

Worship as evangelism

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[0 : 00] I think Spurgeon said once that he didn't know that anybody had ever been converted at an afternoon meeting. So, if you've had a nice time on the beach, you know what he meant.

My subject this afternoon is worship as evangelism. Let me say straight away that we've looked over these talks that I've given to you at some very important subjects.

Some very delicate subjects, but vital subjects. Justification by faith, holding on to that doctrine which is the article of a standing or a falling church.

And never mind the church for a moment, which is the article of a standing or a falling believer.

We've looked at that area of Romans 14 and holy moderation. That delicate and so sensitive area where we've all been hurt.

And if we're honest, we fear we've hurt other Christians. How important that is. But let me say to you in all solemnity that the subject that I have before you this afternoon is even more important than either of those.

[1 : 23] And I say that not in the light of, I think Dr. Lloyd-Jones seemed to say that every sermon he preached, every text he introduced or every book he recommended, that this is the most important passage for us to consider in the whole Bible.

You know, the preacher always feels the one he's dealing with today is the most important. But I don't just mean that. I mean that this is, in a sense, the capstone on all that we've been looking at. There is a certain progression in these papers. And as far as we as Reformed Christians and members of Reformed churches are concerned, this, I would suggest to you, is something like the pinnacle of what we've been looking at.

Worship as Evangelism. Let me very briefly sketch to you three people. Perhaps they're kind of an amalgam of people I know or have met and imaginary figures.

But I'm trying to introduce the situation to you. Eddie is an unbeliever. He works in a sort of, yeah, low-grade office.

[2 : 33] He's not a particularly high-powered person, but he's not a fool either. And he's a bit of a lad about town, likes to go up with his mates for a drink and so on.

But he's not a complete mindless yobbo. He's a thinking person in his own way. And once or twice, people in the office who are a bit odd and go to church have pressed him to go along.

But frankly, whenever he's gone to church, he's been bored out of his mind. And he really hasn't found anything in it at all.

He says, why should someone like me go to church? It's all right for you that have got a sort of religious kick. You obviously are into religion. But it doesn't grab me at all. Your services, they seem old-fashioned and irrelevant.

Nothing for me, thank you. Here's somebody else. Doris. Doris has been a Christian for years and years. She's been very active in her church for many, many years.

[3 : 41] Run, help run youth groups and such things. But she's desperately unhappy. And every time you meet her, all she can talk about is that wretched new vicar they've got.

And the way he's changed the worship of the church. He's brought in choruses. And they no longer have the good old 1662 communion service.

And he does such silly things in the services. And she's so unhappy. He says he's trying to bring in new people to the church.

But all she can see is that he's driving away people like herself and all the others that used to come to the church. That's Doris. Bill.

Bill is a zealous evangelist. He was converted when he was a lad through a beach mission. And ever since he's converted, he's been converted, he goes on beach missions and evangelistic treks

and all sorts of things like that.

[4 : 46] Bill tends to be very impatient with the church. Ah, those churches, you know, this is where real evangelism is done. Waste of time really going to church.

Much better to get out there on the beach and evangelise there. That's where we're really reaching the unbelievers. Churches, well, yeah, they have their place and it's a good thing.

But out on the streets, out in the preaching, out on the giving out the tracts. That's where evangelism is done. Eddie, the unbeliever bored by church worship.

Doris, the old believer, unhappy with all the changes in worship. Bill, a zealous evangelist. Who thinks that, you know, perhaps all the time through the church service he's saying, I wonder how much longer the minister's going to preach on.

I want to get out in the open air before it gets dark and do some evangelism. A couple of points arise from those people.

[5 : 47] Number one, worship is an upfront concern. We looked at this yesterday briefly. There are hundreds and thousands of Dorises in South Africa, from what I've heard from you, certainly in Britain.

People who've been Christians for ages, or at least have been churchgoers for ages, who are really upset and confused about this matter of worship, which since the, especially since the growth of the charismatic movement, has brought about a great revolution in the worship of evangelical churches. It's an upfront issue. It's one that ties, affects our emotions. I think I said last night, to one or two of you, I think after the question time, the other night when we were singing, When Peace Like a River, I suddenly found myself getting very emotional.

Pre-church ministers are allowed to get emotional once a year, I think. Just checking with the others, you know. But I really, it really got to me. And I was thinking, well, you know, why was that? And then I was recalling, you know, I could remember singing that in the church where I was converted. And singing it then in the church where the Lord really blessed me under a reformed preaching of Malcolm Evans.

[7 : 04] And, you know, that hymn had so many associations. Singing it probably for the first time for a good number of years. All those things came back. It's precious to me.

And worship is like that. It's a tearjerker, isn't it? It's something with deep associations of our upbringings, our homes, our past experiences.

It also affects our aesthetic tastes, as well as our intellects. It somehow expresses the sense of belonging.

You know, when you go home, my family or some of my roots are down in Devon. And when I was young, every holiday I used to go down there and stay with my grandparents.

And I loved it down there. And when I go down to Devon now to see my mother who's moved down there, get into Devon and open the car window. And there's a smell that's Devon.

[8 : 07] It's evocative of Devon. And all those associations come back in. And there's a sort of feel about worship, isn't there? The familial.

All these things. It's not so much at the intellectual level. It's almost at the subconscious level. And there's a security in the familial.

A security in mother's home cooking. In the worship that we're used to, that we love. No wonder that worship is an upfront issue.

But it's not only an upfront issue for people like Doris. It's an upfront issue for people like Eddie. So often it's the excuse of people for not going to church. And it's an upfront issue in a way with people like Bill.

Zealous evangelists often see the church as something of a hindrance to evangelism. But also, and this is the point I want to get to, these three people that I outlined to you, their situations raise this one question.

