

The Evangel

by James A. Stewart

James A. Stewart emphasizes the critical role of the Evangelist in proclaiming the Gospel, inviting sinners to repentance, and the necessity of belief in Christ's historical work for salvation.

Duration: 29:11

Scripture: Isaiah 1:18, Matthew 6:33, Mark 16:16, 2 Corinthians 5:20, 2 Thessalonians 1:8

Topics: "Good News"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares the story of John Newton, who experienced a life-threatening storm at sea. In the midst of the danger, Newton realized his guilt as a sinner before a holy God and cried out for mercy. The preacher then transitions to discussing the role of an evangelist and the importance of their ministry. He emphasizes the need for evangelists to proclaim both the warning and wooing aspects of the gospel, reminding sinners of the judgment of God and the need for salvation through Jesus Christ.

Transcript

I'm just under a little disadvantage because I'm trying to pack in the two lectures in one, and that's awfully hard for you to digest, but I'll do my best. For the sake of the radio audience, we like to say that in our first lecture, we spoke on the Evangelist, his office, and his ministry. And then yesterday evening or afternoon, we spoke on the Evangel, or the Evangelistic message, the Gospel message, because the Evangelist takes his title from the message he is authorized to proclaim.

And we took up the different titles of the Gospel in order to see what are the contents of the message. We started from the Gospel of God, and we will write through the various titles, the Gospel of God, the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, right through to, we came naturally and logically to the last title, my Gospel. I have embraced it.

It's God's Gospel, now it is my Gospel. Christ is my Savior, and I have an investment in the evangelization of a lost and dying world through partnership with the Holy Ghost. We spoke a little this morning to the preacher boys on the curse of modernism in the Protestant churches and in the evangelistic field.

That is the curse of fundamentalist, or better still, evangelicals trying to compromise this modernism in evangelism. And we gave the experience of our own land of Scotland. Some folks might have thought I ought to have brought my bagpipes along since we're talking so much about Scotland, but I can only talk from my personal knowledge.

And we showed the preacher boys today the curse of compromising with the modernists in evangelistic work, and how modernism has cursed my land of Scotland, where 80 years ago it was the garden of the Lord, where almost everybody was saved, where every pulpit not only preached the old Gospel, but expounded the Bible, it was deep spiritual truth. And then the liberalism came from the high universities of Germany and permeated our theological summaries, and today Scotland is one of the most pitiful Protestant lands on the face of God's earth. All because, not of communism, but because of modernism.

Now, we ran right in yesterday afternoon into a third lecture, and that is continuing on the contents of the evangel, the Gospel message. And I mentioned how that it was necessary in order to preach a rite, to comprehend a rite. And the evangelist must know his message.

When my dear friend, President Benesch, the president of Czechoslovakia, was drawing up a message, drafting up a sort of a constitution, he said to his ambassador, he said, I'm sorry, but Reverend Stewart and you will have to redraft this, because I must know the contents of my message. And it's very necessary for us to be able to draft over again, as it were, by the Holy Ghost, in the words of God, the contents of a Gospel message. Now, we mentioned, beginning our third lecture, that the Gospel was, first of all, a proclamation.

And then we began to say it was an invitation and then a command. May I go back to this once again? First of all, the Gospel is a proclamation. The evangelist is a herald.

He must blow the trumpet, he must announce certain facts, because the Gospel message is based upon certain historical facts about the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we must preach all the historical facts and truths that gather around the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, if we do not announce and herald forth these historical facts of our glorious Redeemer, we are not evangelizing.

We are not proclaiming the Gospel. Now, I want to go on this morning concerning the proclamation. The proclamation is that there is full and free salvation to every repentant sinner through the work of the Son of God on the cross of Calvary.

Hence, we must expound clearly the doctrine of the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of our great Redeemer. May I say emphatically and dogmatically that nobody can be saved. Nobody can be born again who does not believe these historical facts of the person of our Redeemer.

Evangelical preachers today declare that, well, it is not necessary to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died a substitutionary death on the cross of Calvary. It's enough just to believe that Christ died. A good man, a master for a good cause, that's a lie.

That is from the text. You see, that's a false message. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15, Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture.

And before the guilty sinner can be saved, he must believe in the record that God has given of his Son. That is God's plan of salvation. That God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.

And so every true-born, new-born soul can sing with William Newell, all the love that drew salvation's plan, all the grace that brought it down to man, all the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary. And then the gospel is not only a proclamation, it is an invitation. The Spirit of the bride say come, and let him that heareth say come, and let him as the first come, and whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely.

