

The Lloyd-Jones Memorial Lecture  
at the John Owen Centre for Theological Study  
24th September 2007

## Introduction

The subject of my lecture this evening is ‘The Evangelistic Preaching of Lloyd-Jones – Lessons for Today’. I have chosen this subject because I believe that we need to give very careful thought to the whole matter of evangelism in evangelical and Reformed churches today. It is a subject which, I believe, merits our closest attention at this time.

There can be little doubt, I think, that Reformed churches in Britain face an evangelistic crisis. The crisis does not consist in a lack of evangelistic activity. The crisis consists in the fact that, despite a great deal of activity, we see in our churches relatively few conversions from the world – by which I mean the conversion of men, women and children from an entirely non-Christian, unbelieving background. It is true, thankfully, that some branches of evangelicalism, and some Reformed churches, are experiencing real numerical growth. There are undoubtedly encouraging developments of various kinds in different evangelical churches across the country. Nevertheless, I suggest that, overall, the picture in evangelical and Reformed churches in Britain today is largely disappointing, in terms of numbers of conversions from the world.

Let me repeat. The crisis that we face is not due to a lack of evangelistic activity. There is generally, I suggest, a fairly high level of activity in our churches, the main aim of which is, one way or another, to reach unbelievers – tract distribution, book-stalls, friendship evangelism, men’s breakfasts, Christianity Explored groups, mothers and toddlers groups, and so on. I’m sure, too, that we are regularly reminded by those who preach to us of our responsibility as believers to share our faith with those around us, as opportunity arises, and, although we probably all experience some level of guilt at our failure to

witness to others as much as we feel we ought to, I’m sure that there is a significant amount of personal witnessing and evangelism taking place in our communities. No, the problem is not, lack of activity.

But if lack of activity is not the problem, what is? It is not my intention to provide a complete answer to that question – that would, in any case, be beyond me. But I do want to highlight this evening two aspects of our approach to evangelism which, I believe, warrant our serious and sustained attention – indeed, two areas in which what is needed is a thorough and urgent work of real reformation. I want to argue, firstly, that over the last few decades evangelism in British evangelicalism has suffered from a *serious imbalance* in its approach; and, secondly, that there are several aspects of our evangelistic preaching which may require some *serious attention*.

To help us in our analysis I have chosen to take as our example the evangelistic preaching of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones. I do so, not because I believe him to have been in some way infallible or beyond reproach. (I do not believe in hagiography.) I take him as our example, simply because here was a man who ministered over a lengthy period in our capital city, with very significant and evident evangelistic success. Though he eschewed publicity, and certainly never published numbers of conversions or anything of that sort, it is clear from anecdotal evidence that a large number of people, from many different backgrounds and walks of life, were converted under his long ministry. While he was the minister at Westminster Chapel, membership grew from about 520 at the end of the Second World War to around 700 in the 1960s, making it one of the largest churches, in terms of membership, in London. The numbers actually attending the services were, of course, significantly greater – one author states that, between 1948 and 1968, average attendance on a Sunday morning was around 1500; in the evenings, when the service was consistently

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and deliberately evangelistic, that number rose to around 2000.

I suggest to you, therefore, that here is a man whose evangelistic ministry is, at the very least, worth some study and attention and from whom we can learn, to the benefit of our own ministries. God, by his Spirit, chose to bless Lloyd-Jones's evangelistic ministry with fruit in the form of conversions, in a way which he has not chosen to bless the ministries of most of us who preach today. I accept, of course, that Lloyd-Jones was an exceptional man with exceptional gifts, and that we are, most of us at least, ordinary men and women, with ordinary gifts. Nevertheless, I am not convinced that that fact in itself provides a complete answer to the situation in which we find ourselves today. Of course, it may be that God, in his sovereignty and for his good and perfect reasons, is simply choosing not to bless us with conversions in any great numbers at this time. It may be that we are doing everything as we ought to, and that it is simply a matter of persevering in the same way, continuing in prayer, and hoping that sooner or later we shall see better days. But, personally, I think that that is not the answer either. As I have said, I believe that our approach and our practice at present require serious attention and, indeed, reform. I believe that Lloyd-Jones has some significant and important lessons for us, as we seek to engage in that reform.