[9 : 13] What is the connection? What is the relationship between worship and evangelism? You see, Eddie, if you like, from the unbeliever's perspective, might say to us, well, I might get evangelized if it wasn't for worship.

It's a barrier to my evangelism. Of course, Eddie wouldn't put it like that. Doris says, this new vicar is so concerned for evangelism, he's destroying our worship.

And Bill says, oh, I wish this worship would get over a bit more quickly, then I could get on with the evangelism. Eddie and Bill seem to agree that the two don't mix.

And Doris says, well, if that's evangelism, and this is worship, I'd rather they didn't mix. If evangelism means abandoning the old ways and precious ways of worship, Doris would rather drop evangelism.

What is the connection between worship and evangelism? Okay, that's the question we're looking at this afternoon. Are they right? Are these two things separate things?

[10:27] Things that are to be kept separate and distinct from one another? One book on Christian worship says, the corporate worship of true believers is basically different from a gathering designed for evangelistic purposes.

That's a reformed man writing. He says, worship is different from evangelism. My title shows what I think of that. Worship as evangelism.

Let's begin with point number one. The Bible sees worship as the supreme activity of Christ's church. I want to be very, very clear on this.

There is nothing more important than worshipping God. Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

I have to acknowledge that's a quotation, not my phrase. In case you didn't notice. But it is. It's the chief end of man and it's the chief end of the church.

[11:43] It's what the church will do forever and ever and ever in heaven. Worship. The church will not need to have Sunday school classes in heaven.

The church will not need to have conferences in heaven because the whole life of the whole church will be to praise God without ceasing forever and ever.

It's what the church will do in heaven and it's what we're training for now. It's why God saved us. God saved us. He chose us from all eternity so that we should be to the praise of His glorious grace.

Of Him and through Him and to Him are all things to whom be glory forever and ever. The great doxology of predestination Romans chapter 11 at the end.

The great purpose of all things is to present in the presence of God a spotless worshipping church.

[12:56] Worship then is the supreme activity of Christ's church. And it's the summit of our Christian living.

It's the summit of our Christian living. There's a lovely description I read once of an old man who died and in his obituary it was said for him each day was Sabbath and each Sabbath was heaven. Isn't that lovely? For him each day was Sabbath each day was the Lord's day and each Sabbath each Sunday when he went to church and worshipped God was heaven.

It's the summit of our Christian living. Please notice my words carefully. I said it's a summit it's a peak it's the high point of a whole range of mountains.

Our whole life is worship. Our whole life is raised up in the joy of serving Jesus in our hospitals in our homes wherever we are as we've been reminded this conference.

[14:02] Whatever we do we do all to the glory of God and we enjoy it's our joy to be in the kingdom of God. But the worship of the church is the great peak that stands up even above that wonderful mountain range.

It's not an oasis in the desert. It's not a completely different activity from what we're doing all the time. It's concentrated. It's the summit of a life of worship.

I don't need to emphasize that anymore. The Bible sees worship as the supreme activity of Christ's church. But this is the point that I really want you to look at.

This is the theological meat of what I'm trying to say to you this afternoon. My second heading would be that the Bible sees worship as a profoundly evangelistic activity.

This worship which is the supreme activity of the church the Bible sees it as a profoundly evangelistic activity.

[15:13] Let me read that quote again that I want to disagree with. The corporate worship of true believers is basically different from a gathering designed for evangelistic purposes.

I think that's a false dichotomy. And let me show you why. Evidence number one. 1 Corinthians 14 verses 23 to 25.

Of course the context is this chapter about the exercise or the mis-exercise of certain spectacular spiritual gifts in the church of Corinth.

You may occasionally have had reason to discuss it or consider it. It's not that subject that I want to get into today. It's just this verse verse 23 really and verse 24 and 5.

If therefore the whole church should assemble together and all speak in tongues that is in its unknown languages and an ungifted man or unbelievers enter if your church is having its worship service with this unintelligible and uninterpreted tongue speaking going on and an unbeliever comes in will they not say that you are mad?

[16:30] What does it matter Paul? Worship is for believers. Worship is something not to do with unbelievers. Worship is not meant to do anything for unbelievers.

What does it matter if an unbeliever comes in and thinks we are mad? Isn't the cross foolishness? But remember Paul is using this as an argument against that unintelligible tongue speaking. verse 24 but if all prophesy remember that prophesy was the speaking of a message from God in the language of the people there it was intelligible.

Okay we don't need to get into what prophesy was or is or isn't but it's an intelligible message from God. If all are prophesying and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters he is convicted by all he is called to account by all the secrets of his heart are disclosed and so he will fall on his face and worship God declaring that God is certainly among you.

Now Paul is not saying well this may happen or on the other hand this may happen. No. These things are an argument why you shouldn't have an unintelligible worship that an unbeliever will think is mad but it's an argument for having a worship so that if and when an unbeliever comes in he may be convicted and fall down and worship God.

[18:02] The Bible sees worship as a profoundly evangelistic activity. I wonder too if there is meant to be an implied connection in Acts chapter 2 verses 46 and 47.

the Pentecostal church with a big P and a big E and a big N and a big T you know what I mean. Aren't we all?

The Pentecostal church day by day continuing with one mind in the temple and breaking bread from house to house they were taking their meal together with gladness and sincerity of heart praising God and having favour with all the people.

Here you have the picture of the church meeting in Solomon's Portico that great sort of open market area if that's the right phrase that was around the temple proper the great open gathering place in the centre of the city I'm afraid I don't know the geography of your cities the Trafalgar Square of Jerusalem and the church gathered together these 3,000 who were converted on the day of Pentecost there they were in that open area in the corner and what were they doing?

Day by day they were praising God and the people saw they had favour with the people people could see and hear what was going on and Luke doesn't draw a connection doesn't say therefore and as a result but he simply says and the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved I say is there a link?

