
**Bringing in the Harvest
A Study of the Gospel:
What it Is & How to Tell Others**

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This Booklet belongs to _____

The Hebrew Word Group בָּשַׂר and בְּשֵׂרָה (*basar/b^esorah*)

The basic meaning of the verb בָּשַׂר (*basar*) is “to bring news.” The context must determine whether the news is considered “good” or “bad.” The verb is found 24 times in the Tanach, while the noun, בְּשֵׂרָה (*b^esorah*) is found 6 times.

In 1 & 2 Samuel, and 1 Kings, the use of the word group is generally used simply to describe runners or messengers bringing news, e.g., coming from the battlefield with news of victory or defeat, etc. (1 Sam 4:17; 31:9; 2 Sam 1:20; 4:10; 18:19–20, 26, 31; 1 Kings 1:42)

It is in the prophets, and particularly Isaiah, where the verb and its cognate noun take on a theological perspective.

Is. 40:9 Get yourself up on a high mountain, O Zion, bearer of good news, Lift up your voice mightily, O Jerusalem, bearer of good news; Lift it up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah, “Here is your God!”

עַל הַר־גְּבוּהָ עֲלִי־לָךְ מִבְּשֵׂרָתָ צִיּוֹן הַרְיִמִי בְּכַח קוֹלְךָ מִבְּשֵׂרָתָ יְרוּשָׁלַם הַרְיִמִי אֶל־תִּירָאִי אֲמָרִי לְעָרֵי יְהוּדָה הִנֵּה אֵלֶיְכֶם:
ἐπ’ ὄρος ὑψηλὸν ἀνάβηθι, ὁ εὐαγγελιζόμενος Σιών· ὑψώσον τῆ ἰσχύϊ τὴν φωνήν σου, ὁ εὐαγγελιζόμενος Ἱερουσαλήμ· ὑψώσατε, μὴ φοβεῖσθε· εἰπὸν ταῖς πόλεσιν Ἰουδα Ἰδοὺ ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν.

Is. 41:27 “Formerly I said to Zion, ‘Behold, here they are.’ And to Jerusalem, ‘I will give a messenger of good news.’

רֵאשׁוֹן לְצִיּוֹן הִנֵּה הֵנָּה וְלִירוּשָׁלַם מִבְּשֵׂר אֶתְּנֶן:
ἀρχὴν Σιών δώσω καὶ Ἱερουσαλήμ παρακαλέσω εἰς ὁδόν.

Is. 52:7 How lovely on the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who announces peace And brings good news of happiness, Who announces salvation, And says to Zion, “Your God reigns!”

מִה־נְאוֹו עַל־הַהָרִים רַגְלֵי מִבְּשֵׂר מְשֻׁמֵּעַ שְׁלוֹם מִבְּשֵׂר טוֹב מְשֻׁמֵּעַ יְשׁוּעָה אֲמַר לְצִיּוֹן מִלָּךְ אֵלֶיךָ:
ὡς ὦρα ἐπὶ τῶν ὄρεων, ὡς πόδες εὐαγγελιζομένου ἀκοήν εἰρήνης, ὡς εὐαγγελιζόμενος ἀγαθά, ὅτι ἀκουστήν ποιήσω τὴν σωτηρίαν σου λέγων Σιών Βασιλεύσει σου ὁ θεός·

Is. 60:6 “A multitude of camels will cover you, The young camels of Midian and Ephah; All those from Sheba will come; They will bring gold and frankincense, And will bear good news of the praises of the LORD.

שְׂפָעַת גְּמִלִים תִּכְסֶּךָ בְּכָרִי מִדִּין וְעֵיפָה כָּלֵם מְשָׁבָא יְבֵאוּ וְהָב וּלְבוֹנָה יִשְׂאוּ וְתִהְיֶה לְךָ יְבֵשָׁרוּ: אֲגֵלָּאִי קַמְלָוִן, קַאִי קַלְוִשׁוּסִין סֵה קַאִמְלָוִי מַאִדִּיאַם קַאִי גַאִיפַא· פֶּאֶנְטֵס עֵק סַאבַּא הֶשׁוּסִין פֶּרוֹנְטֵס כְּרוּסִין קַאִי לִיבַנוֹן וִישׁוּסִין קַאִי תֹו סַוֶּתְרִיוֹן קִרְיוֹו עִוֶּאֶקְלִוּנְטַאִי.
ἀγέλαι καμήλων, καὶ καλύψουσίν σε κάμηλοι Μαδιαμ καὶ Γαιφα· πάντες ἐκ Σαβα ἤξουσιν φέροντες χρυσίον καὶ λίβανον οἴσουσιν καὶ τὸ σωτήριον κυρίου εὐαγγελιοῦνται.

Is. 61:1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the LORD has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners;

רוּחַ אֲדָנִי יְהוָה עָלַי יְעַן מָשַׁח יְהוָה אֶתִּי לְבַשֵּׂר עֲנָוִים שְׁלַחְנִי לְחִבְשׁ לְנַשְׁבְּרֵי־לֵב לְקַרְא לְשִׁבּוּיִם דָּרוֹר וְלְאַסוּרִים פְּקַח־קוֹחַ:
Πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ’ ἐμέ, οὗ εἶνεκεν ἔχρισέν με· εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς ἀπέσταλκέν με, ἰάσασθαι τοὺς συντετριμμένους τῆ καρδία, κηρύξαι αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεςιν καὶ τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν,

Is 52:7 is quoted in Rom 10:15

How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!"

Is 61:1 is quoted in Matt 11:5 and Lk 7:22

And He answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: *the* BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT, *the* lame walk, *the* lepers are cleansed, and *the* deaf hear, *the* dead are raised up, *the* POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM. (Lk 7:22)



How do these quotes help us interpret the Isaiah passages?

The Greek Word Group εὐαγγελίζω/εὐαγγέλιον (*euangelizō/euaggelion*)

The basic root is made up of the particle εὖ, which means "good," and ἀγγέλω which means "to announce." Thus, "to announce something good" = "give good news." The verb, *euangelizō* is found 54 times in the Apostolic Scriptures, and the noun, *euangelion*, is found 76 times.

The following verses have been chose to represent the various ways that this word-group is used in the Apostolic Scriptures.

Matt. 4:23 Yeshua was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας), and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.

Matt. 9:35 ¶ Yeshua was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας), and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

Matt. 24:14 "This gospel of the kingdom (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας) shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Mark 1:15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel (μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ)."

Luke 16:16 "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached (ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ εὐαγγελίζεται), and everyone is forcing his way into it.



How should we understand the phrase "the gospel of the kingdom"?

Mark 1:1 The beginning of the gospel of Yeshua Messiah, the Son of God.
Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [υἱοῦ θεοῦ].

Mark 1:14–15 Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

Μετὰ δὲ τὸ παραδοθῆναι τὸν Ἰωάννην ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ λέγων ὅτι πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ· μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ.

Mark 16:15 And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· πορευθέντες εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἅπαντα κηρύξατε τὸ εὐαγγέλιον πάσῃ τῇ κτίσει.

Acts 20:24 “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 Yeshua, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

ἀλλ’ οὐδενὸς λόγου ποιοῦμαι τὴν ψυχὴν τιμίαν ἐμαυτῷ ὡς τελειῶσαι τὸν δρόμον μου καὶ τὴν διακονίαν ἣν ἔλαβον παρὰ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ, διαμαρτύρασθαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ.

Rom. 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Οὐ γὰρ ἐπαισχύνομαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, δύναμις γὰρ θεοῦ ἐστὶν εἰς σωτηρίαν παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι, Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἕλληνι.

Rom. 15:19 in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Messiah (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ).

Rom. 16:25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Yeshua Messiah, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past,

Τῷ δὲ δυναμένῳ ὑμᾶς στηρίξαι κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου καὶ τὸ κήρυγμα Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν μυστηρίου χρόνοις αἰωνίοις σεσιγημένου,

1Pet. 4:17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? (τί τὸ τέλος τῶν ἀπειθούντων τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ εὐαγγελίῳ;)

Different combination of words used with the term “Gospel”

- Gospel of the kingdom
- Gospel of Yeshua Messiah
- Gospel of God
- Gospel of the grace of God
- Gospel (standing alone)
- Gospel of Messiah
- My Gospel (i.e., Paul’s Gospel)





How should we understand these different combinations? What do these different combinations tell us about the essential elements of the Gospel message?

Some Important Texts to Teach Us About the Gospel Message

The Story of the Rich Young Ruler (Matt 19:16ff; Mark 10:17–27; Lk 18:18–30)

Matt. 19:16 And someone came to Him and said, “Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?”

17 And He said to him, “Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.”

18 Then he said to Him, “Which ones?” And Yeshua said, “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER; YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY; YOU SHALL NOT STEAL; YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS;

19 HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER; and YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.”

20 The young man said to Him, “All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?”

21 Yeshua said to him, “If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

22 But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property.

Mark 10:17 As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

18 And Yeshua said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.

19 “You know the commandments, ‘DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, Do not defraud, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.’”

20 And he said to Him, “Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up.”

21 Looking at him, Yeshua felt a love for him and said to him, “One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

22 But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property.

Luke 18:18 A ruler questioned Him, saying, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

19 And Yeshua said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.

20 “You know the commandments, ‘DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.’”

21 And he said, “All these things I have kept from my youth.”

22 When Yeshua heard this, He said to him, “One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

23 But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.

23 And Yeshua said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

24 "Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

25 When the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?"

26 And looking at them Yeshua said to them, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

27 Then Peter said to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?"

28 And Yeshua said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

29 "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life.

30 "But many who are first will be last; and the last, first.

23 And Yeshua, looking around, said to His disciples, "How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!"

Mark 10:24 The disciples were amazed at His words. But Yeshua answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!

25 "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

26 They were even more astonished and said to Him, "Then who can be saved?"

27 Looking at them, Yeshua said, "With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God."

24 And Yeshua looked at him and said, "How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!

25 "For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

26 They who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?"

27 But He said, "The things that are impossible with people are possible with God."

28 Peter said, "Behold, we have left our own homes and followed You."

29 And He said to them, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God,

30 who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life."

Thoughts & Questions about this Gospel story.

Read Chapter 1, Walter Chantry, *Today's Gospel: Authentic or Synthetic?* and highlight the essential elements of the Gospel he gleans from the story of the Rich Young Ruler.

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And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. [Mark 10:17, 18]

The rich young ruler's assets

A glance at the young man who came to Jesus indicates that he was a person worthy of your esteem and confidence. He was a 'cleancut' youth. He greeted your Lord with abundant courtesy: 'kneeled to him' and called Him, 'Good Master'. His deep interest in religion must command your respect. He 'came running' to Christ in enthusiastic pursuit of spiritual help. So anxious was he to secure 'eternal life' that he could not wait for a private conversation. On the highway he ignored the public's attention to inquire after his soul's welfare.

Further, he was a man of moral action. When Jesus began to remind him of the commandments, he responded. 'All these have I observed from my youth' [verse 20]. His life was visibly pure. When Jesus said, 'Do not commit adultery', he could sincerely report that he had been chaste. To our Lords' command, 'Do not steal,' he could say that

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he was honest in business. His wealth was not gained by fraud. He had always respected his parents. He was no slanderer. Such integrity was not occasional or newly acquired. Rather, morality had been woven into his habits 'from his youth.'

Verse 22 tells us that the fellow 'had great possessions.' He was successful in the world. Luke 18:18 calls him a 'ruler' – a nobleman of authority and influence. Matthew 19:20 says he was a 'young man,' which makes his accomplishments more surprising. 'A worthy candidate for the Citizen of the Year Award', you might think. And certainly you would love to have him as a trophy for Christ. You would be delighted to see him confess Jesus and join your church. Isn't it a shame that part of your interest in such a person would stem from the carnal suspicion that one so successful in the world would enhance God's kingdom on earth?

What would be your reflex to such a circumstance? Here is an outstanding fellow begging to know how he can get to Heaven! This is the evangelist's dream! Wouldn't you open your Bible and ask him essential questions? 'Do you believe that you are a sinner? Do you believe that Christ died for sinners? Will you accept Jesus as your personal Saviour? Pray this prayer after me' He would answer in the affirmative to each question with very little instruction. Just

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show him the usual verses. This rich man was ripe for our evangelism. Our inquiry rooms would have elicited his 'decision' in a few moments, and given him assurance of eternal life besides. He would be added to the statistic sheet and his conversion reported across the world. Such a celebrity might even merit a personal write-up in the big evangelical magazines!

Aren't you a little disappointed to see Jesus handling this tender soul so roughly? How could our Lord use such obviously poor tactics with a sinner? He began with a rebuke, went on to talk about the Ten Commandments (of all things!), demanded immense sacrifice as a condition of having eternal life, and allowed the 'fish' to get away! Didn't He know how to lead a soul to Himself? If you are surprised, surely you are the one who doesn't understand evangelism. Look again.

Jesus' rebuke

Jesus addressed His first response, not to the ruler's question, but to the incidental greeting given to Him. The young man had called Jesus 'Good Master'. But our Lord refused to accept the compliment. The inquirer was only aware that Jesus was a great teacher. He was ignorant that he was speaking to the Christ, the Son of the living God. The Saviour took this opportunity to

say in effect, 'The goodness of any creature (and such only, you take Me to be) is not worthy to be named or taken notice of. It is God alone who is originally and essentially good.'¹

It is true that we should not lavish our most glorious adjectives upon men. For then what words will we use to praise our God? But did Jesus have to take the young fellow so literally? Can't we use the term 'good' to refer courteously or generally to men? Does the Lord expect us to interrupt every conversation literally to correct all plaudits given to fellow-creatures? What is Christ's purpose for insisting on this minor point?

The Great Evangelist was not being petty. Nor does He expect us to campaign against using the word 'good' to describe men. Our Master Himself labelled righteous men 'good' [Matthew 5:45]. However, this was not an ordinary conversation but a very intense one. Jesus was rebuking the man for having a readiness to flatter men but little reverence toward God. At the outset of the discussion He wished to honour God and stir a respect for His holy character. So He seized upon the seeker's salutation as an occasion for instruction. Jesus began His message of evangelism by solemnly fixing attention on God's attribute of infinite holiness or goodness.

