

Preach the Biblical Gospel, accept no substitutes! (Part One)

I. Let us show discernment—for the biblical gospel is being replaced by a modern gospel that can't save.

A. **The church today is afflicted by a gospel of “easy believism.”** The words of Welsh pastor Howell Harris are even more true today than they were 200 years ago. *Churches are filled with folks who have a détente with sin; they are at ease under its dominion. They won't study the fruits of faith or make their election and calling sure; but turn the grace of God into licentiousness* (Edward Morgan, *The Life and Times of Howell Harris*, Need of the Times Publishers, 1998 rp, p. 71).

B. **We have forgotten the necessity of deep conviction of sin.**

1. God's grace is free, but its bestowal has conditions which are set by the Holy Spirit; the Spirit prepares the sinner for grace by means of conviction (Jn 16:13). The burden of sin and wrath on the conscience is a function of divine grace BECAUSE Christ's merit is only known to the poor soul in deep distress. ***Small conviction of sin will yield only slight views of Christ's blood and merits.***

2. There is a necessary ‘desperate-ness’ which must accompany true conviction of sin. It is only the destitute sinner who falls at the feet of Christ. Only those who been smitten with the *death wound* of damnation flee to the Savior, only those stripped of all self righteousness cry to Christ for mercy.

3. The unsaved ‘religious’ man has yet to receive a death blow from the law of God. He has never been thoroughly slain by the law. If he had been he would be *dead to the law* as a source of life and would understand that he must find spiritual life in Another, in Christ (Gal 2:19).

As a consequence of being yet alive to the law, the idol of self is set up in the heart against Christ in His offices. The false professor feels that he is a good Christian before he is thoroughly condemned by the law. Only when the law slays him will he be made to feel his utter need of faith in order to lay hold of Christ's imputed righteousness (Edward Morgan, *Life and Times, Howell Harris* , p. 74).

4. Only the Spirit's convicting power can slay self-help. The leprous doctrine of free will is destroyed in the heart of one who has had any spiritual dealing with Christ; for Christ is the One who in the exercise of His sovereignty applies His merits to the sinner (He reveals the Father, Matt 11:27 -- He is ‘the Mediator of a better covenant’ – Heb 8:6).

5. Says Howell, Nature can't stand being stripped of all righteousness. Nature would

rather despair; would rather choose Judas' noose than go to Christ on His terms. "Be merciful to me the sinner" is the hardest prayer in the world. To confess Christ from the heart is above the power of flesh and blood. So much profession of salvation today is merely an accommodation, a *lowering of the market* to what the flesh is capable of; namely a form of religion in which men have never parted with self-righteousness. As a result, carnal professors are strangers to the blood of Christ (Ibid., pp. 24-25).

C. The unregenerate person lies in a deep spiritual slumber of apathy. All his false hopes must be dashed; or he will never flee to Christ.

1. False professors are more naked, wretched, and poor than they can possibly imagine. They have never seen their own moral bankruptcy and spiritual ruin. They seem ignorant of the fact that God only pities, forgives, and receives those who are *poor in spirit, self-condemned, and broken-hearted*, (no man apart from the Spirit's work can *prepare* himself in this way; it is the Spirit's convicting work to harrow the heart until it is 'mortally wounded').

No one ever came to liberty without feeling himself in bondage. No man ever believed without discovering through an evil heart of unbelief that believing is the hardest thing in the world. No one ever took up the cross in self-denial without perceiving hell, darkness, and wrath pursuing him until fleeing to Christ as his only refuge (Ibid., pp. 257-258).

2. God's way is radically different from the "auto-soterism" inherent in modern evangelistic methods. God comes down and confounds the language of Babel; He scatters every stick and stone and pile of mortar. He does not leave one stone upon another. He is a jealous God, and will have no partner in the way of salvation (J. C. Philpot, *What is it that saves a soul?* Chapel Library, p. 13).
3. When the quickening power of God's Spirit has passed upon a man's conscience, he is invariably brought to see himself to be morally and spiritually bankrupt. This inward sight of self cuts him off sooner or later from legal hopes. In many cases the work may begin in a way scarcely perceptible – but be sure of this, that the Lord will "bring down the hearts" of all His people "with labor;" He will convince them of their lost state before Him and cast them as ruined wretches into the dust of death – without hope, strength, wisdom, help, or righteousness, except that which is given to them, as a free gift of distinguishing grace.

This work of grace in the conscience, pulling down all of man's false refuges, stripping him of every lying hope, and thrusting him down into self-abasement and self-abhorrence, is indispensable to a true reception of Christ. No matter how informed his judgment is he will never receive Christ spiritually into his heart and affections, until he has been broken down by the hand of God in his soul to be a ruined wretch (J. C. Philpot, *The Heavenly Birth and its Earthly Counterfeit*, Chapel Library, p. 4).

