



Gospel Confusion Sydney Conference 2025

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Conference Notes



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Conference Notes

Introduction

Session 1

<i>What Is / Is not the Gospel?</i>	P.4
<i>Which gospel?</i>	P.6

Sessions 2

<i>The Theology Behind the Gospel</i>	P.8
<i>Which Depravity?</i>	P.9
<i>Which Grace?</i>	P.11

Session 3

<i>The Preparation - Divine Regeneration</i>	P.14
<i>Human proclamation...The Presentation of the Gospel</i>	P.16

Session 4

<i>Methods: Mediums, Testimonies, Scriptures Misused</i>	P.19
<i>The Fruit of the Gospel/Marks of a Christian</i>	P.24
<i>Bibliography</i>	P.28

Session 1

What Does the Word ‘Gospel’ Mean?

Greek ‘*Euaggélion*’ - bring good news (‘*eú*’ - good, well / ‘*aggéllō*’ - to proclaim, tell). Hebrew equivalent - ‘*tidings*’ (2Sam.18:22,25).

What Is / Is Not the Gospel?

What is the Gospel?

1Cor.15:1-4 ‘*Brethren [brothers], I declare unto you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you have received, and on which also you stand; By which also you are saved, if you keep in memory [hold fast] what I preached unto you, unless [otherwise] you have believed in vain. For I delivered [handed down] unto you first of all that which I also received, that [1] Christ [2] died [3] for our [4] sins according to the Scriptures; And that he was [5] buried, and that he [6] rose again the third day according to the Scriptures*’.

1. *Christ* 2. *Death* 3. ‘*for our sins*’ (*Substitution*) 4. *Sins* 5. *Burial*
6. *Resurrection*

- It’s *about Christ*, not what we can do.

What is not the Gospel?

- Two things missing in modern gospels? *Sin* and *Substitution*

1. The Omission of Sin

- *Sin* is the transgression of the law. *Sin is the expression of our depravity, the wickedness of the heart.*

- *The law shows us our sin* (Rom.7:7; 3:19); it brings us to Christ (Gal.3:24).

- The Law does not justify or save us, but leave us helpless, guilty.

- Sinners must be convinced what they are saved *from* (wrath Matt.3:7; 5:9), before told what they are saved *to*.

- Short use of the law?: Ten commandments...

The Preaching of the Law:

Martin Luther: *‘The first duty of the Gospel preacher is to declare God’s Law and show the nature of sin’... ‘...Therefore the Law and the Gospel are given to the end that we may learn to know both how guilty we are and to what we should again return’.*

Charles Spurgeon: *‘I do not believe that any man can preach the gospel who does not preach the Law’. ‘Lower the Law and you dim the light by which man perceives his guilt; this is a very serious loss to the sinner rather than a gain; it lessens the likelihood of his conviction and conversion. I say you have deprived the Gospel of its ablest auxiliary when you have set aside the Law. You have taken away from it the schoolmaster that is to bring men to Christ...They will never accept grace till they tremble before a just and holy Law. Therefore the Law serves a most necessary purpose...it must not be removed from its place’. ‘The Law cuts into the core of the evil, it reveals the seat of the malady, informs us that the leprosy lies deep within’...‘They must be slain by the Law before they can be made alive by the Gospel’.*

- What is the Gospel without the *reason* for it (the sin nature)?

2. The Omission of Substitution

- 1Cor.15:3 *‘for our sins’ - the perfect substituted for the imperfect*

- Why is Substitution important? - Because you must have a perfection for Heaven. Matt.5:48; 19:21; Heb.12:23.

- How are we made perfect? God perfected a salvation plan based on a perfect Christ being sacrificed *in our place*, so that - God could impute sin to Christ’s account and impute righteousness to the believer’s account. Rom.4:8; 2Cor.5:21.

- The Gospel hinges on that righteousness! Imbedded in the Gospel is this righteousness: Rom.1:16 *‘For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ...therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith...’*

- God accepted death and shedding of blood as *substitution* (Lev.17:11)

- OT substitutions: *Abraham/Isaac* (Gen.22) - *The Lamb and its death was substitute for the death/sacrifice of Isaac.*

- NT - Jesus - the lamb slain - '*Jesus was treated by God as if he committed every sin ever committed by those who would believe*'

- *Substitution/Imputation is at the very heart of the Gospel!*

Which gospel?

- The *ecumenical/political/social* gospels
(as seen in Christmas/Easter denominational messages)

- The *Prosperity* gospel

Built off the back of the *Word of Faith* gospel. It's root is '*New Thought*' philosophy and E. Kenyon (1867-1948) - '*what you confess, you possess*'. Propagated by Kenneth E. Hagin, Kenneth Copeland...Joel Osteen, Joyce Meyer...

This gospel appeals to the human desires of success, health...