### Serious imbalance

At the start of this lecture I suggested that there is some *serious imbalance* in our whole approach to evangelism today. I want now to turn to that subject. What concerns me is that, in my estimation, we have so emphasised the role and responsibility of every church member and every Christian in personal evangelism, that we are at the present time giving insufficient weight and attention to the responsibility of the minister of the gospel to proclaim that gospel regularly and publicly in a manner that is specifically designed to

address unbelievers.

Lloyd-Jones gave enormous emphasis, throughout his own ministry, to preaching that was specifically evangelistic in this way. Some may be surprised at this, but the fact is that Lloyd-Jones saw himself, first and foremost, not as a Bible teacher but as an evangelist. It is worth pausing for a moment and considering this point. It is of the greatest importance. Most of us, I suspect, know Lloyd-Jones's ministry primarily through his published sermons and addresses. Some of us, and I am one, never had the privilege of hearing him in person, though we may have heard him on tape or CD. Our view of his ministry, therefore, is formed by what we read, and the fact is that most of the published material that is available is of Bible teaching aimed primarily at Christians – the series of studies on Romans, the sermons on Ephesians, and so on. As a result, we have the impression that that was the main purpose of his ministry – but that is quite a wrong impression.

I can demonstrate that by two very simple facts. Firstly, he consistently devoted his Sunday evening service to evangelism. The sermon on the Sunday evening was always evangelistic. Secondly, when he preached elsewhere during the week, as he often did, again his preaching would frequently be evangelistic. One may reasonably conclude that a very substantial proportion of Lloyd-Jones's lifelong ministry was devoted to specifically evangelistic preaching.

This is how he saw himself – as an evangelist. He was not interested simply in building up the people of God. Important though that task was, he believed that he was called also – even primarily – to take this gospel to the world outside and to reach unbelievers of every kind with its message of power and love and deliverance.

I believe, therefore, that many of us need, on this matter, to make a significant adjustment in how we view Lloyd-Jones. He was an evangelist. Indeed, he saw this as one of the primary, if not the primary,

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role of the minister of the gospel. He saw the Sunday evening service where he was minister as the main evangelistic thrust of that church, and all the other evangelistic efforts of the church, formal or informal, fed into this great, weekly evangelistic event. Truly, as he once said, he held an evangelistic campaign every week. This, I think, presents a very clear and important challenge to us. Where do we see the main thrust of our church's evangelism? When we discuss evangelism in our elders' meetings and in our members' meetings, or when we are simply thinking about the subject ourselves, individually, what kind of activities do we concentrate on? I suspect that many of us, if asked, would think of our church's evangelism primarily, and perhaps exclusively, in terms of the efforts of individual church members, witnessing amongst the friends, acquaintances and colleagues with whom we mix daily. Or we might think of the more organised church evangelism in which we engage – door-to-door work, handing out tracts, perhaps running a stall on the local market. That's what we mean, when we think of our church's evangelism.

Lloyd-Jones would, I am sure, have viewed all those things as legitimate, valuable activities; he was certainly supportive of that kind of activity at Westminster Chapel. In 1947, he wrote in his annual letter to members of the Chapel that, 'the work of evangelism is to be done regularly by the local church and not by sporadic efforts and campaigns'. In 1956, on a visit to Los Angeles, Lloyd-Jones said on this subject: 'When the local church has a spirit of evangelism, members tell others about Christ, and through personal contact among friends, acquaintances and business associates bring many into the church.' In a sermon on sanctification, from John 17, he said, quite simply, 'we must recognise that the plain and clear teaching of Scripture is that every single Christian person is an evangelist'.

Moreover, he emphasised strongly the need for holiness of life in the believer, if his witness is to be

effective – a note that perhaps is too often missing in our exhortations to witness today. He says, 'If Christians are to evangelise the world, they themselves must be right, there must be no contradiction between the message and the life ... All our elaborate efforts to get people to come to church are going to be useless if, when they come, they find the message contradicted within the church herself... When people are sanctified, they will act as evangelists.'

Evangelism, then, is something which should be going on all the time, and in which all in the local church should be involved in one way or another. But – and this is my point – in Lloyd-Jones's view, personal witness had to be complemented by regular, strong evangelistic preaching in the local church. His expectation was that personal witness would lead to unbelievers coming to hear the preacher expound the gospel message.

