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THE EVANGELISTIC EMPHASIS IN THE PASTORAL
PREACHING OF ADRIAN P. ROGERS

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Johnny Derrick Yelton
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APPROVAL SHEET

THE EVANGELISTIC EMPHASIS IN THE PASTORAL
PREACHING OF ADRIAN P. ROGERS

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To the three men who greatly influenced my life:
my father, Johnny W. Yelton;
my Sunday school teacher, Tommy Humphries; and
my pastor, Rev. Grady B. Parker.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>BDE</i>	Timothy Larsen, ed., <i>Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals</i>
<i>EDT</i>	Walter A. Elwell, ed., <i>Evangelical Dictionary of Theology</i>
SBC	The Southern Baptist Convention
<i>SBJT</i>	<i>The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i>
SBTS	The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

PREFACE

When I returned to SBTS in 2003, I was a defeated pastor contemplating a departure from the ministry. I am certain that I would have quit the ministry if it had not been for the encouragement of Dr. Chuck Lawless and his help during the application process that allowed me the privilege of studying in the Billy Graham School over the past several years. I am also grateful for the friendship and guidance of Dr. Timothy Beougher. I especially appreciate the opportunity I had to serve as his grader for two years in his Personal Evangelism class and to have been his research assistant for a semester. Likewise, I wish to acknowledge my appreciation to both Dr. Hershael W. York and Dr. David Prince. Their guidance and comments were instrumental in the completion of this assignment. I also give thanks to Dr. J. D. Payne for serving as my advisor. I realize he inherited me when Dr. Lawless left the seminary, and I am truly thankful for his helpful advice, patience, and encouragement, which were paramount in the completion of this dissertation.

Gratitude must also be expressed to the members of Beechmont Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky. The gracious people of this church have allowed me to serve as their pastor over the past ten years. I am so grateful that they gave me an opportunity to return to the pastorate, and I appreciate deeply the prayers and financial support they gave to me and my family. They have been instrumental in restoring my faith and love toward the people of God.

I must finally express my appreciation to my loving family. Words cannot express the thanks I have for my wife, Joy, who proof-read so many of my papers into the late hours of the evening. She has been my companion for over thirty years and is the greatest Christian woman I have ever known. I wish to express gratitude to our children:

Charity, Jonathan, Phillip, and Timothy. When we moved to Louisville, they were all school children; they are now adults and pursuing their careers. I am proud of each of them and am grateful for their patience and cooperation in allowing their dad to write papers and read books while they were still at home. Lastly, I wish to mention my parents, Johnny and Carolyn Yelton. I know they missed having our family nearby, especially the grandchildren, after we moved to Louisville; nevertheless, they have supported me and my family with their prayers and love over the years. Many times I have thought of quitting the doctoral program, but my family was instrumental in motivating me and encouraging me to finish the task.

Johnny Derrick Yelton

Louisville, Kentucky

December 2013

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Usually in a discussion on the topic of evangelistic preaching the names of such evangelists as Charles G. Finney, William (Billy) Sunday, or William Franklin (Billy) Graham are mentioned.¹ Unfortunately, evangelism has often been associated with large evangelistic enterprises and itinerate preachers more so than with the pastor of a local church. When studying individuals that have played a significant role in global evangelization, such men as Rick Warren,² the pastor of Saddleback Community Church in Orange County, California, or Al Jackson,³ the pastor of Lakeview Baptist Church in Auburn, Alabama, or the late Adrian Rogers,⁴ the former pastor of Bellevue Baptist

¹John Mark Terry, *Evangelism: A Concise History* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 159-72.

²Rick Warren is the founding pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California, where he has served since 1980. He is perhaps best known as the author of *The Purpose Driven Life* and *The Purpose Driven Church*. Nearly 300,000 ministers have participated in his pastor training seminars, and more than 100,000 churches have participated in Warren's 40-Days of Purpose courses. He established a charitable foundation which fights poverty, illiteracy, and disease—especially AIDS—in the United States and abroad. See Sonja Steptoe et al., "Religion: The Man with the Purpose," *Time*, 29 May 2004, 54-57. Warren was also declared as possibly the most influential pastor in America by *Christianity Today*. See *Christianity Today*, 18 November 2002, cover.

³According to Chuck Lawless, former Dean of the Billy Graham School at SBTS, Al Jackson is "the most Great Commission minded pastor" he knows. Lawless explains that Jackson preaches missions, prays for missions, and ministers extensively overseas in Asia, Europe, Latin America and Africa. Lakeview Baptist Church in Auburn, Alabama, has also sent out dozens of couples to serve as missionaries. See Chuck Lawless, "The Great Commission: The Next Steps," in *The Challenge of the Great Commission: Essays on God's Mandate for the Local Church*, ed. Chuck Lawless and Thom Rainer (Louisville: Pinnacle Publishers, 2005), 260.

⁴Adrian Rogers was the pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, from 1972 to 2005. Under his leadership the church grew to more than 29,000 members. He served three times as president of the Southern Baptist Convention during the conservative resurgence. He wrote eighteen books and forty-nine booklets. In 1987, Rogers extended his teaching ministry when he founded Love Worth Finding Ministries, which can be heard weekly on a worldwide television network of over 14,000 outlets and daily broadcast of nearly 2,000 radio stations. See "The Anointed Life of Adrian Rogers," in *The Adrian Rogers Legacy Bible* (Memphis: Love Worth Finding Ministries, 2009), ix-x.

Church in Memphis, Tennessee, are rarely considered because these men are viewed more as pastors than evangelists. The Great Commission,⁵ however, was originally given to the local church and not to parachurch organizations or evangelistic associations. John Mark Terry, for example, has previously articulated that such evangelistic organizations should not replace the local church's efforts to win the lost through "visitation, friendship evangelism, and home Bible studies."⁶ Fortunately, many Southern Baptists have recently begun to express the importance of the biblical role of the pastor to do the work of an evangelist and carry out the Great Commission through the pulpit ministry of the local church (2 Tim 4:5).⁷

Thesis

One Southern Baptist pastor who demonstrated the heart of an evangelist in his preaching ministry was Adrian P. Rogers. Over the last quarter of the twentieth century, Rogers was one of the most recognizable and influential preachers in America.⁸ He was perhaps best known by many people for his outspoken leadership in the SBC during the conservative resurgence that occurred in the 1980s; nevertheless, his preaching ministry has influenced millions of people around the world through his radio and television ministry, Love Worth Finding, which he founded in 1987.⁹ During his thirty-two years as

⁵Although the Great Commission is expressed in five different passages, it is usually associated with Matt 28:18-20. For an exegesis of this passage, see Hal Freeman, "The Great Commission and the New Testament: An Exegesis of Matthew 28:16-20," *SBJT* 1, no. 4 (Winter 1997), 14-23.

⁶Terry, *Evangelism*, 170.

⁷See Chuck Lawless, "The Great Commission: The Next Steps," in *The Challenge of the Great Commission: Essays on God's Mandate for the Local Church*, ed. Chuck Lawless and Thom Rainer (Louisville: Pinnacle Publishers, 2005), 260. See also "Penetrating the Lostness Embracing a Vision for a Great Commission Resurgence among Southern Baptists: The Great Commission Resurgence Task Force Report and Recommendations to the Southern Baptist Convention in Orlando, Florida, June 15-16, 2010."

⁸Michael Duduit, "Preaching and Church Growth: An Interview with Adrian Rogers," *Preaching* 15 (May-June 2000): 4.

⁹Joyce Rogers and Julie-Allyson Ieron, *Love Worth Finding: The Life of Adrian Rogers and His Philosophy of Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 118-19.

the pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, the church grew from 8,739 members to twenty-nine thousand.¹⁰ At the announcement of his death on November 15, 2005, Albert Mohler wrote,

Dr. Rogers was a lion in our midst—the man God used to serve as leader and voice for a great resurgence of biblical Christianity. He was a man of tremendous gifts, whose booming voice was matched by a gift for words and a powerful delivery. He dominated the pulpit as few men ever have, preaching the Word and calling sinners to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a modern-day "Prince of Preachers" whose personal example served to encourage thousands of others to greater faithfulness in preaching the Word of God.¹¹

In addition, Billy Graham released a statement that was read at the memorial service for Rogers. In this statement, Graham declared, "Rogers was one of the great spiritual statesmen of this generation. His leadership has helped to change religious history in the United States and also in other parts of the world."¹²

Perhaps the greatest tribute to Rogers was in the Memphis newspaper *The Commercial Appeal*. The first line in the article announcing his death stated, "For more than a half-century, Rev. Adrian Pierce Rogers won souls for Jesus by the preaching of repentance, redemption, and the rapture of spending eternity in the presence of God."¹³ This statement best described Rogers' ministry because, more than a denominational leader, Rogers considered himself to be an evangelist. For example, in an interview for the magazine *Preaching*, Rogers exclaimed, "I think everything I do is evangelism."¹⁴

¹⁰Ibid., 88.

¹¹Albert Mohler, "A Patriarch Passes—The Death of Dr. Adrian Rogers," Albert Mohler blog, entry posted November 15, 2005, <http://www.albertmohler.com/blog-print.php?id=377> (accessed September 29, 2008).

¹²Billy Graham, "On the Death of Adrian Rogers," read by Steve Gaines in *Adrian Rogers' Memorial Service*, RA-251571, 2005, cassette.

¹³James Dowd and Tom Bailey, Jr., "Optimistic to the End, Rev. Rogers Dies of Pneumonia after Fight against Cancer," *The Memphis Commercial Appeal*, entry posted November 16, 2005, <http://www.comercialappeal.com/news/2005/nov/16/magnetic-preacher-led-thousands-to-Bellevue> (accessed September 29, 2008).

¹⁴Duduit. "Preaching and Church Growth," 4.

Concerning his preaching ministry, Rogers divulged, “All preaching is evangelistic preaching if it’s good preaching.”¹⁵ Likewise, in another interview he was asked about the focus of his preaching ministry, and Rogers responded, “My main burden throughout all my life has been to live with integrity and to preach an uncompromising gospel.”¹⁶

As pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Rogers preached over three thousand sermons which were recorded and catalogued in the church’s library. Many of these messages were also organized into several series of audio albums by Love Worth Finding Ministries. In addition, Rogers authored eighteen books and over forty-nine booklets taken from the transcripts and notes of several of his sermons.¹⁷ Although Rogers never wrote a book on theology, homiletics, or evangelism, the vast number of recorded sermons and writings by Rogers provide a plethora of information regarding his evangelistic preaching method and ministry.

In the past, research on Rogers has primarily focused upon his preaching philosophy and methodology. There has been no academic work that focused upon the evangelistic content and emphasis of his sermons, thus revealing the purpose for this dissertation. The purpose of this dissertation is to analyze the evangelistic preaching of

¹⁵Ibid., 6.

¹⁶Gene Mims and Michael D. Miller, “Sharing the Gospel: Use Any New Means, Keep God’s Methods,” *Growing Churches*, Winter 1996, 6.

¹⁷Books authored by Adrian Rogers are *God’s Wisdom Is Better than Gold*; *The Power of His Presence*; *Jesus, God’s Unspeakable Gift*; *Believe in Miracles but Trust in Jesus*; *A Family Christmas Treasury*; *The Lord Is My Shepherd*; *God’s Hidden Treasure*; *The Incredible Power of Kingdom Authority*; *Standing for Light and Truth*; *Unveiling the End Times in our Times*; *The Passion of Christ and the Purpose of Life*; *What Every Christian Ought to Know*; *Family Survival in an X-Rated World*; *Adrianisms: The Wit and Wisdom of Adrian Rogers* (2 vols.); *Daybreak: Practicing the Presence of God*. In addition, Rogers assisted his wife Joyce Rogers in the writing of his biography, *Love Worth Finding: The Life of Adrian Rogers and His Philosophy of Preaching*. Booklets by Rogers include *Praying with Power*; *Pardon and Punishment*; *How to Break Satan’s Strongholds in Your Life*; *How to Have a Life that Lasts*; *Finding God’s Peace*; *The Golden Key of Faith*; *God’s Plan for Man*; *Predestined for Hell? Absolutely Not!*; *How to Make Your Bible Come Alive*; *How to Know the Bible is the Word of God*; *How to Fortify Your Faith*; *How to Have a Meaningful Quiet Time*; *Why the Cross*; *How to Keep Your Spiritual Fire Burning*; *Christ of Every Crisis*; *The Secret of Satisfaction*; *The Comfort of His Coming*; *Blessed Assurance, A Know so Salvation*; *The Holy Spirit, Your Best Friend*; and *Unwrapping Your Spiritual Gift*.

Adrian P. Rogers during his thirty-two years as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, in order to determine and evaluate the evangelistic content of his sermons. Furthermore, this dissertation offers a biographical treatment of Rogers to demonstrate his passion for evangelism and identify those elements, people and events that helped to shape his evangelistic ministry. This dissertation also offers an analysis of the sermons and invitations of Rogers to understand his definition of evangelistic preaching. In addition, as a secondary purpose, consideration of the hermeneutical integrity of Rogers is also presented in regard to the original intent of the text and the interpretation and application made by Rogers from the text. Finally this dissertation offers a critical evaluation of the evangelistic preaching of Rogers.

Background

While a student at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in 1984, I had the opportunity to hear Rogers preach from the pulpit of Bellevue Baptist Church. I still remember his booming voice, captivating illustrations, and good humor. The inerrancy controversy was at its apex during the time I attended Bellevue; nevertheless, the content and focus of Rogers' sermons remained largely evangelistic and avoided most of the denominational demagoguery that had become prevalent in many pulpits of Baptists during that decade of conflict. Likewise, his love for God's Word and his love for lost souls, provided for this seminary student an effective and biblical model of evangelistic, pastoral preaching.

After graduation, I continued to listen to Rogers through the radio and television ministry of Love Worth Finding. In addition, when I attended the annual Southern Baptist Pastor's Conference at the SBC, I purchased the audio recordings of his messages, and acquired any new books by Rogers that were available at the Lifeway bookstore. Ten years ago, in 2002, I was in the middle of a crisis at the church where I was pastor, and I wrote a letter concerning my predicament to Rogers. To my surprise, I

received a personal letter from him a week later. Although I was forced to resign from the church the following month, I found great comfort in the fact that someone as busy as Rogers took the time to encourage a struggling pastor of a small, rural church in South Carolina.

A few years later, I began doctoral work at The Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth at SBTS. One of my first Evangelism and Church Growth seminars was “Evangelistic Ministry: Biblical and Theological Principles” led by Timothy Beougher. A requirement for this class was to research and write a paper on the understanding of the gospel and views of evangelism of a significant evangelist or pastor. A list of eighteen men was provided by Beougher, and one of the names on the list was Adrian Rogers. When I gave my class presentation on Rogers, I was surprised to discover that many of the younger students in the seminar knew very little regarding Rogers.

During my last semester, I enrolled in the preaching seminar “Doctrinal Preaching” led by Hershael W. York. One of the requirements of this seminar was to present a review of a contemporary evangelical preacher’s doctrinal preaching, and analyze his methodology, content, application and effectiveness. Once again a list of names was given as possible subjects for research, and the name of Adrian Rogers was also on this list. This assignment gave me the opportunity to focus more broadly on the various theological topics in Rogers’ sermons and writings. Moreover, it presented me with an opportunity to discuss my research with York who knew Rogers personally. Following my presentation, several students commented that they were surprised by the number of theological issues that Rogers addressed in his preaching.

As a result of these assignments and life-experiences, I had a desire to explore the following issues related to the evangelistic preaching of Rogers:

1. What experiences, people, and events in the life of Rogers influenced, shaped, and motivated his passion for evangelism?

2. What did Rogers mean when he said that all good preaching is evangelistic preaching? Did Rogers preach an evangelistic message from the pulpit of Bellevue Baptist Church regardless of the topic or text of his sermon?
3. How would Rogers define evangelistic preaching and what did he consider to be the essential elements of the gospel? Likewise, how much of the gospel did he usually include in his sermons?
4. Did Rogers give an evangelistic invitation after every sermon? If so, why did Rogers consider it necessary to give such an invitation at the end of every sermon? Moreover, what was the content of his invitation?
5. Did Rogers ever violate the original intent of the biblical text used in any of his sermons in order to preach an evangelistic message?

These questions are answered in the framework of answering the overall question, “Approximately how often did Rogers preach an evangelistic sermon from the pulpit of Bellevue Baptist Church during his thirty-two years of pastoral ministry?”

My initial research of Rogers revealed several reasons why no academic study had been done on his evangelistic preaching until now. First, his reputation as a pastor and denominational leader has greatly overshadowed his work as an evangelist. As a result, all past academic works on Rogers have focused on his homiletical style and philosophy of preaching and not his evangelistic emphasis. Second, Rogers was a pastor and not an itinerate evangelist. Sadly, little academic work has been done regarding the relationship between the role of the pastor as shepherd and evangelist even though the apostle Paul instructed his protégé, Timothy, to do the work of an evangelist as well as the other duties of the ministry (2 Tim 4:5). Fortunately, Thom Rainer has recognized the important role of the pastor as an evangelist. A little over a decade ago, Rainer published an insightful study of growing evangelistic churches and discovered that without exception such churches were all led by a pastor who consistently preached evangelistic sermons from the pulpit.¹⁸ This finding was also confirmed a few years later in another

¹⁸Thom Rainer, *Effective Evangelistic Churches* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 119-21.

study Rainer conducted among new converts who had recently joined a church. In this study Rainer discovered that the evangelistic preaching of the pastor was a major factor in reaching these new believers with the gospel and incorporating them into the ministry of the church.¹⁹ Consequently, this extensive study of the evangelistic preaching of Rogers provides a helpful paradigm for pastors to emulate in their pulpit ministry.

Definitions

As is the case with any academic work, clarification is essential when using terminology that may have various nuances of cognitive meaning in the mind of a reader. As a result, it is necessary to explain the meanings of the following two readily used concepts in this dissertation: evangelistic preaching and the evangelistic invitation.

Evangelistic Preaching

According to Ramesh Richard, who teaches expository preaching at Dallas Theological Seminary, evangelistic preaching is defined as “the public proclamation of the Good News of eternal salvation found in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ so that any unbeliever may embrace him as the only God who saves sinners.”²⁰ While this definition is helpful, it fails to identify more thoroughly the content of the gospel message or “Good News.” Beougher explains, however, that an evangelistic sermon answers five crucial questions: Who is God? Who is man? Who is Christ? What did Christ do? How must someone respond to the work of Christ? Furthermore, Beougher contends in his explanation that an evangelistic message must always call people to make a decision regarding Christ.²¹ Likewise, York asserts that an evangelistic sermon must

¹⁹Thom Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 183.

²⁰Ramesh Richard, *Preparing Evangelistic Sermons: A Seven Step Method for Preaching Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2005), 73.

²¹Timothy Beougher, interview by author, digital recording, SBTS campus, Louisville, KY, November 8, 2011.

articulate the sinful condition of humanity and the holiness of God, the nature of Jesus Christ and the meaning of his atoning death, and the need for faith in Christ and repentance from sin. York also emphatically insists that an evangelistic sermon must invite people to receive or reject Christ as Lord and Savior.²² Consequently, in this dissertation, evangelistic preaching is understood as the proclamation of a sermon that contains a clear explanation of the nature of God, the sinfulness of man, the person and work of Christ, the need for repentance and faith, and finally a call to receive or reject Christ as one's personal Lord and Savior.

Evangelistic Invitation

Next, the evangelistic invitation will be used in this dissertation as a synonym for what is commonly referred to as the altar call.²³ Granted, there are many ways to invite people to respond to the gospel message without having an altar call; consequently, this paper is not an argument that the altar call is the only proper method for giving an invitation. The reason for limiting the definition of the evangelistic invitation to the altar call is simply because this method was employed by Rogers in his pastoral preaching. As a result, the term "invitation" is used in this dissertation in reference to the call for an immediate and public response to the gospel by asking individuals to come forward at the conclusion of a sermon and meet with a pastor or counselor.

Limitations

In addition to the aforementioned definitions, there are three limitations to be noted. First, while every attempt was made to utilize the primary sources available, the

²²Hershael York, interview by author, digital recording, SBTS campus, Louisville, KY, December 5, 2011.

²³Alan Streett identifies several methods of invitations which include after meetings, special appointments, decision cards, special classes, a show of hands, and the inquiry room. See R. Alan Streett, *The Effective Invitation: A Practical Guide for the Pastor* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004), 169-86.

number of sermons by Rogers is enormous. I limited my research to one hundred sermons representing the thirty-two years Rogers preached at Bellevue Baptist Church. I made every effort to select sermons based upon the biblical text of the message, the date and service when the sermon was preached, and the topic the sermon addressed. Because the goal of this dissertation is to determine if Rogers always preached an evangelistic message in his sermons, I selected sermons that were preached from a biblical text not typically used to compose an evangelistic message.²⁴ I additionally selected sermons from as many of the various books of the Bible as possible. Although Rogers preached from some books of the Bible much more often than he preached from other books, I attempted to include at least one sermon from each of the books of the Bible from which Rogers preached.

I also selected sermons based upon the year Rogers preached the sermon from the pulpit at Bellevue Baptist Church. I divided the thirty-two year ministry of Rogers into three time periods: his early ministry from 1972 to 1982, his middle ministry from 1983 to 1993, and his latter ministry from 1994 to 2005. I made every attempt to choose several sermons from each of these time periods in order to have examples of sermons from the early, middle, and later years of Rogers' preaching ministry at Bellevue Baptist Church. Unfortunately, not all the sermons of Rogers are dated accurately; consequently, there are more sermons selected from the middle and later years of Rogers' ministry than from his early ministry at Bellevue Baptist Church. This discrepancy may be due to the fact that more accurate records were kept after Rogers began his broadcast ministry *Love Worth Finding* in 1987.

²⁴Ramesh Richard identifies three kinds of biblical texts that may be used in evangelistic preaching: salvation-concentrated text, salvation-connected text, and salvation-compliant text. According to Richard, the salvation-concentrated text is a biblical passage in which the explicit framework of the gospel is presented. A salvation-connected text is a passage in which the theological framework of the gospel is assumed, highlighted or clarified. The salvation-compliant text is a passage which acknowledges a theological truth for believers that may be available to unbelievers who embrace the Lord Jesus as Savior. Richard, *Preparing Evangelistic Sermons*, 93-122.

In addition to the date of the sermons, I attempted to select sermons that represent each of the three weekly services at Bellevue Baptist Church: Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday night. Unfortunately, many of the sermons recorded by the church did not contain enough information in order to identify the specific service in which they were preached by Rogers; however, enough information was available in order to select at least some examples from each of the weekly services at Bellevue in which Rogers preached. Finally, I selected several sermons based upon their theme or topic. Sermons that addressed non-evangelistic topics such as gambling, abortion, and evolution were chosen in order to determine how much, if any, gospel content was included by Rogers in such non-evangelistic topical messages.

A second limitation to this dissertation is the bias of its writer. As a result, the selection of the sermons used in this study are not purely scientific, but are based upon the perceptions and judgments of the writer. Furthermore, I am a great admirer of Rogers, and I find it difficult to be critical of him; nevertheless, I am mindful of the fact that this study is an academic endeavor and I have attempted to be objective and honest in all my findings and conclusions. As a result, I have made every effort to avoid personal bias and have made every effort to avoid presenting any form of a hagiography. The goal of my research was to present an honest and accurate evaluation of the evangelistic content of Rogers' sermons.

A third limitation to this dissertation is that it addresses only the issues relevant to the evangelistic emphasis found in the pastoral preaching of Rogers, and it does not attempt to present a comprehensive study of the evangelistic methodology or theology of Rogers. Such studies regarding Rogers will hopefully be the topic of other future dissertations.

Methodology

This study mostly concentrates upon the primary sources of Adrian P. Rogers. I was able to purchase all the books published by Rogers. In addition, I corresponded with the late Bill Skelton, the former President of Love Worth Finding Ministries, and was able to access several pamphlets and articles taken from the sermons of Rogers. Likewise, Paul Adams, Director of the Bellevue Library, in Cordova, Tennessee, provided a catalog containing a comprehensive list of messages delivered by Rogers during his thirty-two years as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church. Most of these messages are available in the church library and I was able to listen to several sermons by Rogers on cassette tape. Also, during the SBC in Phoenix, Arizona, I had the opportunity to speak with Steve Rogers, the son of Adrian Rogers, and I purchased The Adrian Rogers Legacy Collection. According to Steve Rogers, “The Adrian Rogers Legacy Collection contains numerous sermon transcripts from many of the messages Rogers preached while at Bellevue Baptist Church along with one hundred copies of his original, marked sermon notes and fourteen audio sermons he preached at previous Southern Baptist Convention Pastor Conferences.”²⁵

The internet has been a further avenue of profitable research. Most of the materials from Love Worth Finding are readily available on-line. In addition, many of the sermons by Rogers are available on the website OnePlace.com which is an internet provider of online streaming Christian radio broadcasts and programs. This provider has also catalogued into twenty-two topical headings various articles published by Love Worth Finding taken from the most popular and requested sermons of Rogers. These articles are organized topically into several categories such as Evangelism and Discipleship, Missions, Salvation, the Person and Work of Jesus, and Heaven and Hell.

²⁵Steve Rogers, interview by author, The Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Phoenix, AZ, June 12, 2011.

A final avenue of research for this study was personal interviews with several people who knew Rogers. I was able to interview his wife, Joyce Rogers, and his son Steven Rogers. I also interviewed James Merritt, Hayes Wicker, and Hershael York, all of whom knew Rogers personally. I interviewed James D. Whitmire who worked with Rogers for over thirty years as his Music Director at both the First Baptist Church Merritt Island in Florida, and Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. Additionally, I was able to interview B. Gray Allison who was a professor of Rogers at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Finally I interviewed two of the closest friends of Rogers, Joseph Boatwright, whom Rogers met in college, and Peter Lord, whom Rogers met in seminary. Rogers remained a close friend to both of these men throughout his entire life.²⁶

Outline of Study

As mentioned previously, the goal of this study is to examine the evangelistic preaching method of Adrian P. Rogers during his thirty-two years as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church. To accomplish this objective, this dissertation is composed of six chapters of which the current chapter provides an introduction to the study. In this first chapter, I introduced Adrian P. Rogers as a great man of God, a renowned pastor, and an effective evangelistic preacher who proclaimed an uncompromising gospel message and led thousands of people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, I suggested that a study of the evangelistic emphasis in the pastoral preaching of Rogers was needful in order to provide a successful methodology of evangelistic preaching that other pastors

²⁶Rogers identified Joseph Boatwright and Peter Lord as his two closest friends during a question and answer period of the Adrian Rogers Pastor Training Institute at Bellevue Baptist Church in Cordova, Tennessee, seven months before his death in 2005. See Adrian Rogers, "Q&A Covering All Sessions," in *Adrian Rogers' What Every Pastor Ought to Know* [DVD-ROM] (North Palm Beach, FL: Pastor Training Institute, 2006), disc 10.

may wish to ensue in the context of their pulpit ministry. This chapter also contained the dissertation's background, definitions, limitations, and methodology.

Chapter 2 examines the significant events and people in the life of Rogers that influenced and shaped his passion for evangelistic preaching. This chapter provides a brief biography of Rogers that discusses his conversion and call to the ministry, his education in college and seminary, his pastoral ministry, his broadcast ministry, and his denominational leadership. It also identifies several of the aspects of Rogers' life and ministry that contributed to the effectiveness of his evangelistic preaching ministry.

Chapter 3 examines the sermon preparation and delivery of Rogers. The objective of this chapter is to identify the homiletical style of Rogers' sermons with a focus upon his expository methodology. This chapter considers the preparation and organization skills of Rogers, and provides a study of the functional elements of his sermons. This chapter also identifies nine characteristics of evangelistic preaching reflected in Rogers' preaching ministry. Finally this chapter considers the hermeneutical integrity of the sermons of Rogers in order to determine if he forced an evangelistic meaning into a text and thereby twisted the intent of the original author.

Chapter 4 examines the evangelistic invitation of Rogers. This chapter provides a brief background regarding the origin of the evangelistic invitation and the criticism of some evangelicals regarding its historical and modern usage. The focus of this chapter, however, is upon the methodology of Rogers. This chapter addresses the problems and concerns regarding the evangelistic invitations of Rogers and it identifies the components and characteristics of his evangelistic appeal.

Chapter 5 is a studying of the evangelistic content of Rogers' sermons. The goal of this chapter is to determine how often Rogers actually preached an evangelistic sermon from the pulpit of Bellevue Baptist Church. This chapter begins with a definition of evangelistic preaching, and provides a methodology for measuring the evangelistic

content of Rogers' sermons based upon this definition. Next, this chapter offers an evaluation of the evangelistic content discovered in the sermons of Rogers, and gives a critical analysis of the evangelistic preaching ministry of Rogers based upon these findings. Finally, this chapter provides recommendations for an effective evangelistic preaching ministry.

Chapter 6 gives a conclusion to this study. This chapter addresses the importance of evangelistic preaching in the church. Furthermore, it introduces the discoveries made from this study and gives a summary of those discoveries. It also outlines an application of the strengths of Rogers' evangelistic preaching ministry. Finally, it identifies areas for further study in the future.

Conclusion

Adrian Rogers was a man known for his evangelistic passion and adamant commitment to the Bible as the inerrant Word of God. For more than fifty years, he preached the good news of Jesus Christ with strong conviction, courage, and compassion. Every church Rogers pastored grew immensely under his leadership and preaching ministry. He was a man of integrity who led thousands of people to Christ through his pulpit ministry, and he continues to reach people, although posthumously, through the broadcast ministry of Love Worth Finding. Consequently, I am confident that this study yields many beneficial results for those wishing to employ an effective model for evangelistic preaching in their pulpit ministry.

CHAPTER 2

A BIOGRAPHY OF ROGERS

Adrian Pierce Rogers was born in West Palm Beach, Florida, to Arden and Rosa Rogers on September 12, 1931.¹ Coincidentally, the New York Times published an article that same month asking several scientists and business leaders to make predictions for the year 2011. It was the eightieth anniversary of the magazine and the article attempted to predict life in America eighty years into the future. Several predictions were remarkably accurate. For example, William J. Mayo, a leader in American medicine, calculated that the average American life span would rise from fifty-eight to over seventy years of age.² It is extremely doubtful, however, that Arden and Rosa Rogers could have envisioned that eighty years later thousands of people would gather together at a church on Merritt Island in Florida to celebrate the life and accomplishments of their new baby boy. Nevertheless, on October 16, 2011, friends and family gathered at the First Baptist Church of Merritt Island to pay tribute to the life and legacy of Adrian Rogers who had passed away six years earlier on November 15, 2005, following a battle with colon cancer and double pneumonia. The two hour service at Merritt Island included reminiscences by longtime friends Peter Lord and Joe Boatwright, as well as several video tributes from noted evangelical leaders Jerry Vines, James Merritt, Pat Robertson, Charles Stanley, Elmer Towns and Bill Gaither. Several musical selections were performed by a choir of

¹Joyce Rogers and Julie-Allyson Ieron, *Love Worth Finding: The Life of Adrian Rogers and His Philosophy of Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 8.

²Jack Rosenthal, "Looking Forward, Looking Back: The New York Times Magazine," *New York Times Magazine*, entry posted September, 1996, <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/09/29/magazine/l-looking-forward-looking-back-516538.html> (accessed March 15, 2012).

eighty members who participated in the church's youth music ministry during Rogers' pastorate at Merritt Island in the 1960's and early 1970's.³ The choir was led by Jim Whitmire who worked with Rogers for thirty-eight years. Rogers' wife, Joyce, also spoke at the tribute and commented on the legacy of her husband who served as president of the SBC three times, was chairman of the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message Study Committee, established a global radio and television ministry, and personally consulted and prayed with five former presidents of the United States.⁴

The Childhood of Rogers

Rogers spent his entire childhood in West Palm Beach, Florida. Although he grew-up during the Great Depression, he considered his childhood a pleasant experience and characterized his family and community as being similar to that of the popular 1970's television series "Happy Days."⁵ His father was not an affluent man, but he had a strong work ethic and was a successful salesman. Arden Rogers was from southern Georgia and became an orphan at the age of ten. He worked most of his childhood on the family farm and had received very little formal education; however, he had several natural leadership qualities and excelled in both the automobile and appliance businesses. In addition, he had a resonating baritone voice and was a sharp dresser.⁶ Rogers' mother, Rose, was also from Georgia. She was raised a dedicated Baptist and even had a few Baptist preachers in

³"Eightieth Birthday Celebration Honors Adrian Rogers' Life & Legacy," *Florida Baptist Tribute*, entry posted October 21, 2011, <http://www.gofbw.com/News.asp?id=13402> (accessed March 15, 2012).

⁴Michael Foust, "Adrian Rogers, Longtime Bellevue Pastor and Leader in Conservative Resurgence, Dies," *Baptist Press*, entry posted November 15, 2005, <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=22069> (accessed March 15, 2012).

⁵Angela Elwell Hunt, "SBC's New President Adrian Rogers Undoubtedly Called to Preach," *Fundamentalist Journal* 5 (July/August 1986): 59.

⁶Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 8.

her family.⁷ She was an avid reader and especially loved to read and quote poetry. Rogers described his mother as having had a good sense of humor and a remarkable intellect.⁸ Rogers believed that his own family values, positive work ethic, quick wit, and love of poetry and books were largely fashioned by his parents.⁹

Rogers was the third child of four children in the family of Arden and Rose. The eldest child was his sister, Alliean, who grew up to be a nurse. His older brother was named Arden, but he was usually called by the nickname “Buddy.” Rogers was also given the nick name “Akie” as a child. Rogers’ younger brother was named Barry.¹⁰ Apparently, out of the four children, Rogers had quite a reputation for getting into trouble. He later jested, “I had my share of whippings. Dad always said it was because he loved me. I often thought that if that is so, I must have been his favorite child. I got far more of this love than the rest of the kids.”¹¹

When he was in the fourth grade Rogers met Joyce, whom he eventually married after his first year of college. According to Joyce, Rogers began writing her love notes when they were in the sixth grade. When she began junior high school, Joyce moved with her parents into a house only one block away from the Rogers family, so Adrian began walking her home from school and carrying her books. When the principal of Northboro Junior High School noticed this young romance blossoming, he quickly called Joyce’s mother and warned her that her daughter was seeing “the worse boy in the

⁷Michael Pete Montalbano, “A Critical Comparison of the Preaching of Robert G. Lee, Ramsey Pollard, and Adrian Rogers” (Th.D. diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993), 109.

⁸Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 8.

⁹Joyce Rogers, telephone interview by author, digital recording, February 24, 2012.

¹⁰Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 8-9.

¹¹Adrian Rogers, *The Secret of Supernatural Living* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), 7.

school.”¹² Joyce was not aware of this “bad boy image” of Rogers at the school; however, Rogers described his own adolescence as a time of rebellion and sinful behavior:

I lived a life as a teenager being a rebellious teenager or young person; not doing the things that were overtly bad, in a sense that I was not into drugs or alcohol, or immorality. But I was not above using bad words, or I was not above swiping something that did not belong to me. I wasn’t above disobeying my parents or skipping school or cheating in class. All of these things that come out of a wicked heart.¹³

During this rebellious period, Rogers was not actively involved in a local church, but the few times he and his parents did attend a church, they usually went to Northwood Baptist Church¹⁴ located just three blocks from their house.¹⁵

The Conversion of Rogers

In 1945, when Rogers was fourteen years old, his family was invited by a neighbor to attend revival services at Northwood Baptist Church where a well-known itinerate preacher by the name of Fred Brown was the guest evangelist.¹⁶ Brown was a young man in his mid-thirties and began preaching in 1922, immediately after graduating from Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina.¹⁷ In the mid-1930s, he became a personal friend of the Graham family and often stayed in the Graham’s home when he preached revivals near Charlotte, North Carolina. Moreover, Billy Graham mentioned that Brown

¹²Joyce Rogers, interview, February 24, 2012.

¹³Rogers, quoted in Montalbano, “A Critical Comparison of the Preaching of Robert G. Lee, Ramsey Pollard, and Adrian Rogers,” 110.

¹⁴Northwood Baptist Church relocated in 1990 to Village Boulevard in West Palm Beach, and in 2007 the church changed its name to The Village Baptist Church. See “The Village Baptist Church,” http://thevillagebc.com/our_history (accessed October, 31, 2011).

¹⁵Timothy Hight, “A Comparative Homiletical Analysis of Selected Southern Baptist Convention Presidents from 1979 through 1989” (Th.D. diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 1991), 9.

¹⁶Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 13.

¹⁷Fred M. Barlow, *Profiles in Evangelism* (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1976), 41.

was one of the reasons he decided to attend Bob Jones University.¹⁸ Unlike Graham, whose evangelistic ministry would focus upon citywide crusades, the focus of Brown's ministry was primarily upon local church revival meetings. Brown's meetings were characterized by sound biblical teaching and evangelistic preaching.¹⁹ In his revival services, Brown gave an invitation, but he was cautious not to manipulate people into making a decision. Brown commented, "I used to be afraid that I would not get many decisions when I was a young preacher, but I see so many decisions today that never pan out. I am more afraid of getting a false decision than getting no decision."²⁰ As a result, Brown often admonished preachers not to worry about the number of people responding during an invitation, but simply trust the Holy Spirit to do his work. Accordingly, Brown illustrated, "I am a great believer in allowing the Holy Spirit to do his work. Preach faithfully the Word of God, sow the proper seed, pluck the fruit that is ripe and depend on God to bring the increase according to his pleasure."²¹

According to Rogers, the night his family came to hear Brown, several men from the church met with his father prior to the revival service and shared the gospel with him.²² Rogers did not remember anything about the sermon Brown preached that night, but when the invitation was given Rogers was surprised to see his father step forward to make a public profession of faith. When he saw his father step out, Rogers recalled that he too came under the conviction of the Holy Spirit and realized his own need for Christ. Although he was following after his father, he still expressed an assurance that a genuine change occurred in his life that night and proclaimed, "I followed right behind him. I

¹⁸Billy Graham, *Just As I Am* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers/Zondervan, 1997), 34.

¹⁹Barlow, *Profiles in Evangelism*, 42.

²⁰Ibid., 43.

²¹Ibid.

²²Rogers, quoted in Montalbano, "A Critical Comparison of the Preaching of Robert G. Lee, Ramsey Pollard, and Adrian Rogers," 111.

believe that an eternal change took place in those moments and that night I became a new creature in Christ. I was lost, but I got saved!”²³

Shortly after the revival, Rogers was baptized and his family became members of the church. At first there was a notable change in Rogers so that even his teachers at school began to comment how much his behavior had greatly improved. Unfortunately, his good behavior soon became inconsistent and Rogers began repeating some of his old habits. According to Rogers, he received no training in the Christian life after his conversion other than what he was able to learn in Sunday school.²⁴ Over the next two years he became frustrated with the inconsistencies of his life and later acknowledged:

Old habits and ways die hard. The cheating in class, the school yard fights, truancy, bad language, and disobedience still pulled at me. I was up and down in my Christian life for over a year, and I was miserable. A Christian out of step with his Lord can be more miserable than an unbeliever. I found that out.²⁵

The struggles with his bad language, raging hormones, and a combative personality became so severe that Rogers began to doubt his earlier conversion experience and to question the authenticity of his salvation.²⁶

Finally, one night after church, Rogers had enough of the struggles and doubts. By this time he had a better understanding of the gospel, and knew that salvation was entirely by grace and could only be received by faith. He was not sure if he was lost and under conviction by the Holy Spirit or saved and doubting it, but it was time to settle the issue. Rogers described what happened next in the following testimony:

I walked my girlfriend home and stopped at the corner of Calvin Avenue and 39th Street in West Palm Beach, Florida. I wanted to get it settled. I looked up into the starry sky, wanting to look into the face of God. I said, “O God, I do not have assurance. I am going to get it settled tonight, once and for all, now and forever.”

²³Adrian Rogers, *The Power of His Presence* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1995), 36.

²⁴Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 4.

²⁵Rogers, *The Secret of Supernatural Living*, 8.

²⁶Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 14.

I prayed this way, “Lord Jesus with all my heart, I trust you to save me. I don’t look for a sign, and I don’t ask for a feeling. I stand on your Word and you cannot lie. I trust you to save me.” I continued to pray, “Lord, if I was saved before, this can’t take it away, but if I wasn’t saved, I am driving down a peg tonight. This settles it forever.” A river of peace started to flow in my heart and it is still flowing right now.²⁷

Once Rogers had finally settled the issue of his salvation, he then began to deal with the question regarding God’s plan for his life.

The Call of Rogers

While in high school, Rogers had given serious thought to becoming a lawyer or an architect, but that was before he discovered that God had other plans for his life.²⁸ Rogers credited Guy Marlow as the person who most influenced his call to the ministry. Marlow was the pastor of Northwood Baptist Church from 1945 to 1950. During his four years at the church, Marlow stressed that God had a plan for every person’s life. He also demonstrated a great love for the young people of the church. Marlow and his wife, Elsie, often invited the young people over to their home. He also included them in such ministry projects as door-to-door surveys and visiting the Baptist Children’s Home. Marlow became a close friend and mentor to Rogers. He often attended the high school football games in which Rogers played and encouraged Rogers to always do his best.²⁹

According to Rogers, his call to preach was not a sudden once-for-all event, but a progression of stages. The first stage was when Marlow began to motivate him to seek God’s plan and purpose for his life.³⁰ At this point, Rogers simply started to pray, “Lord, whatever you want me to do, I’ll do it. Just let me know.”³¹ Within a few months

²⁷Adrian Rogers, *What Every Christian Ought to Know* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Press, 2005), 45.

²⁸Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 16.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Rogers, *The Power of His Presence*, 44.

of praying this way, Rogers began sensing a possible call of God into full-time Christian ministry. Rogers later explained the process of his calling:

I am not exactly sure how the seed-thought that God might want me to preach got into my heart. But I found it there. “Lord do you want me to Preach?” I would ask Him. As a high-school football player I was not afraid of much that moved on the gridiron, but the thought of being a public speaker was disturbing. More candidly, it scared me to death.

Yet this little seed of thought would not go away. For weeks I would pray like this, “Lord I think You want me to preach.” Then for days I would pray, “Lord, if You don’t want me to preach, You had better let me know.” Finally it was “Lord, You are calling me and I know it.”³²

Rogers made a public commitment at the age of sixteen while attending a youth conference at Ridgecrest in North Carolina.³³ Marlow had taken the church’s youth group to attend the conference that was being led by Chester Swor.³⁴ After one of the evening services, Rogers went forward during the invitation to make a public profession of his call to the ministry. At the meeting his high school girlfriend and future wife, Joyce Gentry, had been sitting next to him. Although she did not come forward at the invitation, she too sensed God’s call upon her life into full-time Christian ministry.³⁵ Years later, Rogers often commented about the events surrounding his call to the ministry and would say: “I’ve sometimes doubted my salvation, but I’ve never doubted my call to preach.”³⁶

When Rogers returned to Palm Beach High School, he was a different person. He felt thrilled and honored that God would call him to preach. In high school, Rogers

³²Ibid., 44-45.

³³Ridgecrest is a 1,300-acre Christian conference center that was originally purchased by the North Carolina Baptist State Convention and the Sunday School Board of the SBC (LifeWay Christian Resources) in 1907. See “History of Ridgecrest,” <http://www.ridgecrestconferencecenter.org/history> (accessed 21 March 2012).

³⁴Chester Swor was a popular Christian speaker and lectured on twenty to thirty college campuses a year. His home was in Jackson, Mississippi. He was a graduate of the University of North Carolina, and the author of eight books. See Chester E. Swor, *The Best of Chester Swor* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1981), back cover.

³⁵Joyce Rogers, interview, February 24, 2012.

³⁶Adrian Rogers, quoted in Hunt, “SBC’s New President Adrian Rogers Undoubtedly Called to Preach,” 59.

was the captain and quarterback of the football team. He loved football and was an outstanding player.³⁷ Unfortunately, the coach of the team decided that the team needed to practice on Sundays, but Rogers told the coach that he would not practice on Sundays because he felt that he needed to be in church. The coach later accused Rogers of using religion as a means of avoiding practice; however, Rogers contested, “I wanted to be there, but there was something in me that said I ought not to be there, but I ought to be in the house of God on Sunday.”³⁸ Finally, Rogers threatened to quit the team over the issue of Sunday practice, but the coach told Rogers if he quit then he would be letting down his high school, his teammates, and his community. Rogers responded, “I’d rather let you all down than let Jesus down.”³⁹ By now the primary concern of Rogers was no longer to play football, but to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

Although Rogers was certain of his calling, he still felt greatly inadequate about being a preacher. He knew that he needed God’s power and blessing in order to be effective in reaching people with the gospel. Toward the end of his senior year of high school, Rogers went for a walk late one evening in order to pray about his call into the ministry. While praying, Rogers walked out onto the high school football field near his house. Rogers often described the events of that evening walk in several of his sermons:

I walked and prayed, “Lord Jesus I want you to use me.” Then I knelt down and repeated, “Lord Jesus, I want you to use me.” Then, wanting to humble myself before him, I stretched out prostrate, face down on the grass and said, Lord Jesus, I am yours. Please use me.” That still did not seem low enough. So I made a hole in the dirt and placed my nose in it. “Lord Jesus, I am as low as I know how to get. Please use me.”⁴⁰

Rogers could not explain what happened that night, but he knew that God had answered

³⁷In high school Rogers was named to the All-Southern team. He was also later inducted into the National Amateur Football Hall of Fame. See Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 16.

³⁸Adrian Rogers, *The Incredible Power of Kingdom Authority* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Press, 2002), 100.

³⁹Ibid., 101.

⁴⁰Rogers, *The Power of His Presence*, 93-94.

his prayer. Rogers exclaimed, “Something happened in my life that night. I didn’t have ecstasies or a vision of any kind, but I was transformed. At the time, I knew very little theology. But I would be less than honest to deny that God graciously released his power into my young heart and life. There was a great joy and a desire to share Christ with everyone.”⁴¹ Shortly after this experience, Rogers went to Stetson College on a football scholarship and was soon asked to become the pastor of a small country church located several hours from the college campus.⁴² Despite his busy schedule as a student athlete, Rogers believed God had called him to preach, and so he accepted the call to his first pastorate while he was a freshman in college.

Formal Education of Rogers

When Rogers was ready to go to Stetson College, his father told him, “Son, I would like to pay your way to college; I’m not able to, but I would like to.” Rogers would later comment that it meant a great deal to him that his father wanted to help him pay for his college education; however, Rogers knew that God had called him to preach, and that God would provide the means for him to get the education necessary for him to preach.⁴³

Stetson College

In 1950, Rogers attended Stetson College in De Land, Florida. He chose Stetson for two reasons: first, he received two sizable scholarships from the school, and second, Stetson was a popular Baptist college in the state of Florida. At the time Rogers knew very little about the Bible or theology and believed he could get a sound biblical education by attending Stetson College. Unfortunately, Rogers soon discovered that not all Baptists viewed the authority of the Bible in the same way as he had been taught in his

⁴¹Ibid., 94.

⁴²Rogers, *The Secret of Supernatural Living*, 10.

⁴³Rogers, *What Every Christian Ought to Know*, 227.

home church in West Palm Beach, Florida. When Rogers attended his first religion class, for example, Rogers was taught a new approach to understanding the Bible called neo-orthodoxy.⁴⁴

Rogers was unfamiliar with neo-orthodoxy; however, his religion professor persuaded Rogers to accept this new theological approach to understanding the Bible in such a manner as to have a lasting impression upon Rogers' memory:

I got my first taste of theological liberalism when I attended a denominational college on a football scholarship and ministerial scholarship. As I contemplated my options for my course study, I was encouraged by the faculty advisor not to major in religion because I would get all of that in post graduate studies in a seminary. Instead, he suggested that I should study history, journalism, or another of the liberal arts.

Yet my eager mind refused to wait. I wanted "mega-doses" of Bible truth right then! I stayed true to my convictions and majored in religion. With eager anticipation I attended my first lecture.

The religion professor began something like this: "Young people, there are three major schools of theology." I picked up my pen ready to write. "First, there are the 'fun-damn-mentalists.' Too much fun, and too much damn, and not enough mental." Well, I thought, I don't want to be one of those.

Then the winsome professor continued, "Next there are the mod-durn-ists." He was speaking of modernism, which is just a cosmopolitan twist on the less cerebral "liberalism." He went on to explain all the excesses and errors of modernism that has jettisoned the vital truths of the faith. He implied that they were "durn" wrong. For this young preacher, that settled the issue. I didn't want to be a "fundamentalist" or a "modernist."

Finally the professor smiled and said there was a third school of thought called "neo-orthodoxy" that was a wise compromise between the other two extremes. In neo-orthodoxy we don't have to believe all the miracles and historical accounts in the Bible, but we could still hold the great truths the modernist had thrown overboard. The answer was neo-orthodoxy!⁴⁵

At first Rogers was intrigued by neo-orthodoxy, but before long much of what he was learning began to grieve his heart. For example, his professors were telling him

⁴⁴Neo-orthodoxy is used in reference to the theological movement started by Karl Barth after World War I. It is understood as a crisis approach to understanding the Bible as the means by which God communicates with mankind. Although it is not considered a single system with a unified approach to understanding theology, it does have several commonly articulated components and key beliefs, one of which is its stress upon Scripture as the container of the Word of God. It does not advocate that the Bible is the Word of God in all its parts, but that the Bible is a means by which man is able to discover and experience the Word of God. See R. V. Schnucker, "Neo-Orthodoxy," in *EDT*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 754-56.

⁴⁵Rogers, *Kingdom Authority*, 117-18.

that there was no personal devil; rather, the devil was only the personification of evil in the world. Also he was told that the miracles in the Bible were not true and the accounts of demon possession recorded in the four Gospels were actually a form of mental illness that was simply misunderstood and misinterpreted by the biblical writers of the first century.⁴⁶

Finally, during the Easter season, Rogers was talking with one of his professors regarding the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Rogers was appalled to discover that this professor did not believe that Jesus had literally resurrected from the dead. At this point Rogers began to wrestle with everything he was being taught about the Bible in college, and whether or not he could accept neo-orthodoxy. Rogers speculated, “I came to a fork in the road—either the professor was right and the Bible was wrong, or the Bible was right and the professor was wrong. I determined to find out which was which by beginning a parallel study to my regular course work.”⁴⁷ Rogers soon began reading books written by John R. Rice and others published by The Sword of the Lord. He also began to read the writings of R. G. Lee and W. A. Criswell.⁴⁸ After a few months of personal study, Rogers came to the conclusion that he could not accept the neo-orthodox approach to understanding the Bible; rather, he would embrace a fundamentalist theology.⁴⁹

Not all of Rogers’ experiences at Stetson College were as disappointing as his religious classes. During his freshman year, Rogers asked his high school sweetheart,

⁴⁶Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 24.

⁴⁷Rogers, *Kingdom Authority*, 119.

⁴⁸Steve Rogers, telephone interview by author, digital recording, December 10, 2011.

⁴⁹Unfortunately, the term “fundamentalist” has acquired a negative connotation of a hate-filled, legalistic, fanatic; however, Rogers used the term to describe someone who holds to the literal interpretation of the Bible. According to Rogers, a Christian fundamentalist is someone who believes the basic fundamentals of the faith—the inspiration of Scripture, the virgin birth of Jesus, his full deity, his blood atonement, his bodily resurrection, and his actual visible bodily return to earth. See Rogers, *Kingdom Authority*, 119-20.

Joyce Louise Gentry, to marry him on Christmas Eve. She accepted and they were married on September 2, 1952, at their home church, Northwood Baptist Church.⁵⁰ By this time, Marlow had resigned from the church as pastor and Allen Watson was the new pastor of the church. He performed the wedding ceremony. Watson was twenty-five years old when he became the pastor of Northwood, and was only a few years older than Rogers. He and Rogers soon became friends. Watson also led Northwood Baptist Church to ordain Rogers for the gospel ministry.⁵¹

After they were married, Rogers and Joyce moved into a small trailer and lived in a trailer park for college students near campus. By this time, Rogers had dropped his football scholarship and began pastoring a small church one hundred fifty miles away from school for a weekly salary of thirty dollars.⁵² Rogers met Joseph Boatwright who also lived in the student trailer park. Rogers first met Boatwright when they both were leaving chapel services at the college. They began talking, and Rogers soon discovered that Boatwright was also a fundamentalist in his theology. Rogers and Boatwright eventually became good friends. They would often pray together in the woods behind the trailer park and they eventually attended seminary together at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. In seminary the two men met Peter Lord who became a close friend to both of them. These three men became life-long friends and even vacationed together with their families for many years.⁵³

While a student at Stetson, Rogers had the opportunity to meet Billy Graham. The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association had only recently been formed at this time and Graham had just gained national attention following his crusade in Los Angeles,

⁵⁰Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 27.

⁵¹Joyce Rogers, interview, February 24, 2012.

⁵²Adrian Rogers, "Pastor's Marital Fidelity," in *What Every Pastor Ought to Know* [DVD-ROM] (North Palm Beach FL: The Adrian Roger Pastor Training Institute, 2008), disc 2, session 4, part 1.

⁵³Joseph Boatwright, telephone interview with author, digital recording, November 9, 2011.

California, in 1949.⁵⁴ The passion of Graham for preaching the gospel and his method for delivering an effective invitation greatly impressed Rogers. After meeting Graham, Rogers told Joyce that he hoped to be able to preach one day with the same passion and effectiveness as Billy Graham.⁵⁵

Rogers soon began preaching as often as he could. He would travel with a group of students and preach on the street corners of Daytona Beach, Florida. Rogers loved to preach the gospel and exclaimed, “Through college days I preached while standing on the street corners and bus benches. There were times when I would stand in front of the theater and preach as people exited. My heart’s desire was to preach. I also preached in rescue missions and taverns. Those were great days.”⁵⁶ Before long Rogers began to gain a reputation as an evangelist and was invited to speak at several churches across Florida. For a while, Rogers believed that God may be calling him into a full-time evangelistic ministry similar to the ministry of Billy Graham, but he soon discovered that God was calling him to be an evangelistic pastor.⁵⁷ Likewise, He realized that the call of God to preach the Word of God was a call to study the Word of God; consequently, he began looking for a seminary to attend after college so that he might become an effective expositor of Scripture.

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

After he graduated from Stetson College with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1954, Rogers enrolled at the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Rogers was pleased to discover that his professors in the seminary were much more conservative in

⁵⁴Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 124.

⁵⁵Joyce Rogers, interview, February 24, 2012.

⁵⁶Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 124.

⁵⁷Joyce Rogers, interview, February 24, 2012.

their theology than those at Stetson College. Although Rogers acknowledged that there were still a few seminary teachers whom he considered to be liberal.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, Rogers was greatly impressed and grateful for the influence of such professors as Roy Beaman, B. Gray Allison, and Roland Q. Leavell. Rogers credited these three men with providing him a firm foundation of conservative biblical theology.⁵⁹ In 1958, Rogers graduated from seminary with a Bachelor of Divinity degree, but the seminary later reissued him a Master of Theology degree. Rogers would eventually receive six honorary degrees conferred upon him during his ministry at Bellevue Baptist Church. After he graduated from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, however, Roger never again enrolled in school for further theological training.⁶⁰

Perhaps the greatest regret Rogers had about his education was that he did not focus more on the academic opportunities available to him at that time. When reflecting upon his seminary days, Rogers lamented that he was more concerned with graduating from school than learning theology:

When I was in seminary, very frankly, I had a family and children. I was pastoring a small church that paid me a pittance, and I was working very hard to get through seminary. Confession is good for the soul, and I might as well admit that one of my major goals at seminary was not primarily to get an education, but to get out of seminary and to get into the pastorate so I could do what I wanted to do. Not that I was disinterested in learning; I have always had a passion for learning, but it is almost like the goal was to graduate and to get into my life's calling.⁶¹

Although Rogers may not have focused on his academic studies as much as he wished, he did not let the business of his seminary years distract him from his call to preach the gospel and win lost souls. For example, Rogers' former evangelism professor at the

⁵⁸Rogers, quoted in Montalbano, "A Critical Comparison of the Preaching of Robert G. Lee, Ramsey Pollard, and Adrian Rogers," 115.