'*Prosperity*' - 3 times in NT (Rom.1:10; 1Cor.16:12; 2Jn.1:2) - none teach a prosperity gospel. Jesus and apostles did not teach prosperity (Mk.10:30; Matt.8:20; 1Cor.4:9-13; Phil.3:8).

- The *Healing* gospel (early 20th c.)

Misuse of 1Peter 2:24,25 - note the context: '*sins*'; '*the tree*'; '*healed*'; '*as sheep gone astray*'; '*souls*'...

1Peter 2:24,25 is a quote from Isaiah 53:4-6 which is entirely about sins, not our '*sicknesses*'. (OT offerings were not for sickness but for *sin*).

- Healing in the atonement?: Then what of *Trophimus* - 2Tim.4:20 ('*left sick*'); *Timothy* - 1Tim.5:23 ('*wine*'); *Paul* - 2Cor.12:7-9 ('*Thorn in the flesh*'); *Epaphraditus* - Phil.2:25 ('*almost died*')?

- The 'gospel of Man'

This gospel is about what God can do for you in *this life*...Your ability; your success; your life...

The true Gospel is not about what we can gain in this life, it's what we must lose in this life for an eternity gained in Christ...The old life is not made better...it's a New Life...

This 'gospel of man' majors on a Response instead of the Gospel itself...

...Now with 'new measures' added: 'Accept Jesus into your heart'; 'Give your heart to Jesus'; 'Make your decision for Christ'...

All these terms (above) distort the Gospel to what people must *do* rather than what God has already *done* on their behalf in Christ.

None of the historic evangelists used these methods.

This modern 'invitation system' (with 'altar calls', etc.) has an 85% 'fall away' rate.

'The Gospel is not man accepting Jesus as His Saviour but that God accepted the lord Jesus as the perfect and only Saviour 2000 years ago.

The Gospel is not man giving his heart or his life to Jesus but that Christ gave His life in the place of sinners.

The Gospel is not man receiving Christ into his heart, but that God received the Lord Jesus into heaven as the mediator of sinners.

Do we see the great distinction between these two messages? One is subjective and puts great emphasis on what man must do. The other is objective and puts emphasis on what Christ has already done'.

('Firm Foundations' by Trevor McIlwain)

The Gospel is God centred, not man centred...not what unsaved man himself wants or needs...

*Which Gospel will you begin with - 'God loves you'; or 'man is a sinner'?...Will we turn the Gospel from what Christ has *done* to what man could *do*? Will we turn the response to calling for a 'decision', instead of repentance and faith...?*

Will we trust the sovereign Holy Spirit to bring the understanding of 'Christ crucified'; or will we tell them their 'decision' has made them a 'Christian'?

Session 2

The Theology Behind the Gospel

- *Your theology will influence how you present the Gospel, especially how you call for a response to the Gospel.*

- *Two main theologies that might affect the Gospel presentation and especially the response. These two 'streams' see man's depravity differently; and God's grace differently.*

One stream says this grace is given to *all men* and it's *up to the person to choose or to resist* this grace with their own 'free will'.

The other stream says God's grace is saving; when given it will be *effective* and the person will be saved ('raised up').

One stream has a lesser view of the depravity/inability of man's heart. Man has the power in his will to choose Christ. Christ is seen as knocking at the door of men's hearts...

One, the grace is resistible to not being saved; the other the grace is effectual to salvation.

- *The Cultural Influence is to change or soften the message to fit the culture. But the Gospel has an 'offense' and 'shame' built into it (2Cor.1:18-21; Gal.5:11; Heb.12:2).*

- *Gospel Paradoxes which cannot be reconciled...*

The message which is 'offensive' and 'shameful' is to be heavenly and righteous.

The 'foolishness' of preaching the gospel is to be understood.

The inability in man is no inability for God (Jn.6:37-44).

What is impossible with unsaved man is possible with God (Lk.18:18-27)

God put such paradox/barrier in the gospel so that to believe, it would be of God and not of man!

...Depravity is the problem, grace the solution.

Which ‘Depravity’?

- ‘*Total Depravity*’ - historically taught as *Total Inability*.

This is an issue not about outward forms of evil, but what *is in the heart*.

Does man have any ability in and of himself to spiritually understand and receive Christ?

- The History: Pelagianism (4th C) denied original sin; taught man was capable of doing *good* out of his own heart.

...Later Semi-Pelagianism taught man was *sick* in his own heart; still capable of pleasing God. The *issue* was very much around ‘free will’

...Arminianism centuries later dressed up semi-Pelagianism in teaching that: *Man, although he was affected by the Fall of Adam and Eve, has not been left in a state of total spiritual helplessness. God enables every sinner to repent and believe, but He does so without interfering with man’s freedom. Man by his own faith can contribute to his salvation.*

Pelagianism, semi-pelagianism, Arminianism were condemned at Councils and in historic Confessions...

