If you sow disobedience, then you reap cursing, hardship. Sin's consequences.

2.Sin is a disgrace to people. It destroys individuals, families, and nations.

a)Children with drug addicted parents have a hard life.

b)Children with no father in the home often are angry with a sense of hopelessness.

c)Sin deceives people, convincing them they are victims, not responsible for their own actions.

d)Sin destroys people. Many a family has broken up due to the sins of the parents.

e)Children born outside marriage usually grow up in poverty and continue the cycle with their own children.

f)People who engage in illicit sex often are unhappy people.

g)So instead of living with joyful abundance and peace, many live with little resources and constant drama and turmoil.

### **III SO IF GOD WANTS TO GIVE IN ABUNDANT EXTRAVAGANCE, THEN WHY ARE SO MANY LIVING LIVES OF MISERY AND WOE? ARE YOU LIKE THAT?**

*A. Misplaced priorities often are the culprit.*

1. Perhaps you cannot see the forest for the trees.

a) Maybe you are lost in the weeds of the details of life.

b) So you settle for second best, limping along in life, devoid of the Spirit's presence and consequent love.

*B. You are blind and still do not see what God sees and is doing.*

1. The devil blinds the minds of the unbelieving so they cannot see Christ.

a) Instead of peace and joy you often have turmoil and grief.

b) The devil and the guilt he brings robs you of joy.

*C. Maybe you are prideful and think you have found the way to joyful prosperity.*

1. But you have a long history of autonomy, living for yourself.

a) Why? Because you, at the very core of your being, are rebellious.

b) What needs to happen? You need to receive the fullness of Christ's great salvation.

### **IV OKAY, HOW DO YOU GET IT? HEAR AGAIN THE WORDS OF APOSTLE PETER.**

*A. Repent.*

1. See your pride, arrogance, unbelief, rebellion.

a) Confess it as sin against the Holy One who loves you and wants to bless you with abundance.

b) You must think in a whole different direction. You must submit yourself to God's word, His truth. Believe what He

says about you, the Lord Jesus, and how you can be made right with Him.

*B. When you repent, then you will receive the forgiveness of your sins.*

1. You guilt, condemnation, and shame will be lifted.

a) He will take out the heart of stone, the rebellious, cobra heart, and give you His heart which loves God.

b) Blessed are those whose sin the Lord does not take into account, whose sin is covered.

*C. As you repent the Father gives you the Holy Spirit to begin living within you.*

1. He is your comforter in time of hardship or sorrow.

a) He is the One who convicts you of sin and drives you back to Jesus for cleansing.

b) He empowers you to grow in holiness of life, seeking to obey Him, growing more and more into His likeness.

c) So repent this very moment. Believe that Jesus really can take away your sin and give you His righteousness and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

d) Seek the Lord while He may be found. Say to Him, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner."

## FROM THE PAULINE EPISTLES

### How Great a Salvation, Romans 3:23-26

**Introduction:** I bet you could use some good news. Here it is. John 3:16. How do you get it?

#### **I WHAT IS GOD SAYING THROUGH PAUL? Please note:**

##### *A. The context.*

1. All are under sin, all under God's wrath.
  - a) Pagans, Rom. 1:18-32.
  - b) Moral people, Rom. 2:1-16.
  - c) Religious people, Rom. 2:17-29.
  - d) All are sinners, Rom. 3:10-23.

##### *B. The glorious remedy for sin, 24-26.*

1. What is the content of this glorious gospel message?
  - a) Being justified
  - b) As a gift
  - c) By His grace
  - d) Through redemption
  - e) In Christ Jesus
  - f) Propitiation
  - g) In His blood
  - h) Through faith
  - i) Demonstrates His righteousness
  - f) In the forbearance of God, He passed over the sins previously committed.
    - k) That He may be just.
    - l) Justifier.
    - m) Of the one who has faith in Jesus.

**Theme:** Jesus Christ is the only Savior of sinners.

**II WE LIVE IN A WORLD FULL OF BAD NEWS AND TRAGEDY. But I want to declare to you the best news you will ever hear.**

*A. Before I do, however, you need to know the bad news.*

1. There is much tragedy in the world.

a) Hurricanes. .tsunamis. .tornadoes. .cancer. .sexual abuse of children. .

b) Wars. .genocide. .oppression. .

c) Corruption in government. .