Revelation 22, 17. The evangelist is an ambassador who not only delivers the King's message, but also earnestly and sincerely invites the sinner to come to Christ. Now the gospel message, listen carefully, now the gospel message presupposes man's guilt and his need of a savior.

Otherwise the proclamation would not be glad tidings of great joy. As we mentioned to the preachers yesterday afternoon, we can say or repeat Luke 2, 10 this way. Behold, I evangelize you with great joy.

And the gospel is not good news to the sinner, until he knows he's lost and he's a damsel in the sight of a holy God. As Dr. Jones, Sr. has often said in his evangelistic campaigns, a sinner will never desire to be saved until he knows he is lost. And our blessed Redeemer said it this way.

I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are saints. And it is only those who are faith and burdened with sins who appreciate the invitation.

So the Savior's invitation is, come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11, 28. We must be careful then in our invitations not to offer peace and rest to those who are not ready to meet the conditions laid down by the Prince of Peace.

In my studies, I've discovered that the finest illustration of this truth is brought out by my old friend, John Bunyan, the Puritan evangelist. In his holy book, The Holy War, concerning the siege of Mansoul. As you know, the town of Mansoul depicts the individual soul of man.

And this soul is being besieged by the evangelistic efforts of the Lord's people. Born-argees and his captains are calling on the town to surrender. In the name of their king, El Shaddai, if they will lay down their arms and surrender to the king, no harm will come to them, all will be well.

These attacks from the captains were making things so hot for the town of Mansoul. But the leaders decided on a truce with born-argees and his captains. But what will be well was the spokesman for the city.

And he approached the captains of the Lord's army with these words. We will accept your invitation to surrender to your king upon the following conditions. First, that none of those who now serve the town under the great giant Diabolus will be put out of town, or that their freedom will be taken away from them.

Second, that the citizens of Mansoul shall be allowed to carry on all their pleasures and enjoyment which they had enjoyed under their king Diabolus. Third, that no new law officer or executioner of law shall have any power over them without their choice or consent. We may be sure that such terms as presented by Lord Willbewill were categorically rejected by born-argees and his captains.

Now, the lesson here taught by this old Puritan evangelist is simply this, that the sole winner must be careful not to offer reconciliation and rest to those who wish to continue in defiance of God's way of holiness. But to all those who feel the need of a savior, the invitation is, come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.

Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool, Isaiah 118. Now, the gospel is also a command. God now commanded, a few days ago, we're up in Mars Hill again with Paul, and we love to think of him standing there looking around all the idolatry of the Greek philosophers, crying out, God now commanded all men everywhere to repent because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in

righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he has given assurance unto all men in that he raised them from the dead, Acts 17, 30, 31.

Now, this is necessary for young preachers to know. The announcement of the historic facts of the gospel, of the person and work of Christ, carries with it a far-reaching implication to the sinner. It's not as if he's just sitting in a political meeting.

He's sitting in an evangelistic meeting, and it's a matter of life and death, heaven and hell. The sinner is required to hearken and to respond to the message or perish. Embedded in the word evangelism is the thought of taking back the message, you see, or is the thought of the messenger waiting, first of all, to know what answer to take back to him who sent him? That is the thought behind the word evangelism.

Now, the gospel cannot be ignored. The true evangelist must demand an answer. He cries out like Moses, I call heaven and earth to record this day against you.

I have set before you life and blessing, yes, I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore choose you. Deuteronomy 13, 19. The messenger of God must not be content to preach a delightful sermon.

He must not prophesy smooth things. He must breathlessly, he must breathlessly await God's answer or the answer to God's ultimatum. William Guthrie, in his book, *The Christian's Great Interest*, written 300 years ago, has a classic paragraph on this subject.

The great God of heaven and earth has sovereignly commanded all who see their need of relief to betake themselves unto Christ Jesus and to cordially close with God's device of saving sinners by him, laying aside all objections and excuses as they shall be answerable unto him in the day when he shall judge the quick and the dead. The true evangelist will never forget to sound out the warning notes of the gospel as well as the wooing notes of the gospel. He will tell the sinner of the vengeance of God which awaits those who obey not the gospel.

Second Thessalonians 1a. He must not apologize in any way for the severity of God's judgment upon those who reject his son. Two preachers were candidating, if we can use that colloquial term, for a pulpit in Northern Ireland, the dear Presbyterian pulpit.

The young fellow in the morning, he said, just fresh out of Seminary, he said, friends, my beloved friends, my text this morning is Mark 16, 16. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. And he that believeth not, excuse me, and he that believeth not, and he that believeth not, and he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not, and he that believeth not, well, excuse me, beg your pardon, shall go to a place that I dare not mention.