⁵⁹Rogers, quoted in Hight, "A Comparative Homiletical Analysis of Selected Southern Baptist Convention Presidents from 1979 through 1989," 11.

⁶⁰Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 124.

⁶¹Rogers, quoted in Montalbano, "A Critical Comparison of the Preaching of Robert G. Lee, Ramsey Pollard, and Adrian Rogers," 116.

seminary, B. Gray Allison, commented that while all the students at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary were required to do street preaching and evangelism their first year at the seminary, Rogers participated in the evangelistic projects of the seminary every year he attended. Allison also commented that he never met a student who loved God's Word and had a compulsion for winning lost souls more than that of Rogers.⁶²

After graduation, Rogers remained good friends with Allison and often invited his former teacher to lead revival services in the two churches where he was the pastor in Florida. Allison eventually left New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and established Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in 1972. The seminary began in Little Rock, Arkansas, but moved several years later to Memphis, Tennessee, at the persistent invitation of Rogers. According to Rogers, Allison was always one of his greatest role models in the ministry and possessed a passion for evangelism like no other man he had ever met. Allison had a great impact upon the evangelistic zeal of Rogers, and the two men possessed a great admiration for one another over the years.⁶³

Early Pastoral Ministry of Rogers

Rogers preached his first sermon during youth week at Northwood Baptist Church when he was still attending high school.⁶⁴ During his freshman year of college, he received the call to pastor the First Baptist Church of Fellsmere, Florida. The rustic, little church was located near the everglades in a small township of about 500 people.⁶⁵ When Rogers attended seminary, he pastored another small church, Waveland Baptist Church. This church was located on the gulf coast of Mississippi and was about sixty miles from

⁶²B. Gray Allison, telephone interview with author, digital recording, November 30, 2011.

⁶³Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 125-26.

⁶⁴Montalbano, "A Critical Comparison of the Preaching of Robert G. Lee, Ramsey Pollard, and Adrian Rogers," 113.

⁶⁵Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 28.

the seminary.⁶⁶ After Rogers graduated from seminary, he returned to his home state of Florida where he pastored Parkview Baptist in Fort Peirce, and later the First Baptist Church of Merritt Island before moving to Memphis, Tennessee, in 1972, in order to be the pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church.⁶⁷ Overall, Rogers pastored five churches in his ministry and experienced remarkable growth in the active membership of every church he served as pastor.

First Baptist Church of Fellsmere

The First Baptist Church of Fellsmere, Florida, appeared to have no prospects of growth when Rogers arrived in 1950. First, the facilities were lacking in appearance and modern conveniences. According to Rogers the sanctuary was constructed of white concrete block walls with an unpainted concrete floor and no ceiling, only rough cut rafters and a roof overhead. The lighting system consisted of several bare bulbs dangling by electric cords. The pews were simple benches made from two-by-eight boards held together by iron brackets, and there was no indoor plumbing or restroom facilities.⁶⁸ Secondly, Rogers was an inexperienced pastor with no formal biblical training. Rogers confessed that when he began pastoring at Fellsmere, he was theologically ignorant and did not know if Abraham came before Moses in the chronology of the Bible; however, he did possess an overwhelming confidence in the potency of the gospel as well as a complete dependence on the anointing of the Holy Spirit and the power of prayer.⁶⁹

Later in his ministry, Rogers commented that he believed one reason many novice pastors are intimidated and unable to develop a successful evangelistic ministry is

⁶⁶Ibid., 34.

⁶⁷Foust, "Rogers, Longtime Bellevue Pastor and Leader in Conservative Resurgence, Dies."

⁶⁸Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 28-31.

⁶⁹Gene Mims and Michael D. Miller, "Sharing the Gospel: Use Any New Means, Keep God's Methods," *Growing Churches* 6 (Winter 1996): 5-8.

due to a lack of confidence in the potency of the gospel and the incredible power of the Word of God.⁷⁰ In his sermons, Rogers expressed a great confidence in the power of Scripture despite the unbelief of others:

There is power in the Word of God. Someone may say, "I do not believe the Bible." Well suppose someone were to break into your house and you were to say to him, "I have a gun." But he says to you that he does not believe it. What will you do? If you have to, you will shoot him. Listen, what I am saying is that the Bible is powerful whether someone believes it or not. As a result, you must use the Word of God to witness. The Word still has power even upon those who do not believe it. The Bible has incredible power.⁷¹

Moreover, Rogers also acknowledged that only the gospel possessed the potency to change the conduct and spiritual condition of the worst of sinners and make them into saints:

The gospel is the only thing that can make harlots pure, drunkards sober, perverts straight, and adulterers pure. The gospel is the only thing that can give hope that is steadfast and true. It is the lifeline to rescue the perishing and care for the dying and snatch them from sin and the grave. That's the purpose of the gospel.⁷²

Throughout his ministry, Rogers displayed a tremendous respect and love for the Word of God. For example, a longtime friend and former staff member, Ken Whitten spoke in his eulogy of Rogers of the love and admiration for the Bible that Rogers demonstrated to his church staff:

He spoke with authority and his authority was the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God. Hardly a night would go by that he would not meditate on a verse or a passage of Scripture before he went to bed. He taught us to love God's Word and preach God's Word. And when asked why he used God's Word, he would say, "I'm not smart enough to preach anything else. And then again, I'm too smart to preach anything else."⁷³

⁷⁰Ibid., 6.

⁷¹Adrian Rogers, "How to Handle a Skeptic," a sermon on 1 Pet 3 (Memphis: Love Worth Finding Ministries), message STGN-1534, cassette.

⁷²Adrian Rogers, *Foundations for Our Faith* (Memphis: Love Worth Finding Ministries, 1998), 1:29.

⁷³Ken Whitten, quoted in "Two Pastors Pay Tribute to Fellow Shepherd Adrian Rogers," *Baptist Press*, posted November 22, 2005, <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=22129> (accessed March 28, 2012).

Rogers attributed the success of his early ministry at the First Baptist Church of Fellsmere, Florida, to the simple fact that he confidently preached the Bible with the overwhelming conviction biblical preaching changes lives.⁷⁴

In addition to his confidence in the Word of God, Rogers also acknowledged a total dependency upon the work of the Holy Spirit in his evangelistic preaching ministry. According to Rogers, the greatest concern of the preacher is not to please the audience, but to please the Holy Spirit:

Evangelism is supernatural. We depend upon the Holy Spirit of God to communicate the message. We are not marketing the gospel per se. We are proclaiming the gospel. I am totally dependent upon the Holy Spirit to help me communicate the gospel through me. As the Scripture says, “We are witnesses of these things and so is the Holy Ghost whom God has given to them that obey Him.” When I’m preaching, the Holy Spirit is to be saying “amen” to the hearer’s heart. I must accommodate myself, not to the hearer, but to the Holy Spirit who is the one who will bring the message home to the hearer. My greatest question is not “is this pleasing to the man who hears it,” but “is it pleasing to God on whom I am totally dependent to communicate the message?”⁷⁵

Rogers also suggested that ignorance and confusion about the work of the Holy Spirit has been ubiquitous among Baptist churches in the work of evangelism. As a result, Rogers believed that more emphasis needed to be placed on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in Baptist churches and the importance of the Holy Spirit’s anointing in evangelism:

I think that we need a greater emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in evangelism. I know that I can preach truth, but only He can impart truth. And anything I can talk someone into, somebody else can talk them out of, but when the Holy Spirit of God convicts them, then that’s a different matter.

And I also think that we need a greater emphasis on the filling of the Spirit, and the eternal security of the believer, which, I think, is the same Holy Spirit who has begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of Christ Jesus.

We need again a restatement of the energizing, empowering work of the Holy Spirit, and to clearly delineate between the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which I personally believe is a once-for-all experience that is co-incidental with salvation, and the subsequent fillings of the Spirit.⁷⁶

⁷⁴Adrian Rogers, “The Sermons Exposition,” in *What Every Pastor Ought to Know* [DVD-ROM] (North Palm Beach: The Adrian Roger Pastor Training Institute, 2008), disc 4, session 6.

⁷⁵Mims and Miller, “Sharing the Gospel,” 5.

⁷⁶Adrian Rogers, quoted in “Southern Baptist Theology Today: An Interview with Adrian Rogers,” *Theological Educator: A Journal of Theology and Ministry* 37 (Spring 1988): 6-7.

According to Rogers, he never entered the pulpit of the church to preach without first asking the Holy Spirit to give him a special anointing to communicate the gospel message with clarity and power.⁷⁷

Upon reflection of their years at Fellsmere, Florida, Joyce Rogers described her husband's ministry at the church as days of heaven on earth. The church doubled in size the first year Rogers was pastor and he baptized fifty-one people in a nearby canal.⁷⁸ Unfortunately, not every member was pleased with the growth of the church. Rogers soon encountered problems from an older deacon who was unhappy with so many new church members. He was especially displeased with the number of younger people who were joining the church. As a result, whenever Rogers returned to school on Mondays, he would go into the woods behind the trailer park in order to pray concerning this man.⁷⁹ Eventually, this man's influence in the church diminished and the church was able to grow without any further hindrances over the remaining years of Rogers' pastorate.

The opposition Rogers experienced while he was in Fellsmere taught him an important lesson on the priority of prayer in the work of evangelistic preaching. Rogers later commented that while preaching is important for growing a church, prayer must always precede preaching. Rogers explained that a preacher who will not make prayer a priority in his life is a man filled with sinful pride:

I am not the kind of a guy who wakes up early in the morning and who prays for several hours, but I pray all the time. I pray when I am driving my car, I pray when I am writing letters, I pray when I am in a conference. I pray all the time. Prayerlessness is a sin. A person who does not pray is a person filled with pride, and assumes he can preach by himself.⁸⁰

⁷⁷Adrian Rogers, "The Sermon's Invitation," in *What Every Pastor Ought to Know* [DVD-ROM] (North Palm Beach: The Adrian Roger Pastor Training Institute, 2008), disc 7, session 10.

⁷⁸Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 29.

⁷⁹Boatwright, interview, November 9, 2011.

⁸⁰Adrian Rogers, "The Pastor's Spiritual Priority, in *What Every Pastor Ought to Know* [DVD-ROM] (North Palm Beach: The Adrian Roger Pastor Training Institute, 2008), disc 2, session 3.

Consequently, whenever Rogers prepared a sermon, the last step for him was to pray through his message as if he were preaching it to the Holy Spirit. Rogers stressed that the secret to confidence in the pulpit is always good preparation and lots of prayer.⁸¹

Rogers eventually resigned from Fellsmere Baptist Church in 1954 in order to attend New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. By that time the church had changed dramatically. The wooded benches were replaced with theatre seats. The church had indoor plumbing, restrooms, and a baptistry. The church also had a new ceiling, lighting, and an education wing. In addition to the growth of the church, the family of Rogers had also grown. He and Joyce had their first son, Stephen Michael Rogers, born on February 26, 1954.⁸²

Waveland Baptist Church

After Rogers resigned from the First Baptist Church of Fellsmere, Florida, he had no prospects for a church in New Orleans and supported his family by taking odd jobs. He worked, for example, as an exterminator for a brief time until the opportunity came available to pastor a church in the gulf coast town of Waveland, Mississippi.⁸³ Waveland Baptist Church was a difficult pastorate for Rogers. First, the town was a retreat community for people living in New Orleans; consequently, many of the homes did not have permanent residences. Second, the people who did live in town were mostly Roman Catholic.⁸⁴ Third, Waveland Baptist Church had a long history of conflict and was resistant toward pastoral leadership. Fourth, the church was very small. It had only

⁸¹Adrian Rogers, "The Sermon's Preparation," in *What Every Pastor Ought to Know* [DVD-ROM] (North Palm Beach: The Adrian Roger Pastor Training Institute, 2008), disc 5, session 7, part 1.

⁸²Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 31.

⁸³Rogers, quoted in Hight, "A Comparative Homiletical Analysis of Selected Southern Baptist Convention Presidents from 1979 through 1989," 19.

⁸⁴Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 37.

twenty-five members and attendance was usually lower than its membership.⁸⁵ Finally, the facilities of the church were deplorable. The church met in an old wooden barrack. There were no walls inside the building, and curtains were used to separate Sunday school classes.⁸⁶

Rogers found the ministry at Waveland depressing. He was gone almost every day during the week from seven in the morning to seven in the evening attending classes at seminary.⁸⁷ During the weekends, he focused all of his attention on the church, but the evangelistic prospects of the community were so dismal that the situation quickly caused him to yearn for a more productive field for evangelism. He considered quitting seminary and moving to a church in South Carolina, but he felt that God had called him to New Orleans to acquire a good theological education, so he decided to remain at Waveland until graduation.⁸⁸

All was not gloomy during his days of ministry in Mississippi. Shortly after moving to Waveland, he and Joyce had their second child, Gayle Christine Rogers, born on June, 16, 1956.⁸⁹ In addition to his growing family, Rogers was also able to lead the small church in modest growth. During his three years as pastor, Rogers helped the church build an education facility. Also, the church tripled in its membership growing from twenty-five to seventy-five.⁹⁰ After graduating from seminary, he and Joyce added another son to the family, Philip Gentry Rogers, born on February 26, 1958.⁹¹

⁸⁵Ibid., 34.

⁸⁶Ibid., 38.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Ibid., 37.

⁸⁹Ibid., 35.

⁹⁰Ibid., 38.

⁹¹Ibid., 37.

Once he finished seminary, Rogers began to earnestly seek God’s direction for his life and ministry. Rogers soon received letters from two different churches in Florida. Both churches averaged about a hundred people in attendance and both churches stated that they believed it was God’s will for Rogers to be their next pastor. Rogers, however, felt no clear direction from God regarding the two churches, so he respectfully declined both of them. One church, however, would not take “no” for an answer and requested that Rogers please reconsider his decision. Once again Rogers prayed and soon felt the Holy Spirit leading him to respond positively to the church. Consequently, Rogers announced the next Sunday to the members of Waveland Baptist Church that he was resigning as their pastor in order to become the pastor of Park View Baptist Church in Fort Pierce, Florida. In a dramatic fashion, Rogers exclaimed, “A nail pierced hand has pointed to Fort Pierce, Florida, and I must follow.”⁹²

After this vivid announcement, Rogers received a phone call that afternoon from the chairman of a pulpit committee of one of the largest Baptist churches in Florida. Rogers was told that the members of the pulpit committee were very interested in him and wanted to know if he was available to speak with the committee further about being the next pastor of the church. At first Rogers was thrilled to be considered by such a large church, and he even expressed an interest in meeting with the pulpit committee. During his conversation on the phone, however, he was convicted by the Holy Spirit regarding his dramatic announcement to follow the nail pierced hand of Jesus to the little church in Fort Pierce, Florida. Rogers felt that God was testing him to determine if he was a man of honesty and integrity. As a result, Rogers politely ended the phone call and explained to the chairman of the pulpit committee that he was not available, but had already accepted the call to be the pastor of a church in Fort Pierce.⁹³

⁹²Ibid., 40.

⁹³Ibid.

Park View Baptist Church

When Rogers arrived at Park View Baptist Church, it was a small church with an average attendance in Sunday school of about a hundred people. Rogers and his family lived in a parsonage located next door to the church's sanctuary.⁹⁴ During his six and a half years as pastor, from 1958 to 1964, the church grew to an average attendance of over 650 active members in Sunday school. Furthermore, Park View Baptist Church also led its association in baptisms with over one hundred new members baptized every year. The total membership of the church also grew to 1,338 members.⁹⁵ Rogers' ministry at Park View Baptist Church was filled with many successes and blessings, but it was also a time of great sorrow and pain for the Rogers family.

Shortly after moving to Fort Pierce, Rogers lost his youngest son, Philip, who died from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome on Mother's Day. According to Rogers, this family tragedy greatly influenced his spiritual life and it was used by God to equip him for his future ministry. Several years after this tragedy, Rogers was still able to vividly describe the anguish and events that occurred that Mother's Day with grave detail:

After seminary Joyce and I were called back to Florida to a fine little church in Fort Pierce. By this time we had three children: Stephen, Gayle, and Philip. Philip was only two-months old when we got settled in the parsonage.

It happened on Mother's Day. It was a beautiful day as the days in May so often are near the Florida coast. I had just preached a Mother's Day message on the blessings of a Christian home. Our small house was nestled right next door to the little white cement-block church. Joyce was out in the kitchen preparing our lunch after the service. I was in the living room reading.

Suddenly I heard her distraught voice. "Adrian," she cried, "Come here quickly! Something is wrong with Philip!"

I leaped to my feet. She had our baby boy in her arms. He was not breathing. His face had a blue cast upon it.

"What's wrong?" She cried.

"I don't know. You call the hospital and tell them I am coming."

I took the little boy and put him inside my coat to keep him warm. With eyes blinded by tears, I screeched out of our driveway and sped on to the hospital emergency room. "Please help me!" I cried to an awaiting nurse as I burst through the heavy double-entrance doors to the hospital. Kind hands took Philip and rushed

⁹⁴Ibid., 43.

⁹⁵Statistics taken from the Florida Baptist Convention Annual Reports from 1958 to 1964.

him into a nearby room. I kneeled outside the emergency-room door and prayed for God's mercy, not caring who saw me or what they might think.

After a while an attending doctor came out of the room, without Philip, and walked over to me. "He's gone," he said as he laid his hand on my shoulder and shook his head. "There was nothing we could do, we tried." It was one of those sudden "crib deaths."

Joyce was standing in the door way of our house when I returned alone. The look on my face told the story. Mother's Day had turned into incredible grief and confusion for us. We had not known death in either of our families. It was so sudden. And so stark. We did the only thing we knew to do. We kneeled and called out to the Lord for help.

Then we turned to the Word of God. I wasn't sure just where to begin reading. Instead, the Lord Himself led us to the message we so sorely needed. This is what God said:

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. (2 Cor. 1:2-4)

I did not understand all that God was allowing to happen to us. But He had already made one thing abundantly clear. The Father of mercies was going to use the sorrow in our lives to make a blessing to other people with broken hearts. We gave our brokenness and confusion to the God of all comfort.⁹⁶

After the death of Philip, Rogers read the small book by Major Ian Thomas, *The Saving Life of Christ*. This book had a profound impact upon Rogers and led him to have a deeper dependence upon the Holy Spirit.⁹⁷ Rogers believed that the experience of losing his son brought him back to where he was years earlier as a young high school student praying on the football field for God's anointing. Rogers affirmed, "I had just come back to where I used to be. The difference now, however, was that I understood more of the theology behind it all."⁹⁸

In addition to rediscovering the importance of the anointing of the Holy Spirit for effective evangelistic preaching, Rogers also focused on developing the disciplines of the Christian life and mastering the craft of sermon preparation and delivery during the early years of his ministry at Fort Pierce. For example, after Rogers became the pastor of

⁹⁶Rogers, *The Secret of Supernatural Living*, 11-12.

⁹⁷Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 44.

⁹⁸Rogers, *The Secret of Supernatural Living*, 13.

Bellevue Baptist Church, he confessed that the methods of ministry he employed at the start of his ministry while the pastor of Park View Baptist Church had changed very little over his lifetime. Moreover, Rogers said that the biblical methods for having a relevant and productive ministry never change, and these methods are: prayer, evangelism, preaching the Word of God, and having integrity. When asked the most important lessons he has learned in ministry, Rogers said, “I have learned that you can’t divorce the message from the man. Preaching is just incarnational truth. . . . Handle the Word with integrity, live with integrity, pray with integrity. Be real.”⁹⁹

The schedule of Rogers became much more demanding over the years, but he never allowed the administrative affairs of the church or the SBC to take priority over his personal walk with Christ. After he was elected a second time as president of the convention, Rogers said, “There are certain things you cannot take your fingertips off of. You have to know what’s going on. But you have to have that quiet time with God alone. I have heard someone say a long time ago that the preacher who’s always available isn’t worth that much when he is available. Every man has to have that quiet time.”¹⁰⁰

While at Park View Baptist Church, Rogers also became a lifelong student of preaching. Rogers was persistently working to improve his preaching skills. Whenever Rogers preached a sermon, for example, he would write the date he preached the message at the top of his sermon notes and give himself a grade from one to ten for sermon delivery. Rogers never gave himself a grade higher than a nine. He also did not give himself a grade lower than a four. In addition to grading his sermons, Rogers also wrote comments in the margins of his sermon notes regarding better ways to emphasize a point

⁹⁹Michael Duduit, “Preaching and Church Growth: An Interview with Adrian Rogers,” *Preaching* 15 (May-June 2000): 14.

¹⁰⁰Rogers, quoted in Hunt, “SBC’s New President Adrian Rogers Undoubtedly Called to Preach,” 60.

or the need to make a physical gesture.¹⁰¹ Rogers loved to preach and his wife often accused him of preaching because it was his way of having fun.¹⁰² Preaching was his passion and he made it a lifelong goal to be the absolute best preacher he could possibly be. Before his death in 2005, he stated that if he could give any single advice to a young pastor it would be, “Live with integrity and learn to preach!”¹⁰³

Although Rogers preached many kinds of sermons (topical, textual, and expository) from the pulpit, he identified the expository sermon as being his favorite kind of sermon to preach.¹⁰⁴ Regardless of the type of sermon, however, Rogers asserted that every biblical sermon must have four clear purposes:

1. To confront: The preacher must be courageous and deliver his message without fear. The saddest thing in the world is a preacher with fear in his eyes.
2. To clarify: All good preaching is teaching. Three questions to keep in mind when crafting sermons are: What is the Bible saying? So what is so important? And what should a person do?
3. To convict: Every person should leave a message in one of three ways: glad, sad, or mad. A good sermon will not make everyone feel good.
4. To convert: The gospel means good news and the preacher should always tell the Good News of Jesus in a biblical sermon.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹Hayes Wicker, telephone interview with author, digital recording, November 7, 2011.

¹⁰² Rogers, quoted in Hunt, “SBC’s New President Adrian Rogers Undoubtedly Called to Preach,” 60.

¹⁰³James A. Smith Sr., “Rogers to Pastors: ‘Live with Integrity, Learn to Preach,’” *Florida Baptist Witness*, posted November 17, 2005, <http://www.gofbw.com/news.asp?ID=5155> (accessed April 9, 2012).

¹⁰⁴According to Rogers, an expository sermon is a sermon based on a paragraph, chapter or book in the Bible from which the major and minor points of the sermon are drawn. Additional texts or verses from the Bible, however, can be used to supplement the sermon’s text. Rogers also contended that each main point of an exposition requires five elements: explanation, argumentation, illustration, application and motivation. Rogers also said that the test of whether a sermon is truly an expository sermon include whether the source is a passage of Scripture, whether the subject is clearly addressed in the text, whether there is strength in the sermon to inspire and motivate the congregation, and whether there is a clear structure—an outline drawn from the biblical text. See Smith, “Rogers to pastors: ‘Live with Integrity, Learn to Preach.’”

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

Rogers believed a biblical sermon should always end with an invitation for people to receive Christ. Rogers came to this belief one Sunday evening while preaching at Park View Baptist Church. According to Rogers, he came to church one Sunday evening prepared to preach an evangelistic sermon, but he did not see any visitors sitting in the auditorium that night so he decided not to give an invitation. At the end of his sermon he asked everyone to bow for a closing prayer when someone from the back of the room shouted if there would be an invitation because he needed to be saved. Afterwards, Roger said that he would never again preach in a public setting without giving an invitation for people to receive Christ.¹⁰⁶

The years at Park View Baptist Church were very fruitful for Rogers. Despite the great tragedy of the death of his baby boy, Rogers never wavered in his passion for evangelistic preaching. He used his time in Fort Pierce, Florida, wisely and developed the disciplines of administration, prayer, Bible study, sermon preparation and a daily quiet time. While at Park View Baptist Church, Rogers' family also grew by two new members. He and Joyce had another son, whom they named David, born on July 30, 1960, and a daughter they named Janice born on December 4, 1961. According to Joyce, she and Rogers always wanted to have four children, and while they were at Park View Baptist Church, God gave them the desire of their heart.¹⁰⁷

First Baptist Church of Merritt Island

In 1964, Rogers was given an opportunity he simply could not refuse. The members of First Baptist Church of Merritt Island, Florida, asked him to become the next pastor of the church. Contiguous to Coco Beach, Cape Canaveral, and the Kennedy Space Center, Merritt Island was one of the fastest growing communities in Florida during the

¹⁰⁶Adrian Rogers, "The Sermon's Invitation," disc 7, session 10.

¹⁰⁷Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 45-46.

early 1960s. According to Rogers, the median age of the population was only twenty-seven.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, Rogers said the situation at First Baptist Merritt Island was like a field of dry grass that simply needed a spark. There was, however, a concern among some of the members of the church regarding the evangelistic reputation of Rogers' leadership. Rogers assured the pulpit committee that any church members who left because of his evangelic preaching style would be replaced tenfold by new growth in membership.¹⁰⁹

Rogers was true to his word and the growth of the church over the next seven years was unprecedented among churches in the Florida Baptist State Convention. When Rogers arrived the average attendance of the church was three hundred people and the annual budget of the church was \$85,000. In 1972, when Rogers left the church, the average attendance of the church was over two-thousand people, the membership of the church was over four-thousand, the church had baptized over 500 new members and the annual budget was nearly \$600,000.¹¹⁰

The Minister of Music, Jim Whitmire, was one of those in the church who was skeptical about the leadership of Rogers, but he soon became a dear friend of Rogers and referred to the ministry of Rogers at First Baptist Merritt Island, Florida, as "the days of Camelot."¹¹¹ According to Whitmire, Rogers demonstrated in his preaching a deep love for the Word of God, and he often preached on the cross, the blood of Christ, and the person of Jesus. Whitmire said that Rogers also gave a great deal of attention to the invitation, and had a tremendous gift for "drawing the net" at the end of a sermon. Moreover, when Rogers gave the invitation, a person knew exactly what to do. Rogers also loved to use hymns during the invitation that spoke of coming to Jesus. He even

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 49.

¹⁰⁹Rogers, quoted in Hight, "A Comparative Homiletical Analysis of Selected Southern Baptist Convention Presidents from 1979 through 1989," 22.

¹¹⁰Statistics taken from the Florida Baptist Convention Annual Reports from 1957 to 1964.

¹¹¹Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 49.

wrote an invitation hymn called “Lord I Believe.” Furthermore, Whitmire said that Rogers had a burning desire to see the lost come to Christ when he preached and always gave an invitation. Even when Rogers spoke at an outdoor church picnic, Rogers gave an invitation for people to come forward and receive Christ.¹¹²

The growth at the First Baptist Church of Merritt Island added many new demands upon the time of Rogers, and he soon felt torn between the responsibilities of a growing church and the needs of his family. Despite his love for the church and passion for lost souls, Rogers realized that his family was more important.¹¹³ Rogers would later comment that the priorities of a pastor’s life must be as follows: God first, family second, and the church third. “The family is more important than the congregation,” Rogers said.¹¹⁴ Consequently, Rogers decided that he would always choose his family over the church and humorously commented, “I believe in the separation of church and mate.”¹¹⁵

According to Rogers his wife was his prayer partner. He and Joyce prayed together almost every day. They prayed for all their family members by name each morning. They also prayed for a different region of the world each day of the week. One day they would pray for Africa and another day they prayed for the Middle East. On Sunday they always prayed for America. Rogers believed most pastors do not pray with their wives enough. He admitted that it was difficult for him to pray with his wife at first, but he came to the conclusion that nothing will give a man more intimacy with his wife than to pray daily with her.¹¹⁶ Rogers often reiterated, “There is no way to estimate the importance of a man’s relationship with his wife and family. I have more people

¹¹²Jim Whitmire, telephone interview with author, digital recording, November 17, 2011.

¹¹³Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 50.

¹¹⁴Rogers, “The Pastor’s Spiritual Priority,” disc 2, session 3.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶Ibid.

speak to me about my relationship with my wife than any other aspect of my ministry. They say, 'I appreciate the way you love and honor Joyce.' Joyce and I are a team."¹¹⁷

Rogers loved the people of the First Baptist Church of Merritt Island, Florida, and he had planned to spend the rest of his ministry there. When interviewed by the local newspapers in 1972, for example, Rogers said, "I expect to go to heaven from Merritt Island."¹¹⁸ Later that year, Rogers was one of the speakers at the Southern Baptist Pastor's Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Shortly after the convention, Rogers received a phone call from Roland Maddox who was a member of the pulpit committee at Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. Maddox explained to Rogers that the pulpit committee of Bellevue Baptist Church heard him preach in Philadelphia and wanted to meet with him about becoming their next pastor.¹¹⁹

Ministry at Bellevue Baptist Church

Unlike the bright and promising future Rogers saw at the First Baptist Church of Merritt Island, Florida, the best and brightest days for Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, appeared to be in the past. Bellevue was still well known among Southern Baptists as a large church with a rich heritage. The church began as a small mission in 1903, located in the area of the city referred to as midtown. In 1927, Robert G. Lee became the pastor of Bellevue and served until his retirement in 1960. After Lee's retirement, Ramsey Pollard became the pastor and served for twelve years until his retirement in 1972.¹²⁰ Bellevue was still a sizable church, but it appeared to possess little

¹¹⁷Adrian Rogers, quoted in James A. Smith, Sr., "Q & A: Rogers on Ministry, the SBC, and Post-retirement," *Florida Baptist Witness*, posted November 17, 2005, <http://www.gofbw.com/news.asp?ID=517> (accessed April 12, 2012).

¹¹⁸Rogers, quoted in Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 50.

¹¹⁹Ibid., 54.

¹²⁰"History and Vision of Bellevue," www.bellevue.org/pages/page.asp?pageid=64298 (accessed April 13, 2012).

potential for growth. Rogers described Bellevue as a church declining in membership and with outdated facilities:

Bellevue had been in decline for twenty years. From 1952 to 1972, every year attendance had been less than the prior year for twenty straight years. It had gone from an average attendance in Sunday school of 2,700 in 1952—which was the apex, the highest year—down to less than 1,300 in Sunday school in 1972. . . . The town, the demographics of the city had changed. The building was rundown. Parking was woefully inadequate.¹²¹

Consequently, when Rogers was first contacted by the church, he told Maddox that he was not interested in relocating; however, he did graciously agree to visit Memphis and speak with the pulpit committee.

Originally, Rogers made the trip to Memphis simply to be courteous, but afterwards Rogers began to fast and pray about the invitation to speak at the church. As he prayed about Bellevue, Rogers felt the Holy Spirit may be leading him to move to Memphis, Tennessee; consequently, he agreed to visit the church and preach as a guest speaker.¹²² According to his wife, Rogers was not planning to preach in view of a call at this time, but was merely coming as a supply preacher:

We spent a time of intense prayer with the pulpit committee before the coming Sunday. Somehow, however, Adrian and the pulpit committee got “their wires crossed.” He thought that he was only filling the pulpit for a Sunday. Yet before the historic Sunday had ended, he had accepted the call to Bellevue.¹²³

After Rogers accepted the call to become the new pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, he asked the deacons of the church if he could go to the pastor’s study and be left alone for a few minutes. In the study, Rogers wept and prayed privately.¹²⁴

Rogers soon left the youthful, vibrant church in Merritt Island, Florida, and moved to a waning church with an aging congregation. Rogers jokingly commented,

¹²¹Duduit, “Preaching and Church Growth,” 7.

¹²²Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 56.

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴Ibid., 57.

“The first Sunday I preached it was like I was looking at a snowstorm.”¹²⁵ Over the next three decades, however, the church would experience incredible growth under his leadership. When Rogers began his ministry at Bellevue, for example, the three thousand seat auditorium was usually half-filled on a good Sunday morning. Within two years, however, the worship service was filled to capacity and a second worship service was started. In 1983, a third service was started to accommodate the growing number of people attending the church. The church also averaged over five hundred baptisms per year and led the state convention in baptisms almost every year.¹²⁶ Even in 1984, when Rogers was in the midst of leading the conservative resurgence in the SBC, Bellevue Baptist Church was fifth in the number of baptisms among all the churches of the convention with 656 baptisms.¹²⁷ When Rogers came to Bellevue the membership of the church was approximately eight thousand, but when he retired thirty-two years later the church membership had grown to almost twenty-nine thousand.¹²⁸

In addition, the racial makeup of the congregation changed during the tenure of Rogers. In 1972, all the members of Bellevue Baptist Church were Caucasian. When Rogers first arrived at the church, he explained to the deacons that if at any time anyone was turned away from membership because of the color of his or her skin that he would resign as pastor. Rogers was the pastor of Bellevue just a few months when a young African-American man came forward during an invitation. The young man said that he was not interested in joining the church, but he had prayed to receive Christ during the service and wanted to make a public profession of his faith. When Rogers presented this

¹²⁵Randall Balmer, “Churchgoing: Bellevue Baptist Church near Memphis,” *The Christian Century* (5 May 1993): 488.

¹²⁶Montalbano, “A Critical Comparison of the Preaching of Robert G. Lee, Ramsey Pollard, and Adrian Rogers,” 123.

¹²⁷James C. Hefley, *The Truth in Crisis* (Dallas: Criterion Publication, 1986), 20.

¹²⁸Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 56.

man to the church, with nine other Caucasians who came forward to join the church, he explained that the African-American man was only coming forward to make a profession of faith, but when Rogers asked for a vote regarding the decisions that were made that day, one lady raised her hand in opposition. As a result, Rogers asked the lady to come forward and tell the church why she voted in opposition to these decisions. She stated that she believed that God did not intend for blacks to mix with whites at church. Rogers then explained again that the young man was not applying for membership, but only making a public profession of faith. Rogers then asked, “Aren’t you glad that this man was saved today?” Immediately, the congregation rose to its feet and applauded. Rogers believed this response by the church broke the color barrier and today Bellevue has several African-American members in its choir and in leadership positions.¹²⁹ Rogers has even boasted that Bellevue probably has more African-American members than any other integrated church in the SBC.¹³⁰

With the rapid growth of Bellevue’s membership, soon the historic facilities of the midtown church location no longer adequately met the needs of the church members; consequently, the church secured 376 acres east of Memphis in the town of Cordova, Tennessee, in hopes of relocating. The church broke ground in July of 1987, and by November of 1989, the church was able to have its first service in the new facility. The new building cost \$34 million and seated over seven thousand in its worship center with an additional 310 seats for the choir and one hundred seats for the orchestra. The new facility also had thirty-one acres of paved parking with over 3,500 parking spaces.¹³¹

When asked about the remarkable growth of Bellevue Baptist Church, Rogers attributed the success of his ministry to a number of factors. The first and primary factor,

¹²⁹Adrian Rogers, “The Pastor’s Personal Leadership,” in *What Every Pastor Ought to Know* [DVD-ROM] (North Palm Beach: The Adrian Roger Pastor Training Institute, 2008), disc 9, session 13.

¹³⁰Balmer, “Churchgoing,” 488.

¹³¹*Ibid.*, 484.

of course, was biblical or expository preaching. Regarding the importance of preaching, Rogers said,

I think it [preaching] is central, and not because I happen to be the preacher. I believe that the message, preaching, is the stack-pole around which everything else is built. My psychology is always: if I develop the message, God develops the ministry. All that we see here, all that has happened here, I think is a response to a message. I'm not necessarily talking about homiletical structure or oratory, but truth and conviction. I believe that your zeal is never any greater than your conviction over a long period of time. I think that conviction comes out of truth and that the pastor and the pulpit articulate that truth.¹³²

As a result, the pulpit ministry has always been the focus and priority of the ministry of Rogers. When Rogers arrived at Bellevue, he convinced the leadership of the church to allow him to focus the majority of his time upon sermon preparation. Rogers was allowed to organize a staff that handled the other areas of pastoral ministry such as visitation, funerals, weddings, and counseling. As the senior pastor of Bellevue, Rogers described his ministry as “leading the leaders of the church.” Consequently, a second key factor in the growth of Bellevue has been the freedom allotted to Rogers to recruit an effective and gifted staff that shared his vision for the church.¹³³

In addition to his pulpit ministry, a third key factor in the growth of Bellevue Baptist Church was its evangelistic programs and outreach ministries. Rogers explained his leadership role in Bellevue’s outreach ministry as follows:

Some years ago I developed a plan called “God’s Invasion Army.” I taught people how to knock on doors, how to get invited into the home, and how to present the gospel. This was primarily door-to-door soul winning—taking prospect cards and going out—which was very effective. Then some people developed better plans—Christian Witness Training (CWT) and Evangelism Explosion.¹³⁴

For several years Bellevue employed the Evangelism Explosion program. According to Rogers, at one time Bellevue had the largest Evangelism Explosion program in the world.

¹³²Adrian Rogers, quoted in Duduit, “Preaching and Church Growth,” 7.

¹³³Rogers, quoted in Hight, “A Comparative Homiletical Analysis of Selected Southern Baptist Convention Presidents from 1979 through 1989,” 26.

¹³⁴Rogers, quoted in Mims and Miller, “Sharing the Gospel,” 6.

Before his retirement, however, Rogers led the church to adopt the FAITH Evangelism Strategy in its outreach ministry.¹³⁵

Another effective evangelistic program at Bellevue was the Making Friends Forever ministry. This program centered upon church members building friendships with non-Christians for the purpose of reaching people with the gospel. Rogers considered this method of evangelism as the strongest outreach program in the church:

Our strongest and best strategy is a program we have developed here at Bellevue called Making Friends Forever, which is an embodiment of many kinds of evangelism. Basically friendship evangelism involves getting acquainted with the unsaved, getting them under the sound of the gospel, or personally leading them to Christ, bring them into church, getting them into the baptistery, getting them out of the baptistery into a Sunday school class, and out of the Sunday school class into service. We have been training our people to do this through films and lectures and preaching.

Various activities of the church are called Making Friends Opportunities. When we have the passion play or the Fourth of July Spectacular, we tell our members to bring their friends. It is a Making Friends Opportunity. This has been the most effective thing we have done. Along with making friends forever, it is just plain gospel preaching, presenting Jesus, presenting the claims of Christ, and the lordship of Christ, and asking people to surrender to him and be saved.¹³⁶

According to his wife, Joyce Rogers, church records revealed that more than 95,000 people had prayed to receive Christ at these various special events during Rogers' thirty-two years of ministry at Bellevue Baptist Church.¹³⁷

Although much of the growth at Bellevue during the ministry of Rogers was attributed to his evangelistic focus and methodology, perhaps another reason Bellevue was able to report such impressive numbers in the growth of its membership was because of the minimal requirements the church had for becoming a new church member. For example, when Rogers was asked about the expectations of new members, he remarked that all a candidate for membership needed to do in order to join the church was make a

¹³⁵Ibid., 7.

¹³⁶Ibid.

¹³⁷Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 86.

public profession of faith and request membership during one of the weekly worship services:

The only thing I look for when a person comes to join our church is commitment to Christ. Romans 14:1 says, “He who is weak in the faith, receive.” A newcomer is a babe, and I think every family needs a lot of babysitters. You can’t say to a baby, “We’ll let you into the family if you do the dishes, make the beds, mop the floors, and bring in income.” He’s not equipped. He has to be nurtured and trained. So we keep a low threshold for new members.¹³⁸

In other words, a person simply needed to come forward during the invitation, request membership, and meet briefly with a staff member or deacon in order to become a church member.¹³⁹ Once someone joined the church, even attendance was not required to remain a member of the church. Sadly, Rogers has jokingly alleged that Bellevue has so many inactive members that “. . . even J. Edgar Hoover could not find some of them.”¹⁴⁰

Denominational Leadership of Rogers

Denominational leadership held no special attraction for Rogers. He saw himself as a pastor/evangelist, and he viewed denominational work as a distraction from soul-winning and church growth.¹⁴¹ While at Bellevue, Rogers even encouraged young pastors to avoid denominational work and focus on pastoring the church.¹⁴² As a result, Rogers had not been involved much in the state conventions where he served as a pastor. Although he attended the annual meetings of the state and national conventions, he had no political aspirations. In 1979, however, Rogers felt pressed into what he later called the “holy duty” to be the point man of the conservative resurgence.¹⁴³ Although he and

¹³⁸Marshall Shelley, “Apathy and Commitment: A Conversation with Maxie Dunham, Don Finto, Duane Litfin, and Adrian Rogers,” *Leadership* 10 (Summer 1989): 126.

¹³⁹Rogers, quoted in Balmer, “Churchgoing,” 486.

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

¹⁴¹Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 97.

¹⁴²Hayes, interview, November 11, 2011.

¹⁴³Balmer, “Churchgoing,” 486.

other conservative pastors in the convention were often accused by moderate and liberal¹⁴⁴ pastors of being only politically motivated in their aspirations for control of the convention, Rogers consistently contended that his primary concern was the evangelistic mission of the convention and not politics.¹⁴⁵

The 1979 Election of Rogers

The popularity of Rogers among the conservatives in the SBC was evident with his election as president of the pre-convention Pastor's Conference. In Houston, Texas, during the conference, W.A. Criswell (pastor of the First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas) made it clear to the ten thousand pastors in attendance that Adrian Rogers was his man to be the next president of the convention; however, Rogers had not consented to be nominated at that time and was resistant to having his name nominated.¹⁴⁶ Later that same day, Rogers was contacted by two missionaries he greatly admired, Bertha Smith and Charlie Culpepper,¹⁴⁷ both of whom said that they believed it was God's will for him to be the next president of the convention.¹⁴⁸ Finally, late that evening when Rogers was

¹⁴⁴During the conservative resurgence in the SBC, the terms moderate, liberal, conservative and fundamentalist were often used to identify the two groups battling for control of the convention. While some people used liberals and moderates synonymously, Rogers viewed liberals and moderates as two different groups of people. For example, Rogers viewed the term "liberal" theologically, and "moderate" politically. Rogers considered a liberal to be "a person who does not believe in the veracity, the exactitude, the integrity, the infallibility and inerrancy of the Scripture." A moderate, however, was someone who believed in inerrancy, but who also believed the convention should accommodate the liberal view of Scripture, and include liberals in denominational leadership. The fundamentalists and conservatives were those who believed the Bible was inspired of God and without error in all aspects (historical, scientific, and faith). Furthermore, they believed that the belief of inerrancy should be a prerequisite for denominational leadership, and required of all those teaching in the six seminaries supported by the convention. See Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 166. See also Rogers, *Kingdom Authority*, 120-25.

¹⁴⁵Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 97.

¹⁴⁶Hefley, *The Truth in Crisis*, 65-66.

¹⁴⁷Bertha Smith and Charlie Culpepper were missionaries in China during the great spiritual movement among the Chinese people known as the "Shantung Revival." They were admired by Rogers, and considered prayer warriors; consequently, when they said that they had a word from God, Rogers took their comments very seriously. See Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 98-99.

¹⁴⁸Paul Pressler, *A Hill on Which to Die* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 101.

returning to his motel room, he met Paige Patterson and Jerry Vines both of whom also wanted him to run for the presidency. Rogers requested that the two men pray with him about his nomination. Years later Patterson would reflect upon that divine appointment with much detail:

A night I will never forget was in 1979, in Houston, Texas. Dr. Jerry Vines and I felt then that Adrian should run for president, but as of 12:20 a.m. on the day that the convention would begin he had not yet agreed. Jerry and I had prayed and had finally decided to go to our rooms. However, as we started to walk onto the elevator, the doors opened and Adrian walked off. He said, "You are the two I'm looking for. Come with me." We went to his room and Adrian said, "I need to pray with you about this question of my name being put forth for the presidency."

The prayer meeting continued for the better part of an hour. We supposed that Joyce was asleep, but at that point Adrian looked up from our prayer and asked, "Honey, what do you think?" Joyce held up her hand in the victory symbol. Adrian said, "That's how I feel, too, and if you can find somebody to nominate me, I will allow it to happen." As Dr. Vines and I left the room, we commented on the improbability of our having met with Adrian at that moment and could not help but see the hand of God.¹⁴⁹

Rogers was elected on the first ballot. The next year, however, Rogers declined to serve as president for a second term. He said that he needed to focus more of his time on his family and church.¹⁵⁰ A few years later, he did agree to serve as president of the convention a second and third term from 1986 to 1988. During this time, Rogers also served on the Peace Committee. This committee eventually gave a report that validated the conservatives' assertion that the problems dividing the convention were primarily theological.¹⁵¹ Two years later, the conflict between the conservatives and moderates ended with the election of Morris H. Chapman as president in 1990. After Chapman's election, moderates ceased attempting to recapture the office of presidency and Chapman ran unopposed in 1991.¹⁵² Nevertheless, it was the election of Rogers in 1979 that marked

¹⁴⁹Page Patterson, quoted in Gregory Tomlin, "Special Memories of Rogers Recounted by Southern Baptist Convention Presidents," *Baptist Press*, posted November 17, 2005, <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=22091> (accessed April 16, 2012).

¹⁵⁰Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 107.

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*, 109-10.

¹⁵²Foust, "Rogers, Longtime Bellevue Pastor and Leader in Conservative Resurgence, Dies."

the turning point in the SBC and every president of the convention elected afterwards has been theologically conservative.¹⁵³

Reason for Denominational Work

Prior to his first election as president of the convention in 1979, Rogers was first approached by Paul Pressler regarding his assistance in possibly changing the liberal theological direction of the convention. Rogers agreed to help, but he did not seriously believe the convention and its six seminaries could be changed from liberalism to a more conservative theological worldview.¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, from the beginning of the controversy Rogers maintained the only reason he became involved in denominational leadership was for theological and evangelistic reasons and not political ambition. Rogers had stated in the 1979 pastor's conference, for example, that the Baptist churches doing evangelism and reaching people were all "Bible-believing churches" with a pastor who "believes in the inerrant, infallible Word of God."¹⁵⁵ He also explained, "Inerrancy is not the only ingredient, but it is the basic ingredient."¹⁵⁶ Thus, Rogers saw the inerrancy issue

¹⁵³Ibid.

¹⁵⁴Paul Pressler and Page Patterson were considered to be the two leading men who initially orchestrated the conservative resurgence of the SBC in the 1970s that eventually led to the first election of Adrian Rogers as president of the convention in 1979. Pressler and Patterson contended that in order to change the theological direction of the convention a convention president must be repeatedly elected over a ten year period. According to Pressler and Patterson, by having a conservative president repeatedly elected, then more conservatives could be appointed onto the convention's Committee on Committees. Once a majority of conservatives were on the Committee on Committees then this committee would in turn appoint conservatives onto the convention's Committee on Nominations. Likewise, when a majority of conservatives are appointed onto the Committee on Nominations, then this committee will be able to nominate and appoint conservatives to each of the Board of Trustees of the six Southern Baptist seminaries. Finally, once a majority of conservatives were on the Board of Trustees of the six seminaries, a conservative could eventually be appointed to serve as president of each of the six seminaries, and conservatives could be appointed to teach in the seminaries. Consequently, the goal of Pressler and Patterson, like Rogers, was primarily to change the theological direction of the convention by changing the theological persuasion of the convention's academic institutions. See Pressler, *A Hill on which to Die*, 77-84.

¹⁵⁵Rogers, quoted in Hefley, *The Truth in Crisis*, 66.

¹⁵⁶Ibid.

as a crucial theological matter that was fundamental to the evangelistic ministry of the local church and the SBC.

The Peace Committee

The pastors, laity, and denominational leaders opposed to the conservative resurgence persistently argued that the controversial issues in the convention were political and not theological. Finally, in 1985, during the SBC meeting in Dallas, Texas, a committee was formed and instructed to investigate the issues that were dividing the convention and to give a report back to the convention of its findings. This special committee was called the Peace Committee, and Rogers was one of its members.¹⁵⁷ This special committee met for two years and gave a report in 1987, during the SBC meeting in St. Louis, Missouri. The report stated that the primary issue dividing the convention was indeed theological and the primary theological dispute centered upon the nature and authority of the Bible.¹⁵⁸

Any reservations regarding the report of the Peace Committee were certainly eliminated years later by the admission of Cecil Sherman, a leader in the moderate camp, who eventually disclosed that moderates did in fact believe the Bible to have errors in it.¹⁵⁹ In his autobiography, for example, Sherman acknowledged, “I believe the Bible is God-inspired. In all things related to the first purpose of the Bible (to bring wayward human-kind back to God), the Bible is without error. But when the Bible speaks of

¹⁵⁷The Peace Committee was composed of twenty-two members representing conservatives, moderates and some members not aligned with either group. Charles Fuller was named the chairman of the committee. The committee met fifteen times over a two year period and was assigned the task to identify the causes of the division within the Southern Baptist denomination, and to recommend to the convention a plan to resolve the problems in the denomination. See Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 109; Cecil Sherman, *By My Own Reckoning* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2008), 197-211; James C. Hefley, *The Truth in Crisis: The Winning Edge* (Hannibal, MO: Hannibal Books, 1990), 34-35.

¹⁵⁸Hefley, *The Truth in Crisis*, 38.

¹⁵⁹Cecil Sherman organized and led the moderate opposition to the conservative resurgence for several years until his resignation from the Peace Committee and his subsequent departure from the SBC. See Sherman, *By My Own Reckoning*, 150-55.

science and historical details, the Bible has some errors. Moderates do not believe the Bible is full of error, but there are errors.”¹⁶⁰

While serving with Sherman on the Peace Committee, Rogers refused to compromise on the issue of biblical inerrancy. When Rogers was asked, for example, if he would be willing to divide the six seminaries of the convention and allow some to be theologically conservative and others to be liberal, he answered, “Absolutely not, because the graduates of a moderate seminary would be unacceptable on the mission field.”¹⁶¹ Rogers’ answer demonstrated again that he considered the issue of biblical inerrancy to be directly tied to the evangelistic ministry and mission of the church and the SBC.

Revision of the Baptist Faith and Message

According to Michael Foust, Rogers’ most significant impact in the SBC was as the chairman of the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message Study Committee:

Rogers' greatest contribution to Southern Baptist life in his later years may have come as chairman of the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message Study Committee. In one of its most controversial moves, the committee chose to remove language from the 1963 BF&M that stated, "The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ." Although the phrase was placed in the 1963 BF&M as an affirmation of the truthfulness of all Scripture, it eventually came to be used by some moderates as a way to pit Jesus' words in the Gospels against the rest of Scripture.¹⁶²

When the SBC met in Orlando, Florida, Rogers persuasively argued the reasons for making this change in the 2000 revision of the Baptist Faith and Message. Rogers argued, “Jesus Christ cannot be divided from the biblical revelation that is testimony to Him.”¹⁶³ Furthermore he warned, "We must not claim knowledge of Christ that is independent of Scripture or in any way in opposition to Scripture."¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰Sherman, *By My Own Reckoning*, 139-40.

¹⁶¹Rogers, quoted in Sherman, *By My Own Reckoning*, 201.

¹⁶²Foust, “Rogers, Longtime Bellevue Pastor and Leader in Conservative Resurgence, Dies.”

¹⁶³Ibid.

¹⁶⁴Ibid.

In addition to the inerrancy issue, Rogers also stated that other revisions to the Baptist Faith and Message would clarify and affirm the exclusivity of Christ. In regard to this issue, Rogers insisted: “Given the persuasive influence of postmodern culture . . . we are called to proclaim Jesus Christ as the only Savior, and salvation in His name alone.”¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, Rogers asserted, “Baptists thus reject inclusivism and pluralism in salvation, for these compromise the Gospel itself.”¹⁶⁶ The compelling arguments of Rogers not only convinced the messengers to adopt the revisions recommended by the committee, but they also demonstrated once again the concern Rogers had to protect the evangelistic mission of the church and convention from liberalism and postmodernism.

Legacy of Denominational Leadership

Rogers commented a few weeks before his death that he believed the most significant contribution of his life’s work was his role in the conservative resurgence. In an interview with the *Florida Baptist Witness*, Rogers pondered, “I look back on my life and there are a lot of things that have happened. I have written books, pastored churches, preached on radio and television around the world. But I think the part that God allowed me to have in the turning of the SBC may have the longest-lasting effect and be the most significant.”¹⁶⁷ At one time Rogers had seriously considered leaving the SBC prior to the start of the conservative resurgence.¹⁶⁸ He eventually came to believe, however, that God was using the convention to play a significant role in the promotion of the gospel and biblical values in America, and speculated, “I shudder to think what America would be like without the Southern Baptist Convention.”¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵Ibid.

¹⁶⁶Ibid.

¹⁶⁷Smith, “Q & A: Rogers on Ministry, the SBC, and Post-retirement.”

¹⁶⁸Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 95.

¹⁶⁹Smith, “Q & A: Rogers on Ministry, the SBC, and Post-retirement.”

The Broadcast Ministry of Rogers

When Rogers came to Bellevue Baptist Church in 1972, the church already had a local television and radio ministry. The morning service was telecast live on the local ABC affiliate, channel 13, of Memphis, Tennessee, and the evening service was carried on a local radio station.¹⁷⁰ The church also had a tape ministry; however, requests for the sermons of Rogers soon became overwhelming for the church's small tape ministry, and Rogers realized that something must be done to alleviate this problem. According to Rogers, "People were requesting tapes of the messages and soon the requests began to grow to the point that we knew God was leading us into a wider ministry."¹⁷¹ Rogers recommended an expansion of the church's broadcast and tape ministry. This new outreach ministry began in 1985, and was initially called "Word for the World." Rogers enlisted the help of a layman, Buck Jones, to be the first director of the new broadcast ministry. The name of the ministry was changed in 1987, to the present familiar title of "Love Worth Finding." Jones retired in 1991, and Bill Skelton became the executive vice-president of the ministry.¹⁷² The stated purpose of the Love Worth Finding ministry was: "To bring people to Christ and mature them in the faith."¹⁷³

Early Broadcast Ministry

When asked by a young pastor if he should consider starting a radio ministry, Rogers resounded: "Absolutely!"¹⁷⁴ Rogers then explained that when he was still in

¹⁷⁰Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 118.

¹⁷¹Adrian Rogers, quoted in Love Worth Finding Ministries, "Our History," <http://www.lwf.org/site/PageNavigator/about/ourhistory> (accessed April 18, 2012).

¹⁷²Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 118.

¹⁷³Love Worth Finding Ministries, "Our Mission," http://www.lwf.org/site/PageNavigator/about/our_history (accessed April 18, 2012).

¹⁷⁴Adrian Rogers, "Questions and Answers Covering All Sessions," in *What Every Pastor Ought to Know* [DVD-ROM] (North Palm Beach: The Adrian Roger Pastor Training Institute, 2008), disc 10, session 14.

school at Stetson College, he purchased time on the local radio station WARN in Fort Pierce, Florida. Rogers used an old reel-to-reel recorder, and began broadcasting a weekly program on Sunday afternoon called “The Closer Walk Hour.” Despite the program’s name, the broadcast only lasted thirty minutes. After he graduated from seminary and returned to Fort Pierce, Florida, Rogers began a fifteen minute devotional program called “Daybreak.” The program was broadcast live at 6:45 a.m. every morning.

Likewise, when Rogers moved to Merritt Island, Florida, he continued with his radio ministry, and he started a new tape ministry. Rogers commented that a pastor never knows who is listening when he utilizes a radio and tape ministry, and such ministries are an effective way to reach people who do not ordinarily attend a church with the power of the gospel message. During his early days in broadcast ministry, for example, Rogers noted that he often received personal letters from people who thanked him for his messages and many people shared with him how his radio ministry was instrumental in leading them to faith in Christ or contributing to their spiritual growth.¹⁷⁵

Love Worth Finding

When Rogers came to Bellevue, he initially saw the broadcast ministry as an extension of his pulpit ministry, but it soon grew into an evangelistic ministry beyond anything that he had hoped or dreamed.¹⁷⁶ Presently, the ministry of Love Worth Finding is transmitted on over fourteen thousand broadcast and cable television outlets and on nearly two thousand radio stations in more than one hundred fifty countries around the world. Rogers is also heard on the Internet at Lightsource.com and OnePlace.com.¹⁷⁷ When asked how the radio ministry affected his preaching ministry, Rogers exclaimed,

¹⁷⁵Ibid.