[19:50] what is the link? they're the worshipping church and they're the people taking note having favour among the people and being added to the church the Bible sees worship as a profoundly evangelistic activity in 1 Corinthians Paul is concerned that the worship should be evangelistic in Acts let me put it like this Luke observes that their worship was evangelistic go back to the Old Testament and to the message of so many of the Psalms here we see a linkage between God's people praising him for their redemption and an impact on heathen people Psalm 126 verses 1 and 2 when the Lord brought back the captive ones of Zion we were like those who dream then our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with joyful shouting what's that but a picture of the people come back to Jerusalem praising God the days are coming when not in Jerusalem or anywhere other set aside for a temple will you worship God but you will worship in spirit and truth those people came back to Jerusalem praising God for his great works we worship God and praise him for his great works of redemption as we were hearing this morning and look our tongue was filled with joyful shouting then they said among the heathen nations the Lord has done great things for them the church worships the heathen are impressed the heathen acknowledge the works of God

Psalm 105 verse 1 oh give thanks to the Lord call upon his name that's the first term that's used to describe worship in the Bible in those days I'm weak on my genealogies but you know in Genesis chapter 4 is it in those days men began to call upon the name of the Lord began to worship God together public worship if you like oh give thanks to the Lord call upon his name worship God make known his deeds among the peoples sing to him sing praises to him speak of all his wonders glory in his holy name let the heart of those who seek the Lord be glad you see that that's a description of worship it's an exaltation to worship but in the middle of it there's that phrase make known his

deeds among the nations the Bible doesn't say there's two separate things your worship and evangelism no they go together when you worship

God the nations say hey the Lord's done great things for them how are they going to say that unless they hear our praising and here the command is to praise God and make known God to praise God and to proclaim God the two are interwoven Psalm 51 that great psalm of repentance has a similar linkage Psalm 51 verse 12 I'm trying so hard I know these in the metrical version and if I try to quote them I'll end up singing them to you so to spare you that I have to look them up exactly Psalm 51 verse 12 restore to me the joy of thy salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit the joy of salvation David wants to return to praising God to glorifying God to enjoying God then I will teach transgressors thy ways and sinners will be converted to thee where do we go when we turn from our sins and go back to praise the God who saved us and joy in God's salvation we go to worship what does

David say when I joy in your salvation then I will teach transgressors your way and sinners will be turned to you the worship of the penitent and forgiven leads to the conversion of sinners and Psalm 40 verse 3 he put a new song in my mouth he took me from the fearful pit and from the miry clay and he put a new song in my mouth a song of praise to our God many will see and fear and will trust in the Lord what's our worship it's coming together to praise him who has taken us from the fearful pit and put our feet on the rock and what happens when we worship our saviour many will see it and be converted and then Psalm 47 verses 1 and 2 oh clap your hands all peoples oh don't clap them if you're reformed but clap them but don't hold them up oh clap your hands all peoples shout to God with the voice of joy for the Lord most high is to be feared a great king over all the earth he subdues peoples under us and nations under our feet how does Jesus lead his people to conquer the nations not by destroying them but by drawing them to him the days are coming says Zechariah when ten men out of every nation will take hold of the skirts of him that is a Jew and say we will go with you because we've heard that God is with you now say to us can we come to your church because we've heard what great things the Lord is doing as we rejoice in God as we praise God for his wonderful grace for his sovereignty the Lord most high who is to be feared who is king over all the earth what happens he subdues the people under us he brings the nations to into subjection to the gospel not as our slaves but as our fellow brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ do you get the point

I'm stressing this because I think it's such a neglected area or it's such a sensitive area that I need to show you a real clear biblical basis for what I'm trying to put across this afternoon these psalms say that praising God that's worship makes an impact on the lives of unbelievers there is a linkage between worship and evangelism let me give you a couple of perhaps more general theological arguments why we should never separate worship and evangelism as if they were separate activities one is the very nature of the church which worships what is this body that meets together to worship God what is it well it's the church of Jesus Christ but what is the church of Jesus Christ it is in a word a missionary society it is a church set up to spread the gospel throughout the world [27 : 59] Jesus gave to his apostles the great commission go into all the world they were to be his witnesses when they asked him Lord will you now restore the kingdom to Israel he told them he gave them a double answer to that question you ask about the time the time is not for you to know and you talk about the kingdom to Israel let me tell you my kingdom is not a restoration of the kingdom of Israel my kingdom is the whole world and you will be my witnesses when the Holy Spirit comes upon you in Jerusalem Judea Samaria the uttermost parts of the earth now the apostles are the foundation of the Christian church and I know I never studied civil engineering and I've never built a house but forgive me if I'm wrong I always assume that the walls rest on the foundations or to put it another way where the foundations go it's preferable that the walls go the same place and Jesus sent the apostles into all the world with the gospel and Jesus by that says my church is a going into all the world church to evangelize and as we were reminded yesterday very rightly not just to make converts but to make Christians to make disciples to disciple the nations the church Jesus didn't say look I want you to be a church so that you know you can really have fellowship together when I'm gone and you can really build each other up and if you get the opportunity you might occasionally send one or two people out to do some evangelism and it would be nice if sometimes there was some way of reaching out to others it's not that evangelism is an incidental activity or one activity among many that the church has on its agenda no the church is an evangelizing agency it is a mission society it is a going concern that's what the church is you see I

put it another way if God had wanted a church to worship him but not to evangelize why does he leave us in the world when he calls us to Jesus Christ if worship is the great end and really the only important end then why when we're converted don't we get taken straight up to heaven to join the perfect throng of the spirits of just men made perfect if that's what it means but the the ransom church in heaven why did Jesus leave his church here on earth and one great reason is that because he ordained that the word should be preached not by angels but by the church the church is a mission society the very church which worships