D. One of the most subtle but serious errors in modern evangelism is *decisional regeneration*.

1. “You must be born again” (Jn 3:7) is the great doctrine of man’s need for regeneration in order to enter the kingdom of God (i.e., miraculous new birth). But the modern gospel denies the very point that John 3 intends to teach. Simply stated, the error is this – *that men are born again as a result of something they do.*
2. The teaching of “Decisional Regeneration” departs from Scripture because it attributes to man the ability to regenerate himself. “Decisional Regeneration” in the Church must be exposed in order to save men from the damning delusion that because they have “decided,” they are going to heaven and are no longer under the wrath of God (James Adams, *Decisional Regeneration*, Chapel Library, p. 3).
3. We can and must tell men to turn from their sins and believe the Gospel, but in doing so we should realize that when a man does repent and believe, it is the result of God’s prior regenerative working within him. If this were not the case, if man were capable of initiating his own salvation, then it would be impossible to escape the conclusion that men do not need regeneration at all, but possess in themselves an innate goodness which causes them to seek after God – but Scripture puts this to the lie (Rom 3:10-12) (Richard Ochs, *Born-againism*, Chapel Library).
4. The purity of the Gospel is of extreme importance because it alone is the power of God unto salvation, and the true basis of Christian unity. Charles Hodge points out the danger of teaching decisional regeneration: *No more soul-destroying doctrine could well be devised than the doctrine that sinners can regenerate themselves, and repent and believe just when they please. . . As it is a truth both of Scripture and of experience that the un-renewed man can do nothing of himself to secure his salvation, it is essential that he should be brought to a practical conviction of that truth. When thus convicted, and not before, he seeks help from the only source whence it can be obtained”* (Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Grand Rapids 1970, Vol. 2, p. 277).
5. Evangelistic methods employed in Evangelical Christianity have given rise to a policy of equating salvation with a profession of faith in Christ. The result is church roles filled with carnal professors whose daily lives are a contradiction of true piety (Gary Hendrix, *Professing Christians Warned*).

When folks are counseled to pray a certain prayer and then pronounced “saved,” it commonly results in the impression that the individual has been “regenerated” through a decision. Regeneration is reduced to a procedure which man performs. How differently did Jesus Christ deal with sinners. He dealt with every individual on a personal basis; not by a stereo-typed presentation (James Adams, pp. 4-5).

6. Looking unto Jesus is the vivified soul's response to a crucified and risen Savior. Let us not forget that repentance is a consequent of faith in God's free love to sinners; we are not saved FOR believing, faith is not a work. Do not make a savior out of your faith. We might well ask, "Is your hope of glory laid by the hand of Christ or by your own hand? Who began religion in you?" (Wilcox, *Christ is All*, pp. 13-17).
7. Christ is only put on when our own covering is totally unraveled. No one really believes until he is an undone sinner – the hardest thing in the world is to take Christ alone for righteousness. To believe, one must have a clear view of conviction of sin, of the merits of Christ's blood, and Christ's willingness to save one merely as a sinner. This is more difficult than to make a world; nature cannot attain to it. It is Christ's work to make you (His elect) believe. Saving faith is a gift. Unbelief sets up guilt of conscience *above* Christ and His merits (and puts the sinner to work in efforts at self-reformation efforts). Unbelief fixates upon complaints against the self (and their hoped for rectification) – whereas faith looks away from self to Christ (Ibid.).
8. Because of satanic blindness to the Gospel of grace (2 Cor 4:3, 4), unregenerate man cannot comprehend the true basis of salvation, and is therefore ever prone to do the best he knows how. This is to attempt to work out his own standing before God by his own efforts. It is the natural tendency to do something of merit; whether standing in an evangelistic meeting, or walking an aisle. He may be persuaded to do the above when he has no conception of standing by faith on the Rock of Jesus Christ. He may abandon natural timidity by walking an aisle when he knows nothing of abandoning his satanic tendency to self-help, and resting by faith on that which Christ has done for him (Iain Murray, *The Invitation System*, Banner of Truth, pp. 22-23).

E. REGENERATION by the Spirit (How do I receive a new heart?)

1. The Scriptural study of man's sinful depravity reveals that what man does, wills, desires and understands is inseparable from what he is. One cannot separate a man's decision from all else he is and does. There is no such thing as an isolated act of God-pleasing faith rising up out of the quagmire of corruption, darkness and enmity (Rom 8:5-8). This all leads to a key question: "Must a person believe in order to be born again, or must he be born again in order to believe?" "Does faith precede or follow regeneration by the Spirit?" The answer to that affects one's whole understanding of the gospel message. What do the Scriptures teach?
2. THERE ARE BUT TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE AND TWO KINDS OF FRUIT
Those born of the flesh (lost) and those born of the Spirit (saved) (Jn 3:3-8; 1 Cor 2:14-15). Jesus said that people are either like an evil tree (with corrupt fruit) or like a good tree (with good fruit) (Lu 6:43-45). A person's *nature* determines what kind of fruit he produces (Lu 6:43-44). A person must become a "good tree" before he can believe and obey the Lord. "*If a natural man cannot even exercise faith and repentance in order to change into a spiritual man, how can he ever be changed? How is one born again?*"
3. THE NEW BIRTH IS FROM GOD—IT IS SOVEREIGNLY BESTOWED

Scripture does not attribute the cause of the new birth to us, the Bible unequivocally assigns it to God (Jn 5:21). The new birth is likened to: *Resurrection* – John 5:21; Eph. 2:1-6; *Birth* – Jn 3:1-9; 1 Pet 1:23; *Creation* – 2 Cor 4:6; 5:17; Eph 2:10. *In each case the Lord is acting upon the sinner in his helplessness, deadness, and rebellion – “dead body, babe, and the thing created.”*

4. IT IS THE NEW BIRTH THAT PRODUCES FAITH AND REPENTANCE

If indeed the new birth comes before faith, then a Christian’s faith and repentance are ultimately granted by the Lord. If faith precedes the new birth, then ultimately faith and repentance rise out of the natural man. What do the Scriptures say? The new birth precedes a person’s entering into the kingdom of God (Jn 3:3-5). The source of the new birth is “*from above*” (*Greek*), not from within man (Jn 1:13; 3:7). Only those born of the Spirit can respond to God. Jesus likens the operation of the Spirit (in regeneration) to the wind. *The wind is sovereign, it goes where it wills; we do not control it. The wind is invisible, and we only see its effects (so also the work of the Spirit in regeneration).* Jesus admonishes Nicodemus, a teacher of Israel, who should have known of the promise of a new heart (Ez 36:25-27). Jesus came to fulfill this promise.