Arminian thinking thrives on *logic* such as: *God has called all men to believe (Jn.3:16, Acts 16:31, Rom.10:9, etc.), therefore all men must have the ability to come to Christ...* However, the commands ‘*Repent*’ and ‘*Believe*’ say nothing about man’s ability to do that.

- *Does man have any ability in and of himself to spiritually understand/receive Christ?* Let these scriptures speak for themselves:

Jer.17:9; Is.64:6-8; Jn.1:12,13; 6:44,65; 8:34; Rom.3:10-20; 8:7,8; 1Cor.2:14; Col.2:13; Eph.2:2-5; 4:18...

Are there degrees of being ‘*dead*’ (Greek ‘*nekros*’ - corpse)...*Can a person ‘dead in their sins’ use his ‘free will’ to become ‘alive’? (Can a dead person in a grave will to live?)*

Eph.2:2-5 - ‘*by NATURE*’ we were ‘*children of disobedience*’, in the ‘*lusts of our flesh*’, ‘*fulfilling*’ our natural ‘*desires*’ which were *freely* willed.

- Objection: *If the unsaved has 'total inability' to change his heart to be saved, then this destroys his 'free will'.*

...How 'free' is unsaved man's will?

Read Rom.8:7,8; 1Cor.2:14; Jn.6:44; 8:36; Rom.3:11; 9:14-21; 2Cor.4:4

- Why is it that it is always God seeking and choosing man and not man seeking or choosing God? (Lk.19:10; Eph.1:4,5; Jn.15:16; 2Thess.2:13,14 (see also Matt.20:16; 22:14; Mk.13:20; Acts 9:15; 22:14; Rom.16:13; Rev.17:14).

There is not one single Scripture that teaches that man can or wills to choose God as His personal Lord and Saviour in salvation!

Yet unsaved man freely chooses to be the 'servant of sin' (Jn.8:34; Rom.6:16,17,20; Gal.4:7) - why? - His NATURE is a bias, an agent...unsaved have 'free agency', not 'free will'!

'Free agency', not 'free will', was taught in history in Confessions and in scripture.

[See Book: 'Free Will or Free Agency - Killing Sacred Cows']

Lk.18:27 *'The things which are impossible with men are possible with God'*. God has to change this *inability* and *set the will free* - as He did for Lydia (Acts 16:14)!

- The doctrine of *Total Inability* was at the very foundation of much of the evangelism of the great divines and revivalists of old.

They began their evangelistic messages by revealing the depravity/inability of man's sinful heart, exposed sin.

If the sin nature, enslaved will is free to choose of itself; if we are not totally unable; if ultimately we choose by our free will... then the need for the Gospel is reduced, the plight of man is not as serious...and a puny God has his hands tied waiting for man to use his 'free will'!

Summary of true 'depravity' in the unsaved: a *Wicked heart* (Jer.17:9); *Filthy rags* (Is.64:6-8); *slave to sin* (Jn.8:34); *guilty before God* (Rom.3:10-20); *enmity with God, unable to be subject to his laws, cannot please God* (Rom.8:7,8); *dead in sins, needing to be made alive*

(Col.2:13; Eph.2); *willingly fulfilling* evil desires by nature, a child of disobedience (Eph.2:2-5); *unable* to understand spiritual things (1Cor.2:14); *darkened* minds, *blind* hearts (Eph.4)...

Which ‘Grace’?

- More History of two main ‘streams’ on ‘grace’:

4th century Pelagius (AD 354-420) - He denied original sin; and depravity or inability of man’s heart to achieve salvation.

Pelagius stated: *‘For his willing, therefore, and doing a good work, the praise belongs to man; or rather both to man, and to God who has bestowed on him the ‘capacity’ for his will and work, and who evermore by the help of His grace assists even this capacity’.*

The debate was very much about ‘free will’ - whether any grace given was *effectual*, or *resistible* by mans own free will....

Augustine (Nth Africa) refuted Pelagius. He taught man’s nature is morally corrupted by sin in every part; complete freedom of will is lost, being a slave to sin, needing a grace *effectual*, so as to be ‘raised up’.

John Cassian - ‘semi Pelagian’ views - God *assists* men with their wills to accept Christ as Saviour. Thus *Synergistic* (man and God), not *monergistic* (God alone). This grace could fail to convert.

This semi-Pelagian system was the father of a new Arminian system brought later by Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609).

Arminius wrote: *‘All unregenerate persons have the freedom of will, and a capability of resisting the Holy Spirit, of rejecting the proffered grace of God, of despising the counsel of God against themselves, of refusing to accept the gospel of grace, and of not opening to Him who knocks at the door of the heart...’*

- Supporters of ‘Remonstrants’ in 1610 drew up *five points* in opposition to the Doctrines of Grace (which were already in ‘Confessions’ - Belgium, Heidelberg, Church of England).