God is an evangelizing agency our worship is the worship of a mission society so as we were reminded about Jesus being Lord you can't have Jesus without the lordship of Jesus so the church can't stop being an evangelizing agency while it worships it is an evangelizing agency or to use another biblical idea the church is a kingdom of priests now you know what a priest was a priest was someone who had a great responsibility in the worship of God and in teaching the people to worship Malachi chapter 2 verses 6 to 8 sets out the responsibilities of the priest the sons of Levi the priest's job was to teach the rest of the community and to lead them in worship ok that's why God gave that one tribe to be the priests of Israel but in Exodus 19 that crucial passage that I referred to yesterday which is the if you like the prototype the first meeting of the congregation of God's settled people the church for all time gathered around the presence of God

God said to them in Exodus 19 verse 6 you are a kingdom of priests what did he mean by that well he wasn't denying that Levi were the priests for Israel what he was saying was that the nation of Israel had a role towards the rest of the world just as the Levites were to provide the priests for all the rest of Israel so Israel this community was to act as the priest of the world they were to lead the world to worship God they were to teach the world to praise God and it's that thing that's worked out in those psalms Israel experiences God's grace and the world sees it and acknowledges God that's Israel acting as a kingdom of priests but that very phrase again shows that Israel was called by God not to be an ingrown private little huddle even though God nurtured them in a kind of greenhouse through the wilderness and through those

Old Testament years but always the aim the goal the reason ultimately for their calling as that of Abraham was I will bless you and in you all the nations of the world will be blessed and you know in Revelation chapter 1 that same description is used of the Christian church he has made us a kingdom of priests that simply means we are we are here we exist in order to minister to the world in order to lead the world to know God and to worship God the very nature of the church which worships demands that we never forget our evangelistic calling but also another theological reason the very character of the God we worship the very character of the God we worship demands that we never lose sight of evangelism ok let's let's be selfish from it let's forget all those unbelievers out there with all their needs let's simply concentrate on God here we are an assembly of Christians let's really study God and really learn from the Bible everything about God and let's let's look at the God who has changed our lives by his sovereign grace and revealed himself to us let's look at let's marvel at the wonder of God's justifying grace what sort of God is he he's a God who loves to save sinners a God who is waiting to be gracious not meaning that he's sort of putting off the moment when he has to be gracious but he is eagerly he is all attentive he is that is his great purpose that is the thing that is dominating his mind young people if you if you have a boyfriend or a girlfriend and they're studying in Cape Town and you're in Johannesburg one day you may go to the airport and because they're coming for the weekend and you are waiting for them at the airport you're waiting and you're thinking you're longing for them you're already anticipating all that it will mean when they arrive now I don't mean that God is a passive helpless out of control person just waiting helplessly for us to open our hearts to him no please don't take it in that way but our God is waiting to be gracious in that this is what is on his heart this is what really matters to him if we may dare so to speak this is what obsesses the thinking of our God he loves to find sinners and to justify them and you see we began worshipping God rejoicing that he'd saved us but when we come to think of how [37 : 18] God saved us we realise how passionately concerned God is to save others or we get into deeper things and we say well it's great to come together and to rejoice in the profound mysteries of God's election of God's sovereignty but what is God's sovereignty how is it exercised God is in control of all things God predestinates all things according to his eternal purpose but how does God exercise his sovereignty what did he choose to do he chose to elect a vast multitude that no one can number out of every tribe and kindred and people and tongue and we began thinking about election and we're reminded again that our electing God is well the

God who has that great plan to gather in what's another word for that but to evangelise the world God's love if we become deeply devotional in our worship and think of the love of God God is love and we ponder and we think perhaps in deep theology of the love of the father for the son and that there was nothing that the father would refuse the son and that they dwelt in that eternal world of love how greatly the father loves and delights in his son in the mystery of the holy trinity but as we ponder upon that we have to say and we have to come to the staggering conclusion that grace means that God loves guilty sinners more than he loves himself

God so loved the world that it pleased him to bruise his own son how can we square that into our doctrine and can it be amazing love love but you see again we began thinking of the love of God of the mysterious relationships of the trinity and it's driven us again says God so loved the world that whosoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life you cannot look at God without having your heart and mind turned to the subject of the evangelism of the world that's not to have your mind turned away from

God for it is written on the heart of God the very character of the God we worship demands that we evangelize that we never forget evangelism and put it this way if we want to worship God forgive me if my theology is very crude we want to make God happy we want to thank God is our father and you fathers you mothers you know that nothing gives you a glow in your heart more than when your kids come and actually remember to say thank you mum thank you for those Christmas presents thank you for my birthday party or when they've been away at college for a term and suddenly realized that there were worse trials in life than a mum and a dad they come back and in an emotional evening when tiredness has broken down the reserve they blurt out mum and dad thank you for all you've done for me doesn't that make your heart glow well you know what makes God's heart glow there is joy in heaven over every sinner that repents my friends sometimes perhaps at this conference some of our sessions when we've heard of

Jesus as our redeemer and our hearts bursting within us we want to praise him we want to glorify him we want to we want to show our love to him we want to we want to make the heart of Jesus glow because we're so grateful to him well how better to bring joy in heaven out of gratitude to what Jesus has done than to lead others to him and to be able to say in all reverence Lord here are more who've come to rejoice in what you've done for them that's a supreme act of worship to bring other people to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their saviour makes heaven ring with joy and worship isn't that what we want to do and not only that but our worship does and is in God's grace meant to encourage us we worship to encourage and stimulate one another in the grace of God there's a lovely phrase in Acts 15