And so, to the astonishment of the parishioners in the evening, the other candidate, an older brother, a hallelujah-shouting fellow, he said, friends, my text for this evening is Mark 16, 16. And he kept reiterating it this way. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned, and I beg no pardon.

Now, the gospel preacher must beg no pardon. He must faithfully deliver his soul so that he can say like Paul, I am pure from the blood of all men. I have no blood spots upon my hands.

Now, the gospel is a command to repent. God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. They are those who would be saved from the consequences of their sins in our meetings, who do not want to be saved from the love of it.

Never forget that. Mr. Spurgeon warned his students thus. If the professed convert distinctively and deliberately declares that he knows the Lord's will, but does not intend, but does not mean to attend to it, you're not to pamper his presumption, but it is your duty to assure him that he is not saved.

Do you imagine that God is magnified or the gospel glorified by going to the worldlings and telling them that they will be saved at this moment by simply accepting Christ as their savior while they are wedded to their idols and their hearts are still in love with sin? If I do so, I tell them a lie. I pervert the gospel. I insult Christ and I turn the grace of God into lasciviousness.

Now, the gospel does not make light of sin. That's why it's a command. It does not make light of sin.

It reveals to us the terrible sword of God's justice when he smote his beloved son in order to deliver us from the penalty and slavery of sin. And Calvary supplies the most solemn and awe-inspiring spectacle of God's hatred of sin that time or eternity can ever furnish or reveal. And as you already know, the meaning of the word repentance is a change of mind, but oh, what a change of mind.

Satan has blinded the minds of the unregenerate and only the light of the gospel can dispel that darkness. So repentance is a change of mind about God, Christ, which results in a change of attitude and action. We see this illustrated in the story of the prodigal son.

We are told that he came to himself. That is to say, he'd been out of his mind. He was an imbecile.

He'd been a fool all the while. He was living in disobedience in the far country. Now, this change of thought led him to a change of action.

His repentance would have been spurious if he had remained in the far country. Repentance means leaving the harlots and the companions in the far country and returning home. As David said in Psalm 119, 59, I fought on my way and I turned my feet unto thy testimony.

Three things happen when the sinner is brought to Jesus Christ and him crucified, and these three things are essentially and inseparably connected. First, the sinner is brought into the contact with the holiness of God and repents. Second, the sinner is brought into the contact with the love of God and believes.

Third, the sinner is brought into contact with the power of God and is thus regenerated. John Newton possibly is one of the greatest trophies of saving grace the Church of Jesus Christ has ever known. As I have stood where he preached the glorious gospel, and by the way, he was an Episcopal minister of the Church of England.

As I have stood where he preached in London before his church was born, I have always marveled at the grace that sought him and brought him to the fold. His gospel hymn tells of this experience. For instance, the one we all love, amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost, but now I'm found. I was blind, but now I see. John Newton's conversion is a true illustration of the three above-mentioned things.

When he was only seven years old, his pious mother was taken from him. However, she had taught him when just an infant to pray and had sowed in his young heart the seeds of the gospel. When a young man, he went aboard to serve in a slave ship.

He was reduced to utter poverty, starving and sinning and blaspheming. He was indeed the prodigal son, wasted his substance in riotous living. Thus he hurried on in sin, as he himself in one of his hymns describes it.

In evil long, I took delight, anode by shame or fear. One day he found the gospel of John on board, and he took it up and read it. He was thus led to ask the question, what if these things should be true? The thought terrified him, and he closed the book.

He had now a sight of the holiness of God. He went to his hammock that night as usual, having contrived to put the solemn question away from him. However, in the dark of the night, he was awakened by the dash of waves.

A storm had arisen, a terrible sea was sweeping over the vessel, and the cabin was fast filling with water. The cry arose, the ship is sinking, the ship is sinking. All was confusion and terror.

John Newton's past life come up before him as on a cinerama screen. He saw himself a guilty sinner before a holy God. For four solid months, or four solid weeks rather, the vessel was tossed to and fro, he being sometimes at the helm and sometimes at the pump, wave upon wave breaking over him.

In the midst of his danger, he cried, my mother's God, oh, my mother's God, have mercy on me, have mercy on me. That storm was to John Newton, what the earthquake was to the jailer at Philippi. It got him on his knees.

It brought his sins before him. It brought him before him his eternal ruin. It brought him to the cross, where he saw the love of God being poured out in the blood of Jesus Christ.