The Synod of Dort (1618-1619) refuted all five points of Arminianism...as did the Westminster Confession (1647) and the London Baptist Confession (1689).

- Thus there are two main ‘streams’ of understanding ‘grace’...

1. *A grace that God gives to bring all people to a certain point and allows them to choose...The final decision rests upon the will of man.*

2. *God first chooses/calls a person, then changes their hearts to bring them to salvation...The final decision rests upon the will of God.*

The main difference is whether the grace is *resistible* or *effectual* to salvation. Synergistic or monergistic.

What do the Scriptures teach? - those who are drawn, grace is given so that any resistance is *turned to a willingness* (Jn.6:37-44).

- Some pit John 6:44 against John 12:32 ‘*if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me*’. But does this contradict Jn.6:44? ‘*Men*’ is not in original. Who is the ‘*all*’? - not everyone or else all would be ‘*raised up*’. Vs.35,36 ‘*light unto the world*’ shows a general call; see Isaiah 42:6; Rev.5:9. John 6:37-44 is clear - *not one has power to come to Christ except on the condition that the Father has drawn that same person; then Christ promises to raise that same person up.*

- God is the ‘*the author and finisher of our faith*’; ‘*He which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*’ (Heb.12:2; Phil.1:6).

‘*When I was coming to the Lord, I thought I was doing it all myself, and though I sought the Lord earnestly, I had no idea the Lord was seeking me...the thought struck me: How did you come to be a Christian? I sought the Lord. But how did you come to seek the Lord? The truth flashed across my mind in a moment - I should not have sought Him unless there had been some previous influence on my mind to make me seek Him...I saw that God was at the bottom of it all, and that He was the author of my faith, and so the whole doctrine of grace opened up to me...I desire to make this confession, ‘I ascribe my change wholly to God’.*

‘*Is there one here - a solitary one - man or woman, young or old, who can say, ‘I sought God before he sought me?’ No; even you who are a little Arminian, will sing - ‘O yes! I do love Jesus - Because he first loved me’.* (C.H. Spurgeon’s *Autobiography*, Vol.1:168-69; and ‘*A defense of Calvinism*’)

- What has been taught here with ‘Depravity’ and ‘Grace’ - is what nearly all the great evangelists, teachers taught: *Reformers, Puritans, Pastors, preachers, revivalists, evangelists, theologians, martyrs, hymn writers, Bible translators (including KJV), early missionary and tract societies, and in revivals and the Confessions of the day...*

- We must address the human will in Gospel preaching and pray that the Holy Spirit turns that will. However, any gospel preaching that relies upon an act of the human will for the conversion of sinners has added something to ‘grace alone’.

...Spurgeon: *‘We might preach till our tongues rotted, till we should exhaust our lungs and die, but never a soul would be converted unless there were the mysterious power of the Holy Ghost going with it, changing the will of man. O sirs! we might as well preach to stone walls as preach to humanity unless the Holy Ghost be with the Word, to give it power to convert the soul’.*

...(Twenty three years later): *‘I do not come into this pulpit hoping that perhaps somebody will of his own free will return to Christ. My hope lies in another quarter. I hope that my Master will lay hold of some of them and say, ‘You are mine, and you shall be mine. I claim you for myself’. My hope arises from the freeness of grace, and not from the freedom of the will’.*

Summary of ‘which depravity’ / which ‘Grace’

Unsaved man does not seek or choose God unless the Holy Spirit first draws him (Eph.1:4,5; Jn.15:16; Rom.3:11; Lk.19:10; Rom.8:6,7; Rom.3:10-11; Jer.17:9; Is.64:6,7).

The necessity of grace is because the condition of man without grace is that he is a slave to and dead in sins, and by nature a child of wrath (Jn.8:34; Eph.2:2-5; Col.2:13), unable to come to and obey the law of God (Rom.8:7,8; Jn.6:37-44,65), has no understanding of the things of the Spirit of God (1Cor.2:14), has eyes blinded by Satan (2Cor.4:4), a heart wicked to the core and blinded (Jer.17:9; Eph.4:18), and with a righteousness as ‘filthy rags’ (Is.64:6-8).

God put this barrier in the gospel [impossibilities/paradoxes; antinomies] so that to believe, it would be of God and not of man!

Session 3

The Preparation - Divine Preparation (and Regeneration); Human presentation/preaching...

- The 'divine' is in what the Spirit does inside a person's heart and mind. The 'human' is preaching/speaking the Gospel.
- 'Regeneration' is foremost in the Divine preparation process.

1. What Does 'Born Again' Mean?

- '*genao anothen*' - 'born' / '*from above*'. A new; second birth.
'Regeneration is a mighty and powerful change, wrought in the soul by the efficacious workings of the Holy Spirit, wherein a vital principle, a new habit, the law of God, and a divine nature, are put into, and framed in the heart, enabling it to act holily and pleasing to God, and to grow up therein to eternal glory' (Charnock)
(Gal.6:15; Rom.6:14; 2Cor.5:17...)