This, I believe, is where evangelicalism in our generation suffers from what I have called a serious imbalance. Our emphasis upon every-member evangelism, though right and biblical in itself, has, I suggest, tended to eclipse the equally important – perhaps even primary – role of preaching as the evangelistic engine of church growth. The responsibility of every believer to witness for Christ is undoubtedly there in the Scriptures – we have the example of the Jerusalem believers, scattered by persecution, who, we are told in Acts 8, 'went about preaching the word'. We have Peter's exhortation, in his first letter, that we should, all of us, be 'always ... prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you'. We have the grave warnings of the Lord Jesus himself against being ashamed of him before men. But when we stand back from these individual texts, important as they are in themselves, and ask ourselves the question: on whose shoulders does it seem that the responsibility for evangelism primarily lay, and who is that we see doing most of the evangelism in the New Testament – the answer

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is clear. It was, first of all, the apostles who had this responsibility, and whom we see discharging it across the length and breadth of the Roman Empire, and then also their helpers and assistants. How did they discharge that responsibility? By going around preaching – proclaiming publicly this gospel – in whatever situation they could find – synagogues, hired lecture halls, private homes, the market-place or wherever. That is the position in the New Testament. These men felt a serious duty to ensure the regular, public proclamation of the message of the gospel to unbelievers.

The question arises then, on whom does this responsibility now lie? – not simply to respond to opportunities when they arise, as is the duty of every believer, but to make opportunities, imaginatively and appropriately to local conditions – to ensure the regular, public proclamation of this message to unbelievers. Well, in answer to that, I would draw your attention to Paul’s exhortation to the young pastor of the church in Ephesus, Timothy, that, as part of the solemn charge delivered to him as a minister of the gospel, he was to ‘do the work of an evangelist’. He, the pastor, was to carry on this work, in the town where the Lord had placed him. Now, it is very striking that nowhere in the New Testament epistles do we see the kind of sustained exhortation to personal evangelism that is so often heard from our pulpits and which seems now to be taken to be the primary, if not the only, valid approach to evangelism today. But we do see in the New Testament a solemn command to a pastor to engage in the work of evangelism.

Please do not misunderstand me. I agree that, as believers, we all have some level of responsibility in the area of evangelism, as I have already, I hope, made clear. I am not arguing about that. My point is to do with balance. I am arguing that we have the balance wrong and that our emphasis upon personal evangelism has led us to neglect this other emphasis in Scripture – the responsibility of the minister to

ensure that he regularly preaches the gospel to unbelievers. My prayer is that we urgently redress this imbalance, that our preachers and pastors commit to take on again the responsibility to ‘do the work of an evangelist’ – to recover in our thinking and in our practice the vital place of regular evangelistic preaching in our churches today.

I appeal, therefore, to preachers and pastors amongst us to examine our own ministries. Do we really give sufficient time and space to preaching that is specifically evangelistic? As we look ahead to what we will be preaching in the coming weeks, do we deliberately plan to include regularly in our schedule, sermons that are aimed primarily at the unbeliever, that seek to expose him or her to a fully-orbed gospel message? And for those who are not preachers, do you encourage your pastor to do this? Do you tell him that you have friends who are not saved, who you want to bring to hear the gospel, and please could he let you know when he will next be preaching in that way so that you can invite those friends to hear it? And do you pray urgently and consistently for your pastor, that God would pour down upon him the Holy Spirit, that as he prepares to preach evangelistically and as he delivers those sermons, God would move in power upon the unsaved who are listening, that they would be convicted of sin and converted to Christ?

Before I leave this first point, let me add just one thing. I am not arguing necessarily that we should all make every Sunday evening service an evangelistic occasion, as Lloyd-Jones did. That was how he decided to do it. We are not bound to follow him slavishly in that. What we each need to do is to assess carefully our own situations, and decide for ourselves when and where to do our regular evangelistic preaching. It may be on a Sunday – or it may be at some other time of the week. It may be in the context of the local church meeting – or it may be that we conclude it would be more effective to hold meetings elsewhere – in a village hall, in the

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open-air, or some other suitable location. These are points which will differ from one situation to another. The vital thing is that we make a firm decision to engage regularly in the proclamation of the gospel message to unbelievers.

### Aspects requiring serious attention

I suggested also, at the start of this lecture, that there are several aspects of our evangelistic preaching which require serious attention. That, of course, is a risky thing to say, in the presence of preachers. Perhaps I speak mostly to myself and my own preaching. In any event, I want now to turn to examine, more briefly, five specific aspects of Lloyd-Jones's evangelistic preaching, from which I believe we can learn for the benefit of our own preaching.