¹⁷⁶Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 118-19.

¹⁷⁷Love Worth Finding Ministries, “Our History.”

The sun on Sunday will never set on "Love Worth Finding" ministries. We are on satellite, covering Europe, Asia, Africa, South America; it goes all around the globe in different languages. You say, "How can that connect with all of those people?" Two things prove the inspiration of the Scripture to me: one is that it has stood up under so much shoddy preaching! The other is that the Word of God connects and when you are really preaching in the Spirit, you are saying more than you are saying. The Holy Spirit of God will take that word and all those different ethnic backgrounds and sociological backgrounds and bring it home to human hearts.¹⁷⁸

Rogers exclaimed that every problem of mankind is a sub-category of sin, sorrow, and death. The Bible, he said, is the only book that has the answers to all man's problems.¹⁷⁹

In 2002, Rogers was inducted into the National Religious Broadcasting Hall of Fame and his broadcast ministry has received many awards over the years for excellence in religious broadcasting.¹⁸⁰ Although the preaching ministry of Rogers is enjoyed by many Christians, Rogers has made it clear that the primary purpose of his broadcast ministry is evangelism. Rogers declared, "I believe God wants us to proclaim the message of salvation in the power of the Holy Spirit by every means possible. . . . That's our commitment at Love Worth Finding."¹⁸¹

Retirement and Death of Rogers

In 2003, Rogers established The Adrian Rogers Pastor Training Institute as a division of Love Worth Finding Ministries. It was his desire that after he retired, he would focus on mentoring other men on preaching, leadership, and church growth. While he was the pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Rogers had readily demonstrated a great love and concern for many young pastors. He was often approached for advice, and frequently spent hours counseling young pastors.¹⁸² For example, when he announced his retirement in September of 2004, Ken Whitten, who was the pastor of Idlewild Baptist

¹⁷⁸Rogers, quoted in Duduit, "Preaching and Church Growth," 12.

¹⁷⁹Adrian Rogers, "What Is the Gospel?" *Decision*, January 2010, 11.

¹⁸⁰Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 119.

¹⁸¹Rogers, quoted in Love Worth Finding Ministries, "Our History."

¹⁸²Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 119.

Church in Tampa, Florida, disclosed the special role Rogers played in mentoring him:

Adrian Rogers is my spiritual father in the ministry and one for whom I will always be grateful that I was given the privilege of serving under his godly leadership for eight years. All that I know about leadership, preaching, vision, and integrity, I learned at his feet. He will always be my pastor, counselor and friend. There are literally thousands of pastors who would make that same confession.¹⁸³

On his 73rd birthday, Rogers told the people of Bellevue Baptist Church that he was going to retire in six months. According to a written statement which Rogers read to the congregation, he announced, “Now comes a time that we all knew would come when I should announce my retirement as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church. . . . Nevertheless, I will not retire from the ministry until I draw my last breath.”¹⁸⁴ Rogers also promised to keep a close eye on the pulpit committee’s selection for a new pastor. He later said at a press conference, “I’m not going to hand-select the man who’ll follow me, but I’ll stand close by to make sure there aren’t any mistakes.”¹⁸⁵

Retirement and Health of Rogers

For a man over seventy, Rogers seemed to be in excellent health. He still had his chiseled features and his recognizable resonating baritone voice. Except for the removal of his gall bladder in February of 1980, he had no major medical problems.¹⁸⁶ In 2001, however, he experienced a minor heart attack that resulted in a stint being placed in a major artery. Three years later, Rogers was planning a mission trip to Guatemala, when doctors discovered several blockages surrounding his heart that required immediate

¹⁸³Ken Witten, quoted in Michael Foust, “Adrian Rogers Announces Retirement from Bellevue,” *Baptist Press*, posted September 14, 2004, <http://www.gofbw.com/news.asp?ID=3197> (accessed April 19, 2012).

¹⁸⁴Adrian Rogers, quoted in Foust, “Adrian Rogers Announces Retirement from Bellevue.”

¹⁸⁵Adrian Rogers, quoted in Robert Marus, “Adrian Rogers to Retire but Remain at Bellevue,” *Baptist Press*, posted September 17, 2004, <http://www.abpnews.com/content/view/1363/117/> (accessed April 20, 2013).

¹⁸⁶Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 107.

surgery. Rogers had triple bypass heart surgery on March 16, 2004.¹⁸⁷ Rogers denied that his health played a role in his decision to retire, but expressed that he hoped after retirement to spend more time with his family and pursue other opportunities for ministry. After he announced his retirement, Rogers confidently declared, “I thank God for my recovery and growing vitality and hope for many good years ahead.”¹⁸⁸

Rogers retired on March 6, 2005. Thousands of people gathered at Bellevue over the first weekend in March in order to express an emotional farewell to their beloved pastor of thirty-two years. On Sunday morning Rogers preached his last sermon as the pastor of the church, “Jesus Is the One We Praise.”¹⁸⁹ In this message, Rogers expressed once again his expectation to remain as an active member of the church: “It is a new day for Bellevue Baptist Church, and I intend to keep my membership here. I’m going to be sitting on the front row shouting and saying ‘amen’ to our new pastor.”¹⁹⁰ That Sunday evening, the celebration of his retirement continued with testimonials from friends, family, and church members. Rogers and his wife were also given several gifts as expressions of appreciation. He jokingly commented at the close of the service that if he had known retirement would be so enjoyable, then he would have done it years earlier.¹⁹¹

Cancer Diagnosis and Death

Unfortunately, the joy of retirement was short lived and three months later, Rogers announced at the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference in Nashville, Tennessee,

¹⁸⁷Ibid., 88-89.

¹⁸⁸Rogers, quoted in Marus, “Adrian Rogers to Retire but Remain at Bellevue.”

¹⁸⁹Tim Ellsworth, “Adrian Rogers: The ‘Prince of Preachers’ Retires,” *Baptist Life*, posted March 2005, <http://www.sbclife.org/Articles/2005/04/sla8.asp> (accessed April 19, 2012).

¹⁹⁰Ibid.

¹⁹¹Ibid.

he had been diagnosed with colon cancer.¹⁹² Surgeons had already removed part of his colon after cancerous polyps were found in a routine colonoscopy. Subsequent tests, however, revealed that the cancer had already spread to his liver, and would require chemotherapy. Rogers was consistently optimistic and expressed confidence that he planned to keep preaching for many more years.¹⁹³

In November, however, Rogers' condition worsened. He contracted pneumonia in both lungs as a complication from the chemotherapy treatments he had been receiving for colon cancer. Rogers died following a brief period of mechanical ventilation on November 15, 2005. Before he was placed on the ventilator, Rogers spoke one last time to his friends and family in his hospital room. Steve Gaines, who followed Rogers as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, reported that Rogers had confidently confessed to him and the family, "I am at perfect peace."¹⁹⁴

Thousands attended the funeral of Rogers at Bellevue on November 17, 2005. His wooden casket sat at the front of the church's sanctuary draped with red roses, and a golden shepherd's staff leaned against it. He was eulogized by family members, pastors, friends, and numerous other religious leaders. During the two hour service, Rogers was remembered as a godly man who refused to compromise God's Word, who persistently preached the Bible unashamedly and who desired more than anything to see people come to Jesus.¹⁹⁵ Rogers was buried at the Memphis Funeral Home and Memorial Gardens in

¹⁹²Adrian Rogers, "Gideon: Five Characteristics of a Man of God," a sermon on Judg 6 (Nashville: Southern Baptist 2005 Pastors Conference), cassette.

¹⁹³"Adrian Rogers Undergoing Cancer Tests in Houston," *Baptist Press*, posted June 15, 2005, <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=20989> (accessed April 20, 2012).

¹⁹⁴Michael Foust, "In His Final Days, Adrian Rogers Told Those Gathered around Him, 'I am at Perfect Peace,'" *Baptist Press*, posted November 16, 2005, <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=22079> (accessed February 9, 2012).

¹⁹⁵Tim Ellsworth, "At Bellevue, Thousands Say Goodbye to Adrian Rogers" *Baptist Press*, posted November 24, 2005, <http://www.bpnews.net/printerfriendly.asp?ID=22105> (accessed April 20, 2013).

Memphis, Tennessee. A simple headstone marks his grave with the epitaph, “Come to Jesus.”¹⁹⁶

Continued Legacy of Rogers

Even after his death, Rogers continued to have an evangelistic impact in the world through Love Worth Finding Ministries and The Pastors Training Institute. Shortly before his death, Rogers led a seminar in Naples, Florida, as part of the Pastors Training Institute. The seminar included several lecture sessions with Rogers, videos of Rogers preaching, and a question and answer time with Rogers.¹⁹⁷ In an interview about the seminar, Rogers commented,

I have a joy in my heart that I am able to do some things now that I really should have done prior to this, but I can do now, and that is to download some of the things that God has put in my heart for half a century about ministry. . . . God has, by His grace, taught me a lot of things – in small churches and big ones. I am in what I call now the transfer zone. Where if you are running a relay race, there comes a time where you are running side-by-side with another runner and getting ready to hand the baton off. That is where I think I am with some of these younger preachers. I want to run side-by-side with them, and then slap that stick in their hand and say, “You got it, bud. Go!”¹⁹⁸

Fortunately, a professional recording was made of Rogers conducting this seminar in a studio before his death. Under the leadership of his oldest son, Steve Rogers, twenty-one hours of video are now being utilized to train indigenous church leaders around the world.¹⁹⁹ In a telephone interview with the author, Joyce Rogers said that more than 22,000 pastors from overseas have attended the Pastors Training Institute seminar, and she exclaimed, “Adrian is doing more for other pastors than he would have ever dreamed

¹⁹⁶“Come to Jesus” was the common phrase used by Rogers in his sermon invitation. When Joyce Rogers first wrote the book *Love Worth Finding*, she originally gave it the title *Come to Jesus*, but the editors change the title later. Joyce Rogers, interview, February 24, 2012.

¹⁹⁷Smith, “Rogers to Pastors.”

¹⁹⁸Smith, “Q & A: Rogers on Ministry, the SBC, and Post-retirement.”

¹⁹⁹Steve Rogers, interview, December 10, 2011.

or imagined.”²⁰⁰ Indeed, the messenger may be gone, however, his message and ministry continue.

Conclusion

Rogers has been described as the most powerful preacher Southern Baptists have produced in modern times.²⁰¹ He was a key leader of the conservative resurgence, and served as president of the convention three times. Every church he pastored grew in its membership. Moreover, he pastored for thirty-two years one of the largest churches in the SBC, and often led his state conventions in annual baptisms. His preaching ministry resulted in thousands of people around the world coming to faith in Jesus Christ, and through the ministry of Love Worth Finding, he is still reaching thousands of people every year. Consequently, his life and ministry demonstrate many of the characteristics and convictions that are essential for an effective evangelistic ministry.

Rogers possessed an inner compulsion for preaching the gospel motivated by a sacred call into the ministry. He readily acknowledged a definite call in his life to preach when he was a teenager. Moreover, Rogers demonstrated this calling throughout his life by his compassion toward people and his giftedness in communicating the gospel to the unconverted.

Rogers possessed a steadiness or wisdom in balancing and fulfilling the various responsibilities in the segments of life and ministry: his personal relationship with God, his role as husband and father in the family, and his responsibility as pastor and spiritual leader in the church. Rogers was a disciplined person in his time and priorities, and was cautious to always keep his relationship with Christ and family a priority before his vocation and ministry.

²⁰⁰Joyce Rogers, interview, February 24, 2012.

²⁰¹Bill Bennett, “The Secret of Preaching with Power,” in *Text Driven Preaching*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen, and Ned L. Mathews (Nashville: Broadman & Holmes Publishing, 2010), 71.

Rogers possessed courage and perseverance. He refused to compromise his convictions regardless of the circumstances or the personal cost. Rogers was a man of integrity and made every effort to avoid even the appearance of moral or intellectual compromise or impropriety.

Rogers possessed a sensitivity and dependency upon the leadership and anointing of the Holy Spirit. Rogers recognized the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of the lost and acknowledged his need for the Holy Spirit to anoint both him and his sermons in order to be an effective evangelistic preacher.

Rogers possessed a conservative theology in which he recognized the Bible as the inerrant Word of God. Furthermore, he believed in the exclusivity of Christ as lost humanity's only hope of salvation. He also believed in the certainty of judgment and eternal anguish for those who do not know Christ as Lord and Savior.

Rogers possessed an unwavering belief in the power of the gospel to change lives. As a result, Rogers believed that the solution to man's greatest problems was found in the gospel message. Moreover, he believed that evangelism resulted in the ultimate welfare of man, and he believed that evangelism must be an essential priority for genuine social action and change.

Finally, Rogers possessed a desire for excellence and creativity in preaching the gospel. Rogers was a student of preaching and worked to improve his skills to communicate the gospel clearly and effectively. Consequently, Rogers, himself, has become a worthy topic of study for those wishing to be more effective in evangelistic preaching.

CHAPTER 3

THE PREACHING OF ROGERS

Because one of the underlying goals of this dissertation is to present Rogers as a model for evangelistic preaching, the objective of chapter three is to identify the methodology employed by Rogers in his evangelistic preaching ministry at Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. This aim is achieved by examining one hundred of the sermons of Rogers as well as utilizing the writings and lectures of Rogers related to the topic of evangelistic preaching. This chapter begins with an examination of the homiletical and organizational structure of Rogers' sermons. Secondly, this chapter addresses any expositional or hermeneutical concerns discovered in the sermons of Rogers. Finally, this chapter identifies several common characteristics of an effective evangelistic sermon reflected in the preaching of Rogers.

Homiletical Style of Rogers' Sermons

According to Rogers there are three major classifications of sermons: topical, textual and expository.¹ Rogers defined a topical sermon as a message that does not take its outline or points from a single verse or passage of Scripture. He also explained that such a sermon may be very biblical, but begins with a topic or issue from which several verses are eclectically selecting from the Bible that deal with that topic. Despite the fact that topical sermons are usually discouraged, Rogers claimed, "Topical preaching is an acceptable type of preaching, and it is the only way to address certain issues so do not

¹Adrian Rogers, "The Sermon Exposition," in *What Every Pastor Ought to Know* [DVD-ROM] (North Palm Beach, FL: The Adrian Rogers Pastor Training Institute, 2011), disc 4, session 6.

think that there is anything wrong with a topical sermon.”² Secondly, Rogers described a textual sermon as being very similar to an expository sermon except that the textual sermon is based upon only one or two verses from which the outline of the message is based.³ Finally, Rogers identified the expository sermon as a message based upon an extended passage of Scripture. Unlike the textual sermon, Rogers explained that the expository sermon takes its points and sub-points from a paragraph, a chapter, or an entire book in the Bible.⁴ According to Rogers, “It [the expository method] is not the only way to preach but it should be the primary way you preach.”⁵ Although he acknowledged that the expository method was his favorite and most common type of sermon, Rogers readily admitted that he has used all three types of sermons in his pulpit ministry.⁶

A Definition of Expository Preaching

In his excellent book on homiletics *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century*, John R. W. Stott has provided a comprehensive definition of expository preaching. According to Stott, the determining characteristic of a genuine exposition is the content of the sermon and not necessarily the style or method in which the message is delivered. Stott explained,

It [exposition] refers to the content of the sermon (biblical truth) rather than its style (a running commentary). To expound Scripture is to bring out of the text what is there and expose it to view. The expositor pries open what appears to be closed and makes plain what is obscure, unravels what is knotted and unfolds what is tightly packed. . . . the text in question could be a verse, or a sentence, or even a single word. It could equally be a paragraph, or a chapter, or a whole book. The size of the text is immaterial, so long as it is biblical. What matters is what we do with it.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Adrian Rogers, quoted in James A. Smith Sr., “Rogers to Pastors: ‘Live with Integrity, Learn to Preach,’” *Florida Baptist Witness*, posted November 17, 2005, <http://www.gofbw.com/news.asp?ID=5155> (accessed April 9, 2012).

Whether it is long or short, our responsibility as expositors is to open it up in such a way that it speaks its message clearly,⁷ plainly, accurately, relevantly, without addition, subtraction or falsification.

Stott's definition is very similar to Rogers own understanding of expository preaching. Like Stott, Rogers has argued that expository preaching should never be a verse-by-verse commentary or simply an explanation of a biblical passage. As a matter of fact, he even asserted that such preaching would eventually kill a church.⁸ In his abridged definition of expository preaching, Rogers explained,

Expository preaching is a scholarly effort that has aim and development that comes out of a biblical passage. . . . Exposition is not simply explaining a text or paragraph in the Bible. Expository preaching is taking a chapter or a book or a paragraph or a verse and finding a theme that comes directly out of that chapter, or out of that book or out of that verse and preaching it.⁹

According to Rogers, the best tests of whether or not a sermon is truly an expository message includes whether the source of the message is taken from a passage of Scripture; whether the subject of the message is clearly addressed in the text; whether there is strength in the sermon to inspire and motivate the congregation; and whether there is a clear structure—an outline drawn from the text.¹⁰

Classification of Sermons

Unlike Rogers, Stott did not draw a distinction between the textual sermon and the expository sermon. John Broadus, however, did make the same distinction as Rogers in his classic book on preaching, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*. Broadus contends there are four hermeneutical classifications of sermons: textual, topical, textual-

⁷John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1982), 125-26.

⁸Adrian Rogers, "Questions and Answers," in *What Every Pastor Ought to Know* [DVD-ROM] (North Palm Beach, FL: The Adrian Rogers Pastor Training Institute, 2011), disc 4, session 6.

⁹Rogers, "The Sermon Exposition," disc 4, session 6.

¹⁰Rogers, quoted in Smith, "Live with Integrity."

topical, and expository.¹¹ Moreover, like Rogers, Andrew Blackwood has drawn the same distinction between textual and expository sermons based upon the size of the biblical text.¹² Jerry Vines, however, agreed with Stott, and has argued that an expository sermon is determined by the manner in which a text is treated and not by the size of the passage used in the sermon.¹³

Based upon the hermeneutical classifications made by Rogers, the following discoveries were made from the one hundred sermons selected for this study: 63 percent of the sermons of Rogers were expository messages; 13 percent were textual sermons; and 24 percent were topical sermons.¹⁴ If the classification of sermons used by Stott and Vines were applied to the preaching of Rogers, then 76 percent of the sermons of Rogers would have been expositional messages. In addition, out of the 76 percent of sermons that were expository sermon, over 40 percent were biographical expositions.¹⁵ Granted, the purpose of this study has been to measure the evangelistic content of the sermons of Rogers, and many of the sermons selected for this study were chosen because of their topical nature addressing such non-evangelistic issues as abortion, gambling, and evolution. As a result, the one hundred sermons selected for this study may not accurately

¹¹John Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 4th ed., rev. Vernon L. Stanfield (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1979), 54-58.

¹²Andrew Blackwood, *Preaching from the Bible* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1941), 39.

¹³Jerry Vines, *A Practical Guide to Sermon Preparation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 39.

¹⁴See appendix 1 for a list of the one hundred sermons used in this study. The list of sermons is arranged in biblical order and provides the title of the message, date the message was preached, the service in which the message was preached, and an assessment of each sermon identifying the type of sermon Rogers preached: topical, textual, or expository.

¹⁵A biographical exposition is a study of a biblical character. Rogers often preached on biblical characters when preaching from an Old Testament text. Examples of such sermons may be found in the two messages, "Captain Noah and the Good Ship Grace," a sermon on Gen 6:1-21 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, TN, on 29 March 1981; and "Facing the Problem of Pride," a sermon on 2 Kgs 5:1-11, 14 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, TN, on 16 May 1993. Both sermons focus on an Old Testament character. The first message is about Noah and the Ark, and the latter sermon is a study of Nahum the Syrian captain with leprosy.

represent the totality of Rogers preaching; nevertheless, it does demonstrate that the majority of his pulpit ministry utilized the expository method of preaching and reveals that Rogers did indeed believe that good preaching was the application of biblical truth to the human situation through biblical exposition.¹⁶

Application of Expository Preaching

It is prudent to remember that Rogers rejected the idea that a verse-by-verse commentary from the pulpit could be understood as expository preaching. For Rogers, the key to effective expository preaching was not teaching the facts about a text, but applying the truth of the text to the life of the listener. Because of Rogers' fervent belief in the inerrancy and authority of the Bible, he maintained that it was paramount for the pastor to study the text in order to determine the original purpose and meaning of the text and then make application of the text to the lives of the contemporary audience. For example, when he was asked about the impact of the inerrancy of Scripture on preaching, Rogers exclaimed,

The preacher must study the Scriptures to determine the proper meaning of a text and then attempt to apply that truth to human needs. Scripture only has one meaning, and that is the meaning that God gave through the authors. It may have ten thousand applications, and a good preacher can take that one meaning, that one proof, whatever it is, and apply it to human hearts and needs in multiple ways.¹⁷

Rogers maintained that the aim of good preaching is not to disperse information, but to motivate the listener to action or change. According to Rogers, "An effective sermon moves to action. If there is no call to action, there has been no sermon preached only a lesson rendered. The action may be repentance, tithing, rejoicing or soul-winning."¹⁸ For

¹⁶Adrian Rogers, quoted in Joyce Rogers and Julie-Allyson Ieron, *Love Worth Finding: The Life of Adrian Rogers and His Philosophy of Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 185.

¹⁷Ibid., 165.

¹⁸Ibid., 195.

Rogers, the aim of any sermon must accomplish one of four goals: confront, convict, convert, or comfort those listening to the message.¹⁹

Types of Expository Preaching

Rogers preached two types of expository messages: thematic and topical. Thematic sermons involve preaching a series of messages from a book in the Bible or a particular subject. Topical messages involve preaching on a particular topic or need in the congregation and then finding a biblical text that addressed the topic. Both sermon types, Rogers contended, involved an exposition of a biblical text.²⁰ When asked how much of his preaching is thematic exposition (a book series) and how much is topical exposition, Rogers explained, “Fifty percent would be book series, twenty-five percent would be biblical but topical series—a biblical approach to a topic like stewardship, or something like that. Then maybe twenty-five percent would be a potpourri—standalone sermons, or no series at all.”²¹

Unlike some expository preachers,²² Rogers warned against spending too much time in one book of the Bible or on one topic from the Bible. According to Rogers, “You can drown a cat with too much cream.”²³ As a result, Rogers usually preached a sermon series of only five to ten messages on a single topic or from a single book in the Bible. For example, Rogers preached a sermon series from the Gospel of John on the seven miracles of Jesus that were recorded by John. This series of sermons was later published

¹⁹Ibid., 194.

²⁰Ibid., 197.

²¹Michael Duduit, “Preaching and Church Growth: An Interview with Adrian Rogers,” *Preaching* 15 (May-June 2000): 9.

²²Jerry Vines advocates a method of expository preaching in which the preacher is encouraged to preach through an entire books of the Bible regardless of the number of sermons. According to Vines, “The best preaching you can do is to go through books of the Bible—chapter by chapter and paragraph by paragraph—in a systematic fashion.” See Vines, *A Practical Guide to Sermon Preparation*, 146.

²³Rogers, “Questions and Answers,” disc 4, session 6.

by Rogers in the book *Believe in Miracles, Trust in Jesus*. Rogers considered this series of messages to be a beneficial example of how to preach through an entire book of the Bible.²⁴

Advantages of Expository Preaching

In an interview just weeks before his death, Rogers said that the greatest need in the church is expository preaching. Furthermore, he decried, “It is not the job of the pastor to fill the pew, but it is the job of the pastor to fill the pulpit.”²⁵ Rogers often exclaimed that expository preaching will cause a church to grow both numerically and spiritually. In addition to promoting church growth, Rogers identified four additional advantages to expository preaching. First, Rogers claimed that the expository method of preaching gives confidence to the preacher because such preaching points people to the Word of God and not to human opinion. Second, expository preaching gives an overall consistency to one’s messages because it allows the preacher to employ the whole counsel of God and keeps the preacher from getting stuck in a rut of preaching on a repeated topic or favorite theme. Third, expository preaching gives courage to the preacher. It allows the preacher to address difficult and controversial subjects like homosexuality, divorce and even incest when such topics occur in a text from a week-to-week series of messages. Finally, expository preaching gives content to the preacher by allowing the pastor to plan a preaching schedule or calendar. According to Rogers, the expository preacher will not need to worry about the topic or text of his next sermon because he will know what his text will be from Sunday-to-Sunday for several weeks ahead of time.²⁶

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Rogers, quoted in Smith, “Live with Integrity.”

²⁶Ibid.

Preparation and Organization of Rogers' Sermons

During his pastorate at Bellevue Baptist Church, Rogers preached an average of six times a week. He preached three times almost every Sunday morning, once on Sunday evening, once on Wednesday evening, and once on Thursday afternoon at a business men's luncheon.²⁷ Because he preached so often, Rogers made sermon preparation and study the priority of his ministry. While at Bellevue, Rogers kept a rigorous schedule in which he spent Monday and Thursday mornings, and all day Wednesday and Friday preparing sermons in his study. He kept his library at home where he did most of his sermon preparation. Administrative and ministerial responsibilities were performed on Monday and Thursday afternoons at his church office.²⁸ Rogers normally prepared his mid-week sermon on Wednesday and his Sunday evening message on Friday afternoon and Sunday afternoon. Monday, Thursday and Friday mornings were spent preparing his Sunday morning message.²⁹ According to Rogers, "There is no way to be a good preacher without study. You must study to be a good expositor of the Scriptures."³⁰

Because he preached so often, Rogers was constantly formulating sermon ideas and collecting materials for later Bible study and sermon preparation. He organized the materials he collected in several file folders which he kept on his desk. He would store magazine articles, newspaper clippings and personal notes in various file folders that were labeled either biblically or topically according to whatever sermon series he was

²⁷Rogers, quoted in Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 195.

²⁸Timothy Hight, "A Comparative Homiletical Analysis of Selected Southern Baptist Convention Presidents from 1979 through 1989" (Th.D. diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 1991), 42.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 45.

³⁰Adrian Rogers, "The Sermon's Preparation," in *What Every Pastor Ought to Know* [DVD-ROM] (North Palm Beach, FL: The Adrian Rogers Pastor Training Institute, 2011), disc 5, session 7.

planning to preach in the near future.³¹ Rogers contended, “It is important to plan ahead in your sermon planning. I believe in preaching sermon series. By planning ahead and preaching a sermon series you can collect materials on the topic or series. You can also buy books on the subject you are preaching.”³² Depending on the sermon and series, he usually began collecting materials several weeks in advance. Once he collected all the materials needed for a sermon, Rogers would spend approximately four to eight hours completing a sermon.³³ Before he went to bed, he often read and reflected upon his sermon text for Sunday. Moreover, as he was falling asleep, Rogers would meditate and outline the passage of Scripture and apply it to his own life.³⁴

The Sermon Outline

Rogers viewed sermon preparation as both a science and an art. According to Rogers, the science aspect of preaching is related to the rules of hermeneutics and homiletics, and the artistic feature is related to the skill and creativity of the preacher in his presentation and application of biblical truth. To illustrate, Rogers portrayed the process of organizing a sermon as being similar to the construction of a beautiful building or house. Rogers explained,

Preaching is not merely gathering materials that are truth. It is like someone said of architecture. Good architecture is not the arrangement of beautiful materials; it is a beautiful arrangement of materials. . . . Preaching is not simply saying I have these facts. I am going to the building supply and build a homiletical house. It is how you put things together. That is the art form that makes the difference.³⁵

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

³³Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 203.

³⁴Hight, “A Comparative Homiletical Analysis of Selected Southern Baptist Convention Presidents from 1979 through 1989,” 46.

³⁵Michael Pete Montalbano, “A Critical Comparison of the Preaching of Robert G. Lee, Ramsey Pollard, and Adrian Rogers” (Th.D. diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993), 147.

Moreover, like any building, there must be a solid foundation upon which to build, and Rogers believed the best foundation for any sermon is a biblical text. Rogers insisted that the entire sermon always be built from a biblical text. Likewise, he advocated that the main divisions of the sermon outline should also come from the text being preached. Furthermore, he stated that each major point of the sermon should support the overall theme or proposition of the sermon. Likewise, Rogers stated that each of the sermon's sub-points should also be from the text, and should support the main points from which they are taken. Finally, Rogers explained that the outline of the sermon is not simply to inform the listener, but must be organized in such a way as to motivate and stir the heart of the listeners to some kind of decision and action.³⁶

For Rogers, the first step in preparing a sermon was always a careful reading and understanding of the biblical text of the sermon. According to Rogers, "To be a good preacher you need to know two books: know the book of God and know the book of human experience."³⁷ Rogers did not study the Greek or Hebrew text in his sermon preparation, but he did consult several outside sources of biblical language studies. For example, Rogers often consulted W. E. Vines' *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*; A. T. Robertson's *Word Pictures in the New Testament* and *A Complete Concordance to the Holy Scriptures* by Alexander Cruden.³⁸ In addition to word studies, he also used both devotional and critical commentaries. Regarding the use and purchase of such commentaries, Rogers advised pastors to purchase individual commentaries, and he warned against the purchase of large, multiple volume commentary sets. Rogers remarked, "No one knows everything."³⁹ Likewise, Rogers warned that the editor of

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Rogers, "The Sermon's Preparation," disc 5, session 7.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

some multi-volume commentary sets will employ both liberal and conservative scholars, as contributing authors. Therefore, Rogers believed it is best only to purchase individual volumes written by scholars who recognize the integrity and authority of the Bible as the infallible Word of God.⁴⁰

Rogers was an avid reader, and frequently quoted from the classical works of Alexander McLaren, C. H. Spurgeon, and F. B. Meyer in many of his sermons. He also enjoyed reading and quoting from the books of several more modern Christian writers such as Warren Wiersbe, Sidlow Baxter, John Phillips and Vance Havner.⁴¹ Moreover, Rogers loved to study the sermons of other great preachers. Rogers argued: “If you want to be a baseball player then you will study the great hitters of the game. Likewise, if you want to be a great preacher then study the sermons of great men like Charles Spurgeon and others.”⁴²

Once Rogers formulated a clear understanding of a biblical passage, he would write out the proposition of the sermon he was preparing based upon the central theme of the passage. Rogers defined the sermon’s proposition as the message of the sermon in a single sentence. Rogers believed the proposition should be a single, brief statement. He also stated that the sermon’s proposition should be clearly announced somewhere in the introduction to the message.⁴³

Next, Rogers identified the objective of the sermon. Rogers was adamant that a sermon was not a sermon unless it possessed a clearly stated aim to bring about some type of change in the life of the listener.⁴⁴ According to Rogers, the guidance of the Holy

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Montalbano, “A Critical Comparison of the Preaching of Robert G. Lee, Ramsey Pollard, and Adrian Rogers,” 131.

Spirit is essential in this element of the message. He explained, “One key to effective preparation is for the preacher to discover through the guidance of the Holy Spirit the message God desires to be preached.”⁴⁵ Rogers revealed that as he reads and meditates upon a biblical text, he would always ask himself the following three crucial questions in order to identify the objective of a sermon: What did the text mean to the original people or audience who first heard it? What application does that meaning have upon the lives of people living today? Finally, what application does the meaning of the text have upon me as the pastor?⁴⁶ Rogers used the answers to these three questions to write a clear and specific objective for every sermon he preached.

After identifying the proposition and objective of the sermon, Rogers would then begin the process of making an outline based upon the natural division of the text. According to Rogers, a common flaw many pastors make in their sermon preparation is organizing an outline that does not reflect the natural divisions of the biblical text. Rogers accused such preachers of attempting to divide and split the text with an artificial outline that fails to communicate accurately the original intent of the biblical writer and the Word of God. Rogers compared the natural division of a biblical passage to the seams of a coconut. As a boy growing-up in Florida, Rogers explained, he sold coconuts to tourist. Usually, these vacationers were unable to open a coconut because they did not know where the seams were located on the outer shell. According to Rogers, “Once you locate the seams, opening a coconut is simple.”⁴⁷ Likewise, to organize an effective and biblical sermon, Rogers argued, the pastor must simply look for the natural divisions of the text and then create an outline based upon the natural divisions of the passage.⁴⁸

⁴⁵Rogers, quoted in Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 198.

⁴⁶Ibid., 199.

⁴⁷Rogers, “The Sermon’s Preparation,” disc 5, session 7.

⁴⁸Ibid.

When outlining a text, Rogers would take a yellow pad of paper and write each sermon point at the top of a page. He then arranged the materials he gathered from his study time on the appropriate page of each sermon point.⁴⁹ Once he had an outline of the text, Rogers would alliterate each point of the sermon's outline or develop each point so as to make it easy to remember both for him and his audience.⁵⁰ Although Rogers was famous for his sermon alliterations, this homiletical device is readily discouraged, and is even accused of misrepresenting a biblical text when employed by some preachers.⁵¹ The alliterated outlines of Rogers, however, avoided such misrepresentations of the biblical text. Most of the sermons that were used in this study, for example, demonstrated both creativity and accuracy in the outlining of the text. Perhaps the reason for the success of Rogers in this matter may be attributed to the fact that he would outline the text first according to the natural division of the text, and then employ alliteration secondly.

Finally, Rogers did not write out a sermon manuscript. Once he finished his sermon preparation, he wrote a detailed outline containing all the main points, sub-points, and illustrations of the sermon. He would then dictate his sermon notes to his secretary who typed out his notes on a half sheet of paper. The outline was placed in a small notebook which Rogers would take with him to the pulpit when he preached. Although many popular preachers promoted preaching without sermon notes, Rogers commented that the use of sermon notes helped him to stay focused upon the sermon's object and avoid running down the proverbial "rabbit trail."⁵²

⁴⁹Montalbano, "A Critical Comparison of the Preaching of Robert G. Lee, Ramsey Pollard, and Adrian Rogers," 126.

⁵⁰Rogers, "The Sermon's Preparation," disc 5, session 7.

⁵¹See Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 95. See also Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 299.

⁵²Rogers, quoted in Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 202.

The Introduction of the Sermon

Only after Rogers had completed the sermon would he begin preparing the introduction and conclusion to the message. He explained, “I believe the introduction should be constructed after the preacher has prepared his sermon, because you cannot know what you are introducing until you have prepared the sermon.”⁵³ The composition of the sermon’s introduction and conclusion after the completion of the exposition is not unique to Rogers. For example, Stott was also an advocate of writing the introduction and conclusion of the sermon lastly. Like Rogers, he believed the best way to ensure that the sermon accurately reflects the meaning of the biblical text is to complete the body of the sermon first. For example, Stott argued, “It seems essential to prepare the body of the sermon first. If we were to begin with a predetermined introduction or conclusion, we would be almost bound to twist the text to fit. So instead, we start with the body. Only then shall we ‘top and tail’ the body, this is, supply it with a head and a tail end, an introduction and a conclusion.”⁵⁴

According to Rogers, the introduction of the sermon is vitally important when preaching to the same group of people week-after-week. He attempted to vary the introduction of his sermons in length and content. Some of the introductions Rogers used in this study, for example, were quite short and others were very long.⁵⁵ Rogers also varied the content of his introductions sometimes by posing a problem which the sermon would seek to solve, or other times by proposing a question the sermon would seek to

⁵³Ibid., 203-04.

⁵⁴Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 243-44.

⁵⁵Of the one hundred sermons used in this study, eighteen of the sermons had an introduction that was approximately one-fourth to one-third of the sermon’s length. One introduction was as much as half of the sermon. Several of these longer introductions, however, introduced a new series of messages or provided the background information regarding a series of messages already started by Rogers. The majority of the sermon used in this study had an introduction that was brief and were only one or two paragraphs in length (see appendix 1).

answer.⁵⁶ Rogers often incorporated humor in his introductions. He enjoyed telling a joke or sharing a humorous story. He also had a tendency to invent and articulate words, a witty phrase, or a proverb.⁵⁷

Rogers had a four point formula he used for writing his introductions: “Hey! You! Look! Do!”⁵⁸ First, the introduction of the sermon was to get the attention of the audience which is signified by the word, “Hey!” Second the introduction must address a need in the lives of the audience which is the reason for the word, “You!” Third, the introduction must call attention to the text of the message which is signified by the term, “Look!” Finally, the introduction must call for a response of the listener which is the reason for the word, “Do!” According to Rogers, it is the “do” that makes the sermon a sermon and not simply a lesson.⁵⁹ It was also common for Rogers to begin the invitation of the sermon in the introduction of the sermon by telling the audience that at the end of the message he was about to preach, he would invite people to come forward and give their lives to Christ.⁶⁰

Finally, in his introduction, Rogers almost always included a reading of the biblical text. Rogers consistently began his message by instructing the members of the congregation to take their Bibles or “God’s Word” and turn to the text of the message

⁵⁶Of the one hundred sermons in this study, twenty-six began with a question. The following questions are a few examples: “What is a real Christian?” “What is better than knowing you are saved?” “How can you know God’s plan for your life?”

⁵⁷The witty phrases of Rogers were referred to as “Adrianisms.” A small two-volume set was published after the death of Rogers that categorized these sayings topically. The title of the two volumes is *Adrianisms: The Wit and Wisdom of Adrian Rogers*, 2 vols (Cordova, TN: Love Worth Finding, 2006).

⁵⁸Rogers, quoted in Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 204.

⁵⁹According to Jerry Vines, Rogers’ formula “Hey, You, Look, Do” is one of the best methods he has seen for building an effective introduction to a sermon. See Vines, *A Practical Guide to Sermon Preparation*, 141.

⁶⁰See Adrian Rogers, “Captain Noah and the Good Ship Grace,” sermon transcript of a message on Gen 6:1-21 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, TN (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

from which he was about to preach.⁶¹ The tradition of introducing his sermons by readily announcing the text demonstrated that the content of the message was an exposition of God's Word and not merely his opinions on a topic or subject.⁶² The persistent practice of instructing people to open their Bibles and read with him the Scriptures revealed that the content and authority of his message were from the Word of God.

Rogers usually read the biblical text after he introduced the subject of his sermon, although he did sometimes read the text first. When the text of the sermon was a long passage of Scripture, he would often pause and give an explanation or comment and then continue reading.⁶³ Rogers believed the reading of the biblical text was an important part of the message and should be well rehearsed before preaching the sermon. Rogers admonished,

A preacher should read the Word of God carefully and meaningfully. The preacher should practice reading the Word of God privately to read well in public. The Word of God is filled with drama and feeling; thus it is crucial that it be read with feeling, proper pause, and correct inflections. These things ought to come through the preacher's reading of the Word of God. He ought to read the Word so thoughtfully and carefully that the congregation realizes that their pastor is awed, and, therefore, they will be impressed by what he is reading.⁶⁴

Once Rogers had thoroughly and prayerfully completed the introduction of the sermon, he then began preparing a persuasive conclusion to his message.

The Conclusion of the Sermon

Rogers considered the conclusion to be instrumental in achieving the goal of the sermon which was to motivate the listener to some type of change or action. A well planned conclusion, for example, is more than a mere recapitulation of the sermon's main

⁶¹Of the one hundred sermons used in this study, Rogers began ninety of the messages with the reading of a biblical text in the introduction.

⁶²Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 244.

⁶³Hight, "A Comparative Homiletical Analysis of Selected Southern Baptist Convention Presidents from 1979 through 1989," 57-58.

⁶⁴Rogers, quoted in Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 180-81.

points. The goal of every conclusion must be to make personal application of the message and to draw the attention of the members of the listening audience to the welfare of their soul.⁶⁵ Concerning the importance of the sermon's conclusion, Broadus wrote, "In reference to the preacher the conclusion is a leave taking, in which he commits vital and eternal issues to the decision of those who have heard him. He leaves the responsibility of action to them. And he can be at peace only if he has said his best word."⁶⁶ Similar to Broadus' comment, Rogers also acknowledged the conclusion to be vitally important to the success of the sermon's purpose and goal of "drawing the net" and leading the listener to make a decision. Concerning the conclusion, Rogers said: "I consider the conclusion to be vitally important to the achieving success in preaching. It is the drawing of the net; it is getting the names signed on the dotted line. What I desire in the conclusion is to get convictional, and move peoples' hearts."⁶⁷

Rogers constructed the conclusion of his sermons based upon two questions: First, what do I desire the people to do concerning this sermon? Secondly, how will I move them to act upon the applied truth of this sermon?⁶⁸ According to Rogers, the conclusion of the sermon must demand a verdict from the listener. It must make a clear application of the sermon upon the lives of the audience. In other words, the conclusion is the specific application of the sermon's proposition.⁶⁹

In the one hundred sermons used in this study, Rogers' conclusions varied in size and content. Although Rogers stated that the conclusion should be brief, some of his conclusions were quite long. Rogers also used various means in concluding his messages.

⁶⁵Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 246.

⁶⁶Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 109.

⁶⁷Rogers, quoted in Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 205.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Rogers, "The Sermon's Preparation," disc 5, session 7.

For example, sometimes he concluded a sermon by reciting a poem, or telling a story, or sharing a personal experience from his past. In his conclusions, Rogers would avoid appealing to the emotions of the audience and mostly appealed to their logic. Most of the conclusions of Rogers were effective in calling for a specific response from the audience that was based upon the content of the message itself.⁷⁰ Finally, Rogers made a clear distinction between the conclusion and the invitation. Rogers would end his conclusion by having the congregation bow for prayer, and then he would begin the transition from the conclusion of the sermon to the public invitation in his closing prayer.⁷¹

The Title of the Sermon

Once he finished the conclusion of the message, Rogers gave the message a title. Again Broadus wrote, “The principle function of the title is to catch attention, and attract and interest the public.”⁷² Many of Rogers’ sermons certainly drew the interest of his listeners. For example, some of his sermon titles were humorous, “Sick Dogs and Dirty Hogs,” and some were pragmatic, “How to Be a Maximum Mom.” According to Rogers, “The sermon title is best expressed in some rhythmic or alliterative form which catches the ear of the listener.”⁷³ Rogers later discovered that the cuter or more creative the title, then the less popular the sermon was for those who requested recordings of his messages.⁷⁴ Most people ordered recordings of sermons from Love Worth Finding that had titles addressing practical issue such as parenting or marriage.

⁷⁰In the sermon “Fasting and Prayer,” Rogers calls upon the church to set aside Wednesday to fast and pray for America. Likewise in the sermon “Dads Who Shoot Straight,” Rogers admonished fathers to be the spiritual leaders of the home.

⁷¹Unfortunately, many of the recordings used in this study did not include the invitation of Rogers, but ended with the start of the closing prayer after the sermon’s conclusion. As a result, a separate study of the invitations of Rogers will be made in chap. 4 of this study.

⁷²Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 42.

⁷³Rogers, quoted in Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 196.

⁷⁴Ibid.

The majority of the titles from the sermons in this study reflected the content of the sermon itself, and often expressed a solution to a personal problem or personal need. In the past, however, Rogers was an outspoken critic of preaching that was “seeker sensitive” in its content. For example, during the meeting of the Alabama Evangelism Conference, Rogers argued that too much contemporary preaching is focused upon felt needs while “. . . the great human dilemma is not what sin does to me but sin is an affront to a holy God and deserves God's wrath.”⁷⁵ In later years, Rogers admitted to changing his own approach to preaching in order to become more “audience friendly.” According to Rogers, he was more truth focused than people focused in his early preaching ministry, but over the years he attempted to focus his sermons more upon the everyday needs and concerns of people.⁷⁶ As a result, many of the sermons in this study had titles that were “how to” messages: How to Deal with Depression; How to Deal with a Guilty Conscience; How to Overcome Temptation; and How to Have Financial Freedom. Rogers considered this change in focus to be necessary in order to attract the interest of the baby boomer generation with biblical truth and hopefully open the door for them to hear and receive the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Functional Elements of Rogers’ Sermons

According to Rogers, the functional elements of a sermon are: explanation, argumentation, illustration, application and motivation.⁷⁷ Rogers said these elements of the sermon answer four crucial questions in the mind of the listener: Explanation seeks to answer the question, what? Argumentation answers the question, why? Illustration

⁷⁵Adrian Rogers, quoted in Keith Hinson in “Rogers and Church Growth,” *The Baptist Banner* 8 (February 1995) [http://www.baptistbanner.org/Subarchive_2/29 5% 20%20Adrian%20 Rogers%20on%20Church%20Growth.htm](http://www.baptistbanner.org/Subarchive_2/29%20%20Adrian%20Rogers%20on%20Church%20Growth.htm) (accessed November 20, 2012).

⁷⁶Montalbano, “A Critical Comparison of the Preaching of Robert G. Lee, Ramsey Pollard, and Adrian Rogers,” 125-26.

⁷⁷Rogers, interview by James A. Smith Sr., “Live with Integrity.”

answers the question, how? Application answers the question, what then? According to Rogers, all four of these elements are essential for motivating the listener to action and thus fulfilling the objective of the message.⁷⁸

Explanation

As aforementioned, Rogers believed the focus of his sermon was to motivate the congregation to action. For example, when asked about the function of preaching, Rogers said, “Good preaching is not to inform but to transform.”⁷⁹ Rogers, however, also believed that transformational preaching required a correct and clear proclamation of the Word of God (Rom 10:17). As a result, the sermons of Rogers included a biblical text and a clear explanation of that text. Once Rogers stated his subject, and read or made reference to his text, he typically would begin to explain the text throughout the body of his message. Rogers believed that good expositional preaching was beneficial for both the spiritual and physical growth of the church.⁸⁰ In his sermons, Rogers was careful to define biblical and theological terms and explain concepts with which some people may not be familiar or understand. For example, in the sermon “Do Not Be a Disgrace to Grace,” he defined and explained the difference between grace and mercy. He defined grace as “receiving something that you do not deserve,” and mercy as “not receiving what you do deserve.”⁸¹ Likewise, in his sermon “The Sin that Lost a War” he explained the nature of sin as an offense against God and as something that God abhors.⁸² Finally,

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Rogers, “The Sermon’s Preparation,” disc 5, session 7.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Adrian Rogers, “Do Not Be a Disgrace to Grace,” sermon transcript of a message on Titus 2:11-15 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, TN, 16 January 1994 (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

⁸²Adrian Rogers, “The Sin that Lost a War,” sermon transcript of a message on Josh 7:1-5 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, TN, 16 October 1977 (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

in his sermon “Christian Warfare” Rogers explained the nature of spiritual warfare and described the church as being a battleship and not a cruise ship.⁸³ According to Rogers, one of the priorities of biblical preaching is for the preacher to explain the truth of God in its biblical context so that the audience is able to understand the central meaning of the passage being preached.⁸⁴

Argumentation

Once the preacher has clearly stated his point, he should then begin to argue the point logically, reasonably, and passionately.⁸⁵ In his sermon preparation, Rogers often anticipated various questions that might be raised in the minds and hearts of those in the listening audience. He then sought to answer these hypothetical questions in order to diminish any probable doubts or concerns his audience members may have regarding the truthfulness of his message.⁸⁶ The goal of Rogers was not to be argumentative, nor to win a debate, but to expose any faulty reasoning some unregenerate people may have for rejecting the gospel, and hopefully create an opportunity for him to present the truth of God’s Word to any skeptics that may be listening as well as those who may be seeking spiritual truth and wisdom.

In his sermons, Rogers often used supporting Scripture to clarify or prove a point in his argument. When asked about his habit of cross referencing Scripture in his sermons, Rogers explained,

I make use of extensive Scriptural cross-references throughout my exegesis of the text. It is a beautiful thing to bring many other Scriptures that strengthen the truth of your text. Cross referencing Scripture with your text creates an upside-down

⁸³Adrian Rogers, “Christian Warfare,” sermon transcript of a message on Eph 6:10-26 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, TN, 15 August 1999 (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

⁸⁴Rogers, quoted in Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 202.

⁸⁵Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 142-44.

⁸⁶Rogers, “The Sermon’s Preparation,” disc 5, session 7.

pyramid. Your text is where the point of the pyramid rest. Then as other Scripture references are brought to bear on the text, it gets broader as you move up to the inverted pyramid. Cross referencing Scripture aids the preacher in illustrating and illuminating the truth contained in the sermon text.⁸⁷

One example of Rogers' use of Scripture cross referencing to argue his point, and his anticipation of possible questions in the mind of the listener is clearly evident in the sermon, "The Eternal Security of the Believer."

In this message, Rogers gave seven biblical reasons for the eternal security of the believer. His text was from Romans chapter 8, but he used a multitude of cross-references to defend his argument (Matt 7:21-23; John 10:27-30; 1 John 2:19; Heb 10:1-4; 1 Pet 1:3-5; John 5:24 and John 17:9-15). After presenting his seven reasons for the believer's eternal security, Rogers then anticipated what a critic may say in opposition to his arguments. Consequently, he addressed several questions that those having an opposing position might raise:

Now, let me take just a few moments and answer some things, because some of you are saying, "Yes Pastor, that's all right, but what you have done tonight is you have just selected some verses. You have not dealt with all of the verses that say we may lose our salvation." Well, my dear friend, the only reason I haven't is because there are not any. But, let me just give you what seems to be some conflicting Scriptures. Just for a moment, in all honesty, let's look at them.⁸⁸

Rogers then looked at three passages of Scripture (2 Pet 2:20-22; John 10:27; Matt 24:13) which he explained are often used to argue against the eternal security of the believer. After he read each passage, he then demonstrated how arguments made from these texts against eternal security were erroneous logically, biblically, and theologically.

Illustration

Although the sermon illustration is identified as a functional element of the sermon, it in fact operates more as an auxiliary element in the sermon in which it

⁸⁷Rogers, quoted in Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 200.

⁸⁸Adrian Rogers, "The Eternal Security of the Believer," sermon transcript of a message on Rom 8:1-39 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, TN, 10 March 1991 (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

supports the explanation, argument or application of the message.⁸⁹ In reference to the importance of sermon illustrations, Rogers said, “One of God’s greatest ways of communicating spiritual truth so it is easily understood is by use of illustrations. I attempt to include an illustration with every outline point of the sermon.”⁹⁰ The sermons of Rogers do indeed reveal a wealth of various types of illustrations. In the one hundred sermons used for this study, for example, Rogers used articles from journals, newspapers, and magazines as illustrations. He also employed poetry and humor. He told stories of biblical characters, and renowned Christians as illustrations. Moreover, he used personal life stories, and he used historical figures to clarify and illuminate most of the main points of his messages.

Rogers has commented that good illustrations may be discovered everywhere in day-to-day life. According to Rogers, “A living, breathing, thinking person is drowning in illustrations if he will just open his eyes.”⁹¹ Rogers also commented that an advantage to planning a sermon calendar is that it allows the preacher to search and gather pertinent illustrations and file them for future use in sermons. Rogers, for example, acknowledged that he began filing sermon illustrations by topic and by biblical text since he started preaching as a college student. Rogers also readily admitted that the best method for gathering illustrations is by reading books. Rogers insisted that the preacher should read widely and habitually. Accordingly, Rogers admonished, “The pastor should read at least two books a week.”⁹² Moreover, he reasoned, “It is worth reading an entire book if the pastor can find at least one illustration.”⁹³

⁸⁹Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 179.

⁹⁰Rogers, quoted in Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 202.

⁹¹Rogers quoted in Dudit, “Preaching and Church Growth,” 10.

⁹²Adrian Rogers, “Sermon Illustrations,” in *What Every Pastor Ought to Know* [DVD-ROM] (North Palm Beach, FL: The Adrian Rogers Pastor Training Institute, 2011), disc 6, session 8.

⁹³*Ibid.*

Application

The application of the sermon was viewed by Rogers as the most important element of his preaching ministry. Indeed, Broadus argued that the application of the sermon is not simply another element of the sermon that comes at the close of the message; rather, “it is the main thing to be done”⁹⁴ Rogers contended that the application element of the sermon is the climax or focal point of the message. In his preaching, therefore, Rogers repeatedly called upon the congregation to respond in some manner to the messages he preached. Regardless of the sermon’s topic, Rogers expected and persuaded the members of the listening audience to apply the message to their lives. In reference to the application element of his sermons, Rogers explained, “Preaching is more than the dissemination of truth. It is not primarily information, but transformation. It is not so much filling a bucket, as lighting a torch. The preacher is attempting to accomplish something in the hearts and minds of people.”⁹⁵

In the sermons used for this study, Rogers usually began the application of the message in his introduction. He often stated in the beginning of the sermons what he expected the audience to do at the conclusion of the sermon. Moreover, in the body of his message, Rogers habitually used the second person pronoun “you” in order to make his appeals more personal to the listener.⁹⁶ His sermons consistently gave a call to some form of action. When preaching on the topic of finances, for example, Rogers called upon the

⁹⁴Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 165.

⁹⁵Rogers, quoted in Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 202.

⁹⁶According to Timothy Hight, Rogers used three types of appeals within the application elements of his sermons. His appeals were a logical appeal, an emotional appeal, or an ethical appeal. Perhaps the most common was the logical appeal, in which Rogers gave an appeal to action after presenting a logical argument explaining why the action or application was important. Secondly, Rogers used both positive and negative emotional appeals. From a positive perspective, Rogers persuaded his audience to act in order to experience the blessings of God or the joy of knowing Christ. From a negative perspective, he warned people that not taking action may lead to the judgment of God, or even eternal separation from the presence of God. Finally, Rogers used an ethical appeal by which he encouraged people to action based upon his own experience or testimony. See Hight, “A Comparative of Homiletical Analysis of Select Southern Baptist Convention Presidents from 1979 through 1989,” 73-76.

people to practice tithing. When preaching on evangelism, he instructed the members of the church to witness to their unregenerate friends, neighbors and family members. When preaching on various types of sinful behavior, Rogers called upon church members to repent from their sinful habits. Regardless of the subject of the message, the sermons Rogers preached consistently lead to some form of action or application.

Characteristics of Rogers' Preaching

While opinions may vary on the essential characteristics of an effective evangelistic sermon, this study will utilize the standard employed by the late W. A. Criswell from his book *Criswell's Guidebook for Pastors*. The reasons for implementing the nine characteristics of an effective evangelistic sermon listed by Criswell are: first, Criswell's renowned reputation as an effective evangelistic preacher among Southern Baptists as the former pastor of The First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas;⁹⁷ and second, Criswell was a hero of Rogers, and greatly influenced the preaching ministry of Rogers as well as his theology.⁹⁸ According to Criswell, "An effective evangelistic sermon must possess these nine ingredients: (1) Be biblical in content; (2) Simple in construction; (3) Personal in concern; (4) Winsome in its appeal; (5) Uncompromising against sin; (6) Present pardon in Christ; (7) Preached with energy and zeal; (8) Delivered in marvelous expectancy; (9) Utter reliance upon the Holy Spirit."⁹⁹

Be Biblical in Content

An effective evangelistic sermon must be biblical in its content. Of course the best method of preaching to ensure that a sermon is biblical in its content is to preach

⁹⁷Steve Gaines, "Preparing the Evangelistic Sermon," in *Preaching Evangelistically: Proclaiming the Saving Message of Jesus*, by Al Fasol et al. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 59.

⁹⁸Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 125.

⁹⁹W. A. Criswell, *Criswell's Guidebook for Pastors* (Nashville: Broadman, 1980), 236-37.

only expository sermons. Haddon W. Robinson provides an excellent definition of expository preaching in his book *Biblical Preaching*. Robinson explains, “Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher then through the preacher applies to the hearers.”¹⁰⁰ Consequently, by definition an expository sermon is biblical in its content.

