

THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL

"According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust."
I Timothy 1:11.

This gospel is the theme of the New Testament. Gospel is a word used much by Christ. Paul mentioned it over and over. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: For it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." Also our text.

What is this gospel which is so prominent in the scriptures? The gospel is not the Bible. Bible is Word of God, but there is much in it that is not the gospel. Gospel is not a call to repentance, or to amendment of one's ways, or to promise to do better in the future. These things are right and proper in their place, but they do not constitute the gospel. Gospel is not good advice to be obeyed, but it is good news to be believed. It does not come to men to tell them to do anything, but it is that glorious message that tells us what God has done for us in order that we, who are guilty sinners, may be saved. After man had fallen into sin and broken fellowship with God, what we call "the gospel" is the effort to restore that fellowship with Him. Gospel is the plan offered by God whereby man is offered the opportunity of returning to full fellowship with God, which culminates in his safe arrival in heaven, where he will live for all eternity.

Gospel is a word of deep significance and wide import. It means, as I presume all of you know, "Good News" or "Glad Tidings." The famous Alfred Tennyson once asked an aged woman, "What is the news!" She replied, "Why, Mr. Tennyson, there is only one piece of news that I know -- that is, Christ died for all men." Mr. Tennyson remarked, "That is old news, and good news, and new news." This good news comes directly from God through His Word. The best news that was ever told is that a Saviour has been provided for us. All the good news of the glorious gospel of Christ can be summed up on one matchless statement: "Christ died for our sins." This is the only news for our broken-hearted, sinning, suffering and dying humanity.

Gospel is not concerned with what man should do, for there is no good news in that for a sinner, but it is concerned with what God has done already. The gospel is God's good news for sinners. It is the announcement of the fact that He has provided righteousness for unrighteous men. It is called "good news" because to those who are under the curse of imputed sin it carries the message that they are to get out from under the curse of death. Jesus came and paid the debt by His death on the cross. That satisfied the penalty which God was forced to put on man because of his sin.

I. The Content of This Gospel.

It is centered about a Person. He is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. The revelation of His person and His accomplished work are the contents of the gospel. With the exception of Christianity, all religions speak of salvation by character or by conduct. They hold out the hope of earning salvation by merit of one kind or another. But salvation by conduct or by works is the doctrine of the devil, no matter by whom nor where it is preached. Salvation is not a matter of merit on the part of the receiver, but it is entirely a matter of grace on the part of the Giver. Salvation is not partly of grace and partly of works; it is all of grace and none of works: Man must accept it as a gift from God; otherwise, he will never receive it. This is illustrated in a statement by Dr. Alexander's Maclaren, the great preacher of Edinburgh. Not long before his death his associate minister, Mr. Gustart, visited him and inquired, "What are you doing, brother?" Whereupon Dr. Maclaren replied, "I'll tell you what I am doing, brother: "I am gathering all my prayers, all my sermons, all my good deeds, and all my evil deeds; and I am going to throw them all overboard and swim to glory on the plank of free grace." Man's only hope of salvation is in the marvelous grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is wonderful news to hear and to know that God has done for us what we could never do for ourselves.

To open up this great text in all its length and breadth would be an appropriate exercise for the loftiest intellect and the most spiritual soul. The gospel has to do with facts, not theories, nor speculations, nor guesses, but solid, substantial, established inescapable and unmistakable facts. They are three in number.

1. Christ died for our sins.

That certainly is good news, for all of us have sinned. God says we are sinners and when we deny the fact we give the lie to God. But the gospel tells us that Christ has borne our sins in our stead. "Christ died for our sins." Jesus paid our debt, all the debt we owe. Although "sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow."

The great message of the gospel is summed up in the cross. Gospel gives us not merely a great personality, or great ideas of truth, or a lofty example of living, but a great act, a sublime God-conceived and God-executed transaction, namely, the death of Christ on the cross for the sins of the world. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.

At the cross the history of human guilt culminated, the purposes of divine love became intelligible, the mysteries of prophecy were unravelled, the majesty of the divine law was vindicated, and the great problem of human redemption was solved. "He died for all ... that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him Who died for them and rose again." Note that it says "Christ died for our sins." No man preaches the gospel, no matter what nice things he may say about Jesus, if he leaves out the vicarious death on Calvary's cross. The very first message of the gospel is the story of the vicarious atonement of Christ. There is no gospel if His vicarious death is left out, and there is no other way whereby man can be saved than through the death of the blessed and spotless Son of God.

When Paul referred to "the glorious gospel of the blessed God," he incidentally gave us one of the keynotes of his marvelous life and his wonderful ministry. To him the gospel which he preached was the most glorious fact in all history. He gloried in the cross He was not afraid to proclaim his gospel to anybody. How he loved to dwell upon the good news about Christ! To him it covered the whole range of man's need; it forgave the past, it enabled the present, and it provided for the future.

2. Christ was buried.

"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that He was buried, and that He arose again the third day according to the scriptures." There came a day when the sun went down at noonday and all said, "He is dead." It was a terrible day. There was the mob, the scourge, the dripping blood, the voices, the lightning, the earthquake, the dice, the veil rent in the Temple, and the rich man going to the governor and asking for the dead body. Then Joseph came, and Nicodemus with the spices, and His body was placed away in the tomb and some women saw where they placed Him. The throne of their beloved had disappeared in a tomb. His kingdom had shrunk to the narrow dimensions of a grave. His regal robes had become a shroud. His only reign had been six hours of torture on the bloody cross.

