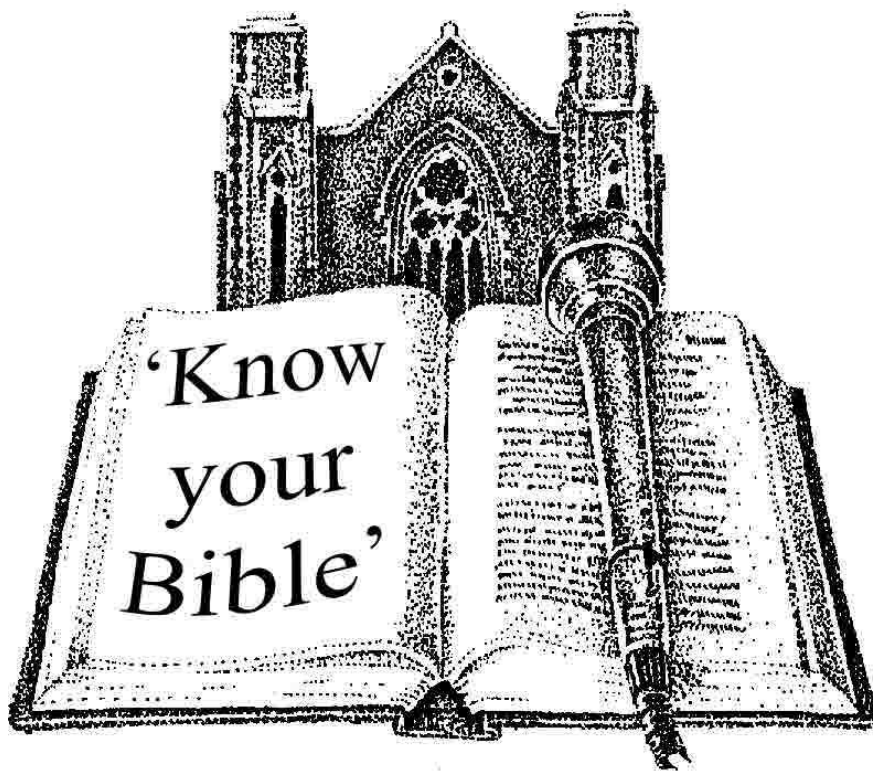


The True Gospel

Study Notes by Stuart Olyott



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THE TRUE GOSPEL

What is Evangelism?

A lot of Christian activity claims to be 'evangelism', and we are seriously urged to support it. But IT IS 'evangelism'? Tonight we are going to try and make a definition of 'evangelism' from the pages of God's Word.

- "Evangelism" is a word which is never used in the Bible!
- This tells us something right away. The New Testament Christians had no separate activity called 'evangelism'.
- We would be wiser not to use the word; but if we do, we must at least be clear what we mean by it.
- Let us look at the words the New Testament DOES use, and then draw up our definition of 'evangelism' with that in mind.

"Evangel"

This word is used 70 times in the New Testament. It is a word which described the CONTENT of the message which the early Christians spread.

- They did not choose the content. It was revealed by God. Galatians 1:11-12.
- It is truth. Ephesians 1:13.
- It is a holy trust, and not to be tampered with. 1 Timothy 1:11
- Unbelieving men are blind to it. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4.
- But some receive it by faith. Hebrews 4:2.
- It is the power of God unto salvation, and reveals how a sinner may be put right with His God. Romans 1:16-17.
- Its chief features are set out in Romans, Galatians and Hebrews.
- Its chief words are, God, man, law, sin, righteousness, repentance and faith.
- It sets forth Jesus Christ as:- Lord, Mediator of the New Covenant, Prophet; priest and King.

It:-

- parades the privileges of believers.
- and tells them of their solemn responsibility to live a holy life within the fellowship, and under the discipline, of the local church.
- Nothing which does not do full justice to this Evangel which is revealed in the Scriptures should be termed "evangelism".
- 'Evangelism' must be 'EVANGEL-ism'! Or it is nothing.