2. What Does Born Again Not Mean?

- Not by race, flesh, will; but an *Inner* regeneration (Jn.1:12,13). The sinful heart is dead, tied to an 'agent' - the sin nature.
The scriptures never teach man can choose to be born again. God has to create, make alive a new spirit (2Cor.4:6).

3. The Necessity of the New Birth

Jn.3:3-7 - urgency is because one is '*dead in sins*' (Eph.2:1-5).

4. The Mystery of the New Birth

Jn.3:8 - as the '*wind*' ('*pneuma*' - spirit). Greek *Passive Voice* on man's part (Jn.1:13; Jn.3:3,5,6,7,8; Acts 16:14; 1Pet.1:3).

We cannot will/do anything to be born again of ourselves *any more than a baby cooperates in child birth.*

5. *The Modern Confusion With The New Birth*

- Ezek.ch.36-37 entirely work of God. *'I will sprinkle'* (vs.25) *'I will cleanse'* (vs.25) *'I will give a new heart'* (vs.26) *'I will remove the heart of stone'* (vs.26) *'I will put my Spirit in you'* (vs.27)

- 'Ordo Salutis' (order of salvation) - Regeneration must come before we can respond, because we are *'dead in sins'* (Eph.2:1,5; Col.2:13 - *'nekros'* - a corpse).

- Spurgeon: The *'cause'* of trusting/faith is *'that miraculous supernatural grace of regeneration'*.

- 1Jn.5:1 *'Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is [Perfect tense 'has been'] born of God'*...not *'will be born of God'*.

Faith is the result and evidence of regeneration. (Theologians vary with - *regeneration first and then faith*; or both at same time).

1Pet.1:23 *'[Perfect tense - lit. 'Having been'] 'Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever'*; James 1:18 *'of his own will he brought us forth with the word of truth'*...

Regeneration the *cause*; faith the *effect* (Eph.2:1-5)

6. *What Do We Do To See People Born Again?*

- When one truly believes in Christ and what He has done - *they are born again*. What do we do to see people born again?...*Preach Christ crucified for sin to satisfy a righteous holy God who demands justice; that God has punished Christ as our substitute instead of us for sin. Call on the person to believe in Him.*

Use the instrument God has provided - the Word (1Pet.1:23).

7. *Proofs of Being Born Again - The Effects*

- The *'fruit of the Spirit'* (Gal.5:22,23)

The born again will suffer, survive persecutions, trials, testings and temptations' (Matt.10:22).

The born again will put Christ first (1Jn.5:1; Matt.10:37)

The born again do not practise sin but show repentance (1Jn.3:9; 5:18).

The new birth produces holiness (1Jn.2:15,16; 3:3).

The born again love the brethren (1Jn.3:14).

Charles Spurgeon: *‘When I was coming to the Lord, I thought I was doing it all myself; though I sought the Lord earnestly, I had no idea the Lord was seeking me...the thought struck me: How did you come to be a Christian? I sought the Lord. But how did you come to seek the Lord? The truth flashed across my mind in a moment - I should not have sought Him unless there had been some previous influence on my mind to make me seek Him...I saw that God was at the bottom of it all, and that He was the author of my faith, and so the whole doctrine of grace opened up to me...I desire to make this confession, ‘I ascribe my change wholly to God’.*

The Presentation of the Gospel (the human side)

- *The Presentation of the Gospel* is about the *Preparation of a Heart* (see the Parable of the Sower).

Put God up; put man down.

Show the *Nature and Character of God*. In creation (Rom.1:18-20)

Who is God?

God is a Spirit (Jn.4:24).

God is a sovereign ruler (Ps.135:6)

God is one in three persons, Christ included (Gen.1:1,26; Is.7:14; Jn.8:24, 58 cp. Ex.3:14)

God is eternal (Is.44:6; 47:12; Rev.1:8)

God is immutable: He will never change (Mal.3:7)

God is omnipotent: He is all-powerful (Jer.2:17)

God is Omniscient: He is *all knowing* (Heb.4:13)

God is omnipresent: He is *everywhere at once* (Jer.23:23,24)

God is Holy: separate, distinct, without sin or fault (Ex.15:11)

God is just: God is fair, pure. His justice is perfect (Is.30:18)

God is a personal being (Rev.3:20).

- Results of this preparation?: *understanding* the person of God; a certain *fear of God*? (Pr.1:7; 2:5; 9:10).

*...More Preparation: Who is man?
The Law in Evangelism...to show sin*

- The preparation of a heart involves a two way process - teaching who God is, and teaching who man is in God's sight. God's nature and character must be put in stark contrast to man's sinfulness.