First: Lloyd-Jones in his evangelistic preaching gave a great deal of time and energy to the matter of sin. This is evident from a brief perusal of any of the published volumes of his evangelistic sermons – look, for example, at the volume of Old Testament evangelistic sermons published by the Banner of Truth, or the volume of his evangelistic sermons on Isaiah 1, entitled, *God's Way Not Ours*. Lloyd-Jones's aim in taking this approach was twofold – the glory of God, and the salvation of souls. He held that the primary goal of preaching the gospel is the glory of God. This came as a priority even before the saving of souls. In an address to the leaders of the Crusaders' Union in 1942, on the subject of the presentation of the gospel, Lloyd-Jones laid down a number of what he saw as foundational principles for evangelistic preaching. The first of these he expressed as follows: 'The supreme object of this work is to glorify God. That is the central thing. That is the object that must control and override every other object. The first object of preaching the gospel is not to save souls; it is to glorify God. Nothing else, however good in itself, or however noble, must be allowed to usurp that first place.'

To this end, therefore, it is necessary for the preacher

to expound fully the character and attributes of God, including his holiness which features so prominently in Scripture. Necessarily this involves expounding God's utter opposition to and hatred of sin, and his settled determination to punish sin which the Bible calls his wrath. To ignore these matters in evangelistic preaching, or to downplay them, is to present a god who is not the God of the Bible.

Sin must be preached, also, Lloyd-Jones believed, because men and women need to be given a reason to come to Christ for salvation. The great danger for the preacher is to try to persuade his hearers to come to Christ only on the grounds of all the good things Christ offers them. Lloyd-Jones believed that approach to be fundamentally mistaken. The biblical pattern is first to demonstrate to man that he is a sinner and that he is therefore subject to the wrath of God and eternal punishment in hell. This requires the preacher to seek to impress the reality of these things on the minds of his hearers. We need to note that Lloyd-Jones deliberately aimed to do precisely this.

'I am not afraid of being charged,' he said, 'as I frequently am, of trying to frighten you, for I am definitely trying to do so. If the wondrous love of God in Christ Jesus and the hope of glory is not sufficient to attract you, then, such is the value I attach to the worth of your soul, I will do my utmost to alarm you with a sight of the terrors of Hell'.

Can anyone accuse us, I wonder, of being too ready to frighten our hearers by the terrors of hell and the wrath of God against their sin?

Only after the preacher has sought to convince his hearers of these terrible truths, and impress them clearly and urgently upon their minds and their hearts, argued Lloyd-Jones, is it appropriate for him then to urge his hearers to repent and come to Christ for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. 'There is not much point', he said, 'in trying to consider the theme of God's love until one has first

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of all considered the question of sin'. He told a meeting of the Congregational Union in 1944 that 'it was not the wooing note which was needed but the note of judgment. We must convict men of sin and make them feel that they [are] under the condemnation of God.'

I believe that we need to examine our own attempts at evangelistic preaching, in the light of these principles. If nothing else, Lloyd-Jones's approach surely condemns any attempt simply to entertain our hearers and attract them into the kingdom by means which avoid the difficulties of pinpointing and convicting of sin. Sadly, I believe we are too prone to fall to this temptation. To preach the wrath of God, to seek to bring true, deep, lasting conviction of sin to our hearers is difficult, and the flesh rebels at the thought. Yet, if we are to be true to our commission as preachers, it is absolutely necessary. There is no other way.

There is a subtle danger at work here. We have a tendency, as evangelicals, to subscribe in theory to the doctrine of the wrath of God, but to avoid it in our actual practice of evangelism. In his exposition of Romans chapter 1 (which, incidentally, Iain Murray says is the clearest statement of Lloyd-Jones's approach to evangelism anywhere in his published works), Lloyd-Jones has this to say – and his words, spoken in the mid-1950s, seem just as relevant today as they were then: There is a section of evangelicalism, he says,

'who do believe in the wrath of God; they accept it because it is in the Scriptures. These believe in it and accept it in theory, but they deny it in practice ... 'Oh yes', they say, "we believe in the wrath of God, but you have got to be careful, you know, and especially in these days. You don't put that first, because if you put that first, people will not come and listen to you. Modern young people would be put off by that. You must attract", they say. So, in the interests of evangelism, in the interests of attracting people, they deliberately do not start, as Paul does, with the wrath of God...