5. CONTRARY TO ALL OTHER RELIGIONS, THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST IS ALL OF GRACE—WHICH INCLUDES THE ABILITY TO COME TO CHRIST

The gospel of grace is characterized by a *free offer* (whosoever thirsts, is guilt-laden, is weary etc.—Mt 11:28-30). Come obtain salvation without money and without cost (Is 55:1ff.). The gospel of grace is characterized by *the universality of the offer* (not restricted to an ethnic group or to a sacred geographical region). “The gospel is to be preached to every creature.” The gospel of grace is an offering of eternal salvation conditioned upon *faith and repentance* (not upon human merit, works, alms or personal reformation) (Rom 10:13; Heb 11:6; Jn 3:16; Rev 22:17).

6. THE SCRIPTURES TEACH THAT THE OFFER OF SALVATION IS

UNIVERSAL, AND THAT HUMAN INABILITY IS UNIVERSAL (Do you see the problem here?) The most common error concerning the modern gospel is to assume that the freeness of the offer is meant to be a measure of human ability. “Whosoever will” is not intended to teach universal ability. The 14 point universal indictment of Romans 3:10-18 dispels the notion of ability. The Son of God gives the ability to respond to the gospel. The gospel of sovereign grace is to be preached to the dead wills of sinful men. Yet, human depravity cannot frustrate God’s gracious purposes. The exalted Son of God lives and He gives life to whomever He wishes. He gives the ability to respond to the gospel (Mt 11:27; Jn 17:2). He gives the saving knowledge of the Father (Lu 10:22). Jesus has the authority to save everyone that the Father has given Him (Jn 6:39; 17:2).

7. THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF SALVATION CALLS: *OUTWARD AND INWARD*

The outward or external call is God’s summons to all unbelievers to come to Christ. This outward call is what Jesus had in mind when He said, “many are called” (Mt 22:14). Paul also gave this outward call when he preached on Mars Hill (Acts 17:30).

The outward call is frequently rejected (Acts 17:32). The inward call describes the inward drawing of the unbeliever to Christ. It is effectual and is carried out by the Holy Spirit (Heb 3:1). Paul testifies that he experienced this inward call (Gal 1:15-16). Every person who is saved experiences this inward holy calling (2 Tim 1:9; Jude 1; Acts 16:14).

8. THE INWARD CALL IS AN IRRESISTIBLE DRAWING OF A LOST PERSON TO CHRIST

Jesus testified that those who come, do so because they are drawn (Jn 6:44, 65). No one is able to resist this drawing. Every N.T. use of this Greek word for draw (*helkuo*), refers to an irresistible drawing or dragging (Jn 21:6, 11; 18:10; Ja 2:6; Acts 16:19-21). The hearing of Scripture is necessary in order for the inward call to be given (Rom 10:14; Ja 1:18).

9. EVERYONE WHO IS INWARDLY CALLED BY GOD'S SPIRIT COMES TO JESUS

No one wants to come (the gospel way, by faith and repentance) unless he is drawn! When God's Spirit works in a person's heart, He opens the heart so that the person naturally wants to come (note Lydia, the seller of purple, Acts 16:14). The inward call did not force her to believe against her will. "The Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul." She was freed from her blinding bondage to sin so that she could believe. Her response was a work of God. Her heart was closed to the gospel prior to God's opening of her heart.

10. THE SCRIPTURES DISTINGUISH BETWEEN TRUE AND FALSE FAITH

Scripture warns of a kind of faith that cannot save (Jn 2:23-25; Ja 2:14-20, 26; Mt 7:21-23). Those with a spurious faith may assent to the facts of the gospel, but do not demonstrate the changed life that accompanies repentance. When the gospel is believed unto salvation, it is because of the Holy Spirit's power (1 Th 1:5; Ja 1:17-18; Eph 1:19-21; Col 2:13).

11. SAVING FAITH IS A GRACE GIFT FROM THE LORD

It is God's gift to us, not our gift to Him (Phil 1:29). It is not our faith that raised us spiritually, it is the spiritual resurrection of the new birth that caused our faith! (See Eph 2:1-3; 8-10). God's gift is faith. The gospel of grace comes bringing the very divine power we lack (Rom 5:6; Ps 110:3). The gift of faith is a sovereign grant (Acts 13:44-48). The gift of repentance is always given with the gift of faith (Acts 11:18; 2 Tim 2:24-26).

F. FOR REVIEW AND DISCUSSION:

1. ***Regeneration (the new birth) cannot be commanded or caused by man. The new birth is not a process, it is instantaneous, and sovereignly bestowed*** (note the conversion of the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus) (Jonathan Edwards, *The Rational Biblical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 3, by John H. Gerstner). God grants the new birth only in connection with powerful conviction of sin (Jn 16:8-11; Acts 2:37; Lu 18:13). Union with God can only be produced by God Himself. Only God

can unite Himself to man (Gerstner, vol. 3, p. 160).

2. *The Holy Spirit produces the change of regeneration.* His indwelling and operations and life-giving work are the sum of the blessings Christ purchased for His people (Ibid, p. 163). Natural man is destitute of spiritual sense and perception. He has no concept of the excellency of divine truth and he has no heart affection for God. An entirely new principle must be planted in him in order for him to choose God. The ruin inherent in our guilt, moral defilement, and inability cannot will the improvement of our ruin (Ibid, p. 188)! Before man chooses God, there must be the implanting of a nature that loves the supernatural light of God's truth. The new birth produces faith in Christ alone. There must be a reception of Christ with the faculties of the soul. True salvation is never a hope that is distributed over personal reform and religious acts.