Although Rogers admitted that he did not always preach expository messages, he did state that expository preaching was his favorite method of preaching. Moreover, the topical sermons Rogers preached were still biblical in their content and source. Furthermore, the vast majority of sermons that Rogers preached were indeed expository sermons, and especially those sermons that were evangelistic in their content. For example, the sermon “Captain Noah and the Good Ship Grace” was a biographical exposition of Genesis 6:12–22.¹⁰¹ In this sermon Rogers drew a parallel between the days of Noah and the end of time as described by Jesus in Matthew 24:37. He also presented the ark of Noah as a type of Christ based upon 1 Peter 3. The objective of this sermon was to demonstrate that salvation may only be found in a personal relationship with Christ. Rogers argued persuasively for the exclusivity of Christ as man’s only means of

¹⁰⁰Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academy, 2001), 21.

¹⁰¹Other sermon used in this study that are examples of evangelistic sermons that were also expository sermons are, “Dying Grace,” a sermon on Gen 47:28-29; “The Sin that Lost a War,” a sermon on Josh 7:1-5; “Facing the Problem of Pride,” a sermon on 2 Kgs 5:1-11, 14; “Dads Who Shoot Straight,” a sermon on Ps 127; “The Greatest Story Ever Told,” a sermon on Isa 53:1-12; “Rivers of Revival,” a sermon on Ezek 47: 1-12; “Countdown in the Holy Land,” a sermon on Dan 9:24-27; “Haunted by the Ghost of Guilt,” a sermon on Zech 3:1-5; “When Bankruptcy is a Blessing,” a sermon on Matt 5:1-9; “Suicide of the Soul,” a sermon on Mark 10:17-22; “How to Overcome Temptation,” a sermon on Luke 4:1-12; “Principles of Power,” a sermon on Acts 2:1-4; “Does a Loving God Believe in Capital Punishment?” a sermon on Rom 13:1-7; “What Is the Gospel?” a sermon on 1 Cor 15:1-4; “Soul Winners Six Mighty Motivations,” a sermon on 2 Cor 5:9-20; “Christian Warfare,” a sermon on Eph 6:10-26; “Real Salvation,” a sermon on 1 John 3:1-9; “The Battle for the Bible,” a sermon on Jude 1-7; “The Sin of Lukewarmness,” a sermon on Rev 3:14-21.

salvation from the wrath and judgment of God. Furthermore, he emphasized the importance of the atonement of Christ as payment for man's sin debt, and he stressed the necessity for repentance and faith in order to receive salvation. This particular sermon is an excellent example of how Rogers' evangelistic preaching was indeed biblical in its content.

Be Simple in Construction

In addition to being biblical in content, an effective evangelistic sermon must also be simplistic in construction. Unfortunately, some expository preaching has a reputation for being boring. According to Robinson, this false impression may be attributed to the preacher's failure to distinguish the difference between exegesis and exposition. Too often preachers will use the jargon of their profession in the pulpit and pronounce Greek and Hebrew terms and theological concepts which have little or no meaning to their listening audience. Such language may be appropriate for the seminary, but is meaningless to the average person sitting in the pew.¹⁰² Regarding such malpractice in the pulpit, Charles Spurgeon has correctly advised, "The people in the marketplace cannot learn the language of the academy, so the people of the academy must learn the language of the marketplace. It is the pastor's job to translate."¹⁰³ In other words, the sermon must be simple in its construction, and this advice is even more important when it concerns evangelistic preaching in which the listener is not even a Christian.

Rogers was a master craftsman in preparing and preaching sermons that communicated with his audience and taught biblical truth. In his sermon "Dads Who Shoot Straight," for example, Rogers preached an exposition of Psalm 127 in which he

¹⁰²Haddon Robinson, "Blending Bible Content and Life Application," in *Mastering Contemporary Preaching*, by Bill Hybels, Stuart Briscoe, and Haddon Robinson (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1989), 57.

¹⁰³Charles Spurgeon, quoted in Haddon Robinson, "Blending Bible Content and Life Application," 57.

addressed the need for fathers to be responsible parents and to raise their children in the Christian faith. Moreover, Rogers encouraged parents to view their children as the means God has chosen to influence and reach the next generation with the gospel. This sermon made a vivid comparison between the characteristics of a warrior and a godly father. It also employed an outline that the members of the congregation were able to understand and remember: (1) Dads Who Shoot Straight Must Have an Arm that Is Strong; (2) Dads Who Shoot Straight Must Have Arrows that Are Straight; and (3) Dads Who Shoot Straight Must Have an Aim that Is Sure. This sermon appealed to all parents who were concerned about raising their children in the Christian faith. It appealed especially to fathers by expressing their masculine nature as warriors. It also delivered a persuasive appeal to non-believer by explaining the gospel and stressing the importance of having Christ in one's life and one's home.

According to Robinson, the goal of an expository sermon is to explain the flow and meaning of a passage of Scripture so that when people come back weeks later and read the passage they are able to understand the text and apply it to their lives based upon what they heard their pastor preach.¹⁰⁴ Surely everyone who heard Rogers preach this message will recall his outline and many of his points when reading Psalm 127.

Be Personal in Concern

When it comes to maintaining a compassionate concern for the unconverted souls of men and women, Criswell warned, "The true pastor must strive to keep his heart warm by the fires of God's love and grace. Let no root of bitterness grow in his soul. Pray, be sweet and tender, witness to the lost that they might be saved. Just keep on doing the soul-winning work to which Jesus called you."¹⁰⁵ Criswell continued in his caution to

¹⁰⁴Robinson, "Blending Bible Content and Life Application," 58.

¹⁰⁵Criswell, *Guidebook for Pastors*, 230.

say that efforts to reach the unconverted will most likely bring criticism directed against the evangelistic pastor both from within and without of the church; nevertheless, the preacher of the gospel must not let personal attacks distract him from his evangelistic calling. For example, Criswell urged, “Let the true pastor never turn aside from his great calling to preach the whole counsel of God, warn men of their sins and the judgment of the Lord upon them, call the lost to repentance and faith, baptize converts in the name of the triune God, and build up his congregation in the love and wisdom of the Lord.”¹⁰⁶

A former deacon of Bellevue Baptist Church, Bob Vincent, said that there are two things about the preaching ministry of Rogers that have made the greatest impression upon his life and Bellevue Baptist Church: one is Roger’s love for Jesus, and the other is his concern for lost souls.¹⁰⁷ In his sermons, Rogers never forgot the importance of sharing the gospel with the unconverted. His messages repeatedly demonstrated his compassion and concern toward his fellow man, and his earnest conviction that the gospel was the solution to man’s greatest problems. Rogers often said that the Bible is the only book that has the answer to all man’s problems.¹⁰⁸ When preaching, Rogers referred to the unconverted as “friends” and compassionately invited them to receive Christ. Finally, Rogers stated that one of his main purposes in life was to communicate clearly an uncompromising gospel and lovingly explain to people how to become a Christian.¹⁰⁹

Be Winsome in Appeal

Unfortunately, some evangelistic preaching is more offensive than winsome in its appeal to the unconverted. The “hell-fire and brimstone” preaching associated with

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 233.

¹⁰⁷Bob Vincent, quoted in “Come to Jesus,” a video played at the memorial service for Adrian Rogers, www.youtube.com/watch?v=84tmxMiNRhE (accessed January 17, 2013).

¹⁰⁸Rogers, quoted in Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 189.

¹⁰⁹Rogers, quoted in Duduit, “Preaching and Church Growth,” 6.

the camp meetings of the nineteenth century are not an effective methodology for reaching people in the twenty-first century. Likewise, Rogers stated that he considered such topics as hell and judgment to be ineffective in reaching people with the gospel. Rogers did not, however, ignore these doctrines in his sermons. He simply did not focus his sermons on such subjects.¹¹⁰ Rogers often focused more upon the love of God in his sermons. Similar to the name of his broadcast ministry, Rogers' sermons shared a love worth finding more so than a hell worth avoiding.

Consequently, the sermons of Rogers were usually engaging with the listening audience. For example, he often asked questions of his audience that addressed a personal problem or a general concern, and then he provided an answer to such questions by giving a biblical solution to the problem or concern. Likewise, Rogers often used humor in his messages so as to capture the attention of his listeners and hopefully remove any preconceived obstacle in the mind of the listener to the message. In general, the sermons of Rogers were interesting, informative, and insightful. Rogers was careful to ensure that the only offense his audience may have would be toward the offense in the message of the cross (Gal 5:11), and not the messenger.

Be Uncompromising to Sin

Although Rogers preached with a winsome appeal, he still preached an uncompromisingly against sin. Rogers preached against moral sins such as adultery, fornication, pre-marital sex, and homosexuality.¹¹¹ He also preached against social vices such as gambling, pornography, social drinking, and the use of tobacco products.¹¹² In

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹Adrian Rogers, "The Sin of Sodom and the Spirit of the World," sermon transcript of a message on Gen 13:1-11 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, TN, 3 August 2003 (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

¹¹²See Adrian Rogers, "What Is Wrong with Gambling?" sermon transcript of a message on Acts 19:21-32 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, TN, 7 June 1987 (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

addition, he preached on controversial political issues such as same-sex marriage, no-fault divorce, and abortion.¹¹³ Furthermore, he preached on ethical matters addressing such issues as honesty, anger, pride, immodesty, and gossip.¹¹⁴ Rogers was never guilty of shying away from preaching against any kind of sin no matter how controversial or politically incorrect the topic may have been at the time.

Present Pardon in Christ

It is important to note that preaching against any sin without pointing people to the atoning death of Christ on the cross and the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit is not evangelistic preaching, but merely pious preaching.¹¹⁵ Rogers, however, was not guilty of pious preaching. He often orchestrated his sermons to announce that everyone needed Christ, and no one would be accepted by God based upon his or her merits. For example, in the sermon “Salvation,” Rogers warned his audience that many church members and moral people will be eternally separated from God in hell simply because they incorrectly assume the gospel is for the prostitute or felon:

There are many who are listening to me across the nation, and you are going to go to hell, not because you were a harlot, not because you were a drunkard, not because you were a thief, but because you never were. You think the gospel is for the harlot, you think the gospel is for the drunkard. You think the gospel is for the thief. Most of the people in America are egomaniacs strutting to hell. Thinking that they are too good to be damned, trusting in their own religion.¹¹⁶

¹¹³See Adrian Rogers, “Same Sex Marriage and the Word of God,” sermon transcript of a message on Matt 19:1-6 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, TN (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010); Adrian Rogers, “Families that Choose Life,” sermon transcript of a message on Exod 20:1-13 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, TN, 28 May 1995 (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

¹¹⁴See Adrian Rogers, “The Road to Hell Is Paved with Pride,” sermon transcript of a message on 2 Kgs 5:11 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, TN, 27 July 1997 (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010); Adrian Rogers, “The Sin of Lukewarmness,” sermon transcript of a message on Rev 3:14-21 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, TN, 14 June 1995 (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

¹¹⁵Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 13.

¹¹⁶Adrian Rogers, “Salvation” [CD-ROM] (Memphis: Love Worth Finding), message 2067.

Likewise, Rogers was often quick to make the point that the sin that keeps people from grace is unbelief. Again Rogers cautioned,

What is the sin that sends people to hell today? It is not lying, it is not murder, it is not rape, it is not arson, it is not sexual perversion, it is not pride, [and] it is not arrogance. It is unbelief! You see Jesus died for all those other sins. Those sins have been paid for with his precious blood. The Bible says, “He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18). It is unbelief that shuts the door to heaven.¹¹⁷

Rogers preached boldly against all kinds of moral and social sins, but he was consistent to explain to his listeners that the only solution for man’s sin problem is found in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Moreover, Rogers repeatedly explained in his messages that the only hope anyone had of inheriting eternal life was by embracing Christ as one’s personal Lord and Savior.

Preach with Zeal

When preaching, Rogers consistently demonstrated a zeal and passion in his sermon delivery. His passion for preaching was not only evident in his sermons, but also in his joy for being called by God to be in vocational ministry. Rogers repeatedly said that he was infinitely glad to have been called to preach the gospel. According to Rogers, “It is the best calling, but it is the worst profession. No one should choose the ministry as a profession, but should be called into the role of pastor.”¹¹⁸ Moreover, in an interview with *Fundamentalist Journal*, Rogers confessed that he preached for fun. He genuinely loved and enjoyed preaching. According to the writer, “It’s true. Adrian Rogers does love to preach. It’s evident in his excellent sermon preparation, in his fervent delivery, and in his voice. When you listen to Adrian Rogers preach, you know you are hearing a man

¹¹⁷Adrian Rogers, *What Every Christian Ought to Know* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005) 155.

¹¹⁸Adrian Rogers, “The Pastor’s Job Description,” in *What Every Pastor Ought to Know* [DVD-ROM] (North Palm Beach FL: The Adrian Roger Pastor Training Institute, 2008), disc 1, session 1.

who loves what he is doing.”¹¹⁹ According to Rogers, genuine zeal in preaching is never any greater than one’s conviction. Likewise, Rogers never lost his conviction that he was called to preach, and that there is incredible power when God’s Word is preached with the anointing of the Holy Spirit.¹²⁰

Delivered in Marvelous Expectancy

Rogers consistently preached with an expectation that people would always respond to his messages. According to Rogers, he believed that one reason so few people respond to the sermons preached by many pastors today is because pastors no longer preach with a sincere and genuine expectation that people will respond to their message.¹²¹ When asked if he preached for decisions, Rogers explained, “In teaching you may be disseminating truth. In preaching you are moving hearts. You have got to have truth in it but you are moving hearts. So yes, my preaching is decisional. Yes, it is evangelistic in a broad sense, though not just in preaching how to be saved in every service. But in every service somewhere, somehow, sometime, I am going to tell people how to be saved.”¹²² When Rogers was asked if a preacher should expect results, Rogers exclaimed, “Not only should a pastor expect results from the pulpit ministry, but expectation should be the general tone of the pastor’s ministry. A man who preaches the gospel should expect results because based upon the evidence following the resurrection of Jesus Christ there is not a negative note in the New Testament.”¹²³ Consequently,

¹¹⁹Angela Elwell Hunt, “SBC’s New President Adrian Rogers Undoubtedly Called to Preach.” *Fundamentalist Journal* 5 (July/August 1986): 60.

¹²⁰Gene Mims and Michael D. Miller, “Sharing the Gospel: Use Any New Means, Keep God’s Methods,” *Growing Churches* 6 (Winter 1996): 6.

¹²¹Adrian Rogers, “The Sermon’s Invitation,” in *What Every Pastor Ought to Know* [DVD-ROM] (North Palm Beach, FL: The Adrian Rogers Pastor Training Institute, 2011), disc 7, session 10.

¹²²Rogers, quoted in Duduit, “Preaching and Church Growth,” 6.

¹²³Rogers, quoted in Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 161.

Rogers performed every aspect of his ministry, especially his preaching ministry, with an expectation of results.

Reliance upon the Holy Spirit

Rogers repeatedly stated that all preaching must demonstrate a complete and total dependency upon the work of the Holy Spirit to be effective in changing lives.

According to Rogers, “The preacher can produce no lasting work apart from total dependency and submission to the Holy Spirit.”¹²⁴ Rogers often shared in his testimony that as a teenager he prayed alone one night while lying prostrate on a football field with his face in the dirt pleading with God to fill him with the Holy Spirit and make him an effective preacher of the gospel.¹²⁵ He also acknowledged how his dependency upon the Spirit waned after seminary, and the death of his baby son drew him back to a renewed intimacy and filling of the Holy Spirit.¹²⁶ Consequently, he consistently demonstrated in his life a complete reliance upon the Holy Spirit.

Unfortunately, Rogers believed the vast majority of Southern Baptists have an inaccurate understanding of the nature and work of the Holy Spirit. He also believed that many Baptist preachers readily mistaken “soulish preaching” for “Holy Spirit-anointed preaching.”¹²⁷ Rogers explained that soulish preaching is simply proclaiming biblical truth because the Word of God has soul in it; however, soul-winning preaching comes only when the preacher is filled with the Holy Spirit. According to Rogers, such anointed preaching will always produce spiritual fruit in the church.¹²⁸ Thus, Rogers adamantly believed anointed preaching was essential for effective evangelistic preaching.

¹²⁴Ibid., 155.

¹²⁵Ibid., 156.

¹²⁶Ibid., 159.

¹²⁷Ibid., 157.

¹²⁸Ibid.

Regarding the importance of anointed preaching, Rogers declared that the preacher cannot accomplish anything of eternal significance unless he has a “special anointing” of the Spirit. He explained,

The preacher can produce no lasting work apart from total dependence and submission to the Holy Spirit. Only the Holy Spirit can cause men to understand and believe the gospel. I may preach truth, but only the Holy Spirit can impact truth. It takes more than power or persuasion to be a good preacher. The preacher is completely dependent upon the work of the Holy Spirit for power in the ministry. Not only is Jesus the person of truth, the Holy Spirit is the power of truth.¹²⁹

Rogers went so far as to say elsewhere that he believed it was a sin for any man of God to preach the Word of God without first being anointed and filled by the Spirit of God.¹³⁰

Rogers attributed much of the misunderstanding among Baptists regarding the Holy Spirit to be the result of confusion caused by the charismatic teaching of a “second blessing” of the Holy Spirit. Rogers fervently rejected what many charismatics referred to as a second blessing of the Holy Spirit or the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and contended that the charismatics confused their second blessing with what they had already received at the first blessing of salvation. For example, Rogers clarified,

Through the years I have heard some talk about the “second blessing.” By the second blessing they have meant an encounter with the Holy Spirit after their initial salvation experience. They have called [this experience] a “baptism in the Spirit” or “baptism by the Spirit.” I am not being disrespectful, but I believe the second blessing is simply an understanding of what you got in the first one! I believe many Christians draw closer to the Lord and begin to understand what the first blessing means and that is so radical they think of it as an entirely different encounter with the Lord, when actually it may be an affirmation of their identity with Jesus.¹³¹

As a result of comments like the above quote, it is clear that Rogers believed that every preacher of the gospel should have a biblical understanding of one’s identity with Christ, and an appreciation of the gift of the Holy Spirit, and a consistent dependency on the power of the Holy Spirit in order to be an effective evangelistic preacher.

¹²⁹Ibid., 155.

¹³⁰Adrian Rogers, *The Secret of Supernatural Living* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982), 42.

¹³¹Adrian Rogers, *Mastering Your Emotions* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1988), 21.

Consequently, Rogers argued that soulish preaching is never an adequate substitute for anointed preaching. According to Rogers, “The true test of whether a preacher is proclaiming God’s Word through the power of soulish preaching or through the anointing of the Holy Spirit is: Does the message cause fruit to remain? When a man is preaching in the Spirit, God is doing work. His work lasts for eternity, and God is glorified because he bears fruit in the ministry. Soulish preaching does not cause fruit to remain because man is preaching outside the anointing of God’s Spirit.”¹³² For Rogers, only the Holy Spirit is able to do the work of genuine conviction and conversion; therefore, both his life and message demonstrated a complete reliance upon the power of the Holy Spirit in reaching people with the gospel. Furthermore, Rogers’ sermons generally reflected all the other characteristics mentioned by Criswell for an effective evangelistic preaching ministry.

Allegorical Elements in Rogers’ Sermons

The search for allegorical and typological meanings in the Bible dates back to the early church fathers. Origen, for example, placed more value upon allegories than the literal sense of Scripture.¹³³ The differences between typological and allegorical meaning has been explained by Henry Virkler:

Typology is the search for links between historical events, persons, or things within salvation history; allegorism is the search for secondary and hidden meanings underlying the primary and obvious meaning of a historical narrative. Typology rests on an objective understanding of the historical narrative, whereas allegorizing imports subjective meaning into it.¹³⁴

While typological exegesis searches for a clear linkage between the Old Testament type and the anti-type in the New Testament, allegorism searches for a hidden meaning in the

¹³²Rogers, quoted in Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 161.

¹³³C. C. Kroeger, “Origen,” in *EDT*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984), 803.

¹³⁴Henry A. Virkler and Karelyne Gerber Ayayo, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1981), 182.

biblical text that is not affirmed or revealed in later revelation. Consequently, the allegorical method of interpreting Scripture has been shown to demean the historical facts, grammatical structure and authorial intent of the biblical text, and is strongly discouraged.¹³⁵

Unfortunately, Rogers demonstrated a tendency to allegorize several biblical texts from the Old Testament and even encouraged the use of allegory for understanding the Old Testament. For example, Rogers stated at the beginning of his sermon “Pass the Salt” that in order to understand the Bible, especially the Old Testament, one must apply three principles: first one must understand the second coming of Christ, secondly one must understand that in the Old Testament Israel is analogous for the Christian life, and finally one must understand that Jesus can be found anywhere in the Bible.¹³⁶ Using this methodology, in his sermon “Victory over the Flesh” he allegorized much of the passage found in Exodus 17:8-16. In this sermon, for example, Rogers identified Amalek (Esau) as an Old Testament personification of the sinful nature of man or the flesh principle that was later mentioned by the apostle Paul in Galatians 5:16-26. Additionally, he personified Israel to be a backslidden Christian living in bondage to the flesh, and he characterized the nation of Egypt before the exodus of Israel as representing the lost condition of man. Moreover, he identified Pharaoh as epitomizing the devil, and Israel’s wondering in the wilderness as typifying the carnal Christian life.¹³⁷

In addition to allegorical interpretations of Exodus 17:8-16, Rogers habitually identified numerous other questionable types from the Old Testament. For example, in

¹³⁵Chipley McQueen Thornton, “Allegorical Tendencies in Preaching and Their Relation to the Doctrine of the Sufficiency of Scripture” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, May 2009), 45-46.

¹³⁶Adrian Rogers, “Pass the Salt,” sermon transcript of a message on Lev 2:11-13 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, TN (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

¹³⁷Adrian Rogers, “Victory over the Flesh,” sermon transcript of a message on Gal 5:16-26 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, TN (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

his sermon “Getting Ready for the Rapture” Rogers identified Enoch as the personification of the church in order to defend his argument for a pre-tribulation rapture.¹³⁸ According to Rogers, as Enoch was taken to heaven by God before the universal flood in Genesis 5:24, so the church will be raptured by God prior to the Great Tribulation.¹³⁹

In addition to such questionable types, Rogers also had a tendency to see more than was warranted by Scripture in his use of typology. In his sermon “How You Can Be Sure,” for example, Rogers persuasively argued that one of the reasons a believer may possess confidence in the saving power of Christ was because of the prophetic witness of Scripture regarding the atoning work of Jesus on the cross found throughout the Old Testament. In order to demonstrate this point, Rogers proclaimed that the Old Testament tabernacle and all its furnishings were biblical types for the person and work of Jesus. While it may be argued from the New Testament that the tabernacle possesses many images illustrating the person and work of Christ, Rogers goes beyond what is expressed in the New Testament to the point of using each piece of furniture found in the tabernacle as personifying a characteristic of the person and redemptive work of Christ. For example, Rogers argued,

This tabernacle was about the Lord Jesus Christ. The acacia wood of that tabernacle speaks of the humanity of Jesus. It was overlaid with gold, which speaks of the deity of Jesus. It had badger skins on the outside, which said that, from the outside, it was not beautiful. “He hath no form, nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him” (Isaiah 53:2). But, on the inside, there was all of that fine gold and fine twined linen, and there was that

¹³⁸Rogers was a pre-millennialist in his views on biblical eschatology, and he preached a pre-tribulation rapture of the church. Rogers also believed he was preaching in the end times or last days, and he often suggested that the return of Christ may occur in his life-time. He also believed that the second coming was a strong motivation for evangelism. In his sermons Rogers would often warn his listeners that Jesus may return to judge the earth at any moment so they should not delay another day, but should come to Christ immediately for salvation. See Adrian Rogers, *Revelation* (Memphis, TN: Love Worth Finding Ministries, 1995), 1:115.

¹³⁹Adrian Rogers, “Getting Ready for the Rapture,” sermon transcript of a message on 1 Thess 1:9-10 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, TN, 14 July 1991 (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

scarlet, that blue, and that purple there, in the veil. The veil spoke of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. As you came into that tabernacle, first of all, there was a brazen altar, which speaks of Christ our sacrifice, because animals were slain there. And then, you come to a laver, which speaks of Christ our sanctification. You go in a little further, and there's a table with bread on it—the showbread, which speaks of Christ our sustenance. Over here's a candlestick, which speaks of Christ our sight. Here's an altar of incense, which speaks of Christ our supplication. In here are the Holy of Holies and the mercy seat, which speak of Christ the satisfaction for the sinner's sin, where the blood was sprinkled there. It's all about the Lord Jesus Christ. Every priest in the Old Testament pictures the Lord Jesus Christ—our Great High Priest, who intercedes for His people and makes intercession for us.¹⁴⁰

The tabernacle may indeed have numerous aspects that illustrate and reveal many of the characteristics of the person and work of Christ; however, Rogers often implies that every aspect of the tabernacle serves as some indisputable types for which the New Testament does not clearly identify Christ as an antitype.

Similarly, in another sermon, Rogers even went so far in his typology as to identify the veil of the tabernacle as an Old Testament picture of the Four Gospels, and to argue that the various colors of the veil as significant to the theme and purpose of each Gospel. In the sermon “Church Attendance” from Hebrews 10:19-27, Rogers proclaimed,

The Book of Hebrews was obviously written to Hebrews, written to Jews. They would have been familiar with the tabernacle and the temple. In the tabernacle and the temple there were three basic rooms. There was the outer court, the inner court, and the innermost court called the Inner Sanctum or the Holy of Holies. And that Holy of Holies was the place where the Shekinah glory of God dwelt. And that Holy of Holies was separated from another chamber called The Holy Place by a veil. That veil in the Old Testament was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, the body of Christ. Our Scripture says, “His flesh.”

And if you were to see that veil, that veil would have been made of white linen. But on that white linen would have been purple and scarlet and blue. And so you have four colors there on that veil, and those four colors represent the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. You have Four Gospels, and each of the Four Gospels speaks of those four colors.

For example, Matthew shows Jesus as the King of the Jews. So Matthew is the gospel of royal purple. That's the color of majesty.

Mark shows Jesus as the suffering servant. So if Matthew is the royal purple gospel, Mark is the blood red gospel because it shows Jesus as the sacrificial, Lamb of God.

¹⁴⁰Adrian Rogers, “How You Can Be Sure,” sermon transcript of a message on Acts 10:38-48 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, TN (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

What about Luke? Well, Luke is the sky blue gospel because Luke tells of the virgin born Son of God who came from heaven to earth.

What about John? John is the snow white gospel because it speaks of the deity of Christ, His absolute, pristine, purity and holiness. And so you have in that veil, you have royal purple, you have blood red, you have sky blue, and you have snow white. All of these colors in that veil typify and picture the Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁴¹

Although there are a number of types in the Old Testament, nevertheless, the only valid method for identifying a type is when the biblical author or some later author identifies the type and its antitype. For example, Jesus identified the brazen serpent as an Old Testament type, and he identified himself as the antitype during his conversation with Nicodemus in the third chapter of the Gospel of John. Consequently, when it comes to using allegorical and typological meanings in one's interpretation of the Scriptures, it would be wise to heed the reprimand of J. Robertson McQuilkin who decried, "When the interpreter finds the Old Testament full of typical language and symbolic language that the Bible itself does not identify, he has undermined the authority of Scripture."¹⁴²

Conclusion

Despite the occasional tendency of Rogers to allegorize in his interpretation of some Old Testament passages, there are several beneficial aspects of Rogers' preaching ministry that may prove invaluable for other pastors in the art and science of evangelistic preaching. First, Rogers possessed a great love and respect for the Bible as the inspired and inerrant Word of God. Rogers viewed the Bible as the source for all his sermons and often used the expository method of preaching for his sermons. Moreover, Rogers made sermon preparation the priority of his ministry, and spent many hours a week in the study preparing and planning sermons. Second, Rogers focused the application element of his

¹⁴¹Adrian Rogers, "Church Attendance," sermon transcript of a message on Heb 10:19-27 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, TN, 3 December 2000 (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

¹⁴²J. Robertson McQuilkin, *Understanding and Applying the Bible: An Introduction to Hermeneutics* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 224.

sermons upon meeting the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of his congregation. In addition, Rogers used creativity in his sermon outlines, topics, titles, and illustrations in order to capture the attention of his audience. Third, Rogers was a diligent student of the Bible, as well as homiletics, and theology. Rogers spent a lifetime studying and laboring to improve as an expositor and preacher of the Word of God. Likewise, Rogers read habitually, and persistently looked for ways he might improve his effectiveness in communicating the truth of the gospel to an ever changing world.

CHAPTER 4

THE INVITATIONS OF ROGERS

A study of the evangelistic preaching of Rogers would be incomplete without mentioning his use of the public invitation or altar call given at the conclusion of almost every sermon he preached.¹ As a matter of fact, the phrase “Come to Jesus,” which Rogers repeatedly shouted while people were coming forward during the invitation, became a hallmark of his evangelistic preaching ministry. This phrase was the original title for his biography which was later changed by the editor to *Love Worth Finding*.² The altar call was ubiquitous to Southern Baptist churches during most of Rogers' ministry, and his use of the altar call reflected the methodology implemented by other Baptist preachers as well as many pastors of other denominations.³ Despite the popularity of the altar call among evangelicals, use of this evangelistic methodology was certainly not without its critics and dissenters.⁴ The purpose of this chapter is not necessarily to defend the invitation system as much as it is to examine and evaluate the invitations extended by Rogers in his preaching ministry. In order to accomplish this objective, this chapter will first present the biblical, theological, and historical arguments for the invitation system; secondly, it will provide an examination and evaluation of the invitations given by

¹Adrian Rogers, quoted in Joyce Rogers and Julie-Allyson Ieron, *Love Worth Finding: The Life of Adrian Rogers and His Philosophy of Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 188.

²Joyce Rogers, telephone interview by author, digital recording, February 24, 2012.

³In 1969, 94.2 percent of Southern Baptist churches with a membership of over 300 extended a public invitation every Sunday morning. Moreover, 99.4 percent gave an invitation almost always on Sunday morning. See David Bennett, *The Altar Call: Its Origins and Present Usage* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000), 164.

⁴See Iain H. Murray, *The Invitation System* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1967).

Rogers; address any concerns regarding the modern use of the invitation; and finally make recommendations for those pastors who wish to employ the public invitation as a regular part of their evangelistic preaching ministry.

Definition of the Altar Call

There are many variations in the use of the altar call. As a result, before proceeding in this study it is necessary to define the altar call and identify some of its more common aspects. Such a definition may be found in David Bennett's published dissertation *The Altar Call: Its Origin and Present Usage*. Although Bennett is a critic of the systematic use of the altar call, he provides a thorough and accurate description of it in the following definition:

A method of evangelism within which a regular or frequent planned invitation is given to unbelievers to respond to Jesus Christ publically at the conclusion of a sermon or other gospel presentation, in such ways as: calling out a response, raising a hand, standing, or walking to a designated spot in the evangelistic setting. A response to such an invitation would normally be followed by immediate counseling and later by some form of follow-up. It often incorporates an appeal to Christians for such issues as rededication and a call to mission. It is not a theology, though it does reflect and support particular theologies.⁵

In this study, the altar call is more specifically understood as an appeal made by a preacher at the conclusion of a sermon instructing his listeners to make an immediate decision for Christ, and then to demonstrate that decision by leaving their seats and walking to the front of the auditorium usually while some form of music is playing.

Biblical Argument for the Altar Call

There are diverse opinions as to the biblical, theological, and historical origin of the modern invitation. For example, in his book *The Effective Invitation*, Alan Streett argued that the altar call was a common methodology of first-century evangelistic preaching. According to Streett,

⁵Bennett, *The Altar Call*, xvi.

The first-century gospel preacher always concluded his evangelistic sermon with an appeal for the unconverted present to repent of their sins and place their faith in the crucified and resurrected Lord of glory. Often these appeals call upon the individuals additionally to demonstrate their sincerity by taking a public stand for Christ before friends, relatives, neighbors and even enemies. This call for the sinner or new convert to make an initial public profession of faith is the basis for the modern day practice of extending a public invitation.⁶

Additionally, Streett contends that the biblical evidence for the public invitation may be found as far back as the Garden of Eden. Again Streett exclaims, “From the beginning of human history to the present, God has continued to extend an invitation to the lost to respond openly to his offer of forgiveness. The pages of both the Old and New Testament are replete with examples of God through chosen servants, calling men to make a public commitment of faith.”⁷

Similar to Streett’s comments, Rogers also proclaimed that the Bible is filled with numerous examples of the public invitation in both the Old and New Testament. In a lecture on the sermon’s invitation, he explained,

Now the Bible is full of examples of public invitations. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter preached a great sermon and then he gave an invitation. The Bible says, “And with many other words he did testify and exhort, saying, ‘Save yourself from this untoward generation.’” That means the sermon was over, but with many other words, he is testifying, “This is what Jesus has done for me.” He is exhorting, “Let it be done to you.” “With many other words,” that is an invitation that he gave. The Bible starts with an invitation in the Garden of Eden. God came walking in the garden. He said, “Adam, where are you?” Now God knew where he was. This was not the voice of a detective. It was the voice of a brokenhearted God inviting Adam to come to Him.

Joshua, I love Joshua. By the way, if you are preaching a series, preach a series on Joshua. Joshua said in Joshua 24 verse 5: “And if it seems evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served which were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” That was an invitation. He is saying, “Choose.”

Elijah, on Mount Carmel, gave an invitation, and he said, “Listen, folks, make up your mind. Do not halt between two opinions. If God be God, serve Him; if Baal be god then serve him.” And he gave an invitation, a public invitation. The Bible closes with an invitation. The way the Bible ends is this: Revelation 22 verse 17, “And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let him that heareth say, ‘Come.’”

⁶R. Alan Streett, *The Effective Invitation*, updated ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2004), 54.

⁷Ibid., 56.

And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.”⁸

Clearly Rogers agreed with the view of Strett that the Bible is filled with examples of the public invitation in both the Old and New Testament. Moreover, Rogers also argued that an invitation was given by the apostle Peter whenever the gospel was preached on the Day of Pentecost inviting sinners to respond immediately to the gospel message.

In addition to Strett and Rogers, this view is also shared by noted Southern Baptist scholar Roy Fish, who stated,

When one studies the message of apostolic preachers, the conclusion becomes obvious that one distinction of New Testament preaching was that preaching and invitation were virtually inseparable. The very nature of the message they preached compelled them to appeal for a response.

The gospel message is of such a nature that an invitation to response is the logical outcome of its declaration. After his sermon at Pentecost, Peter called on his hearers to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38). After his second recorded sermon, his imperative was: “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19).

Jesus frequently coupled the indicative and the imperative. He would conclude a message with “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3), or “Repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15). God makes man a concrete offer of forgiveness of sin on the basis of the saving acts of his Son. Such an offer demands a decision. The good news of Jesus is of such a nature that it demands a verdict. . . .

From beginning to end, invitations are extended in Scripture. God’s probing question to Adam in the garden, “Where art thou?” in Genesis 3 is something of an invitation. The final chapter of the Bible contains an invitation, “And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely’” (Rev. 22:17).⁹

Although Strett, Rogers and Fish are redundant in their biblical arguments; nevertheless, when all the Scriptures used to defend the modern day invitation are considered, even Bennett, who is a critic of the altar call, admits that the biblical use of the invitation “in exceptional circumstances” can be justified.¹⁰

⁸Adrian Rogers, “The Sermon’s Invitation,” in *What Every Pastor Ought to Know* [DVD-ROM] (North Palm Beach, FL: The Adrian Rogers Pastor Training Institute, 2011), disc 7, session 10.

⁹Roy Fish, “Preparing for Invitations in a Revival Meeting,” in *Before Revival Begins: The Preacher’s Preparation for Revival Meeting*, ed. Dan R. Crawford (Fort Worth, TX: Scripta Publishing, 1996), 95.

¹⁰Bennett, *The Altar Call*, 185.

Despite these numerous biblical examples, there are still many evangelicals who argue passionately against there being any biblical evidence for the modern day invitation.¹¹ For example, Iain Murray has argued that there is no scriptural support for any type of a physical response on the part of a listener to the gospel message. In addition, Murray has insisted that any comparison of the biblical call to follow Christ found in the New Testament with the modern day altar call is “a confusion of thought” regarding the meaning of the biblical text.¹² According to Murray, the modern evangelistic call to confess Christ by coming to the front of a church in order to receive Christ as Savior is a reversal of the New Testament order of salvation. Murray decries: “To confess Christ is the spiritual duty of a Christian. It is no part of the gospel message to say that compliance with certain outward duties will help us to become Christians. Yet the invitation system inevitably gives the impression that ‘confessing Christ’ by moving forward is the order of conversion.”¹³

The source of Murray’s contention regarding the biblical basis of the invitation system, however, appears to be more of a theological issue than a hermeneutical error. The primary issue for Murray is the order of salvation; consequently, his contentious opposition to any biblical basis for the invitation reverts to the age old debate regarding human free-will and divine sovereignty which J. I. Packer contested is best understood as an antinomy.¹⁴ Regardless of this theological debate, it is obvious that Rogers definitely viewed the altar call as a biblical methodology for evangelistic preaching. Furthermore,

¹¹In addition to Murray, see Jim Ehrhard, “The Dangers of the Invitation System,” *Reformation and Revival Journal* 2 (June/August 1993): 75-94; Jim Elliff, “Closing With Christ,” in *Christian Communicators Worldwide* (1999); Carey Hardy, “Just As I Am: A Closer Look at Invitations and Altar Calls,” in *Fool’s Gold: Discerning Truth in an Age of Error*, ed. John MacArthur (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 131-43.

¹²Murray, *The Invitation System*, 8.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1961), 18-36.

his view regarding the biblical origin of this evangelistic methodology was commonly held by other evangelicals and especially among Southern Baptists. Moreover, even one of the critics of this methodology has admitted that there is justifiable biblical evidence for its usage.

Theological Evidence for the Altar Call

The apostle Paul declared to the Corinthians, “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor 1:21 AV). Lewis Drummond, the former professor of Evangelism at SBTS, explained that this passage contains several theological elements essential to effective evangelistic preaching:

Paul’s word to the Corinthians bristles with stimulating ideas and principles. One of the most vital truths the apostle would have the entire church to grasp is that, in all evangelistic endeavors, God uses as His primary instrument in redemption what Paul called “our proclamation” (*kerygma*). In other words, the *kerygma* is the “sword of the Spirit” God wields to bring people to saving faith in Jesus Christ. If this is true, those who aspire to evangelize effectively need to know all that is compacted in this key word.¹⁵

Drummond continued to explain that the root of *kerygma* boasts of various ideas in its verbal and substantive forms: a herald, a proclaimer, to preach, to declare, and to decree.¹⁶ Its use in the New Testament, however, implies the proclamation of the gospel that includes both the communication of theological dogma and the expectation of a positive faith response on the part of the recipients. Furthermore, Drummond identified two important studies that address the New Testament meaning and components of the *kerygma*. They are C. H. Dodd’s *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments*, and Michael Green’s *Evangelism in the Early Church*.¹⁷

¹⁵Lewis A. Drummond, *The Word of the Cross: A Contemporary Theology of Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 203.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid., 207-09.

The Definition of C. H. Dodd

In 1936, Dodd wrote his renowned little book *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments*. In this work, Dodd identified six basic elements in the content of evangelistic proclamation or the *kerygma*. The first element is the fulfillment of the messianic age that was proclaimed by the prophets in the Old Testament has dawned (Acts 2:16). Second, this dawning has occurred as a result of the earthly ministry, vicarious death, and glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ. Third, by virtue of his resurrection, Jesus has ascended to the right hand of the heavenly Father and assumed the position as the Messianic head of a new Israel (Acts 2:33-36). Fourth, the Holy Spirit has been given to the church as a sign of Christ's power and presence on earth (Acts 2:33). Fifth, the Messianic age will soon reach its consummation with the bodily return of Christ to earth (Acts 3:21). Finally, the proclamation or *kerygma* always closes with an appeal for repentance, the offer of forgiveness, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of salvation to those who enter the community of the elect (Acts 2:38-39).¹⁸

The Definition of Michael Green

Like Dodd, Michael Green also recognized that the "proclamation" or *kerygma* in the New Testament possessed a definable body of theological truth. Green, however, made the argument that Dodd was far too fixated in his understanding of the *kerygma*, and contended that the background of the listening audience influenced what elements of the gospel were preached.¹⁹ Green, nevertheless, did identify three crucial points to the *kerygma*. First, the proclamation of the gospel was always Christocentric in its content. Second, the proclamation offered the free gift of forgiveness, the filling of the Holy Spirit, and reconciliation with God. Third, the proclamation called for a response from

¹⁸C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments: With an Appendix on Eschatology and History* (repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 21-23.

¹⁹Drummond, *The Word of the Cross*, 209.

the listeners which was demonstrated by repentance from sin, faith in Jesus Christ, and a public profession of faith in Jesus by baptism.²⁰

Drummond points out that whether one takes the more rigid view of Dodd or the more flexible view of Green, there are still certain theological and historical realities that must be clearly understood and declared in the presentation of the gospel message. First, there is historical and objective truth that centers upon the historic person and salvific work of Jesus Christ in the proclamation of the gospel, and second, there is a demand for a response or an experiential element of coming to know and experience the love and forgiveness of God.²¹ Consequently, a theology of evangelism must include more than simply the dissemination of facts and doctrine regarding the person and work of Jesus Christ. It must also include a persuasive call for a decision to be made on the part of the listener to receive God's truth. As Stephen Olford has so aptly said: "With the proclamation there is the declaration of that which God has done and is doing in Christ and His cross; then the invitation calls men and women to respond to this Good News . . . the motive of the preacher must be to lead men and women into an experience of sound, saving, and steadfast faith in Christ."²²

Historical Evidence for the Altar Call

Similar to the biblical debate over the altar call, scholars have also expressed various views concerning the historical origin of the modern day invitation system. As previously mentioned, Streett contends that the practice of giving a public invitation dates back to the first century. He also contends that the practice of giving public invitations ceased in A.D. 324 with the conversion of Constantine and the unification of church and

²⁰Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church, updated* (London: Eagle Publishers, 1970), 68-83.

²¹Drummond, *The Word of the Cross*, 214.

²²Stephen Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 343.

state.²³ According to Streett, biblical evangelism was only practiced scarcely from Constantine to the eighteenth century, but the Reformation was the dawning of a new age, and the beginning of a return to biblical evangelism. Streett explained,

Though history does not record any of the reformers issuing the kind of public invitation practiced today, they did conclude their message by calling sinners to Christ through personal repentance and faith. Those who heeded the appeal were dealt with privately, and later were presented before the congregation to receive communion. This act was the initial public profession of faith for the new convert. It was the first step in restoring the public invitation to its New Testament place of prominence.²⁴

Streett further contends that the invitation system achieved gradual acceptance during the First Great Awakening through the evangelistic preaching of John Wesley.²⁵

Contrary to Streett's historical argument, Bennett argues that there is no historical evidence that the public invitation was used before the nineteenth century. According to Bennett, it is probably impossible to pinpoint with certainty the exact beginning of the public invitation system. He contends that it most likely came into being through various incidents of spontaneous rather than planned responses of those under conviction during the camp meetings of the western frontier.²⁶ According to Bennett, "In this largely non-intellectual, non-traditional environment the camp-meeting, seemingly inevitably, became the flower bed for new methods to sprout and develop, not least, the public invitation. This would have been aided by the belief common to many of the preachers that it was important to be able to date precisely one's conversion experience."²⁷ Regardless of exactly when the public invitation started, by 1810, Bennett concedes that the public invitation had become such a common part of the American

²³Streett, *The Effective Invitation*, 82-83.

²⁴Ibid., 82.

²⁵Ibid., 92.

²⁶Bennett, *The Altar Call*, 29-30.

²⁷Ibid., 67.

Methodist movement that Francis Asbury insisted that all Methodist meeting houses include a mourner's bench for people under conviction to use.²⁸

The debate over the conception of the altar call may never be settled; nevertheless, its evolution and rise to prominence as a methodology for evangelistic preaching by the end of the Second Great Awakening is unquestionable. By 1832, for example, Charles G. Finney's use of the "anxious seat" in revival meetings was so popular that his evangelistic methods were being published for other revival preachers to employ.²⁹ Following the ministry of Finney, the public invitation was carried internationally through the well-organized evangelistic campaigns of D. L. Moody until his death in 1899. With the turn of the century, a former baseball player turned evangelist named Billy Sunday preached to more people from 1908 to 1920 than any evangelist before his time. Conservative estimates suggest that at least a million people responded to his invitation to come forward, shake his hand, and pray.³⁰ Finally, Billy Graham, who preached to live audiences of more than 250 million people in over 190 countries, established the invitation as a hallmark of evangelistic preaching during the latter half of the twentieth century. Almost predictably, all four of these popular evangelists were greatly admired by Rogers and mentioned readily in several of his sermons.

Charles G. Finney

Criticism of the public invitation began with its emergence in the early part of the nineteenth century and was chiefly directed toward its leading proponent Charles G. Finney. According to William McLoughlin, in his book *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, the leading prophet of revivalism and the invitation system during the Second

²⁸Ibid., 29.

²⁹Ibid., 112.

³⁰Lyle W. Dorsett, *Billy Sunday and the Redemption of Urban America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 93.

Great Awakening was Finney.³¹ As a young man, Finney pursued a career as a lawyer, but after his conversion in 1821, he was ordained by the Presbyterian Church. Although he lacked a proper theological education, Finney received invitations to preach in the western frontier and New York. He was recognized as an enthusiastic revivalist who preached in a colloquial style. He soon became a controversial figure, however, because of his “new measures.” These measures or methods included all-night prayer meetings, praying for sinners by name, allowing women to pray when men were present, speaking with an irreverent familiarity with God, and employing an anxious seat or bench at the front of the church or congregation hall to which people were asked to come for special prayer, counseling or exhortation after the sermon.³²

Moreover, when Finney preached he often mentioned sinners by name from the pulpit. He also repudiated Calvinism in many of his sermons, and even contested the Westminster Confession of Faith. One of Finney’s most famous sermons, for example, was “Sinners Bound to Change Their Own Hearts” and was based upon Ezekiel 18:31. In this sermon Finney argued that sinners could change their own hearts and choose to give-up selfishness and sin. Moreover, Finney denied that conversion was a miracle of God and believed it to be purely a philosophical act based upon the free-will of the individual. He also persistently argued that people have the ability to decide their own fate in regards to their salvation.³³

In 1826, a meeting of ministers was held in New Lebanon, New York, in order to consider the new measures being used by Finney. The criticism of Finney during this meeting was directed only toward his methods and not his theology. The popularity and success of Finney resulted in the majority of ministers siding with Finney and rejecting

³¹William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 122.

³²Ibid., 122-24.

³³Ibid., 124-25.

the concerns of his opponents. After the meeting, Finney's popularity and influence grew dramatically among churches in the northeastern United States while the influence of his critics rapidly declined.³⁴

Finney has been recognized as a watershed figure in the history of American Christianity and is considered the founder of the evangelistic methods of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Moreover, the impact of Finney has led to the emergence of a new understanding of revival which places greater emphasis upon the role and decision of man in salvation and spiritual awakenings.³⁵

Although his theology and methodology were controversial, Finney's piety and devotion to Christ were admirable. According to Rogers,

Finney, one of the greatest evangelists who ever lived—a man who had such spiritual power that he could walk into a factory, and factory workers would fall under conviction of sin—Charles Grandison Finney, as a young man, filled with the Holy Spirit, was walking down the street when a prostitute approached him and looked him in the face about to make a proposition, and when she looked into the face of that holy man, she bowed her head and wept under conviction of sin. Charles Grandison Finney had more of the power of God upon him than most any man that's ever lived, but Finney, in his autobiography, said that, often, he would feel the absence of the Lord's power and withdraw himself for a day of fasting and prayer.³⁶

Similar to Rogers, John Mark Terry also mentioned that the reason for Finney's great evangelistic success may have been the many hours Finney spent in daily prayer.³⁷

Scholars estimate that during Finney's ministry five hundred thousand people made professions of faith in Jesus Christ.³⁸ In addition to an evangelist, Finney was also a social reformer. While Finney never put social reform above evangelism, he zealously

³⁴ Malcolm McDow and Alvin L. Reid, *FireFall: How God Has Shaped History through Revivals* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 242.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 244-45.

³⁶ Adrian Rogers, "The Hope for a Weary World," sermon transcript of a message on Eph 5:17 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, TN (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

³⁷ John Mark Terry, *Evangelism: A Concise History* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 147.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 146.

condemned slavery in his sermons as a grievous sin against God and promoted various social reforms wherever he preached.³⁹ When Finney led revival meetings in Rochester, New York, from September 1830 to June 1831, the revival reportedly transformed the social fabric of the city by linking conversion to Christ with temperance.⁴⁰ Finney's piety, social reforms, and evangelistic success resulted in him becoming an inspiration and model for other evangelists to follow. Furthermore, his employment of the "anxious seat" and his use of protracted meetings soon became common aspects of evangelistic preaching. Moreover, his godly character and success as an evangelistic preacher caused him to be a man whom Rogers respected and greatly esteemed.

D. L. Moody

Dwight L. Moody has been called the greatest revivalist of the nineteenth century.⁴¹ According to Rogers, "Dwight L. Moody was one of the greatest Christians and greatest preachers who ever lived."⁴² Although Moody was never ordained to the ministry, he has been recognized as one of the most effective and famous servants of Christ since the apostolic days. According to Bennett, Moody is also considered the evangelist who popularized and developed the crusade method of evangelistic preaching. Moreover, he was the first evangelist to introduce the use of music through the popular soloist Ira D. Sankey in his evangelistic campaigns. He was also the first evangelist to organize and train the laity for counseling those who responded to the invitation to meet in the inquirer's room.⁴³

³⁹C. E. Hambrick-Stowe, "Charles G. Finney," in *BDE*, ed. Timothy Larsen (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003), 227.

⁴⁰McDow and Reid, *FireFall*, 247-48.

⁴¹Terry, *Evangelism*, 147.

⁴²Adrian Rogers, "Liberated Living," sermon transcript of a message on Rom 6:1-19 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, TN (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

⁴³Bennett, *The Altar Call*, 144. See also McDow and Reid, *FireFall*, 266-71.

The sermons of Moody were both simplistic and evangelistic in their overall content. All of his messages have been summarized by a basic three point alliteration: ruined, redeemed and regenerated. First, Moody preached that all of mankind was totally depraved and ruined by the fall of Adam (Gen 3:1-6). Second, Moody preached the love of God which prompted God to provide redemption from sin by the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ on the cross. Third, he preached that Christians are regenerated by the Spirit of God when they repent of their sins and put their faith in Jesus Christ.⁴⁴ After the sermon, Moody gave an invitation that involved a request for those troubled or concerned about their spiritual condition to stand. Moody then invited those concerned about the welfare of their souls to meet with him in a nearby inquirer's room following each meeting of the crusade.⁴⁵

According to Lyle Dorsett, two catastrophic events molded and motivated Moody's life and ministry. The first event was the American Civil War. Dorsett asserts, "The war had been a school of practical theology for D. L. Moody. It presented him with endless opportunities to preach, and in those dirty, fly-infested, impersonal field hospitals he learned the delicate art of one-to-one personal counseling—and he learned to do it with urgency and compassion."⁴⁶ During the war, Moody served as a volunteer chaplain in the Union army camps. He was continually hearing the last words of dying soldiers after a battle. Likewise, he witnessed thousands of dead men lying on the battlefield and thousands more withering in agony and dying from their wounds in the field hospitals. His experiences during the war permeated Moody with a foreboding sense of death and urgency for salvation.⁴⁷

⁴⁴Terry, *Evangelism*, 152.

⁴⁵Bennett, *The Altar Call*, 141.

⁴⁶Lyle W. Dorsett, *A Passion for Souls* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997), 106-07.

⁴⁷Ibid.

The second crucial event in Moody's life was the great Chicago fire of 1871. On Sunday, October 8th, Moody preached at Farwell Hall. Moody did not ask the people attending the service to surrender to Christ after his sermon. Later that evening, Chicago was engulfed in flames that destroyed four square miles of the city. More than 1000 people perished in the fire, and over 100,000 people were homeless. Moody stated that the Chicago fire gave him a glimpse of what the Day of Judgment will be; consequently, he resolved that in the future he would always give an invitation for people to meet with him in an inquiry room immediately following his sermon.⁴⁸

After the Chicago fire, Moody devoted most of his time to itinerate evangelism. In 1873, Moody went to England where he also preached in Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. When Moody returned to America in 1875, he was internationally famous as an effective revival preacher. He conducted evangelistic crusades and meetings in large cities across the United States, Canada and Mexico for the next twenty-four years until his death on December 22, 1899. Records indicate that over one hundred million people heard Moody preach, and millions of them made a profession of faith in Christ. Millions more were reported to have had their faith and ministries encouraged by his messages and ministry.⁴⁹

Billy Sunday

Before his death, Moody had become acquainted with the young evangelist and former baseball player named Billy Sunday.⁵⁰ Born in 1862, Sunday was an orphan whose father died shortly after his birth of influenza while serving in the Union army during the American Civil War. At the age of ten, Sunday went to live in an orphanage

⁴⁸Ibid., 152.

⁴⁹Lyle W. Dorsett, "Moody, D. L.," in *BDE*, ed. Timothy Larsen (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 436-37.

⁵⁰Dorsett, *A Passion for Souls*, 390.

until he moved to Nevada, Iowa, where he attended school and worked as a stable boy and store clerk. In 1883, Sunday joined the National League Chicago White Stockings (Chicago Cubs) and played baseball in Chicago until 1887. He was converted after being confronted by a street preacher outside of a saloon in Chicago who invited Sunday to attend an evangelistic service at the Pacific Garden Mission where Sunday responded to an altar call, and gave his life to Christ.⁵¹

Following his conversion experience, Sunday began to read his Bible and became active at the YMCA in Chicago. He also became a lay-preacher and soon his love for preaching surpassed his love of baseball. Sunday decided to quit baseball and became an evangelist. In 1893, Sunday became the associate evangelist of J. Wilbur Chapman whom D. L. Moody had nurtured and mentored in the faith. In 1896, however, Chapman unexpectedly quit the evangelistic ministry and became the pastor of a large church in Philadelphia.⁵²

After Chapman left the evangelistic ministry, Sunday soon began receiving invitations to preach and he conducted his first crusade in Garner, Iowa, on January 7, 1896. Over the next twenty-five years Sunday became famous as the “baseball evangelist” and preached to large crowds of people in city-wide crusades across America. Sunday ultimately preached to over 100 million people and approximately one million responded to his invitations in which they were asked to walk the “sawdust trail” and commit their lives to Jesus Christ.⁵³

Unfortunately, Sunday was accountable to no one for his financial income and expenses. Moreover, he was often criticized for his flamboyant lifestyle, his Republican politics, his Arminian theology, and his unusual pulpit antics. In addition, his reputation

⁵¹Lyle W. Dorsett, “Sunday, William Ashley, Jr.” in *BDE*, ed. Timothy Larsen (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003), 651.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 652.

⁵³*Ibid.*

and life were eventually marred later in his ministry by family difficulties and tragedy. His oldest child and only daughter died early in life, and his three sons became drunkards and promiscuous. Although his popularity declined greatly after the 1920s, Sunday remained a recognized religious figure in America. He was viewed by many as a preacher who spoke the language of the common man. When he died in 1933, it was reported that nearly 20,000 people passed his casket at the Chicago's Moody Church.⁵⁴

Despite the criticism directed toward Sunday for his lack of financial accountability and unusual pulpit antics, Rogers admired Sunday as a great preacher and evangelist whom God used mightily to win lost souls for Christ. For example, in his sermon "Goodbye to Boasting," Rogers made reference to Sunday and his peculiar antics as an example of how God is able to use ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things. In his application of 1 Corinthians 1:17, Rogers exclaimed:

God uses common people. You may not have an IQ of a hundred and forty but God can use you. I think of Billy Sunday. Billy Sunday was the Billy Graham of his day. Billy Sunday was a former YMCA clerk and a baseball player. Billy Sunday held a mighty crusade here in Memphis, Tennessee, some years ago. Billy Sunday used slang language. He sometimes said ridiculous things. But it is said that he won over a million men to Jesus Christ. You say, "That's an exaggeration." Well then, let's say half a million. Any way you put it, God used Billy Sunday in a wonderful way.