"Perhaps you could do that sort of thing one hundred years ago [they say], but you just cannot now; you must make the gospel attractive to people."

Sadly, that advice has not, I think, on the whole been heeded by evangelicalism. And so we have a situation today in which the philosophy is: we have to get people to hear this gospel; but to get them to hear, we must attract them in; and so the entire event, to which we invite them, must be planned on this basis – it must be attractive, it must make people feel comfortable. The last thing we must do, according to this philosophy, is to make newcomers to our meetings feel uncomfortable. But, argues Lloyd-Jones, that is precisely what we must do, if we are to be faithful to the biblical pattern for evangelism. Of course, this does not mean that we are not to be welcoming to newcomers, or that we do not seek to make the facilities in which we meet comfortable and attractive, or that we are obscure or antiquated in what we do in our meetings. But we must be absolutely clear about our first objective in evangelistic preaching, which is to bring home to our hearers the reality of sin and of their terrible state of danger before a holy and wrathful God, and therefore of their urgent need for salvation.

And so there is no place, it seems to me, for the razzmattazz – the jovial master-of-ceremonies, the jaunty tone, the jokes, the over-emphasis upon music, the downright entertainment – that sadly seems to be so often associated with evangelistic events today. No, we urgently need a whole-hearted return to serious gospel preaching, with a clear and prominent emphasis upon the awful holiness of God and the terrible condition of the sinner.

This has consequences, too, for those who are not preachers, in this sense: what kind of preaching do you want to bring your unsaved friends to? If you are embarrassed by too much preaching on sin, if you feel uncomfortable with the idea of inviting your friends and acquaintances to preaching which, if it is successful, will make them feel very

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uncomfortable indeed, in order to do them good, then you need to examine your own approach to this whole question. A true and loving concern for your neighbour, coupled with a right desire for the glory of God, will overcome these fears and cause you to desire in your pastor and in those who preach in your church the kind of evangelistic preaching that Lloyd-Jones both taught and himself exemplified.

Second: Lloyd-Jones held that the great objective of evangelistic preaching was to bring sinners into a right relationship with God. The aim is not simply to fill their heads with right doctrine; nor is it to bring them to make some kind of decision; it is not about trying to persuade them to conform to certain evangelical church practices, or to adopt a particular kind of morality; and it is certainly not about trying to reform society. Lloyd-Jones was always concerned to show that sin was more than a matter simply of what we do wrong. It is a much deeper and more serious issue than that. The sinner's problem is that he has no living relationship with the living God. This is the essence of sin – man in rebellion against God. People will accept that they may have done wrong, but they hate to be told that they are all wrong in their relationship with God – that the root of their problem is in fact a hatred of God. Lloyd-Jones tells of a man who used to attend his preaching.

'He did not mind my condemning particular sins', said Lloyd-Jones, 'he knew he was guilty of them. What he could not stand was hearing me say that quite apart from what he did, he was a sinner, that he was in the wrong relationship to God. He was ready to improve himself, but he did not like the idea that he needed to be born again.'

That is precisely the point – we may preach about sins, but we do not get to the heart of the matter until we begin to address the root problem of sin, of man's position before God – man in rebellion, in a state of hostility toward God. That is the problem. Time and again, in his evangelistic preaching,

Lloyd-Jones will impress this on his hearers – that the true nature of the problem that faces them is that, without Christ, they have no living relationship with God. This, he argues, lies at the root of all their other, more obvious problems. In a sermon on Jacob and Esau, he deals with this. He is preaching on Genesis 32, the period prior to the great meeting and re-union between the two estranged brothers. With great eloquence, he shows that Jacob thought his problems lay in his relationship with Esau. The application is obvious – the world is beset with problems which it thinks are its real problems, but in fact the true problem lies much deeper, and the world does not see it – nor did Jacob, until he was 'left alone, and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day'. Then he knew – the real issue in his life was not his relationship with Esau, but his relationship with God. And that is the problem that lies at the root of every one of us, until we come to faith in Jesus Christ.