Does the evangelism you support measure up to this standard (God's standard)?

If NOT - know this; you are supporting what God does not support.'

"Evangelise"

This refers to what is DONE with the Evangel; it is the word used to describe HOW the early Christians spread the Evangel.

- It **always** means THE SETTING FORTH OF THE EVANGEL BY MEANS OF THE SPOKEN WORD, and has no other meaning.
- In the A.V. the word 'preach' usually translates the word 'evangelise'. See Acts 5:42, 8:35, 14:7, 17:18, 1 Corinthians 1:17, 9:16, 15:1-2. Hebrews 4:2. 1 Peter 1:12-25.
- If our modern word 'evangelism' means anything it means 'the act of evangelising'. This means that we have no right to call anything 'evangelism' unless it is a setting forth of the Evangel by the SPOKEN WORD.

Can you see what this means?:-

- An area is not evangelised if it has just been flooded with printed tracts, and nothing more.
 - But it HAS been evangelised if the Word has been spoken to all there - whether they respond or not.'
 - the speaking of the Word is what constitutes evangelism. So a meeting is not made MORE evangelistic by - the personality of the preacher; special singing; testimonies.
 - In fact true evangelism does not require any particular time, place, organisation or format - just so long as it is the SPEAKING OF THE WORD. In the early church EVERY believer did it ALWAYS.
-
- They were constrained by Christ's love I Corinthians 9:16
 - They bathed the message in prayer. Ephesians 6:18.
 - They spoke the Word in all sorts of places, Acts 2:14, 8:35, 10:24, 16:32.
 - They made no attempt to prove or dress up the message. 1 Corinthians 1 and 2
 - Filled with the Spirit they steered clear of both the extreme of empty activism; and the extreme of blasphemous idleness.

A closing definition

"Evangelism is the relating of the Evangel, by means of the spoken Word, and in the power of the Holy Spirit - in order that men may seek God, repent of their sins, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved; and then order the whole of their lives by His Word".

- The threads we have spun together support this definition.
- To give our energies to anything else, and to anything less, is to disobey Christ's Great Commission to us.

THE TRUE GOSPEL - Sets forth:-

1. The attributes of God

= Scripture was given to make us wise unto salvation, and to give us life. (2 Timothy 3:15. John 5:39). Their purpose is evangelistic !

- But what are the Scriptures mostly about? - GOD !
 - This sets the pattern for all evangelistic messages.
 - They must give clear teaching about WHO GOD IS.

= John's Gospel was written with an evangelistic purpose. (20:31).
How does it begin? - with teaching about GOD.

= Look at our Lord's evangelistic method.
He always began by seeking to bring people to understand something of the ways and nature of GOD:-

- See Mark 10:17..... Nicodemus.
- See John 4:10. The rich young ruler.
- See John 3:3..... The Samaritan woman.

= Look at the preaching of the apostles.
See the sermons beginning in Acts 2:17, 3:13, 5:29, 7:2, 10:34, 13:16, 17:22, 26:2.

- The more ignorant the people were, the more clearly they expounded WHO GOD IS.

= Look at the New Testament letters. Romans, Galatians, Ephesians and Hebrews were specifically written to define the Gospel, amongst other reasons.

- Scan through their pages at random - and you will not find a page or a column which does not give clear doctrine concerning some aspect of the being and attributes of GOD.

= Other random samples make it clear that New Testament Gospel preaching always contained exposition concerning WHO GOD IS. for example - 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 2 Corinthians 5:17-19. Titus 2:9-15.

- THE DOCTRINE OF GOD was foremost in the Evangel revealed in Scripture.
- Most modern 'evangelistic preaching does not dwell at any length, or give such prominence, to God's attributes. It is, thus, 'another Gospel' - and must be treated as such. See Galatians 1:6 - 10.

What happens when the attributes of God are NOT set forth?