3. *In the Scriptures, the same things are represented from God as from us: God is said to convert sinners, men are said to convert or turn. God makes a new heart—we are commanded to make a new heart. God circumcises the heart—we are commanded to circumcise our hearts* (Ibid, p. 178). God will not believe and repent for us; the Scriptures command us to believe and repent—the repenting sinner makes an “appeal to God for a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ who is at the right hand of God” (1 Pet 3:21b). The moral inability of man is not an excuse to avoid seeking God in His Word. Scripture declares that these are the terms of God bestowing mercy: the command is to seek with all the heart. Don't expect to obtain salvation without seeking it! (Is 55; Lu 16:16) (Ibid, p. 122ff.).

4. *The urgency of the call to salvation is addressed to ruined sinners who really don't know who they are in God's plan.* John Calvin (one of the greatest minds in the last 500 years) notes that to suppress of the truth of God is to suppress the knowledge of one's own existence—you don't know what you are in God's great plan because you have become the dungeon of yourself. Sinners 'descend' into themselves and find that they are in a labyrinth from which they cannot escape. The deeper they go into self; the greater the darkness (absence of meaning and purpose). Only the thread of the Word of God can lead a man out of self.

5. *God draws us to Himself with the gloriousness of the gospel—for the gospel announces that God is prepared to deal with guilty men on the ground of free favor and mercy.* This incredibly good news to defiled consciences because the conscience teaches that God is just and that He will punish sin and reward righteousness. The good news that is the gospel proclaims that God the Judge is prepared to pardon transgressions and justify the ungodly (Rom 4:5). By means of Christ suffering in the place of sinners, God is ready to take us from the curse of the Law and give us the blessedness of righteousness as an act of pure mercy. But this is good news ONLY for

those who have despaired of providing their own righteousness and favor with God (Gal 3:10-13) (Charles Spurgeon, “A Gospel worth dying for”).

6. *The gospel announces that God is just and justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus*

(Rom 3:24-26). All sinners are invited to come—the broken and despairing, the social outcasts, hopeless. In Christ, hell-deserving sinners are given heaven by means of the sovereignty of God’s love. God the Father has removed the grand obstacle that stood in the way of mercy—the justice of God has been dealt with by the cross. Man’s guilt under the moral government of God has met the strictest justice in the bloody death of the Son of God. Now, without doing injustice, God may deal with compassion and mercy because divine justice has been completely satisfied for all who believe (Heb 8:12) (Ibid.).

9. ***Don’t look within—you won’t find merit there—God says that salvation is through His only begotten Son.*** Look unto Me and be saved. Christ died for the ungodly—at the right time He died for the helpless—the rebellious (Rom 5:6-10). God’s boundless mercy is sovereign and free—there is nothing we can do to have a claim or obligation to receive it (Rom 9:5). Christ bids us come to Him and be cleansed and saved. Come without money—without cost (Is 55:1, 6; Rev 22:17).

II. Let’s recover the Gospel essentials that are increasingly missing today.

A. The Biblical Gospel must include the character of God and the character of the sinner. The true Gospel contains the following essentials:

1. ***Who*** has the sinner offended?
2. ***How*** has the sinner offended God?
3. ***What*** are the consequences of offending God?
4. ***What*** are sinners to be saved from?
5. ***What*** has God done about the sinner’s dilemma?
6. ***How*** are sinners to be saved from ruin?

B. Who has the sinner offended?

1. Our Gospel message must have at its core the glory and majesty and exaltation of God; He is the offended power. Without the knowledge of the God whom he has offended; the sinner will not see himself in *opposition to God* (Joseph Lo Sardo, *Errors in Modern Evangelism*, www.sermonaudio.com, 5/7/06).
2. The Gospel is about God whom the sinner has offended; about His moral majesty and righteous justice. God cannot be made to fit the sinner’s instincts, radical miscalculations, and carnal ideas of deity. All conviction of sin and remorse for sin begins with the character of God as He is revealed in Scripture.
3. Start with God as Creator—who God is in relation to all else (His absolute claims upon His creatures). “Don’t assume the culture knows anything about God,” says Ken Ham. Don’t try to get someone saved who doesn’t understand God’s character. False evangelism tries to attract by focusing on divine love to the

exclusion of God's holiness, sovereignty, and righteous justice.

C. How has the sinner offended God?

1. Man must experience a degree of devastation about personal sin. The modern gospel circumvents this step. There must be an awakening in the individual as to the fact that all sin is against God; against His holy character. There is no repentance until the sinner says the same thing about his sin that God does. Sin makes you an enemy of God and His glory (Rom 3:23; 5:10).
2. Jesus took the rich young ruler back to the Law of God (Lu 18:18-23). The sinner must be shown how he has specifically offended God. You can't make the cross *personal* without making the sinner's depravity *personal* (that is, the transgressor must be shown that *who he is* and *what he has done* in his person has offended God) The preaching of the law is the tool for identifying sin (Ro 3:20; 5:20) (Ibid.).
3. In our culture, people hear the Gospel through a 'self help' grid. They assume that the Gospel is about them; about their self-therapy; not about God who is glorified in judging sin at the cross; and thereby redeeming and reconciling sinner and taking them to glory.

D. What are the consequences of offending God?

1. The law stops every mouth that all may become guilty before God (Ro 3:19). Man's 'uneducated conscience' cannot be trusted to assess the seriousness of sin and its verdict of death and separation from God. Only by proclaiming the character of God and the immutability of His law will sinners conclude that they are *lawbreakers* in God's sight who deserve *eternal condemnation* (1 Jn 3:4).
2. The law is the *identifier of sin*—without the law; how does a person know what to repent of? Modern evangelism ignores God's law—as a consequence the modern gospel is emptied of the Gospel essentials of *sin, hell, conviction, and repentance*.
3. God has born witness to man's moral and spiritual condition. God is just and fair to shut impenitent sinners out of the enjoyment of His glory forever (Mt 10:28). Sinners who reject God's authority; who do not fear God or believe God are liable to death and judgment (Mt 12:36). They will experience God's verdict; the separation of their souls from God forever in eternal punishment (Rom 6:23).