It is the business of the preacher to draw this out, in the minds of his hearers. The entire thrust of a gospel message should be to cause the sinner to see this and to seek reconciliation with God through Christ alone. Lloyd-Jones's sermon on Naaman, printed in the Banner's volume of his Old Testament evangelistic sermons, shows how he did this. He argues there that the Bible is really all about man's relationship with God. Sin spoils life, because it destroys that relationship. That is what happened in Eden, and ever since man has been plagued by the consequences – trying to live without God, but in rebellion against God. Man at his best is utterly unable to deal with this. He is powerless to do so and anyway ignorant of how to begin to resolve it. It is only the death of Christ that can bring the reconciliation that we need.

Again, we must all of us think this through for ourselves. Do we see Christianity first and foremost in terms of relationship – relationship with God?

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Doctrine and theology, though of course essential, are not ends in themselves. Being a Christian is not, in its essence, about holding to certain truths, though of course it necessarily involves that. No, the believer is a believer first of all because he is in a living and personal relationship with the living God – we remember Christ's own words: 'This is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.' Is that how we understand the Christian faith? Is that how we preach it to sinners?

Third: and very importantly, is the way in which Lloyd-Jones structured his evangelistic sermons. Here, I believe we can easily get entirely the wrong idea. Most of us, I suspect, imagine that Lloyd-Jones always preached in the style that we see, for example, in his Romans series. There, he generally takes as his text a verse or two, or even part of a verse, and expounds it in great detail. Every nuance of meaning is examined, conflicting interpretations are considered, and one is argued for over the others. The introduction to the sermon is brief, consisting usually of reference to the text and a summary of what was considered last time. However, if we imagine that Lloyd-Jones's evangelistic sermons were like that, we would be utterly mistaken.

We must remember, again, that the Romans series was essentially Bible studies delivered on a Friday evening. They were designed for Christians, and they were not part of a Lord's Day service. To understand how Lloyd-Jones approached evangelistic preaching, we have to go elsewhere – to the published volumes of evangelistic sermons that I have already referred to, or to tapes or CDs of his preaching. There we find a completely different picture.

Lloyd-Jones understood that, in addressing the unbeliever, the preacher has to work a great deal harder than when he addresses the believer. The believer has a reason to listen – he wants to hear the Word of God, because he has the Spirit of God

dwelling within him. This is not true of the unbeliever. The preacher therefore has to make considerable extra effort to engage the attention of the unbeliever, when he comes to preach evangelistically. Otherwise, all his work will be in vain. In the first volume of his biography of Lloyd-Jones, dealing with his time as minister at Sandfields in South Wales, Iain Murray recounts a most interesting explanation that Lloyd-Jones gave of this point. This is his report of what Lloyd-Jones said:

'I felt that in preaching' – he means evangelistic preaching – 'the first thing that you had to do was to demonstrate to the people that what you were going to do was very relevant and urgently important. The Welsh style of preaching started with a verse and the preacher then told you the connection and analysed the words, but the man of the world did not know what he was talking about and was not interested. I started with the man whom I wanted to listen, the patient. It was a medical approach really – here is a patient, a person in trouble, an ignorant man who has been to quacks, and so I deal with all that in the introduction. I wanted to get the listener and then come to my exposition. They started with their exposition and ended with a bit of application.'

I fear that, too often, we also start with our exposition and end with a bit of application – even when we are trying to preach the gospel to the unbeliever. This is tremendously important, in my view. We urgently need to learn the art of drawing our hearers in, of speaking to them in such a way, at the beginning of the sermon, so that they want to hear more. We might put it like this – let us assume that it is the accepted practice in our churches, five minutes into the sermon, for anyone who does not want to listen further to get up and leave. How many would remain in our congregations, to hear us out? That is the test, really. If they remain only because custom and natural courtesy force them to stay in their seats, you can hardly be said to have caught their attention. No, we must learn to interest

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our hearers – our unbelieving hearers – in what we have to say.

Of course, for Lloyd-Jones this most emphatically did not mean telling a series of jokes and personal anecdotes (though he was not totally averse to the occasional amusing comment or story). Our intention is of the utmost seriousness, and our preaching therefore must be in keeping with that intention. How did he go about it? Are there things we can learn from him, on this matter?

Lloyd-Jones believed that Christians need to be aware of what is going on in the world. This is how he put it:

You and I, you know, tend to live sheltered lives, and many of us don't know what's happening in the world in which we are living. We are not to become little ghettos. We are living in the world and we are to know its condition. We are to be aware of what is happening.