When this happens, men are ignorant of God's true character

They do not know WHO GOD IS

Many believe in God, but their "God" is the invention of their own imaginations

This means:-

- They do not understand what their true need is. They do not realise that they need reconciliation to a holy and infinite God Whom they have enormously offended, and from Whom they are cut off. Instead, they think their real need is peace, happiness, fulfillment, freedom from fear - or something like that.
- They do not seek Christ aright. They see Him more as a catchword who will help them in trouble, rather than the eternal Son of God who provides salvation for helpless sinners because of His cross - where He made propitiation and atonement. They call on his name frivolously, rather than as lost sinners in dire need of a Prophet, Priest and King.
- Others continue to believe that their own efforts and works can save them, for they are ignorant of God's majestic holiness.
- Others do not see the urgency and vital importance of their seeking God. They believe 'God loves' them, and will do them no harm. They do not fear at the thought of judgment; tremble at God's wrath; and flee from the road to certain hell.
- Many think in terms of 'deciding' to favour God with their patronage, rather than begging mercy of a furious and sovereign Creator. Who can be sought in Christ.
- 'Converts' do not live their lives in the fear of God, and with awesome reverence for His laws; but become seekers of experiences, who do whatever their evil hearts warm to.

Our clear duty

- We must abandon all non-Scriptural man-centred messages. ("God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life" etc...)
- We must boldly and clearly set forth the character of God, as revealed in Holy Scripture, when we address unbelievers.
- In this way we shall honour God each time we speak, whether fruit follows the speaking, or not.

The True Gospel - Sets forth:-

2. The Law of God.

Sometimes the word 'law' is used of the whole revelation of God, (Psalm 1:2, 19:7), but more usually it means the law of God given through Moses.

God showed to Adam how he ought to live, and wrote this law on his heart
Adam broke this law.

But because it is the law of the unchangeable God, it remained in force.

Later God wrote it down in summary form, in the Ten Commandments.

It required exact, perpetual and absolute obedience.

All who do not keep it are denounced with a curse.

- To this was added the ceremonial law - repealed by Christ's death.
The judicial law was made for the nation of Israel until the Christ should come
- and this similarly has been withdrawn.

But God's moral law is still in force. It shows how men ought to live.

No man can get right with God by it, for no man can keep it. Romans 8:3, Galatians 2:16

Yet it is still useful (1 Timothy 1:3):-

- it shows men the nature and holiness of God, and what standards He demands of them. Romans 7:12, James 2:10-12.
- it convinces men of their inability to keep it, and reveals the defilement of their very nature, and lives Romans 3:20, Romans 7:7.
- it humbles and levels men, and acquaints them with their true condition.
Romans 3:9. Romans 3:23.
- it shows them clearly their need of Christ. Galatians 3:21-22, Romans 10:4.
- it is the chief means of bringing sinners to Christ! Galatians 3:24.
- it assures all who do not come to Him that they are inexcusable and under God's curse. Romans 2:12-16. Romans 4:15. Galatians 3:10.
- Whereas for those who come to Christ it is their rule of life by which they seek to please God. Right is still right - grace does not change that. By the law their progress in grace is also measured Romans 7:22. Ephesians 6:1-3. Titus 2:11-14.

It is clear, then, that the Law of God must be plainly set forth.

What happens when the Law of God is NOT set forth?

- the sinner forgets the true nature of God, that He 'loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity'; and also forgets that he is accountable to Him.
- the word 'sin' makes no sense to him.
It is a strange concept, because God's law is foreign to his mind. 1 John 3:4.
- ignorant of the full implications of James 2:10,
many think they can still earn their way into God's favour by what they do.
- others assent to a general statement that they are sinners,
but are still unaware how offensive their conduct is to a holy God.
They only have a vague awareness of their danger.

- sinners do not truly understand their need of Christ, nor does His cross have much meaning to them. They frivolously come to the 'Christ' of their imaginations, to have peace, purpose etc., or to experience a change. They do not helplessly flee to the Christ of the Scriptures, who has borne the curse, and imputes His own righteousness to guilty sinners who cast themselves on Him.
- they are devoid of repentance. They may be sorry for what they have done; but are not broken hearted that they have offended GOD.
- the 'converts' have only the most hazy ideas about holiness, righteousness and godliness...
- while some of them, still ignorant of what the Law's standards are, think they have arrived at 'victory', the 'higher-life' and even 'perfection'!