When I was in seminary, the president of our seminary, Dr. R. Q. Level, who was a dear man of God, at New Orleans Seminary said, "I went to hear Billy Sunday preach when Billy Sunday was in his heyday." He said, "Billy Sunday got up there and did all of these antics and he did all of these kind of foolish things but then he began to preach hell's hot, heaven's sweet, sin's black, judgment's sure, and Jesus saves. And the power of God fell on that place and he called it hitting the sawdust trail. He gave an invitation and people streamed forward to give their hearts to Jesus." Dr. Level said, "I was at the front." He said, "I was amazed at what was happening." He said, "Among those who came forward was an old man with a long flowing white beard." He said, "Billy Sunday was mesmerized by that beard. He couldn't take his eyes off that beard. During the invitation, souls were getting saved, people were weeping at the altar, but Sunday was taken with that beard."

Finally, during the invitation, Billy Sunday went over there and kneeled down and grabbed that man by the beard and went "honk, honk." Can you imagine that? Can you imagine that, during an invitation when souls are getting saved? You say,

⁵⁴Ibid., 653.

“Well, God could not use a man like that.” God did use a man like that and Dr. Smell Fungus and Dr. Tinkling Brass can’t figure it out. How could God use a man like that? But God took a Billy Sunday; somebody called him, his biographer called him, God’s joke on the ministry. God uses the intellectually common.⁵⁵

Rogers considered Sunday as one of his heroes, and even exclaimed, “Billy Sunday was a great, great preacher of the Word of God. He’s one of my heroes, and one of my favorite old-time preachers.”⁵⁶

Billy Graham

Just a few months after the death of Sunday, another evangelist by the name of Mordecai Ham was conducting an evangelic campaign near Charlotte, North Carolina, in which a young farm boy by the name of Billy Graham responded to an invitation and walked the “sawdust trail” and received Christ.⁵⁷ Graham was born November 7, 1918. After his conversion, at the age of sixteen, he became active in an Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church near his home. Like Billy Sunday, Graham loved to play baseball and even considered becoming a profession player while in high school, but as he neared graduation his attention turned to full-time Christian ministry. At the encouragement of his parents, Graham enrolled and attended Bob Jones College which was then located in Cleveland, Tennessee.⁵⁸

Graham attended Bob Jones College for only one semester. After he left Bob Jones College, he attended the Florida Bible Institute in Tampa, Florida. In 1939, he was baptized and ordained as a Southern Baptist minister. Following his education in Florida, Graham attended Wheaton College in Illinois. He graduated from Wheaton in 1943, with

⁵⁵Adrian Rogers, “Goodbye to Boasting,” sermon transcript of a message on 1 Cor 1:18–29 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, TN (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

⁵⁶Adrian Rogers, “New Time Religion,” sermon transcript of a message on: Rev 21:5 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, TN (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

⁵⁷Terry, *Evangelism*, 165.

⁵⁸Keith J. Hardman, *Seasons of Refreshing: Evangelism and Revival in America* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 249.

a degree in anthropology. While at Wheaton, he met Ruth Bell whom he married in August of that year.⁵⁹

After graduating from Wheaton College, Graham spent the next five years crisscrossing the United States organizing Youth for Christ chapters and preaching in youth rallies. Cliff Barrows worked with Graham in several of these rallies, and later became the song leader for Graham's evangelistic crusades. In 1949, Graham conducted his first major evangelistic crusade in Los Angeles, California. This crusade gave Graham national attention as an evangelist, and the next year he organized the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association with its headquarters located in Minneapolis, Minnesota.⁶⁰ By the end of the twentieth century, Graham had preached to more people than any other evangelist in history.⁶¹

According to Terry, "Billy Graham has provided a model for evangelist and leaders of evangelical ministries. His character and integrity are above reproach. . . . He is without question the elder statesman of American evangelicals."⁶² Despite Graham's phenomenal success during his career as an evangelist and his unblemished reputation, he has had several critics of his ministry. For example, he has been attacked by numerous fundamentalist groups for associating with Roman Catholics and liberal Protestants. Additionally, he was criticized in 1988, for not addressing human rights violations when preaching in China. He has been mostly criticized; however, by Calvinists for his belief that people may make a decision for Christ in the same tradition as Finney, Sunday, and Moody.⁶³

⁵⁹L. W. Dorsett, "Graham, William Franklin, 'Billy,'" in *BDE*, ed Timothy Larsen (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003), 260.

⁶⁰Terry, *Evangelism*, 166-67.

⁶¹Dorsett, "Graham," 262.

⁶²Terry, *Evangelism*, 169.

⁶³Dorsett, "Graham," 262.

Similar to these three evangelists, Graham employed a public invitation at the conclusion of his sermons and defended its use as a biblical methodology of inviting lost sinners to receive Christ. According to Graham, “The evangelistic invitation is valid for at least two reasons: First, it is valid because the gospel demands a decision; and second, it is valid because it is illustrated repeatedly in the Bible.”⁶⁴

According to Streett, an examination of the public invitations given by Graham over the years appears to indicate an evolution in the methodology by which he invited people to receive Christ. Despite this evolution, Streett also observed that Graham’s invitations always extended an appeal for his listeners to respond immediately to the gospel message. Streett remarked,

Billy Graham originally issued a progressive style invitation. His call for sinners to repent and believe included three essential elements. First, he asked that all heads be bowed. Next those who wished to repent and believe were to raise their hands. Finally, he called for all who had raised their hands to leave their seats and come forward, while those who remained seated kept their heads bowed in prayer.⁶⁵

Those who responded to Graham’s invitation were ushered to a room or tent for counseling, prayer, and follow-up information. According to Streett, Graham used this “progressive invitation” method in the 1950s.⁶⁶

Streett notes that Graham no longer extended a progressive type of invitation by the early 1960s, but began giving a single one-step invitation. According to Streett, after Graham finished preaching he simply exhorted listeners to leave their seats and make their way to the platform. Once he gave the invitation to come forward, Graham would step back with his arms folded and head bowed while the choir sang the familiar hymn, “Just as I Am.” At the close of the invitation, Graham addressed the inquirers

⁶⁴Billy Graham “The Evangelist’s Appeal for Decision,” in *The Calling of an Evangelist: The Second International Congress for Itinerant Evangelists, Amsterdam, The Netherlands*, 2nd ed., ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1986), 171.

⁶⁵Streett, *The Effective Invitation*, 112.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 112-13.

standing around the podium and then had them paired off with counselors who provided literature and follow-up material.⁶⁷

Rogers knew Graham personally and considered Graham to be a close friend. For example, in one sermon, Rogers acknowledged: “I have the privilege of knowing Billy Graham and I’ve been in Billy Graham’s house and eaten with Billy and Ruth in their home. I’ve had Billy in programs where I have presided, and I’ve spoken with him in programs. I love Billy Graham.”⁶⁸ Rogers also viewed Graham as a personal mentor. In his biography, Rogers said: “I hold Billy Graham as a hero and am grateful to call him my friend.”⁶⁹ When Rogers was a freshman in college, he first heard Graham preaching on a local radio station. He was so impressed with Graham’s message that when he learned Graham would be speaking at a nearby factory, Rogers drove several hours to hear and meet the young evangelist. Moreover, when Rogers returned home later that day, he told his wife, Joyce, that he wanted to preach and give an invitation with the same passion and clarity of Graham.⁷⁰

Although Graham may have had the greatest impact upon the evangelistic preaching of Rogers, it is clear that Rogers respected and admired Finney, Moody, and Sunday as well as Graham. All four of these evangelists utilized some form of the public invitation as a part of their own evangelistic methodology. Consequently, it is evident that each of these four men most likely influenced and contributed to the evangelistic invitation employed by Rogers in his evangelistic preaching ministry at Bellevue Baptist Church.

⁶⁷Ibid., 113-14.

⁶⁸Adrian Rogers, “How to Measure a Man,” sermon transcript of a message on Acts 20:17–38 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, TN (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

⁶⁹Rogers, quoted in Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 124.

⁷⁰Joyce Rogers, interview, February 24, 2012.

Characteristics of Rogers' Invitation

Rogers readily admitted that he did not prepare his sermon's invitation as he did the other elements of his message; rather he gave the altar call extemporaneously. For example, Rogers explained, "I do not prepare my invitations like the rest of the sermon. I have three or four varieties of the invitation that I use and feel natural in giving the invitation without much preparation. I depend upon the inspiration of the moment rather than upon preparation for the delivery of the invitation."⁷¹ Regardless of his lack of preparation, the invitations of Rogers were still well structured and persuasive. Again, concerning the invitation Rogers explained, "In delivering an invitation, I first desire to tell the congregation what to do, then inform them what the staff will do. After this I tell them what they can say when they come forward. Finally, I give them a word of encouragement."⁷² In a lecture given a few months before his death, Rogers identified ten characteristics of an effective evangelistic invitation. According to Rogers, an effective evangelistic invitation should be given courageously, clearly, concisely, cooperatively, convincingly, consistently, creatively, compassionately, convictionally, and celebratively.

Give the Invitation Courageously

When explaining how a pastor ought to give an invitation, Rogers exclaimed, "Be courageous when you give the invitation."⁷³ Rogers contended that the reason many pastors do not give an invitation is because they are fearful that no one will respond, and the lack of response will cause the congregation to assume that the pastor has somehow failed in his preaching ministry. Another reason, according to Rogers, is the pastor is fearful of criticism from others who do not agree with giving a public invitation after the

⁷¹Rogers, quoted in Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 206.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Rogers, "The Sermon's Invitation," disc 7, session 10.

sermon.⁷⁴ Rogers fails to mention, however, that many pastors probably do give an invitation because of their theology more so than anxiety. Rogers, nevertheless, fervently contended that those pastors who give an altar call at the close of their message should do so courageously and without apology.

Similar to Rogers, Roy Fish explained that the invitation, when given, should be done so with authority. According to Fish,

There is no reason for apology in extending an invitation. We're inviting people to accept a quality of life they could never find anywhere else. The most sensible thing one could do would be to respond to our offer to receive Christ. The invitation should be given authoritatively. I have marveled at times as I have observed Billy Graham extending an invitation. You get the impression that he is almost ordering people to repent and believe. But why shouldn't he and why shouldn't we? We have the authority of heaven behind us when we call men to repentance. A note of authority or a lack of it is one of the keys to a successful ministry and one of our worse failures in giving an invitation. As we invite men to break with the old life, a life which to many is a life of degradation, emptiness, and bondage, we are calling them to a life of freedom, forgiveness, and newness in Christ. With authority and without apology it should be done.⁷⁵

No doubt the impression Fish expressed regarding the public invitations of Graham also made a similar impression on Rogers. Consequently, Rogers advocated, like Fish, that the invitation should be given courageously and with authority.

Give the Invitation Clearly

Secondly, Rogers warned that an invitation should only be given when the gospel has clearly been presented to the congregation. Rogers decried,

You know, there are a lot of preachers who think they have preached the gospel and they haven't preached the gospel. They may preach a Bible message. It may be pertinent. It may be applicable, and all that, but it's not a gospel message. What is the gospel? First Corinthians 15, Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He was raised again the third day. That's the gospel. Always get the gospel into a sermon, somehow, somewhere. It doesn't matter what you're preaching on. Preaching on tithing; you say, "Well, listen, you know, God doesn't want what you have; He wants you. And Jesus came to this earth to save you, and He suffered, bled, and died on the cross. And He was buried, and He rose again. And the Bible

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Fish, "Preparing for Invitations in a Revival Meeting," 96.

says if you'll trust Him, He will save you." Get the gospel into whatever you're doing. It's so very important that you are very clear.⁷⁶

Likewise, when preaching the gospel, Rogers also contended that it is best to start with the love of God and then begin to address the sinfulness of man and the need of man for forgiveness through faith in Christ.⁷⁷

Rogers believed that the clearest method for inviting people to receive Christ was to lead them in the sinner's prayer. Rogers usually invited people, during the invitation, to pray with him by saying,

You know, God loves you so much He wants to save you. And, friend, salvation is a gift of God. Jesus bought it for you when He died upon that cross and shed His blood for you. If you would like to know the Lord Jesus Christ and know that every sin is forgiven, and know that God is in your heart to live in you, and you want to know that when you die you're going to heaven, I want to invite you to pray a prayer like this with me: "Dear God," That's right. Just go ahead and say it. "Dear God. I know that I'm a sinner." Pray it, pray it, sir, and mean it. "I know that I'm a sinner. My sin deserves judgment, but I want mercy. Jesus, you died to save me and you promised to save me if I would only trust you. I do trust you. I believe you're the Son of God. I believe you paid my sin debt with your blood on the cross. I believe that God raised you from the dead. I believe you will save me if I will trust you, and I do trust you. Right now, this moment, with all of my heart, like a little child, I trust you. Come into my life, Lord Jesus. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me, Jesus."

Friend, pray that. Did you ask Him? Pray it from your heart. "Save me, Lord Jesus." Did you ask Him to do it? Wonderful! Now by faith I want you to pray this way: "Lord, thank You for doing it. I don't deserve it. I receive it as a gift of your love. I don't ask for a feeling. I don't look for a sign. I just stand on your Word. Thank You, Jesus, for saving me." And now begin, "Lord Jesus, make me the person you want me to be. And, Lord Jesus, help me never to be ashamed of you because you died for me. Lord Jesus, give me the courage this morning to make this public. Thank You for doing it. And I will obey you, in your holy name. Amen."⁷⁸

By utilizing this form of the sinner's prayer, Rogers insisted that he has explained the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, if not in his sermon, then in his invitation and prayer.⁷⁹ Apparently, Rogers would contend that even a sermon that is not

⁷⁶Rogers, "The Sermon's Invitation," disc 7, session 10.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Adrian Rogers, quoted in Dudit, Michael, "Preaching and Church Growth: An Interview with Adrian Rogers," *Preaching* 15 (May-June 2000): 6.

evangelistic in its content may be evangelistic if the invitation of the sermon provided a clear and persuasive explanation of the gospel.

Following the sinner's prayer, Rogers maintained that it is also important for the pastor to tell the people responding to the invitation exactly what he wishes for them to do in coming forward and making a public profession of faith. He also believed it was important to explain what the people responding to the invitation can expect when they do come forward. Again Rogers illustrated this point by sharing what he usually says when giving an invitation:

“Now, folks, in a moment, we're going to stand and sing a hymn that we call an invitational hymn. Standing at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front will be a man of God to welcome you, a minister of this church.”

Now, if you're in a small church, you don't have that many ministers. But I don't say a counselor. If I didn't have a minister, I would say a friend or a man of God to welcome you. I don't say a counselor. Some people think, well, if you're coming to a counselor, you've got to go spill your guts and tell your life story, and all that, and that's not what it's about.

[Next] I say, “There'll be a friend to welcome you. And I want you to just step out and come.” [Someone may say], “Well, pastor, I've never done that before. What will I say when I go down there?” “Well, you prayed and asked Christ to come into your heart, didn't you? Just tell that man, ‘I'm trusting Jesus.’”

I'll give them something to say because they may not know what to say. And then, [I will say], “Well, pastor, then what will happen?” Well, number one, we'll rejoice. Number two; we'll give you some Scripture to stand on. Number three, we'll answer any questions we can answer. And number four, we'll seal it with you in prayer. It'll take just a few moments. It will shame the devil; it will give you joy; it will give God glory. Don't look around to see what anyone else is going to do. As soon as we begin to sing, you step out. This church is praying for you. We love you. This can be the greatest thing you've ever done [which] is to acknowledge Christ as your personal Savior. I want you to know walking this aisle doesn't save you. A carpeted aisle can't save anybody. Shaking a man's hand can't save you. But what it indicates saves you, that you're not ashamed of Jesus. Because Jesus said, ‘If you're ashamed of me, I'll be ashamed of you.’”

[Someone may say], “Well, pastor, how do I know if I really trusted Him?” “Well, are you willing to confess Him? Now that shows that you really mean business. Let's stand and sing. You be the first one down the aisle to say yes to Christ.”⁸⁰

⁸⁰Rogers, “The Sermon's Invitation,” disc 7, session 10.

Rogers admitted that he did not give an invitation exactly the same way after every sermon, but he did comment that most of his invitations did contain some of the same components given in the above example.

Give the Invitation Concisely

According to Rogers, a typical invitation should only take a few minutes to deliver. He also emphasized that it is important always to schedule enough time at the end of a sermon for people to respond. As long as people are still responding, Rogers said the pastor should prolong the service until everyone stops coming forward. Additionally, Rogers believed the pastor should start to give the invitation before he begins the sermon. According to Rogers, at the start of the worship service he will tell the congregation, “Well, we want to welcome you today to our services. We’re so glad that you’re here. And if you have already made the wonderful discovery of knowing Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, we rejoice in that. If you have not yet come to the place where you can clearly say, ‘I know that I know that I have a personal relationship with God through Christ,’ it’s our prayer before this service ends you’ll be able to say that. And just thank you for being here.”⁸¹ Rogers explained that Graham follows a similar pattern of beginning his meetings and messages with an invitation and then repeating the invitation several times throughout his sermon.⁸² Consequently, Rogers believed that the invitation should be given repeatedly throughout the service and concisely at the close of the service.

Give the Invitation Convincingly

Rogers argued that the invitation must be given with a sense of urgency and expectancy. Although Rogers recognized the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit in

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Ibid.

bringing people to Christ; nevertheless, he also insisted that the New Testament demonstrates that the first preachers of the gospel persuasively and urgently compelled the unconverted to come to Christ immediately for salvation.⁸³ Rogers declared, “Friends, you need to have a sense of urgency when you preach, and always the word is now! And you need to be positive when you stand up and say, ‘Now let us stand and sing. God bless you as you come.’”⁸⁴ Rogers believed that until people respond affirmatively to Jesus as Savior and Lord then they are living in rebellion to God and are in danger of the judgment of God and becoming eternally separated from God in hell. Consequently, Rogers appealed that people not be allowed to leave the church’s worship service without being confronted with the importance of making a decision to receive or reject Christ.

Give the Invitation Cooperatively

Rogers often viewed the ministry of the church as a team effort that involved both the staff and laity. Likewise, he saw the successful invitation as a team effort that involved the pastor and the congregation. As a result, Rogers believed it was important to ask the congregation to pray for those who needed to respond to the invitation. He also stated that the pastor should often instruct the congregation on the importance of the invitation and the necessity of prayer in reaching the unconverted. Rogers explained,

Let the entire church participate in the invitation. . . . Teach your members how to pray during the invitation. Satan never gives up anybody without a fight. And there are strongholds that have to be broken: strongholds of procrastination and pride and fear. Teach your people to pray during the invitation so that power comes down. As the song says, “All is vain unless the Spirit of the Holy One comes down.” And

⁸³Rogers bases his argument on Acts 2:40 where the Bible explains that on the Day of Pentecost, Peter made an appeal “. . . with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this untoward generation.’” Rogers also bases his argument on Luke 14:23 where Jesus said “Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.” Finally, he referenced 2 Cor 5:11 when Paul said, “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.” Although Rogers did not believe in prolonging a service or manipulating his audience, he did believe it was important to persuade people and even to plea with them to make a decision for Christ before they leave the worship service.

⁸⁴Rogers, “The Sermon’s Invitation,” disc 7, session 10.

commend your congregation after the invitation. Thank them. Many times I'll say, "Oh, people, let me thank you for your faithfulness and your prayerfulness during this invitation time. I love you so much."⁸⁵

According to Rogers, the mark of a great church is that the members care about people and desire to see the unconverted come to Christ just as much as the pastor.

Give the Invitation Consistently

There are several methods for giving an invitation. For example, Streett identifies five different methods: the altar call, the after meeting, the special appointment, the invitation card, and the special class meeting.⁸⁶ Although Rogers habitually used the altar call as his method of inviting people to Christ, he acknowledged that, regardless of the method, the pastor should give an invitation consistently at every service. Again Rogers demanded, "Now there are varied ways, and you don't always have to do like I do, but somehow, somehow be consistent, and give an invitation."⁸⁷ Furthermore, he persisted, "Don't wait for the revival meeting in July and August to invite people to Christ. Do it week-by-week, and daily, if you can, so the Lord is adding to the church daily such as should be saved."⁸⁸ Rogers followed this advice and consistently gave an invitation after almost every weekly service at Bellevue Baptist Church whether it was Sunday morning, evening, or Wednesday night.

Give the Invitation Creatively

Rogers was not opposed to new and creative methods of inviting people to come to Christ. As a matter of fact, he encouraged it. When asked about the importance of making a public profession of faith, Rogers explained, "There's nothing in the Bible about walking an aisle in a church. The real profession of faith in the Bible is what? It's

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Streett, *The Effective Invitation*, 170-72.

⁸⁷Rogers, "The Sermon's Invitation," disc 7, session 10.

⁸⁸Ibid.

baptism. It's baptism. That's when you're really professing your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is when you're baptized."⁸⁹ Thus, Rogers was not so much an advocate of the altar call as much as an advocate of urgently persuading people to make a decision for Christ.

Give the Invitation Compassionately

During the Second Great Awakening, one of the criticisms made against some of the revivalists like Finney and others was their excessive use of emotionalism.⁹⁰ While Rogers was not an advocate of excessive displays of emotions, he did contend that the invitation should be given with a deep sense of compassion and concern over the lost souls of men and women. Rogers explained, "Don't be afraid of tears. There are times when I'm preaching and the tears will come. There are times when I get up to give an invitation and the tears come unbidden. I never try for crocodile tears, but I feel so deeply about what I'm saying that tears will come because I know we're dealing with eternal destiny. Read the Bible. Jesus wept. Paul wept. May the things that break the heart of God break our heart, and be compassionate for lost people."⁹¹ Indeed, Rogers often demonstrated a great deal of compassion and concern for the spiritual welfare of men and women both in his message and his invitation. Although he did not habitually display tears during every sermon or invitation, he did occasionally weep over the lost souls of people while pleading for them to come forward and be saved.⁹²

Give the Invitation Convictionally

According to Rogers, conviction is the work of the Holy Spirit; therefore, the preacher needs to be filled with the Spirit in order to prick the hearts of men with the

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Terry, *Evangelism*, 122.

⁹¹Rogers, "The Sermon's Invitation," disc 7, session 10.

⁹²See "Come to Jesus," video played at the memorial service for Adrian Rogers, www.youtube.com/watch?v=84tmxMiNRhE (accessed January 17, 2013).

truth of God’s Word. When discussing the preacher’s dependence upon the Holy Spirit, Rogers has stated that effective evangelistic preaching mandates a complete dependence on the Holy Spirit on the part of the gospel preacher. Moreover, Rogers even professed, “I believe a preacher should never enter the pulpit without the anointing of the Holy Spirit. I had rather die than preach without the anointing of the Holy Spirit.”⁹³ Rogers believed both the sermon and invitation must be given in the power of God’s Spirit in order to bring about a conviction of sin that may lead to conversion.

Give the Invitation Celebratively

Finally, Rogers exhorted pastors to rejoice with those who respond to the invitation. He exclaimed, “There ought to be a great celebration when souls come to the Lord Jesus Christ in our church. After I give an invitation and people come, I say to the congregation, ‘Let’s rejoice with these who’ve come this morning. Praise the Lord. Amen.’ And people begin to rejoice, and sometimes even shout. The happiest time in our churches ought to be when newborn babes are coming into the family of God.”⁹⁴ Rogers believed that there should be rejoicing in the church every time someone responds to the invitation just as there is “rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:10 NIV). According to Rogers, an invitation given with these ten elements will enable the pastor to be more evangelistic in his preaching ministry, and encourage the members of the church to be more excited about evangelism and more involved in the church’s outreach ministry.

Examples of Rogers’ Invitations

Unfortunately, most of the recorded sermons of Rogers used in this study did not contain the invitation at the end of the sermon; nevertheless, forty of the sermons

⁹³Rogers, quoted in Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 157.

⁹⁴Rogers, “The Sermon’s Invitation,” disc 7, session 10.

used in this study did contain most if not the entire invitation.⁹⁵ In addition, Rogers had stated that there were three or four variations of the invitation he employed in his preaching; however, only two persistent patterns emerged out of the sermons used for this study. In one pattern, Rogers utilized a progressive style of the altar call similar to that employed by Billy Graham during his earlier crusades, and in the second pattern Rogers employed a one-step invitation that centered upon the use of the sinner's prayer.

The Progressive Invitation

Typically when Rogers ended his sermon he would ask the members of his congregation to bow their heads and close their eyes for prayer. He would then ask a question or make a transitional statement in order to introduce the invitation. He usually extended the invitation from the podium while standing to the right or left of the pulpit. Sometimes, however, he would step down from the platform, and give the invitation from the floor level. According to Rogers, stepping down to the floor level allowed people to

⁹⁵Sermons that did contain the invitation of Rogers are "The Battle for Your Mind," a sermon on 2 Cor 10:3-11; "The Bible Believing Church," a sermon on Matt 5:17-18; "Christian Warfare," a sermon on Eph 6:10-26; "A Christian Worldview," a sermon on 1 Pet 3:10-15; "The Church of Jesus Christ," a sermon on Matt 16:13-18; "Dads Who Shoot Straight," a sermon on Ps 127; "Does a Loving God Believe in Capital Punishment?" a sermon on Rom 13:1-7; "Faithful in Stewardship," a sermon on Mal 3:7-12; "Faithful Stewardship," a sermon on Luke 16:1-13; "Families that Choose Life," a sermon on Exod 20:1-13; "Freedom from the Poison of Perfection," a sermon on Gal 3:1-3; "Goodbye to Boasting," a sermon on 1 Cor 1:18-29; "The Hope for a Weary World," a sermon on Eph 5:17; "How to Behave in a Cave," a sermon on 1 Sam 24:1-7; "How to Deal with Depression," a sermon on Ps 42; "How to Discover Your Spiritual Gift," a sermon on Rom 12:1-6; "How to Measure a Man," a sermon on Acts 20:17-38; "How to Overcome Temptation," a sermon on Luke 4:1-12; "How to Praise Your Way to Victory," a sermon on 2 Chr 20:1-12; "How to Stand When You Do not Understand," a sermon on Job 1:6-18; "It's Prayer Time in America," a sermon on 2 Chr 7:14; "Let's Just Praise the Lord," a sermon on 1 Chr 16:29; "Let the Fires Fall," a sermon on 1 Kgs 18:1-39; "Liberated Living," a sermon on Rom 6:1-19; "A Magnificent Mother," a sermon on 1 Sam 1; "Pass the Salt," a sermon on Lev 2:11-13; "A Philosophy to Live By," a sermon on Phil 1:21; "Predestine for Hell? Absolutely Not," a sermon on Rom 9:1-10; "The Principle of Prosperity," a sermon on Eccl 11:1-10; "Principles of Power," a sermon on Acts 2:1-4; "Real Salvation," a sermon on 1 John 3:1-9; "Rivers of Revival," a sermon on Ezek 47: 1-12; "Same Sex Marriage and the Word of God," a sermon transcript on Matt 19:1-6; "Seven Words that Can Build a Marriage," a sermon on 1 Pet 3:1-7; "The Sin of Sodom and the Spirit of the World," a sermon on Gen 13:1-11; "Soul Winners Six Mighty Motivation," a sermon on 2 Cor 5:9-20; "There Is Nothing too Difficult for God," a sermon on Jer 32:17; "What Is a Great Church?" a sermon on Acts 4:33; "What Is the Gospel?" a sermon on 1 Cor 15:1-4; "What Is Wrong with Gambling?" a sermon on Acts 19:21-32; "What You Can Expect," a sermon on Matt 13; "When Bankruptcy Is a Blessing," a sermon on Matt 5:1-9; "Why I Reject Evolution," a sermon on Col 1:12-17; "The Word of God," a sermon on 1 Pet 1:23-25.

see him more personal and approachable which he believed also made people feel more comfortable in coming forward.⁹⁶

The following is an example of one of the progressive invitations given by Rogers from his sermon: “The Soul Winner’s Six Mighty Motivations.” The focus of this sermon was upon the characteristics of a soul-winning Christian; however, after Rogers concludes the message he made a transition during the closing prayer from the message to the invitation by giving his own testimony. In this example, Rogers gave the following directions to the congregation:

Bow your heads in prayer. Would you pray right now, Lord God, give me the same kind of motivation that Paul had?

I was in a Bible conference, when I was a young Christian, in Ridgecrest, North Carolina. I’d not been saved very long at all, but I remember the service. I was in the balcony, and the speaker spoke on soul winning. And then, he said, “How many of you will endeavor to win a soul to Christ this year?” I lifted my hand, and God put me on the pathway of being a soul winner. I want to ask you a question: How many of you, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, would say, Lord Jesus, I am already a soul winner, or I want to be one? Would you lift your hand? I’m already a soul winner, or I want to be one. Hold it up a minute. Hold it up till it hurts. Don’t take it down. I want you to pray this: Lord Jesus, help this not to be an idle boast. You see my hand. Move my heart.

Take your hands down. Now, if you are here today and you’re unsaved—you say, “Pastor, my soul must be important, if people will do this to get people like myself saved.” And, that is true—would you like to be saved? To be saved means that every sin is forgiven, buried in the grave of God’s forgetfulness. To be saved means that God lives in your heart through the Holy Spirit. To be saved means that, one day, you’re going to heaven. And, you can only imagine how great heaven is. Would you like to be saved? Would you pray this prayer, remembering, as you pray, that salvation is a gift—you can’t earn it; you’ll never deserve it—pray this prayer: Dear God, I need to be saved, and I want to be saved. Jesus, you shed your blood on the cross to pay my sin debt. Thank you for doing that, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus. Thank you. Now, Lord Jesus, you promised to save me, if I would trust you. I do trust you, right now, this moment, where I am in this seat, now, now, I trust you to save me. I’m not looking for a feeling. I’m not asking for a sign. And, I’m standing on your Word. No matter how I feel, I trust you to save me. Thank you for doing it. I receive it by faith, and that settles it. You’re now my Lord, my Savior, my Master, my God, and my King. I love you, Jesus. Thank you for keeping your Word, for you said, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Thank you, Jesus, for saving me.

⁹⁶Michael Pete Montalbano, “A Critical Comparison of the Preaching of Robert G. Lee, Ramsey Pollard, and Adrian Rogers” (Th.D. diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993), 151.

Now, I want you to pray this prayer: Lord Jesus, because you have saved me help me never to be ashamed of you, and give me the courage to make it public. In Your name I pray.⁹⁷

At this point in the invitation, the choir and congregation would usually begin to sing a hymn as Rogers beckoned, “Come to Jesus!” Also during the start of the invitation, several members of the ministerial staff and deacons filtered down to the front of the congregation in order to meet with those who responded to the invitation.⁹⁸

Unlike Graham’s progressive invitation, in which he asked those wishing to receive Christ to raise their hands, Rogers usually asked those who already know Christ and are Christians to raise their hands. In the preceding example, Rogers asked those who were soul winners or who wished to be soul winners to raise their hands. Typically, however, Rogers will ask, “How many today can say, ‘Pastor Rogers, I know for certain that if I died today, then I would go straight to heaven.’ Would you hold your hand up as a testimony and hold it up for a moment?”⁹⁹ After telling everyone to lower their hands, Rogers then turns his attention to those who did not raise their hands, and asks them if they would like to be saved and become a Christian.

Next, Rogers usually invites those who did not raise their hands to say a prayer with him. The sinner’s prayer used by Rogers usually contained five parts. First, there is an acknowledgment of sin on the part of the person praying. Second, there is a confession of faith that Christ died for the sins of those praying. Third, there is a request of God’s forgiveness of sin and a reception of salvation as a gift of God. Fourth, there is an expression of gratitude for salvation that has just been requested and received by the

⁹⁷Adrian Rogers, “Soul Winners Six Mighty Motivation,” sermon transcript of a message on 2 Cor 5:9-20 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, TN, 19 June 1983 (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

⁹⁸Randall Balmer, “Churchgoing: Bellevue Baptist Church near Memphis.” *The Christian Century* (5 May 1993): 486.

⁹⁹Adrian Rogers, “When Bankruptcy Is a Blessing,” sermon transcript of a message on Matt 5:1-9 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, TN, 26 July 1992 (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

individuals praying. Fifth, there is a request for courage or boldness to make one's decision public during the altar call.¹⁰⁰

Of the forty sermons used in this study that contain an altar call, 20 percent used this progressive method. Rogers used this method both during morning and evening services. The earliest sermon to use this type of altar call was preached in 1983, and the latest was preached in 2005. Finally, two of the examples also contained an invitation for baptism and church membership while the other examples only addressed the need for salvation.

The One-Step Invitation

The majority of the invitations examined in this study used a one-step method that centered upon the use of the sinner's prayer. Similar to the progressive invitation, Rogers began the one-step invitation by first asking everyone in the congregation to bow for prayer. The following example is taken from the sermon, "The Word of God." In this one-step method, Rogers gave the following instructions:

While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, friend this is the Word of the King, not the word of the preacher, but the Word of the King, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. If you want to be saved, I want to help you to get saved right now. Would you just pray right now this prayer? If you're not absolutely certain that you're saved, you might be like I was on that street corner and you want to get it settled. [In the conclusion of the sermon, Rogers gave his testimony of praying to receive Christ on a street corner in order to remove any doubts he had about his own salvation.] Why don't you pray this way?

"Dear God, I know that you love me and I know that you want to save me. Jesus, you died to save me. You promised to save me if I would trust you. I do trust you. I confess that I'm a sinner. I confess that my sins deserve judgment but I need mercy. I want to be saved. Thank you, Jesus, for paying for my sin. Thank you. Thank you that you took my sin to the cross. Thank you, Lord. I believe that God raised you from the dead and now by faith, I trust you. I receive you into my heart as my Lord and Savior once and for all, now and forever. And Lord, because you died for me, I'll live for you. And help me never ever to be ashamed of you. Give

¹⁰⁰According to Jim Elliff, the typical sinner's prayer used in connection with the public invitation has three elements: (1) an acknowledgement of sin, (2) a confession of belief in the act of Christ's death for sin, and (3) an inviting of Christ into one's life. See Jim Elliff, "Closing with Christ," Christian Communicators Worldwide (1999), http://www.ccwto day.org/article_views.asp?article_id=52 (accessed January 7, 2013).

me the courage to make this public, in your Holy name I pray, Amen.”

Now, look up here. If you prayed that prayer, listen; don't gather your books just look at me. If you prayed that prayer or you want to pray that prayer and you need some more help, I'm going to ask you to do something very wonderful. I'm going to ask you to do something that will settle it and seal it. I'm going to ask you to leave your seat and come forward. The Bible says, “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.” Jesus said, “If you'll confess me before men, I'll confess you before my Father in heaven.” Walking a church aisle doesn't save you but what it indicates is what saves you. That you trust Jesus, and you're not ashamed of him. For the Scripture says when we believe on him, we'll not be ashamed of him.

There will be a minister standing at the head of each of these aisles. There will be a minister standing along in that broad aisle way up in the balcony. We're going to sing a little song that says Lord, I believe, Lord I receive, Lord I confess you now. You believe, you receive, you confess. And so, when we stand and sing and if you prayed and asked Christ to come into your heart, I want you to leave your seat and come forward. Or, if you still need some guidance and help, we've got an open Bible. I want you to come and tell the minister that you're trusting Christ or that you need some more help, but you want to trust him. And what we want to do is give you some Scripture to stand on and seal it in prayer. It'll take a few moments but they'll be glorious moments.

If you're in the balcony you needn't come all the way down here, there'll be a minister up there, just go tell him, “I'm trusting Jesus or I want to be saved.” Put it in your own words, he'll know why you're coming. And don't let the crowd bother you. All these people, most of them have already done what they're praying you will do. They'll rejoice when you come, I promise you.

Others of you today, have been saved; some of you for a long time, but you've never had believer's baptism. You ought to come and say, I want to make an appointment for my baptism; I want to be baptized in obedience to Jesus and added to the membership of this church. Others of you may want to come transferring your membership from another church. You want to come and say, “I want to place my membership here.” From all over the building, I want you to come as soon as we stand. Don't look around to see what someone else is going to do. Let's stand together.¹⁰¹

In this invitation, like the previous example, Rogers asked those who are not saved to repeat a sinner's prayer with him. Out of the forty invitations used in this study, Rogers utilized the sinner's prayer thirty-eight times. In the second example, Rogers addressed the issue of baptism and church membership. Overall, he addressed the issue of baptism and church membership in 25 percent of the invitations used in this study. Finally, unlike the first example, Rogers gave detailed instructions in the second example as to what those responding to the invitation may expect when they come forward. Such instructions were found in 17 percent of the invitations in this study.

¹⁰¹Adrian Rogers, “The Word of God,” sermon transcript of a message on Heb 4:12 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, TN, 17 February 1991 (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

Overall, both the progressive and one-step invitation methods were used by Rogers in the morning and evening services. Likewise, both patterns were used over the thirty-two year span of Rogers' ministry at Bellevue Baptist Church. Finally, all the invitations used in this study communicated a sense of great compassion and concern for the salvation of those in the audience by Rogers.

Evaluation of Rogers' Invitations

In evaluating the invitations of Rogers, some of the criticisms given by its opponents will be used to determine the appropriateness of the altar calls employed by Rogers in his preaching ministry. In an article by Jim Ehrhard entitled, "The Dangers of the Invitation System," Ehrhard identified five potential problems with the altar call. These five potential dangers are: (1) The danger of promoting something that is not in Scripture, (2) The danger of eliciting an emotional response, (3) The danger of confusing the "coming forward" with salvation, (4) The danger of counting great numbers of people who only discredit their profession of faith by their lives, (5) The danger of giving assurance to those who are unconverted.¹⁰²

Based upon these criticisms, the first question that will be asked concerning the invitations of Rogers is, "Did Rogers promote something that is not biblical?" While several opponents of this methodology argue that the public invitation is not used in the Bible, it has already been demonstrated that Rogers and many other evangelicals have provided an adequate biblical argument for its use. Moreover, the underlying issue of this criticism appears to be more theological than hermeneutical. While it is important that the evangelist recognize the importance of the Holy Spirit's work to convict and convert the lost sinner when giving an invitation, Rogers has, indeed, demonstrated that he has a complete dependence upon the Spirit in both his sermons and his invitations.

¹⁰²Jim Ehrhard, "The Dangers of the Invitation System," *Reformation and Revival Journal* 2 (June/August 1993): 75-94.

Furthermore, it is because of his dependence upon the Holy Spirit to convict and convert lost sinners that he instructs his congregation to pray during the invitation that souls might be saved, and lost sinners will respond.

The second question that must be asked about the invitations of Rogers is, “Does Rogers manipulate his audience with a persuasive appeal to come forward?” Unfortunately, the invitation system has been abused by some evangelist in the past with prolonged emotional appeals; however, the invitations of Rogers were usually brief and only lasted five minutes. Moreover, Rogers avoided the use of any excessive displays of emotion in his invitations. Perhaps, as Ehrhard warned, some individuals may have responded to the altar calls of Rogers because they admired and respected the pastor and were willing to blindly follow his instructions; nevertheless, it may also be argued that some people have also been blindly led to pray and receive Christ when asked to do so by their pastor while being counseled in the pastor’s office, or while being led to do so during a home visit. Manipulation is not limited to the altar call, and should be avoided regardless of the evangelistic method being employed. In his use of the altar call, Rogers appeared to avoid the use of prolonged and manipulative invitations which might motivate people to respond and come forward under false pretense.

The third question in evaluating the invitations of Rogers is, “Does Rogers extend the invitation in such a way as to cause the listener to assume that ‘coming forward’ is the equivalent of salvation?” In his invitations, Rogers readily emphasized the point that it is not the “coming forward” that saves, rather it is Jesus who saves sinners. Moreover, Rogers led people to pray and receive Christ while they were still at their seats. He even encouraged those praying at their seats to thank God for saving them before he instructed them to come forward and make a public profession of their faith. Finally, when people responded to the invitation, they were always met by a trained counselor who answered any additional questions regarding salvation. Despite the efforts

of Rogers to clarify the meaning of the altar call, some people who came forward during his invitations may have indeed confused their response with salvation; however, some people also confuse baptism and church membership with salvation. The solution to such confusion should not be the abandonment of the system, but careful clarification and follow-up with those who have responded to the invitation.

A fourth question about the invitation of Rogers is, “Did the invitations of Rogers result in great numbers of people responding who later discredit their decision by their lives?”¹⁰³ Rogers has jokingly commented that Bellevue Baptist Church has many members who are inactive. The problem of false conversions and unregenerate church members, however, can not necessarily be blamed solely on the altar call. This problem dates back to the New Testament. Judas, one of the disciples of Jesus, demonstrated a false confession of faith when he betrayed Christ. Likewise, the apostle Paul identified Hymenaeus and Alexander as two church leaders who apparently made a false confession of faith and then later blasphemed Christ (1 Tim 1:20). Moreover, the apostle John indicated that there were apparently many in the early church that made a confession of faith and then left the church. John explained, “They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us” (1 John 2:19 NIV). Consequently, there may have indeed been several people who made a false profession of faith when responding to the invitations of Rogers; nevertheless, the previous examples of Rogers’ invitation demonstrated that he exercised precautions against such false professions of faith through the use of careful instructions, counselors, and follow-up materials.

A fifth question regarding the invitations of Rogers is, “Did Rogers give assurance to those who were unconverted?” It must always be remembered that “Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Sam 16:7 NIV).

¹⁰³Balmer, “Churchgoing,” 486.

There is no way to determine for certain the sincerity of the person responding to an invitation. Even Jesus warned that many people will quickly receive the gospel, like the “rocky places,” but soon they will wither away because they have no root (Matt 13:5-6). In his invitations, Rogers appeared to stress the importance of sincerity on the part of those responding when he lead them in the sinner’s prayer. Moreover, Rogers also attempted to give the invitation with clarity so as not to mislead people and give them a false assurance. While, on the one hand, giving false assurance to an insincere soul is a great danger that should be avoided, on the other hand, the Bible does say, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Rom 10:13 NIV). Consequently, assurance should be given carefully in the public invitation, but it should not be refused. When giving the invitation, Rogers usually encouraged people to thank God for the gift of salvation which they had just requested, but he did not appear to give any assurances to them that were not supported biblically.

Conclusion

While criticisms of any evangelistic methodology should be welcomed as an opportunity to reform and improve the methodology, unfortunately, many of the critics of the altar call see the only solution as a complete abandonment of the method. Rogers’ use of the altar call, however, has provided an example where this evangelistic methodology has been used effectively over many years. As a result, it is hopeful that this study of the invitations of Rogers provides a helpful model for others who wish to employ the altar call in their evangelistic preaching ministry.

CHAPTER 5
AN EVALUATION OF THE EVANGELISTIC
PREACHING OF ROGERS

In an interview with the editor of *Preaching Magazine*, Rogers was asked how he perceived the interplay or relationship of preaching with evangelism. Rogers answered with the assertion, “I don't think there is any preaching that is not evangelism.”¹ Rogers even went so far as to contend that “all preaching is evangelistic preaching if it's good preaching.”² Moreover, he said, “If it [preaching] is not evangelistic, there is something desperately, inherently wrong with it.”³ Rogers later explained that he does not believe that every sermon should simply be hell is hot, heaven is sweet, sin is bad, judgment is certain, and only Jesus saves; nevertheless, he did say, “I think every message ultimately ought to have an evangelistic appeal.”⁴ Regardless of the topic or content of the sermon, Rogers explained that “somewhere, somehow, sometime, I am going to tell people how to be saved.”⁵ Because of the comments by Rogers, the purpose of this chapter is to discover the accuracy of Rogers' statement that, “all good preaching is evangelistic preaching,” in his pulpit ministry. This objective will be achieved by first defining evangelistic preaching and then examining one hundred of Rogers' sermons spanning his thirty-two years as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. Secondly,

¹Michael Duduit, “Preaching and Church Growth: An Interview with Adrian Rogers,” *Preaching* 15 (May-June 2000): 4.

²Ibid., 6.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

this chapter will present a methodology for measuring the evangelistic content of Rogers' sermons, and utilize this methodology to determine the evangelistic content of the one hundred sermons selected for this study. Third, this chapter will give a critical evaluation of the evangelistic preaching ministry of Rogers; and finally, this chapter will present several recommendations based upon this evaluation.

Defining Evangelistic Preaching

As mentioned in chapter 1, there are numerous opinions concerning the nature and content of an evangelistic sermon; nevertheless, the following definition was written for this dissertation:

Evangelistic preaching is the proclamation of a sermon that contains in its message an explanation of the nature of God, the sinfulness of man, the person and work of Christ, the need for repentance and faith, and an invitation to receive or reject Christ as one's personal Lord and Savior.⁶

Based upon this definition, an evangelistic sermon must explain the character of God addressing both his love and holiness. It should also articulate the sinfulness of man who has rebelled against God and is deserving of his wrath and judgment. Furthermore, an evangelistic sermon must address the nature of Christ, his deity and humanity, as well as the accomplishment of his substitutionary atonement for sin on the cross. Likewise, an evangelistic sermon must address the need for faith in Christ, which goes beyond a mere intellectual assent about Christ, and involves an embracing of Christ. The sermon also must express the need for repentance or a repudiation of one's sinful behavior and habits. Finally, an evangelistic sermon must include an invitation for the listener to embrace Christ as personal Lord and Savior.

⁶See Ramesh Richard, *Preparing Evangelistic Sermons: A Seven Step Method for Preaching Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2005), 73; Timothy Beougher, interview by author, digital recording, SBTS campus, Louisville, KY, November 8, 2011; and Hershanel York, interview by author, digital recording, SBTS campus, Louisville, KY, December 5, 2011.

A Method of Measurement

In order to evaluate the evangelistic content of Rogers' sermons, it is necessary to develop a methodology for identifying the elements of an evangelistic message based upon the aforementioned definition. The methodology chosen to accomplish this task is based upon the lectures and class notes from the personal evangelism course taught by Timothy Beougher at SBTS in Louisville, Kentucky. According to Beougher, a complete gospel presentation must unequivocally answer these five crucial questions in the mind and heart of the listener: (1) who is God; (2) who is man; (3) who is Jesus; (4) what did Jesus do; and, (5) what must I do?⁷

Who Is God?

According to Will Metzger, a good question to ask when evaluating any gospel presentation is, "Was the nature of God defined clearly and its implications impressed on the mind and heart lovingly and firmly?"⁸ Metzger argued that a biblical gospel message must identify God as our "Owner, Father, and Judge." Furthermore, Metzger explained that though most western countries have a Christian historical background, the dominate worldview of these cultures is relativistic and ignorant of the biblical concept of God. As a result, an effective and biblical gospel presentation must include an explanation of God as the Creator and sovereign of the universe who is both loving and just, and to whom all mankind is accountable.⁹ Accordingly, Metzger quantified, "We cannot explain the work of Christ until we present a true picture of God"¹⁰

⁷According to Beougher, the five questions in his lecture are based upon the following three books: John Stott, *Basic Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008); J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1961); and Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel to the Whole Person by Whole People*, 3rd ed., rev. and enl. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

⁸Metzger, *Tell the Truth*, 39.

⁹Ibid., 53-55.

¹⁰Ibid., 57.

Likewise, when Rogers was asked in an interview by the editor of the journal *Theological Educator* if there were some truths that Southern Baptists fail to emphasize as much as they should, he answered that most Baptists fail to emphasize the holiness and righteousness of God in their preaching. Rogers asserted, “Today modern Americans like to think more of God being fair than God being holy.”¹¹ In several of his sermons Rogers was careful to explain both the righteousness of God and the love of God. For example, in one of his published sermons, Rogers defined grace as the unmerited love of God, and he further expounded, “Grace is the characteristic of God’s nature that makes God love sinners such as we [us]. God does not love us because we are valuable; we are valuable because he loves us. That love is by his sheer grace. Grace is something we do not deserve at all. It is God’s unmerited love and favor shown to sinners who deserve judgment.”¹² Rogers, however, also explained that the love and grace of God is only one part of the gospel message. Rogers was quick to point out that the good news of the love and grace of God can only be appreciated by those who understand the bad news that is also a part of the gospel message.¹³ The bad news of the gospel is mankind’s deplorable sinful condition before a holy God. Rogers made it clear that man’s sin has separated him from God. According to Rogers: “If you were to search all the dictionaries and lexicons for a word that best describes mankind, it would be the word sinful. . . . There is a chasm as wide as eternity between a holy, sinless God and sinful man. ‘For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God’ (Rom 3:23 KJV). The glory of God is His holiness. The shame of mankind is our sin.”¹⁴

¹¹Adrian Rogers, “Southern Baptist Theology Today: An Interview with Adrian Rogers,” *Theological Educator: A Journal of Theology and Ministry* 37 (Spring 1988): 5.

¹²Adrian Rogers, *What Every Christian Ought to Know* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 34.

¹³Adrian Rogers, *The Passion of Christ and the Purpose of Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 51.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 18.

In another sermon, Rogers emphatically pointed out that the gospel message cannot exclude biblical information concerning the righteous judgment of God. Rogers warned: “If you preach the love of God at the exclusion of the judgment of God then you have not given the whole picture, you have only given half the truth. And when half the truth becomes the only truth then that half of the truth is an untruth.”¹⁵

In his sermon “The Simplicity of Salvation,” Rogers explained that the only righteousness that a holy God will accept is sinless perfection. Furthermore, Rogers declared that God’s holiness makes it impossible for a person to save him or herself from God’s judgment and the punishment of eternal separation from God in hell:

When a person tries to be righteous by keeping the Ten Commandments or by doing good deeds, God rejects that. Why would God do that? Because God is holy and man is sinful at his best. The best that we can do is not enough. We don't have what it takes to keep the Ten Commandments in our own strength. If you're hanging over a fire by a chain of ten links and nine of them are forged steel and one of them is made of paper, how safe are you? That's the reason the Bible says if we should keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, we are guilty of all. God demands perfection and we just can't supply it. Salvation is not a reward for the righteous; it is a gift for the guilty. Salvation is not a goal to be achieved; it is a gift to be received.¹⁶

Although Rogers said in the interview with *Preaching Magazine* that he did not consider sermons about hell to be an effective evangelistic message, he did readily admit that most Baptists need to preach more about the topic of hell. He also acknowledged that he often addressed the doctrine of hell in many of his messages. For example, Rogers declared, “I do preach on hell, I think we ought to preach on hell more than we do because it is almost a forgotten note in the modern church. But don't expect a lot of decisions for Christ when you preach on hell, not immediately.”¹⁷

¹⁵Adrian Rogers, “The Soul Winners Six Mighty Motivations,” sermon on 2 Cor 5:9-20 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, TN (Memphis, TN: Love Worth Finding Ministries), message, STGN-2483, cassette.

¹⁶Adrian Rogers, “The Simplicity of Salvation,” sermon on Rom 10:1-10, delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, TN, http://www.oneplace.com/ministries/Love_Worth_Finding/Article.asp?article_id=175 (accessed September 26, 2008).

¹⁷Rogers, quoted in Duduit, “Preaching and Church Growth,” 9.

Indeed, Rogers often made reference to hell in many of his sermons; however, he usually used the doctrine of hell more as a motivation for church members to engage in evangelism than as a warning for the unconverted to receive Christ and avoid the judgment of a holy and just God. In the sermon “The Soul Winners Six Mighty Motivations,” for example, Rogers identified hell as one of the motives of a soul winner and said: “Now I realize here today that you do not hear much about hell from many pulpits, but I want to tell you that as surely as I am standing here there is a place of everlasting fire that the Bible calls hell. And when you lead a soul to Jesus Christ, no longer must they face an eternity in hell . . . but they can know the grace of the Lord.”¹⁸ For Rogers, the thought of people dying and going to hell was a motivation for the Christian to share the gospel as much as it was for the unconverted to receive the gospel. Consequently, like Metzger, Rogers recognized that an evangelistic sermon requires an explanation of the nature of God and its implications upon the judgment of God toward sinful man. Moreover, Rogers made reference to the holiness, justice, or righteousness of God in 42 percent of the one hundred sermons used in this study.

Who Is Man?

In addition to addressing the righteous nature of God, an evangelistic sermon should also address the sinful nature of mankind. Again Metzger has said, “By reminding people who God is, we show them who they are, both in terms of their significance and in terms of the horror of their sinfulness. The human individual is noble, a special creation of God, built to reflect God’s moral characteristics. Yet the same individual is also horribly ignoble, spoiled by the Fall and the spoiler of creation.”¹⁹ In other words, the gospel is not only a message about the love and grace of God, but it is also a message

¹⁸Rogers, “The Soul Winners Six Mighty Motivations.”

¹⁹Metzger, *Tell the Truth*, 62-63.

about the depravity of man. As a result, an evangelistic sermon must explain that man is helpless to save himself, he is ungodly because of his revolt against the authority of God, he is also a sinner because he has missed the mark of God's righteousness, and he is an enemy of God because of his hostility to the will of God (Rom 5:6-8).²⁰ In addition to Metzger's remarks, Mark Dever has stated that an explanation of man's sinful condition is an essential element of the gospel presentation. According to Dever, a gospel message must explain both the reality of sin and seriousness of sin. Furthermore, Dever says that a gospel presentation must reveal that man is the object of God's wrath and judgment, and that man deserves death, separation from God and spiritual alienation from God now and even forever.²¹

In a sermon series on the book of Romans, Rogers stated that the average unbeliever is ignorant about two things: he does not understand the holiness of God; and he does not understand his own sinful condition.²² Rogers believed and preached the total depravity of man. He often acknowledged the corruption of the human heart, and the influence of sin upon everything man seeks to accomplish. He exclaimed, "There really is nothing that man can do that is not tainted by sin. That is the meaning of 'total depravity.' Not that we are as bad as we could be, but everything we do is tainted with badness. In the court of God, though man may do some good things, they are still evidence of sin and depravity when they are not with the ultimate goal of glorifying Him."²³ Likewise, in a published series of sermons on the passion of Christ, Rogers also proclaimed, "Our hearts are infested and corrupted by sin. And sin brings debt, defilement and dominion."²⁴ Thus,

²⁰John R. W. Stott, *Men Made New* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1966), 18.

²¹Mark Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 35.

²²Adrian Rogers, *Foundations for Our Faith* (Memphis, TN: Love Worth Finding Ministries, 1998), 1:82.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Rogers, *The Passion of Christ*, 51.

Rogers' believed and preached the total depravity of man and readily acknowledged man's complete inability to save himself (Rom 3:10-18).

Although Rogers was an outspoken critic of Calvinism, he emphatically acknowledged the total depravity of man in several sermons, and he repeatedly identified God as the source of saving faith.²⁵ Rogers argued that when the gospel is presented to a lost person then God grants to that person the grace necessary to believe the message and receive the free gift of salvation. Rogers explained,

You do not generate faith; you are totally depraved by nature and there is nothing in you that can generate faith. As a matter of fact, the Bible says in Ephesians 2:1, "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins." It is not just that we are sick with sin. We are dead in sin! So, grace is not a reward for our faith. Our faith is the gift of God's grace. But once we have received the gift of faith it must be exercised . . . God gives us faith but he does not exercise faith for us. Think of it this way God gives you lungs and oxygen, but does not breathe for you. God gives you eyes and light waves, but he does not see for you. You can choose to shut down these wonderful gifts at any time. Anyone who says they cannot believe has not heard God speak, because faith is nothing more than a response to the promise of God.²⁶

Despite his belief in the total depravity of man, Rogers completely rejected the idea of irresistible grace.²⁷ While Rogers argued that God granted to everyone who hears the gospel message a sufficient amount of grace to receive the gospel message, he fervently contended that God does not give an efficient amount of grace so that the one hearing the

²⁵Rogers accused Calvinists of using "fancy theological footwork" to support their views of predestination, limited atonement, and irresistible grace (Rogers, *Passion of Christ*, 68). Rogers also published his sermon on Rom 9, as a rebuttal to the views of some Calvinists on election. See Adrian Rogers, "Predestined for Hell? Absolutely Not!" sermon transcript of a message on Rom 9:1-10 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, TN, May 3, 1998 (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010). Rogers also acknowledge that his greatest concerns with Calvinism are on the issues of limited atonement and irresistible grace, but not total depravity. See Adrian Rogers, "Questions and Answers Covering All Sessions," in *What Every Pastor Ought to Know* [DVD-ROM] (North Palm Beach, FL: The Adrian Roger Pastor Training Institute, 2008), disc 10, session 14.

