

Models of Biblical Evangelism

Editorial: Paul R. House

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Biblical evangelism is in short supply these days because biblical theology is on the wane. Few pastors are able to articulate the great truths of Scripture. Thus, doctrines such as human depravity, substitutionary atonement, and justification by faith are not well known by lay persons. For many listeners, the gospel amounts to a non-committal mental decision to accept Christ, rather than true repentance from sin and a complete dedication to the one who died for them. It is no wonder, then, that so many churches never see large numbers of their members in worship services, since these members never possessed saving faith in the first place. It is time to re-emphasize a biblical definition of evangelism in hopes that real conversions will result, and that revival and reform can occur in the churches.

Throughout church history the Lord has provided individuals who have been models of evangelism with integrity. These persons have not been sinless, of course, yet they have been examples to their own and succeeding generations. They have shown how evangelism can be done in a biblical manner. They have based their ministries on Christ's call to go and make disciples, and they challenge us to settle for nothing less than what God would have us do to share the gospel with a lost world. My own models for evangelism are Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Carl F. H. Henry, and Billy Graham. These men have not agreed on every doctrinal issue, nor have they shared the same vocation. Each one in his own way, however, sets an example today's church needs to emulate.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones served as pastor of Westminster Chapel in London from 1938-1968. For three decades he preached expository and doctrinal sermons in that place. Above all, though, he saw himself as an evangelist. To that end he delivered an evangelistic sermon every Sunday evening in his own church, and presented evangelistic messages throughout Britain in mid-week services. A strong Calvinist, he longed to see revival in Britain so that God might be glorified. His sermons and lectures are still in print, and they are models of exegetical fidelity, doctrinal soundness, and warm-hearted concern for souls.

Carl F. H. Henry has written or edited over thirty books, lectured in colleges, seminaries, and Bible schools around the world, and taught in various institutions. His ministry now spans six decades, and continues to the present, as this issue of our journal attests. He has desired to see minds convinced of the truth of the gospel that is revealed in the inerrant scriptures so that conversion and discipleship might result. He believed that the modern mind had to be remade for the gospel to be heard and wrote books intended to effect this transformation. His theological works are unstintingly orthodox in their conclusions, and, like Lloyd-Jones, he refuses to separate the gospel and sound doctrine. As founding editor of *Christianity Today*, he positioned that magazine to engage secularism with the best arguments Christianity has to offer. For him, this work was more than putting out a quality magazine; it was the fulfillment of the Great Commission through print as

it was read by key thinkers and leaders. Those engaged in academic work would do well to imitate his vision, even if they do not agree with all his philosophical or theological positions.

Like many Christians my age, I cannot remember the first time I heard of Billy Graham. He has been the world's best-known preacher all my life. Like Lloyd-Jones and Henry, he has proven faithful to God over a long period of time, and like Henry he has ministered around the world. Despite being a celebrity, he has fought to stay humble. Most importantly, he has maintained fidelity to God's word. As his sermon in this issue indicates, he has called sin, sin. He has called hell, hell. He has called the blood, the blood. Though not a pastor/theologian like Lloyd-Jones or an academician/editor like Henry, he has been as committed to biblical truth as they. Though he gives invitations aimed at "decisions," he does not believe that mere mental assent or emotional response can save. For him, salvation remains *God's* work in an individual's life.

Today's church needs to pay attention to the witness of these three men. Lloyd-Jones' ministry challenges pastors to evangelize, disciple, and stand for evangelical faith. It warns that evangelism divorced from doctrine is not evangelism at all. It offers a model for pastors determined to build a church over time on the word of God.

Henry's work demonstrates that evangelism is not just the work of career evangelists. Intellectuals are as obligated to share the gospel as the simplest mind in Christendom. Indeed, they are more accountable, for they have been given the ability to speak, write, lecture, and counsel. Theologians also bear the burden of writing books that keep the church on solid doctrinal foundations in an era

where a new theological fad and a new cult seem to be birthed every half-second.

Graham's ministry serves as a reminder that we must be willing to go to the ends of the earth and use any legitimate means to spread the gospel. It also highlights the value of the evangelist for the growth and health of the church, and proves that evangelistic work can be done with integrity over a long period of time. Graham's life and work demonstrate that times change, but the Lord and the word of the Lord do not change. The gospel must be preached afresh to every generation, but the gospel itself must not be altered.

Without question, a new generation of evangelicals is coming on the scene. It must decide whether to follow in the footsteps of those committed to biblical evangelism or to pursue theological fads, methodological expediency, and an emphasis on numbers for numbers sake. It must determine whether to define soulwinning biblically or by what seems to draw and hold a crowd. As Billy Graham celebrates his seventy-ninth birthday, as Carl Henry turns eighty-five, and as we remember Martyn Lloyd-Jones, evangelicals must decide to practice evangelism with biblical integrity rather than to succumb to worldly standards of success.