IN OTHER WORDS - IF THE LAW IS NOT SET FORTH, PERISHING MEN AND WOMEN DO NOT FLEE TO CHRIST; DO NOT FIND HIM; AND DO NOT FOLLOW HIM.

The example of Scripture and history

Jesus set forth the Law,

- His ministry was full of references to it. e.g. Matthew 5:17-18, 22:35-40, Luke 16,16-17, John 4:16-19, Mark 10:19-21.

His apostles set forth the Law,

- In their public preaching they charged the people with specific sins in the light of God's revelation, frequently mentioning righteousness, wickedness, judgment, and repentance, Acts 2:23, 38. 3:14-15, 19, 5:30, 7:51-53, 10:34-43, 13:33-39, 17:29-31, 20:21, 28:23-31.
- In their writings the Law is prominent, Romans is the classic exposition of the Gospel, and the Law is on nearly every page there, In Galatians 3 & 4 a right understanding of justification and the cross of Christ depend on it. Other random passages prove that the exposition of the Law was part and parcel of New Testament preaching - 1 Timothy 1:8-17, 1 John 1:5-2:2, 3:4-9. etc...

The greatest Gospel-preachers set forth the Law.

- The greatest 'fathers'; the Reformers; the leaders in Revival eras.
- "Expound the law truly, to condemn all flesh, and prove all men Sinnerand then set abroad the mercy of our Lord Jesus, and let the wounded consciences drink of the water of life, And thus shall your preaching be with power, and not as the hypocrites, And the Spirit of God shall work with you; and all consciences shall bear record unto you that it is so". (William Tyndale),

Our clear duty

- We must abandon all attempts to make way for the scarlet thread of the Gospel without the sharp needle of the Law.
- We must recognize one who is unfaithful in setting forth the Law is also unfaithful in setting forth the Gospel, and must behave towards them accordingly, Galatians 1:6-10.
- We must return, not to the legal preaching of the Gospel, but to the evangelical preaching of the Law and Gospel.

The True Gospel - Sets forth:-

3. The Son of God.

Having shown clearly Who God is, and that men and women are estranged from Him, the Gospel then sets forth the Son of God as their only Hope. The main points which Scripture emphasizes are these (please check from the Acts sermons, and the epistles):-

1. His Person.

- He is the eternal Son of God, of one substance and equal with the Father. John 1:1, 14. John 10:30. Philippians 2:6.
- In the fullness of time He became man, with a true body and a reasonable soul. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost in Mary's womb, and born of her; and was without sin. Galatians 4:4. Hebrews 4:15. Hebrews 7:26.
- And so He was, and continues to be, God and man, in two distinct natures, yet one Person, for ever. Romans 9:5, Colossians 2:9, Hebrews 7:24-25.

2. His humiliation.

The main points of His earthly life are covered.

It is emphasized that for our sakes He emptied Himself of His glory, and took upon Himself the form of a servant.

- He was born of a woman, and subjected Himself to the Law, which He perfectly fulfilled, although He received every temptation. Galatians 4:4, Romans 5:19, Hebrews 2:17-18, Hebrews 4:15.
- Bearing God's wrath, He then laid down His life as an offering for sin, enduring the painful, shameful and cursed death of the cross. Philippians 2:8, Hebrews 12:2, Galatians 3:13.
- He was then buried, and continued under the power of death until the third day. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. Romans 6:9.

3. His exaltation

It is never forgotten that He is LORD.

He is not a weak figure to be patronized; but an Almighty Sovereign to Whom supplication is to be made.