¹ Henry Scougal, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, Inter-Varsity Press, 1961, p 31.

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Jesus' motive

Our Lord was motivated in His conversation by love and compassion for the covetous youth. Verse 21 states explicitly that Jesus had a conscious love for the man as He talked with him. When the youth departed from Jesus, because he could not save his soul and his money too, there must have been the gnawing pain of pitying sorrow in our Lord's heart. He wept to see Jerusalem refuse His offers of mercy. Similar emotion for this particular sinner was likely felt as he turned away. The man was not merely a hopeful statistic, nor a trophy of success to embellish His crusade reports. Jesus deeply loved the ruler. Such love for sinners is an essential qualification for any evangelist.

However, concern for the nobleman's soul was not the supreme motive that moved Christ to witness to this sinner. Running even deeper within His breast was a love of God. Though induced by a desire to save men, Christ was primarily motivated by a longing to glorify His Father. You cannot carefully read the Gospels and fail to see that our Lord's chief aim in every act was to do the will of His Father and to make His glory known to men.

Upon humbling Himself to enter this world Christ said, 'Lo, I come to do thy will, O God' [Hebrews 10:7]. In life He reported, 'I do always those things that please him' [John 8:29].

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As He went to the cross, Jesus summarized His ministry thus: 'I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do' [John 17:4]. This burning passion consumed Him throughout his life.

An evangelist of today must know what it is to be committed above all else to glorifying God. Some who demonstrate a passion for accurate doctrine, place a question mark over their love for God by evidencing no active love for lost sinners. This absence of missionary effort is appalling. Nevertheless, if being moved by compassion for sinners is essential, it is more essential to be moved more profoundly still by a love of God.

Jesus' message

Such motivation and determination will display itself in the evangelist's message. The questioner in this passage had centred attention upon his own need (of finding a way to inherit eternal life). Jesus, however, turned the primary focus of the interview upon God and His glory. His entire message was structured to honour His Father. The man wanted a solution to his fear of death and judgment. Jesus would eventually address Himself with compassion, to this concern but first a foundation had to be laid and a more important issue settled. Jesus' answer indicated that He had come to exalt Jehovah, to declare His

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name, to tell of His unique goodness. His coming to save men was rooted in this.

Evangelism always requires preaching on the attributes of God. When Jesus met the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well [John 4], He taught her that God is a Spirit. When Paul addressed the heathen on Mars' Hill [Acts 17], he had to devote even more of his evangelistic message to the character of God, who was unknown to them. He began by speaking of God as the Creator, as the Sustainer of all life, as the Mighty One who raised Jesus from the dead. This element, of exalting God's character, is essential to bringing honour to God in our preaching.

Much of modern preaching is anæmic, with the life-blood of God's nature absent from the message. Evangelists centre their message upon man. Man has sinned and missed a great blessing. If man wants to retrieve his immense loss he must act thus and so. But the Gospel of Christ is very different. It begins with God and His glory. It tells men that they have offended a holy God, who will by no means pass by sin. It reminds sinners that the only hope of salvation is to be found in the grace and power of this same God. Christ's Gospel sends men to beg pardon of the Holy One.

There is a wide difference between these two messages. The one seeks to blaze a trail to Heaven

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for man while ignoring the Lord of Glory. The other labours to magnify the God of all grace in the salvation of men. The first would give a technical answer to, 'What shall I do to inherit eternal life?', without an adequate foundation. The last says,

Wait a moment. The God with whom we have to do is thrice holy, alone good, unapproachable in brilliant holiness! We will return to your question in its subordinate place. But now take your eye from yourself and behold the holy God of the Scriptures. Then you will see yourself as you truly are – a creature in rebellion against an infinitely pure God. You are not yet prepared to discuss yourself and eternity.

This does not mean that preaching about the character of God is isolated from seeking the salvation of a sinner. Preaching on the attributes is essential to the conversion of a man. Without a knowledge of God, a sinner does not know whom he has offended, who threatens him with destruction, or who is able to save him. Apart from some clear apprehensions of God, there can be no personal approach to God, and 'personal Saviour' becomes a hollow phrase.

Jesus lifted the egocentric eyes of the wealthy ruler to One whose holiness caused Isaiah to cry, 'Woe is me! for I am undone' [Isaiah 6:5]. Is that a secondary part of the Gospel? If you think so,

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you don't understand the first things of the faith. The rich youth had come running because he understood that he might not inherit eternal life. But he didn't understand why. Whom had he offended? There was no remorse for having offended a holy God. He was prepared to talk of religion; but he was ignorant of God. He was anxious to ask for the joys of salvation; but he could not confess as David, 'Against thee, thee only, have I sinned; and done this evil in thy sight' [Psalm 51:4]. He was not acquainted with the Lord.

When Saul was arrested by a shining light on the road to Damascus, a voice demanded, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' [Acts 9:4]. Immediately Saul asked, 'Who art thou?'. Whom have I persecuted? How is that? The one who came running to Jesus had the same question, for he had never seen the transcendent holiness of God. Ignorant of Jehovah's unspeakable dignity, he was unaware of the enormity of his crime. Though he had not loved the Lord with all his heart, the youth did not conceive of this as criminal neglect, because he had never beheld the glory of God. He was unready to hear of the way of salvation.

Although the inquirer was a Jew, and probably devout, Jesus did not assume that he knew who God was. He needed catechizing on the attributes

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of God. Evangelists today are making the dreadful miscalculation that sinners know who God is. The sad truth is that *our* age knows less than the Jews of our Lord's day. Nevertheless, evangelicals plunge right in with 'five things God wants you to know.' They all centre upon the man's eternal fortunes and utterly ignore the question, 'Who is God?'. The sinners thus treated never realize the gravity of their plight. They don't know whom they have offended. This is tragic.

Jesus spoke to the man of God's holiness because it showed him what great trouble had come upon him. It is the invariably pure God who is your Judge. The note of holiness was particularly pertinent to bringing a proper fear of God into this fellow's soul. He realized before that God was a Judge. Now Jesus impressed him with the holiness of that Judge, a holiness that 'will by no means clear the guilty' [Exodus 34:7].

Today, we are told that witnessing is to begin with, 'God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life'. Love is set before sinners as the foremost characteristic of God. But Jesus didn't begin that way. And the Bible as a whole speaks more often of God's holiness than of His love. This is probably because men readily remember all attributes that might favour themselves and totally forget those which threaten or alarm them.

Thousands of sinners think of God as having

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only one attribute – ‘love’. Though that is part of the truth, when it is taken for the whole truth it becomes a lie. When you tell a stranger, ‘God loves you,’ his mind registers something like this: ‘Yes, He loves me and would never harm me. He loves me with forgiving and merciful kindness; so, all is well with my soul.’ In the concept of the average American, there is no idea that God is holy; only a perverted concept that He has a gushy, all-embracing kindness. Modern evangelism is helping to foster this misconception of God by its silence and vagueness.

To say to a rebel, ‘God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life,’ is terribly misinforming. The truth is that God is holy. Thus, He is angry with the sinner at this moment. His sword of wrath already hangs over the head of the guilty and will forever torment him unless he repents and trusts Christ. This plan is not so wonderful. God’s redeeming love for sinners is found only in Christ, and the sinner is out of Christ. The modern approach is diametrically opposed to Jesus’ method with the young ruler. He did not soothe him in his ignorance, but stirred up fear by preaching that God is essentially good.

Men today will readily use the name of God as would the rich man. But it is disastrous to assume that men are speaking of the same person as we

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are. When we say ‘God’ we mean ‘Creator’. When our contemporaries say ‘God’ they are often speaking of one who has little to do with the world we see. When we say ‘God’ we mean ‘One who is sovereign in creation, providence, and in the redemption of His creature, man.’ When sinners say ‘God’ they usually refer to one who has committed himself to honouring the sovereign will of man at any cost to himself. Above all, when we say ‘God’ we speak of One who has unflinching holiness, ‘Who will by no means clear the guilty.’ Sinners frequently think of ‘God’ as flexible so that He will by no means punish wonderful men.

Do you declare in your witnessing that God is holy? Every part of your message rests upon the character of God. If you rush into four easy steps to Heaven with a man who has a defective view of God, you will deceive him and yourself. You may lead him to pray after you, and *you* will be praying to the God of glorious holiness. But when *he* repeats ‘God’ in his prayer, he will be praying to another god, or at best to his ‘unknown god’.

‘How shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard?’ [Romans 10:14] is a pertinent question for today’s evangelist. Sinners must know Him upon whom they must call to be saved. ‘Salvation is of the Lord’ [Jonah 2:9]. His power and His grace alone can deliver from destruction and lead to eternal life. Eliminating the doctrine

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of God from evangelism is no innocent shift in emphasis, but is cutting the heart out of our message.

'What must I do to inherit eternal life?' asked the religious youth. You must apply to Jehovah for it. But before you rush into His courts, let me tell you that He is so holy that if one ray of His glory were to meet your eye, you would be cast at His feet with a dreadful sense of uncleanness. He is a consuming fire, and you must cry out to Him for mercy. Do not think that you do Him a favour by 'accepting Jesus'? The Holy One has done you a great favour in commanding you to trust his Son.

Preaching several easy steps to Heaven is not evangelism. Preaching the whole counsel of God is. Preaching the radiant truth of the unique goodness of God especially is. Telling men that God is their Creator may embarrass you with intellectual evolutionists, but it is essential to the Gospel. Telling men that God is holy, wise and sovereign is also vital. These are not unnecessary trappings.

Someone no doubt objects:

My mission board calls such doctrines 'unessential' because they are divisive. Serious conflict would arise if I suggested that dwelling only on the love of God misleads sinners. And the pressure to get results doesn't allow time for such preaching.

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Where did any group of theologians or administrators get the audacity to relegate the character of God to the category of the unessential? When liberals said that the virgin birth was an unnecessary truth, men left their churches and schools in droves. If 'evangelicals' say that the holiness and sovereignty of God are subjects too sensitive to preach, perhaps it is time to instruct others boldly at all costs, even though it involves conflict and exclusion from their fellowship.

Paul was a missionary evangelist, not a settled pastor. He could say to the Ephesian elders 'I am pure from the blood of all men' [Acts 20:26]. How could Paul make such a claim? Not because he had given each person four spiritual laws. That was not the New Testament method of evangelism. The next verse substantiates his claim. 'For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.' In his itinerant ministry Paul preached a thorough-going theology, not a denuded four steps to eternal life.

Today mission boards are asking their missionaries to keep the blood of men on their hands:

Don't rock the boat by clearly teaching anything that another evangelical will object to, even if it is in the Bible. Don't cause trouble by demanding the clear notes of the Gospel from those who labour by your side as fellow-missionaries. Stick to the main issues.

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Important aspects of the Gospel that we learn from Yeshua's response to the "rich young ruler" and highlighted by Chantry.

Getting the Big Picture: Galatians 3:1–9

1 You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Messiah was publicly portrayed as crucified?

2 This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Torah, or by hearing with faith?

3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

4 Did you suffer so many things in vain — if indeed it was in vain?

5 So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Torah, or by hearing with faith?

6 Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. [Genesis 15:6]

7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.

8 The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU." [Gen 12:3; 22:18]

9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

1 Ὡς ἀνόητοι Γαλάται, τίς ὑμᾶς ἐβάσκανεν, οἷς κατ' ὀφθαλμοὺς Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς προεγράφη ἐσταυρωμένος;

2 τοῦτο μόνον θέλω μαθεῖν ἀφ' ὑμῶν· ἐξ ἔργων νόμου τὸ πνεῦμα ἐλάβετε ἢ ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως;

3 οὕτως ἀνόητοί ἐστε, ἐναρξάμενοι πνεύματι νῦν σαρκὶ ἐπιτελεῖσθε;

4 τοσαῦτα ἐπάθετε εἰκῆ; εἶ γε καὶ εἰκῆ.

5 ὁ οὖν ἐπιχορηγῶν ὑμῖν τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἐνεργῶν δυνάμεις ἐν ὑμῖν, ἐξ ἔργων νόμου ἢ ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως;

6 ¶ Καθὼς Ἀβραὰμ ἐπίστευσεν τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην·

7 γινώσκετε ἄρα ὅτι οἱ ἐκ πίστεως, οὗτοι υἱοὶ εἰσὶν Ἀβραάμ.

8 προῖδοῦσα δὲ ἡ γραφὴ ὅτι ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοὶ τὰ ἔθνη ὁ θεός, προευηγγελίσατο τῷ Ἀβραάμ ὅτι ἐνευλογηθήσονται ἐν σοὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη·

9 ὥστε οἱ ἐκ πίστεως εὐλογοῦνται σὺν τῷ πιστῷ Ἀβραάμ.



How does Gal 3:8 give further definition to the Gospel?

**Peter evangelizes the Jews who had
come to Jerusalem to celebrate Shavuot**

Acts 2:22–40

Acts 2:22 “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Yeshua the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know —

23 this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.

24 “But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

25 “For David says of Him, ‘I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN.

26 ‘THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE;

27 BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY.

28 ‘YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH YOUR PRESENCE.’

29 ¶ “Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

30 “And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT ONE OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE,

31 he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID HIS FLESH SUFFER DECAY.

32 “This Yeshua God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.

33 “Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.

Acts 2:22 Ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλῖται, ἀκούσατε τοὺς λόγους τούτους· Ἰησοῦν τὸν Ναζωραῖον, ἄνδρα ἀποδεδειγμένον ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς ὑμᾶς δυνάμεσι καὶ τέρασι καὶ σημείοις οἷς ἐποίησεν δι’ αὐτοῦ ὁ θεὸς ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν καθὼς αὐτοὶ οἴδατε,

23 τοῦτον τῇ ὀρισμένη βουλῇ καὶ προγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ ἔκδοτον διὰ χειρὸς ἀνόμων προσπήξαντες ἀνείλατε,

24 ὃν ὁ θεὸς ἀνέστησεν λύσας τὰς ὠδῖνας τοῦ θανάτου, καθότι οὐκ ἦν δυνατὸν κρατεῖσθαι αὐτὸν ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ.

25 Δαυὶδ γὰρ λέγει εἰς αὐτόν· προορώμην τὸν κύριον ἐνώπιόν μου διὰ παντός, ὅτι ἐκ δεξιῶν μου ἐστὶν ἵνα μὴ σαλευθῶ.