E. What are sinners to be saved from?

1. Sinners must be told that they need to be saved not only from the *consequences* of sin (death and separation from God in hell); but also from *sin itself*. This is absolutely vital; it is a truth inherent in true repentance (Lu 13:5; 24:47).
2. The fact that God will *lay bare* every heart is stated in a Gospel context (Ro 2:16).

Jesus felt a love for the rich young ruler; then told him what he must be *saved from*—covetousness (Lu 18:22ff.).

3. Sinners must be told that they must be saved from the *wrath of God* which will justly come upon all who do not believe the Gospel and repent of sin (Rom 2:1-10).

F. What has God done about the sinner's dilemma?

1. Without a knowledge of God whom the sinner has offended; and without a knowledge of God's law which the sinner has trampled—there will be no grasp of what God has done to save (the great lengths He has gone to redeem). Grace only makes sense to those who see themselves as condemned lawbreakers.
2. The good news of the Gospel is that there is an almighty living God who is Creator. He has taken on flesh and dwelled with mankind. Christ the *God-man* died for our sins according to the Scriptures. By His substitutionary death, He fulfilled the long-awaited promise of a perfect redemption. He established the new covenant in His blood (Matt 26:28; 1 Cor 11:25).
3. The atonement Christ has made exalts divine justice. Because of the cross, God is glorified in extending forgiveness full and free to believing sinners. For Jesus' resurrection from the dead conquered sin, Satan, and death. His resurrection is proof that the Father has accepted the Son's sacrifice on behalf of all who will believe. God is ready to receive even the worst sinner who believes and repents because Christ has provided the all-sufficient sacrifice for sin.

G. How are sinners to be saved from ruin?

1. The promise of eternal life is offered to all who believe and repent. "Turn from your sins and follow Christ—take hold of eternal life—you can be a part it!" God is focusing His mighty power in the Gospel—in saving sinners (Rom 1:16-17).
2. The good news of the Gospel is that man may have certainty about forgiveness of personal sin; and man may have eternal life through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (Jn 3:36; 5:24, 25; Jn 10:27-29).
3. God desires you to be saved; He even commands you to come to Him and be forgiven; be reconciled to Him on the basis of what He has done in Christ Jesus. You do not need to remain an enemy estranged from Him—He has promised to receive all those who come to Him by faith in His only begotten Son (Jn 1:12, 13; Acts 17:30-31).
3. Christ is calling sinners to repentance and faith. These are twin graces that will be present in the regenerate person; they enable the sinner to flee to Christ and take hold of Him as Savior (Phil 1:29; Eph 2:8-10).

III. Master the difference between the true Gospel and the modern gospel:

THE MODERN GOSPEL

Man is able to choose God—given a chance; his will is free.

All men are truth-seekers who just lack information and proof.

People's greatest need is love, help, recovery—and healing for their problems.

All men make mistakes; no one is perfect; this is what it means to be human.

Men need to be saved from hell so that they can go to heaven.

Men need religious truth so that they can overcome their own religious ignorance.

People need to hear all of the advantages of believing on Christ.

People need to be led in a prayer of acceptance of Christ as soon as they express a desire for eternal life.

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

Fallen man will not come to God by his own will power.

Man is an enemy of God in mind and heart—none seek after God.

Sinful man needs a new mind, heart, and will—a new nature (regeneration).

All men are rebels against God, sinners by nature; lovers of darkness.

Men need salvation from the power of sin. They need a cleansed conscience.

All men are spiritually dead, lost, and condemned—in need of a Savior.

People need to hear about God's character and their own character.

People need time to form their prayer alone; for it is normally in isolation that a sinner will call upon God for mercy.

IV. Learn to use God's moral law in evangelism.

A. *The problem created by modern evangelism is a false diagnosis of the sinner's dilemma.*

1. Without a correct diagnosis of the sinner's condition in God's sight; men will resent and resist the Gospel. Apart from the Holy Spirit using the Law; men tend to hide from the exposure and judgment of their sin. (EX. Joseph Lister and antiseptics).
2. By God's Law sinners come to know God as Moral Governor of the Universe.

B. *Can a man understand the Gospel if he has no understanding of the divine economy of Law? The Puritans would say, "No!"*

- The Law now has both a precept role and an evangelical role. Its evangelical role is to make sin exceedingly sinful. We are to therefore preach the law "killingly" to the end that the sinner loses all hope of contributing to his own salvation (including his false hope in 'legal' repentance).
1. Early Puritans such as Robert Bolton (1606-1654) recognized the danger of "short-cutting" the Gospel by offering free grace, *before* the conscience was afflicted by the Law (Robert Bolton, *Afflicted Consciences*, p. 175).
 2. The Puritans regarded the moral law as a codified copy of the divine nature (God's

holiness in transcript); an unchanging expression of the holy majesty of God's Person. Since God's moral government is founded upon His Law, the ineffable principle of moral cause and effect reveals God's righteous character. C. H. Dodd regarded God's moral Law to be built into the very fabric of the universe and creation (C. H. Dodd, *Gospel and Law*, pp. 70, 71, 79).