²⁶Rogers, *Foundations for Our Faith*, 1:108.

²⁷Irresistible grace or efficacious grace is the theological concept that God's grace always achieves the purpose for which it was given. "It is efficacious simply because it is God's grace." According to this doctrinal view, what God has purposed cannot fail otherwise God is not God. God's grace is not only sufficient enough to reveal to sinful man his need for salvation, but it is efficient enough to bring him to salvation and ultimately to the consummation of eternal glory. See P. E. Hughes, "Grace," in *EDT*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984), 479-82.

gospel is unable to reject Christ. Likewise, in his sermons Rogers often stressed to those listening to his message that they must make a decision to receive or reject Christ.

Similar to the views of Charles Finney, Rogers argued that the Bible is filled with stories of people who resisted God's love and grace.²⁸ He believed each individual has the opportunity to choose or reject Christ when the gospel is preached; however, some skeptics have so harden their hearts to the Word of God that it has become increasingly difficult for them to receive Christ as their Savior. Concerning the topic of irresistible grace, for example, Rogers exclaimed,

Some preach irresistible grace, saying that when God calls a person he or she cannot resist. Oh, but we can resist the call of God. Men and women have done it for centuries. . . . There are not enough angels in heaven or demons out of heaven to drag you onto your knees and make you confess your faith in Jesus Christ. You have the dubious privilege of saying "No" to the Holy Spirit. That is why the Bible warns those who hear his voice not to harden their hearts (Heb 3:15; 4:7).²⁹

Consequently, Rogers often preached on the issue of man's sinful condition and total depravity; however, Rogers rejected the notion that God's grace is somehow irresistible to some people and inaccessible to other people. Theologically, Rogers could best be described as an advocate of prevenient grace.³⁰ As a result, the issues Rogers had with the doctrines of grace identified with Calvinism did not include the matter of total depravity; furthermore, of the one hundred sermons used for this study, Rogers addressed the sinful nature of man in 50 percent of his messages.

²⁸Rogers, *Passion of Christ*, 76.

²⁹Rogers, *Foundations for Our Faith*, 2:93-94.

³⁰Prevenient grace is divine grace that precedes human decision and endeavor. Such grace means that it is God who takes the initiative on behalf of needy sinners. Grace exists prior to and without reference to anything humans may have done. Because all humans are corrupted by the effects of sin, prevenient grace allows persons to engage their God-given free will to choose the salvation offered by God in Jesus Christ or to reject that salvific offer. See Hughes, "Grace," 479-82.

Who Is Jesus?

In his book *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, J. I. Packer contends that a common error in contemporary evangelistic preaching is to focus upon the work of Christ or the atonement at the exclusion of the person of Christ.³¹ According to Packer, “What the New Testament calls for is faith in (en) or into (eis) or upon (epi) Christ Himself—the placing of our trust in the living Savior, who died for sins. The object of saving faith is thus not, strictly speaking, the atonement, but the Lord Jesus Christ, who made the atonement.”³² In other words, a gospel presentation must identify the nature of the person of Christ as the incarnate Son of God, the spotless Lamb of God, the risen Lord; and the perfect Savior.³³ According to the gospel, Jesus is indeed the sin bearer whose death atones for sin, but the gospel message must also explain that Jesus is the Son of God, and he is the only one who was able to live a perfect life, thus he was able to fulfill the requirements of the law of God, and obtained a righteousness acceptable to God for all those who place their faith and confidence in him. As Metzger has so concisely and aptly expressed, “He is the sin-bearer and the purity-bestower.”³⁴

Rogers spoke about Jesus often in his sermons. For example, when Rogers had the opportunity to preach in the Red Army Theater in Moscow after the collapse of the Soviet Union, his message focused upon the person of Jesus and why Jesus is the only hope of mankind. In this message, he asked the question, “How do the Scriptures present Jesus?”³⁵ He answered this question and explained, “First, they tell us of His sinless, miraculous, virgin birth. Then they tell us of his sinless, miraculous life. Jesus Christ is

³¹Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 65.

³²Ibid., 66.

³³Ibid., 63.

³⁴Metzger, *Tell the Truth*, 72.

³⁵Adrian Rogers, *Standing for Light and Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 126.

absolutely unique as he is presented in the Bible.”³⁶ Although Rogers was preaching an evangelistic message in the Red Army Theater, he often made reference to the unique nature and person of Christ in his pulpit ministry as well. For example, of the one hundred sermons used in this study, Rogers addressed the uniqueness of Christ’s personhood in 34 percent of his messages.

Rogers frequently told the gospel story somewhere in his sermons. For him, the saddest thing he could imagine is for a person not to know the story of Jesus. In his sermon “The Greatest Story Ever Told,” Rogers mourned,

We sing that old hymn, “Tell me the story of Jesus. Write on my heart every word. Tell me the story most precious, sweetest that ever was heard.” This is indeed the old story, the precious story, the sweetest story, the story of stories, the greatest story ever told, the story of the Lord Jesus Christ. And how sad some people who tend to be educated, how sad that they don’t know the story of Jesus. I want to tell you the rich man is poor and the strong man is weak and the educated man is ignorant if he doesn’t know the story of Jesus.

How sad I say for a person to be educated and to know the study of Botany, and the study of flowers and not to know Jesus, Sharon’s fairest rose. How sad it is for a man to know geology and the ages of the rocks and not to know Jesus, the rock of ages. It is sad indeed for a man to know astronomy and how the heavens go and not to know Jesus and how to go to heaven. It is sad indeed for a person to study history and not to see that history is His-story, for it is Him that we live and breathe and have our being. I say ladies and gentlemen that it is sad indeed for a man to think that he’s educated and not to know the story of Jesus.³⁷

For Rogers, there was no greater privilege or responsibility as a pastor than to preach the wonderful gospel story of Jesus. Likewise, there was no greater blessing for him in his preaching ministry than to see a lost soul respond to the gospel and receive Jesus Christ.

What Did Jesus Do?

Just as some preachers overlook the importance of the person of Christ, others may neglect to address the saving work of Christ. Unfortunately, such preachers proclaim

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Adrian Rogers, “The Greatest Story Ever Told,” sermon transcript of a message on Isa 53 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, TN, 19 September 1979 (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

a gospel message in which Christ is presented simply as a friend or an example for others to follow. In response to such a gospel message, Dever contends: “But the Christian gospel is not a matter of mere self-help or even of a greater example or a relationship to be cultivated. There is a real past to be dealt with. Real sins have been incurred. And so what is to be done? What will our holy God do? Even if he, in his love, wants a people for his own, how will he have them without sacrificing his own holiness?”³⁸ The answer to all of these questions is found in the work of Christ on the cross. The gospel message, therefore, must address the substitutionary atonement of Christ for sin.

According to Packer, it is impossible to understand the historical figure of Jesus without knowing about the incarnation, and it is impossible to make any sense of the life of Jesus without knowing about the atonement.³⁹ Consequently, the apostles persistently preached the death of Christ as an atoning sacrifice or a propitiation for sin; a redemptive act; a legal act of justification, and a victorious act.⁴⁰ Moreover, Jesus also identified his redemptive work on the cross as the objective of his earthy ministry and exclaimed, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45 NIV). Hence, a clear presentation and explanation of the work of Christ on the cross is essential to the evangelistic sermon.

Rogers often preached about the cross, and proclaimed that the death of Christ was the only means of forgiveness that satisfies the justice of a holy and righteous God while also demonstrating the infinite love of God. In a sermon on Romans 5:8-9, Rogers exclaimed that justice, mercy and grace all come together at the cross:

Three words come together at Calvary, all of which deal with the character of God:
Justice: God gives us what we deserve, which is his wrath, which Christ bore for us.
Mercy: God does not give us what we deserve, which is wrath, which Christ got

³⁸Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism*, 37.

³⁹Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 64.

⁴⁰Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism*, 38.

instead. Grace: God gives us what we don't deserve, which is righteousness, which we get from Christ. All these come together in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary. God's justice was satisfied, God's mercy was shown, and his grace was given. When you lay your sins upon Jesus Christ, you become a child of the King, and righteous in his sight, and justified by his blood.⁴¹

Consequently, Rogers was not the kind of preacher who simply saw the cross as an addendum to the life of Christ; rather, he preached the atoning work of Christ as the central purpose of Christ's work on earth.

Moreover, when preaching about the cross, Rogers often expressed a sincere conviction that the death of Christ was designed to include all mankind, whether or not all believed in Christ. Rogers not only preached that Christ died for everyone, but he also frequently rejected the concept of limited atonement.⁴² Likewise, Rogers believed it was crucial to preach that Christ died for everyone and salvation was available to anyone. In an Easter message on the passion of Christ, for example, Rogers declared,

I don't believe that you and I in our wildest imagination can begin to understand what Jesus Christ suffered upon that cross. We can't comprehend that upon the cross of Calvary, Jesus Christ paid for all of the sin for the entire world, for all of the time, for all of the eternity that any man, any woman, any boy, and any girl would ever have to pay.

Jesus Christ in six hours upon the cross suffered all the hell that you and I would suffer for eternity. For Jesus, being infinite, suffered in a finite period of time what you and I, being finite, would suffer in an infinite period of time. The eternities as well as the sin of the world were compressed upon the Lord Jesus Christ in that time.

When Jesus died, all that was necessary for you to be forgiven and to be saved was done. There's nothing for you to do but to receive what Jesus Christ has already done, for it is finished.⁴³

⁴¹Rogers, *Foundations of Our Faith*, 2:16.

⁴²J. I. Packer has stated that the nature of the atonement as it relates to its extent has no bearing on the content of the evangelistic message. According to Packer, whether a person believes in unlimited or limited atonement should not alter one's presentation of the gospel because "preaching the gospel . . . means inviting sinners to come to Jesus Christ, the living Savior, who, by virtue of his atoning death, is able to forgive and save all those who put their trust in Him" (Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 66-68). Rogers, however, argued that one's view of the extent of the atonement greatly influenced the evangelistic message. For example, Rogers said, "But think what the limited atonement view does to the proclamation of the gospel. If this is true, then as a pastor I have to tell people that although the sure cure for their sin is generally available, I can't tell them for sure that it is actually available to them" (Rogers, *The Passion of Christ*, 73).

⁴³Adrian Rogers, "The Word that Shook the World" sermon transcript of a message on John 19:30 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, TN (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

Consequently, Rogers believed that Jesus died for all sin, and Rogers preached that the death of Christ has made salvation available to everyone whether or not a person receives or rejects Christ. Finally, of the one hundred sermons that were used in this study, Rogers addressed the atonement of Christ in 40 percent of them.

What Must I Do?

According to Metzger, “An inherent part of the biblical gospel is the call to respond. No evangelist is worthy of our support, no matter how superb his presentation of truth about God, man and Christ, if he then walks away without lovingly urging people to respond.”⁴⁴ Metzger is careful to explain that the gospel’s invitation does not necessitate a physical response such as a signing of a card, repeating a prayer, walking forward, or raising a hand; however, it does require a call for faith and repentance. Again, Metzger explains, “The call to turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus summarizes the gospel invitation (Acts 20:21). It is important to have both elements urged upon non-Christians who are under conviction.”⁴⁵

Likewise, Packer said, “The gospel is a summons to faith and repentance.”⁴⁶ Furthermore, Packer defined faith as more than mere mental assent about Christ and repentance as more than simple sorrow or regret for sin. For example, Packer explained that faith is embracing the promises of Christ and repentance is a change of one’s being:

Faith and repentance are both acts, and acts of the whole man. Faith is more than just credence; faith is essentially the casting and resting of oneself and one’s confidence on the promises of mercy which Christ has given to sinners, and on the Christ who gave those promises. Equally, repentance is more than just sorrow for the past; repentance is a change of mind and heart, a new life of denying self and serving the Savior as king in self’s place.⁴⁷

⁴⁴Metzger, *Tell the Truth*, 75.

⁴⁵Ibid., 76.

⁴⁶Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 70.

⁴⁷Ibid., 71.

Consequently, the gospel sermon must contain a clear and persuasive call for faith and repentance on the part of the listener, and it should give some type of explanation as to what such actions require of the individual.

Rogers often made reference to faith and repentance in his sermons. Similar to Metzger and Packer, he believed and preached that faith and repentance were required for genuine conversion. Rogers gave the following definition and explanation of repentance:

Repentance is a whole-hearted heart change. Ezekiel 14:6 says, "Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations." Can you imagine standing at the altar and your soon-to-be spouse promises to be eighty percent faithful? Not me! And I would hope, not you!

Repentance is a continuing change. I repented of my sin when I gave my heart to Jesus Christ as a teen. I gave all I knew of me to all I knew of Jesus and friend that was enough. Since that time I have learned a whole lot more about Jesus and I have learned a whole lot more about me. I've done far more repenting after I got saved than I did when I got saved. Acts 17:30 tells us that God commands every man, woman, and child to repent. All are sinners, none is excluded. The unsaved need to repent and be saved. The saved need to repent and be sanctified so that they may serve the Lord Jesus with a clean heart. . . . Repentance is not just a good thing to consider. It is a necessity to experience the grace of God. Jesus said, "I tell you, Nay: except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). God's grace has a condition upon it - repentance and humility. God resists those who are filled with pride and not willing to repent (see James 4:6-8).⁴⁸

In addition to being a prerequisite to conversion, this statement also reveals that Rogers considered repentance to be evidence of the genuineness of one's conversion. Moreover, Rogers did not consider the act of repentance to be a once in a life-time experience, but it is a continuous attitude toward sin in the life of the believer that affirms one's salvation.

As a result, Rogers preached lordship salvation, and often chastised church members who gave no evidence of conversion in their manner of living. For example, Rogers charged, "There are many people who join a church as if they were joining a country club. There's no change and they continue to live the same ungodly lives. Those people have no reason whatsoever to think that they are going to heaven. If you can sin

⁴⁸Adrian Rogers, "The Great Exchange: National Revival for National Repentance," http://www.lwf.org/site/News2?page=News Article&id=12107&news_iv_ctrl=1261 (accessed November 27, 2012).

willfully, knowingly, deliberately, and habitually and feel no conviction or remorse; you have no reason to believe you are saved.”⁴⁹ Consequently, Rogers did not consider the issue of repentance as a coincidental topic in his sermons, but a fundamental part of the gospel message.

When defining faith, Rogers used the familiar acrostic “Forsaking All I Trust Him.” Based on this definition, Rogers explained,

If grace is God’s Riches at Christ Expense, what is faith? Here is another acrostic: F-A-I-T-H, “Forsaking All I Trust Him.” I forsake dependence on my good intentions, my good deeds, my own so-called sense of self-worth, and I also forsake my sin. I turn my back on sin and I trust him. I put my faith where God has put my sins—on the Lord Jesus Christ. This faith is not a mere intellectual belief; the demons believe and tremble. No it is more than belief, it is commitment. I can believe an airplane can fly, but I don’t truly trust it until I get in it.

Here is how salvation works and the new birth comes about. I put my faith in God’s grace. It is not the faith that saves; it is the grace that saves. Faith just lays hold of that grace. Think of grace as God’s hand of love reaching down from heaven, saying, “I love you. I want to save you.” It is a nail pierced hand because He has paid for our sins. Think of faith as your sin-stained hand, saying, God I need you. I want you.” And when you put your hand of faith in God’s hand of grace that is salvation.⁵⁰

In the context of the one hundred sermons used for this study, Rogers addressed faith and repentance for salvation in 48 percent of his messages.

Evangelistic Content of Sermons

Rogers said that he concluded “virtually every message with an evangelistic appeal.”⁵¹ As mentioned previously, most of the recorded sermons by Rogers did not include the invitation; therefore, in measuring the content of the sermons selected for this study the invitation was excluded. As a result, the following conclusions concerning the

⁴⁹ Adrian Rogers, “Dealing with Doubt,” sermon transcript of a message on 1 John 5:13, delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, TN (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010). Metzger and Packer agree that the issue of lordship salvation should be considered when extending a response to the gospel (Metzger, *Tell the Truth*, 75-82; Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 70-73).

⁵⁰ Rogers, *What Every Christian Ought to Know*, 35.

⁵¹ Adrian Rogers, quoted in Joyce Rogers, and Julie-Allyson Ieron, *Love Worth Finding: The Life of Adrian Rogers and His Philosophy of Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 188.

evangelistic content of Rogers' preaching ministry are based upon the gospel content discovered in the body of his messages.

An assessment of the evangelistic content of the sermons used in this study was determined by using the following method: first, sermons answering four or five of the aforementioned five questions were identified as being evangelistic in their content; second, sermons answering only two or three questions of the five questions were identified as being somewhat evangelistic in their content; third, sermons answering only one question were identified as having almost no evangelistic content; and finally, sermons not addressing any of the five questions were identified as having no evangelistic content. Using this method of measurement, the following findings were made: 25 percent of the sermons used in this study were indeed evangelistic in their content; 33 percent of the sermons in this study were only somewhat evangelistic in their content; 23 percent of the sermons studied had almost no evangelistic content; and 19 percent of the sermons in this study actually had no evangelistic content. Based upon these statistics, it may be concluded that Rogers did not proclaim an evangelistic sermon from the pulpit of Bellevue Baptist Church every time he preached. Furthermore, only a fourth of the sermons (twenty-five sermons) used in this study were actually evangelistic messages. Moreover, nearly half of the sermons in this study (forty-two sermons) had very little or no evangelistic content in them.

Critique of Rogers' Sermons

Rogers' claim that all good preaching is evangelistic preaching was not unique. A similar statement was expressed by Graeme Goldsworthy in his book *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*. For example, Goldsworthy contended that “. . . while there is much in the Bible that is strictly speaking not the gospel, there is nothing in the Bible that can be truly understood apart from the gospel. . . . All preaching to be true to

the biblical perspective, must in some sense be gospel preaching.”⁵² Yet, by its very definition, gospel preaching must be preaching that clearly defines and explains the essential elements of the gospel. Unlike Rogers, however, Goldsworthy makes a clear distinction between preaching the gospel and preaching for a decision:

My concern about evangelism is that sometimes there is a greater emphasis on the need for some kind of response than on the clear exposition of the gospel. Telling people they need to come to Jesus, that they may be born again, that they should commit their lives to Christ, and so on, is not preaching the gospel. It is at best, telling them what they ought to do or, in the case of the new birth, what has already happened when they have received the gospel.⁵³

Goldsworthy further contends that the response to the message of Peter, in Acts 2, may be attributed to the power and clarity of the gospel message that was delivered by Peter and not an appeal to do something. Based upon Peter’s sermon, Goldsworthy asserted, “When we have explained what God has done for us in Christ—the gospel—then we may go on to explain the benefits of receiving the gospel and the perils of ignoring it.”⁵⁴ The fact, therefore, that only 25 percent of the sermons used in this study possessed enough of the five essential elements of the gospel to be considered an evangelistic message, and the fact that Rogers consistently gave an invitation after every sermon he preached raises certain homiletical, theological, and practical concerns.

Before continuing with this critique, it should be mentioned that although Rogers was a very successful evangelistic preacher, nevertheless, there are still several areas of his preaching ministry that should be assessed in order to benefit from both the strengths and weaknesses of his ministry. As a result, the goal of critiquing the sermons of Rogers is not to needlessly criticize, but hopefully to learn and improve upon both the strengths and weaknesses of his ministry. So far this study has identified many positive

⁵²Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 95.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

aspects of his preaching ministry; however, this critique focuses upon six areas of concern that were discovered from measuring the evangelistic content of the one hundred sermon used in this chapter: the first issue of concern is the evangelistic content found, or not found, in the majority of the sermons employed for this study; the second concern is the admitted lack of planning and preparing of the sermon's invitation by Rogers; the third topic is the possible confusion of confession with repentance in Rogers' use of the sinner's prayer; the fourth problem is equating decision with conversion; the fifth issue concerns the failure to emphasize consistently the exclusivity of Christ by Rogers; and the final issue concerns the number of times Rogers preached topical sermons rather than expository messages.

Insufficient Evangelistic Content

The first critical issue discovered in this study regards the lack of evangelistic content in many of the sermons Rogers preached. Of the one hundred sermons used in this study, only 25 percent were evangelistic in their content. In other words, only a fourth of these sermons addressed the essential elements of the gospel, and adequately answered at least four of the following five questions: (1) who is God; (2) who is man; (3) who is Jesus; (4) what did Jesus do; and (5) what must I do? The overwhelming absence of so many of the essential elements of the gospel in the majority of these sermons raises questions as to Rogers' definition of the gospel, and his understanding of the essential element of an evangelistic sermon.

According to Rogers, the gospel may be summarized as a message about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:1-4).⁵⁵ Although the term gospel means good news, Rogers explained that the gospel message cannot be appreciated until the bad news of man's sin and rebellion toward a holy and just God is first addressed

⁵⁵Adrian Rogers, "What Is the Gospel?" *Decision* 51 (January 2010): 11.

(Rom 3:23). According to Rogers, the bad news of man's sin must then point the listener to the source of the gospel (good news) which is the atoning work of Jesus Christ. In other words, the source of the gospel message is Jesus. It includes his perfect life, and the nature of his cruel death on the cross as atonement for sin. Next, the force of the gospel explains that one must believe and receive Christ as God's only source for salvation. Finally, Rogers spoke of the course of the gospel which extends an invitation to every person to trust Jesus as Lord and Savior.⁵⁶

Rogers' definition of the gospel is similar to the explanation given by Wayne Grudem in his *Systematic Theology*. Grudem states that in the preaching of the gospel three important elements must be included: (1) an explanation of the facts concerning salvation, at the least including the problem of sin (Rom 3:23), the penalty of sin (Rom 6:23), and the payment of sin (Rom 5:8); (2) an invitation to respond to Christ in repentance and faith; and (3) an assurance of forgiveness and eternal life (John 6:37).⁵⁷ Likewise, Millard J. Erickson, in his book *Christian Theology*, summarized Paul's view of the gospel as "... centering on Jesus Christ and what God has done through him. The essential points of the gospel are Jesus Christ's status as the Son of God, his genuine humanity, his death for our sins, his burial, his resurrection, subsequent appearances, and future coming judgment."⁵⁸

At a minimum, it has been said that the gospel may be defined simply as the message about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.⁵⁹ In which case it may be argued that Rogers presented the gospel in the invitation of his sermons; however, there are many biblical truths related to the gospel that must be addressed and explained in order

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 694-95.

⁵⁸Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 1998), 1072.

⁵⁹Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 83.

for the gospel to be understood and appreciated. For example, as Rogers alluded in his definition of the gospel, the message of the gospel is not good news until someone first understands the nature and character of God. Moreover, the gospel cannot be appreciated unless one begins to comprehend the sinful nature of man and the offense of sin to a holy and just God. Furthermore, the gospel message must clearly address the matter of one's justification and assurance of salvation.⁶⁰

Rogers began his preaching ministry in the early 1950s and he preached to a generation that was much more biblically and theologically literate than the generation of the twenty-first century. For example, Thom Rainer conducted a survey and discovered that the generation born before 1946, which he identifies as the "Builder" generation, possessed a predominately biblical understanding of God and Christianity.⁶¹ Rogers was a member of this generation and preached to this generation the first half of his ministry.

The "Boomer" generation was born between 1946 and 1964. Unfortunately, the members of this generation possessed a less appreciative view of the Christian faith than did their parents. The majority of this generation was exposed to the Christian faith, but many were never converted, and eventually became materialistic and agnostic.⁶² Rogers would have preached to this generation in the latter half of his ministry from 1972 until his retirement in 2005. Although the majority of the "Boomers" are non-Christian, many of the members of this generation were eventually converted and came to faith in Christ. The majority of the people Rogers reached while he was the pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church were, most likely, from the "Boomer" generation.

The generation born after 1982, Rainer has called the "Bridger" generation. This generation is mostly ignorant of the Bible and the Christian faith. Although the

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Thom S. Rainer, *The Bridger Generation* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 29.

⁶²Ibid.

majority of this post-modern generation believes in the existence of God and is religious minded, their understanding of God is based upon a vague spirituality rather than the God of the Bible. Furthermore, when comparing the “Bridger” generation with the “Boomer” generation, Rainer asserted,

They [the Bridgers] are more religious than the Boomers ever were. But we cannot make religion synonymous with Christianity. The former has some general type of belief in God (or gods) that may have many expressions. The latter believes only in God as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. The former is “tolerant” and open to many faiths. The latter is “narrow-minded” and sees only one way to God.⁶³

Consequently, the modern day evangelistic preacher cannot assume that the people to whom he is preaching on Sunday morning have a basic understanding of the gospel or the Bible. Especially when preaching to younger adults, the pastor must clearly explain the essential biblical doctrines related to the gospel message in order to insure that those responding to the gospel are accepting the biblical concept of Christianity and not simply adding to the cornucopia of religious ambiguity that is so prevalent in post-modernism. It is doubtful, therefore, that the evangelistic content in many of Rogers’ sermons could have provided enough information and clarification about the essential elements of the gospel for members of the Bridger generation to make an informed response to the demands of the gospel and Christ.

Planning the Invitation

Rogers admitted that he did not prepare his invitations during his study but delivered his invitations extemporaneously.⁶⁴ Conversely, the Professor of Preaching at the George W. Truett Theological Seminary of Baylor University, Ralph Douglas West exclaimed: “The invitation is not an appendix to a sermon; it is part of the sermon process. As much attention should be giving to the wording of the invitation as to the

⁶³Ibid, 152.

⁶⁴Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 206.

sermon itself.”⁶⁵ Likewise, R. Alan Streett contended that the invitation of an evangelistic message is the most important part of the sermon. He alleged, “Every evangelistic message succeeds or fails according to the effectiveness of the invitation.”⁶⁶ Furthermore, Streett explained that the evangelistic preacher must clarify the requirement of the gospel for salvation in every invitation. For example, he instructed: “You must call them to repent, believe and follow Christ openly and unashamedly. These three points should be included in every gospel invitation. Under each category you need to define and illustrate your terms, and provide scriptural support.”⁶⁷ Similarly, Ramesh Richard states that the invitation must be strategically planned by the pastor in order “To clarify the terms of the gospel in the hearer’s mind so that he knows exactly what he is embracing without adding conditions for salvation or concealing the cost of trusting Jesus as the only God who saves sinners.”⁶⁸

Rogers believed in the importance of giving an evangelistic invitation, and used this method of evangelism in almost every sermon he preached at Bellevue. By his own admission, however, he did not plan his invitations as carefully as he planned his sermons. Consequently, he did not clearly define theological terms, or address all the essential elements of the gospel when extending the invitation. As noted in chapter 4, Rogers based his invitation on the method employed by Billy Graham. Both Graham and Rogers began their ministry during a period when biblical illiteracy was not as prevalent as it is today. For example, George Gallup and Timothy Jones recently reported that biblical literacy has declined so sharply that in the twenty-first century many Americans are unable to identify the reason for celebrating Easter, or mention any of the Ten

⁶⁵Ralph Douglas West, “Selecting a Text for an Evangelistic Sermon,” in *Preaching Evangelistically*, by Al Fasol et al. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 41.

⁶⁶R. Alan Streett, *The Effective Invitation*, updated ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004), 151.

⁶⁷Ibid., 155.

⁶⁸Richard, *Preparing Evangelistic Sermons*, 177.

Commandments.⁶⁹ Consequently, it is important that the invitation, like the evangelistic sermon, be well prepared with all theological terms carefully defined, and all the elements of the gospel message explained so that those responding to the preacher's appeal are cognitive of why and how they must respond to the gospel message.

Unfortunately, Rogers gave invitations with very little explanation of such terms as faith, repentance, or even sin. Considering the vast number of sermons in this study with little or no evangelistic content, it is difficult to imagine how an unconverted person could understand the meaning or purpose of the invitation and sinner's prayer. Extending such an invitation without clearly explaining the elements of the gospel has certainly resulted in many false confessions and may have caused individuals to assume conversion when spiritual regeneration has not occurred. Consequently, it is essential that the invitation, when used by the evangelist, be carefully planned. Moreover, it is equally important that all the elements of the gospel are clearly presented and carefully explained in the context of the sermon itself as well as the invitation and/or sinner's prayer.

Nature of Repentance

Repentance has been described by Rogers as the forgotten word in most evangelistic preaching today.⁷⁰ Grudem has also observed a similar omission of the topic in some preaching and commented, "When we realize that genuine saving faith must be accompanied by genuine repentance for sin, it helps us to understand why the preaching of the gospel has such inadequate results today."⁷¹ Grudem later warned, "Preaching the need for faith without repentance is preaching only half the gospel. It will result in many

⁶⁹George Gallup, Jr. and Timothy Jones, *The Next American Spirituality: Finding God in the Twenty-First Century* (Colorado Springs: Victor Books, 2000), 30.

⁷⁰Adrian Rogers, "The Forgotten Word," sermon transcript of a message on Luke 13:1-15 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, TN, 2 November 1980 (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

⁷¹Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 312.

people being deceived, thinking that they have heard the Christian gospel and tried it, but nothing has happened.”⁷² The gospel message, therefore, requires a clear explanation of the nature and necessity of repentance as a requirement for receiving salvation. Such a requirement is demonstrated throughout the New Testament. For example, Erickson noted that evangelistic preaching in the New Testament always included a call for repentance as an indispensable demand for salvation: “As we examine this matter of repentance, we cannot avoid being impressed with its importance as a prerequisite for salvation. The large number of verses and the variety of context in which repentance is stressed make clear that it is not optional but indispensable.”⁷³ Consequently, evangelistic preaching must emphasize the need for repentance, and adequately explain its nature.

What is repentance? Repentance involves more than a simple change of mind or attitude about one’s bad behavior or habits. For example, Erickson insisted that the very nature of repentance involves remorse over one’s offense against a holy and loving God as well as a resolution to turn from sin and live for Christ:

It is important for us to understand the nature of true repentance. Repentance is godly sorrow for one’s sin together with a resolution to turn from it. There are other forms of regret over one’s wrong doings that are based on different motivations. One form of regret may be motivated by little more than selfishness. If we have sinned and the consequences are unpleasant, we may well regret what we have done. But that is not true repentance. That is mere penitence. Real repentance is sorrow for one’s sin because of the wrong done to God and the hurt inflicted upon him. This sorrow is accompanied by a genuine desire to abandon that sin. In the case of true repentance, there is regret over the sin even if the sinner has not suffered any unfortunate personal effects because of it.⁷⁴

Genuine repentance, therefore, is an essential element of the gospel message that insists upon a recognition of sin as an offense against God, and leads to a repudiation of sin that results in a change of behavior, thus, giving evidence of genuine conversion (2 Cor 5:17).

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 949.

⁷⁴Ibid., 950.

Out of the one hundred sermons used in this study, Rogers addressed the meaning of repentance in 48 percent of his messages. This percentage was second only to the sinful nature of man to which Rogers addressed in half of the sermons used in this study. Although addressing the meaning of repentance in forty-eight sermons and the nature of sin in fifty sermons seems impressive, it should be considered that Rogers would have given an invitation in half his sermons without clarifying the nature of sin and repentance in the context of the sermon. This omission, however, may be permissible if Rogers adequately addressed these issues in his invitation.

As was noted in chapter 4, Rogers used the following example of the sinner's prayer in practically every invitation he gave:

Dear God, I know that you love me and I know that you want to save me. Jesus, you died to save me. You promised to save me if I would trust you. I do trust you. I confess that I'm a sinner. I confess that my sins deserve judgment but I need mercy. I want to be saved. Thank you, Jesus, for paying for my sin. Thank you. Thank you that you took my sin to the cross. Thank you, Lord. I believe that God raised you from the dead and now by faith, I trust you. I receive you into my heart as my Lord and Savior once and for all, now and forever. And Lord, because you died for me, I'll live for you. And help me never ever to be ashamed of you. Give me the courage to make this public, in your holy name I pray, Amen.⁷⁵

Unfortunately, in this example of the sinner's prayer, Rogers instructed people to confess their sin to God and receive Christ without explaining the abhorrence of sin to a holy God as well as the necessity and nature of repentance. In the above example, it appears that Rogers not only made a grievous omission of an essential component of the gospel, but he also seemed to equate the confession of sin with the act of repentance.

In his criticism of the sinner's prayer, for example, Jim Elliff has correctly argued that merely acknowledging or confessing sin is not the same thing as repentance from sin.⁷⁶ In the previous example of the sinner's prayer, Rogers leads those praying to

⁷⁵Adrian Rogers, "The Word of God," sermon transcript of a message on Heb 4:12 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, TN, 17 February 1991 (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

⁷⁶Jim Elliff, "Closing with Christ," Christian Communicators Worldwide (1999), http://www.ccwto day.org/article_views.asp?article_id=52 (accessed January 7, 2013).

confess that they have sinned, and that their sins deserve judgment; however, there is no mention of repentance. This prayer fails to express a repudiation of sin. Although, Rogers leads the potential converts to pray, “. . . because you [Jesus] died for me, I’ll live for you;” nevertheless, there is no explanation given by Rogers as to what living for Christ involves or requires. It must be remembered that Jesus demanded that his disciples “count the cost” before they made the decision to follow him (Luke 9:23; 14:27). As a result, to omit repentance or equate repentance with confession is to offer a “watered-down” version of the gospel that appears to neglect the cost of discipleship in order to increase the number of people responding to the altar call. Thus, Erickson has warned: “Any attempt to increase the number of disciples by making discipleship as easy as possible ends up diluting the quality of disciples instead.”⁷⁷ Simply asking someone to confess his or her sin and receive Christ as Savior without adequately addressing the nature and necessity of repentance from sin is a woeful omission of an essential requirement of the gospel message for which Rogers was apparently often guilty of doing.

Equating Decision for Conversion

While repentance is a component of conversion, it is only one aspect of the required response to the gospel. According to Grudem, conversion may be defined as follows: “Conversion is our willing response to the gospel call, in which we sincerely repent of sins and place our trust in Christ for salvation.”⁷⁸ While Arminians and Calvinists have debated over the order of repentance and faith, Bruce Demarest contends that conversion is a single act that has two distinct but inseparable aspects:

Repentance, the forsaking of sin and the cultivating of a new hope, and faith, turning to Christ in belief and trust, are related to one another as two sides of a coin. The two are interdependent responses, each incomplete without the other. Thus conversion involves both believing repentance and a penitent faith. True repentance

⁷⁷Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 951.

⁷⁸Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*, ed. Jeff Purswell (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 307.

requires belief, and full-orbed faith requires a penitent spirit. It is psychologically impossible to believe in the biblical sense without a broken, penitent spirit that renounces sin.⁷⁹

Conversion is seen as the human response to God's offer of salvation, and regeneration is viewed as a work of God's grace in which man is passive. Conversion is not, however, without divine initiative and is still the result of God's effectual call and the work of the Holy Spirit.⁸⁰

In his dissertation on the sinner's prayer, Paul Chitwood pointed out that the concept of conversion has changed much among evangelicals with the introduction of the invitation system in nineteenth century. Chitwood explained that prior to this period rather than being asked to make a decision, the unconverted were made aware of their perilous condition before a holy God and encouraged to pursue forgiveness and salvation through prayers of repentance. The emphasis of evangelistic preaching was upon man's total depravity, sinfulness, and inability to save himself apart from the grace of God.⁸¹

Unfortunately, many modern evangelists have replaced the term conversion with the phrase "make a decision" or "make a commitment."⁸² While these evangelists may readily admit that God is involved in the process of conversion, nevertheless, their language communicates that conversion is as simple as making a decision with little or no emotion or conviction involved.⁸³ For example, Rogers readily acknowledged the importance of the Holy Spirit's work in the conversion of lost sinners.⁸⁴ Moreover, he

⁷⁹Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), 264.

⁸⁰Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 954.

⁸¹Paul H. Chitwood "The Sinner's Prayer: A Historical and Theological Analysis." (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2001), 71.

⁸²David Bennett, *The Altar Call: Its Origins and Present Usage* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000), 201.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 155.

also affirmed his belief in the total depravity of man and acknowledged that the unconverted man or woman is dependent upon God for both the gift of saving grace and faith.⁸⁵ Despite Rogers' statements, however, the invitations he gave communicated that conversion is more or less dependent upon the whim of human choice. In the example of the progressive invitation found in chapter 4, Rogers simply asked, "Would you like to be saved? Would you pray this prayer, remembering, as you pray, that salvation is a gift—you can't earn it; you'll never deserve it—pray this prayer."⁸⁶ Rogers fails to ask the members of his congregation if any of them are under the conviction of the Holy Spirit regarding their sin (John 16:8). He also fails to address their hopelessness or God's holiness; thus, the emphasis of his invitation is upon human decision and not conversion.

While conversion requires a decision on the part of the sinner to respond in faith to Christ and repent of sin, the evangelist must announce the need of a decision in a manner that communicates the biblical concept of conversion. For example, Donald G. Bloesch explained that conversion is initiated by the Holy Spirit through conviction, and is demonstrated by the Holy Spirit through a life of obedience to Christ:

We cannot be converted through our own power, but we can repent and turn to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. We cannot maintain our walk with Christ on the basis of our own resources, but we can maintain this walk with the aid of his Spirit. Conversion entails the promise of sanctification just as it reveals the gift of justification.⁸⁷

Genuine conversion, therefore, requires more than a simple decision. It involves the effectual call of God demonstrated by remorse and repudiation of sin, an embracing of Christ, and a growing obedience to God through the indwelling presence of the Spirit.⁸⁸

⁸⁵Rogers, *Foundations for Our Faith*, 1:108.

⁸⁶Adrian Rogers, "Soul Winners Six Mighty Motivation," sermon transcript of a message on 2 Cor 5:9-20 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, TN, 19 June 1983 (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

⁸⁷Donald G. Bloesch, "Conversion," in *EDT*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984), 273.

⁸⁸Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 264.

Exclusivity of Christ

Another essential element of the gospel is the explanation of the atoning work of Christ as the only means of salvation. While Rogers addressed the person and work of Christ in several sermons, he only addressed the exclusivity of Christ in slightly over 20 percent of the sermons used in this study. This low percentage means that Rogers failed to stress the exclusivity of Christ in almost 80 percent of the sermons in this study.⁸⁹ Although, the exclusivity of Christ is not specifically addressed in the *kerygma* or proclamation, Jesus clearly declared that he is the only way to heaven (John 14:6). Likewise, when Peter and John were questioned by the Sanhedrin about the healing of a crippled man in the temple courtyard, they explained that the man was healed in the name of Jesus and announced, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12 NIV). Subsequently, the exclusivity of Christ was definitely taught by both Jesus and his disciples.

Unfortunately, the concept of the exclusivism of Christ has become offensive both inside and outside the community of the local church. According to Rainer, "The most dangerous doctrinal aberration facing the church in the twenty-first century will be inclusivism."⁹⁰ Moreover, Rainer warned, "Inclusivism is enticingly tempting to Christians and churches that do not want to appear narrow-minded, yet desire to affirm the work of Christ for redemption."⁹¹ In a recent study of young adults born between 1980 and 1991, Rainer discovered that less than 31 percent of this generation agreed with the statement that Jesus was indeed the only way of salvation.⁹²

⁸⁹Christian exclusivism has been defined as the belief that Jesus is the only Savior, and explicit faith in him is necessary for salvation. Christian exclusivists believe the New Testament affirms this position in several Scriptures (Matt 28:19-20; John 3:16-18; 14:6; Acts 4:12; 8:35; 16:31; Rom 3:10-28; 5:1-11; 1 Tim 2:5). See Ronald H. Nash, *Is Jesus the Only Savior?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 11-18.

⁹⁰Rainer, *The Bridger Generation*, 156.

⁹¹Ibid., 157.

⁹²Thom S. Rainer and Jess W. Rainer, *The Millennials* (Nashville: Broadman, 2012), 241.

Some members of the church may question the significance of exclusivism, and argue that stressing the importance of Christ as man's only means of salvation is not needed. Ronald H. Nash, however, explained the detrimental impact both inclusivism and pluralism has upon the nature of the Christian faith.⁹³ Nash warned that Christians who abandon the exclusivity of Christ must also "abandon every core value of the Christian faith including the trinity, the deity of Christ, the incarnation, and even the atonement. Inclusivism has a significant deleterious effect on the nature and importance of such Christian activities as evangelism and missions."⁹⁴

It is clear in several of Roger's sermons that he was an exclusivist. Rogers readily said that Jesus is the only Savior, and explicit faith in Christ is necessary for salvation. Moreover, Rogers denounced the influence of pluralism and inclusivism among some Southern Baptists. When preaching the convention sermon, in 1986, he pled with pastors to preach boldly and confidently the exclusivity of Christ. In his message, Rogers implored the pastors: "I beg you, without stutter, without stammer, without apology, without equivocation; let us say it on television, in private, in public, and in denominational meetings that Jesus Christ is not a good way to heaven. Jesus Christ is not the best way to heaven. Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven."⁹⁵

Likewise, immediately after Rogers was elected president of the SBC in 1979, he faced a hostile press conference in which he was asked by one news reporter if he believed a Jewish person without Jesus was lost and doomed to spend eternity in hell.

⁹³Pluralism is the belief that a person may be saved through a number of different religious traditions and possible saviors. Pluralism has been promoted by John Hicks dating back to the early 1970s. Inclusivism affirms that Jesus is the only Savior; however, while affirming the ontological necessity of Christ's work, inclusivism rejects the epistemological necessity of Christ's work. While inclusivists agree with exclusivists that Jesus is the only Savior, they disagree that faith in the atoning work of Christ is necessary for salvation. In other words, the Buddhist, Hindu, or Muslim does not need to believe in Jesus in order to receive the benefits of his redemptive death on the cross. Inclusivism was promoted by Clark H. Pinnock and John Sanders. See Nash, *Is Christ the only Savior?* 22-25.

⁹⁴Ibid., 10.

⁹⁵Rogers, quoted in Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 175.

Rogers responded, "I believe that one of my own dear children is lost without Jesus Christ. It isn't a matter of whether a person is a Jew or a Gentile. It's not a matter of race or face or place—it's a matter of grace. People are saved or lost according to what they do with the Son of God."⁹⁶

Rogers consistently preached that man's greatest problem is sin, and man's greatest need is salvation through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. In the sermon "Salvation," for example, Rogers persuasively argued that the purpose for which Christ came into the world was to save sinners. He exclaimed,

Out of all the needs that humanity has what is the greatest need? Is it education? If it were education then Jesus would have come as an educator. Is it finance? If that is true then the Lord Jesus would have come as an economist or a banker. Is it peace? If that were true then Jesus would have been a diplomat. But what is man's greatest need? Why did Jesus come? We do not have to guess about it. In Luke 19:10, Jesus said: "The Son of Man has come to seek and save that which was lost?" Salvation is man's greatest need. To be saved is man's greatest need.⁹⁷

Consequently, anyone familiar with the preaching of Rogers certainly recognizes him as an exclusivist; nevertheless, the fact that Rogers only mentioned the exclusivity of Christ in 24 percent of the sermons used in this study is a grievous failure to confront adequately the growing tide of inclusivism in the church. Moreover, it is a contradiction of the very plea he made to the pastors at the SBC in 1986.

Despite his awareness of the growing tide of inclusivism and pluralism, Rogers clearly failed to follow his own advice and stress the importance of Christ as man's only hope of salvation. Considering the destructive potential of inclusivism and pluralism to the Christian faith, Rogers should have been more persistent in stressing the exclusivity of Christ in his evangelistic preaching ministry. Likewise, other evangelical pastors, like

⁹⁶Adrian Rogers, "Who Is this Man Called Jesus?" Love Worth Finding Ministries, http://www.oneplace.com/ministries/Love_Worth_Finding/Article.asp?article_id=103 (accessed September 26, 2008).

⁹⁷Adrian Rogers, "Salvation" [CD-ROM] (Memphis, TN: Love Worth Finding Ministries), message 2067.

Rogers, cannot afford to assume that all those who attend church believe that Jesus is the only source of salvation; therefore, whenever an invitation is given for people to receive Christ, it is essential to explain that Jesus is not simply another means of salvation for someone to choose or reject, but he is the only means by which anyone may be made right with God. Moreover, it must also be explained and emphasized that explicit faith in Christ, and repentance from sin is essential to receive the gift of salvation. To neglect or ignore the exclusivity of Christ in one's preaching is to create an environment in which sound doctrine will surely diminish while evangelism and missions also declines.

Topical Messages

In his book *Biblical Preaching*, Haddon Robinson contended, "The type of preaching that best carries the force of divine authority is expository preaching."⁹⁸ Robertson readily admitted that it would be fatuous for him to assume that every preacher will agree with his statement. It should not be presumptuous, however, to suppose that Rogers would have agreed with Robinson regarding the efficacy of expository preaching. Rogers acknowledged that expository preaching was his favorite method of preaching, and he identified numerous advantages to expository preaching over topical preaching and other homiletical methodologies.⁹⁹ Consequently, it is difficult to understand why Rogers regressed so often in his pulpit ministry and preached topical sermons.

Of the one hundred sermons used in this study, for example, nearly 25 percent were topical sermons. It might have been assumed that the reason Rogers preached so many topical messages was to focus specifically on the topic of evangelism and proclaim all the essential elements of the gospel; however, nearly half of the topical sermons

⁹⁸Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 20.

⁹⁹Adrian Rogers, "The Sermon Exposition," in *What Every Pastor Ought to Know* [DVD-ROM] (North Palm Beach, FL: The Adrian Rogers Pastor Training Institute, 2011), disc 4, session 6.

researched in this study contained either little or no evangelistic content. Only three of the topical sermons used in this study were actually evangelistic in their content. Even though Rogers explained that a topical message is still a biblical message, and a topical message is necessary sometimes to address some pertinent social or theological issues, the number of topical sermons preached by Rogers was considerable for someone who advocated expository preaching so readily and emphatically.

While some social and doctrinal issues may easily lend themselves to a topical sermon methodology, it is best to preach an expository message from a text dealing with the issue or doctrine as opposed to collecting and organizing various passages of Scripture on the subject. Preachers who possess a high regard for the authority and reliability of Scripture, like Rogers, should make every effort to expound and explain the truths of the Bible from their original context so that the listening audience is aware that they are hearing the Word of God concerning the matter. As Stephen Olford has so aptly stated, “A sermon is the proclamation of the Word of God only if the text of the Word of God is accurately expounded and preached. So in the strictest sense of the term, authentic preaching is expository preaching.”¹⁰⁰

Recommendations

Based upon these six criticisms, there are six recommendations that are now given to correct or help avoid similar concerns in the evangelistic preaching ministry of others. These recommendations are as follows: preach expository sermons; conduct a biblical study of conversion; explain all the essential elements of the gospel in an evangelistic sermon; require counseling and a new member’s class for converts; equip and encourage the laity in personal evangelism; and use the sinner’s prayer cautiously.

¹⁰⁰Stephen Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 4.

Preach Expository Sermons

There can be no saving faith unless the unconverted hear and understand the Word of God (Rom 10:14; 1 Cor 15:1-8, 11).¹⁰¹ As a result, the most effective way to preach evangelistically is to preach expository sermons. It has been aptly said that exposition is the best method of evangelism because it allows the Spirit of God to take the Word of God and make a child of God.¹⁰² Moreover, Rainer discovered in his research of some of the most effective evangelistic churches in America that the pastors of these churches consistently preached expository sermons. According to Rainer, nearly 74 percent of the pastors from the 576 churches he surveyed said that they preached expository messages.¹⁰³ Likewise, many esteemed pastors have been recognized over the past few years as expositors of the Bible. A list of such preachers includes W. A. Criswell, Stephen Olford, Jerry Vines, Tony Evens, and John Phillips.¹⁰⁴ The consistent exposition of Scripture allowed these men to educate their members on the essential doctrines of the faith while proclaiming the gospel to the unconverted. While there are indeed many methods for doing evangelism, the conversion of lost souls is not ultimately dependent upon any human methodology. Genuine evangelism, therefore, is best accomplished by preachers faithfully proclaiming the Word of God while trusting the Holy Spirit of God to bring people to a saving knowledge of Christ.¹⁰⁵

Study Biblical Conversion

The debate between Calvinists and Arminians concerning conversion and the order of salvation (*ordo salutis*) has existed since the Reformation and will most likely

¹⁰¹Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 252.

¹⁰²Bennett, *The Altar Call*, 240.

¹⁰³Thom Rainer, *Effective Evangelistic Churches* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 56.

¹⁰⁴Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 40-43.

¹⁰⁵Bennett, *The Altar Call*, 241.

continue until the return of Christ. These variations of opinions, however, are not an excuse for failing to study the issues and establishing a biblical position regarding the nature and requirements of conversion. The evangelistic preacher should not assume that what he has been taught by others about conversion is necessarily biblical or correct. It is essential that the evangelist is diligent to study the Word of God and acquires a biblical understanding of the nature of God, the depravity of man, the means of salvation, and the work of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁶ Always being mindful of Paul's admonishment to his protégé Timothy, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15 AV). Finally, the evangelist should always be willing and prepared to change his methodology if he discovers that it is in conflict with sound biblical theology.

Explain the Whole Gospel

Unlike the issue of conversion, there is general agreement among evangelicals on the meaning and content of the gospel. It is still advantageous for the evangelist, however, to study the Bible and define the gospel based upon examples of its proclamation (*kerygma*) found in the Scriptures. Streett has observed, "One of the common errors committed by evangelical pastors is the practice of preaching a message devoid of the gospel content and then inviting the listeners to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior."¹⁰⁷ When preparing a sermon, the evangelist should ask himself the following question: "Does this sermon tell me who God is, who man is, who Christ is, what Christ did, and what I must do to receive salvation?" It is imperative that the evangelistic sermon explain the nature of God, the sinfulness of man, the deity and humanity of Jesus, the atonement, and the nature of faith and repentance. If these issues are not addressed in

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 240.

¹⁰⁷Streett, *The Effective Invitation*, 21.

the sermon, then it is important that they be explained carefully in the invitation. Richard even advocated that the invitation be given as “an evangelistic sermon in short form.”¹⁰⁸ Regardless of whether the gospel is presented in the invitation or the sermon, the listeners must know the whole gospel in order to know what they are rejecting or accepting.

Counseling and Follow-up

Regardless of the evangelistic methodology, counseling and follow-up are essential for the affirmation of genuine faith, discipleship, and assimilation into the membership of the church. Richard commented, “Follow-up is a soul-conservation process and can help distinguish between inquirers and converts, professors and confessors, nominal Christians and real Christians.”¹⁰⁹ During the nineteenth century, the evangelist D. L. Moody employed the inquiry room as his follow-up methodology. He also trained members of the laity to serve as counselors to those who remained behind following the preaching service to seek instruction on becoming a Christian.¹¹⁰ Although the inquiry room has been replaced with the modern day altar call in most Southern Baptist churches, some type of follow-up and counseling is always essential once an individual has responded to the invitation to receive Christ. As Streett has so aptly insisted, “Any on-the-spot commitment to Christ must be accompanied by extensive counseling. And every new convert should be disciplined in the faith following his salvation experience.”¹¹¹

In his book *Introduction to Evangelism*, Alvin Reid reminded the evangelistic church of the importance of follow-up, and he rebuked many churches for neglecting the task of following-up on new converts. Reid admonished,

¹⁰⁸Richard, *Preparing Evangelistic Sermon*, 183.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 187.

¹¹⁰Bennett, *The Altar Call*, 144.

¹¹¹Streett, *The Effective Invitation*, 185.

When a person becomes a believer, he or she is birthed into the kingdom of God. But he is a baby spiritually and in need of nurture. Immediate follow-up can help a new believer in her or his time of spiritual infancy. Churches have neglected follow-up. We have left a generation of baby Christians stranded, unsure of how to grow.¹¹²

Consequently, the evangelistic pastor must have a plan for counseling and follow-up with those responding to an invitation to receive Christ. To disregard or ignore the need for follow-up with new converts is paramount to spiritual child abuse and neglect.

There are a variety of options for counseling with new converts. Similar to the methodology of Rogers at Bellevue Baptist Church, for example, the deacons and other members of the laity may be trained for counseling and follow-up.¹¹³ Such counselors, however, must be expected to do more than simply help the convert complete a new member's record. All counselors should be trained and able to lovingly share the gospel, pray, and answer questions the new convert may have about the church or the Bible. Counselors should also be warned not to pressure those coming forward to make an immediate decision if they are unwilling to receive Christ at the time. Finally counselors should meet with a new convert in a room outside the auditorium with a Bible and printed materials for the new convert to take home.

Other follow-up options include the use of a new member's class and Christian mentors. For example, Rainer did a study of 287 churches that were the highest 4 percent of Southern Baptist churches in evangelistic growth. The purpose of Rainer's research was to discover successful methods for retaining new church members; however, some of his discoveries provide insights for successful follow-up ministries. According to Rainer, a significant trend discovered among the churches of this study was the emergence of the

¹¹²Alvin Reid, *Introduction to Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 201.

¹¹³Training materials include Yvonne Burrage, *Decision Time: Commitment Counseling* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998); *Personal Commitment Guide* (Alpharetta, GA: North America Mission Board, 2012); William Fay and Linda Evans Shepherd, *Sharing Jesus without Fear* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999); Phillip D Jensen and Tony Payne, *Two Ways to Live* (Kingsford, NSW: Matthias Media, 2003).

new member's class. Of the churches in this study, over 80 percent expected or required new members to attend a new member's class.¹¹⁴ Nearly half of these churches gave a clear explanation of the gospel message in the class. Nearly 70 percent of the churches discussed and explained doctrinal issue, and over 35 percent of the churches provided training in spiritual discipline.¹¹⁵

When these same churches were questioned about the follow-up ministry with new converts, 99 percent of the churches acknowledged having a follow-up ministry with new converts. Moreover, 72 percent of the churches utilized decision counselors, and over 50 percent assigned new converts to a shepherd ministry. According to Rainer,

The higher-assimilation churches in this study were likely to have some formal requirements or expectations for new Christians. More than eight out of ten of the churches either required or expected each new convert to have post-conversion counseling with a trained follow-up counselor. . . . What is the typical process for this counseling? Usually the new believer is matched with someone of the same gender who can provide about two hours per week of instruction and mentoring.¹¹⁶

Because the vast majority of the churches in Rainer's study were Southern Baptists, it may be assumed that many of these same churches employed the public invitation. The sincerity of a new member's conversion, therefore, was clarified through the counseling and follow-up ministries of the church without the need of abandoning the use of the altar call. Thus, counseling and follow-up are essential for churches wishing to reach people with the gospel and lead them into a genuine conversion experience with Christ.