26 διὰ τοῦτο ἠὺφράνθη ἡ καρδία μου καὶ ἠγαλλίασατο ἡ γλῶσσά μου, ἔτι δὲ καὶ ἡ σὰρξ μου κατασκηνώσει ἐπ’ ἐλπίδι,

27 ὅτι οὐκ ἐγκαταλείψεις τὴν ψυχὴν μου εἰς ἄδην οὐδὲ δώσεις τὸν ὄσιόν σου εἰδὲν διαφθοράν.

28 ἐγνώρισάς μοι ὁδοὺς ζωῆς, πληρώσεις με εὐφροσύνης μετὰ τοῦ προσώπου σου.

29 Ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί, ἐξὸν εἰπεῖν μετὰ παρρησίας πρὸς ὑμᾶς περὶ τοῦ πατριάρχου Δαυὶδ ὅτι καὶ ἐτελεύτησεν καὶ ἐτάφη, καὶ τὸ μνήμα αὐτοῦ ἐστὶν ἐν ἡμῖν ἄχρι τῆς ἡμέρας ταύτης.

30 προφήτης οὖν ὑπάρχων καὶ εἰδὼς ὅτι ὄρκῳ ὤμοσεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς ἐκ καρποῦ τῆς ὀσφύος αὐτοῦ καθίσει ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον αὐτοῦ,

31 προϊδὼν ἐλάλησεν περὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὅτι οὔτε ἐγκατελείφθη εἰς ἄδην οὔτε ἡ σὰρξ αὐτοῦ εἶδεν διαφθοράν.

32 τοῦτον τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἀνέστησεν ὁ θεός, οὗ πάντες ἡμεῖς ἐσμὲν μάρτυρες·

33 τῇ δεξιᾷ οὖν τοῦ θεοῦ ὑψωθείς, τὴν τε ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου λαβὼν παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς, ἐξέχεεν τοῦτο ὃ ὑμεῖς [καὶ] βλέπετε καὶ ἀκούετε.

34 “For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: ‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,

35 UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.”

36 “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Messiah — this Yeshua whom you crucified.”

37 Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?”

38 Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Yeshua Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

39 “For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.”

40 And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation!”

34 οὐ γὰρ Δαυὶδ ἀνέβη εἰς τοὺς οὐρανοὺς, λέγει δὲ αὐτός· εἶπεν [ὁ] κύριος τῷ κυρίῳ μου· κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου,

35 ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου.

36 ἀσφαλῶς οὖν γινωσκέτω πᾶς οἶκος Ἰσραὴλ ὅτι καὶ κύριον αὐτὸν καὶ χριστὸν ἐποίησεν ὁ θεός, τοῦτον τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὃν ἡμεῖς ἐσταυρώσαμε.

37 Ἀκούσαντες δὲ κατενύγησαν τὴν καρδίαν εἰπόν τε πρὸς τὸν Πέτρον καὶ τοὺς λοιποὺς ἀποστόλους· τί ποιήσωμεν, ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί;

38 Πέτρος δὲ πρὸς αὐτούς· μετανοήσατε, [φησίν,] καὶ βαπτισθήτω ἕκαστος ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ὑμῶν καὶ λήμψεσθε τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος.

39 ὑμῖν γὰρ ἐστὶν ἡ ἐπαγγελία καὶ τοῖς τέκνοις ὑμῶν καὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς εἰς μακρὰν, ὅσους ἂν προσκαλέσῃται κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν.

40 ἐτέροις τε λόγοις πλείοσιν διεμαρτύρατο καὶ παρεκάλει αὐτοὺς λέγων· σῴθητε ἀπὸ τῆς γενεᾶς τῆς σκολιᾶς ταύτης.



What are the essential truths which Peter emphasizes as he evangelizes the Jewish people who were at the Temple for Shavuot?

What can we learn from Paul's methods of evangelism on the Areopagus?

Acts 17:16–34

Acts 17:16 Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols.

17 So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present.

18 And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, "What would this idle babbler wish to say?" Others, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities," — because he was preaching Yeshua and the resurrection.

19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming?"

20 "For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean."

21 (Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.)

22 So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects.

23 "For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.

24 "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands;

25 nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things;

26 and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,

6 Ἐν δὲ ταῖς Ἀθήναις ἐκδεχομένου αὐτοῦ τοῦ Παύλου παρωξύνετο τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ θεωροῦντος κατείδωλον οὔσαν τὴν πόλιν.

17 διελέγετο μὲν οὖν ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις καὶ τοῖς σεβομένοις καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ κατὰ πᾶσαν ἡμέραν πρὸς τοὺς παρατυγχάνοντας.

18 τινὲς δὲ καὶ τῶν Ἐπικουρείων καὶ Στωϊκῶν φιλοσόφων συνέβαλλον αὐτῷ, καὶ τινες ἔλεγον· τί ἂν θέλοι ὁ σπερμολόγος οὗτος λέγειν; οἱ δὲ· ξένων δαιμονίων δοκεῖ καταγγελεὺς εἶναι, ὅτι τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ τὴν ἀνάστασιν εὐηγγελίζετο.

19 ἐπιλαβόμενοι τε αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸν Ἄρειον πάγον ἤγαγον λέγοντες· δυνάμεθα γινῶναι τίς ἡ καινὴ αὕτη ἢ ὑπὸ σοῦ λαλουμένη διδαχὴ;

20 ξενίζοντα γὰρ τινα εἰσφέρεις εἰς τὰς ἀκοὰς ἡμῶν· βουλόμεθα οὖν γινῶναι τίνα θέλει ταῦτα εἶναι.

21 Ἀθηναῖοι δὲ πάντες καὶ οἱ ἐπιδημοῦντες ξένοι εἰς οὐδὲν ἕτερον ἠυκαίρουν ἢ λέγειν τι ἢ ἀκούειν τι καινότερον.

22 Σταθεὶς δὲ [ὁ] Παῦλος ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ Ἄρειου πάγου ἔφη· ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, κατὰ πάντα ὡς δεισιδαιμονεστέρους ὑμᾶς θεωρῶ.

23 διερχόμενος γὰρ καὶ ἀναθεωρῶν τὰ σεβάσματα ὑμῶν εὔρον καὶ βωμὸν ἐν ᾧ ἐπεγέγραπτο· Ἄγνωστω θεῷ. ὃ οὖν ἀγνοοῦντες εὐσεβεῖτε, τοῦτο ἐγὼ καταγγέλλω ὑμῖν.

24 ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιήσας τὸν κόσμον καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ, οὗτος οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς ὑπάρχων κύριος οὐκ ἐν χειροποιήτοις ναοῖς κατοικεῖ

25 οὐδὲ ὑπὸ χειρῶν ἀνθρωπίνων θεραπεύεται προσδεόμενός τινος, αὐτὸς διδοὺς πᾶσι ζωὴν καὶ πνοὴν καὶ τὰ πάντα·

26 ἐποίησέν τε ἐξ ἐνὸς πᾶν ἔθνος ἀνθρώπων κατοικεῖν ἐπὶ παντὸς προσώπου τῆς γῆς, ὀρίσας προστεταγμένους καιροὺς καὶ τὰς ὁροθεσίας τῆς κατοικίας αὐτῶν

27 that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;

28 for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.'

29 "Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man.

30 "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent,

31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, but others said, "We shall hear you again concerning this."

33 So Paul went out of their midst.

34 But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

27 ζητεῖν τὸν θεόν, εἰ ἄρα γε ψηλαφήσειαν αὐτὸν καὶ εὔροιεν, καὶ γε οὐ μακρὰν ἀπὸ ἐνὸς ἐκάστου ἡμῶν ὑπάρχοντα.

28 ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμέν, ὡς καὶ τινες τῶν καθ' ὑμᾶς ποιητῶν εἰρήκασιν· τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν.

29 γένος οὖν ὑπάρχοντες τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ὀφείλομεν νομίζειν χρυσῷ ἢ ἀργύρῳ ἢ λίθῳ, χαράγματι τέχνης καὶ ἐνθυμήσεως ἀνθρώπου, τὸ θεῖον εἶναι ὅμοιον.

30 τοὺς μὲν οὖν χρόνους τῆς ἀγνοίας ὑπεριδὼν ὁ θεός, τὰ νῦν παραγγέλλει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις πάντας πανταχοῦ μετανοεῖν,

31 καθότι ἔστησεν ἡμέραν ἐν ἣ ἔμελλει κρίνειν τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ, ἐν ἀνδρὶ ᾧ ὤρισεν, πίστιν παρασχὼν πᾶσιν ἀναστήσας αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν.

32 Ἀκούσαντες δὲ ἀνάστασιν νεκρῶν οἱ μὲν ἐχλεύαζον, οἱ δὲ εἶπαν· ἀκουσόμεθά σου περὶ τούτου καὶ πάλιν.

33 οὕτως ὁ Παῦλος ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ μέσου αὐτῶν.

34 τινὲς δὲ ἄνδρες κολληθέντες αὐτῷ ἐπίστευσαν, ἐν οἷς καὶ Διονύσιος ὁ Ἀρεοπαγίτης καὶ γυνὴ ὀνόματι Δάμαρις καὶ ἕτεροι σὺν αὐτοῖς.



What are the essential truths which Paul emphasizes as he evangelizes the philosophers on the Areopagus?

what we do every time we pray is to confess our own impotence and God's sovereignty. The very fact that a Christian prays is thus proof positive that he believes in the Lordship of his God.

Nor, again, am I going to spend time proving to you the particular truth that *God is sovereign in salvation*. For that, too, you believe already. Two facts show this. In the first place, you give God thanks for your conversion. Now why do you do that? Because you know in your heart that God was entirely responsible for it. You did not save yourself; He saved you. Your thanksgiving is itself an acknowledgment that your conversion was not your own work, but His work. You do not put it down to chance or accident that you came under Christian influence when you did. You do not put it down to chance or accident that you attended a Christian church, that you heard the Christian gospel, that you had Christian friends and, perhaps, a Christian home, that the Bible fell into your hands, that you saw your need of Christ and came to trust Him as your Saviour. You do not attribute your repenting and believing to your own wisdom, or prudence, or sound judgment, or good sense. Perhaps, in the days when you were seeking Christ, you laboured and strove hard, read and pondered much, but all that outlay of effort did not make your conversion your own work. Your act of faith when you closed with Christ was yours in the sense that it was you who performed it; but that does not mean that you saved yourself. In fact, it never occurs to you to suppose that you saved yourself.

CHAPTER I

DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY

I do not intend to spend any time at all proving to you the general truth that *God is sovereign in His world*. There is no need; for I know that, if you are a Christian, you believe this already. How do I know that? Because I know that, if you are a Christian, you pray; and the recognition of God's sovereignty is the basis of your prayers. In prayer, you ask for things and give thanks for things. Why? Because you recognize that God is the author and source of all the good that you have had already, and all the good that you hope for in the future. This is the fundamental philosophy of Christian prayer. The prayer of a Christian is not an attempt to force God's hand, but a humble acknowledgment of helplessness and dependence. When we are on our knees, we know that it is not we who control the world; it is not in our power, therefore, to supply our needs by our own independent efforts; every good thing that we desire for ourselves and for others must be sought from God, and will come, if it comes at all, as a gift from His hands. If this is true even of our daily bread (and the Lord's Prayer teaches us that it is), much more is it true of spiritual benefits. This is all luminously clear to us when we are actually praying, whatever we may be betrayed into saying in argument afterwards. In effect, therefore,

As you look back, you take to yourself the blame for your past blindness and indifference and obstinacy and evasiveness in face of the gospel message; but you do not pat yourself on the back for having been at length mastered by the insistent Christ. You would never dream of dividing the credit for your salvation between God and yourself. You have never for one moment supposed that the decisive contribution to your salvation was yours and not God's. You have never told God that, while you are grateful for the means and opportunities of grace that He gave you, you realize that you have to thank, not Him, but yourself for the fact that you responded to His call. Your heart revolts at the very thought of talking to God in such terms. In fact, you thank Him no less sincerely for the gift of faith and repentance than for the gift of a Christ to trust and turn to. This is the way in which, since you became a Christian, your heart has always led you. You give God all the glory for all that your salvation involved, and you know that it would be blasphemy if you refused to thank Him for bringing you to faith. Thus, in the way that you think of your conversion and give thanks for your conversion, you acknowledge the sovereignty of divine grace. And every other Christian in the world does the same.

It is instructive in this connection to ponder Charles Simeon's account of his conversation with John Wesley on Dec. 20th, 1784 (the date is given in *Wesley's Journal*): "Sir, I understand that you are called an Arminian; and I have been sometimes called a Calvinist; and therefore I suppose we are to

draw daggers. But before I consent to begin the combat, with your permission I will ask you a few questions. . . . Pray, Sir, do you feel yourself a depraved creature, so depraved that you would never have thought of turning to God, if God had not first put it into your heart?" "Yes," says the veteran, "I do indeed." "And do you utterly despair of recommending yourself to God by anything you can do; and look for salvation solely through the blood and righteousness of Christ?" "Yes, solely through Christ." "But, Sir, supposing you were at first saved by Christ, are you not somehow or other to save yourself afterwards by your own works?" "No, I must be saved by Christ from first to last." "Allowing, then, that you were first turned by the grace of God, are you not in some way or other to keep yourself by your own power?" "No." "What, then, are you to be upheld every hour and every moment by God, as much as an infant in its mother's arms?" "Yes, altogether." "And is all your hope in the grace and mercy of God to preserve you unto His heavenly kingdom?" "Yes, I have no hope but in Him." "Then, Sir, with your leave I will put up my dagger again; for this is all my Calvinism; this is my election, my justification by faith, my final perseverance; it is in substance all that I hold, and as I hold it; and therefore, if you please, instead of searching out terms and phrases to be a ground of contention between us, we will cordially unite in those things wherein we agree."¹

There is a second way in which you acknowledge

¹ *Horae Homileticae*, Preface: I. xvii f.

that God is sovereign in salvation. You pray for the conversion of others. In what terms, now, do you intercede for them? Do you limit yourself to asking that God will bring them to a point where they can save themselves, independently of Him? I do not think you do. I think that what you do is to pray in categorical terms that God will, quite simply and decisively, save them: that He will open the eyes of their understanding, soften their hard hearts, renew their natures, and move their wills to receive the Saviour. You ask God to work in them everything necessary for their salvation. You would not dream of making it a point in your prayer that you are not asking God actually to bring them to faith, because you recognize that that is something He cannot do. Nothing of the sort! When you pray for unconverted people, you do so on the assumption that it is in God's power to bring them to faith. You entreat Him to do that very thing, and your confidence in asking rests upon the certainty that He is able to do what you ask. And so indeed He is: this conviction, which animates your intercessions, is God's own truth, written on your heart by the Holy Spirit. In prayer, then (and the Christian is at his sanest and wisest when he prays), you *know* that it is God who saves men; you *know* that what makes men turn to God is God's own gracious work of drawing them to Himself; and the content of your prayers is determined by this knowledge. Thus, by your practice of intercession, no less than by giving thanks for your conversion, you acknowledge and confess the sov-

ereignty of God's grace. And so do all Christian people everywhere.