3. Under the new covenant, the evangelical role of the Law is summarized in Galatians 2 and 3. The moral law is a "bulldozer" that scrapes human merit off the face of the earth. In fulfilling that role, it functions as a *prosecutor, an executioner, a jailor, a tutor, and a curse-er* (thus the Law prepares the sinner for the Gospel—Rom 10:4).

C. What is the use of the Law in apologetics and evangelism? Ernest Kevan documents the way in which the Puritans used the Law in evangelism (Ernest Kevan, *The Grace of Law*, pp. 91, 92). William Perkins identified four aspects related to God's Moral Majesty which must be grasped before the Gospel can be understood: a.) *the existence of God's Law*, b.) *man's sin against God's Law*, c.) *the guilt of sin incurred by breaking God's Law* d.) *the eternal wrath of God poured out in judgment against sin* (William Perkins, *Two Treatises*, in *Works*, p. 541).

1. The Puritans believed the Holy Spirit utilized the preaching of the Law to produce a state of conviction designated as "legal faith" or "the spirit of bondage." Once in that state of conviction, the awakened sinner recognizes the guilt of his sin, he recognizes the moral government of God, and he comes to understand the hopelessness of reforming himself and working his way out of condemnation (Kevan, p. 92).

D. A suggested procedure for using the Law in apologetics.

- 1.) **Establish the very concept of moral law.** Note how our culture separates the Person of God from moral law. How can we in our preaching bring the two back together again? When ethics are "orphaned" from the Person of God, they are easily debauched. Vices can be legislated as "virtues" (homosexual partnerships, abortion, etc.) (John O. Anderson, *Cry of the Innocents*, p. 135). (EX. David Wells Study).
- 2.) **Establish that moral law is a direct reflection of God's unchanging moral character.** It is impossible to love God without submitting to and valuing His commands as the expression of His righteousness (Deut 30:19, 20). The formula repeated in Leviticus is, "I am the Lord, therefore . . ." Only the man who "imitates God" will enter the kingdom of heaven (Eph 5:1-6). God's standard never evolves because the Lawgiver never changes. His moral law for man reflects the immutable character of His righteousness and holiness. It is a standard that is eternally binding upon all civilizations (Douglas W. Phillips, Esq., "Do Laws and Standards Evolve?" *Impact* #303, *Institute for Creation Research*, 1998).
- 3.) **Establish the existence of God's moral government.** Moral cause and effect are administrated by God (note Deut 10, 11, 13, 27, 28). To possess salvation is to be possessed by God. By obedience to God's commands we manifest that we are God's

possession and that we are willingly subject to His moral government. Paul preached the Gospel against the backdrop of the coming judgment of God's moral government (see Acts 17:30, 31; 24:15, 16; Rom 2:16).

E. *A proposed line of questioning in apologetics that can be used to promote the recognition of God's moral government.*

- 1.) Do you believe that we can know right from wrong? Upon what basis can we know right from wrong? By means of cultural standards, and/or social evolution?
- 2.) Do you believe that right from wrong is strictly a matter of personal opinion? OR, is right from wrong an external, constant standard which flows from the holy character of the one, true, and righteous God?
- 3.) Do you believe that God has revealed His standard of right and wrong in the Ten Commandments found in the Holy Bible? And that God's standard in the Ten Commandments is absolute, universal, and unchanging?
- 4.) Do you believe that God is the sovereign, moral Governor of all creation; ruling over His moral creatures by means of his righteous laws found in the Ten Commandments?
- 5.) Do you believe that God's righteous character, expressed in His moral government, requires that He thoroughly punish all evil? Will God some day judge every person by this righteous standard which is based upon His unchanging character?
- 7.) Would you affirm that the ethical 'instincts' in man's conscience agree with Ten Commandments; and that your conscience is an undeniable testimony of God's the righteous standard found in the Ten Commandments?
- 8.) Do you believe that God requires you to keep the Ten Commandments? Do you believe that God has a record of your transgressions of His laws?
- 9.) Do you know what God's Word, the Bible, teaches concerning personal guilt before God due to the breaking of His laws? May I show you from God's Word the Bible what God declares concerning the lost and sinful condition of the human race?

(Remember, some of the most flagrant inconsistencies within pagan philosophies and world views are in the area of morals and their origin and enforcement. As Greg Bahnsen notes, every pagan world view has its own particular erroneous counterpart to the biblical doctrines of sin, moral guilt, atonement, and salvation.)

F. *The Apostle Paul states that the human condition is made known by God's Law.*

1. "Creation in the image of God demands moral conformity to that image. Romans 1:18-32 is God's indictment upon man as a creature in sin. Both being created by God and being sinful are universal realities since the fall of Adam. . . Paul is describing

God's attitude toward His creatures that find themselves in sin and outside of Christ. Creation by God's hand demands moral conformity to God's law. The sins listed in Romans one are direct violations of the Decalogue (Richard C. Barcellos, *The Ten Commandments*, p. 19).

2. Man is responsible to God for his conduct and is held to a standard of conduct and indicted and judged for not upholding that standard, even if he has never read or heard of the Bible. According to Paul, man has an innate knowledge of God's attributes (Rom 1:20), an innate knowledge of God's person (Rom 1:21), an innate knowledge of God's law (Rom 1:32; 2:14-15), and an innate knowledge of God's judgment (Rom 1:32) (Ibid.).

G. In our apologetic "reasoning" we must remember the conscience of man must be reached before the sinner is ready to abandon his cherished intellectual fallacies.