[43 : 21] Paul and Barnabas have returned from their first missionary journey they've been in Antioch for a while then they're going up to Jerusalem to deal with the problems that have arisen and on the way they stop at the various churches and they tell them about their mission journey about all the people who've become believers and there's a lovely phrase it says they told them about their journey bringing great joy to all the brethren my friends can you imagine or do you know if you're privileged in God's grace how much more joy there is in our worship services when we know that week by week there are those coming in amongst who are falling down and worshipping God and acknowledging that our God is indeed the Lord what a buzz it gives to our worship these are all proofs of my thesis that the Bible sees worship as a profoundly evangelistic activity and that we have separated we have put asunder things that God has joined if we separate our worship from evangelism why is it though that we tended to do that well I think there are perhaps two reasons one is that we have reacted we have overreacted to

Arminian and entertainment evangelism the era of the big crusade gradually instead when it first began when people like Whitfield went around there was no question if you were in Northampton in Massachusetts that you would you could and praise God you would come under the converting power of the word as your pastor preached week by week in the church especially when your pastor was Jonathan Edwards but every so often George Whitfield came to town and then there were special times and maybe in God's grace even more people were converted so that was a sort of extra a sort of bonus but gradually evangelicals came to the idea that well the ordinary weekly worship of the church was one thing nobody got converted then the only time people get converted is when the big evangelist comes to town and holds a revival and the big mission mentality of evangelism led to a mental disjunction of the two we need to get some people converted we better set up a big mission no I'm saying remember nothing wrong with a

George Whitfield coming to town which he would as an expert the mistake was not in having big events or special meetings but in allowing that to make us feel that people couldn't get converted in the weekly meetings and then of course perhaps through those sort of big meetings and with all the glitz and declension of the 20th century more and more these big events became totally unrelated to an ordinary church service they became sort of entertainment events there were all the unique and rare activities and the specialized style of preaching and all these things and you see we tend to think well that's evangelism if you want to reach unbelievers you've got to put on something glitzy to entertain them then maybe you can slip the message in when they're not looking you've got to put on some spectacular event no good expecting a believer to be converted in an ordinary service and also I think perhaps we made this false deduction all these evangelists it's sad isn't it with these scandals in the states that the word evangelist is a sort of snort word in these days these evangelists have all their false theology they call people to get up out of their seats they tell them if you put your hand up you're a Christian they tell them all these errors evangelizing involves pouring out bad theology we don't want that we'll keep so far away from that we won't do anything that sounds like that sort of

Arminianism and so we just turn and we say the business of the church is to teach our members yes an Arminian evangelist dares to stand up as once was recorded and tell the people how Christ had died and God was now waiting to see if anybody would take up the offer and God was so disappointed because so few of them have taken up the offer and his feeling that his son's death may have been wasted and said the evangelist poor God become a Christian out of pity for that poor helpless God in heaven and reformed people said if that's evangelism no we'll keep right away from it and we won't say anything to sins we'll just get on with teaching and studying and thinking about how great God is my friends that's an overreaction we don't want that God dishonouring evangelism but we do want glory evangelism let me ask you can you think of anywhere that you would rather bring that unconverted friend that you love so much and long for them to be a Christian can you think of anywhere where you'd rather bring them than to the sort of worship service that we looked at yesterday the ideal worship service what can we say about it number one God is here God is here in the majesty of his sovereign grace God is speaking here God is speaking through the wonderful simplicity and directness of his word and here there is a whole gathering of people who love God who are living epistles who are showing here today in this service that they love the Lord their God with all their heart and soul and strength and mind and God is dealing with them and they are sensing the reality and they are responding to it my friends wouldn't you rather bring that unbeliever that you long to be converted to that place where God has promised to meet his people and assured us that he will speak and where they will be surrounded by proofs of the reality of God's grace what better place to evangelize an unbeliever than the worship service of a gospel church ah but you see that's our other reason why evangelism and worship has been separated let me tell you about a traumatic experience in my ministry it happened some six or seven years ago one of my very best members who I love dealing have a profound respect for and is tremendously supportive and appreciative of the ministry and of me personally she said to me one morning after the service oh I'm afraid I won't be in church tonight

[51 : 51] I've got a friend from work coming to lunch with me and they're not a Christian and you know they've never met the gospel at all and I feel I need to take them to that church and she mentioned another church I don't feel I can bring them here to me that was a ministry changing seed that was sown and I had to ask myself if we are what we claim to be why does that lovely Christian person feel that she cannot bring a friend to my church a friend that she longs to meet with God and the Lord Jesus Christ and I think if you questioned her about it she would say oh I know the people here love the Lord I know they take his words seriously but the service can be so dull the people can seem so distant and uninterested in visitors and the preaching can be very profound and helpful to Christians but I don't think there would be anything in the ordinary sermons here that would be a challenge or would be relevant to the serious unbeliever and you see no wonder our people separate evangelism from worship if our worship is stereotyped traditionalised if it has not got that dynamic sense of

God all the things we were talking about yesterday the rest of the service being just the preliminaries the sermon being a kind of teaching session of the pastor sharing with the congregation the things that he studied from Berkhoff with a little help from Paul in the past week no sense of God speaking to this people and gripping them by their hair and holding them up in his

presence no wonder if our worship has degenerated into that that our members conclude there's no link between worship and evangelism what are the implications of what I've said if worship is to be viewed as evangelism somebody may say does this mean that you're saying that all our services should be simple evangelistic services that we should stop preaching about anything that's sort of a bit deep and simply preach the gospel every service is that what you're saying not at all our worship must be a response to the whole of God's revealed truth our worship must take the whole Bible it's all profitable it's all profitable for reproof and correction and instruction in righteousness but it it doesn't say then that you're to go through the Bible you know like there are these red letter Bibles that mark off the words of Jesus that he actually spoke in red as if they were somehow in an extra way the word of God not sure it's a good idea at all but often people talk as if you could go through the Bible and have I don't know a green letter Bible and that the bits that are in black are for teaching and the bits that are in green are for evangelism and you know if you for an evangelistic service you pick a green text and for a teaching service you expound a black text my Bible ain't like that my Bible's all in the same colour and every part of the Bible is potentially evangelistic and every part of the Bible is potentially teaching if you cannot be edified and taught by some of the quotes simple evangelistic texts there's something wrong with you for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son is that a simple evangelistic text or is it the most profound statement that's ever been read or thought on by human beings in all of history