There is a long-standing controversy in the Church as to whether God is really Lord in relation to human conduct and saving faith or not. What has been said shows us how we should regard this controversy. The situation is not what it seems to be. For it is not true that some Christians believe in divine sovereignty while others hold an opposite view. What is true is that all Christians believe in divine sovereignty, but some are not aware that they do, and mistakenly imagine and insist that they reject it. What causes this odd state of affairs? The root cause is the same as in most cases of error in the Church—the intruding of rationalistic speculations, the passion for systematic consistency, a reluctance to recognize the existence of mystery and to let God be wiser than men, and a consequent subjecting of Scripture to the supposed demands of human logic. People see that the Bible teaches man's responsibility for his actions; they do not see (man, indeed, cannot see) how this is consistent with the sovereign Lordship of God over those actions. They are not content to let the two truths live side by side, as they do in the Scriptures, but jump to the conclusion that, in order to uphold the biblical truth of human responsibility, they are bound to reject the equally biblical and equally true doctrine of divine sovereignty, and to explain away the great number of texts that teach it. The desire to over-simplify the Bible by cutting out the mysteries is natural to our perverse minds, and it is not surprising that even good men

should fall victim to it. Hence this persistent and troublesome dispute. The irony of the situation, however, is that when we ask how the two sides pray, it becomes apparent that those who profess to deny God's sovereignty really believe in it just as strongly as those who affirm it.

How, then, do you pray? Do you ask God for your daily bread? Do you thank God for your conversion? Do you pray for the conversion of others? If the answer is 'no', I can only say that I do not think you are yet born again. But if the answer is 'yes'—well, that proves that, whatever side you may have taken in debates on this question in the past, in your heart you believe in the sovereignty of God no less firmly than anyone else. On our feet we may have arguments about it, but on our knees we are all agreed. And it is this common agreement, of which our prayers give proof, that I take as our starting-point now.

CHAPTER III

EVANGELISM

WE shall now try to answer from Scripture the following four questions concerning the Christian's evangelistic responsibility. What is evangelism? What is the evangelistic message? What is the motive for evangelizing? By what means and methods should evangelism be practised?

I. WHAT IS EVANGELISM?

It might be expected that evangelical Christians would not need to spend time discussing this question. In view of the emphasis that Evangelicals always, and rightly, lay on the primacy of evangelism, it would be natural to assume that we were all perfectly unanimous as to what evangelism is. Yet in fact much of the confusion in present-day debates about evangelism arises from lack of agreement at this point. The root of the confusion can be stated in a sentence. It is our widespread and persistent habit of defining evangelism in terms, not of a message delivered, but of an effect produced in our hearers.

For illustration of this, look at the famous definition of evangelism which the Archbishops' Committee gave in its report on the evangelistic work of the Church in 1918. "To *evangelise*", declared the Committee, "is so to present Christ Jesus in the power

of the Holy Spirit, that men shall come to put their trust in God through Him, to accept Him as their Saviour, and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His Church.'

Now this is in many ways an excellent definition. It states admirably the aim and purpose of the evangelistic enterprise, and rules out many inadequate and misleading ideas. To start with, it makes the point that evangelizing means *declaring a specific message*. According to this definition, it is not evangelism merely to teach general truths about God's existence, or the moral law; evangelism means *to present Christ Jesus*, the divine Son who became man at a particular point in world-history in order to save a ruined race. Nor, according to this definition, is it evangelism merely to present the teaching and example of the historical Jesus, or even the truth about His saving work; evangelism means *to present Christ Jesus Himself*, the living Saviour and the reigning Lord. Nor, again, is it evangelism, according to this definition, merely to set forth the living Jesus as Helper and Friend, without reference to His saving work on the cross; evangelism means *to present Jesus as Christ*, God's anointed Servant, fulfilling the tasks of His appointed office as Priest and King. 'The man Christ Jesus' is to be presented as the 'one mediator between God and men',¹ who 'suffered for sins . . . that he might bring us to God',² the One *through whom*, and through whom alone, men may *come to put their trust in God*, according to His own claim: 'I am the way, the truth, and the

¹ 1 Tim. ii.5.

² 1 Pet. iii.18.

life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.'³ He is to be proclaimed as the *Saviour*, the One who 'came into the world to save sinners'⁴ and 'redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us'⁵—'Jesus, which delivereth us from the wrath to come.'⁶ And He is to be set forth as *King*: 'for to this end Christ died, and lived again, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living'.⁷ There is no evangelism where this specific message is not declared.

Again, the definition makes the point that evangelizing means declaring this specific message *with a specific application*. It is not evangelism, according to this definition, to present Christ Jesus as a subject for detached critical and comparative study. Evangelism, according to this definition, means presenting Christ Jesus and His work in relation to the needs of fallen men and women, who are without God as a Father and under the wrath of God as a Judge. Evangelism means presenting Christ Jesus to them as their only hope, in this world or the next. Evangelism means exhorting sinners to *accept* Christ Jesus *as their Saviour*, recognizing that in the most final and far-reaching sense they are lost without Him. Nor is this all. Evangelism also means summoning men to receive Christ Jesus as all that He is—Lord, as well as Saviour—and therefore to *serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His Church*, the company of those who worship Him, witness to Him, and work for Him here on earth. In other

³ Jn. xiv.6.

⁴ 1 Tim. i.15.

⁵ Gal. iii.13.

⁶ 1 Thes. i.10, RV.

⁷ Rom. xiv.9, RV.

words, evangelism is the issuing of a call to turn, as well as to trust; it is the delivering, not merely of a divine invitation to receive a Saviour, but of a divine command to repent of sin. And there is no evangelism where this specific application is not made.

The definition under review establishes these vital points well. But on one fundamental matter it goes astray. It puts a consecutive clause where a final clause should be. Had it begun: 'to evangelise is to present Christ Jesus to sinful men *in order that*, through the power of the Holy Spirit, they may come . . .', there would be no fault to find with it. But it does not say this. What it does say is quite different. 'To evangelise is *so* to present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit, *that* men shall come . . .' This is to define evangelism in terms of an effect achieved in the lives of others; which amounts to saying that the essence of evangelizing is producing converts.

But this cannot be right, as we pointed out at an earlier stage. Evangelism is man's work, but the giving of faith is God's. It is true, indeed, that every evangelist's aim is to convert, and that our definition perfectly expresses the ideal which he longs to see fulfilled in his own ministry; but the question whether or not one is evangelizing cannot be settled simply by asking whether one has had conversions. There have been missionaries to Moslems who laboured for a lifetime and saw no converts; must we conclude from this that they were not evangelizing? There have been un-evangelical preachers through whose words (not always understood in the

sense intended) individuals have been soundly converted; must we conclude from this that these preachers were evangelizing after all? The answer, surely, is no in both cases. The results of preaching depend, not on the wishes and intentions of men, but on the will of God Almighty. This consideration does not mean that we should be indifferent as to whether we see fruit from our witness to Christ or not; if fruit is not appearing, we should seek God's face about it to find out why. But this consideration does mean that we ought not to define evangelism in terms of achieved results.

How, then, should evangelism be defined? The New Testament answer is very simple. According to the New Testament, evangelism is just preaching the gospel, the evangel. It is a work of communication in which Christians make themselves mouth-pieces for God's message of mercy to sinners. Anyone who faithfully delivers that message, under whatever circumstances, in a large meeting, in a small meeting, from a pulpit, or in a private conversation, is evangelizing. Since the divine message finds its climax in a plea from the Creator to a rebel world to turn and put faith in Christ, the delivering of it involves the summoning of one's hearers to conversion. If you are not, in this sense, seeking to bring about conversions, you are not evangelizing; this we have seen already. But the way to tell whether in fact you are evangelizing is not to ask whether conversions are known to have resulted from your witness. It is to ask whether you are faithfully making known the gospel message.

For a complete picture of what the New Testament means by evangelism, we need not look further than the apostle Paul's account of the nature of his own evangelistic ministry. There are three points to note about it.

1. *Paul evangelized as the commissioned representative of the Lord Jesus Christ.* Evangelism was a task that had been specifically entrusted to him. 'Christ sent me . . . to preach the gospel.'¹ Now, see how he regarded himself in virtue of this commission. In the first place, he saw himself as Christ's *steward*. 'Let a man so account of us (myself, and my fellow-preacher Apollos),' he wrote to the Corinthians, 'as of ministers of Christ, and (in that capacity) stewards of the mysteries of God.'² 'A dispensation of the gospel (*i.e.*, a commission to dispense it: "a stewardship", RV) is committed unto me.'³ Paul saw himself as a bondsman raised to a position of high trust, as the steward of a household in New Testament times always was; he had been 'approved of God to be intrusted with the gospel',⁴ and the responsibility now rested on him to be faithful to his trust, as a steward must be,⁵ guarding the precious truth that had been committed to him (as he later charges Timothy to do⁶), and distributing and dispensing it according to his Master's instructions. The fact that he had been entrusted with this stewardship meant, as he told the Corinthians, that 'necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the

¹ 1 Cor. i.17. ² 1 Cor. iv.1, RV. ³ 1 Cor. ix.17.

⁴ 1 Thes. ii.4, RV; cf. 1 Tim. i.11 f.; Tit. i.3.

⁵ Cf. 1 Cor. iv.2.

⁶ 1 Tim. vi.20; 2 Tim. i.13 f.

gospel!⁷ The figure of stewardship thus highlights Paul's *responsibility* to evangelize.

Again, Paul saw himself as Christ's *herald*. When he describes himself as 'appointed a preacher' of the gospel,⁸ the noun he uses is *kēryx*, which means a herald, a person who makes public announcements on another's behalf. When he declares, 'we preach Christ crucified',⁹ the verb he uses is *kēryssō*, which denotes the herald's appointed activity of blazoning abroad what he has been told to make known. When Paul speaks of 'my *preaching*', and 'our *preaching*', and lays it down that, after the world's wisdom had rendered the world ignorant of God, 'it pleased God by the foolishness of *preaching* to save them that believe',¹⁰ the noun he uses is *kērygma*, meaning, not the activity of announcing, but the thing announced, the proclamation itself, the message declared. Paul, in his own estimation, was not a philosopher, not a moralist, not one of the world's wise men, but simply Christ's herald. His royal Master had given him a message to proclaim; his whole business, therefore, was to deliver that message with exact and studious faithfulness, adding nothing, altering nothing, and omitting nothing. And he was to deliver it, not as another of man's bright ideas, needing to be beautified with the cosmetics and high heels of fashionable learning in order to make people look at it, but as a word from God, spoken in Christ's name, carrying Christ's authority, and to be authenticated in the

⁷ 1 Cor. ix.16; cf. Acts xx.20, 26 f.; 2 Cor. v.10 f.; Ezk. iii.16 ff., xxxiii.7 ff.

⁸ 2 Tim. i.11; 1 Tim. ii.7, RV mg.

⁹ 1 Cor. i.23.

¹⁰ 1 Cor. ii.4, xv.14, i.21.

hearers by the convincing power of Christ's Spirit. 'When I came to you,' Paul reminds the Corinthians, 'I . . . came . . . declaring unto you the testimony of God.' I came, Paul is saying, not to give you my own ideas about anything, but simply to deliver God's message. Therefore, 'I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified'—for it was just this that God sent me to tell you about. 'And my speech and my preaching (*kerygma*) was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.'¹ The figure of the herald thus highlights the *authenticity* of Paul's gospel.

Thirdly, Paul considered himself Christ's *ambassador*. What is an ambassador? He is the authorized representative of a sovereign. He speaks, not in his own name, but on behalf of the ruler whose deputy he is, and his whole duty and responsibility is to interpret that ruler's mind faithfully to those to whom he is sent. Paul used this figure twice, both times in connection with his evangelistic work. Pray for me, he wrote from prison, 'that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an *ambassador* in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.' God, he wrote again, has 'committed unto us the word of reconciliation. We are *ambassadors* therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were intreat-

¹ 1 Cor. ii.1-5. The argument is not affected if for 'testimony' we read 'mystery' in verse 1, as RV does.

ing by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God.'¹ Paul called himself an ambassador because he knew that, when he proclaimed the gospel facts and promises, and urged sinners to receive the reconciliation effected at Calvary, it was Christ's message to the world that he was declaring. The figure of ambassadorship thus highlights the *authority* that Paul had, as representing his Lord.

In his evangelism, then, Paul consciously acted as the slave and steward, the mouthpiece and herald, the spokesman and ambassador, of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, on the one hand, his sustained boldness and unshakable sense of authority in face of ridicule and indifference; hence, on the other hand, his intransigent refusal to modify his message in order to suit circumstances. These two things, of course, were connected, for Paul could regard himself as speaking with Christ's authority only as long as he remained faithful to the terms of his commission and said neither less nor more than he had been given to say.² But while he preached the gospel that Christ had entrusted to him, he spoke as Christ's commissioned representative, and could therefore speak authoritatively, and claim a right to be heard.

But the commission to publish the gospel and make disciples was never confined to the apostles. Nor is it now confined to the Church's ministers. It is a commission that rests upon the whole Church collectively, and therefore upon each Christian individually. All God's people are sent to do as the

¹ Eph. vi.19 f.; 2 Cor. v.19 f., RV.