1. Arguments against biblical theism come from the unbeliever's intellect. "The ungodly mind is like a brick wall. It has been built to keep God out. It is at enmity against Him. It refuses to bow to the Law of God – 'because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be'" (Rom 8:7) (Ray Comfort, *Avoiding the Wall of Antagonism*).
2. The human mind spins off arguments and attacks against God. The carnal mind is the place of *battles against God* – it is a place of great hostility against the knowledge of God (Col 1:21). The wall of antagonism is hard and immovable, so make it a habit of going around it. Learn to speak directly to the conscience (Ibid.).
3. "The conscience is the part of human nature that isn't an enemy of God. The conscience is God's ally. It speaks for the law of God. It bears witness (Rom 2:15). It testifies for God. It is the trustworthy witness who points out the guilty party in the courtroom. If we want to win our case we must bring out our star witness and put it on the stand to give it a voice. We want to stop the mouth of the criminal and that's what the lawful use of the Law does (Rom 3:19; 1 Tim 1:7-11). It condemns the guilty and drives him to give up his defense, so that he will be forced to look solely to the Judge for mercy" (Ray Comfort, *Conversions True and False*).

H. If our witness is to be both biblical and effective, we must know why the Gospel offends the unbeliever.

- The Gospel offends because it lays bare one's life before God. It confronts personal idolatry in all of its forms. It calls and commands us to say the same thing about our ruined condition as God does. It demands that we discard our faulty "scales" of reasoning in exchange for the absolute authority of God's Word.

- The Gospel offends because it demands we make the greatest “U-turn” conceivable. The repenting man acknowledges that his chosen path has been one of self destruction and one of rebellion against God.
- The Gospel offends because at its center is the cross. The cross states that man is horribly wrong and God alone is right. The cross of Christ is a monument to the fact that the human race deserves to die, and that nothing less than the death of the only begotten Son of God can avail to remedy our ruin (Gardner Spring, *The Attraction of the Cross*, pp. 205-207).
- The Gospel offends because man is not in charge of its eternal benefits. The sinner’s only hope is the sovereign mercy and pity of God in Christ. If one is to be saved, it hangs completely upon un-obligated divine compassion.
- The Gospel offends because the sinner is rescued solely by Christ’s might, love, and infinite grace and the redeemed sinner is consequently obligated forever to the lordship and Kingship of Christ.
- The Gospel offends because sinners are suspicious of the cross; for the cross speaks of pain, suffering, self-denial, and death. The cross calls for a complete reordering of one’s life; a repentance that goes to the depth of one’s being and leaves no existing loyalties untouched.
- The cross offends because it speaks of an extremely demanding and comprehensive worldview. It is a worldview that divorces the believer from the love of the world and binds him completely to Christ for his identity, purpose, happiness, and destiny.

I. Preaching the Law of God and preaching repentance toward God is necessarily joined to the Holy Spirit’s preparation of the sinner.

1. Only the man prepared by God’s Spirit goes to war against his own sin and his own sin nature. The sinner prepared by the Holy Spirit takes God’s side against himself. As Luther said, “Penance remains while self hate remains.” In other words, no one comes to Christ without being overwhelmed with self-contempt over personal sin.
2. In order to be brought to true repentance, a man must be taken beyond the fear of punishment to hatred of sin and love of Christ. Repentance begins with sobering thoughts of eternity then proceeds to conscience-crushing contemplation of personal sin (John MacArthur, *Exposition of Luke 3:1-18*).
3. The sinner will come willingly if the Spirit of God has prepared him by crushing his conscience over sin and by bringing him to the end of self. Unbelievers stop short of saving faith and repentance when they place their trust in their efforts of personal reformation (legal repentance). Therefore it is the Spirit’s convicting role to bring the sinner to utter bankruptcy of soul and despairing of all self-help.

4. True turning from sin has a desperate-ness about it. The prepared sinner longs for forgiveness and deliverance from sin. The cost of discipleship lived out under the absolute lordship of Christ appeals ONLY to the person who is desperate to be delivered from sin. The prepared person is willing to pay any cost and part with anything in order to have Christ and deliverance (MacArthur).
5. The man who is genuinely converted never outgrows his amazement at divine forgiveness. His mind and affections are now a servant and instrument of God's Word and grace. He continues to glorify God by viewing God's grace from the vantage point of his own ill desert (Eph 2:1-16). This is why we preach the Law, for it is the beginning of understanding our ill desert and it is the beginning of preparing the sinner to appeal to the throne of grace for mercy.

J. God's law is the divinely appointed means of "X-raying" the human heart.
(EX. *The pepper spray illus.; know what it feels like before 'spraying' others*).

1. The First Commandment: *Have no other gods before Me.* We haven't loved God supremely—we haven't treasured Him and valued Him; and pressed on to know Him. We have chosen things in place of God and disregarded Him—despising His ownership of us. We have regarded His loving rule over us to be an intrusion. We have made *other gods* out of our own will, our own way, and our own cravings.
2. The Second Commandment: *You shall not make for yourself an idol.* We have set our affections on the world—we have worshipped and served the creature and creation instead of God. We have made idols of our lusts and desires. We have refused to love God by a life of continual thanksgiving to Him.
3. The Third Commandment: *Do not take the Name of the Lord God in vain.* We have not sanctified and set apart the Name of the Lord—we have used God's Name casually and irreverently. We have dragged His Name into our conversations without reverence and fear; with no thought of His holiness. We have had no passion and sentiment for His honor and glory. We have been too cowardly to defend His character when others have dishonored His Name in our presence.
4. The Fourth Commandment: *Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.* Though not a N.T. ordinance; the principle of setting aside time to draw near to God is timeless. We have failed in this by not leaving our pursuits and pastimes to actively seek God. We have not made it a priority to worship God; to serve Him; and make Him known to our fellow creatures. We have not come away from our schedules to give Him the best of our thoughts and conversation. We are by nature *Sabbath-breakers*.
5. The Fifth Commandment: *Honor your father and mother.* We have disobeyed by dishonoring our parents countless times. We have deemed them unworthy of our obedience and respect. We have talked back to them and undermined their authority. We have promised obedience and withheld it. We have been ungrateful and have

disregarded their God-appointed authority in our lives.