- He did not see the corruption of death. It was impossible for death to hold Him. He rose again, by which act He declared Himself to be the Son of God, and the Lord of the living and the dead. Acts 2:24-27. Romans 1:4. Romans 14:9.
- He presented Himself alive, and then, as a Man, visibly ascended into the highest heavens, where He is at the right hand of God. He has authority over all things in heaven and earth; and is interceding for His people. Acts 2:28. Ephesians 1:22. 1 Peter 3:22. Romans 8:34. Hebrews 9:12, 24.
- Although unjustly judged and condemned by wicked men, He shall come again, gloriously, at the last day, to judge the world in righteousness. Acts 3:14-15. 1 Thessalonians 4:16. Acts 17:31.

His offices.

Because He is Who He is, and because He has done what He has done, He is then set forth to the sinner as:-

Prophet

- Only by HIM is there any true knowledge of God. John 1:18, 12:45, 14:9, 1 Timothy 2:5. Hebrews 1:3.
- In Christ, God may be KNOWN.

Priest.

- He has made an acceptable sacrifice for sins, by which sinners are reconciled, and justified. Hebrews 2:17. 2 Corinthians 5:19-21. Romans 1:17. Romans 5:1.
- He ever lives to make intercession for those who come to God by Him. Hebrews 7:25. Romans 8:34.
- Through Christ, God may be APPROACHED.

King.

- Those whom He calls to salvation, He rules, protects and supports, working all things for their good; and takes vengeance on the rest, who do not obey God or His Gospel. 1 Corinthians 15:25. Romans 8:28. Ephesians 1:22-23. 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9.
- Because of Christ, God may be FEARED:-
 - gladly by His people.
 - sadly by all others.

What happens if the Son of God is NOT set forth?

- THIS Christ is the ONLY One by Whom we can be saved. John 14:6. Acts 4:12. 1 Timothy 2:5.
- If HE is not set forth, men call on the 'Christ' of their imaginations - who does not exist. Their vocabulary may be orthodox, and their claims may be plausible; but they still have not come to the Christ Whom GOD has set forth as a Prince and a saviour.
- What this means is this - IF THE SON OF GOD IS NOT SET FORTH SCRIPTURALLY, MEN PERISH IN THEIR SINS.

Our clear duty.

- We have to choose between the mutilated 'Gospel' of much modern evangelism, which appears to have results; and the revealed Gospel of GOD - which gives thorough teaching concerning our Lord Jesus Christ; and which is not so readily heard.
- Love for God; compassion for the lost; and loyalty to our own consciences; - these demand that we be TRUE to the Scriptural Evangel, and that we set forth the Son of God as He is presented in God's Word.

The True Gospel - Sets forth:-

4. Repentance toward God.

- We have seen that the Gospel is a definite message entrusted to our care by God Himself and that it sets forth God's attributes, God's Law and God's Son.
- Tonight we see that it also commands men and women to repent and believe. "Repent" has no meaning unless the Law has been set forth. "Believe" has no meaning unless the Son of God has been set forth.

Notice the place which Scripture gives to repentance.

- John prepared for Jesus by stressing repentance. Mark 1:4. Luke 1:76. Luke 3:3, 8, Acts 13:24. This was because repentance was the ONE thing necessary if people were to be ready to receive Christ.
- Throughout His ministry Jesus stressed repentance.
 - At the beginning Mark 1:14-15
 - As He continued Mark 6:12, Luke 13:1-5., 14:33.
 - See also Matthew 6:24, Mark 10:21, Luke 19:8, John 4:17-18.
 - At the end Luke 24:45-48 (!)
- The Apostles stressed repentance.
 - Jews Acts 2:38, 3:19.
 - To Gentiles Acts 17:30.
 - It was a dominant note in their message Acts 20:21, 26:20. Hebrews 6:1.

2. Notice what repentance IS.

It is NOT:-

- confession of sin alone. Proverbs 28:13.
- remorse. A person may be sorry for his sins because of their consequences, but not because God is offended. Judas and Esau had that sort of sorrow (Matthew 27:3-5, Hebrews 12:17); but such sorrow works death, not life, and is not to be confused with repentance (2 Corinthians 7:9-10).