God loved the world that loathsome anti-God community of rebels God so loved them you know you could preach the most profound teaching sermon on that passage and if you teach and preach the truth whatever the passage in biblical balance and application God may well use it I remember the first young man who was converted in London under my ministry by the grace of God he wasn't converted through my preaching it was the first time we had a house meeting and I asked one of my youngest and rawest young men Christian man to lead it and God used his ministry to awaken and convert one who is now a very precious member we had this house meeting Roddy

Roddy spoke on the subject of backsliding backsliding and how Christians fall away and the problems of Christians falling away and how we can get back Roddy had never really spoken before and he rather stumbled through it nine o'clock the next morning the phone rang and it was Angus on the phone Angus had been there the night before and I'd said to somebody on the way home what a pity if we'd known that Angus was coming we could have taken a gospel subject because Angus was one we were really concerned for he wasn't a Christian he was only coming to church frankly because he was so homesick in London and so lonely nine o'clock the next morning Angus phoned up please could I see him and we met at the church we spent two hours together talking and I ended up giving him I think it was John Benton's little book coming to faith in Christ well Angus try and read through that see what you make of it that was at about midday four o'clock he phoned again

[58 : 51] I've read the booklet three times he said can I see you again and Angus that night came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and I said to him Angus what was it in the talk last night that awakened you it was about backsliding it was for Christians I know he said and I realized as I sat there listening to it that it had nothing to do with me at all that I was outside and this was something that I couldn't backslide because I wasn't a Christian if you're preaching a sermon on backsliding and you're really trying to deal with a problem among your Christians there's an evangelistic application don't finish your sermon without saying maybe there's somebody here tonight and you're thinking well there was nothing for me in that because I'm not a Christian at all is that how you felt that it didn't ring any bells with you at all you've never had a problem with this you've never been bothered by it my friends you can't backslide because you've never been saved and if the backslider is in a bad condition what condition are you in there's you know a teaching sermon for Christians but one that maybe by God's grace either unconsciously why not deliberately used as evangelistic last night Andrew made a very good point in the discussion somebody asked about that point how can you tell the difference between a backslider and someone who's never been converted Andrew said do you remember well in a way we can't tell the difference but in a sense it doesn't matter because the remedy is the same in both cases the remedy is repentance and coming back to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ or coming to the cross for the first time Thomas Halliburton says somewhere the secret of Christian living is to come always to the cross but to come always as if it was the first time we'd come and you see that's why whatever sin you're dealing with whatever problem you're dealing with in the congregation it must have and it can have

an evangelistic reference there is no black green distinction in the Bible there is no cutting up of the Bible into evangelistic and teaching portions that's the fallacy I think of the old system where you had teaching for the saints at the morning service and evangelism in the evening service what do you do with the young couple who come in the morning who are non-Christians with their baby but one or other can't come out in the evening whereas all your Christians are dear old saints who are there in the evening as well well if you preach the word with relevant biblical application there will be a message God has commissioned preachers to rightly divide the word of truth and Ken Cameron's father who's my professor of Greek at the New Free Church College I can remember him telling us that the word used there the word for divide is really the word apportion rightly apportion the word he used a lovely illustration he says that's what mother does when she cuts the cake at tea time she cuts a big piece for daddy and a little piece for little

Freddie who's just two she cuts the cake suitably for the people who she knows are there and that's the business of the preacher his business is not just to understand the word in a vacuum but to have his people on his heart and to have a right sized proportion for everybody no you can preach the word and you can teach the saints and evangelize sinners there's no problem there oh yes there is a problem if you have an unbalanced use of God's word if you're fresh from the free church college perhaps with an added degree from Westminster theological seminary as well so you know all the theology in the world and you know you're a young minister age 26 this is your big chance now your congregation and you announce that you're going to preach a series of 23 sermons on the doctrine of supralapsarianism in the prophet

Haggai now if you do that you may well have a problem if many unbelievers come in I would also suggest that though they may be too gracious to say it you will also totally fail to teach your own people you will totally fail to minister there may be one or two hyper academic types who revel in the sheer mystery of it all but those saints that you think you're teaching you are not teaching and I would even dare I'm not going to develop it or defend it here to make the thesis that if your preaching is not the sort of preaching that could have an evangelistic impact on your congregation neither will it be the sort of preaching that really edifies your congregation because we are concerned not to teach but to edify and the teaching that edifies will I suggest to you be the same the very same that God also uses to convert and challenge the unbeliever but somebody else says look you know you criticized our traditional sort of services and we like those old ways we like those things surely

[65 : 18] God is sovereign isn't he we're Calvinists we believe that God can use the most foolish things to save the lost wasn't Spurgeon converted through a very inadequate preacher you know the story of how the preacher couldn't the stated preacher couldn't get to this chapel because of the snow and somebody preached who was very poor and ineffective as a preacher but he just took at his text look unto him and be saved that's right look unto him and be saved and he just said again and again young man look unto him and be saved it wasn't a grace you'd think surely Spurgeon must have been to win Spurgeon there must have been some sermon but God is sovereign and you say well does it matter we believe in the sovereignty of God God can use our worship services if he wants to convert someone why should we change do you know the story of when