The sinner must know who God is and what the 'disease' is before he is told of the 'cure'!

- The Law. The Law of God is His standard, rule of judgement...the 10 commandments summarise this. Rom.2:15; 3:27; 9:31; 10:4

Use of the law in evangelism - Ps.19:7; Rom.3:20; 7:7.

The Law does not save, it exposes sin (Rom.7:7) and leads to Christ for grace (Gal.3:24). The Law reveals; grace cleanses.

Martin Luther: 'The first duty of the Gospel preacher is to declare God's Law and show the nature of sin'...

Ref. Books: Baxter's classic 'Call to the Unconverted' or Alleine's 'Alarm to the Unconverted' re-printed by John Blanchard 'Invitation to Live' (Evangelical Press).

Jonathan Edwards: 'The only way we can know whether we are sinning is by knowing His Moral Law'.

J.C.Ryle: '...Let us expound and beat out the Ten Commandments, and show the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of their requirements...Those whom the Spirit draws to Jesus are those who the Spirit has convinced of sin. Without thorough conviction of sin, men may seem to come to Jesus and follow Him for a season, but they will soon fall away and return to the world'.

The Order of preaching - Law then grace (Rom.chs.1-3)

William Perkins: 'The true way to teach and declare righteousness...is not preaching the Law alone, or the Gospel alone, as some unwisely do, with the result that both are preached without

profit. Both the Law and the Gospel must be preached; the Law to give birth to repentance, the Gospel to lead to faith. But they must be preached in their proper order, first the Law to bring repentance, then the Gospel to work faith and forgiveness - never the other way around'.

- Simplistic use of law: 'Have you ever lied?'; 'ever stole?'; 'ever committed adultery?'; 'hated anyone'?...Will God overlook one single sin? ...would an honest judge on earth overlook?

Charles Spurgeon: [law then grace] *'They seek to make the man stand up; we seek to bring him down, and make him think that there he lies in the hand of God, and that his business is to submit himself to God, and cry aloud, 'Lord save, or we perish'. We hold that man is never so near grace as when he begins to feel he can do nothing at all. When he says, 'I can pray, I can believe, I can do this, and I can do the other', marks of self sufficiency and arrogance are on his brow...I want to make man feel his sins before I dare tell him anything about Christ. I want to probe into his soul and make him feel that he is lost before I tell him anything about the purchased blessing...The Spirit comes to convict before He comes to comfort'.*

Preaching Grace

The Gospel of grace is not an 'offer', but a proclamation!

- *Christ was sent in Substitution [sacrifice/cross; to take sins away; sins imputed]; in Propitiation [God satisfied; wrath appeased]; So that...Righteousness can be imputed.*

- *The Response? - It's calling for a trust in Christ...to Believe...Call for a turning around from sin (repent)...Telling them to Call upon his name. To Receive Christ as Saviour.*

[Note the terms: trust/repent/believe/call/receive...]

- *Trust the Holy Spirit! Our responsibility is to give the Gospel accurately, co-working in preparing the heart...It is God's responsibility to draw and save...Trust the Holy Spirit!*

- *Suggested order in presentation: God, Sin, Christ, Grace...Response...*

Session 4

Methods, Mediums, Testimonies, Scriptures Misused...

- Theology determines methods!

Quote: *'The pattern of modern evangelism is to give people a pleasing and easy message; take them through a simple formula; get them to pray a prayer, sign a card, or whatever; then tell them they are saved and should never doubt it. Such an approach to witnessing actually fights against the Holy Spirit, whose ministry is to bring both assurance to those who are truly saved, (Rom.8:16) and conviction to those who are not, (Jn.16:8,9). God knows the difference; we do not. It is not our job to certify peoples salvation.'*

- Our thinking determines methods... Some of following from *'Tell The Truth'* by Metzger

Modern Thinking

God loves you, wants you, has a wonderful plan for your life...

* [See next page]

People's salvation is our responsibility

Sin is a 'brokenness'...we are victims...

Man is fallen, yet has the ability (potential) to choose salvation

The human heart is sick and ignorant

Biblical Thinking

By nature you are 'children of disobedience' in the 'lusts of the flesh...fulfilling natural desires' under wrath of God (Eph.2; Matt.3:7; Jn.3:36; Rom.1&5:9...).

God is responsible for people's salvation (Heb.12:2; 5:9...)

Sin is the breaking of Gods law and the cause of His wrath (Rom.7:7,13; Matt.3:7; Jn.3:36...)

Man is fallen, will not come to God by his own will power (Jer.17:9; Jn.8:34; Rom.8:7,8; Col.2:13; Eph.2; 1Cor.2:14; Jn.6..)

The human heart is dead, lost (Jer.17:9; Col.2:13; Eph.2...)

Modern Thinking

God is impotent before the sinners will, knocking at their hearts...

Goal: decisions, immediate response...