And so, in his own ministry, he spoke a great deal about contemporary issues and events – the war and its aftermath; hopes for world peace; fear of nuclear attack. He spoke of the kind of moral and religious thinking that was current in those days, and with which his hearers would have been familiar from newspapers and radio broadcasts, as well as from general conversation. These were the things that dominated the outlook of the people he was addressing at Westminster Chapel in the late 1940s and 1950s and Lloyd-Jones brought them into his sermons – he was determined to show that Christianity is real and relevant and down-to-earth – not in the sense that it provides a direct answer to the world's problems, but in the sense that it gets to grips with the true problem that underlies all the others – the problem of man's sin. But he takes people there with him – he does not expect them to see what he sees, without his carefully demonstrating his case to them. He takes them, in other words, from where they are and brings them to where he believes they need to be. We urgently

need to learn to do the same.

Then he would use his text to the full. Often he would take an Old Testament narrative passage, from which to preach evangelistically – the story of Naaman, Jacob and Esau, the Philistines and their god Dagon, and so on. He would re-tell the biblical narrative in a gripping manner, demonstrating as he did so its great relevance to his hearers, despite the cultural and chronological divide between them. So, as Moses stands in awe before God at the burning bush, we the hearers are also brought to that same point of awe in the face of the holiness of God. We are made to feel the guilt and shame of David's sin, as we see in it our own sin; we tremble with Felix, as the preacher reasons with us of righteousness, self-control and judgment to come; we are rebuked with Naaman as we realise that our pride in our own abilities and remedies for our problems is hateful to God, and we submit humbly to the healing that only God can bring. Lloyd-Jones made his hearers feel the reality of the experiences of the men and women of the Scriptures, as they come into contact with the word of the living God, and either reject it or submit to it. Again, we must learn to do the same.

Lloyd-Jones used illustrations. It is extraordinary that it is sometimes suggested that he avoided illustrations, or that he was not very good at them. Such views are overturned by his evangelistic preaching, which is full of illustrations, even including personal anecdotes. In a sermon delivered in 1972, on 1 Timothy 1 verses 12 and 13, Lloyd-Jones illustrates the nature of unbelief from a visit that he and his wife made in Northern Ireland, where they were taken to a point from which Scotland ought to have been visible. It was not, because of mist. The fact that they could not see Scotland did not mean, said Lloyd-Jones, that Scotland did not exist. The problem lay with the mist. So it is with the unbeliever, he went on. The unbeliever (he was speaking of the apostle Paul,

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before his conversion) does not believe the truths of Scripture. But the problem does not lie in Scripture and its truths; the problem lies in the atmosphere, the condition of unbelief in which he lies – which shrouds his understanding and prevents him from seeing the truth. Lloyd-Jones went on, with another illustration of the same point, quoting the aphorism ‘all seems yellow to the jaundiced eye’. That is quite literally true, he said, but there is nothing wrong with the eye or the brain; the problem lies in the jaundiced blood which contains a pigment which gives everything an apparent yellow tinge. So it is with the unbeliever and unbelief. Then he gives yet another illustration of the same point, this time taken from poetry and music. Read his evangelistic sermons for yourself, or – even better – listen to them on tape or CD and see how much illustration he puts in.

We also, then, need to learn to interest our unbelieving hearers – to draw them in, to give them solid reasons for wanting to listen to what we have to say. We must sustain their interest, by demonstrating how relevantly the Bible speaks to their situation, and we must make our meaning plain and interesting by illustrating the truths which we are seeking to expound with illustrations and stories taken from everyday life. This takes time and thought and effort. It means that we may need to take longer over the preparation of our evangelistic sermons than we do over other sermons – that was certainly true of Lloyd-Jones, at the start of his ministry, when he would write out his evangelistic sermon each week. We too need to take great pains in our efforts to reach the unbeliever with the gospel.

Fourth: and following on from that point, Lloyd-Jones believed that evangelistic preaching, like any other kind of preaching, must be in strong in propositional content. Or, if you like, it must be doctrinal preaching. I do not want to stay long on this point, but I make it because I believe it to be an

important corrective to much that goes on today in the name of evangelism. Lloyd-Jones was very clear that gospel preaching had to have real, substantial content. The truth had to be presented. It was not just a matter of giving a few testimonies, telling a few stories about the personal journeys that different people have made to find Christ. The church, said Lloyd-Jones in a sermon on Paul’s encounter with Felix and Drusilla, is resorting to all kinds of methods to interest and attract men, thinking that that is the way to do it. But what did Paul do? He didn’t engage in dialogue or discussion with them. He didn’t just give them his testimony. He didn’t tell them stories, sing choruses or pop music to them. He preached the truth to them. He reasoned with them, and made them think. The unbeliever is ignorant, argued Lloyd-Jones. He must be confronted with the truth; the preacher must make him think it out, must reason with him, and drive him to the conclusion that the Bible draws, that he is a man under sin who needs the salvation that only Christ can provide.