William Carey said shouldn't they put together a mission to the un-evangelized and go out and do something about the heathen it said that old John Ryland said sit down young man when God wants to convert the heathen he can do it without your help or mine of course God can God could God spoke through Balaam's ass didn't he but that is not the point that's theological time terms the heresy that we call hyper Calvinism I don't like that word I grudge poor John Calvin's name being linked with such a denial of the gospel I wish there was some other term that was more nasty to give to it I don't like to think that anybody is hyper me in following and loving dear John Calvin but you know what I mean when I say that is a perversion a denial a contradiction of the gospel no no my friends if you take that to the logical extreme why preach are you preaching at all God could teach these Christians without you preaching or preparing why do you make all that effort to prepare your sermons because you believe that God uses the preaching of the word and God uses the intelligent the intelligible Paul's point in 1 Corinthians 14 the intelligible worship of his people the relevant worship of his people to get across to unbelievers the glories of his grace and to cut them to the heart what then must we do number one we must make sure that our services are intelligible that was Paul's point in 1 Corinthians 14 if an unbeliever comes in and you're all

jabbering away in unknown tons he'll think you're mad and it was one of the great reformation doctrines indeed it was very often the point on which the conflict broke out in its most fierce sense the fact that they insisted on having the bible in the language of the people why did they do that strange enough it was the

Catholics who said God is sovereign he can use the vulgar he can use the Latin services to convert people and it was the Calvinists and the reformers who said no we must have the people must hear the word of God in their own language God must speak to them in the language that the plowmen will understand Martin Luther said his job was to as he translated the German bible was to make the holy spirit speak German speak like a German and he used down to earth language in a lovely passage he discusses the crucial and controversial passage where the angel came to the virgin Mary and said hail Mary full of grace Luther said in a passage what I should really have put in my translation what the angel would have said if he was a

German was hello there Mary but he said if I put that in my bible all the papists would have gone out and hanged themselves that was the great that was what the reformation was all about that was why they introduced congregational singing because this highfalutin anthem singing up in the trained choir in the cathedrals the people couldn't hear what was going on so they took the psalms and the passages of scripture the magnificat these sort of things and they rendered them into pretty ordinary simple ballad poetry and they took the tunes from the taverns and they set these little simple poems to the tunes of the tavern that the people knew so that they could know what they were singing and the people sang them in the streets they were the first pop songs Dumergou in his writings about

[71 : 04] Calvin has a lovely chapter on the way that the psalms and songs of the early reformers went to what we might say the top of the hit parade in France they were sung everywhere they brought the message the worship of the church down into the language and the idiom of the people our worship must be intelligible intelligible at this level people who come in must know what's going on if things happen in the service with no word of explanation and no introduction suddenly everybody else may be standing up the visitors may just stand up in time for everybody else to sit down I do want to emphasize the point that Andrew made last night in leading our worship and making it meaningful we must be very careful we need to prepare carefully that we don't ramble on as we minister sometimes tend to do between each thing we must have a crisp way of quickly introducing and explaining what we're going to do now be intelligible if you don't want to feel make an unbeliever or visitor feel pressurized by the collection say we're now having our offering time this is when we give our gifts to the work of the church if you're a visitor here and you don't want to give please don't feel embarrassed just pass the plate on to the next person that lets somebody know where they are it's intelligible that's what you mean isn't it that's what you feel why not say it intelligible and knowing what's happening in the language of our prayers every minister should read

Spurgeon's lecture on public praying in his book lectures to my students where he speaks about the obscurities of our praying we may need dear friends to look again at some of our beloved hymns I was talking to you yesterday about worms that bend the knee we've sung them so many times we know what they mean we love them dearly but what's an unbeliever going to make when he hears a congregation singing a verse like he comes through thickest films of vice to bring celestial day to bring his quickening ray and on the eyeballs of the blind to poor celestial day thickest films of vice what are they talking about and you see this is where we need to think evangelistically as we do our worship we know what it means do we we do know what it means we sing it but do we ever think what the unbeliever is going to make of it will he not think we're mad intelligibility and in the style and content of our sermons

Dr. Lloyd Jones' sermons are great for the period in which he preached he used language that certainly any educated person could use I think that was the doctor's special ministry to educated people not hyper educated people but to people with a general education as we were reminded he began his ministry among the steel workers of Paul Talbot but the doctor spoke it was the language of a doctor talking to serious yes dealing with big issues but not using obscure and convoluted language making it so plain Thomas Chalmers in his lectures on theology has a great lecture on the difference between theology as studied in the college and taught from the pulpit and he would say that the great problem with so many of our sermons is that they are fit for the college lecture not for the pulpit and he tells a lovely story of a young student who was invited to preach at a congregation with the possibility of being their minister and he was so excited that he got out his best sermon and

instead of being called as a minister he ended up being complained of as a heretic to the presbytery for he announced as his text

I am going to preach to you today on the immateriality of the soul and the elders wrote a letter and said this young man came to preach to us and he said it didn't matter if we had a soul or not we need to look at intelligibility plain simple style Bishop Ryle has a marvellous lecture in his book *The Upper Room* about simplicity in preaching second thing we need is to have the heart of Christ we need perhaps especially pastors with the heart of Christ fellow ministers what it boils down to is this when you're preparing your sermon and your service when you're going to church on the Sunday and in the vestry waiting to go into the pulpit do you have a heart like

Jesus that wept over Jerusalem do you have a heart for the lost John Knox Lord give me Scotland or I die Samuel Rutherford if one soul from Anworth will meet me at Christ's right hand then heaven will be two heavens in Emmanuel's land John Calvin that great teacher that's why you need to read his letters one of his letters which I think is in the banner of truth little paperback a letter that he wrote to five young men in prison in Lyon they'd been his students he'd taught them and they'd gone to pastor and preach in France to evangelize in France and they'd been betrayed immediately and arrested and they were soon to be burnt at the stake and John