The hymn from which we've already quoted the first two lines goes on to tell his experience. In evil long I took delight, anod by shame or fear, till a new object met my sight and stopped my wild career. The new object which met his eye as he stood at the helm and walked the day, with the waves dashing over him, was the crucified Christ.

The cross and the Son of God there, bearing his sins, stood out before him in the brightness of divine love. For thus he sings, I saw one hanging on the tree in agony and blood. He fixed his line with eyes and made as near his cross I stood.

As it was with Simon Peter when the Lord turned and looked upon him, so it was with John Newton. In both cases, the look of love it was melted the sinner down. Sure, sure, never till my latest breath can I forget that look.

It seemed to charge me with his death, though not a word he spoke. That look of love, holy love, went through and through his conscience, making him feel his sin in all its vileness. Sin which had hitherto been treated by him as a mere trifle or being altogether overlooked, now presented itself in all its terror.

He was doomed, he was lost. What should he do? My conscience felt and owned the guilt and plunged me in despair. I saw my sins, his blood had spilled, and helped to nail him there.

He's overwhelmed, he's in despair. As he sees how his sins has nailed the Lord Jesus of Calvary, but as he looks, he sees something more in that look, and he hears that voice of pardon coming from the cross. A second look he gave, which said, I freely all forgive.

This blood is for thy ransom paid. I die that thou mayst live. And the second look he read, forgive me.

I have found a ransom is the message which removed his terror. That ransom suffices. God looks at it and is satisfied.

He said it is enough. The sinner looks at it and is satisfied. He says it is enough.

John Newton's repentance. Notice these young preachers about repentance. What brings repentance? It's a look at Calvary.

John Newton's repentance came through a sight of the precious love of God as displayed at Calvary. Thus, while his death my sins display, in all its blackish hue, such is the mystery of grace, it seals my pardon too. That holy pardon had made John Newton a holy man.

The slave trader, the drunken blaspheming sailor broke from his sins, and at the foot of the cross he found deliverance. His life of holiness and aspirations after God showed how his repentance was genuine. Here was demonstrated the power of God in regeneration.

And so he says in his hymn Amazing Grace, "'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved. How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed." Now, just to go in for two or three minutes before we close on the documentary sources of the evangel. The documentary sources of evangel just to hurry up and close suddenly.

As we continue our studies on the all-important theme of evangelism, we come to the documentary sources of our evangel. Now, we have two sources from which we may draw on the New Testament in our search for the contents of the gospel message. One, of course, is the Acts.

Not Exodus, Acts, A-C-T-S, the Acts, where we find the gospel defined. And the other is the Epistle of Romans where we find, rather, in the book of Acts, we find the gospel in action. And then the other is the Book of Romans where we find the gospel defined.

Now, the Acts which we call the Acts of the Holy Ghost through the apostles, we have an account approximately of 53 years of ahistoric evangelism. And although the Spirit has only given us a thumbnail sketch of their gospel sermons, we are not left in any doubt as to the message these apostles proclaim. And so, we notice, first of all, that the apostles in their messages emphasize the resurrection of Christ.

Now, that's easy to understand, isn't it? Because the hearers knew all about the death of Christ. Some were actually there when the crucifixion took place. Some of their hands were stained with the blood of Emmanuel.

However, these people did not believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, that that poor man, helpless man who hung in that Roman gibbet was the Messiah, the King of Israel. You see, they did not see him as the Lord and King. They were like the little boy in a London hospital who was told that the King was going to make an informal visit to the children's hospital that day and that they should all await breathlessly his coming.

How eagerly they all waited. How expecting was our little fellow all afternoon. About four o'clock, a party of people came and a little boy sighed with relief and said, oh, he must be among this party.

One of the gentlemen was ever so kind as he came and patted the little boy's head and spoke pleasantly to him. Then the group disappeared, but the King had him calm. When it was time for the little ones to settle down to sleep, our little friend was so bitterly disappointed.

But sister, he said, the King hasn't come. Ah, but funny, she answered. Don't you remember that kind man who was ever so nice to you and patted you on the head? Yes.

Well, that was he. The small boy's eyes opened wide with wonder. The small bro puckered in bewilderment.

But sister, he hadn't his crown on. It was exactly like that with these Jews. They could not believe that Jesus of Nazareth was God's appointed Messiah and Redeemer.

You see, he hadn't his crown on. And that is why it was necessary to emphasize the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us bow and pray.

Our gracious God and loving Heavenly Father, we want to shout aloud today, saying hallelujah, what a Savior. We thank thee for thy glorious plan of redemption, and we thank thee for giving us this opportunity to preach the gospel to every creature. Bless us mightily today for Christ saved us.

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