Trigger their powers of 'free will' to choosing Christ

Challenge, entice their emotions with felt desires, excitement...

Get them to pray a prayer with you

Biblical Thinking

God is the author and the finisher to empower the sinner's will, to save to the uttermost...

(Heb.12:2; 5:9; 7:25)

Goal: Conversions, Disciples (Matt.28:19,20)

Face them with the impossibility of saving themselves or exercising faith on their own

(Jn.6:4; Eph.2:8,9; 1Cor.2:14...)

Present truth to their mind, call on the will to obey, expect the emotions to follow

Allow time for prayer in their own words, preferably alone

* 'God loves you'? - is a misrepresentation of what scriptures say of the unsaved. It is true of God's elect ['agapetos' beloved], His church; but the Bible never says that 'God loves the sinner'. Rather, the wrath of God abides on them (Jn.3:36; Rom.1:18; 2:8; 13:4); they are 'children of wrath', 'children of disobedience' (Eph.2:3; 5:6; Col.3:6); God 'hates all workers of iniquity' (Ps.5:5); is 'angry with the wicked every day' (Ps.7:11). Nowhere does the Bible say God loves the unsaved...The 'love gospel' thwarts the reason why man needs to be saved - because of his *sin* nature!

Evangelism and 'church':

- Evangelism has its place in church but is an outgrowth of the teaching, equipping of saints (Acts 2:42,47).

Puritan or Modern?:

- Modern Evangelism is now often big scale, short term campaigns, calling for decisions. (The roots of this in the ‘*new measures*’ - 1840’s and Charles Finney in 1820’s).

- Puritan evangelism was a *broader long term effort* and generally *local church based*.

Pragmatic Methods:

- Pragmatism says - *if it gets results, it works and must be of the Holy Spirit*. By nature is ecumenical.

- There is an 80% fall away rate with modern pragmatic evangelism.

Ecumenical Methods

- Evangelists increasingly include all denominations in their evangelistic crusades, sending people back to heretical fellowships, false religions...(Is.30.1-3; 31:1,2).

‘Decisional’ and ‘Invitational’ Methods

- One experienced missionary author sums this case up well: *‘We distort and confuse the Gospel in people’s understanding when we try to present the Gospel using terminology which turns people’s attention to what they must DO rather than outward to what God has DONE on their behalf in Christ. We should use terminology which directs repentant sinners to trust in what has been done FOR THEM through Christ, rather than directing their attention to what must be done IN THEM. ‘Accept Jesus into your heart’; ‘give your heart to Jesus’; ‘give your life to Jesus’; ‘open the door of your heart to the Lord’; ‘ask Jesus to wash away your sins’; ‘make your decision for Christ’; ‘ask Jesus to give you eternal life’...These modern and commonly used phrases confuse people’s understanding of the Gospel...’*

We must bring people to the point where they see they can do nothing. But even when people do understand their inability to do anything...many [then] tell enquirers things such as ‘Now you must give

your heart to Jesus'. Having told them they are unable to do anything they then tell them what they must do!...People's interest and concern is turned inward to their own experience instead of outward to trust only in Christ's death, burial and resurrection on their behalf...'

Another author, writing on the increase of decisional methods, writes: *'I have seen people go forward in response to appeals, but in the sermon the Gospel was not preached! A message was proclaimed, people responded to an appeal, but the Gospel was nowhere clearly presented - so dare we not question the 'decisions' people made? In many sermons there is little or no mention of Christ's death on the cross on behalf of the guilty sinner; neither is there reference to the need to repent of one's sin. Instead, people are asked to 'give their lives to Jesus' or 'accept Christ' with no explanation of the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross (which is the core of the gospel, (1Cor.15:1-4). When people go forward on such appeals (often after repeated invitations accompanied by emotionally-stirring music), do they really understand what they are doing? Are they really saved?'*

- We have traded repentance for a 'decision' and we have reaped a bitter harvest of spurious 'conversions', tares and carnality within the church!

'Come to Christ' is not 'come to the front'...A 'decision' must never be counted as salvation.

'Doorknocking'

- If the Lord gives one a burden to use this method, then they should obey God in that...

Stats show that family and close friends are the best groups to evangelise first?

Divine Appointments?

- Pray for a 'divine appointment'.

Felt Needs

- Bringing the Gospel through peoples need (food, clothing, shelter...)

The purpose of the Gospel is not primarily to solve felt needs but to solve the problem of *sin*. The danger of an *emphasis* on ‘felt needs’ is that it *places man at the centre*.

At best, addressing ‘felt needs’ could be an ‘entry point’ or an ‘ice breaker’ to build relationships with people. But the *motivation* is to be the *Gospel given* in some way.