[77 : 36] Calvin poured out his heart in consolation and exhortation and encouragement to them read those letters and you'll see John Calvin wasn't a mind on links he was all heart he had a heart for his people my friends you need to pray for your ministers that they will have and keep and develop a heart for the lost you see being a minister there are so many pressures on us to get absorbed in the details and the administration of our church to become hardened to the emotional impact of the word by our over familiarity with it to become so wounded by our many failures and disappointments that we will harden our hearts and say well I'll never again I'll never again allow myself to get so hopeful and so committed to somebody who I long for to be converted because I was so disappointed

I was so hurt when they went away and our human instinct our natural instinct is to harden our hearts and never fall in love again it's the same instinct and you need to pray for us that our hearts will continue to be the hearts of Christ my friends we need to be humbled also isn't it our temptation as reformed ministers to have the intellectual pride and satisfaction of pouring out heavy theology to an adoring studious congregation there's a thrill in that but my friends we must see that all our expertise in preaching is but filthy rags and we need to be humbled before God and ask his forgiveness ask God so to kill us slay us by his word that we will preach as dying men to dying men that as we stand in the pulpit we'll know that all this carefully prepared sermon and all this knowledge is in God's sight filthy rags but oh Lord please use it to the conversion sinners David McIntyre the son-in-law of Andrew Boner was principal of the BTI the Bible training institute in Glasgow he was a great teacher but one year he was very ill and he came back to his students when he got better and he began his first lecture saying gentlemen I have been to the gates of heaven and I have seen everything I ever did stained with sin we need that attitude if we are going to preach evangelistically or to put it another way if the gospel of grace is not gripping our lives how can we expect it to grip the lives of those unbelievers who come in we need pastors with Christ's heart very quickly to finish we need a people with Christ's mind you too need to be broken and revived yourselves you too need to recover that blessedness that you knew when first you saw the Lord because a large part of the impact of our worship services is when the unbelievers come in and they look and they look at you out of the corner of their eye as the whole service unfolds they notice the attentiveness or lack of it as you listen to the sermon they notice the way that you join in the singing and they conclude the Lord has done great things for them they say to you afterwards I'd like to know more you obviously are so blessed in this church can you tell me more more like Helen Roseby the missionary she concluded when she met a bunch of Christians they have got something that I want my friends how are people going to get that impression you can't put it on you need to be broken before God you need to pray for your pastors and for your services you need to pray for your communities pray pray pray you need to expect great things there's a congregation in the north of Scotland in a parish called Ross Skeen which is a great joy to us in the free church it's grown and doubled and trebled and quadruple I'm not surprised quite early on in the ministry of Kenny MacDonald there somebody said to me I met a member in their congregation and she said to me quite naturally and artlessly you know every Sunday morning in church we sit there before the service watching the door seeing who's going to come to church for the first time today people

have begun coming to church and people have been converted and the congregation she didn't mean in a passive way that that was all she was doing no but they were expecting visitors to come to church they were expecting people to come in through the door do you? do you? how many first timers are you expecting in your church on Sunday? why not? expect great things from God and attempt great things for God we had a pastor called Dick Kaufman speaking to us and I am watching the time and he asked us this question how many of you in this congregation how many of you have invited brought non-Christian friends to church in this past year let me ask you how many of you have brought over a hundred non-Christian friends to your church this past year and we all went you got right the way down like Abraham pleading with God fifty twenty ten five why not if you haven't done it let me finish with this one of the I mentioned Ross Keane that's a great joy to us another great excitement to me is what God is doing in a reformed church in New York

[84 : 24] City Dr Tim Keller left Westminster Seminary in 1989 and went to Manhattan and started preaching there a church planting work the Presbyterian Church in America by 1991 the beginning of the year there were fifteen hundred people worshipping in that church and in June that year they were officially organised and I went over for the organising service and I met British people there and of course being typically reformed British people reformed church where did you worship in England you know were you with the reformed baptists or the FIEC or whatever and the first person I said it to said oh I wasn't a Christian in England at all but when I came to New York I was working in an office and somebody in the office said you must come along to our church and here are this minister in the church I go to and I spoke to somebody else oh you're from England which church were you in oh I was a Roman Catholic in England oh oh yeah well when I came to New York

I got into this flat and there was a girl in the flat who said you must come to our church and then I found something more I said to people oh are you members here in Redeemer it's Redeemer Presbyterian Church and they said rather embarrassing well actually no we belong to Trinity Baptist Church but they said we come to Redeemer we come to Redeemer because it's a church and a ministry that we feel we can bring our non-Christian friends to I'm not surprised that church has grown so quickly there's something about the ministry and the worship which makes the people feel that they want to invite their friends to or that they'll go there even if they're in another church because that's the sort of church they want to bring their friends to my friends that's a reformed church Trinity Baptist I think we would put in a sort of Arminian camp isn't that wonderful Arminians saying we'll go to the reformed church because there's the sort of worship and preaching we can take our friends to to be evangelised my friends why is it so unusual why do I have to tell you about a church in Manhattan that's growing worship as evangelism may God bless his word can we just I think I do want you to respond to God's word by singing if we can quickly do this your dinner will stay hot or at least warm number 41 this psalm really says everything that I've been trying to say it's a prayer to God to bless us so that the whole world will come to know him and praise him number 41 oh God to us show mercy and bless us in thy grace cause thou to shine upon us the brightness of thy face that saw thy way most holy on earth may soon be known and unto every people thy saving grace be shown

O God let all men praise thee let all the nations sing in every land that praises and songs of gladness ring for thou thou shalt judge the people in truth and righteousness and through thee and the nations shall I just rule confess O God let people praise thee let all the nations sing for a way