

The Gospel And The Cross

Introduction

I have had people tell me I need to preach about positive things. Preach about things that are uplifting to folks. So, I decided I would do just that. Now, the message being talked about here is a positive one if you are a born again Christian. I mean a born again Christian, not one of these Christians in name only. A born again Christian that believes God to be the only true God, that believes there is no other way to be reconciled unto the Father, but by Jesus alone. I mean a born again Christian that knows they are a born again Christian because of what God calls a born again Christian in His word that we have in this King James Bible. We are in the last days and God's word warns that there will be a falling away from the Word.

2 Thessalonians 2:1–3 (KJV)

¹ Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *by* our gathering together unto him,

² That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

³ Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

That people will gather to themselves teachers, having itching ears.

2 Timothy 4:1–5 (KJV)

¹ I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

² Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

⁴ And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

⁵ But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

People will call themselves Christians but will only be calling themselves Christians. They will not call Jesus Lord, but will believe there are a million other ways that we can be reconciled to God. For those who are saved, those who are born again Christians, this will be a positive message. To all others, it will be foolishness. I will do as Paul instructed in verse 5 that we just read.

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The Gospel Requires The Cross

You cannot have the Gospel without the Cross. It is this connection that will be addressed in this message. A cross can exist without a gospel, but the Cross is inextricably linked to the Gospel. We read of two thieves that hung on crosses on either side of Jesus at Calvary, but neither of the thieves were responsible for the Gospel. But Jesus, is responsible for the Gospel, and it is His death on the Cross that is a key to the Gospel. So, the Gospel is linked with the Cross, that Cross on which Jesus hung and died at Calvary. That Cross is what provides the key to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and it is good that we learn from it. I heard an old preacher say, I've never been to seminary, but I've been to Calvary. That preacher understood what the Cross means and you will never get that kind of understanding from a seminary! You go to a seminary and you get an understanding of what man wants us to believe. You go to Calvary and you get an understanding of what God wants us to believe. A seminary has men teaching you things of man. Calvary has the Holy Ghost teaching you things of God. Consider what Paul spoke of to the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 1:17,

1 Corinthians 1:17 (KJV)

¹⁷ For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

Paul not only shows the connection between the Cross and the Gospel, but shows us that the Gospel is not preached with wisdom of words, as those in the seminaries would have you believe. Man's wisdom only makes the cross of Christ of none effect.

I was riding the bus to our house church one Sunday morning and ended up sitting behind a young man carrying a bag with a shoulder strap over his shoulder. On the strap were several buttons with clever little messages on them. One of those buttons stood out from the others for me. This button read, Jesus saves ... by using coupons. This blasphemous message didn't surprise me as one that this young, effeminate man would have on him. I tapped him on the shoulder and when he looked back to see who was tapping him on the shoulder, I asked him if he is saved. He of course responded in the negative with hardly any energy at all. Just a sound of being put off because I asked him this. So, I reached a Scripture card towards him and asked him if I could give him this card. He looked at it momentarily and declined the card. I merely said, thank you and placed the card in the window ledge beside him. The Scripture verse that young man read was the verse following the one we just read, 1 Corinthians 1:18, which says,

1 Corinthians 1:18 (KJV)

¹⁸ For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

To this man, those words were indeed foolishness, but to me, it is the power of God. The next week, I rode the same bus and this same young man was on the bus. It just so happened that I ended up sitting behind him again. He had the same bag over his shoulder. The shoulder strap had the same buttons on

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them, with the exception of one. That blasphemous phrase of Jesus saving by using coupons was no longer on the strap! I believe the power of God was revealed there. I do not know if this young man ever came to believing on Jesus, but I do know that he removed that button about Jesus. Maybe when we believers end up in heaven, I'll see that young man because of what God did there!

The preaching of the cross is indeed foolishness to them that perish. We who are saved realize that there is no other way that we can be saved apart from believing on the only begotten Son of God. Those who believe on any other way of being saved will perish. That means those who believe they are eventually going to go to heaven because of the church they attend, because of good works they have done, because they have been baptized, either as adults or infants, because one or more of their family members are saved, will perish because they have not believed on the one way God's Word, Jesus, said was the only way. John 14:6 makes it perfectly clear that there is no other way than by Jesus himself,

John 14:6 (KJV)

⁶ Jesus saith unto him, **I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**

Now that is a positive message! Jesus is not making it difficult for us to know how we are to be reconciled unto the Father. There is one and only one way. No other religion can say that! Who died on the Cross for us? Was it Buddha? Was it Confucious? Was it Mohammed? Was it any of the popes, priests, preachers, pastors, church elders, church fathers, choir directors, or anyone else? Of course not, it was Jesus who accomplished this for us.