Evangelism Training

This dissertation has focused upon evangelistic preaching; however, Rogers readily admitted that the greatest evangelistic method for reaching the lost was not his preaching ministry at Bellevue Baptist Church, but the personal evangelism practiced by

¹¹⁴Thom Rainer, *High Expectations* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 60.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 110.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 61.

the members of his congregation. Rogers acknowledged, “My greatest evangelistic tool is not evangelistic preaching, but rather the ministry of the people bringing the lost to Christ. Sheep who are properly fed the Word of God will be healthy and reproduce.”¹¹⁷ Rogers even contended that biblical preaching which is not evangelistic in content may still be considered evangelistic if it motivates and equips the people to do evangelism. For example, Rogers remarked in an interview, “If I have a saint and I am making him a better saint that is evangelism because he becomes an evangelizer.”¹¹⁸ The evangelistic preacher, therefore, must understand that evangelism is not a ministry simply for the pulpit, but it must be carried outside the church to the streets of the church’s community.

Rogers readily admitted that programs such as Evangelism Explosion (EE) and Christian Witness Training (CWT) were used at Bellevue Baptist Church to train the laity in evangelism.¹¹⁹ Rogers also explained that once a person received the gospel message, evangelism was not complete until the person becomes a church member who is growing in the Christian faith and is equipped to witness to others. According to Rogers, “Getting saved does not mean we are finished. We’re only beginning His building process in us.”¹²⁰ Rogers also reprimanded church members who were passive in their witness, and immature in their faith:

Do you know why we have so many flabby Christians? They come down the aisle of the church, they get baptized, and then they come Sunday after Sunday, and just sit, soak, and sour. They do not exercise. They don't have daily quiet times, they're not sharing Christ in their communities and neighborhoods, and they're not ministering in their church.¹²¹

¹¹⁷Rogers quoted in Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 188.

¹¹⁸Rogers, quoted in Duduit, “Preaching and Church Growth,” 6.

¹¹⁹Rogers, quoted in Mims, “Sharing the Gospel,” 7.

¹²⁰Rogers *Foundations for Our Faith*, 1:118.

¹²¹Adrian Rogers, “How to Be a Growing Christian,” Love Worth Finding Ministries, http://www.oneplace.com/ministries/Love_Worth_Finding/Article.asp?article_id=30 (accessed 26 September 26, 2008).

Rogers preached that every Christian should be a growing Christian, and the mark of a growing Christian is personal evangelism. He proclaimed, “This is a mark of a growing Christian – that you are multiplying yourself by sharing it with others.”¹²²

Likewise, the evangelistic preacher must recognize the importance of training and encouraging the laity in the ministry of personal evangelism. Moreover, when giving the invitation, the pastor should acknowledge that perhaps someone in the congregation has received Christ this past week because a faithful church member has been witnessing to him or her and this person needs to make a public profession of faith today. By doing so, the evangelistic pastor will be demonstrating the importance of personal evangelism and emphasizing the importance of church members witnessing to their friends, family, and neighbors. He may also encourage those members who are not witnessing to be more active in personal evangelism.

The Sinner’s Prayer

The sinner’s prayer has become an issue of concern and controversy among some evangelicals. While some pastors have abandoned the use of the sinner’s prayer, others encourage a continued use of the prayer with clarity and caution. Although the sinner’s prayer is a popular approaching of evangelism among American evangelicals, its use is fairly new. In his research of the sinner’s prayer, for example, Chitwood estimated that the popular use of the sinner’s prayer may have started as recently as the 1950s.¹²³ Likewise, Rogers began his preaching ministry in the early 1950s, and used the sinner’s prayer in his sermon invitation throughout his entire ministry. He also included a version of the sinner’s prayer in the publications of Love Worth Finding Ministries.¹²⁴

¹²²Ibid.

¹²³Chitwood, “The Sinner’s Prayer,” 69.

¹²⁴See appendix 2.

Unfortunately, use of the sinner's prayer has given some the impression that it is a type of incantation that instigates salvation. The sinner's prayer is often vague in communicating the concepts of biblical repentance and saving faith. The evangelistic preacher, therefore, must be careful not to place his trust in the repeating of a prayer to bring about conversion. Furthermore, the evangelist must clarify the biblical requirements of salvation (faith and repentance) before introducing the prayer.

Conclusion

In his book *Effective Evangelistic Churches*, Rainer stated that his research of 576 growing churches revealed that the evangelistic preaching ministry of the pastor was still the most effective means of reaching people for Christ. According to Rainer, his research repeatedly revealed that the preacher must believe and preach God's Word with power, and he must keep evangelism as a priority in everything he says from the pulpit.¹²⁵ Hopefully, this study of the evangelistic content of Rogers' preaching ministry at Bellevue Baptist Church has addressed several pertinent issues that will be beneficial for those pastors wishing to establish an evangelistic preaching ministry that is biblically and theologically sound as well as practically effective in reaching the unconverted souls of their congregation and community.

¹²⁵Rainer, *Effective Evangelistic Churches*, 14-15.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Evangelistic preaching is God's chosen method for reaching the unconverted with the gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:21). There may be many other methods for doing evangelism today, but the New Testament repeatedly demonstrates that the ministry of proclamation is the method God has decreed.¹ In the New Testament, for example, the Greek term *kerygma* is used to identify the methodology used by the apostles.² It is this method, evangelistic preaching, that is essential in order to reach the unconverted.

During his thirty-two years as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, Adrian P. Rogers consistently preached the gospel and called the unconverted to repentance and faith with conviction, compassion and integrity. As a devoted husband, father and pastor, he demonstrated an appropriate balance between home and church; moreover, he exemplified godly character and spiritual leadership. As a leader in the SBC, he was an instrumental figure in guiding the convention back to its doctrinal heritage and beliefs in the authority and reliability of the Bible. As the pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, the church experienced phenomenal growth, and increased its membership from 8,739 in 1972, when Rogers first arrived, to over 29,000 in 2005, when Rogers retired. Although God called Rogers home on November 15, 2005, his preaching ministry continues to reach people with the gospel through the broadcast ministry of

¹See Matt 12:41; Luke 11:32; Rom 16:25; 1 Cor 1:21; 2:14; 15:14; 2 Tim 4:17; and Titus 1:3.

²See C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments: With an Appendix on Eschatology and History* (repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 7-35; Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, updated ed. (London: Eagle Publishing, 1970), 68-83; and Lewis A. Drummond, *The Word of the Cross: A Contemporary Theology of Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 203-19.

Love Worth Finding. The life and ministry of Rogers exemplifies the influence of a pastor who is empowered by the Holy Spirit and committed to the preaching of the Word of God.³

This study of the evangelistic preaching of Rogers was conducted with the objective of identifying the evangelistic content of Rogers' sermons in order to determine if he did, in fact, always preach an evangelistic sermon from the pulpit of Bellevue Baptist Church over his thirty-two years as pastor. The motivation behind this study was an interview with Rogers in which he said that all preaching is evangelistic preaching if it is good preaching.⁴ In addition, this study had a secondary objective of identifying the characteristics of Rogers' pulpit ministry that contributed to his success as an evangelistic preacher. These objectives were achieved by first examining the life of Rogers and identifying the events and people that influenced him and his ministry. Second, this study identified the methodology used by Rogers in his sermon preparation, organization, and proclamation. This study also identified the characteristics of effective evangelistic preaching reflected in his pulpit ministry. Third, this study examined the invitations of Rogers which were a hallmark of his evangelistic preaching ministry. Fourth, this study selected and examined one hundred sermons of Rogers to measure the evangelistic content of his messages, and evaluated the evangelistic preaching of Rogers based upon those findings. This study will now conclude with a brief discussion of the importance of evangelistic preaching in pastoral ministry, the discoveries made from the research of Rogers' evangelistic preaching, qualities of Rogers' ministry worthy of emulating, and finally, identify areas for further study in the life and ministry of Rogers.

³Michael Foust, "Adrian Rogers, Longtime Bellevue Pastor and Leader in Conservative Resurgence, Dies," *Baptist Press*, November 15, 2005, <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=22069> (accessed March 15, 2012).

⁴Michael Dudit, "Preaching and Church Growth: An Interview with Adrian Rogers," *Preaching* 15 (May-June 2000): 6.

Reasons for Evangelistic Preaching

According to Rogers, “The church must evangelize, or fossilize.”⁵ It was the conviction of Rogers that the proclamation of the gospel was a key responsibility of the pastor. Likewise, W. A. Criswell stated,

The pastor is under the command of God to do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim 4:5). The evangelist, according to the word of Paul in Ephesians 4:11, is one of the gifts of the ascended Christ to the church. Among the apostles, prophets, and pastor-teachers, he stands as a God anointed, God called minister in the household of faith. But the work the evangelist does in his itinerant ministry, the pastor is to do in his pastoral ministry. If he fails in this he fails God. If he is faithful in this he is faithful to God. There is no alternative. The pastor is to win souls to Jesus.⁶

Unfortunately, pastors who fervently and faithfully preach evangelistically from the pulpit are often criticized by others; nevertheless, there are several reasons why pastors need to continue to preach evangelistic sermons from the pulpit.⁷

First, God has sovereignly chosen to reach the unconverted by means of evangelistic proclamation. Ramesh Richard addressed the theological framework for evangelistic preaching in his book *Preparing Evangelistic Sermons*, and exclaimed,

In God’s provision of salvation to human beings, he has included evangelistic proclamation in the salvation sequence he has initiated. The Father’s election, Christ’s accomplishments, the Holy Spirit’s role, evangelistic proclamation, and faith response seamlessly work together for a person’s salvation. None of these cause salvation by themselves. In a multiple but distinguishable set of conditions, layered together, they effect salvation of human beings.⁸

Consequently, there is no work of conversion without the proclamation of the gospel. It is not the responsibility of the pastor to understand why God selected “the foolishness of

⁵Adrian Rogers, “The Church of Jesus Christ,” sermon transcript of a message on Matt 16:13-18 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, TN, 14 October 1990 (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

⁶W. A. Criswell, *Criswell’s Guidebook for Pastors* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1980), 227. It is important to note that W. A. Criswell was identified by Rogers as a major influence in his own ministry and theology. See Joyce Rogers, and Julie-Allyson Ieron, *Love Worth Finding: The Life of Adrian Rogers and His Philosophy of Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Press, 2005), 125.

⁷The enlighten culture no longer recognizes the need for the gospel, and believes the pulpit should be used primarily for addressing social reform. See Criswell, *Guidebook for Pastors*, 230.

⁸Ramesh Richard, *Preparing Evangelistic Sermons: A Seven-Step Method for Preaching Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2005), 64.

preaching” (1 Cor 1:21) as the method for reaching the unconverted with the gospel, but it is his responsibility to employ God’s decreed methodology. The first reason, therefore, why pastors should preach evangelistic messages is because God has decreed the proclamation of the gospel as a stipulation for reaching the unconverted.

Secondly, evangelistic preaching is essential to the health and growth of the church. According to Criswell, the primary reason so many churches are declining and dying is because of a lack of evangelistic preaching.⁹ Likewise, Thom Rainer has identified a high correlation between evangelistic preaching and church growth in his book *Effective Evangelistic Churches*.¹⁰ Additionally, Rainer discovered in a study of new church members that evangelistic, expository preaching also played a significant role in the church attendance and eventual church membership of most prospects and visitors.¹¹ Consequently, growing churches are churches that are reaching people evangelistically, and the most proven method for reaching the unconverted is still the evangelistic preaching ministry of the pastor. Evangelistic preaching, therefore, is a proven and effective method for church growth.

Third, evangelistic preaching is important because of the moral decline of modern culture. People today are facing various moral and social problems: drugs, alcoholism, illicit sexual behavior, gender confusion, divorce, and pornography. Such problems may only be resolved by the conversion of sinners by the power of the gospel. For example, Jesus explained, “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander” (Matt 15:19 NIV). Consequently, the only way to change a decadent culture is by changing the hearts of its people.

⁹Criswell, *Guidebook for Pastors*, 229.

¹⁰Thom Rainer, *Effective Evangelistic Churches* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), chap. 3.

¹¹Thom Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 2001), chap. 2.

In the past, God has used evangelistic preaching and spiritual revival to bring about social reform and moral change. For example, John Mark Terry observed that the First Great Awakening significantly raised the level of public morality in the American colonies near the end of the seventeenth century.¹² Likewise, Malcolm McDow and Alvin Reid stated that the significance of the Second Great Awakening upon the cultural fiber of America cannot be fully comprehended. This spiritual movement of the eighteenth century, for example, led to several social reforms in the nation and assisted in the establishment of the American Temperance Society; The American Peace Society; and the American Anti-slavery Society.¹³ Similar to the First Great Awakening which centered upon the preaching of Jonathan Edwards, the Second Great Awakening was spread through the evangelistic preaching of several preachers such as Asahel Nettleton, Lyman Beecher, James Caughey, Jacob Knapp, and Charles Finney.¹⁴ Though not all of these men were pastors like Edwards, they were all men who preached evangelistic sermons and called the unconverted to repentance and faith. Consequently, the history of revivals and spiritual awakenings provides further evidence that evangelistic preaching has been instrumental in producing social and moral reform. Thus, it is logical to assume that God is able to cause the same moral change in modern culture that he produced in the past through the means of evangelistic preaching.

Discoveries from Study

In chapter 1, several questions were listed to identify the issues this study would address and the discoveries this study hoped to make. The first question on this list addressed the people and events in Rogers' life that influenced and motivated his passion

¹²John Mark Terry, *Evangelism: A Concise History* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 124.

¹³Malcolm McDow and Alvin L. Reid, *FireFall: How God has Shaped History through Revivals* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 248.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 237-39.

for evangelism. In chapter 2, a biography of Rogers was given explaining how he was converted as a young adolescent responding to an altar call with his father at a revival service. The use of the altar call was ubiquitous among Southern Baptist churches during the early years of Roger's life and ministry, and its prevalent use most likely contributed to his employment of it in the beginning of his own evangelistic preaching ministry. Rogers mentioned that early in his ministry he failed to give an altar call following a Sunday evening worship service when a man shouted from the back of the congregation that he wanted to become a Christian. After this experience, Rogers resolved never to preach without giving an invitation for people to be saved.

As a teenager, Rogers was encouraged by his pastor, Guy Marlowe, to pursue God's purpose for his life. Marlowe attended the football games of Rogers, and he often encouraged Rogers in his faith. Finally, while he was attending a youth conference at Ridgecrest, Rogers surrendered to the ministry by once again responding to an altar call.

When Rogers was in college, he was greatly impressed by the evangelistic ministry of Billy Graham. Rogers commented that he wanted to preach and give an invitation similar to Graham's methodology. Later, in seminary Rogers was influenced by the evangelistic fervor of his professor B. Gray Allison. Rogers commented that Allison had a passion for soul winning unlike any man he had ever met.¹⁵ He and Allison eventually became close friends.

The event that had the greatly impact on the life of Rogers was the death of his infant son, Philip. The tragedy of Philip's death drove him back to a greater dependence upon the Holy Spirit, and it renewed the intimacy of his relationship with Christ. Rogers readily spoke of this heartbreaking loss, but he also acknowledged how God used this event to impact his spiritual life and ministry.

¹⁵Adrian Rogers, quoted in Joyce Rogers and Julie-Allison Ieron, *Love Worth Finding: The Life of Adrian Rogers and His Philosophy of Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 125.

The second issue addressed in this study focused upon the evangelistic preaching of Rogers and sought to determine how often Rogers preached an evangelistic sermon from the pulpit of Bellevue Baptist Church. In order to answer this question, it was necessary to measure the gospel content of the sermons of Rogers by asking five questions: (1) Does the sermon address the nature of God as holy and just? (2) Does the sermon address the sinful nature of man? (3) Does the sermon identify the nature of Christ? (4) Does the sermon explain the death of Christ? (5) Does the sermon call for a response of repentance and faith? Of one hundred sermons by Rogers, only twenty-five were found to be evangelistic in their content.

Another focus of this study concerned the evangelistic invitations of Rogers and sought to determine how often Rogers gave an invitation, and what was the content of his invitations. Despite the lack of evangelistic content in many of his sermons, Rogers still gave an invitation at the conclusion of his message. The invitations of Rogers took various forms, but he usually gave a sinner's prayer during his invitation. The invitation and sinner's prayer focused upon the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor 15:1-4) which Rogers considered to be the gospel message. When giving the sinner's prayer Rogers always closed the prayer with a request for the new converts to have the courage to make their decision public during the altar call.

The final issue concerned the hermeneutical integrity of Rogers' sermons and sought to determine if Rogers violated the original intent of a passage in order to give an evangelistic appeal or twist to his message. It was discovered that Rogers did allegorize some passages in order to preach Christ. He also identified several Old Testament types for which no clear antitype was given in the New Testament or by the biblical author. Although such occasions were usually limited to a few of his sermons with an Old Testament text, it is a practice that should be avoided by those wishing to be faithful to the original intent of the passage in their exposition and preaching.

Applications from Study

When reflecting over the various aspects of the life and ministry of Rogers, there are numerous positive qualities about him that are clearly recognizable. First, there are a number of physical traits: his athletic stature, his resounding baritone voice, and his gleaming smile. Second, there are a number of personality characteristics: his sense of humor and quick wit, his friendly and personable nature, and his logical intellect. Consequently, when listing the qualities of Rogers that are worth emulating, there are surely more than the few mentioned in this chapter; however, the following attributes are those that are most applicable to the nature of this study.

A Commitment to Biblical Authority

In 1972, researcher Dean M. Kelley stunned the liberal protestant community with his book *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing: A Study in Sociology of Religion*. Originally commissioned by the National Council of Churches, Kelly set out to discover why conservative churches were growing while more liberal churches were declining. In his book, Kelley argued that evangelical churches grow because they are serious about doctrine and Christian behavior. Likewise, the success of the preaching ministry of Rogers, and the phenomenal growth of Bellevue Baptist Church over his thirty-two years as pastor may be considerably attributed to the conservative theology of Rogers, especially as it applies to his understanding of the Bible as the inerrant and infallible Word of God. For Rogers, the Bible served a dual purpose in his evangelistic preaching ministry: first, the Bible gave him confidence in his preaching; and second, the Bible provided the content of his evangelistic messages.

According to Rogers, the starting place for any preacher who wishes to be an effective evangelist is to acquire a firm conviction of the inspiration and authority of the Bible. He stated that growing churches are those with a pastor in the pulpit who believes

and preaches the Bible as the Word of God.¹⁶ A favorite Bible verse, Hebrews 4:12 is often quoted by Rogers in several of his sermons:

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (AV)

In reference to this passage, Rogers declared, “There’s life and there’s energy in the Bible. We read other books while this book reads us. It is incredible. It is saving to the sinner. I have used this book so many times to lead people to Christ and have seen them transformed.”¹⁷ Rogers believed that regardless of one’s evangelistic methodology, the key to winning people to Christ is preaching the Word of God.

Secondly, the Bible was the source of Rogers’ sermons. Although he did not always preach expository sermons, he did preach biblical sermons, and he began his sermons with a biblical text. Moreover, his favorite type of preaching was indeed expositional preaching. As a result, Rogers developed a disciplined study habit early in his ministry that focused on sermon preparation. While at Bellevue, the priority of Rogers’ ministry was the exposition of biblical truth and the application of biblical truth upon modern life. According to Rogers, “Although the Bible is a supernatural book, it is not automatically applicable to today’s world.”¹⁸ Thus, Rogers often spent hours in his study each week in order to determine the proper meaning of a biblical text and how best to apply that truth to the needs of his congregation. The first lesson that may be gleaned from this study of the evangelistic preaching of Rogers, therefore, is the importance of understanding the Bible as the Word of God and preaching expositional sermons to address the needs and concerns of one’s congregation.

¹⁶Adrian Rogers, *What Every Christian Ought to Know* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 7.

¹⁷Ibid., 22.

¹⁸Rogers, quoted in Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 165.

Preaching for a Verdict

When considering the various people who have influenced the preaching ministry of Rogers, perhaps no one impressed and influenced Rogers more than Billy Graham. According to Graham, “Our great privilege as evangelists is to call on men and women to cross the river to find life, and tell them of the good news of the bridge God has built for them in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ.”¹⁹ In his sermons, Graham called people to make a decision regarding God’s bridge to life; likewise, Rogers followed Graham’s example and preached for a verdict from his listeners. According to Rogers, “An effective sermon moves toward an effective action.”²⁰ For Rogers, the preacher aims to confront, convict, convert, and comfort. Although the sermons of Rogers addressed various topics and issues, he always closed his message by giving an invitation for people to come to Christ. Rogers explained,

I believe in calling for a decision. If I preach on tithing, I would say at the end of the message: “When I am talking about tithing and God blessing stewardship, I am talking to a child of God. If you are not a child of God then that is where you need to start today, by giving your heart to Christ.” And I will transition right into an invitation.²¹

There is much debate over the appropriateness of the altar call as an evangelistic method; nevertheless, Rogers did manage to use this method effectively in his preaching ministry. Irrespective of ones’ view concerning the altar call, hopefully a lesson that may be acquired from the ministry of Rogers is the importance of preaching for a decision and encouraging people to make a decision regarding Christ regardless if an altar call is given or some other methodology is employed.

¹⁹Billy Graham, “The Evangelist’s Appeal for Decision,” in *The Calling of an Evangelist: The Second International Congress for Itinerant Evangelists, Amsterdam, The Netherlands*, 2nd ed., ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1986), 171.

²⁰Rogers, quoted in Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 195.

²¹Rogers, quoted in Michael Duduit, “Preaching and Church Growth,” 6.

A Genuine Love for Christ

One of the recognizable characteristics of Rogers' ministry at Bellevue was his sincere love for Christ. When Jesus was questioned by a Pharisee and asked to identify the greatest commandment, the Bible says, "Jesus replied, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment" (Matt 22:37-38 NIV). Likewise, when Rogers was questioned about evangelistic preaching, he answered,

I do not view the preacher's love for souls as the greatest key that would insure ministerial success. Rather I believe the greatest key for ministerial success to be the preacher's personal love for Jesus Christ.

If the preacher will love Jesus, he will love what Jesus loves. Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Do you love me? Feed my sheep." Jesus did not ask, "Peter do you love my sheep, or do you love to feed my sheep?" But He asked, "Do you love me? Feed my sheep."²²

Because of his love for Jesus and his heart's desire to serve Jesus, Rogers would commit the beginning of his day in devotional Bible reading and prayer. According to Rogers, one of the major reasons many preachers fail to see evangelistic results in their ministry is because they have grown diffident in their prayer and devotional life.²³

Dependency upon the Holy Spirit

Rogers demonstrated a tremendous dependency upon the work of the Holy Spirit of God in his evangelistic preaching ministry. Rogers acknowledged that only the Holy Spirit can convict and cause the sinner to understand and receive the gospel message. He also believed it was important for the pastor to seek a special anointing of the Holy Spirit every time he stood in the pulpit to preach. Regarding this remarkable quality of Rogers, Bill Bennett commented,

I became acquainted with Adrian Rogers in 1971, and we remained close friends until his death in 2005. In my opinion he was the most powerful preacher Southern Baptists produced in my lifetime. The secret to his power was not primarily in his

²²Rogers, quoted in Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 188.

²³*Ibid.*, 163.

use of words, which he was a master, but in the filling and anointing of the Holy Spirit.²⁴

The ministry of Rogers exemplifies a life of prayerfulness and holiness. While the gospel preacher should indeed be a student of biblical languages, homiletics, and hermeneutics, nevertheless, academic achievements should never be a substitute for personal holiness, prayer, and private devotions. Rogers remarkably exemplified a pastor who balanced time in the prayer closet with time in the study and church office.

Personal Integrity

The ministry of Rogers demonstrated the importance of integrity. When asked in an interview to identify the most important lesson he learned in the ministry, Rogers answered that it was the necessity for integrity in the life of the preacher. Likewise, when Rogers gave advised to young pastors, he encourages them to live, preach, and minister with integrity.²⁵ For Rogers, there was no substitute for integrity.

Integrity began at home for Rogers with the relationship he had with his wife and children. He believed it was important to be the same man in the kitchen that he was in the pulpit. Moreover, Rogers believed it was important for the pastor to avoid both questionable habits and places. For example, he did not attend the movie theatre, nor did he watch sitcoms or dramas on television.²⁶ For Rogers, the reputation and character of the church was simply a reflection of the reputation and character of the pastor. Rogers declared, “There needs to be a separation of worldliness and the church. The pastor needs to be a man who has character.”²⁷ He also reprimanded, “Preachers have lowered their

²⁴Bill Bennett, “The Secret of Preaching with Power,” in *Text-Driven Preaching: God's Word at the Heart of Every Sermon*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen, and Ned Mathews (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2010), 71.

²⁵Rogers, quoted in Dudit, “Preaching and Church Growth,” 6.

²⁶Steve Rogers, telephone interview by author, digital recording, December 10, 2011.

²⁷Adrian Rogers, “The Pastor’s Personal Integrity,” in *What Every Pastor Ought to Know* [DVD-ROM] (North Palm Beach, FL: The Adrian Rogers Pastor Training Institute, 2011), disc 2, session 2.

standards regarding the books they read or the movies they watch.”²⁸ Likewise, Rogers asserted, “When a man loves Jesus with all his heart, then worldliness is not going to be a problem.”²⁹ Consequently, Rogers told one group of pastors, “If you do not want to be holy then get out of the ministry. A preacher should be so holy that his people are a little afraid of him.”³⁰ The life of Rogers, therefore, provides a glowing example of a man and ministry with godly integrity.

A Genuine Conversion and Call

Finally, it should be noted that Rogers was confident in communicating the gospel because of the assurance he possessed in his own conversion and calling. It is difficult to imagine that there are preachers proclaiming the gospel, inviting people to Christ, and yet they have not been genuinely converted themselves. Richard Baxter, however, cautioned the gospel preachers of England in the seventeenth century to take heed of their own souls, and be sure that the same grace they preach is effectual in their own hearts and lives. Baxter, for example, warned: “Believe it, brethren, God never saved any man for being a preacher, nor because he was an abled preacher; but because he was a justified, sanctified man, and consequently faithful to his Master’s work. Take heed, therefore, to yourselves first, that you be that which you persuade your hearers to be, and believe that which you persuade them to believe, and heartily entertain that Savior whom you offer to them.”³¹

Rogers’ conversion experience. Similar to Baxter’s comments, Rogers also acknowledged that it is possible for an unregenerate preacher to see people saved under

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1981), 54.

his preaching ministry. According to Rogers, “I believe some people have been saved through the ministry of an unsaved preacher.”³² Rogers attributes such conversions to the power of God’s Word; nevertheless, Rogers also exclaimed “The preacher’s personal conversion is vital because you cannot preach what you do not know any more than you can come from where you have not been.”³³ An unconverted preacher, according to Rogers, is powerless and unprofitable because his ministry is void of the Holy Spirit.

In his sermons and writings, Rogers readily acknowledged the uncertainty he possessed about the specific time of his own conversion. For example, he often made reference to his response at an invitation during a church revival as the time when he was converted. He also spoke of a later time when he prayed at a street corner in West Palm Beach as the time when he was converted. Regardless of the specific time, Rogers was certain of his conversion by the time he began preaching in college.

The importance of a genuine conversion experience is perhaps best explained by Broadus in his classic book *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*. Broadus exclaimed, “Preaching is truth through personality, or preaching is proclamation by a chosen man. The preacher is not the source of the message; it is from God. But he is the channel of the message. The message moves through his personality. He is the transmitter.”³⁴ Consequently, an effective transmitter of God’s gospel message is indeed someone who has experienced God’s grace and is empowered by the indwelling presence of God’s Holy Spirit as Rogers clearly demonstrated in his own life and ministry.

Rogers call to the ministry. In addition to a genuine conversion experience, Rogers also expressed a sincere sense of a calling to preach the gospel. Again Broadus

³²Rogers, quoted in Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 170.

³³Ibid.

³⁴John Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 4th ed., rev. ed. Vernon L. Stanfield (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1979), 13.

declared: “The preacher should be a person with a call from God. Ministers are classed as professionals, but they should never be persons with just a ‘profession.’ They are people with a divine calling.”³⁵ In some sense every believer is called to proclaim the gospel to the unconverted. For example, J. I. Packer wrote, “There is something badly wrong with a Christian who does not have a passion for evangelism.”³⁶ Likewise, Ramesh Richard described evangelistic preaching not so much as a calling, but as a motivation of one’s inner being to become skilled in communicating the gospel. He stated, “You may be a pastor, professor, or plumber, but if you sense a personal giftedness in evangelism combined with a heart sensitive to non-Christians, you can focus toward learning to preach evangelistically.”³⁷

Similarly, Rogers did not believe that a specific or special calling was necessary to be an evangelistic preacher. For example, when he was asked about the importance of a divine calling to preach the gospel, Rogers explained,

God’s call is a call to be a man of God. I do not think a man primarily surrenders to a specific ministry, such as to preach, to teach, to sing, or to be a pastor, evangelist, or missionary. I believe he surrenders to the Lord.

Any man, who is a child of God, may and should preach. I do not think there are gifted individuals who possess the oracles of God and others who do not. I think any man may and should preach if he has an opportunity.³⁸

Like Packer and Richard, it was the conviction of Rogers that every Christian ought to proclaim the gospel message to the unconverted; however, Rogers did acknowledge that he believed there is indeed a need for a special calling of God upon someone who enters the gospel ministry. In his answer to the aforementioned question on a call to preach, for example, Rogers elaborated further on the issue and commented, “I do believe, however,

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶J. I. Packer, Foreword, in Lewis Drummond *The Word of the Cross: A Theology of Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992).

³⁷Richard, *Preparing Evangelistic Sermons*, 19.

³⁸Rogers, quoted in Rogers and Ieron, *Love Worth Finding*, 170.

that no man should be a pastor of a church or separated to the ministry who has not received a definite call.”³⁹

Likewise, Rogers sincerely believed that he had received a genuine call to be a pastor and preacher of the gospel. Rogers often spoke of the call to preach as a privilege for which he was grateful to have received. He considered the opportunity to be a pastor and preacher as the greatest honor any man can ever receive. He often shared in his sermons the circumstances and the certainty of his own calling to preach the gospel. In the message “Knowing the Time,” for example, Rogers confidently confessed,

When I was in high school, I prayed, “Lord Jesus, what do you want me to do?” Before God ever called me into the ministry, I said, “Lord I’ll do whatever you want me to do.” I had no idea that God would want me to preach. My dad was not a preacher. My dad and I were saved the same night. I didn’t have uncles and brothers in the ministry.

I wasn’t given to public speaking. I wasn’t afraid of much that moved on a football field, but when a man called on me to pray in Sunday school class, I just said, “I’m sorry, I can’t do it. Excuse me.” It embarrassed him, and it embarrassed me. I didn’t want to speak in public. I had no idea that I could even speak in public.

I didn’t think that God would call me to be a preacher, pastor, but I said, “Lord, I’ll do anything you want me to.” And, as it were, I signed my name in the bottom of a page and said, “Lord, you fill it in.” And, I don’t even know how the germ got into my heart. But, somehow, somewhere, there came inkling in this inner sanctum of my being that God might want me to preach His glorious gospel.

I never fought the call to preach, these guys talk about “I surrendered to preach.” I say, “Boy, boy, hot dog.” I’m so glad God called me to preach.⁴⁰

Like the apostle Paul who said, “But it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen” (Gal 1:15-16a AV). Rogers also acknowledged with amazement that he was called by God to preach the gospel. Moreover, Rogers even went so far as to exclaim that there was never a time in his ministry where he doubted God’s divine call for him to preach the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.⁴¹ Consequently, Rogers preached

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Adrian Rogers, “Knowing the Time,” sermon transcript of a message on Rom 13:11-14 delivered at Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, TN (The Adrian Rogers Legacy Library, 2010).

⁴¹Rogers, quoted in Angela Elwell Hunt, “SBC’s New President Adrian Rogers Undoubtedly Called to Preach.” *Fundamentalist Journal* 5 (July/August 1986): 59.

the gospel with boldness and conviction because he was confident of both his conversion under the preaching of the gospel and his calling to preach the gospel.

Areas of Further Study

As was noted in chapter 1, there are several research projects on the preaching of Rogers. This project focused upon the evangelistic element of his preaching. There are still other areas of Rogers' ministry that may be examined in future research projects. For example, the leadership and administrative skills of Rogers are a worthy topic for academic research. Rogers was a recognized leader in the church, community and the SBC. He was a central figure in the conservative resurgence in the 1980s. His interpersonal relationship skills, his work with church staff at Bellevue Baptist Church, and his work with other denominational leaders are areas that may be of great benefit for those interested in providing a model for successful pastoral leadership. Moreover, such research may include an examination of Rogers' views on ecclesiology. Rogers was a strong supporter of single elder leadership in the local church. His views regarding the role of the pastor, the role of the laity, and the role of women in the church may all be included in a study of his leadership. Likewise, this study may examine the qualifications and responsibilities of deacons at Bellevue, and other church leaders while he was pastor.

Another area of study is the discipleship ministry of Bellevue Baptist Church during the thirty-two years of Rogers' ministry at the church. Such a research project may focus upon the hundreds of people who joined the church by baptism each year at Bellevue Baptist Church and what steps were taken to determine the genuineness of their profession of faith, and what method was used for their assimilation into the ministry of the church. This research project may consider the requirements for church membership at Bellevue and the method, if any, of church discipline while Rogers was pastor.

Conclusion

Few men have been as gifted and successful in their pulpit ministry as Adrian Rogers. He was described as the “Prince of Preachers” by many Southern Baptists. His talent as a speaker, his vibrant personality, and his compassion for people all contributed to his success as a pastor and preacher. Few men may hope to be as dynamic and successful in the pulpit as Rogers; nevertheless, there are aspects and qualities about his ministry that may be emulated and beneficial to others in their evangelistic preaching ministry. Hopefully, this study has provided some insights and instruction that may be helpful for those pastors wishing to be more effective in proclaiming the gospel to the unconverted.

APPENDIX 1
ONE HUNDRED SERMONS

The following is the list of sermons used in this study that were preached by Adrian Rogers from the pulpit of Bellevue Baptist Church during his thirty-two years as senior pastor of the church from 1972-2005. The following list of sermons is arranged in biblical order and provides the title of the message, date the message was preached and service in which the message was preached (Sunday morning service, Sunday evening service, or Wednesday night service). This list also provides an outline of the major points of the sermon and the sub-points when they are clearly stated in the message. Finally, there is an assessment of each sermon identifying the type of sermon Rogers preached (topical, textual or expository), evangelistic content of the sermon, objective of the sermon and theological issues addressed in the sermon.

**“Captain Noah and the Good Ship Grace”
Genesis 6:12–22**

Sermon was preached on March 26, 2000, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Security of the Ship
- II. The Sufficiency of the Ship
- III. The Shape of the Ship
- IV. The Structure of the Ship
- V. The Sustenance of the Ship
- VI. The Schedule of the Ship
- VII. The Security that Is Pictured in the Ship

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a biographical exposition that focused upon the ark more so than Noah. The sermon was evangelistic in its content. Rogers drew a parallel between the days of Noah and modern times. He presented the ark of Noah as a type of Christ based upon 1 Peter 3. The objective of the sermon was to demonstrate that security may be found only in a personal relationship with Christ. Rogers argued the exclusivity of Christ for salvation.

He emphasized the importance of the atonement of Christ and the need for repentance and faith. Rogers also addressed eternal security, and stressed the urgency of salvation.

**“The Sin of Sodom and the Spirit of the World”
Genesis 13:1-11**

Sermon was preached on August 3, 2003, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The World Courted Lot
- II. The World Conformed Lot
- III. The World Corrupted Lot
- IV. The World Cost Lot

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a biographical exposition on Lot and had almost no evangelistic content. The objective of the message was to warn God’s people of the dangers of worldliness and compromise. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were Satan, judgment, hell, heaven, and the Holy Spirit.

**“Dying Grace”
Genesis 47:28-29**

Sermon was preached on June 9, 1981. Time of the service was unavailable.

Sermon Outline

- I. Jacob Had a Forgiving Lord with Him
- II. Jacob Had a Fruitful Life behind Him
- III. Jacob Had a Family Legacy after Him
- IV. Jacob Had a Future Light around Him
- V. Jacob Had Faithful Loved Ones Awaiting Him

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a biographical textual message that focused on the death of Jacob. The sermon was evangelistic in its content. In the message, Rogers identified several elements

and characteristics that should be true of every child of God when he or she faces death. The objective of the sermon was to motivate people to prepare for death by receiving Christ. Rogers addressed the certainty of death and the need for everyone to prepare for death. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were judgment, heaven and hell, the atonement, and the necessity of spiritual regeneration.

“Families that Choose Life”
Exodus 20:1-13

Sermon was preached on May 28, 1995. Time of the service was unavailable.

Sermon Outline

- I. God Gives Three Kinds of Life
 - A. Physical Life
 - B. Spiritual Life
 - C. Eternal Life
- II. Satan Destroys Life
 - A. Satan’s Motive
 - B. Satan’s Methods
- III. Parents Protect Life
 - A. Physical Life
 - B. Social Life
 - C. Spiritual Life

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a topical sermon on abortion and was only somewhat evangelistic. The focus of the sermon was on the sixth commandment and the objective of the sermon was to motivate parents to teach their children the value of human life. The issues addressed were Satan, Christ, depravity, judgment and hell. Sermon concluded with an appeal for fathers to be the spiritual leaders of the family.

“Knowing the Ways of God”
Exodus 33:12-14

Sermon was preached on December 29, 2002, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Difference between Knowing God’s Way and His Work

- A. Rest and Relapse
 - B. Intimacy and Infatuation
 - C. Teacher and Testifier
 - D. Peace and Panic
 - E. Intercession and Indifference
- II. How Can You Know the Ways of God
 - A. Not by Human Reason
 - B. Through an Intimate Relationship with God

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a topical message that answered the question, “How can you know the ways of God?” The evangelistic content of the message was almost none. The message focused on the characteristics of a true believer in Christ. Rogers used Moses as a biblical example for others to emulate in their relationship with God. Rogers addressed the difference between knowing the works of God and knowing the ways of God. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were the nature of God and sanctification. The sermon was the last message Rogers preached in 2002. The objective of the message was to motivate the members of Bellevue Baptist Church to discover the will of God for their lives and then follow the will of God for their lives in the upcoming New Year.

“Pass the Salt” Leviticus 2:11-13

Sermon was preached on November 17, 1996, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Presenting Christ in His Purity: Leaven
- II. Presenting Christ in His Integrity: Honey
- III. Presenting Christ in His Vitality: Salt

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a textual message; however, it was largely allegorical, and had almost no evangelistic content. The focus of the sermon was upon the person and character of Christ and its objective was to motivate Christians to follow the example of Jesus in ministry and missions. The sermon began with the question, “Do you want to know how to understand the Bible?” According to Rogers, in order to understand the Old Testament, one must understand the second coming of Christ in the Bible, one must understand that Israel is analogous for the Christian life, and one must understand that Jesus can be found anywhere in the Bible. The theological topics addressed in this sermon were the Bible,

the second coming of Christ, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, universalism, salvation, and the role of government in the providence of God.

“The Sin of Omission”
Numbers 32:23

Sermon was preached on September 28, 1986, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Sin of Omission Is a Very Destructive Sin
- II. The Sin of Omission Is a Very Deceiving Sin
- III. The Sin of Omission Is a Very Determined Sin

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a textual-topical sermon. A similar message was preached by Rogers from James 4:17 by the same title. The sermon was somewhat evangelistic in its content. The sermon began with the question, “What can you be sure of in life?” The answer was “your sins will find you out.” The sin Moses addressed in this passage, according to Rogers, was the sin of omission. The sermon focused on the ways man can sin by not doing what God has told him to do. In this sermon, Rogers argued that all sin has been atoned for except the sin of rejecting Christ. The objective of the sermon was to motivate people to focus on the things that they should do for Christ, so that they will not be able to do the things God has told them not to do. The theological issues addressed in this sermon were judgment and hell, the authority of the Bible, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the power of prayer, the ministry of the local church, evangelism, and the extent of the atonement.

“What Fathers Should Teach Their Children about Sex”
Deuteronomy 5:18, 21; 6:6-9

Sermon was preached on May 4, 1986, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Dads Need to Point Out the Dangers about Sex
- II. Dads Need to Give Out Directions about Sex
- III. Dads Need to Point out the Delights about Sex

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message; however, the text from which Rogers got his outline was Proverbs chapter five and not Deuteronomy chapters five and six. The sermon had almost no evangelistic content. The introduction was long, and addressed the role of the father in the home. The objective of the sermon was to motivate fathers to be responsible for teaching their children God's plan for sex in marriage. The issues addressed in the sermon were marriage, Satan, judgment, and sin.

“The Sin that Lost a War”

Joshua 7:1-5

Sermon was preached on October 16, 1977, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Underlying Cause of Sin
- II. The Unfailing Curse of Sin
- III. The Ultimate Consequences of Sin

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message and was evangelistic in its content. The purpose of the message was to demonstrate the destructive effects of sin in the life of a Christian. The objective of the message was to teach church members how to have victory over temptation and sin. The introduction of the message addressed the background of the text and explained the destructive consequences of pride. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were ecclesiology, hamartiology, and soteriology. The message concluded with a definition of both grace and mercy.

“Give Me this Mountain”

Joshua 14:6-12

Sermon was preached on November 13, 1977, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Character of Caleb
- II. The Confidence of Caleb
- III. The Courage of Caleb
- IV. The Conquest of Caleb

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a biographical exposition on the life of Caleb and had no evangelistic content. The focus of the message was upon conquering the giants of doubt, fear, and sin that prevent the child of God from receiving the promises of God. The objective of the message was to help every church member live the victorious Christian life. The issues addressed in the message were the authority of Scripture, the importance and power of prayer, and the nature of spiritual warfare.

“Bring Back the Glory to America” Judges 1:1-2

Sermon was preached on July 10, 1994. Time of service was unavailable.

Sermon Outline

- I. Days of Glorious Conquest
- II. Days of Gradual Compromise
 - A. The Enemies that They Feared
 - B. The Enemies that They Favored
 - C. The Enemies with Whom They Fellowshiped
- III. Days of Grim Consequences

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a biographical exposition of Israel during the time of the Judges. The sermon had almost no evangelistic content. The focus was upon the need for spiritual revival in America. The objective of the message was to motivate the church to pray and witness. The issues addressed in the sermon were the destructive influence of moral compromise, sin (especially adultery, homosexuality, alcoholism, and gambling), and the Bible.

“It’s Decision that Determines Destiny” Ruth 1:1-18

Sermon was preached on August 2, 1998. Time of service was unavailable.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Principle of Choice
- II. The Problem of Bad Choices
- III. The Power of Wise Choices

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a biographical exposition on the life of Ruth and was only somewhat evangelistic in its content. The introduction focused on the background of the book of Ruth and the spiritual apathy of the culture in Israel. The focus of the message was on the importance of making good choices. The objective of the message was to motivate the congregation to follow God's will and plan in life. The issues addressed in the message were God's sovereignty and human freewill, the consequences of sin, and the nature and need of grace.

“Magnificent Mother” 1 Samuel 1

Sermon was preached on May 11, 1997, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Priority of the Home
- II. Prayer for the Family
- III. Purpose of the Family
- IV. Persistence of Prayer
- V. Persuasion of the Gospel

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a biographical exposition on Hannah and was somewhat evangelistic in its content. The sermon was a Mother's Day message and focused upon the characteristics of a godly parent. The sermon began with the question, “Why is society in a mess?” According to Rogers, society is in a mess because of the absence of godly mothers in the home. The introduction addressed the attack upon motherhood by feminism in American society and identified the historical and biblical evidence of the importance of motherhood. The objective of the sermon was to encourage godly mothers to be faithful in their God-given responsibilities in the home despite the pressure of culture to do otherwise. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were the authority of the Bible for building a godly family, and the importance and influence of pray.

“How to Behave in a Cave” 1 Samuel 24:1-7

Sermon was preached on February 21, 1982, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Recognize Kingdom Authority
- II. Respect Kingdom Authority
- III. Rest in Kingdom Authority

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a biographical exposition on David and had almost no evangelistic content. The sermon began with the question, “How can you have kingdom authority in your life?” The purpose of the sermon was to demonstrate that the means to having authority is to respect authority. The objective of the message was to motivate people to be respectful toward authority whether it is in government, the workplace, the community, the home or the church. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were the role of government in the plan of God, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, the sovereignty of God, the problem of evil, and the person of Satan.

“The Way Home” 2 Samuel 11:1-15

Sermon was preached on December 11, 1995, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Danger of Backsliding
- II. The Development of Backsliding
 - A. Casualness
 - B. Carelessness
 - C. Compulsiveness
 - D. Callousness
- III. The Dealing with Backsliding
 - A. Conviction
 - B. Chastisement
 - C. Challenge
 - D. Consummation or Confession
 - E. Cleansing
 - F. Confidence

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a biographical exposition on David and had almost no evangelistic content. Sermon was preached during a “Camp Meeting” or revival service at Bellevue Baptist

Church. The message was directed to Christians and focused upon the issue of spiritual backsliding. The object of the message was to encourage God’s people to surrender their lives to Christ. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were the destructive and deceptive nature of sin, the danger of hell, the need and means of forgiveness for sin, and the work and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Rogers did not extend a public invitation after this message.

“Let the Fires Fall”
1 Kings 18:1-39

Sermon was preached on April 21, 1993, during a Wednesday night service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Enemies of Revival
 - A. The Compromiser
 - B. The Corrupt
 - C. The Confused
 - D. The Competition
- II. The Elements of Revival
 - A. The Solidarity of God’s People
 - B. The Separation from the World
 - C. The Sacrifice of Jesus Christ
 - D. The Supernatural Power of God
 - E. The Strength of Believing Prayer
- III. The Evidence of Revival
 - A. Revival Consumes
 - B. Revival Convicts
 - C. Revival Converts

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message, but was only somewhat evangelistic in its content. The focus of the message was revival, and the objective of the message was to motivate church members to pray and work for revival in America. The sermon began with the question, “Is it too late for America to have a revival?” Rogers gave the background of the text, and made a comparison between the spiritual conditions of Israel during the time of Elisha and America in the 1990s. The issues addressed in the sermon were repentance, judgment, prayer, the atonement, church membership, and the existence of Satan.

“Facing the Problem of Pride”
2 Kings 5:1-11, 14

Sermon was preached on May 16, 1993, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Marvelous Character of Naman
- II. The Miserable Condition of Naman
- III. The Miraculous Cure of Naman

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a biographical exposition on Naman and was evangelistic in its content. The sermon began with the question, “What is man’s biggest problem?” The answer, Rogers said, was the problem of pride. The purpose of the message was to identify the dangerous and destructive nature of pride and encourage people to confess their pride and receive salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were the authority of Scripture, the origin of evil, Satan, the nature of sin, the exclusivity of Christ, the nature of grace, the need for repentance, and the importance of a public profession of faith.

“The Road to Hell Is Paved with Pride” 2 Kings 5:11

Sermon was preached on July 27, 1997, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Marvelous Character of the Man
 - A. Capable Leader
 - B. Conquering Leader
 - C. Courageous Leader
- II. The Miserable Condition of the Man
 - A. Problem of Human Resources
 - B. Problem of Human Reputation
 - C. Problem of Human Reason
- III. The Miraculous Cleansing of the Man
 - A. His Repentance
 - B. His Reliance
 - C. His Renewal

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a biographical exposition on Naman and was somewhat evangelistic in its content. The focus of the sermon was upon the problem of pride more so than the nature of hell. The content of the message was almost identical to the sermon “Facing the

Problem of Pride.” The objective of the sermon was for people to repent of pride and put their trust in Christ for salvation. The theological topics addressed in the sermon were pride, Satan, repentance, and faith in Jesus Christ.

**“The Making of the Man of God”
2 Kings 13:20-21**

Sermon was preached on August 23, 1979, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Memorial of the Man
- II. The Making of the Man
- III. The Ministry of the Man

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a biographical exposition on Elisha and was somewhat evangelistic in its content. The sermon was preached during an ordination service and focused on the character of a man called by God to preach and lead His people. The objective of the sermon was to encourage the candidate and explain the responsibility and importance of the role of every pastor. The issues addressed in the sermon were the authority of the Bible, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, total depravity, and the rapture of the church.

**“Let’s Just Praise the Lord”
1 Chronicles 16:29**

There was no date and time available for this sermon.

Sermon Outline

- I. We Worship Constantly
- II. We Worship Creatively
- III. We Worship Collaboratively
- IV. We Worship Confidently

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message and had no evangelistic content. The focus of the message was worship. Rogers drew an analogy between the Ark of the Covenant and the

Lord, Jesus Christ. The objective of the message was to motivate praise and worship in the lives of God’s people. The theological issue addressed in this sermon was the relationship between Christ and the church (ecclesiology).

**“It Is Prayer Time in America”
2 Chronicles 7:14**

Sermon was preached on July 4, 2004, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The People God Has
- II. The Pride God Hates
- III. The Prayer God Hears
- IV. The Promise God Honors

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a textual message and was somewhat evangelistic in its content. The sermon began with the question, “Is it too late for America to be a godly nation?” In the introduction, the culture of America in the 1950s was juxtaposed with the culture of America in the 1990s. The objective of the sermon was to motivate the congregation to pray and work for revival in America. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were the grace of God, the nature and need of repentance, the consequences of sin, the importance of prayer, and the authority of Scripture.

**“How to Praise Your Way to Victory”
2 Chronicles 20:1-26**

Sermon was preached on August 22, 1977, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. He Encountered a Problem
- II. He Established a Purpose
- III. He Examined the Past
- IV. He Embraced a Promise
- V. He Exposed His Powerlessness
- VI. He Enlisted Protection
- VII. He Engaged Preparation
- VIII. He Expressed Praise

- IX. He Expected Power
- X. He Enjoyed the Provision

Sermon Assessment

The message was a biographical exposition on King Jehoshaphat and had no evangelistic content. The sermon began with the question, “Do you have a problem?” The object of the sermon was to provide ten steps for overcoming worry and anxiety despite one’s circumstances. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were the person and work of Satan, the sovereignty of God, the power of prayer, the providence of God, and the authority of the Bible.

“Devices of the Devil” Nehemiah 6:1-16

Sermon was preached on March 17, 1991, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Devil Will Use Derision
- II. The Devil Will Use Discouragement
- III. The Devil Will Use Danger
- IV. The Devil Will Use Discord
- V. The Devil Will Use Depletion
- VI. The Devil Will Use Distraction
- VII. The Devil Will Use Defamation
- VIII. The Devil Will Use Dismay
- IX. The Devil Will Use Deception

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a biographical exposition on the devil from the book of Nehemiah and had almost no evangelistic content. Focus of the message was to explain how the devil works to keep God’s people from doing God’s will. The question was asked: “What are the tricks of the devil?” Rogers gave nine ways the devil tricks God’s people. The sermon addressed the issue of Satan, the Holy Spirit, Scripture, and the atonement.

“How to Stand When You Do Not Understand?” Job 1:6-18

Sermon was preached on July 11, 1993, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. An Unexpected Tragedy
- II. An Unexplained Victory
- III. An Unexpected Victory

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a biographical exposition on Job and had no evangelistic content. The introduction asked the question, “How can you be thankful when you do not understand what God is doing?” The objective of the message was to teach the church how to respond to tragedy with confidence and faith in God. The theological themes of the sermon were God’s sovereignty and sufficiency, Satan and evil, and the Bible’s authority.

“Too Blessed to Be Stressed” Psalms 37

Sermon was preached on October 15, 2001, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Trust in the Lord When Your Resources Vanish
- II. Delight in the Lord When Your Dreams Dissolve
- III. Commit Your Way to the Lord When Your Lifestyle Is Threatened
- IV. Rest in the Lord When God Seems Slow to Act

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message with no evangelistic content. The focus of the sermon was on stress and anxiety. The objective of the message was to teach God’s people not to worry, but to trust in God despite the circumstances of life.

“How to Deal with Depression” Psalm 42

Sermon was preached on August 20, 1995, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Severe Problem of Depression

- A. Examples of Depression
- B. Description of Depression
 - 1. Spiritual Dryness
 - 2. Overwhelming Circumstances
 - 3. Preoccupation with Death
- II. Spiritual Provisions for Depression
 - A. Look Inward
 - B. Look Upward
 - C. Look Forward

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message and had almost no evangelistic content. The sermon began with the question, “What is depression?” The focus of the message was upon the causes of depression. The objective of the message was to help people overcome depression by understanding certain biblical truths about the forgiveness and love of God. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were the love of God, the providence of God, the deceit of Satan, and the existence of hell.

“Dads Who Shoot Straight” Psalms 127

Sermon was preached on June 20, 1999, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Dads Who Shoot Strait Must Have an Arm that Is Strong
- II. Dads Who Shoot Strait Must Have Arrows that Are Straight
- III. Dads Who Shoot Strait Must Have an Aim that Is Sure

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message and evangelistic in its content. The sermon focused on the responsibility of parents to raise their children in the Christian faith. The sermon made a comparison between the characteristics of a warrior and a godly father. The issues addressed in the sermon were Satan, prayer, the Bible, and spiritual regeneration.

“Finding God’s Way in a Dark Day” Proverbs 3:5-6

Sermon was preached on April 8, 1984, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. A Trusting Confidence in God
- II. A Total Commitment to God
- III. A Thrilling Confidence from God

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a textual sermon and had almost no evangelistic content. The sermon focused upon the need for wisdom among God's people to live godly lives. The objective of the sermon was to teach God's people to trust and obey God even when they do not understand God. The issues addressed in the sermon were the authority and infallibility of Scripture, the importance of prayer, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

“God's Grace in the Workplace” Proverbs 14:23

Sermon was preached on June 10, 1983, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Sacredness of Everyday Work
- II. The Sphere of Everyday Work
- III. The Service of Everyday Work

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a topical message with almost no evangelistic content. The introduction examined three passages of Scripture: Proverbs 14:23; 1 Corinthians 1:26, and Colossians 4:5-6. Rogers argued in the introduction that all honest work is sacred work, and every believer should view work as a ministry. The objective of the message was to motivate Christians to work hard, and look for opportunities to be a witness for Christ. The issues addressed in the sermon were the authority of the Bible, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and the need for evangelism.

“The Principle of Prosperity” Ecclesiastes 11:1-10

Sermon was preached on January 21, 1996, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Principle of Investment
- II. The Principle of Diversification
- III. The Principle of Preparation
- IV. The Principle of Venture
- V. The Principle of Trust
- VI. The Principle of Work
- VII. The Principle of Perspective
- VIII. The Principle of Accountability

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message with no evangelistic content. The sermon began with the question, “Do you want some good news?” According to Rogers, the good news is that God wants his people to prosper. The focus of this message was biblical stewardship, and the objective was to motivate church members to follow biblical principles of financial management. The issues addressed in the sermon were biblical authority, and the judgment of God.

“Music of Marriage” Song of Solomon 1:1-16

Sermon was preached on April 29, 1990. Time of service was unavailable.

Sermon Outline

- I. Successful Marriages Communicate with Plentiful Words
- II. Successful Marriages Communicate with Personal Words
- III. Successful Marriages Communicate with Positive Words
- IV. Successful Marriages Communicate with Passionate Words

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a biographical exposition of Solomon and his relationship with his beloved. The message had no evangelistic content. The focus of the message was communication in the marital relationship, and its objective was to improve the way couples in the church communicate with one another. The sermon began with the question, “Did you know that 80 percent of marital problems are caused by poor communication?” According to Rogers, couples must communicate or disintegrate. There were no theological issues addressed in this sermon.

**“Why I am Pro-Life”
Isaiah 5:20**

Sermon was preached on January 19, 2003, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. It Is a Matter of Life
- II. It Is a Matter of Love
- III. It Is a Matter of Logic

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a topical message and had no evangelistic content. The sermon was preached on the thirtieth anniversary of Roe v Wade. The introduction was long and addresses the Supreme Court’s decision on abortion. The focus of the message was upon the nature and value of human life as revealed in the Bible. The objective of the sermon was to promote the pro-life view that abortion is an immoral and murderous act so that church members will speak out on the issue. The theological themes were the nature and value of human life, the authority of the Bible, the judgment of God, the depravity of man, forgiveness, and the responsibility of the church to stand against sin.