It IS:-

- an overwhelming change of mind; thought; attitude; outlook; direction. The Greek word has this strong meaning. A repentant person just does not think the same way anymore.
- a heart-stricken grief for sin. Job 42:5-6, Psalm 51. Luke 22:62. A repentant person hates what God hates; so he hates his own sin.
- a turning from sin to God. Acts 3:19. Acts 26:20.
- That is why Scripture often uses the word 'turn' instead of 'repent'. Acts 14:15. Acts 26:18. 1 Thessalonians 1:9. A repentant person determines to finish with sin; and to please God.

3. Notice what goes hand-in-hand with repentance.

Remission of sins.

- It is made clear that there is NO salvation without repentance. Luke 13:1-5, 24:47, Acts 2:38-39, 3:19, 5:31, 11:18, 26:18. 2 Corinthians 7:10.

Faith.

True repentance cannot, and does not, exist in a vacuum.

Repentance and faith always go together. You can't have one without the other

- Faith looks to Christ for salvation.
But why should it want to be saved? Because it wants to finish with sin.
This is repentance!
- Repentance is turning from sin. But where is it going to turn? To Christ! This is faith!

Now see Mark 1:15, Acts 20:21, and compare :- Acts 3:19. with 4:4,
Acts 10:43 with 11:18
Acts 17:30 with 17:34
Acts 26:18 with 26:20

"Believe" means "repentantly believe".

"Repent" means "believingly repent".

In apostolic thinking, one term includes the other.

What happens if repentance is not set forth?

- Then a false 'gospel' has been set forth. See Galatians 1:8-12.
- Converts are as worldly after their 'decisions' before.
- Such unrepentant (and, therefore, unsaved) people are nonetheless assured that they are true Christians, but that they are no different in their lives because they are "carnal Christians" (who are said to have received Christ as Saviour, but not as Lord!). They are then urged to seek 'victory' etc., or even the 'Spirit-filled life'
 - Spiritual immaturity is a fact - but someone who is devoid of Biblical repentance is NOT a Christian, and should be told so. See Romans 8:6-14.
 - The 'carnal Christian' heresy means that countless thousands of unrepentant people genuinely believe themselves to be saved, although continuing in their old ways, and still loving their sins. They have been given a false assurance. The inventors and propagators of this wicked doctrine will have a lot to answer for at the Judgment.

Our clear duty.

- We must abandon all non-Scriptural terminology when we set forth the Gospel ('receive Christ as your own personal Saviour', 'committed'; 'open your heart'; 'turned on' etc..).
- We must, in Christ's Name, call upon men and women to repent and believe the Gospel, assuring them that otherwise they will perish. We must solemnly teach them that if they do not turn their back on their sin, and turn to Christ - God will turn His back upon them.

The Gospel - True Does NOT:-

1. Give false assurance

Modern evangelism teaches

- what it calls "the eternal security of the believer".
- that if you have made a 'decision' for Christ ('invited Him into your heart' etc.), you are safe for time and eternity.

God's Word teaches

- a solemn doctrine, which in history has been called "the final perseverance of the saints"
- that if you profess to be a believer you must prove the truth of your claim by making constant progress (persevering to the end) in holiness and godliness.
- true believers do persevere.
- those who don't persevere are NOT true believers.
- those who don't persevere are LOST.
- In other words - God's Word declares that you may only be SURE that you are a true believer as long as you are making spiritual progress.

1. Jesus did not give false assurance.

- He consistently taught that **UNLESS A PROFESSED BELIEVER IS PERSEVERING HE HAS NO GROUNDS TO BE; SURE OF HIS ETERNAL SALVATION.**

Matthew 7:20-29.

- Here He warned that a professed believer may work miracles, and expect to be received at the last day - but unless he is doing the Father's will (21), and obeying Christ's sayings (24), his hope is groundless.

Luke 8,5-15.

- The only genuine believers are where the seed falls on good ground. These are those who hear the Word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

John 8,30-31.