What are the great truths that the evangelistic preacher, in particular, must present to his hearers?

‘Our first call’, said Lloyd-Jones, ‘is to declare in a certain and unequivocal manner the sovereignty, the majesty, and the holiness of God; the sinfulness and the utter depravity of man, and his total inability to save and to rescue himself; and the sacrificial, expiatory, atoning death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, on that cross on Calvary’s hill, and His glorious resurrection, as the only means and only hope of human salvation.’

Our evangelistic preaching, too, must be strong in the presentation of biblical truth, and these are the truths that it must present.

Fifth: finally, any assessment of Lloyd-Jones’s evangelistic preaching must emphasise his biblical conviction that all our preaching is useless without the accompanying work of the Holy Spirit. Lloyd-Jones never assumed that the Spirit would accompany his preaching – he never took that for

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granted. He recognised that the preacher is to seek the Lord for the blessing of his Spirit on the preaching. The preacher is to be a man who is himself wholly submitted to the Lord, in heart and life, and who seeks to be so filled with the Holy Spirit that he may preach the life-giving words of the gospel to the salvation of souls. He recognises that, without the help of the Spirit, the task that the preacher faces is utterly hopeless. It is entirely beyond him. We can see this simply by considering the nature of the task. We have a message that first of all demands that man humbles himself. But that is the last thing that man in his sin will do. And so the sinner finds the message of the gospel impossible to accept. Lloyd-Jones put it like this:

What men find intolerable and insulting in the gospel is that it demands repentance and admission of wrong and of sin at the very outset. ... There is nothing that the natural man so hates and detests as the biblical view of sin... We do not dislike a gospel that talks of love and of forgiveness but we dislike a gospel of grace because that tells us that we are utterly undeserving of that love and mercy... The trouble about the gospel is that it regards us all as condemned helpless sinners.

And so the work is hopeless, without the power of the Spirit. However, it is only when we see something of the true depth and difficulty of the problem that we are compelled to cry out to God to pour out his Spirit upon us. So, in the address to the Crusader leaders that I mentioned earlier, Lloyd-Jones says this:

The only power that can really do this work is the Holy Spirit. Whatever natural gifts a man may possess, whatever a man may be able to do as a result of his own natural propensities, the work of presenting the gospel and of leading to that supreme object of glorifying God in the salvation of men, is a work that can be done only by the Holy Spirit.

This is a vital point. Unless we grasp it, we shall fall into the trap of an unbiblical evangelism. If we are not constantly conscious of our absolute dependence

upon the work of the Spirit, two things will happen. First: we will trim our message to what we think our hearers might accept. That is inevitable. Second: we will begin to rely upon methods and approaches to evangelism that we have devised, as the effective means to success. Our dependence upon the Lord will lessen; our prayers for God's blessing upon our efforts will reduce in both frequency and fervency; and we will become much more interested in questions of technique and details of what is to be done at evangelistic events and of how it is to be done, than in the much more important question of what message is to be conveyed at those events. That road leads to disaster – and sadly I fear that we are already quite a way down it.

No, we must be convinced in our own hearts and minds that we will achieve nothing without the work of Christ by his Spirit – that the entire exercise is utterly futile without that. We must, of course, think carefully about how we go about the work of evangelism – that is the whole point of this lecture. Of course, we must plan and organise and not simply do things in a particular way because we have always done them that way. We must be innovative and imaginative in the ways in which we seek to bring this message to those who need to hear it today. We must think of them, and seek to ensure that we really do communicate to them the gospel message, in their circumstances and situations. But above all, we must have this sense of utter inadequacy in the face of a humanly hopeless task, and that must drive us urgently to seek the help and blessing of the Spirit of God, who is the only agency able to make our efforts effective to the salvation of souls. Then we must go out in utter dependence upon him, to preach in all its glory the everlasting gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who alone saves sinners.