2. But these are not the greatest tragedies, though I do not wish to diminish them. The greatest tragedy is people all over the world, dead in their trespasses and sins.

a) They are enslaved and cannot break free, like a young woman bound in sex trafficking.

b) Often they do not even know they are enslaved.

c) And to whom are they enslaved?

1) To Satan.

2) To sin.

3) To death.

3. Consequently they are on the road to eternal destruction. Where? How so?

a) They are going to hell, a place of conscious, endless, torment where the fire is never quenched and the worm never dies.

b) They are living in the power of the evil one who has blinded them and preparing them for hell fire.

c) They are under wrath and indignation. . they are under tribulation and distress.

d) And one day, they will appear before the judgment seat of Christ and give account of every deed they have done, every careless word they have spoken, every idle, lustful, hateful thought they ever had.

e) And they will be cast into the lake of fire where Satan and his fallen angels reside.

4. My dear friends, this is not a mere academic exercise for you to ponder concerning other people who we know to be wicked. We rightly know they will go to unquenchable fire.

a) But you also, my friend, may go there too. How so? After all, you believe you are a fine person.

b) You will go there because you are not holy; and only holy, undefiled, righteous people will make it to heaven.

Apply: Do you see this? Do you understand your perilous condition?

*B. But here is the good news, my friends. No one needs to go to hell.*

1. Why not? Because Jesus has conquered death and the reason for it—our sin. The wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ our Lord.

2. And what has Christ's death accomplished on your behalf?

a) He justifies the ungodly. He declares them not guilty through faith in the finished work of Christ. He gives them something they can never earn—the righteousness, perfection, the innocence of Jesus Christ.

b) This is a gift from God, never anything we can earn or deserve.

c) This comes through Christ's death, the shedding of His blood in buying us back (redeeming us) for our slavery to Satan, sin, and death.

d) This comes through Christ's propitiating work at Calvary. The blood of Jesus satisfies the just wrath and condemnation the Father has for all ungodly sinners.

e) This marvelous work of propitiating grace demonstrates God's perfect righteousness. Like the angel of death passing over the houses which had the blood of the lamb on the door post, so God passes over, refuses to hold us accountable to our multitude of sins because of the blood of Jesus which alone can reconcile us to God.

f) Therefore God is both just and justifier. How can a holy God forgive sin?



1) God's perfect justice is satisfied by allowing His sinless, undefiled Son to become sin for us.

2) This makes possible the Christ's justifying grace being applied to us.

### **III THIS INDEED IS GLORIOUS NEWS, BUT HOW IS IT APPLIED TO PEOPLE?**

*A. Notice the phrases used throughout this passage.*

1. They all point to Christ's redeeming work. He is central and vital.

a) Grace which is in Christ Jesus.

b) A propitiation in His blood through faith. Faith in Christ is essential. Without faith it is impossible to please God.

c) He is just and justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

*B. This glorious good news of redemption and right standing with God comes only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.*

1. You must know the facts of His life and death.

a) He is 100% God and 100% man.

b) He died, was buried, was raised from the dead, ascended into heaven, and now sits at the Father's right hand. He will come again to judge the world in righteousness and set up the new heaven and new earth. Indeed Jesus is King over all the earth.

2. You must hold to these facts.

a) Everybody in our country knows these general facts about Jesus.

b) However most do not hold to the facts. A Muslim knows these things but he rejects the truth filled statements they make about Jesus.

3. You must believe.

a) To truly believe is to trust, to cast yourself wholeheartedly on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

4. Have you believed on Christ? What will you do with Jesus? Humble yourself under His mighty person and work. Call out to Him. He is ready, quick, and able to save you this very moment.

# FROM THE BOOK OF REVELATION

## The Judgment of Almighty God, Revelation 20:11-15

**Introduction:** Hell is a horrible place. People go there every day, but no need for you to go there. How do you escape the judgment of God?

### I WHAT IS JESUS SAYING TO US THROUGH JOHN?

#### **Please note:**

##### *A. The context.*

1. John's vision of Satan being bound for a thousand years, 1-3.

- a) To bind the devil means his reach, influence is limited.
- b) He no longer has dominion. .he deceived the nations.
- c) All were in darkness except O.T. Jews. .and most of them had left the faith.
- d) Not a literal 1000 years. .apocalyptic. .figurative language.
- e) Refers to the years between Christ's first and second advents.

