

# What is an Evangelical?

by Vernon G. Wilkins

## Authority of Scripture

The absolute authority, sufficiency, supremacy and efficacy of scripture in all matters pertaining to the Christian faith, including Christian doctrine and Christian life conduct. The Reformation principle of *Sola Scriptura* (scripture alone). The perspicuity of scripture. Its full divine inspiration, its complete truth, infallibility and inerrancy in everything it affirms and denies, indeed in everything it sets out to say, whether implicitly or explicitly (but note the matter of context mentioned below). The scriptures don't contain, nor become, nor convey, the Word of God, but *are* the Word of God and the Word of Truth. The priority of Bible teaching in Christian ministry, both in public and semi-public teaching contexts and in personal discipling (1-many, 1-several, 1-few, 1-1; not pulpit 'preaching' only). The importance of reading the Bible 'in context', in all senses of that expression, especially in the context of the story-line of the whole Bible. The necessity of not driving a wedge between the Word of God and the Spirit of God – it's the Word of God in the hands of the Spirit of God which brings an individual to repentance and faith in Christ, and which grows God's Church in understanding and godliness.

## Belief of the individual

The necessity of personal belief in Christ for every individual. The reality of sin (original sin, the utter depravity of the human heart) and of judgement, and the consequent need for repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ. The need to be converted (and thus forgiven and cleansed) in response to the gospel; the reality of passing from death to life, from slave to free, from blindness to sight (etc.); from the certainty of hell to the promise of heaven. I.e., the need to trust Christ as Saviour (see C below), to accept him as Lord and worship as God the Son (see D below). Personal responsibility in all matters of Christian conversion and Christian life (alongside the equally prominent Bible notion of the absolute sovereignty of God in these things, without there being any conflict whatsoever between these two doctrines).

## Cross of Christ

The penal, substitutionary, sin-bearing death of Christ on the cross, as the ultimate expression of the absolute grace and mercy of almighty God, and as the supreme demonstration of the love of God for sinners. The centrality of the cross. The cross as the glory of Christ. The cross is the prime reason for the incarnation, the plan of God for the redemption of the world from all eternity, the pinnacle event of human history to which the whole preceding story-line of the Bible leads, and from which the entire life and mission of God's people subsequently flows. The consequent doctrine of justification by faith alone, through grace alone, in Christ alone. The uniqueness of Christ and his cross as the only way of salvation.

# Divinity of Christ

Jesus Christ is God the Son, and eternally so. The full humanity and full divinity of the incarnate Christ. The divinity of Christ undiluted, unmodified and not lessened or weakened by his humanity, and *vice versa*. His bodily resurrection. The submission of the Son to the will of the Father, notwithstanding his full divinity. The crucified, risen and ascended Christ is exalted Lord of all and reigns in heaven at the right hand of the Father. Christ's absolute glory and majesty in heaven. His absolute sovereign providence in the affairs of the world (in general) and in the life of the Christian person and of the Christian Church (in particular). Christ is Lord and head of his Church. His ultimate return in judgement and final salvation.

# Evangelism

The absolute necessity and utter urgency of the gospel mission of the Church, to proclaim Christ to the world. The sovereignty of God in evangelism (so that not one of Christ's elect will be lost, whatever the failures and fragility of the Church's witness); but equally the responsibility of Christians to be unstintingly zealous and faithful in evangelising the world. The importance of the local church supporting worldwide mission. The evangelistic mission of the Church not to be confused with the outworking of godly compassion, however imperative the latter.

# The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in a Nutshell

## **The Person, Work, Fruit and Gifts of the Holy Spirit.**

The divinity of the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Trinity, as per the catholic creeds. The Spirit of Truth as teacher of the Word of God, convincing and convicting the human heart and mind, pointing to Jesus Christ and bringing glory to him (thus also the self-effacing nature of the work of the Holy Spirit). The role of the Holy Spirit in the creation and sustaining of the world. The priority of the work of the Holy Spirit in the salvation of the individual. The work of the Holy Spirit in bringing new birth to the individual. The Holy Spirit as the giver of assurance, and of power for service. The work of the Holy Spirit in growing a Christian into the likeness of Christ, i.e. in holiness, understanding and as a disciple of Christ in every respect, with the consequent display of the fruit of the Spirit in the Christian's life. The gifts of the Spirit (more properly the gifts of Jesus, distributed by the Holy Spirit in Christ's Church), are everything Christ gives to his Church, harnessed in humble Christian service, whether natural or supernatural, temporal or eternal, ordinary or extraordinary (which distinctions should not be pressed), for the glorifying of Christ and for the edifying of his people.

**Acknowledgement**

This paper has been peer-reviewed by a variety of colleagues. The finished result owes much to these contributors, and I humbly acknowledge with gratitude their help. Nonetheless, the views expressed in this paper are those of the author, and he and he alone accepts responsibility for them – particularly for anything inexact or unclear, any obvious omissions, faulty logic and other follies and defects. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version except where noted.

**Latest Version**

This is version dated 13<sup>th</sup> November 2010. The latest version of this paper can be found at [vernonswilkins.org](http://vernonswilkins.org).

**Apology**

Apologies for the remainder of this panel and its verbiage – the site it was downloaded from requires it, I'm afraid, for usual safeguarding reasons.

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