6. The Sixth Commandment: *You shall not murder.* In 1 John 3:15 we are told that to hate your brother is murder because it is a spirit of murder. Have you despised and resented those who have mistreated you? Have you held a grudge and wished for their downfall, misfortune; failure; and destruction? Have you entertained violent thoughts against those who have offended you? Have you lashed out in angry words? (Matt 5:22). Do you harbor unforgiveness? Have you sought your own vengeance by backbiting; gossip; and slander?
7. The Seventh Commandment: *You shall not commit adultery.* This encompasses all sexual sin. We have allowed lusts to rule us. We have looked upon others as sexual objects of desire in our minds. Jesus said that to do that can be adultery in the heart (Matt 5:28). We have entertained discontent with our marriage partner and allowed imaginary lovers to enter the mind. We have loved our lusts above God's honor. We have not cared to reflect God's purity in our thinking; desiring; and looking.
8. The Eighth Commandment: *You shall not steal.* We have many times taken what is not ours. We have robbed employers of a full day's work. We have cheated on tests and homework. We have robbed God by using our resources for our pleasures without a thought of giving to His Kingdom and the spread of the Gospel. We have stolen the reputation of others by gossip and tale-bearing. We have borrowed from others and not returned; and we have cheated others out of fairness by our greed.
9. The Ninth Commandment: *Do not bear false witness against your neighbor.* We have lied and covered our sin. We have altered the truth to protect ourselves. We have exaggerated; embellished; and distorted the truth to make ourselves look more favorable. We have misrepresented the character of others. We have not sought the truth in the inward man; but have lied to ourselves about God's faithfulness. We have allowed dishonesty to enter our speech.
10. The Tenth Commandment: *You shall not covet.* We have desired what is not ours but another's. We have believed it should be ours and not our neighbor's. We have envied; been jealous of what others have. We have been secretly happy at the misfortune of those around us. We have been secretly saddened by the promotions and prosperity of those around us. We have complained and grumbled—indulging in self-pity and discontentment. We have felt elevated by the moral downfall of others. We have compared ourselves to others instead of living in gratitude to God for grace.

SUMMARY: The modern "gospel" fails to bring the human condition to light; therefore it comes short of producing true conviction of sin which is the condition for the new birth.

1. Without exposing the human condition in a convincing way that afflicts the conscience, people have little idea what they are to be saved from. Modern presentations of the Gospel tend to emphasize the benefits of salvation rather than the

character of God and the sinner's condition (Jim Elliff, *The New Gospel: Appealing but not Revealing*, p. 3).

2. When Christ preached the Gospel, He removed all middle ground; He eliminated all gray areas. He emphatically stated that there is no territory between truth and lies, between heaven and hell. Christ's words concerning the Gospel made a very clear division between men. If a person is not following Christ with all his heart, and seeking to build His Kingdom, and involved in gathering souls, then according to Christ, that person is *scattering*, and is "*against Me*" (Luke 11:23).
3. Christ and the Apostles preached the Law of God, original sin, the need of repentance, and the need for a new nature. When the Gospel is preached biblically, the soil of the heart will be "plowed up" in order to receive the good seed (Matt 13:1-23).

Recommended Reading:

Tell the Truth, Will Metzger

Today's Gospel; Authentic or Synthetic, Walter Chantry

The Way of the Master, Kirk Cameron & Ray Comfort

Right with God, John Blanchard

One World; One Way, John Benton

The Doctrine of Repentance, Thomas Watson

Faith Works, John MacArthur

The Eclipse of the Gospel, Frank Allred

Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God, J. I. Packer

A Price for a People, Tom Wells

The Attraction of the Cross, Gardiner Spring

The Grace of God in the Gospel, John Cheeseman

Select Sermons of George Whitfield, w/ comments by J. C. Ryle & R Elliot

Take Away Principles from Lesson Seven:

- 1.) **The idols of self-righteousness and self-worship must receive a death blow from the Law of God in order for the sinner to become saved.**
- 2.) **'Decisional regeneration' is a prevalent error in Evangelicalism. Untold numbers of individuals trust their decision as the ground of their salvation.**
- 3.) **'Looking unto Jesus' is the response of a soul made alive by God's Spirit. No one savingly believes until he is an undone sinner.**
- 4.) **The biblical Gospel includes the character of God and the character of the sinner. The sinner must be told precisely what he is to be saved from.**
- 5.) **Faith in the Gospel is not a transaction. It is coming to know God through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Gospel is about God—the Gospel gives us God—'whom to know is life eternal' (Jn 17:3).**
- 6.) **The modern Gospel fails to adequately diagnose the seriousness of the sinner's dilemma. Nothing can save a sinner but the power and mercy of God. God is exerting His mighty power in salvation of spiritually dead sinners (Rom 1:16-17).**

- 7.) Former divines of bygone days knew how to preach the Law of God ‘killingly’.
We can learn much from them.**
- 8.) The moral deformity of the human heart is made known by the Law of God.**
- 9.) The conscience of man must be reached before the sinner will abandon his
cherished intellectual fallacies and heretical opinions.**
- 10.) No matter how winsome you are; no matter how engaging your presentation—you
will not be able to remove the offense of the cross if you preach the biblical Gospel.
The Gospel offends because it slays the sinner’s sovereignty.**
- 11.) The preaching of the Law of God is joined to the Spirit’s preparation of a sinner for
salvation.**
- 12.) God desires that sinners be saved; God commands sinners to be saved. Sinners need
to hear that Christ is ready to receive them now.**