2. John's vision of the saints, 4-6.

- a) Thrones in heaven.
- b) Those reigning with Christ. Who are they?
  - 1) They had not worshipped the beast or his image.
  - 2) They had not received the mark of the beast.
  - 3) The beast is the Roman Empire.
- c) Rest of the dead—the lost.
- d) Blessed are those who take part in first resurrection—born again to living hope.
- e) They reign victoriously with Christ between His two advents.

3. Satan released at end of 1000 years, at Christ's return.

- a) Satan will again for short time deceive the nations.
- b) Satan will war against people of God.

c)Satan defeated and cast into lake of fire, tormented forever.

d)All without Christ likewise tormented, 2 Thess. 1.

*B. The Great White Throne judgment., 11-15.*

1.What is it?

a)The place of God's righteous, divine, judgment.

b)Jesus the Victor is seated on the throne.

c)All the dead of all the ages will stand and be judged for things in the books.

d)Judged by their deeds. See also 2 Cor.5:10.

1)All will also be judged by their words, Mt.12:36-37.

2)All thoughts also will be judged, Rom.2:16.

e)Sea, death, and Hades gave up their dead to stand before God's judgment seat.

f)The occupants of Lake of Fire.

1)Death.

2)Hades.

3)All whose names not in book of life.

g)Lake of Fire is the second death.

**Theme:** Flee from the wrath of God which is to come.

## **II KNOW THIS SOBERING TRUTH, MY FRIENDS—THERE IS A SURE, CERTAIN, AND TERRIFYING JUDGMENT COMING TO THIS WORLD.**

*A. Why such doom and gloom? Can you not give us a happy message?*

1.On the one hand, yes I can. I can lie to you and tell you that all is well with your soul.

a)Like a physician, who wants you to feel comfortable, who knows you have stage four cancer, but tells you that you merely have the flu.

b)But does that really help you?

c)Wouldn't you rather have the bad news so that you can address your medical problem?

2. On the other hand, I can give you good news, but it will mean nothing to you unless it is contrasted with the bad news.

a) You need the bad news first.

3. And what is the bad news?

a) You face a day of wrath.

b) God is vengeful and wrathful. He will not leave the guilty unpunished.

c) The longer you live in your sinful state, the more your sins are being counted against you.

d) You are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of the wrath of God.

e) You will die and immediately your soul will be thrown into hell where the fire is never quenched and the worm never dies.

f) It is a place of conscious, endless, torment.

g) You will know where you are and you will suffer untold misery and you can do nothing to extract yourself from it.

h) But it is even worse, my friends, far worse.

i) On the day of the Great White Throne Judgment you will stand before God and give account of every lawless deed, every careless word, and every ungodly thought you have ever committed.

j) Then you will hear the most dreadful words imaginable—*Depart from Me you workers of iniquity into the everlasting fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.*

k) No amount of money, earthly accomplishments, status in life, or good works you have done can ever put you in right standing before the One whose eyes are a flame of fire.

### **III BUT NOW COMES THE GOOD NEWS, MY FRIENDS.**

*A. No one needs to suffer judgment. No one must go to hell or be cast into the lake of fire. Why not?*

1. Jesus, the last Adam, did that which the first Adam failed to do.

a)He obeyed the law of God perfectly every day of His earthly life.

2.He went to hell so that you and I would never have to go there.

a)On the cross He cried out, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?”

b)The sins of all God’s elect, from the foundation of the world, were placed on the Lord Jesus that horrible day at Calvary’s cross.

c)Jesus became sin. He took your sin upon Himself.

d)It was a scandal. People mocked. To this day people wonder how Jesus can be the Messiah since He was allowed to be so tortured by His Father.

e)But the Christian glories in the cross of Christ. He knows this is his only way to make it back to God, to go up the mountain to the heavenly Jerusalem, to hear those words, “Enter into your rest.”

3.Jesus was raised from the dead which proves the Father’s acceptance of His payment for our sins.

a)He conquered death.

b)He overpowered sin.

c)He defeated Satan.

#### **IV WHAT, THEN, MY FRIENDS MUST YOU DO?**

*A. You must flee to your only place of refuge.*

1.You must run in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Savior of sinners.

a)See your desperate, perilous condition.

b)Believe Jesus took your wrath and hell you deserve.

c)Believe that His death and resurrection is like the Passover of Israel, that by placing His shed blood over your life, the angel of death, condemnation, and judgment passes you by.

2.Jesus is the only Savior of sinners.

a)He is merciful, gracious, compassionate. He will save you this very moment if you humble yourself in His presence.

b)Repent, submit, surrender now. Do not delay.

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