3. Christ arose.

All night long Friday, all day long Saturday, and until early on Sunday morning, His body was in the tomb. It was sealed with the king's seal. Soldiers were placed there to guard the grave. But early on Sunday morning, when the angels of the Lord came down, the soldiers fell away, and the seal was broken, and the stone was rolled away from the tomb. Christ arose, laid aside the grave clothes, and walked out of the tomb, a

living Christ, a living Lord, and a living King, triumphant over death and the grave. Thus He sent down through the ages the blessed assurance that the grave is not our goal. The resurrection of Jesus is the whole alphabet of human hope, the certificate of our Lord's mission from heaven, and an indispensable part of the gospel in all ages. When He arose Christ resumed His power, recovered His challenged rights, regained His waning influence and reasserted His sacred grandeur.

There is nothing in these facts to cause us shame. I unhesitatingly take my stand anytime and anywhere believing in His supernatural birth, His absolute deity, His vicarious atonement, His bodily resurrection, and His personal return. And with Paul, I ask nothing more than to know His will and to do that will faithfully. "When I survey the wondrous cross, etc."

II. The Character of This Gospel.

Essentially the gospel of Christ consists in glad tidings; tidings which are designed and adapted to excite joy in all who receive them. They are the tidings of an all-sufficient Saviour for the self-destroyed, of pardon to the justly condemned, of deliverance to the captives, of honor to the degraded, of happiness to the wretched, and of everlasting life to those who are dead in sin.

Literal translation: "According to the gospel of the glory of the happy God, with which I was entrusted." Paul is not just telling us what kind of thing the gospel is, but what it is about -- "the glory of the happy God." He is not dealing with its quality, but its content. It is a gospel which reveals the glory of God. Its purpose is to set forth and make manifest to men the glory of God. Have you ever considered how supremely happy God must be? No care or sorrow enters His experience. The gospel is sent "that His joy may be in us, and that our joy may be full." We might not have anticipated that such a term as "happy" should at any time be applicable to our God, but it is. He is happy and He makes us happy. He yearns for the happiness and highest well-being of His people, and has expressed Himself in the gift of His Son that this and may be accomplished. He takes pleasure in the happiness of His people, because He loves them. He is happy that He gave His Son to and for the world. The success of His gospel makes Him happy. The reception of the gospel has always occasioned joy and gladness. What other sounds ever vibrated upon mortal ears like these; "The gospel of the glory of the happy God?" How we wish we might hear their import fully unfolded and their infinite worth clearly stated!

1. It had a glorious authorship.

Brain of man did not devise it, nor heart of man conceive it. It came not from man, but from God. It is His movement towards men. "We love Him because He first loved us."

2. It is glorious in its antiquity.

Before the beams of the first morning drove away the darkness, this gospel was ordained in the mind of God.

3. It is glorious in its content.

4. It is glorious in its cost.

Men believe that value and cost are closely related.

5. It is glorious in its unfolding.

6. It is glorious in its achievements.

It transforms sinners into saints and brings disciples to glory.

III. The Custodians of This Gospel.

It has pleased our Lord to commit His gospel to His churches. They are the custodians of it. Because it is His gospel, He is very jealous of it. He wants it kept pure. He does not want it mixed with any of man's theories. He does not want it mixed with an ordinance or anything of that kind. Woe be it unto the church which preaches not the gospel.

Making Christ known to lost sinners is not the only task of His churches, but it is the primary task. The true mission of every New Testament church is that of winning lost souls to a saving knowledge in Christ. We need a new concern for lost souls. One weakness of our present-day churches is that we have delegated soul-winning to the preachers and a few missionaries. In the early church at Jerusalem every member was a soul-winner. The church members did not wait for the unsaved to come to the services, but they carried the gospel message to them. People will be saved in any church that uses this method. There is something seriously wrong with any Christian who is not constantly working to get people to repent of sin and to accept Christ as personal Saviour.

1. Beware of ignoring the gospel.

That is what many are doing -- quietly and complacently setting it aside.

2. Beware of undervaluing the gospel.

3. Beware of perverting the gospel.

4. Beware of hindering the gospel.

Some churches are wrapped in carnal security or in deadly formality. They encase the gospel and treat it as if it were a relic.

5. Beware of withholding the gospel.

Gospel was no more designed to remain locked up in the breast of its author than the rays of light were intended to remain in the body of the sun. That its glad tidings might produce their designed effect, it was necessary that they should be made known. Good news ought to be told to those whom it most concerns. A cure for a disease ought to be offered to those who are suffering for lack of it. Water ought not to be kept from those who are thirsty and famishing. Food ought not to be concealed from the hungry. A way of escape ought to be pointed out to the imperilled.

Man's spiritual debtorship to the world knows no territorial nor racial nor social boundaries. All the light we have we are under obligation to give. All the mercy God has given us we are under obligation to pass on. All the truth God has entrusted to us we are under obligation to herald and to give to men out of Christ everywhere. This obligation knows no evasions nor exemptions nor substitutes, nor does it respect any barriers. We are trustees of the most sacred treasures God has ever given into human hands. We are the depositories of a holy and sacred trust. Gospel has not been committed to us for selfish consumption or selfish distribution. Must distribute or dispense it freely and unselfishly to a lost world. Pass on to others light we have received. Sharing the gospel is an inestimable privilege and an imperative duty. Gospel is not our private property. We are expected to incarnate it, live it, proclaim it and reflect it wherever we go. Program of our Lord is that everyone shall hear it.

In earthly matters you rank neglectful or fraudulent trustees among worst of men. What about those neglectful and unfaithful as stewards of gospel of glory of happy God? Ought to be faithful to our trust. Responsible for dispensing what Lord has placed in our custody according to directions which He has give us. First thing required of us is that we should be faithful. Highest place not give to brilliance or to success, but to faithfulness. Can be faithful and hear commendation of Master at end of way. Let Lord have your life.

"Only one life; 'Twill soon be past;
Only What's done for Christ will last."