² Cf. Gal. i.8 ff.

Philippians did, and 'shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life'.³ Every Christian, therefore, has a God-given obligation to make known the gospel of Christ. And every Christian who declares the gospel message to any fellow-man does so as Christ's ambassador and representative, according to the terms of his God-given commission. Such is the authority, and such the responsibility, of the Church and of the Christian in evangelism.

2. The second point in Paul's understanding of his own evangelistic ministry follows on from the first. *His primary task in evangelism was to teach the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ.*

As Christ's ambassador, Paul's first job was to 'get across' the message that his Sovereign had charged him to deliver. Christ sent me, he declared, —to do what?—'to preach the gospel'.⁴ The Greek word here is *euangelizomai*, meaning publish the *euangelion*, literally the 'good news'. For that is what Paul's gospel was. Good news, Paul proclaimed, has come into the world—good news from God. It is unlike anything that the world, Jewish or Gentile, had guessed or expected, but it is something that the whole world needs. This good news, the 'word of God' in the usual New Testament sense of that phrase,⁵ 'the truth' as Paul often calls it,⁶ is a full and final disclosure of what the Creator has done, and will do, to save sinners. It is a complete unfold-

³ Phil. ii. 15 f.

⁴ 1 Cor. i. 17.

⁵ Cf. Acts iv. 31, viii. 14, xi. 1, xiii. 46; 2 Cor. ii. 17; Col. i. 25; 1 Thes. ii. 13; 2 Tim. ii. 9.

⁶ Cf. 2 Cor. iv. 2; Gal. ii. 5, 14; 2 Thes. ii. 10 ff.; 2 Tim. ii. 18, 25, iii. 8.

ing of the spiritual facts of life in God's apostate world.

What was this good news that Paul preached? It was the news about Jesus of Nazareth. It was the news of the incarnation, the atonement, and the kingdom—the cradle, the cross, and the crown—of the Son of God. It was the news of how God 'glorified his servant Jesus'⁷ by making Him Christ, the world's long-awaited 'Prince and . . . Saviour'.⁸ It was the news of how God made His Son Man; and how, as Man, God made Him Priest, and Prophet, and King; and how, as Priest, God also made Him a sacrifice for sins; and how, as Prophet, God also made Him a Lawgiver to His people; and how, as King, God has also made Him Judge of all the world, and given Him prerogatives which in the Old Testament are exclusively Jehovah's own—namely, to reign till every knee bows before Him, and to save all who call on His name. In short, the good news was just this: that God has executed His eternal intention of glorifying His Son by exalting Him as a great Saviour for great sinners.

Such was the gospel which Paul was sent to preach. It was a message of some complexity, needing to be learned before it could be lived by, and understood before it could be applied. It needed, therefore, to be *taught*. Hence Paul, as a preacher of it, had to become a teacher. He saw this as part of his calling; he speaks of 'the gospel: whereunto I am appointed a preacher . . . and a teacher'.⁹

⁷ Acts iii. 13, RV.

⁸ Acts v. 31.

⁹ 2 Tim. i. 10 f.

And he tells us that teaching was basic to his evangelistic practice; he speaks of 'Christ . . . whom we preach . . . *teaching every man* in all wisdom'.¹ In both texts the reference to teaching is explanatory of the reference to preaching. In other words: it is by teaching that the gospel preacher fulfils his ministry. To *teach* the gospel is his first responsibility: to reduce it to its simplest essentials, to analyse it point by point, to fix its meaning by positive and negative definition, to show how each part of the message links up with the rest—and to go on explaining it till he is quite sure that his listeners have grasped it. And therefore when Paul preached the gospel, formally or informally, in the synagogue or in the streets, to Jews or to Gentiles, to a crowd or to one man, what he did was to *teach*—engaging attention, capturing interest, setting out the facts, explaining their significance, solving difficulties, answering objections, and showing how the message bears on life. Luke's regular way of describing Paul's evangelistic ministry is to say that he *disputed*,² or *reasoned* (*dialogomai*: RSV renders 'argued'),³ or *taught*,⁴ or *persuaded* (*i.e.*, sought to carry his hearers' judgments).⁵ And Paul himself refers to his ministry among the Gentiles as primarily a task of instruction: 'unto me . . . was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to *make all men see* what is the

¹ Col. i.28.² Acts ix.29.³ Acts xvii.2, 17, xv, xviii.4, xix.8 f., xv, xxiv.25.⁴ Acts xviii.11, xxviii.31.⁵ Acts xviii.4, xix.8, 26, xxviii.23; *cf.* xxvi.28.

dispensation of the mystery . . .'⁶ Clearly, in Paul's view, his first and fundamental job as a preacher of the gospel was to communicate knowledge—to get gospel truth fixed in men's minds. To him, teaching the truth was the basic evangelistic activity; to him, therefore, the only right method of evangelism was the teaching method.

3. *Paul's ultimate aim in evangelism was to convert his hearers to faith in Christ.*

The word 'convert' is a translation of the Greek *epistrephō*, which means—and is sometimes translated—'turn'. We think of conversion as a work of God, and so from one standpoint it is; but it is striking to observe that in the three New Testament passages where *epistrephō* is used transitively, of 'converting' someone to God, the subject of the verb is not God, as we might have expected, but a preacher. The angel said of John the Baptist: 'Many of the children of Israel shall he *turn* to the Lord their God.'⁷ James says: 'Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one *convert* him; let him know, that he which *converteth* the sinner . . . shall save a soul from death . . .'⁸ And Paul himself tells Agrippa how Christ had said to him: 'I send thee (to the Gentiles) to open their eyes, and to *turn* them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God', and how he had obeyed the heavenly vision by proclaiming to both Jews and Gentiles 'that they should repent and *turn* to God'.⁹ These passages represent the converting of others as the

⁶ Eph. iii.8, xv.⁷ Lk. i.16.⁸ Jas. v.19 f.⁹ Acts xxvi. 17 ff.

work of God's people, a task which they are to perform by summoning men to turn to God in repentance and faith.

When the Scriptures speak in this way of converting, and of saving, too, as a task for God's people to perform, they are not, of course, calling in question the truth that, properly speaking, it is God who converts and saves. What they are saying is simply that the conversion and salvation of others should be the Christian's objective. The preacher should work to convert his congregation; the wife should work to save her unbelieving husband.¹ Christians are sent to convert, and they should not allow themselves, as Christ's representatives in the world, to aim at anything less. Evangelizing, therefore, is not simply a matter of teaching, and instructing, and imparting information to the mind. There is more to it than that. Evangelizing includes the endeavour to elicit a response to the truth taught. It is communication with a view to conversion. It is a matter, not merely of informing, but also of inviting. It is an attempt to *gain*, or *win*, or *catch*, our fellow-men for Christ.² Our Lord depicts it as fishermen's work.³

Paul, again, is our model here. Paul, as we saw, knew himself to be sent by Christ, not only to open men's minds by teaching them the gospel (though that must come first), but also to turn them to God by exhorting, and applying the truth to their lives. Accordingly, his avowed aim was not just to spread information, but to save sinners: 'that I may by all

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 16. ² See 1 Cor. ix. 19 ff.; 1 Pet. iii. 1; Lk. v. 10.
³ Mt. iv. 19; cf. xiii. 47.

means save some'.⁴ Thus, there was in his evangelistic preaching both instruction—'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself'—and entreaty—'we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God'.⁵ His responsibility extended, not only towards the gospel which he was charged to preach and preserve, but also towards the needy people to whom he was sent to impart it, and who were perishing without it.⁶ As an apostle of Christ, he was more than a teacher of truth; he was a shepherd of souls, sent into the world, not to lecture sinners, but to love them. For he was an apostle second, and a Christian first; and, as a Christian, he was a man called to love his neighbour. This meant simply that in every situation, and by every means in his power, it was his business to seek other people's good. From this standpoint, the significance of his apostolic commission to evangelize and found churches was simply that this was the particular way in which Christ was calling him to fulfil the law of love to his neighbour. He might not, therefore, preach the gospel in a harsh, callous way, putting it before his neighbour with a contemptuous air of 'there you are—take it or leave it', and excusing himself for his unconcern about people on the grounds of his faithfulness to the truth. Such conduct would be a failure of love on his part. His business was to present truth in a spirit of love, as an expression and implementation of his desire to save his hearers. The attitude which informed all Paul's evangelism was this: 'I seek not

⁴ 1 Cor. ix. 22, RV; cf. Rom. xi. 14. ⁵ 2 Cor. v. 19 f., RV.
⁶ Cf. Rom. i. 13 ff.

yours, but you . . . and I will very gladly spend and be spent for you.⁷

And all our own evangelism must be done in the same spirit. As love to our neighbour suggests and demands that we evangelize, so the command to evangelize is a specific application of the command to love others for Christ's sake, and must be fulfilled as such.

Love made Paul warm-hearted and affectionate in his evangelism. 'We were gentle among you,' he reminded the Thessalonians; 'being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.'⁸ Love also made Paul considerate and adaptable in his evangelism; though he peremptorily refused to change his message to please men,⁹ he would go to any lengths in his presentation of it to avoid giving offence, and putting needless difficulties in the way of men's accepting and responding to it. 'Though I was free from all men,' he wrote to the Corinthians, 'I brought myself under bondage to all, that I might gain the more. And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law . . . that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law . . . that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak; I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save

⁷ 2 Cor. xii. 14 f.

⁸ 1 Thes. ii. 7 f.

⁹ Cf. Gal. i. 10; 2 Cor. ii. 17; 1 Thes. ii. 4.

some.¹ Paul sought to save men; and because he sought to save them, he was not content merely to throw truth at them; but he went out of his way to get alongside them, and to start thinking with them from where they were, and to speak to them in terms that they could understand, and above all to avoid everything that would prejudice them against the gospel, and so put stumbling-blocks in their path. In his zeal to maintain truth he never lost sight of the needs and claims of people. His aim and object in all his handling of the gospel, even in the heat of the polemics which contrary views evoked, was never less than to win souls, by converting those whom he saw as his neighbours to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Such was evangelism according to Paul: going out in love, as Christ's agent in the world, to teach sinners the truth of the gospel with a view to converting and saving them. If, therefore, we are engaging in this activity, in this spirit, and with this aim, we are evangelizing, irrespective of the particular means by which we are doing it.

We saw earlier how wrong our thinking would go if we defined evangelism too broadly, and fell into assuming that the production of converts was our personal responsibility. We would now point out that there is an opposite mistake which we must also avoid: the mistake, that is, of defining evangelism too narrowly. One way of making this mistake

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 19 ff., RV; cf. x. 33.

would be to define evangelism institutionally, in terms of holding some particular type of evangelistic meeting—a meeting, let us say, run on informal lines, at which testimonies are given, choruses are sung, and an appeal is made at the close for some outward sign of having received Christ, such as raising the hand, or standing, or walking to the front. Should we equate the Church's evangelistic responsibility with the holding of such meetings, or the Christian's evangelistic responsibility with bringing unconverted people to such meetings, we should be grievously astray, as the following considerations will show.

1. In the first place, there are many ways of bringing the gospel before the unconverted in order to win them, besides getting them to meetings of this type. There is, to start with, the way of personal evangelism, by which Andrew won Peter, and Philip won Nathanael, and Paul won Onesimus.² There is the home meeting, and the group Bible study. Also, and most important, there are the regular services Sunday by Sunday in local churches. Insofar as the preaching at our Sunday services is scriptural, those services will of necessity be evangelistic. It is a mistake to suppose that evangelistic sermons are a special brand of sermons, having their own peculiar style and conventions; evangelistic sermons are just scriptural sermons, the sort of sermons that a man cannot help preaching if he is preaching the Bible biblically. Proper sermons seek to expound and apply what is in the Bible. But what is in the Bible

² Jn. i.40 ff., 43 ff.; Phm. 10

is just the whole counsel of God for man's salvation; all Scripture bears witness, in one way or another, to Christ, and all biblical themes relate to Him. All proper sermons, therefore, will of necessity declare Christ in some fashion, and so be more or less directly evangelistic. Some sermons, of course, will aim more narrowly and exclusively at converting sinners than do others. But you cannot present the Lord Jesus Christ as the Bible presents Him, as God's answer to every problem in the sinner's relationship with Himself, and not be in effect evangelistic all the time. The Lord Jesus Christ, said Robert Bolton, is 'offered most freely, and without exception of any person, every Sabbath, every Sermon, either in plaine, and direct terms, or impliedly, at the least.'³ So it is, inevitably, wherever the Bible is preached biblically. And there is something terribly wrong in any church, or any man's ministry, to which Bolton's generalization does not apply. If in our churches 'evangelistic' meetings, and 'evangelistic' sermons, are thought of as special occasions, different from the ordinary run of things, it is a damning indictment of our normal Sunday services. So that if we should imagine that the essential work of evangelism lies in holding meetings of the special type described out of church hours, so to speak, that would simply prove that we had failed to understand what our regular Sunday services are for.

2. Secondly, imagine a local church, or fellowship of Christians, who are giving themselves whole-

³ *Instructions for a Right Comforting Afflicted Consciences*, 3rd. ed. (1640), p. 185.

heartedly to evangelism by the means mentioned above—personal work, home meetings, and gospel preaching at their ordinary services—but have never had occasion to hold, or to join in, evangelistic meetings of the special sort that we are considering. If we equated the Christian duty of evangelism with running and supporting such meetings, we should have to conclude that this church or fellowship, because it eschewed them, was not evangelizing at all. But that would be like arguing that you cannot really be an Englishman unless you live at Frinton-on-Sea. And it would surely be a little odd to condemn people for not evangelizing just because they do not join in meetings of a type of which there is no trace in the New Testament. Was no evangelizing done, then, in New Testament times?

3. In the third place, it needs to be said that a meeting, or service, is not necessarily evangelistic just because it includes testimonies, and choruses, and an appeal, any more than a man is necessarily English because he wears striped trousers and a bowler hat. The way to find out whether a particular service was evangelistic is to ask, not whether an appeal for decision was made, but what truth was taught at it. If it transpired that insufficient of the gospel was preached to make the appeal for response intelligible to the congregation, the right of the meeting to be called evangelistic would be very doubtful.