- Here some Jews become professing believers; but later on (44-45) Jesus makes it clear that they are the Devil's children. He will own no-one as His disciple unless he goes on and on progressively. (31).

John 15:1-8

- Jesus acknowledges no-one as a believer unless he constantly bears fruit (2, 4-5, 8). If a professed believer does NOT bear fruit, it is because he is not truly joined to the Vine. Such people are clearly lost (2,6).
- We repeat, Jesus again and again warned that **UNLESS A PROFESSED BELIEVER IS PERSEVERING, HE HAS NO GROUNDS TO BE SURE OF HIS ETERNAL SALVATION.**

2. The apostles did not give false assurance.

2 Peter 2:20-22. This shows that if professing believers return to their former ways, it is because they have no change of nature.

They cannot hold out any hope of being saved.

Hebrews 3:6, 14. 4:11. Hebrews 5:9, & 6:4-8, Hebrews 10:26-27, 35-39. Hebrews 12:14-17. Which we have expounded these at length on Sunday mornings.

They teach clearly:- No perseverance = No salvation.

1 John 1:6-7, 1 John 2:4-5, 9-10, 15, 29. 1 John 3:6,14. 1 John 4:5-8,12-13. 1 John 5:1, 18 John's whole purpose is to lead believers into an assurance of salvation (1 John 5:13). But he stresses in his epistle that no unholy person can have any certainty that he is a child of God, and eternally saved.

Romans 8:13. Galatians 4:11. 5:19-26. Ephesians 4:17-21. Philippians 1:6, 1 Thessalonians 3:5-8. 4:7-8. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15 also stress the same truth

**UNLESS A PROFESSED BELIEVER IS PERSEVERING,
HE HAS NO GROUNDS TO BE SURE OF HIS ETERNAL SALVATION.**

What happens if false assurance is given?

- People who are unregenerate genuinely believe themselves to be saved.
- Many professed believers think that because they are "eternally secure", and so cannot be lost, then they can live exactly as they please. In this way great shame is brought on the Gospel.
 - All who do not walk well are labelled "backsliders" :-
 - who are told that they will never be 'happy' as they are.
 - but who are still assured that they are "eternally secure"
 - Whereas what they **SHOULD** be told is
THAT IF THEY STAY AS THEY ARE, THEY WILL BE LOST!
- (We do not doubt that believers backslide - but backsliding in Scripture is exceptional, never normal. It is a temporary condition, eventually repented of, never a settled state in which a true believer is content to remain permanently.
- The overall trend in a true believer is fruit-bearing, holiness, godliness, **PERSEVERANCE!**)

Our clear duty.

- We must not think that we are exempt from falling-away. 1 Corinthians 9:27, 10:12.
- We must take steps to ensure that we persevere, counting on the help of God. Philippians 1:12-13. 2 Peter 1:10.
This means using diligently the means of grace. Acts 2:42.
- We must warn professed believers who continue willingly in some sin - to repent of it - for to continue in it will mean being **LOST!** (See Acts 8:20-24).

THE TRUE GOSPEL Does NOT:-

2. Give "appeals".

We are not discussing whether it is right to invite sinners to Christ that is beyond dispute :-

- It is of the whole essence of Biblical Christianity to apply the Gospel to the consciences of those who hear it, and to demand a response.
- See the previous talk on repentance.
- See such references as Matthew 11:28. Acts 16:31. 17:30 etc. etc.

But much modern evangelism goes further than this:-

- At the end of its preaching it invites those who wish to come to Christ to come to the front / come to an after-meeting / raise a hand etc.
- This is called variously 'the appeal', 'the invitation', 'the altar-call', 'the anxious seat' or 'an act of commitment to Christ'.
- It is often thought that an evangelistic meeting is lacking or defective without such an appeal'.
- Many reasons are given to support the practice :-
 - It is said that Christ always called people publicly, and such texts as Mark 1:16-20, Luke 19:5-6, and Matthew 10:32 are quoted.
 - It is said that people are less likely to go back on a 'public' decision.
 - It is said that the appeal helps those who see it to consider the message more seriously, and to consider 'deciding for Christ' themselves.