Culture?:

- Bring the Gospel through *culturally relevant* methods? Missionaries learn language, culture, etc... to build relationships, and not to offend...But *the Gospel is not culturally relevant*. No culture recognises the Gospel, because no culture recognises man’s sinfulness, God’s forgiveness, or His mercy (1Cor.1:23; 2:14)...

...If the natural man ‘cannot receive the things of the spirit’ and if they are ‘foolishness’ to him and only can be ‘spiritually discerned’ (1Cor.2:14), then how can the Gospel be made to be culturally relevant? *It cannot be ‘culturally discerned’ but only ‘spiritually discerned’.*

Don’t change the Gospel to fit the culture.

Tracts

- Choose wisely. The problem with many tracts - *Preparation of the heart is lacking!* The sinful nature is not detailed. The emphasis is often on the methods to get ‘decisions’, *instead of the conversion.*

Scriptures Misused in Evangelism

Joshua 24:15 is about Israelite *believers in idolatry*.

Revelation 3:20 is a warning to a *church of believers*.

Mediums

- *Stage plays, drama, clowning, sensational testimonies, ‘Christian’ rock music, sport?* The Gospel message was never meant to be presented in a *fun atmosphere?*

These mediums often dilute and lower the *intellectual understanding* of the message. *The bait you catch them with may well be the food you will have to continue to feed them with?*

‘The Testimony’

- *The gospel is about God’s part, not anything of us except that we sinners under the wrath of God.*

- Testimonies should not highlight or bring glory to self or a sinful past, although it may be necessary to show sin and the consequences.

- Evaluating a testimony:

‘How much did I hear about the Gospel’;

‘How much did I hear about Christ...How much was about the speaker and how much was about Christ...and which was more prominent?’

- An example of a testimony: Paul of Acts (26:1-32) 1. Before conversion (sinner condemned...) 2. Conversion (what you understood) 3. After (the fruit - faith, repentance).

Summary:

Do we trust the Holy Spirit to take the Gospel and apply it in conviction and understanding to the mind and the heart of someone whose eyes are blinded by Satan? ...Can we not do this without the fancy pragmatic methods and mediums we can conjure up from the market places of the world? The answer is to Trust the Gospel and the Holy Spirit...!

The Fruit of the Gospel; Marks of a Christian

- *Repentance and faith.* Faith is the vehicle of entrance into salvation; Repentance is the mental and moral condition of that faith.

- *Humility in a honesty about ones heart...Submission...Heart change*

- 1Jn.5:13 *‘These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God’...*

1. *The Born Again Have Christ First; Fellowship With Him as Saviour/Lord* (1Jn.1:6; 2:22; 5:1; Matt.10:37).

2. *The Born Again Confess Sin* (1Jn.1:8-10).
3. *The Born Again do not continue in sin* (1Jn.3:3,4,8,9)
4. *The Born Again Keep His Word* (1Jn.2:3-5).
5. *The Born Again Are Abiding and Walking in Him* (1Jn.2:6).
6. *The Born Again Love the Brethren* (1Jn.2:9-11; 3:11-18; 4:7,8,11,12,20,21).
7. *The Born Again Know Jesus personally and are overcoming* (1Jn.2:13,14 - 4).
8. *The Born Again Seek Holiness and Are Separate From the World* (1Jn.2:15,16; 3:1; 4:5; James 4:4).
9. *The Born Again Have the Fruit of the Spirit* (1Jn.2:20,21).

Closing:

Trust the power within the Gospel itself, as well as the Holy Spirit, to make men righteous before God.

The Gospel is not ours. We dare not change it, add to it, soften it, sweeten it and tune it to the will of men.

The Gospel has not gone into the world to have those who hear it remain in the world.

The Gospel has gone out into the world to sever those who will believe, to sever them from the judgement to come.

...For the person of Christ and His glory!

Reference Books by Author

'Foundations For Evangelism' (theology/different parts of the gospel/parable of sower...)

'Bring the Gospel Back' [Sequel...true/false gospels; apologetics/methods...plea to bring back]

'Free will/Free agency - Killing Sacred Cows' [free will and free agency in history, confessions and scripture]

Other books

Baxter's classic *'Call to the Unconverted'* or Alleine's *'Alarm to the Unconverted'* - re-printed by John Blanchard in *'Invitation to Live'* (Evangelical Press).

'Tell The Truth' by Metzger

Notes

Notes

About the Author

Terry holds a Doctorate in theology (Dth), a Masters degree (MABS) and several diplomas.

He is the founder of, and for many years was pastor of the Hervey Bay Bible Church, Queensland, Australia.

Terry was founder and president of *South Pacific Bible Institute*, a Bible college training and equipping people for ministry.

He is the author of several books and is involved in a full time ministry of *teaching, informing* and *equipping* the church. He is also editor of a growing worldwide publication '*Diakrisis* (Australia)'.

His ministry includes preaching/teaching and conducting seminars in a wide range of churches and colleges.



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