We say these things, not to grind a polemical axe, but simply in the interests of clear thinking. It is no part of our purpose to belittle evangelistic meetings and campaigns as such. We are not suggesting that

there is no place at all for special evangelistic meetings; that, in face of the rampant paganism of the modern world, would be excessively foolish. The only point we are making here is that there is a place for other forms of evangelistic action too; indeed, under certain circumstances, a prior place. Because God has used meetings, and series of meetings, of this type in the past, there is a certain surface plausibility about the idea that they constitute the normal and natural, and necessary, and indeed only, pattern of evangelism for the present and the future. But this does not follow. There can be evangelism without these meetings. They are in no way essential to the practice of evangelism. Wherever, and by whatever means, the gospel is communicated with a view to conversion, there you have evangelism. Evangelism is to be defined, not institutionally, in terms of the kind of meeting held, but theologically, in terms of what is taught, and for what purpose.

What principles should guide us in assessing the value of different methods of evangelism, and how much the Christian duty to evangelize really involves for us, we shall discuss at a later stage.

II. WHAT IS THE EVANGELISTIC MESSAGE?

We shall have to deal with this fairly summarily. In a word, the evangelistic message is the gospel of Christ, and Him crucified; the message of man's sin and God's grace, of human guilt and divine forgiveness, of new birth and new life through the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is a message made up of four essential ingredients.

1. The gospel is a message about *God*. It tells us who He is, what His character is, what His standards are, and what He requires of us, His creatures. It tells us that we owe our very existence to Him, that for good or ill we are always in His hands and under His eye, and that He made us to worship and serve Him, to show forth His praise and to live for His glory. These truths are the foundation of theistic religion, and until they are grasped the rest of the gospel message will seem neither cogent nor relevant. It is here, with the assertion of man's complete and constant dependence on his Creator, that the Christian story starts.

We can learn again from Paul at this point. When preaching to Jews, as at Pisidian Antioch,⁴ he did not need to mention the fact that men were God's creatures; he could take this knowledge for granted, for his hearers had the Old Testament faith behind them. He could begin at once to declare Christ to them, as the fulfilment of Old Testament hopes. But when preaching to Gentiles, who knew nothing of the Old Testament, Paul had to go further back, and start from the beginning. And the beginning from which Paul started in such cases was the doctrine of God's Creatorship, and man's creaturehood. So, when the Athenians asked him to explain what his talk of Jesus and the resurrection was all about, he spoke to them first of God the Creator, and what He made man for. 'God . . . made the world . . . he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made . . . all nations . . . that they should seek

⁴ Acts xiii. 16 ff.

the Lord.⁵ This was not, as some have supposed, a piece of philosophical apologetic of a kind that Paul afterwards renounced, but the first and basic lesson in theistic faith. The gospel starts by teaching us that we, as creatures, are absolutely dependent on God, and that He, as Creator, has an absolute claim on us. Only when we have learned this can we see what sin is, and only when we see what sin is can we understand the good news of salvation from sin. We must know what it means to call God Creator before we can grasp what it means to speak of Him as Redeemer. Nothing can be achieved by talking about sin and salvation where this preliminary lesson has not in some measure been learned.

2. The gospel is a message about *sin*. It tells us how we have fallen short of God's standard; how we have become guilty, filthy, and helpless in sin, and now stand under the wrath of God. It tells us that the reason why we sin continually is that we are sinners by nature, and that nothing we do, or try to do, for ourselves can put us right, or bring us back into God's favour. It shows us ourselves as God sees us, and teaches us to think of ourselves as God thinks of us. Thus it leads us to self-despair. And this also is a necessary step. Not till we have learned our need to get right with God, and our inability to do so by any effort of our own, can we come to know the Christ who saves from sin.

There is a pitfall here. Everybody's life includes things which cause dissatisfaction and shame. Everyone has a bad conscience about some things in his

⁵ Acts xvii. 24 ff. See also Acts xiv. 15 ff.

past, matters in which he has fallen short of the standard which he set for himself, or which was expected of him by others. The danger is that in our evangelism we should content ourselves with evoking thoughts of these things and making people feel uncomfortable about them, and then depicting Christ as the One who saves us from these elements of ourselves, without even raising the question of our relationship with God. But this is just the question that has to be raised when we speak about sin. For the very idea of sin in the Bible is of an offence against God, which disrupts a man's relationship with God. Unless we see our shortcomings in the light of the law and holiness of God, we do not see them *as sin* at all. For sin is not a social concept; it is a theological concept. Though sin is committed by man, and many sins are against society, sin cannot be defined in terms of either man or society. We never know what sin really is till we have learned to think of it in terms of God, and to measure it, not by human standards, but by the yardstick of His total demand on our lives.

What we have to grasp, then, is that the bad conscience of the natural man is not at all the same thing as conviction of sin. It does not, therefore, follow that a man is convicted of sin when he is distressed about his weaknesses and the wrong things he has done. It is not conviction of sin just to feel miserable about yourself and your failures and your inadequacy to meet life's demands. Nor would it be saving faith if a man in that condition called on the Lord Jesus Christ just to soothe him, and cheer

him up, and make him feel confident again. Nor should we be preaching the gospel (though we might imagine we were) if all that we did was to present Christ in terms of a man's felt wants. ('Are you happy? Are you satisfied? Do you want peace of mind? Do you feel that you have failed? Are you fed up with yourself? Do you want a friend? Then come to Christ; He will meet your every need . . .')—as if the Lord Jesus Christ were to be thought of as a fairy godmother, or a super-psychiatrist.) No; we have to go deeper than this. To preach sin means, not to make capital out of people's felt frailties (the brainwasher's trick), but to measure their lives by the holy law of God. To be convicted of sin means, not just to feel that one is an all-round flop, but to realize that one has offended God, and flouted His authority, and defied Him, and gone against Him, and put oneself in the wrong with Him. To preach Christ means to set Him forth as the One who through His cross sets men right with God again. To put faith in Christ means relying on Him, and Him alone, to restore us to God's fellowship and favour.

It is indeed true that the real Christ, the Christ of the Bible, who offers Himself to us as a Saviour from sin and an Advocate with God, does in fact give peace, and joy, and moral strength, and the privilege of His own friendship, to those who trust Him. But the Christ who is depicted and desired merely to make the lot of life's casualties easier by supplying them with aids and comforts is not the real Christ, but a misrepresented and misconceived

Christ—in effect, an imaginary Christ. And if we taught people to look to an imaginary Christ, we should have no grounds for expecting that they would find a real salvation. We must be on our guard, therefore, against equating a natural bad conscience and sense of wretchedness with spiritual conviction of sin, and so omitting in our evangelism to impress upon sinners the basic truth about their condition—namely, that their sin has alienated them from God, and exposed them to His condemnation, and hostility, and wrath, so that their first need is for a restored relationship with Him.

It may be asked: what are the signs of true conviction of sin, as distinct from the mere smart of a natural bad conscience, or the mere disgust at life which any disillusioned person may feel?

The signs seem to be three in number.

(i) Conviction of sin is essentially an awareness of a *wrong relationship with God*: not just with one's neighbour, or one's own conscience and ideals for oneself, but with one's Maker, the God in whose hand one's breath is and on whom one depends for existence every moment. To define conviction of sin as a sense of need, without qualification, would not be enough; it is not any sense of need, but a sense of a particular need—a need, namely, for restoration of fellowship with God. It is the realization that, as one stands at present, one is in a relationship with God that spells only rejection, and retribution, and wrath, and pain, for the present and the future; and a realization that this is an intolerable relationship to remain in, and

therefore a desire that, at whatever cost and on whatever terms, it might be changed. Conviction of sin may centre upon the sense of one's guilt before God, or one's uncleanness in His sight, or one's rebellion against Him, or one's alienation and estrangement from Him; but always it is a sense of the need to get right, not simply with oneself or other people, but with God.

(ii) Conviction of sin always includes conviction of *sins*: a sense of guilt for particular wrongs done in the sight of God, from which one needs to turn, and be rid of them, if one is ever to be right with God. Thus, Isaiah was convicted specifically of sins of speech,⁶ and Zacchaeus of sins of extortion.⁷

(iii) Conviction of sin always includes conviction of *sinfulness*: a sense of one's complete corruption and perversity in God's sight, and one's consequent need of what Ezekiel called a 'new heart',⁸ and our Lord a new birth,⁹ *i.e.* a moral re-creation. Thus, the author of Psalm li—traditionally identified with David, convicted of his sin with Bathsheba—confesses, not only particular transgressions (verses 1–4), but also the depravity of his nature (verses 5–6), and seeks cleansing from the guilt and defilement of both (verses 7–10). Indeed, perhaps the shortest way to tell whether a person is convicted of sin or not is to take him through Psalm li, and see whether his heart is in fact speaking anything like the language of the psalmist.

3. The gospel is a message about *Christ*—Christ the Son of God incarnate; Christ the Lamb of God, ⁶ *Is.* vi.5. ⁷ *Lk.* xix.8. ⁸ *Ezk.* xxxvi.26. ⁹ *Jn.* iii.3 ff.

dying for sin; Christ the risen Lord; Christ the perfect Saviour.

Two points need to be made about the declaring of this part of the message.

(i) *We must not present the Person of Christ apart from His saving work.*

It is sometimes said that it is the presentation of Christ's Person, rather than of doctrines about Him, that draws sinners to His feet. It is true that it is the living Christ who saves, and that a theory of the atonement, however orthodox, is no substitute. When this remark is made, however, what is usually being suggested is that doctrinal instruction is dispensable in evangelistic preaching, and that all the evangelist need do is paint a vivid word-picture of the Man of Galilee who went about doing good, and then assure his hearers that this Jesus is still alive to help them in their troubles. But such a message could hardly be called the gospel. It would, in reality, be a mere conundrum, serving only to mystify. Who was this Jesus? we should ask; and what is His position now? Such preaching would raise these questions while concealing the answers. And thus it would completely baffle the thoughtful listener.

For the truth is that you cannot make sense of the historic figure of Jesus till you know about the *incarnation*—that this Jesus was in fact God the Son, made man to save sinners according to His Father's eternal purpose. Nor can you make sense of His life till you know about the *atonement*—that He lived

as man so that He might die as man for men, and that His passion, His judicial murder, was really His saving action of bearing away the world's sins. Nor can you tell on what terms to approach Him now till you know about the *resurrection*, *ascension*, and *heavenly session*—that Jesus has been raised, and enthroned, and made King, and lives to save to the uttermost all who acknowledge His Lordship. These doctrines, to mention no others, are essential to the gospel. Without them, there is no gospel, only a puzzle story about a man named Jesus. To oppose the teaching of doctrines about Christ to the presenting of His Person is, therefore, to put asunder two things which God has joined. It is really very perverse indeed; for the whole purpose of teaching these doctrines in evangelism is to throw light on the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to make clear to our hearers just who it is that we want them to meet. When, in ordinary social life, we want people to know who it is that we are introducing them to, we tell them something about him, and what he has done; and so it is here. The apostles themselves preached these doctrines in order to preach Christ, as the New Testament shows. In fact, without these doctrines you would have no gospel to preach at all.

(ii) But there is a second and complementary point. *We must not present the saving work of Christ apart from His Person.*

Evangelistic preachers and personal workers have sometimes been known to make this mistake. In their concern to focus attention on the atoning death

of Christ, as the sole sufficient ground on which sinners may be accepted with God, they have expounded the summons to saving faith in these terms: 'Believe that Christ died for your sins.' The effect of this exposition is to represent the saving work of Christ in the past, dissociated from His Person in the present, as the whole object of our trust. But it is not biblical thus to isolate the work from the Worker. Nowhere in the New Testament is the call to believe expressed in such terms. What the New Testament calls for is faith in (*en*) or into (*eis*) or upon (*epi*) Christ Himself—the placing of our trust in the living Saviour, who died for sins. The object of saving faith is thus not, strictly speaking, the atonement, but the Lord Jesus Christ, who made atonement. We must not in presenting the gospel isolate the cross and its benefits from the Christ whose cross it was. For the persons to whom the benefits of Christ's death belong are just those who trust His Person, and believe, not upon His saving death simply, but upon *Him*, the living Saviour. 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,'¹ said Paul. 'Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest,'² said our Lord.

This being so, one thing becomes clear straight away: namely, that the question about the extent of the atonement, which is being much agitated in some quarters, has no bearing on the content of the evangelistic message at this particular point. I do not propose to discuss this question now; I have done

¹ Acts xvi.31.

² Mt. xi.28.

that elsewhere.³ I am not at present asking you whether you think it is true to say that Christ died in order to save every single human being, past, present, and future, or not. Nor am I at present inviting you to make up your mind on this question, if you have not done so already. All I want to say here is that even if you think the above assertion is true, your presentation of Christ in evangelism ought not to differ from that of the man who thinks it false.

What I mean is this. It is obvious that if a preacher thought that the statement, 'Christ died for every one of you', made to any congregation, would be unverifiable, and probably not true, he would take care not to make it in his gospel preaching. You do not find such statements in the sermons of, for instance, George Whitefield or Charles Spurgeon. But now, my point is that, even if a man thinks that this statement would be true if he made it, it is not a thing that he ever needs to say, or ever has reason to say, when preaching the gospel. For preaching the

³ In my introduction to the 1959 reprint of *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, by John Owen. Owen's book is a classical discussion of the complex of questions which the controversy about 'limited atonement' involves. The central issue does not concern the value of the atonement, considered in itself, nor the availability of Christ to those who would trust Him as their Saviour. All agree that no limit can be set to the intrinsic worth of Christ's death, and that Christ never casts out those who come to Him. The cleavage is over the question, whether the intention of the Father and the Son in the great transaction of Calvary was to save any more than actually are saved. There is no room here to open up this elaborate question; and in any case, nothing in the text depends one way or the other on the answer that one gives to it.

gospel, as we have just seen, means inviting sinners to come to Jesus Christ, the living Saviour, who, by virtue of His atoning death, is able to forgive and save all those who put their trust in Him. What has to be said about the cross when preaching the gospel is simply that Christ's death is the ground on which Christ's forgiveness is given. And this is all that has to be said. The question of the designed extent of the atonement does not come into the story at all.