"Appeals" are contrary to God's Word.

- When Jesus called people to Himself, He primarily meant them to repent and believe - spiritual movement. (Think of Levi, Zaccheus etc.). Because He was on earth in a body, physical movement was also involved. But now Christ is ascended. Nobody is physically nearer to Him than anyone else, (the front of the hall is no nearer to Him than the seats!). No command to move physically remains. But a command to spiritual movement remains - see Acts 2:38, 17:30, 20:21, Luke 24:45-48.
- Christ's call is for people to believe on Him, THEN confess Him, constantly! Matthew 10:32, 28:18-20. Appeals give the impression that people are to confess Him BEFORE or DURING conversion. They reverse Christ's command of Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38 etc..
- Appeals are always urgent, and speak as if coming to the FRONT was coming to CHRIST (You ought to come to Christ... You need Christ, you get up and come"). The Acts are SILENT on any link between physical and spiritual movement - because there is NO connection! Where Scripture is silent, WE DARE NOT ADD.
- Appeals rest on the conviction that a man acts first; THEN he is born-again. So they try and get the man to act, so that he can be born-again. But Scripture teaches that the New Birth comes BEFORE faith and a man's action; and that this New Birth comes about through the WORD. John 1:12-13, 3:3, 1 Corinthians 2:14, 1 Peter 1:23-25.

Evangelism should not be putting pressure on a man to ACT - but ensuring that he understands the WORD, which will then do its own work,.

What happens when "appeals" are given?

- There is confusion. Those who do NOT go forward are left with the impression that they have rebelled against God, and that they are further away from Him than before.
- Those who DO go forward think that that act is pleasing to God and are thus misled. Many of them think they have 'done something' which puts them in His favour. Others overlook that God 'looks on the HEART'.
- All who go forward are treated as if they were sincere enquirers, and most are led in a 'prayer of invitation' and are told that by praying it they are certainly saved. In this way millions have been led into false assurance (see last week. Also an interest in Christ is not necessarily a saving interest - of rich young ruler, Galilean crowds etc.).
- A whole unscriptural way of thinking springs up. Scripture says that continuing fruit is the outward sign of conversion. Most modern evangelicals regard the outward profession as the sign of conversion; and often talk about all who respond to an appeal as 'converts').
- Countless throngs of unregenerate people have gone out in appeals. They say that they have 'tried Christianity, but it didn't work'. Their ears are for ever afterwards closed to the Gospel, which they regard as a delusion; and great shame is brought on the Word of God.
- Campaigns using appeals seem successful. By contrast, the churches look weak. Confidence in the local church is undermined (see how hard folk work for crusades; but how little they work in the local church!) Sometimes churches are urged to adopt 'appeals', and exposition and spirituality decrease. Thousands of Christians (wrongly) consider their unconverted friends are 'more likely' to be converted in a campaign than through THE ORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.
- Because of 'appeals' and their apparent results, four generations have considered that RESULTS are the sign that God is at work, whereas TRUTH is the sign. Consequently results have become more important than truth!!! Today's church has largely abandoned Biblical principles, and does a thing 'because it works'.
- Besides all this, appeals are DOWNRIGHT DECEITFUL.
- If there is NO connection between going to the front and TRULY going to Christ (as all admit, if pressed), WHY STILL CONVEY THE IMPRESSION THAT THERE IS???
- If lots of people are NOT being converted, although they APPEAR to be, WHY CONTINUE; WITH A SYSTEM WHICH GIVES SUCH A WRONG IMPRESSION???

Our clear duty.

- NOT to suggest to a sinner anything that the Word of God does not suggest.
- TO set forth the Biblical Gospel (as outlined in previous weeks) to every creature.
- TO apply it to those who hear - specifically, prayerfully, with authority, and with urgency.
- TO trust the Holy Spirit. As we present TRUTH - souls will be saved. ALL that is necessary for true reaping is TRUE SOWING (see the parable of the Sower). Nothing else.