**“The Greatest Story Ever Told”
Isaiah 53:1-12**

Sermon was preached on December 19, 1979, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Mystery of His Birth
- II. The Manner of His Life
- III. The Meaning of His Death
- IV. The Miracle of His Resurrection
- V. The Magnificence of His Reign

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message and evangelistic in its content. Rogers began the message with the question, “What is the greatest chapter in the Bible?” According to Rogers, it is Isaiah 53. The introduction was brief, and did not include the reading of the text. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were sin and total depravity, the

holiness and justice of God, the person and work of Christ, the virgin birth of Jesus, substitutionary atonement for sin, judgment and hell, the second coming of Christ, and the millennial reign of Christ.

**“Snake Eggs, Spider Webs and Traffic Jams”
Isaiah 59:1-5**

Sermon was preached on August 7, 1988. Time of service was unavailable.

Sermon Outline

- I. Snake Eggs: Poisonous Eggs from Satan
- II. Spider Webs: Satanic Traps that Create Bondage
- III. Traffic Jams: Satanic Obstacles that Hinder Justice and Truth

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message and had almost no evangelistic content. Rogers asked the questions, “Why does God appear not to answer the prayers of the church for revival in America?” Rogers focused on the moral decline of American society and called for parents to teach their children the gospel and Christian values. The introduction was almost a third of the sermon, and addressed the following social issues: pornography, drug addiction, alcoholism, homosexuality, and abortion. Rogers argued that the gospel is needed to change society. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were the existence of Satan, nature and person of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit.

**“There Is Nothing too Difficult for God”
Jeremiah 32:17**

Sermon was preached on June 22, 2003, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Majesty of God’s Limitless Power (Gen 18:14)
 - A. There Is No Promise too Difficult for God to Keep (Titus 1:2)
 - B. There Is No Prayer too Difficult for God to Answer (Jer 33:3)
 - C. There Is No Problem too Difficult for God to Solve (Isa 55:8-9)
 - D. There Is No Person too Difficult for God to Save (Isa 1:18)
- II. The Mystery of Man’s Limiting Power (Ps 78:41)
 - A. Man Can Limit God by an Unwilling Spirit (Matt 23:37)
 - B. Man Can Limit God by an Unconcerned Attitude (Rev 3:20)

- C. Man Can Limit God by an Unreasonable Mindset (Is 1:18)
- D. Man Can Limit God by an Unclean Lifestyle (Is 59:1-2)
- E. Man Can Limit God by an Unbelieving Heart (Matt 15:58)

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a topical message and was evangelistic in its content. The sermon began with the question, “Where is God and why doesn’t he do something?” The focus of the sermon was upon the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. Rogers argued that God will not do anything that violates His will or His Word. Moreover, Rogers argued that many times God may desire to do something great in the life of a person but God is limited in his desire to bless man because of sin and unbelief. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were the sovereignty of God and man’s freewill, sin, the authority of Scripture, the power of prayer, the work of Christ, and the need of repentance and faith

“Rivers of Revival” Ezekiel 47:1-12

Sermon was preached on August 22, 2004, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Mysterious Source of the River
 - A. It Comes from a Humble Source
 - B. It Comes from a Holy Source
 - C. It Comes from a Heated Source
- II. The Marked Course of the River
 - A. It Flows into the Depressed Places
 - B. It Flows into the Deserted Places
 - C. It Flows into the Deadly Places
- III. The Mighty Force of the River
 - A. Where the Waters Flow, the Trees Will Grow
 - B. Where the Waters Flow, the Fish Will Grow
 - C. Where the Waters Flow, the Fruit Will Grow
 - D. Where the Waters Flow, the Health Will Grow

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message and evangelistic in its content. It was mostly an allegorical interpretation of the text in which the temple of Ezekiel was understood as a picture of the Christian life. The theological topics addressed in the sermon were the

holiness of God, the atonement of Christ, the nature of sin, the ministry and nature of the church, and the authority of the Bible.

**“Facing the New Age”
Daniel 3:1-6**

Sermon was preached on June 7, 1987, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Saturate Your Children in the Word of God
- II. Prepare Your Children for Peer Pressure
- III. Teach Your Children to Stand Alone
- IV. Teach Your Children Not to Fear the Furnace

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a topical sermon and was somewhat evangelistic in content. The purpose of the sermon was to identify four biblical principles parents need to follow in order to keep their children from being deceived by New Age philosophy. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were Satan, the antichrist, and the sovereignty of God.

**“Countdown in the Holy Land”
Daniel 9:24-27**

Sermon was preached on June 4, 1989. Time of service was unavailable.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Period
- II. The People
- III. The Place
- IV. The Purpose
- V. The Program

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a textual sermon and was evangelistic in its content. The sermon focused on the circumstances surrounding the second coming of Christ and eschatology. The sermon argued a pre-millennial view of Scripture. The theological issues addressed in the sermon

were the fulfillment of Messianic prophecies by Jesus, the person of Christ, salvation, the atonement, the authority of the Bible, and Satan.

“Fasting and Prayer”
Joel 1:14

Sermon was preached on October 27, 1996, during a Wednesday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Meaning of Fasting
- II. The Motivation for Fasting
- III. The Ministry of Fasting
- IV. The Methods of Fasting

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a topical message and had no evangelistic content. The introduction was long (over a fourth of the message) and addressed the topic of fasting by explaining what Joel said about fasting, what Jesus said about fasting, and what several figures from church history said about fasting. The objective of the message was a call for the members of the church to fast and pray the following Wednesday. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were the person and purpose of Satan, and the power of prayer.

“Miracle of Missions”
Jonah 1-4

Sermon was preached on March 5, 1998, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Hear the Mission Mandate
- II. Preach the Missionary Message
- III. Remember the Missionary Miracle
- IV. Understand the Missionary Motive

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a biographical exposition on the prophet Jonah and was somewhat evangelistic in its content. Focus of the message was on missions and evangelism. The

objective of the message was to motivate more church members to get involved in carrying out The Great Commission. In the introduction, Rogers addressed the authority of the Bible, and the importance of understanding the book of Jonah literally. Other theological issues addressed in the sermon were the mission of the church, hell, judgment, substitutionary atonement, the resurrection of Jesus, and the grace of God.

**“Christmas in the Old Testament”
Micah 5:2**

Sermon was preached on December 15, 1996. Service time was unavailable.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Portrait of Christ in the Old Testament
- II. The Prophecies of Christ in the Old Testament
- III. The Presentation of Christ in the Old Testament

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a topical message and was somewhat evangelistic in its content. The introduction of the sermon was brief, and asked the question, “How do I understand the Old Testament?” Rogers said the way to understand the Old Testament is by looking for Jesus. The objective of the message was to demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah. The issues addressed were the Bible, person of Christ, atonement, and the second coming.

**“Don’t Let the Election Steal Your Song”
Habakkuk 1-3**

Sermon was preached on November 10, 1996, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. A Perplexing Problem
- II. A Proper Perspective
- III. A Profound Praise

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a biographical exposition of the prophet Habakkuk and had almost no evangelistic content. The purpose of the sermon was to remind Christians not to put their

hope in politics but in Christ. The issues addressed in this sermon were immorality and homosexuality, hell, the church, the authority of Scripture, the nature of faith, the gospel, the judgment of God, and the second coming of Christ.

**“The Greatness of Our God”
Haggai 1:3-6**

Sermon was preached on March 13, 1988, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Our God Is Lord of Heaven
- II. Our God Is Lord of Harvest
- III. Our God Is Lord of History

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a biographical exposition of God and had almost no evangelistic content. The introduction was long and asked the question, “How big is God?” The focus of the sermon was the sovereignty and love of God. The objective of the sermon was to teach people to face life with confidence because God is in control. The theological issues of the sermon were God’s sovereignty, the judgment, and eschatology.

**“Haunted by the Ghost of Guilt”
Zechariah 3:1-5**

Sermon was preached on November 28, 1999, during the Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Accused
- II. The Adversary
- III. The Advocate

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message and was evangelistic in its content. The focus of the sermon was guilt, and the object of the sermon was to teach Christians how to put away the guilt of the past and begin each day with joy and excitement in the freedom of Christ. The theological issues addressed were the grace and love of God, the person and work of

Satan, the existence of a literal hell, the destructive influence of sin and guilt, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the person and work of Christ, the atonement, and eternal security.

**“Faithful in Stewardship”
Malachi 3:7-12**

Sermon was preached on February 5, 1995, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Who Is Interested in Your Money?
 - A. God Is Interested in Your Money
 - B. The Devil Is Interested in Your Money
 - C. You Are Interested in Your Money
- II. How to Have Financial Freedom
 - A. There Is a Personal Return
 - B. There Is a Financial Release
 - C. There Is a Spiritual Renewal

Sermon Assessment

The sermon was an expository message and had no evangelistic content. The focus of the message was on finances, and the sermon’s objective was to motivate tithing and good stewardship among God’s people. The issues addressed were God, Satan, and the Bible.

**“When Bankruptcy is a Blessing”
Matthew 5:1-9**

Sermon was preached on July 26, 1992 during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Spiritual Beggar and his Bankruptcy
- II. The Spiritual Beggar and His Brokenness
- III. The Spiritual Beggar and His Blessedness

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message and was evangelistic in its content. The introduction was nearly a fourth of the message and asked the question, “Who are the spiritual beggars

of the world?” The sermon was one message in a series called: “The Keys to the Kingdom.” The focus of the message was on humility, and its objective was to motivate people to repent of sin, and have total dependency on Christ for salvation. The issues in the sermon were the holiness and righteousness of God, the total depravity of man, the need for regeneration, the reality of hell, and the certainty of judgment.

“The Bible Believing Church” Matthew 5:17-18

Sermon was preached on February 20, 2005, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Jesus Fulfills the Old Testament Predictions
- II. Jesus Fulfills the Old Testament Perfection
- III. Jesus Fulfills the Old Testament Purpose

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a textual message and was evangelistic in its content. The focus of the message was the nature and person of Christ, and argued that Jesus is the fulfillment of the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. The sermon had a long introduction, and included the background information on the series of messages being preached by Rogers on the Sermon on the Mount. The issues addressed were biblical authority, hell, Satan, the person and work of Christ, the atonement, sin, and the Law of God. The objective of the sermon was to present Jesus as the Messiah, and the only Savior for lost humanity.

“What You Can Expect” Matthew 13:1-58

Sermon was preached on August 13, 2003, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. You Should Expect Many to Reject the Gospel
- II. You Should Expect Hypocrites in the Church
- III. You Should Expect a Rise of False Teachers
- IV. You Should Expect Corruption in the Church
- V. You Should Expect Jesus to Establish His Kingdom
- VI. You Should Expect Jesus to Build His Church
- VII. You Should Expect God’s Final Judgment

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message and was somewhat evangelistic in its content. Focus of the message was on the ten parables found in Matthew chapter thirteen. The sermon addressed seven things every Christian can expect when he or she chooses to follow Jesus. The objective of the sermon was to give Christians confidence in the face of opposition. The issues addressed in the sermon were the Bible, the devil, the second coming, the judgment, and the ministry of the local church.

“The Church of Jesus Christ” Matthew 16:13-18

Sermon was preached on October 14, 1990, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Saving Faith of the Church
- II. The Sovereign Formation of the Church
- III. The Supernatural Formation of the Church
- IV. The Sweet Fellowship of the Church
- V. The Sure Future of the Church
- VI. The Sacred Function of the Church

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message and somewhat evangelistic in its content. The message began with the question, “Are you looking for an exciting and meaningful cause?” The focus of the message was upon the nature and mission of the church. Its objective was to motivate members to grow the church through evangelism and ministry. The topics addressed in the sermon were the second coming, the person of Jesus, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the mission and ministry of the local church, the existence of Satan, the existence of hell, and the importance of evangelism.

“The Carpenter is Still Building Houses” Matthew 19:1-9

Sermon was preached on April 20, 1980, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Provisions of Married Life

- A. Creation of Marriage
 - B. Commitment of Marriage
 - C. Cultivation of Marriage
 - D. Consummation of Marriage
- II. The Pollution of Marriage
 - III. The Preservation of Marriage

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message and was somewhat evangelistic in its content. The sermon focused on the teachings of Jesus about marriage, and asked the question, “Has marriage become obsolete in America?” The introduction of the sermon identified the Bible as the means for determining the definition and importance of marriage. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were the authority of the Bible, the sins of fornication and adultery, the importance and nature of the church, the judgment and wrath of God, and the creation and origin of man. The conclusion of the message included a call for revival in the Christian home.

“Same Sex Marriage and the Word of God” Matthew 19:1-6

Sermon was preached on November 23, 2003, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Homosexuality is a Moral Problem (Lev 18:22)
- II. Homosexuality is a Spiritual Problem (Mark 7:21)
- III. Homosexuality is a Social Problem (1 Kgs 14:24)
- IV. Homosexuality is a Solvable Problem (1 Cor 6:9-11)

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a topical message on homosexuality, and was somewhat evangelistic in its content. The introduction of the sermon was long and composed about a fourth of the message. The sermon addressed the homosexual agenda in America following the decision of the Massachusetts Supreme Court to legalize homosexual marriage. Rogers defined marriage as “the joining together of a man and a woman to bring the next generation into the world and provide those children with mothers and fathers who will assume unique obligations and responsibilities.” In addition to homosexuality, the sermon addressed the theological issues concerning biblical authority, sin, judgment, salvation, church membership, and believer’s baptism. The sermon concludes with a call for the congregation to make a stand for traditional marriage, and family values.

**“There Is No Omission in the Great Commission”
Matthew 28:18-20**

Sermon was preached on March 19, 1995, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. We Are to Employ All Power
 - A. Description of this Power
 - B. Domain of this Power
 - C. Dispersal of this Power
 - 1.This Power Enlightens
 - 2.This Power Energizes
 - 3.This Power Encourages
 - 4.This Power Edifies
 - 5.The Power Employs
- II. We Are to Endure All Ages

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message and was somewhat evangelistic in its content. The sermon was a mission message, and began with the question, “What were the last words of Jesus?” Rogers discussed the importance of a person’s last words, and then explained that the last words of Jesus were the Great Commission in Matthew 18:18-20. Rogers referred to this passage as the marching orders of the church. The objective of the sermon was to promote missions in the church. The sermon addressed such theological issues as spiritual warfare, the existence of Satan and demons, the work of the Holy Spirit, the priority of evangelism, the exclusivity of Christ, the necessity of faith in Christ for salvation, believer’s baptism, and discipleship.

**“Suicide of the Soul”
Mark 10:17-22**

Sermon was preached on August 17, 1986, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Young Man’s Desire
- II. The Young Man’s Decision
- III. The Young Man’s Destiny

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a biographical exposition of the rich young ruler and was evangelistic in its content. The introduction gave a strong statement for unlimited atonement. The focus of the sermon was upon the need for Christians to look for opportunities to share their faith with others. The sermon addressed the theological issues concerning the holiness of God, the person and work of Jesus, the work of the Holy Spirit, the nature of sin, the reality of hell, the danger of judgment, the need for faith and repentance, and the existence of Satan and demons. The conclusion gave a clear presentation of the gospel.

“How to Overcome Temptation” Luke 4:1-12

Sermon was preached on April 8, 1973, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Principle of Sonship
- II. The Principle of Submission
- III. The Principle of Spirituality
- IV. The Principle of Scripture
- V. The Principle of Satisfaction

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a biographical exposition of the temptation of Christ and was evangelistic in its content. The sermon began with the question, “How can you win the battle over temptation?” The introduction of the message was unusually long and composed over half the sermon. The introduction addressed five questions:

1. How do people deal with temptation?
2. When to expect temptation?
3. Who is the source of temptation?
4. How are we tempted?
5. What is sin?

In the sermon Rogers identified five principles he said will give believers victory over temptation. The objective of the message was to teach believers how to win the battle with temptation. The theological issues addressed were the person of Satan, the deity and humanity of Jesus, the authority of the Bible, the nature of man, and the necessity of regeneration for salvation.

“The Forgotten Word”
Luke 13:1-15

Sermon was preached on November 2, 1980, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Mandate of Repentance
- II. The Meaning of Repentance
 - A. Repentance Is More than Mere Conviction
 - B. Repentance Is More than Mere Confession
 - 1. Example of a Horrified Confession
 - 2. Example of a Hypocritical Confession
 - 3. Example of a Half-hearted Confession
 - 4. Example of a Hemmed-up Confession
 - C. Repentance Is a Change of Heart
- III. The Motive of Repentance
 - A. The Command of God
 - B. The Curse of Guilt
 - C. The Condition of Grace

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a textual message and had almost no evangelistic content. The message was preached before the observance of the Lord’s Supper at Bellevue Baptist Church. The focus of the message was upon repentance. Its objective was for church members to prepare their hearts for the Lord’s Supper by repenting and confessing any known sin in their lives. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were repentance and faith, authority of the Bible, believer’s baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and the grace of God.

“Faithful Stewardship”
Luke 16:1-13

Sermon was preached on October 26, 2003, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Secure Money
- II. Save Money
- III. Spend Money
- IV. Share Money

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a topical message on stewardship and had almost no evangelistic content. The introduction of the sermon was half the message and addressed several Bible passages related to money. The question asked at the end of the introduction was, “Is your money the master of you or are you the master of your money?” The objective of the sermon was to motivate church members to practice good stewardship in their giving, saving, and spending. The theological topics addressed in the sermon were tithing, social vices (gambling, pornography, and alcoholism), and the judgment of God.

“The Holy Spirit” John 14:16-18

Sermon was preached on October 16, 1983, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Work of the Holy Spirit Is to Restore the Presence of Christ
- II. The Work of the Holy Spirit Is to Represent the Person of Christ
- III. The Work of the Holy Spirit Is to Recall the Promises of Christ
- IV. The Work of the Holy Spirit Is to Release the Power of Christ

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a biographical exposition of the Holy Spirit from the Gospel of John, and it was somewhat evangelistic in its content. The focus of the sermon was the person and work of the Holy Spirit. According to Rogers, “A Christian will never be successful in the faith, victorious over temptation, and powerful in prayer if he or she is ignorant regarding the Holy Spirit.” The objective of the sermon was for church members to pray for the Holy Spirit to fill their hearts. Other theological themes addressed in this sermon were the person and work of Christ, the danger of sin, the devil, and the atonement.

“Every Christian’s Job” John 20:21

Sermon was preached on January 20, 1993, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. His Mandate Is Our Mandate
- II. His Mission Is Our Mission

- III. His Method Is Our Method
- IV. His Message Is Our Message
- V. His Motive Is Our Motive

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a textual sermon and was only somewhat evangelistic in its content. The sermon began with the question, “What are some things that are true about Jesus that should be true about us?” The focus of the sermon was evangelism and missions and its objective was to motivate church members to be actively involved in sharing their faith with others. The theological issues addressed were Satan and the problem of evil, the person and work of Jesus, the mission of the Church, and the need of evangelism. The sermon closed with an appeal for church members to be more evangelistic.

“Principles of Power” Acts 2:1-4

Sermon was preached on January 14, 2001, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Holy Spirit Is a Promise to Be Received
- II. The Holy Spirit Is a Power to Be Released
- III. The Holy Spirit Is a Person to Be Recognized

Sermon Assessment

The sermon was an expository message and was evangelistic in its content. The introduction of the sermon was long and a third of the message. The purpose of the sermon was to identify three principles of power available to the church from the Holy Spirit for reaching people with the gospel. Rogers made several allegoric analogies between the traditional meals prepared on the day of Pentecost with the arrival of the Holy Spirit upon the church. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were the total depravity of man, the nature of sin, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, and believer’s baptism. The message concluded with two questions. The first question was, “Are you filled with the Spirit?” And the second question was, “Are you saved?”

“What Is a Great Church?” Acts 4:33

Sermon was preached on May 27, 2001, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. A Great Church Has Great Power (Acts 4:33)
- II. A Great Church Has Great Grace (Acts 4:33)
- III. A Great Church Has Great Fear (Reverence) (Acts 5:5)
- IV. A Great Church Has Great Persecution (Acts 8:1)
- V. A Great Church Has Great Joy (Acts 8:6)
- VI. A Great Church Has Great Numbers Saved (Acts 11:21)

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a biographical exposition of the church in the book of Acts and was somewhat evangelistic in its content. The text was not read in the introduction. The question was asked, "How would you measure a great church?" The answer to the question is found in the six characteristics of the church from the book of Acts. The objective of the sermon was to motivate church members to be more evangelistic. The issues addressed in the sermon were the Holy Spirit, the grace of God, the holiness of God, evangelism and missions, and the nature and ministry of the local church.

“What Is Wrong with Gambling?” Acts 19:21-32

Sermon preached on June 7, 1987, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Gambling Violates the Principle of Honesty
- II. Gambling Violates the Principle of Love
- III. Gambling Violates the Principle of Work
- IV. Gambling Violates the Principle of Providence

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a topical message with no evangelistic content. The focus of the sermon was gambling and its objective was to get people to vote against expanded gambling in the state of Tennessee.

“Eternal Security of the Believer” Romans 8:1-39

Sermon was preached on March 10, 1991, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Clear Promise of Scripture (Rom 8:38-39)
- II. The Nature of the Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross (Heb 10:1-4, 14)
- III. The Continuing Work of the Holy Spirit (Phil 1:6)
- IV. The Predestination of God (Rom 8:29-30)
- V. The Relationship the Believer Has with Christ (2 Cor 5:17)
- VI. The Reception of Eternal Life (John 5:24)
- VII. The Prayer of Jesus (John 17:15)
- VIII. The Sovereignty of God (1 Pet 1:3-5)

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a topical message and evangelistic in its content. The introduction was long, and asked the question, “Is there anything better than being saved?” According to Rogers, the only thing better than being saved is for a person to be saved, and know he or she is saved, and to know that he or she can never lose his or her salvation. The stated purpose of the sermon was to identify eight biblical reasons why a Christian cannot lose his or her salvation. In addition to the theological issue of eternal security, the sermon also addressed the authority of Scripture, the atonement, regeneration, justification, predestination, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, sin, Satan, and hell. After Rogers identified eight reasons for eternal security, he then addressed a few problematic passages used by some preachers to deny the eternal security of the believer (Matt 24:13, 2 Peter 2:20-22; and Hebrews 6:4-6).

“Predestine for Hell? Absolutely Not!” Romans 9:1-10

Sermon was preached on May 3, 1998, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. God’s Sovereign Choice
- II. God’s Spotless Character
- III. God’s Steadfast Concern

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message on Romans chapter nine and was somewhat evangelistic in its content. The focus of the message was on the character of God, and asked the question, “Did God predestine some people to hell?” The objective of the sermon was to show that anyone can be saved who will receive Christ as Savior and

Lord. The theological issues addressed in this sermon were limited and unlimited atonement, supralapsarianism, judgment, hell, and the righteousness of God.

**“How to Discover Your Spiritual Gift”
Romans 12:1-6**

Sermon was preached on January 30, 2000, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Sacrificial Presentation
- II. Spiritual Transformation
- III. Somber Consideration
 - A. Principle of Enlightenment
 - B. Principle of Enjoyment
 - C. Principle of Encouragement
- IV. Shared Participation
- V. Specific Activation

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message, but had no evangelistic content. The focus of the message was on spiritual gifts, and the objective was for church members to discover and use their spiritual gifts in ministry. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the love and grace of God, the authority of the Bible, and the ministry of the local church.

**“Does a Loving God Believe in Capital Punishment?”
Romans 13:1-7**

Sermon was preached on November 7, 1999, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Introduction
 - A. God Prohibits Revenge
 - B. God Promises Retribution
 - C. God Provides Restraint
- II. To Obey God
- III. To Protect Society
- IV. The Good of the Criminal

V. The Justice of God

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message and evangelistic in its content. The sermon was an argument supporting capital punishment based upon the character of God. The introduction was long and composed a fourth of the total sermon. The sermon began with the question, “Does a loving God believe in capital punishment?” The sermon addressed the following theological issues: the depravity of man, the nature of God, hell, judgment, atonement, repentance, faith, and the inspiration of the Bible.

“Women in Ministry” 1 Corinthians 11:1-16

Sermon was preached on June 7, 2000, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Principles of Spiritual Authority
 - A. Apostolic Authority
 - B. Pastoral Authority
 - C. Government Authority
 - D. Employer Authority
 - E. Household Authority
 - F. Church Authority
- II. Role of Women in the Church (2 Tim 2:11-15)
 - A. How God uses Woman
 - B. Women God Has Used
 - C. Woman God Will Use
- III. The Covering of the Woman’s Head

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a topical message with almost no evangelistic content. The introduction of the message explains the historical roles of women in the Baptist church. Although the question was not mentioned, the sermon clearly seeks to answer the question, “What is the role of women in the church?” The objective of the sermon was to defend the revision to the Baptist Faith and Message, and encourage women to seek God’s plan for their lives in the church, the community, and the home. The theological themes addressed in the sermon were the church, spiritual authority, biblical authority, the holiness of God, and the existence of Satan.

“What Is the Gospel?”
1 Corinthians 15:1-4

The date and time of this sermon was unavailable; however, the content of the message indicates that it was preached in 2004 sometime after the release of the Mel Gibson film, *The Passion of Christ*.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Content of the Gospel
 - A. The Debt of Sin
 - B. The Defilement of Sin
 - C. The Dominion of Sin
- II. The Intent of the Gospel
 - A. To Save
 - B. To Strengthen
 - C. To Secure
- III. The Extent of the Gospel
 - A. It Extends to Every Person
 - B. It Extends to Every Place
 - C. It Extends to Every Problem

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message and evangelistic in its content. The sermon began with the question, “If someone were to ask you to define the gospel, what would you say?” The sermon addressed the controversy surrounding the movie *The Passion of Christ*. It identified the elements of the gospel, and explained why the gospel is an offense to many people. The objective of the sermon was to present the gospel as the solution to man’s greatest problems. In the sermon, Rogers argued that man’s greatest problems are sin, sorrow and death. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were the nature of sin, judgment, hell, believer’s baptism, eternal security, and the need of repentance from sin and faith toward Jesus Christ for salvation.

“Soul Winners Six Mighty Motivations”
2 Corinthians 5:9-20

Sermon was preached on June 19, 1983, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Soul Winner’s Compulsion

- II. The Soul Winner's Compensation
- III. The Soul Winner's Conviction
- IV. The Soul Winner's Compassion
- V. The Soul Winner's Confidence
- VI. The Soul Winner's Commission

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message and was evangelistic in its content. The objective of the sermon was to motivate church members to be more active in sharing their faith with others. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were the holiness and justices of God, the atonement of Christ, hell, judgment, and the authority of the Bible.

“The Battle for Your Mind” 2 Corinthians 10:3-11

Sermon was preached on December 2, 1990, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Warfare of Our Foe
 - A. The Devil Wants Your Mind
 - B. God Wants Your Mind
 - 1. God Communicates through Your Mind
 - 2. God Changes You through Your Mind
 - 3. God Controls You through Your Mind
- II. The Weakness of Our Flesh
 - A. Education Is Not the Answer
 - B. Legislation Is Not the Answer
 - C. Environment Is Not the Answer
- III. The Weapons of Our Fight
 - A. The Sovereignty of Our Commander
 - B. The Authority of Our Commission
 - C. The Certainty of Our Courage

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message with almost no evangelistic content. The focus of the message was on spiritual warfare, and the objective of the sermon was to teach believers to guard their minds from negative, immoral, or defeated thoughts. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were the nature of spiritual warfare, the sovereignty of God, the

reality of Satan, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the nature of man, and the power of the Word of God.

“Freedom from the Prison of Perfection”
Galatians 3:1-3

Sermon was preached on July 23, 2000, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Life Behind Bars
 - A. Description of a Perfectionist
 - B. Critical Attitude of a Perfectionist
 - C. Obstacle to Fellowship
- II. Characteristics of a Perfectionist
 - A. Impossible goals
 - B. Idealist
 - C. Goal Oriented
 - D. Misplaced Self-esteem
 - E. False Guilt
- III. The Great Escape
 - A. God Accepts You
 - B. Forgive Yourself
 - C. Accept Others

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a topical or thematic message that focused on the issue of perfectionism as it relates to one’s understanding of salvation. The sermon was somewhat evangelist in its content. The objective of the sermon was to help Christians who struggle with perfectionism to discover the freedom that comes from living in God’s grace and love. The sermon began with the question, “How did you get saved, by grace or works?” According to Rogers perfectionism keeps Christians from enjoying their freedom in Christ and it keeps others from coming to Christ because they feel they cannot live the Christian-life. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were the nature of salvation, eternal security, Satan, the authority of the Bible, and the grace of God.

“Victory over the Flesh”
Galatians 5:16-26; Exodus 17:8-16

Sermon was preached on February 3, 1985, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Certainty of the Fight
- II. The Strategy of the Foe
- III. The Victory of Our Faith

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message and somewhat evangelistic in its content. In the sermon, Rogers drew a parallel between the battle of Israel with Amalek and the battle between the Christian and “the flesh” or sin. The sermon has a lengthy introduction that is a third of the message. In the sermon, Rogers made several analogies in which he identified several Old Testament characters and events as New Testament types. For example, he identified Amalek (Esau) as a type for the sinful nature or the flesh principle mentioned by the apostle Paul in Galatians 5:16-26. Additionally, he identifies Israel as a type for the Christian, Egypt symbolizes the lost condition of man, the Red Sea is the conversion experience, Pharaoh was a type for the devil, and the wilderness was a symbol for the carnal Christian. The proposition of the sermon was to explain how a Christian can have victory over the flesh or the sinful nature. The theological themes of the sermon were the holiness of God, spiritual warfare, sin, salvation, Satan, prayer, sanctification, and the Holy Spirit. The objective of the sermon was to admonish church members not to be disruptive or combative toward one another, but to work together.

“The Law of Sowing and Reaping” Galatians 6:6

Sermon was preached on September 30, 1990. Time of service was unavailable.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Law of Dissemination
- II. The Law of Identification
- III. The Law of Anticipation
- IV. The Law of Multiplication
- V. The Law of Cultivation
- VI. The Law of Participation

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a textual message and somewhat evangelistic in its content. The focus of the message was on the blessings of making good choices, and the problems that follow bad choices. The objective of the message was to motivate people to make good choices in

life in order to avoid the tragic consequences of sin. The issues addressed in the sermon were the law of God, the consequences of sin, human responsibility, the ministry of the church, repentance, and prayer.

“Christian Warfare” Ephesians 6:10-26

Sermon was preached on August 15, 1999, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Christian Warrior and His Adversary
- II. The Christian Warrior and His Armor
- III. The Christian Warrior and His Attack
- IV. The Christian Warrior and His Allies

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message and was evangelistic in its content. The focus of the message was spiritual warfare. The objective was to identify the battle every Christian must fight, and the means God provides in order to overcome the opposition of the devil. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were Satan, the nature of hell, sin, the authority of the Bible, liberalism, the Holy Spirit, church membership, prayer, and spiritual warfare.

“A Philosophy to Live By” Philippians 1:21

The date and time of this sermon was unavailable; however, the content of the message indicates that it was preached on a Sunday evening at Bellevue shortly prior to the time the church was to relocate to Cordova, Tennessee.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Source of Life
- II. The Subject of Life
- III. The Standard of Life
- IV. The Song of Life
- V. The Satisfaction of Life
- VI. The Strength of Life
- VII. The Supply of Life

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a textual sermon and evangelistic in its content. The proposition of the message was to show that a person will not have anything for which to live, if he or she does not have anything for which to die. The sermon began with three questions: “What did Paul mean when he said, “To live is Christ?” What did Paul mean when he said, “To die is gain?” And finally, what did Paul mean when he said, “For me to live is Christ?” The sermon concludes with a word study of “depart.” The theological issues addressed were total depravity, salvation, the sins of omission and commission, hell, judgment, and repentance.

“How to Control Your Thought Life” Philippians 4:4-8

Sermon was preached on October 10, 1988, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Reliance Test
- II. The Respect Test
- III. The Righteous Test
- IV. The Reverence Test
- V. The Relationship Test
- VI. The Refinement Test

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a textual message and had no evangelistic content. The sermon began with the question, “How can you protect your thought life?” The introduction of the sermon was long and composed over half the message. The introduction gave the background to the series of messages on Philippians, and a brief review of the morning message which was on the same topic of the Christian’s thought life. The objective of the sermon was to provide a check list of the kinds of thoughts a Christian should avoid. The theological themes of the sermon were spiritual warfare, the omnipresence of God, the authority of the Bible, and the power of prayer.

“Five Steps to Mental Health” Philippians 4:4-9

Sermon was preached on August 2, 1995, during a Wednesday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Rejoice Continually in the Presence of God
- II. Rely Consistently on the Power of God
- III. Reflect Carefully on the Provisions of God
- IV. Rest Completely in the Peace of God
- V. Remember Cautiously the Promises of God

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message, but had no evangelistic content. The sermon began by addressing the problem of depression and mental illness. The message gave five principles for overcoming depression. The objective of the message was to encourage people to spend more time reading the Bible and discovering God's truth. The theological issues addressed were biblical authority, the importance of prayer, and the importance of having daily devotions or a quiet time with God.

“Why I Reject Evolution” Colossians 1:12-17

Sermon was preached on July 27, 2003, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Logical Reasons for Rejecting Evolution
- II. Moral Reasons for Rejecting Evolution
- III. Theological Reasons for Rejecting Evolution

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a topical message and somewhat evangelistic in its content. The sermon began with the question, “Did God create man or did man create God?” This sermon was almost identical to the message on evolution from the text found in 1 Timothy 6:20-21. The object of the message was to encourage belief in creationism. The theological issues addressed were the sovereignty of God, the authority of the Bible, and the nature of man.

“Getting Ready for the Rapture” 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

Sermon preached on July 14, 1991, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Impending Wrath of God
- II. Expectant Wait of the Church
 - A. The White Horse of Dominion
 - B. The Red Horse of Destruction
 - C. The Black Horse of Deprivation
 - D. The Demon Spirits Released
 1. They Are Infernal
 2. They Are Insatiable
 3. They Are Intolerable
 4. They Are Irresistible
 5. They Are Invincible
 6. They Are Intelligent
 7. They Are Insidious
 8. They Are Insensitive
 9. They Are Inescapable
 10. They Are Injurious
 11. They Are Indivisible
- III. Exemplary Work We Must Do

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a topical message on the rapture and had almost no evangelistic content. The sermon began with the question, “Will believers go through the tribulation?” The focus of the message was upon the rapture of the church. The objective of the message was to motivate believers to live in the expectation of Christ’s return. In the sermon, Rogers identified Enoch as an Old Testament type representing the church during the rapture. The theological issues addressed in this sermon were eschatology, the deity of Jesus, the wrath of God, judgment, and Satan.

“The Comfort of His Coming”

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18,

Sermon was preached on July 21, 1991. Time of service was unavailable.

Sermon Outline

- I. You Need to Rely on the Certainty of His Coming
- II. You Need to Rest in the Comfort of His Coming
- III. You Need to Respond to the Challenge of His Coming

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message and was somewhat evangelistic in its content. The message focused on the rapture of the church, and began with the question, “What three problems do many people face today?” Rogers identified man’s three greatest problems as ignorance, sorrow, and hopelessness. Rogers then explained that a proper and biblical understanding of the rapture gives a comforting hope for the church. Rogers argued the premillennial, pre-tribulation view of the Scripture. In addition to the rapture of the church and the second coming of Christ, the sermon also addressed the atonement of Christ, the person of Christ, the need for faith in Christ, repentance from sin for salvation, and the authority and infallibility of Scripture. The sermon concluded with the question, “Are you ready for the second coming?”

“Satan’s Superman” 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Sermon was preached on February 26, 1984, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Mockery of God Recounted
- II. The Mystery of Inequity Restrained
- III. The Ministry of the Spirit Removed
- IV. The Mastery of Satan Released
- V. The Misery of Man Redoubled
- VI. The Majesty of Jesus Revealed

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message with no evangelistic content. The focus of the message was on the antichrist. The sermon argued a premillennial and pre-tribulation view of Scripture. The goal of the message was to encourage believers concerning the second coming of Christ, and to motivate non-believers to prepare for the second coming by receiving Jesus as Lord and Savior. The theological issues addressed in this sermon were the rapture, the second coming of Christ, the reality of Satan and demons, the existence of hell, the ministry of the church, and the work of the Holy Spirit.

“Evolution Fact or Fiction” 1 Timothy 6:20-21

Sermon was preached on March 17, 1996, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Evolution May Be Rejected for Logical Reasons
- II. Evolution May Be Rejected for Moral Reasons
- III. Evolution May Be Rejected for Theological Reasons

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a topical message and was only somewhat evangelistic in its content. The sermon gave three reasons for rejecting the theory of evolution. The introduction was long and composed a third of the message. The majority of the message focused upon the logical problems of evolution, and identified what Rogers called the four logical bridges that no evolutionist can cross. The objective of the message was to demonstrate that creationism is more logical than evolution. The sermon also addressed the theological issues concerning God, man, sin, and salvation.

“Why I Know the Bible Is the Word of God” 2 Timothy 3:12

Sermon was preached on October 5, 1980. Time of service was unavailable.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Fact Principle
- II. The Faith Principle
- III. The Faithful Principle

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a topical message and had almost no evangelistic content. The focus of the sermon was on biblical authority and inerrancy. The objective of the message was to remove any doubts in the minds of church members concerning the authority and reliability of the Bible as the Word of God. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were the authority of the Bible, salvation, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

“Gods Pattern for a Pastor” Titus 1:1-14

Sermon was preached on January 29, 2000, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Be Blameless at Home
- II. Be Blameless in Your Personal Life
- III. Be Blameless in Your Preaching

Sermon Assessment

The message was an expository sermon, and had almost no evangelistic content. Sermon was an ordination sermon and asked the question, "What are the characteristics of a godly pastor?" The sermon had a long introduction that was nearly half the message. The issues in the sermon were the nature of sin, Satan, and the authority of the Bible.

"Do Not Be a Disgrace to Grace" Titus 2:11-15

Sermon preached on January 16, 1994. Time of service was unavailable.

Sermon Outline

- I. Deeds that Disgrace Grace
 - A. Prince of the World
 - B. Purpose of the World
 - C. Philosophy of the World
 - D. People of the World
- II. Four Principles Concerning the World
 - A. Pull of the World
 - B. Persuasion of the World
 - C. Pollution of the World
 - D. Price of the World

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a combination of an expository and topical message, and was only somewhat evangelistic in its content. The focus of the sermon was upon Christian character and it argued that grace was a motivation for good works in the Christian's life and not an excuse for sinful behavior. The objective of the message was to encourage righteous living among Christians. The sermon addressed the theological issues of grace, salvation, Satan, regeneration, and the authority of Scripture.

**“The Word of God”
Hebrews 4:12**

Sermon preached on February 17, 1991, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Absolute Perfection of the Word of God
- II. The Wonderful Character of the Word of God
- III. The Clear Authority of the Word of God
 - A. The Bible Has Life
 - B. The Bible Has Power
 - C. The Bible Has Sharpness

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a topical-textual message with the last point of the message being outlined by the text in Hebrews. The sermon was somewhat evangelistic in its content. The focus of the message was upon the nature and authority of the Bible, and the objective of the message was to motivate people to read, study, and obey the Bible. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were the inspiration of the Bible, the nature of man, the nature of Christ, Satan, temptation, judgment, sin, and spiritual warfare.

**“How to be a Growing Christian”
Hebrews 5:11-6:1**

Sermon was preached on July 9, 2000, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Mandate of Maturity
 - A. Dullness
 - B. Dependency
 - C. Discernment
- II. The Motive of Maturity (1 John 2:12)
- III. The Means of Maturity
 - A. Growth Requires Life
 - B. Growth Requires Time
 - C. Growth Requires Nourishment
 - D. Growth Requires Exercise

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a textual-topical message and had no evangelistic content. The sermon began with the question, “Are you a growing Christian?” The focus of the message was upon Christians who have not grown in their faith since their conversion experience. The objective of the message was to argue that spiritual growth is not optional, and to explain to new believers how to grow in their faith. The theological issues addressed by the sermon were the authority of the Bible and the sanctification of the believer.

“Church Attendance” Hebrews 10:19-27

Sermon was preached on December 3, 2000, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Church Is Where Christians Enjoy the Savior
- II. Church Is Where Christians Express Their Faith
- III. Church Is Where Christians Encourage the Saints

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message and was somewhat evangelistic in its content. The focus of the message was on the importance of church membership in the spiritual growth of the believer. The sermon began with the question, “Why attend church?” The objective was to encourage church members to be more active in the church. The message did contain the use of allegory in its efforts to compare the tabernacle in the Old Testament and the church in the New Testament. The theological issues in the sermon were the person of Christ, and the purpose and mission of the church.

“Communication in the Home” James 1:19-20

Sermon was preached on January 12, 2003, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. How to Listen
 - A. Concentrate
 - B. Consideration
 - C. Clarification

- II. Mistakes in Speech
 - A. Do Not Speak as a Judge
 - B. Do Not Speak as a Professor
 - C. Do Not Speak as a Historian
 - D. Do Not Speak as a Dictator
 - E. Do Not Speak as a Critic
 - F. Do Not Speak as a Preacher
- III. How to Express Anger
 - A. Do Not Attempt Avoidance
 - B. Do Not Attempt Appeasement
 - C. Do Not Attempt Aggression

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a topical message and had no evangelistic content. The focus of the message was upon effective communication in the home. The introduction was almost a fourth of the sermon, and addressed what Rogers called the five levels of communication: (1) the frivolous level, (2) the factual level, (3) the fellowship level, (4) the feelings level, and (5) the freedom level. Although the text of the sermon was from the book of James, the majority of the message was from the book of Proverbs.

“How to Understand the Bible” James 1:21-25

Sermon was preached on November 28, 1993, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Welcome the Word of God with a Repentant Heart
- II. Welcome the Word of God with a Receptive Heart
- III. Welcome the Word of God with a Responsive Heart
- IV. Welcome the Word of God with a Reflective Heart

Sermon Assessment

The sermon was an expository message and was somewhat evangelistic in its content. The objective of the message was to motivate Christians to read and study their Bible. Rogers stated in the introduction that a Christian will never grow spiritually without knowledge of the Word of God. Rogers then identified four ways to welcome the Word of God into one's life. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were the authority of the Bible, salvation, sanctification, the atonement, repentance, judgment, and hell.

**“Superficial or Supernatural”
James 1:26-27**

Sermon was preached on July 16, 1978, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Danger of Superficial Faith
 - A. Lacks Reality
 - B. Lacks Restraint
 - C. Lacks Results
- II. Delight of Supernatural Religion
 - A. It Reaches Upward
 - B. It Reaches Outward
 - C. It Reaches Inward

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a textual sermon and was only somewhat evangelistic in its content. The objective of the sermon was to motivate church members to examine themselves and determine if they have a genuine faith or a superficial faith. The message began with the question, “What is real religion?” Rogers then made a comparison between genuine and false faith. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were the second coming of Christ, lordship salvation, hell, and Satan. Rogers closed the sermon with his own testimony of salvation.

**“The Word of God”
1 Peter 1:23-25**

Sermon preached on September 22, 1996. Time of service was unavailable.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Bible Is Incontestable
- II. The Bible Is Incorruptible
- III. The Bible Is Indestructible
- IV. The Bible Is Indispensable
 - A. Provides Our Message
 - B. Provides Our Methods
 - C. Provides Our Members

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message and was somewhat evangelistic in its content. The sermon began with the question, “How many of you believe the Bible is the Word of God?” The focus of the sermon was the authority and inspiration of the Bible, and its objective was to defend biblical inerrancy. In addition to biblical authority, the sermon also addressed the theological issues regarding the ministry of the Holy Spirit, regenerate church membership, the depravity of man, and the person and work of Christ.

“Seven Words that Can Build a Marriage”

1 Peter 3:1-7

Date of sermon was unavailable. Time of message was a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Faith
- II. Acceptance
- III. Contentment
- IV. Forgiveness
- V. Communication
- VI. Romance
- VII. Prayer

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message, but had no evangelistic content. The sermon began with the question, “How do you keep the honey in your honeymoon?” The objective of the sermon was to strengthen marital relationships in the church by identifying and applying seven biblical principles for building a strong and loving relationship in marriage. The theological issues addressed in this sermon were marriage and family, the existence and deception of devil, and the authority and inspiration of the Bible.

“A Christian Worldview”

1 Peter 3:10-15

Sermon was preached on September 15, 1996, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Principle of Lordship

- II. Principle of Learning
- III. Principle of Lowliness
- IV. Principle of Lifestyle
- V. Principle of Love

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a textual message and focused upon 1 Peter 3:15. It contained almost no evangelistic content. The sermon began with the question, “What is a Christian worldview?” The introduction was very long and was almost half the message. Rogers addressed postmodernism and the danger of not confronting other worldviews with the gospel. The purpose of the message was to encourage believers to be active in defending the faith to a diverse and post-Christian culture. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were total depravity, the power of prayer, lordship salvation, and apologetics.

“The Shepherd and His Sheep” 1 Peter 5:1-4

Sermon was preached on May 22, 1983. Time of service was unavailable.

Sermon Outline

- I. We Are the Sheep
 - A. Sheep Are Wayward
 - B. Sheep Are Weak
 - C. Sheep Are Worthwhile
- II. The Church Is the Flock
- III. The Pastor Is the Shepherd
 - A. The Role of the Pastor
 - B. The Requirements of the Pastor
 - C. The Rewards of the Pastor

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message and had almost no evangelistic content. The focus of the message was on the character and conduct of the man of God. The question asked in the introduction was: “What is a man of God?” The content of the sermon argued that a pastor must be a man of God, and if he is not a man of God, then he should not be a pastor. The objective of the message was for the men of the church to seek to be men of God, and for the church to pray for the pastor and his ministry. The theological issues addressed in this sermon were the authority of the Bible, the nature of judgment, the nature of the church, and the existence of a personal devil.

“Sick Dogs and Dirty Hogs”
2 Peter 2:17-22

Sermon was preached on February 2, 1992, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Endangerment of False Teachers
- II. The Enticement of False Teachers
- III. The Enslavement of False Teachers
- IV. The Entanglement of False Teachers

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message and had no evangelistic content. The purpose of the message was to identify the characteristics and dangers of false teachers and their doctrine. Rogers argued that the key to joy in the Christian life is to know sound doctrine so as to be able to recognize and reject false doctrine. The sermon addressed the theological issues of biblical authority, Satan, the eternal security of the believer, the necessity of regeneration, the nature of sin, and the reality of an eternal hell.

“Birthmarks of a Believer”
1 John 2:3-11

Sermon was preached on October 18, 1998, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Submit to the Lordship of Christ
- II. Seek the Lifestyle of Christ
- III. Show the Love of Christ

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message and was somewhat evangelistic in its content. The focus of the message was lordship salvation and was primarily addressed to Christians or church members. The sermon began with the question, “What is a real Christian?” Rogers argued that a real Christian is someone who lives a life similar to the lifestyle of Jesus Christ. The sermon addressed the theological issues regarding salvation, eternal security, and the necessity and nature of regeneration.

“Real Salvation”
1 John 3:1-9

Sermon was preached on December 6, 1998, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Rebellion that Proves Our Sinfulness
- II. The Righteousness that Proclaims Our Sonship
- III. The Redemption that Provides Our Salvation
 - A. Deliverance from the Pollution of Sin
 - B. Deliverance from the Power of Sin
 - C. Deliverance from the Principle of Sin

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message and was evangelistic in its content. The message began with the question, “What is real salvation?” The focus of the message was upon lost church members. The objective of the message was to motivate church members to examine their conversion experience and insure that their salvation was genuine. The sermon was from a series titled “The Sweetest Fellowship This Side of Heaven.” The introduction was long. It also focused on the nature of sin, God’s law, and total depravity. Other issues addressed in the sermon were Satan, the atonement, and eternal security.

“The Battle for the Bible”
Jude 1-7

Sermon was preached on February 17, 1985, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

- I. The Danger of the Apostate
- II. The Description of the Apostate
- III. The Destruction of the Apostate
- IV. The Defense against the Apostate

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message and evangelistic in its content. The purpose of the sermon was to equip believers to contend for the faith. The focus of the message was upon apologetics. Rogers identified three areas of the Christian faith that he believed

were under attack: inerrancy of the Bible, the deity of Christ, and the exclusivity of faith in Christ for salvation. Other issues addressed were the atonement, regeneration, the Holy Spirit, eternal security, the judgment of God, the nature of sin, and lordship salvation.

“The Sin of Lukewarmness”
Revelation 3:14-21

Sermon was preached on June 14, 1995, during a Sunday morning service.

Sermon Outline

The Lord’s Introduction

- A. He Is the Confirming Christ
- B. He Is the Convicting Christ
- C. He Is the Controlling Christ

I. The Curse of Lukewarmness

- A. To Whom Is God Speaking?
- B. How Is Lukewarmness Manifested?
 - 1. Lukewarm about Sanctification
 - 2. Lukewarm about Service
 - 3. Lukewarm about Scripture
 - 4. Lukewarm about Supplication
 - 5. Lukewarm about Sacrifice
 - 6. Lukewarm about Soul Winning
- C. What Is so Bad about Lukewarmness?
 - 1. Lukewarm Christians Keep People Out of Heaven
 - 2. Lukewarm Christians Are an Insult to God
 - 3. Lukewarm Christians Are Open to Other Sins

II. The Cause of Lukewarmness

III. The Cure of Lukewarmness

Conclusion

- A. A Word to the Lost to Receive Jesus
 - 1. Salvation Is a Definite Act
 - 2. Salvation Is a Deliberate Act
 - 3. Salvation Is a Delightful Act
- B. A Word to the Saved to Serve Jesus

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was an expository message and evangelistic in its content. The objective of the message was for believers to seek an intimate and passionate relationship with Christ and for non-believers to receive Christ. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were

the person and work of Christ, sin, sanctification, the nature of man, the Holy Spirit, the authority of the Bible, the power and importance of prayer, tithing, evangelism, the holiness of God, the judgment of God, and the ministry of the local church.

“The Place Called Hell”
Revelation 21:7-8

Sermon was preached on July 14, 1974, during a Sunday evening service.

Sermon Outline

- I. Hell Is a Place of Vile Association
- II. Hell Is a Place of Separation from the Saint
- III. Hell Is a Place of Eternal Darkness
- IV. Hell Is a Place of Everlasting Death
- V. Hell Is a Place of Hopelessness
- VI. Hell Is a Place of Burning Fire

Sermon Assessment

Sermon was a topical message and evangelistic in its content. Although a few main points of the message were taken from the text, most of the sermon outline came from the topic of hell and not the text. The sermon began with a question: “Why preach on hell?” Rogers explained that he did not preach on hell often because it was not a productive topic for evangelism; however, the objective of the sermon was not to scare people out of hell and into heaven, but to motivate Christians to reach the lost with the gospel. The introduction of the sermon was long, and addressed the methods by which some theologians have attempted to eliminate hell from their theology with annihilationism or universalism. Rogers argued that hell is eternal and the destiny of everyone who does not receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The theological issues addressed in the sermon were the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the atonement, the person and work of Christ, the nature of hell, the existence of Satan and demons, sin, depravity, and the authority and inspiration of the Bible.

APPENDIX 2

EXAMPLE OF GOSPEL PRESENTATION FROM LOVE WORTH FINDING

A Closing Plea

My friend, have you given your life to the Lord? Do you have assurance that if you were to die right now, you would go straight to heaven? If not, please let me tell you how you can be saved.

Admit Your Sin

First, you must understand that you are a sinner. The Bible says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Abandon Self-Effort

Second, you must understand that you cannot save yourself by your own efforts. The Bible is very clear that it is "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5).

Again, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Acknowledge Christ's Payment

Third, you must believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died for your sins. The Bible says, "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

That means He died in your place. Your sin debt has been paid by the blood of Jesus Christ which "cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7b).

Accept Him as Savior

Fourth, you must put your faith in Jesus Christ and Him alone for your salvation. The blood of Christ does you no good until you receive him by faith. The Bible says, "...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved..." (Acts 16:31).

Have you taken this all-important step of faith? If not I urge you to do it right now. Why? Because Jesus is the only way to heaven!

And speaking of Jesus, the apostle Peter said in Acts 4:12, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Jesus himself said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6). It couldn’t be any clearer than that.

Are you willing to offer the following prayer to God today?

O God, I am a sinner. I am lost, and need to be saved. I know that I cannot save myself, so right now, once and for all, I trust you to save me. Come into my heart, forgive my sin, and make me your child. I give you my life. I will live for you as you give me strength.

If you will make this your heartfelt prayer, God will hear and save you! Jesus has promised that He will not turn away from anyone who comes to Him in faith (see John 6:37) He will make you a child of God if you will turn to Him (see John 1:12).¹

¹Adrian Rogers, *Predestined for Hell? Absolutely Not!* (Memphis, TN: Love Worth Finding Ministries), 25-26. Although this presentation and prayer may vary slightly in other publications, this example accurately illustrates the outline and content of the gospel in the publications of Adrian Rogers and Love Worth Finding Ministries.

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ABSTRACT

THE EVANGELISTIC EMPHASIS IN THE PASTORAL PREACHING OF ADRIAN P. ROGERS

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This dissertation examines the evangelistic content of the pastoral preaching of Adrian P. Rogers during his thirty-two years of ministry at Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. Chapter 1 introduces the thesis and explains the purpose, goals, limitations and methodology of this study.

Chapter 2 examines the significant events and people in the life of Rogers that influenced and shaped his passion for evangelistic preaching. This chapter provides a brief biography of Rogers that discusses his conversion and call to the ministry, his education in college and seminary, his pastoral ministry, his broadcast ministry, and his denominational leadership. It also identifies the characteristics demonstrated by Rogers that contributed to his effective evangelistic preaching ministry.

Chapter 3 examines the sermon preparation, organization, and delivery skills of Rogers. The objective of this chapter is to identify the homiletical style of Rogers' sermons with a focus upon his expository methodology. This chapter provides a study of the functional elements of Rogers' sermons, and identifies nine characteristics of evangelistic preaching reflected in Rogers' preaching. Finally this chapter considers the hermeneutical integrity of the sermons of Rogers in order to determine if he forced an evangelistic meaning into a text and thereby twisted the intent of the original author of the text.

Chapter 4 examines the evangelistic invitation of Rogers. This chapter provides a brief background regarding the origin of the evangelistic invitation and the criticism of some evangelicals regarding its historical and modern usage. The focus of this chapter, however, is upon the methodology of Rogers. This chapter addresses any problems and concerns regarding the evangelistic invitations of Rogers and it identifies the components and characteristics of Rogers' evangelistic invitation.

Chapter 5 is a study of the evangelistic content of Rogers' sermons. The goal of this chapter is to determine how often Rogers actually preached an evangelistic sermon from the pulpit of Bellevue Baptist Church. This chapter begins with a definition of evangelistic preaching, and provides a methodology for measuring the evangelistic content of Rogers' sermons based upon this definition. Next, this chapter offers an evaluation of the evangelistic content discovered in the sermons of Rogers, and gives a critical analysis of the evangelistic preaching ministry of Rogers based upon these findings. Finally, this chapter provides recommendations for an effective evangelistic preaching ministry.

Chapter 6 gives a conclusion to this study. This chapter addresses the importance of evangelistic preaching in the church. Furthermore, it introduces the discoveries made from this study and gives a summary of those discoveries. It also outlines an application of the strengths of Rogers' evangelistic preaching ministry. Finally, it identifies areas for further study in the future.

This dissertation also contains two appendices. The first appendix includes significant material regarding one hundred sermons by Rogers including an outline of each sermon and an assessment of the evangelistic content of each sermon. The second appendix provides an example of a gospel presentation and sinner's prayer used in the publication materials of Love Worth Finding Ministries.

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