The fact is that the New Testament never calls on any man to repent on the ground that Christ died specifically and particularly for him. The basis on which the New Testament invites sinners to put faith in Christ is simply that they need Him, and that He offers Himself to them, and that those who receive Him are promised all the benefits that His death secured for His people. What is universal and all-inclusive in the New Testament is the invitation to faith, and the promise of salvation to all who believe.⁴

Our task in evangelism is to reproduce as faithfully as possible the New Testament emphasis. To go beyond the New Testament, or to distort its viewpoint or shift its stress, is always wrong. And therefore—if we may at this point speak in the words of James Denney—'we do not think of separating (Christ's) work from Him who achieved it. The New Testament knows only of a living Christ, and all

⁴ See Mt. xi.28 ff., xxii.9; Lk. ii.10 f., xii.8; Jn. i.12, iii.14 ff., vi.40, 54, vii.37, xi.26, xii.46; Acts ii.21, x.43, xiii.39; Rom. i.16, iii.22, ix.33, x.4 ff.; Gal. iii.22; Tit. ii.11; Rev. xxii.17; cf. Is. lv.1.

apostolic preaching of the gospel holds up the **living Christ** to men. But the living Christ is Christ **who** died, and He is never preached apart from His death, and from its reconciling power. It is *the living Christ, with the virtue of His reconciling death in Him*, who is the burden of the apostolic message . . . The task of the evangelist is to preach *Christ . . . in His character as the Crucified*.⁵ The gospel is not, 'believe that Christ died for everybody's sins, and therefore for yours,' any more than it is, 'believe that Christ died only for certain people's sins, and so perhaps not for yours.' The gospel is, 'believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for sins, and now offers you Himself as your Saviour.' This is the message which we are to take to the world. We have no business to ask them to put faith in any view of the extent of the atonement; our job is to point them to the living Christ, and summon them to trust in Him.

It was because they had both grasped this that John Wesley and George Whitefield could regard each other as brothers in evangelism, though they differed on the extent of the atonement. For their views on this subject did not enter into their gospel preaching. Both were content to preach the gospel just as it stands in Scripture: that is, to proclaim 'the living Christ, with the virtue of His reconciling death in Him', to offer Him to sinners, and to invite the lost to come to Him and so find life.

4. This brings us to the final ingredient in the

⁵ *The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation*, p. 287; my italics.

gospel message. The gospel is a summons to *faith and repentance*.

All who hear the gospel are summoned by God to repent and believe. 'God . . . commandeth all men every where to *repent*,' Paul told the Athenians.⁶ When asked by His hearers what they should do in order to 'work the works of God', our Lord replied: 'This is the work of God, that ye *believe* on him whom he hath sent.'⁷ And in 1 John iii.23 we read: 'This is his *commandment*, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ . . .'⁸ Repentance and faith are rendered matters of duty by God's direct command, and hence impenitence and unbelief are singled out in the New Testament as most grievous sins.⁹ With these universal commands, as we indicated above, go universal promises of salvation to all who obey them. 'Through his name *whosoever believeth* in him shall receive remission of sins.'¹⁰ '*Whosoever will*, let him take the water of life freely.'¹¹ 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever believeth* in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'¹² These words are promises to which God will stand as long as time shall last.

It needs to be said that faith is not a mere optimistic feeling, any more than repentance is a mere regretful or remorseful feeling. Faith and repentance are both acts, and acts of the whole man. Faith is more than just credence; faith is essentially the

⁶ Acts xvii.30. ⁷ Jn. vi.29.
⁸ Cf. Lk. xiii.3, 5; 2 Thes. ii.11 f. ⁹ Acts x.43.
¹⁰ Rev. xxii.17. ¹¹ Jn. iii.16.

casting and resting of oneself and one's confidence on the promises of mercy which Christ has given to sinners, and on the Christ who gave those promises. Equally, repentance is more than just sorrow for the past; repentance is a change of mind and heart, a new life of denying self and serving the Saviour as king in self's place. Mere credence without trusting, and mere remorse without turning, do not save. 'The devils also believe, and tremble.'¹³ 'The sorrow of the world worketh death.'¹⁴

Two further points need to be made also.

(i) The demand is for *faith as well as repentance*. It is not enough to resolve to turn from sin, and give up evil habits, and try to put Christ's teaching into practice by being religious and doing all possible good to others. Aspiration, and resolution, and morality, and religiosity, are no substitutes for faith. Martin Luther and John Wesley had all these long before they had faith. If there is to be faith, however, there must be a foundation of knowledge: a man must know of Christ, and of His cross, and of His promises, before saving faith becomes a possibility for him. In our presentation of the gospel, therefore, we need to stress these things, in order to lead sinners to abandon all confidence in themselves and to trust wholly in Christ and the power of His redeeming blood to give them acceptance with God. For nothing less than this is faith.

(ii) The demand is for *repentance as well as faith*. It is not enough to believe that only through Christ and His death are sinners justified and accepted, and

¹³ Jas. ii.19. ¹⁴ 2 Cor. vii.10

that one's own record is sufficient to bring down God's condemning sentence twenty times over, and that, apart from Christ, one has no hope. Knowledge of the gospel, and orthodox belief of it, is no substitute for repentance. If there is to be repentance, however, there must, again, be a foundation of knowledge. A man must know that, in the words of the first of Luther's Ninety-five Theses, 'when our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, said "Repent", He called for the entire life of believers to be one of repentance,' and he must also know what repentance involves. More than once, Christ deliberately called attention to the radical break with the past that repentance involves. 'If any man will come after me, let him *deny himself*, and take up his cross daily, and follow me . . . whosoever will *lose his life for my sake*, the same (but only he) shall save it.'⁵ 'If any man come to me, and *hate not* his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also (*i.e.*, put them all decisively second in his esteem), *he cannot be my disciple* . . . whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, *he cannot be my disciple*.'⁶ The repentance that Christ requires of His people consists in a settled refusal to set any limit to the claims which He may make on their lives. Our Lord knew—who better?—how costly His followers would find it to maintain this refusal, and let Him have His way with them all the time, and therefore He wished them to face out and think through the implications of discipleship before committing themselves. He

⁵ Lk. ix.23 f.

⁶ Lk. xiv.26, 33.

did not desire to make disciples under false pretences. He had no interest in gathering vast crowds of professed adherents who would melt away as soon as they found out what following Him actually demanded of them. In our own presentation of Christ's gospel, therefore, we need to lay a similar stress on the cost of following Christ, and make sinners face it soberly before we urge them to respond to the message of free forgiveness. In common honesty, we must not conceal the fact that free forgiveness in one sense will cost everything; or else our evangelizing becomes a sort of confidence trick. And where there is no clear knowledge, and hence no realistic recognition of the real claims that Christ makes, there can be no repentance, and therefore no salvation.

Such is the evangelistic message that we are sent to make known.

III. WHAT IS THE MOTIVE FOR EVANGELIZING?

There are, in fact, two motives that should spur us constantly to evangelize. The first is love to God and concern for His glory; the second is love to man and concern for his welfare.

1. The *first* motive is primary and fundamental. The chief end of man is to glorify God. The biblical rule of life is: 'do all to the glory of God.'⁷ Men glorify God by obeying His word and fulfilling His revealed will. Similarly, the first and great commandment is: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.'⁸ We show love to the Father and the Son, who have so richly loved us, by keeping Their commandments.

⁷ 1 Cor. x.31.

⁸ Mt. xxii.37 f.

'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me,' said our Lord.⁹ 'This is the love of God,' wrote John, 'that we keep his commandments.'¹ Now, evangelism is one of the activities that the Father and the Son have commanded. 'This gospel of the kingdom,' Christ tells us, 'shall' (according to Mark, 'must') 'be preached in all the world for a witness.'² And before His ascension Christ charged His disciples in the following categorical terms: 'Go ye . . . and make disciples of all the nations.' To this command He added at once a comprehensive promise: 'and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'³ The comprehensiveness of this promise shows us how wide is the application of the command to which it is appended. The phrase 'even unto the end of the world' makes it clear that the 'you' to whom the promise was given was not solely and exclusively the eleven disciples; this promise extends to the whole Christian Church throughout history, the entire community of which the eleven were, so to speak, founder members. It is, therefore, a promise for us no less than for them, and a promise of great comfort too. But if the promise extends to us, then the commission with which it is linked must extend to us also. The promise was given to encourage the eleven, lest they be overwhelmed at the size and difficulty of the task of world evangelism that Christ was laying upon them. If it is our privilege to appropriate the promise, then it is also our responsibility to accept the

⁹ Jn. xiv. 21.¹ 1 Jn. v. 3.² Mt. xxiv. 14; Mk. xiii. 10.³ Mt. xxviii. 19 f., RV.

commission. The task laid upon the eleven is the Church's constant task. And if it is the Church's task in general, then it is your task and my task in particular. If, therefore, we love God and are concerned to glorify Him, we must obey His command to evangelize.

There is a further strand to this thought. We glorify God by evangelizing, not only because evangelizing is an act of obedience, but also because in evangelism we tell the world what great things God has done for the salvation of sinners. God is glorified when His mighty works of grace are made known. The psalmist exhorts us to 'shew forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.'⁴ For a Christian to talk to the unconverted about the Lord Jesus Christ and His saving power is in itself honouring and glorifying to God.

2. The *second* motive that should prompt us to assiduous evangelism is love to our neighbour, and the desire to see our fellow-men saved. The wish to win the lost for Christ should be, and indeed is, the natural, spontaneous outflow of love in the heart of everyone who has been born again. Our Lord confirms the Old Testament demand that we should love our neighbour as ourselves.⁵ 'As we have therefore opportunity,' writes Paul, 'let us do good unto all men.'⁶ What greater need has any man than the need to know Christ? What greater good can we do to any man than to set before him the knowledge of Christ? Insofar as we really love our neighbour as

⁴ Ps. xcvi. 2 f.⁵ Mk. xii. 31; Lk. x. 27 f.⁶ Gal. vi. 10.

ourselves, we shall of necessity want him to enjoy the salvation which is so precious to us. This, indeed, should not be a thing that we need to think about, let alone argue about. The impulse to evangelize should spring up spontaneously in us as we see our neighbour's need of Christ.

Who is my neighbour? When the lawyer, confronted with the demand of love for one's neighbour, asked our Lord this question, Christ replied by telling the story of the Good Samaritan.⁷ What that story teaches is simply this: that any fellow human being whom you meet who is in need is your neighbour; God has put him there so that you may help him; and your business is to show yourself neighbour to him by doing all that you can to meet his need, whatever it may be. 'Go, and do thou likewise,' said our Lord to the lawyer. He says the same to us. And the principle applies to all forms of need, spiritual no less than material. So that when we find ourselves in contact with men and women who are without Christ, and so face spiritual death, we are to look on them as our neighbours in this sense, and ask ourselves what we can do to make Christ known to them.

May I stress again: if we ourselves have known anything of the love of Christ for us, and if our hearts have felt any measure of gratitude for the grace that has saved us from death and hell, then this attitude of compassion and care for our spiritually needy fellow-men ought to come naturally and spontaneously to us. It was in connection with

⁷ Lk. x.29 ff.

aggressive evangelism that Paul declared that 'the love of Christ constraineth us'.⁸ It is a tragic and ugly thing when Christians lack desire, and are actually reluctant, to share the precious knowledge that they have with others whose need of it is just as great as their own. It was natural for Andrew, when he found the Messiah, to go off and tell his brother Simon, and for Philip to hurry to break the good news to his friend Nathanael.⁹ They did not need to be told to do this; they did it naturally and spontaneously, just as one would naturally and spontaneously share with one's family and friends any other piece of news that vitally affected them. There is something very wrong with us if we do not ourselves find it natural to act in this way: let us be quite clear about that. It is a great privilege to evangelize; it is a wonderful thing to be able to tell others of the love of Christ, knowing that there is nothing that they need more urgently to know, and no knowledge in the world that can do them so much good. We should not, therefore, be reluctant and backward to evangelize on the personal and individual level. We should be glad and happy to do it. We should not look for excuses for wriggling out of our obligation when occasion offers to talk to others about the Lord Jesus Christ. If we find ourselves shrinking from this responsibility, and trying to evade it, we need to face ourselves with the fact that in this we are yielding to sin and Satan. If (as is usual) it is the fear of being thought odd and ridiculous, or of losing popularity in certain circles, that holds us back, we need to ask

⁸ 2 Cor. v.14.

⁹ Jn. i.40 ff.

ourselves in the presence of God : Ought these things to stop us loving our neighbour? If it is a false shame, which is not shame at all, but pride in disguise, that keeps our tongue from Christian witness when we are with other people, we need to press upon our conscience this question : Which matters more—our reputation, or their salvation? We cannot be complacent about this gangrene of conceit and cowardice when we weigh up our lives in the presence of God. What we need to do is to ask for grace to be truly ashamed of ourselves, and to pray that we may so overflow in love to God that we shall overflow in love to our fellow-men, and so find it an easy and natural and joyful thing to share with them the good news of Christ.

By now, I hope, it is becoming clear to us how we should regard our evangelistic responsibility. Evangelism is not the only task that our Lord has given us, nor is it a task that we are all called to discharge in the same way. We are not all called to be preachers; we are not all given equal opportunities or comparable abilities for personal dealing with men and women who need Christ. But we all have some evangelistic responsibility which we cannot shirk without failing in love both to our God and to our neighbour. To start with, we all can and should be praying for the salvation of unconverted people, particularly in our family, and among our friends and everyday associates. And then we must learn to see what possibilities of evangelism our everyday situation holds, and to be enterprising in our use of them. It is the nature of love to be enterprising. If you love

someone, you are constantly trying to think out what is the best you can do for him, and how best you can please him, and it is your pleasure to give him pleasure by the things you devise for him. If, then, we love God—Father, Son, and Spirit—for all that They have done for us, we shall muster all our initiative and enterprise to make the most that we can of every situation for Their glory—and one chief way of doing this is to seek out ways and means of spreading the gospel, and obeying the divine command to make disciples everywhere. Similarly, if we love our neighbour, we shall muster all our initiative and enterprise to find ways and means of doing him good. And one chief way of doing him good is to share with him our knowledge of Christ. Thus, if we love God and our neighbour, we shall evangelize, and we shall be enterprising in our evangelism. We shall not ask with reluctance how much we have to do in this realm, as if evangelizing were a distasteful and burdensome task. We shall not enquire anxiously after the minimum outlay of effort in evangelism that will satisfy God. But we shall ask eagerly, and pray earnestly to be shown, just how much it is in our power to do to spread the knowledge of Christ among men; and once we see what the possibilities are, we shall give ourselves wholeheartedly to the task.

One further point must be added, however, lest what we have said be misapplied. It must never be forgotten that the enterprise required of us in evangelism is the enterprise of love : an enterprise that springs from a genuine interest in those whom we

seek to win, and a genuine care for their well-being, and expresses itself in a genuine respect for them and a genuine friendliness towards them. One sometimes meets a scalp-hunting zeal in evangelism, both in the pulpit and on the personal level, which is both discreditable and alarming. It is discreditable, because it reflects, not love and care, nor the desire to be of help, but arrogance, and conceit, and pleasure in having power over the lives of others. It is alarming, because it finds expression in a ferocious psychological pommelling of the poor victim which may do great damage to sensitive and impressionable souls. But if love prompts and rules our evangelistic work, we shall approach other people in a different spirit. If we truly care for them, and if our heart truly loves and fears God, then we shall seek to present Christ to them in a way that is both honouring to Him and respectful to them. We shall not try to violate their personalities, or exploit their weaknesses, or ride roughshod over their feelings. What we shall be trying to do, rather, is to show them the reality of our friendship and concern by sharing with them our most valuable possession. And this spirit of friendship and concern will shine through all that we say to them, whether in the pulpit or in private, however drastic and shattering the truths that we tell them may be.

There is a famous old book on personal evangelism by C. G. Trumbull, entitled *Taking Men Alive*. In the third chapter of that book, the author tells us of the rule that his father, H. C. Trumbull, made for himself in this matter. It was as follows:

'Whenever I am justified in choosing my subject of conversation with another, the theme of themes (Christ) shall have prominence between us, so that I may learn of his need, and, if possible, meet it.' The key words here are: '*whenever I am justified in choosing my subject of conversation with another*'. They remind us, first, that personal evangelism, like all our dealings with our fellow-men, should be courteous. And they remind us, second, that personal evangelism needs normally to be founded on friendship. You are not usually justified in choosing the subject of conversation with another till you have already begun to give yourself to him in friendship and established a relationship with him in which he feels that you respect him, and are interested in him, and are treating him as a human being, and not just as some kind of 'case'. With some people, you may establish such a relationship in five minutes, whereas with others it may take months. But the principle remains the same. The right to talk intimately to another person about the Lord Jesus Christ has to be earned, and you earn it by convincing him that you are his friend, and really care about him. And therefore the indiscriminate buttonholing, the intrusive barging in to the privacy of other people's souls, the thick-skinned insistence on expounding the things of God to reluctant strangers who are longing to get away—these modes of behaviour, in which strong and loquacious personalities have sometimes indulged in the name of personal evangelism, should be written off as a travesty of personal evangelism. *Impersonal* evangelism would be a better name for

them! In fact, rudeness of this sort dishonours God; moreover, it creates resentment, and prejudices people against the Christ whose professed followers act so objectionably. The truth is that real personal evangelism is very costly, just because it demands of us a really personal relationship with the other man. We have to give ourselves in honest friendship to people, if ever our relationship with them is to reach the point at which we are justified in choosing to talk to them about Christ, and can speak to them about their own spiritual needs without being either discourteous or offensive. If you wish to do personal evangelism, then—and I hope you do; you ought to—pray for the gift of friendship. A genuine friendliness is in any case a prime mark of the man who is learning to love his neighbour as himself.

IV. BY WHAT MEANS AND METHODS SHOULD EVANGELISM BE PRACTISED?

There is today a controversy in some evangelical circles about evangelistic methods. Some are criticizing, and others are defending, the type of evangelistic meeting that has been a standard feature of English and American evangelical life for almost a century. Meetings of this type are well known, for they are very characteristic. They are deliberately made brisk and bright, in the hope that people who have little interest in the Christian message, and who may never have been inside a Christian church, may nevertheless find them an attraction. Everything is accordingly planned to create an atmosphere of

warmth, good humour and happiness. The meeting normally includes a good deal of music—choir items, solo items, choruses, and rousing hymns, heartily sung. Heavy emphasis is laid on the realities of Christian experience, both by the choice of hymns and by the use of testimonies. The meeting leads up to an appeal for decision, followed by an after-meeting or a time of personal counselling for the further instruction of those who have made, or wish to make, a decision in response to the appeal.

The main criticisms that are made of such meetings—whether they are wholly justified we would not venture to say—are as follows. Their breezy slickness (it is said) makes for irreverence. The attempt to give them 'entertainment value' tends to lessen the sense of God's majesty, to banish the spirit of worship, and to cheapen men's thoughts of their Creator; moreover, it is the worst possible preparation of the potential converts for the regular Sunday services in the churches which they will in due course join. The seemingly inevitable glamourizing of Christian experience in the testimonies is pastorally irresponsible, and gives a falsely romanticized impression of what being a Christian is like. This, together with the tendency to indulge in long-drawn-out wheedling for decisions and the deliberate use of luscious music to stir sentiment, tends to produce 'conversions' which are simply psychological and emotional upheavals, and not the fruit of spiritual conviction and renewal at all. The occasional character of the meetings makes it inevitable that appeals for decision will often be made on the

basis of inadequate instruction as to what the decision involves and will cost, and such appeals are no better than a confidence trick. The desire to justify the meetings by reaping a crop of converts may prompt the preacher and the counsellors to try and force people through the motions of decision prematurely, before they have grasped what it is really all about, and converts produced in this way tend to prove at best stunted and at worst spurious and, in the event, gospel-hardened. The way ahead in evangelism, it is said, is to break completely with this pattern of evangelistic action, and to develop a new pattern (or, rather, restore the old one which existed before this type of meeting became standard), in which the evangelizing unit is the local church rather than a group or cross-section of churches, and the evangelistic meeting finds its place among the local church's services—a pattern, indeed, in which the local church's services function continually as its evangelistic meetings.

The usual reply is that, while the things stigmatized are certainly real abuses, evangelistic meetings of the standard pattern can be, and frequently are, run in a way that avoids them. Such meetings, it is said, have proved their usefulness in the past; experience shows that God uses them still; and there seems to be no sufficient reason for abandoning them. It is argued that, while so many churches in each major denomination are failing in their evangelistic responsibility, these meetings may well be the only opportunity for presenting the gospel to vast multitudes of our fellow-men and women. The way ahead, there-

fore, it is maintained, is not to abolish them, but to reform them where abuses exist.

The debate continues. No doubt it will remain with us for some time to come. What I want to do here is not to go into this controversy, but to go behind it. I want to isolate the key principle that should guide us in our assessment both of these and any other methods of evangelism that may be practised or proposed.

What is this key principle? The following line of thought will make it clear.

Evangelism, as we have seen, is an act of communication with a view to conversion. In the last analysis, therefore, there is only one *means* of evangelism: namely, the gospel of Christ, explained and applied. Faith and repentance, the two complementary elements of which conversion consists, occur as a response to the gospel. 'Belief cometh of hearing,' Paul tells us, 'and hearing by the word of Christ'¹—or, as *The New English Bible* expands the verse, 'faith is awakened by the message, and the message that awakens it comes through the word of Christ'.

Again, in the last analysis, there is only one *agent* of evangelism: namely, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is Christ Himself who through His Holy Spirit enables His servants to explain the gospel truly and apply it powerfully and effectively; just as it is Christ Himself who through His Holy Spirit opens men's minds² and hearts³ to receive the gospel, and so

¹ Rom. x.17, RV.

² Lk. xxiv.45.

³ Acts xvi.14.

draws them savingly to Himself.⁴ Paul speaks of his achievements as an evangelist as 'those (things) which *Christ wrought through me*, for the obedience of the Gentiles, by word and deed . . . *in the power of the Holy Ghost*'.⁵ Since Augustine the point has often been made that Christ is the true minister of the gospel sacraments, and the human celebrant acts merely as His hand. We need to remember the equally basic truth that Christ is the true minister of the gospel word, and the human preacher or witness acts merely as His mouth.

So, in the last analysis, there is only one *method* of evangelism: namely, the faithful explanation and application of the gospel message. From which it follows—and this is the key principle which we are seeking—that the test for any proposed strategy, or technique, or style, of evangelistic action must be this: will it in fact serve the word? Is it calculated to be a means of explaining the gospel truly and fully and applying it deeply and exactly? To the extent to which it is so calculated, it is lawful and right; to the extent to which it tends to overlay and obscure the realities of the message, and to blunt the edge of their application, it is ungodly and wrong.

Let us work this out. It means that we need to bring under review all our evangelistic plans and practices—our missions, rallies, and campaigns; our sermons, talks, and testimonies; our big meetings, our little meetings, and our presentation of the gospel in personal dealing; the tracts that we give, the books that we lend, the letters that we write—

⁴ Jn. xii.32.

⁵ Rom. xv.18 f., RV.

and to ask about each of them questions such as the following:

Is this way of presenting Christ calculated to impress on people that the gospel is *a word from God*? Is it calculated to divert their attention from man and all things merely human to God and His truth? Or is its tendency rather to distract attention from the Author and authority of the message to the person and performance of the messenger? Does it make the gospel sound like a human idea, a preacher's plaything, or like a divine revelation, before which the human messenger himself stands in awe? Does this way of presenting Christ savour of human cleverness and showmanship? Does it tend thereby to exalt man? Or does it embody rather the straightforward, unaffected simplicity of the messenger whose sole concern is to deliver his message, and who has no wish to call attention to himself, and who desires so far as he can to blot himself out and hide, as it were, behind his message, fearing nothing so much as that men should admire and applaud him when they ought to be bowing down and humbling themselves before the mighty Lord whom he represents?

Again: is this way of presenting Christ calculated to promote, or impede, the work of the word in men's *minds*? Is it going to clarify the meaning of the message, or to leave it enigmatic and obscure, locked up in pious jargon and oracular formulae? Is it going to make people think, and think hard, and think hard about God, and about themselves in relation to God? Or will it tend to stifle thought by

playing exclusively on the emotions? Is it calculated to stir the mind, or put it to sleep? Is this way of presenting Christ an attempt to move men by the force of feeling, or of truth? Not, of course, that there is anything wrong with emotion; it is strange for a person to be converted without emotion; what is wrong is the sort of appeal to emotion, and playing on emotion, which harrows people's feelings as a substitute for instructing their minds.

Again: we have to ask, is this way of presenting Christ calculated to convey to people the *doctrine* of the gospel, and not just part of it, but the whole of it—the truth about our Creator and His claims, and about ourselves as guilty, lost, and helpless sinners, needing to be born again, and about the Son of God who became man, and died for sins, and lives to forgive sinners and bring them to God? Or is it likely to be deficient here, and deal in half-truths, and leave people with an incomplete understanding of these things, and hurry them on to the demand for faith and repentance without having made it clear just what they need to repent of, or what they ought to believe?

Again: we have to ask, is this way of presenting Christ calculated to convey to people the *application* of the gospel, and not just part of it, but the whole of it—the summons to see and know oneself as God sees and knows one, that is, as a sinful creature, and to face the breadth and depth of the need into which a wrong relationship with God has brought one, and to face too the cost and consequences of turning to receive Christ as Saviour and Lord? Or is it likely to

be deficient here, and to gloss over some of this, and to give an inadequate, distorted impression of what the gospel requires? Will it, for instance, leave people unaware that they have any immediate obligation to respond to Christ at all? Or will it leave them supposing that all they have to do is to trust Christ as a sin-bearer, not realizing that they must also deny themselves and enthrone Him as their Lord (the error which we might call only-believism)? Or will it leave them imagining that the whole of what they have to do is to consecrate themselves to Christ as their Master, not realizing that they must also receive Him as their Saviour (the error which we might call good-resolutionism)? We need to remember here that spiritually it is even more dangerous for a man whose conscience is roused to make a misconceived response to the gospel, and take up with a defective religious practice, than for him to make no response at all. If you turn a publican into a Pharisee, you make his condition worse, not better.

Again: we have to ask, is this way of presenting Christ calculated to convey gospel truth in a manner that is appropriately *serious*? Is it calculated to make people feel that they are indeed facing a matter of life and death? Is it calculated to make them see and feel the greatness of God, and the greatness of their sin and need, and the greatness of the grace of Christ? Is it calculated to make them aware of the awful majesty and holiness of God? Will it help them to realize that it is a fearful thing to fall into His hands? Or is this way of presenting Christ so

light and casual and cosy and jolly as to make it hard for the hearers to feel that the gospel is a matter of any consequence, save as a pick-me-up for life's misfits? It is a gross insult to God, and a real disservice to men, to cheapen and trivialize the gospel by one's presentation of it. Not that we should put on an affected solemnity when speaking of spiritual things; there is nothing more essentially frivolous than a mock seriousness, and nothing more likely to make hypocrites out of our hearers. What is needed is this: that we, who would speak for Christ, should pray constantly that God will put and keep in our hearts a sense of His greatness and glory, and of the joy of fellowship with Him, and of the dreadfulness of spending time and eternity without Him; and then that God will enable us to speak honestly, straightforwardly, and just as we feel about these matters. Then we shall be really natural in presenting the gospel—and really serious too.

It is by asking questions of this sort that we must test and, where necessary, reform our evangelistic methods. The principle is that the best method of evangelism is the one which serves the gospel most completely. It is the one which bears the clearest witness to the divine origin of the message, and the life-and-death character of the issues which it raises. It is the one which makes possible the most full and thorough explanation of the good news of Christ and His cross, and the most exacting and searching application of it. It is the one which most effectively engages the minds of those to whom witness is borne, and makes them most vividly aware that the

gospel is God's word, addressed personally to them in their own situation. What that best method is in each case, you and I have to find out for ourselves. It is in the light of this principle that all debates about evangelistic methods must be decided. For the present, we leave the matter there.



Let's summarize the primary points Packer has made in these chapters of his book.

I. What is evangelism?

II. What is the evangelistic message?

III. What is the motive for evangelizing?

IV. By what means and methods should evangelism be practiced?