Although it has been brought up by me before, I will bring up this section of Scripture again, because it so clearly states the Gospel. Let us look at 1 Corinthians 15:1 – 4,

1 Corinthians 15:1–4 (KJV)

¹ Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

² By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

³ For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

⁴ And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

This is a positive message! It makes it crystal clear what the Gospel is and what it accomplishes. The Gospel is what we are saved by as long as we believe it. We are then presented with the Gospel and are reminded that it was all according to Scripture, God's word that is. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, he was buried and he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. At the time this was written to the church at Corinth, there were still people alive that had seen the risen Christ.

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Jesus is the only one who has ever died, and then rose from the dead, and is still alive! Jesus did raise others from the dead, but that was only a temporary thing. They all died again. Jesus is the only one who has ever risen from the dead and remained alive. That is a positive message!

The preaching of the Cross is foolishness to those who perish. Those who perish either think there is not going to be any payment for the sins they have committed or that they can make restitution for their sins in some manner that God has not approved of. To those of us who are saved, though, the preaching of the Cross is the power of God. What does this mean? The preaching of the Cross is the power of God. Think about it, let's read 1 Corinthians 1:17 – 18 again,

1 Corinthians 1:17–18 (KJV)

¹⁷ For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

¹⁸ For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

Paul is equating the preaching of the Gospel with the preaching of the Cross. The Gospel cannot exist without the Cross. If we attempt to preach salvation with wisdom of words, we destroy the power of God unto salvation. If we attempt to preach any other way of salvation other than by preaching the Cross, we are doing so with wisdom of words, and the Cross of Christ is made of none effect. For those who are not saved, they believe there are millions of ways to be saved; that Jesus is not the only way. It is foolishness to them to believe that because Jesus died on the Cross, was buried, and rose again that we can be saved by believing on this. As they may put it, by merely believing on this. Surely, there must be more to salvation than just believing the Gospel. All others, that is those who are not born again believers in Jesus Christ, consider us to be fools, simpletons, for thinking that we cannot earn salvation. They all rely on the wisdom of man to save them instead of the wisdom of God. Even though, God's Word contradicts them in numerous places in Scripture, they believe themselves to be wise, wiser than God.

The Holy Ghost provided Paul the words to speak about the Gospel as we read in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. But, he also knew that there would be ones who would pervert the Word of God and attempt to corrupt the believers. Let's look at 2 Corinthians 11:3 – 4,

2 Corinthians 11:3–4 (KJV)

³ But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

⁴ For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him*. This fear was not unfounded. We see this when we read in Galatians 1:6 – 12,

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Galatians 1:6–12 (KJV)

⁶ I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

⁷ Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

⁸ But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

⁹ As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

¹⁰ For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

¹¹ But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

¹² For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

That's a positive message! Paul, who had preached the Gospel to those at Galatia, came to find out they were believing another Gospel. He told them there is no other Gospel. Now the positive part of this section of Scripture is repeated twice. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." If anyone, I don't care if you spent 100 years in seminary training, have all the respect of other men, women, and/or children, if you go about wearing robes, collars, street clothes, if you are called a minister, pastor, priest, preacher, brother or sister, if you preach any other gospel other than that which this King James Bible provides, you are accursed by God! I wonder how popular Paul would be as a minister in these last days. I wonder why some of us don't have huge followings or pastor mega churches. I wonder why some of us don't end up on thousands of TV stations around the world. It's not because we've been accursed of God, but because we do not preach those smooth things that people want to hear. We are not the preachers they gather to themselves having itching ears. I pray that there will be more preachers like Paul, Peter, John the Baptist, and Stephen out here. Folks that were so popular they were all killed for preaching the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. None of these men of God were willing to compromise. They did not preach with the wisdom of men.

The Cross on which Jesus was nailed, presented Jesus to the whole world. He was lifted up on this Cross where He hung above everyone else, where He was seen by all that were there. While there were two thieves hung on crosses on either side of him, it was Jesus who was the center of attention there at Calvary. It was Jesus who had a sign put on the Cross above his head which mockingly read,

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Luke 23:38 (KJV)

³⁸ And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Just to make sure everyone knew what was happening, the main languages of the day were used in this superscription. It was Jesus on the Cross that had his own people mocking him, saying,

Luke 23:35 (KJV)

³⁵ And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided *him*, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.

Along with the Jews, the Gentiles also mocked him while He hung on the Cross,

Luke 23:36–37 (KJV)

³⁶ And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar,

³⁷ And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.

Have you ever considered the pain Jesus suffered here? Do you realize that if Jesus had done as the Jews and the Gentiles had mockingly requested him to do, all the world would be eternally lost? We would all perish. If Jesus had saved himself, we would have perished. We were and are completely unable to pay the price for our sins. That is why God, who so loved the world, gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on Him would not perish, but have eternal life. It took God to pay the price of man's sin.

The Cross is the power of God unto salvation. Without it, we would be eternally lost. Just as Moses lifted up the pole with the fiery serpent on it, so that all who looked upon it would not die from the stings of the fiery serpents that were sent as a result of the people of Israel's sins, Jesus was lifted up on the Cross, that whosoever looked upon Him and believed would be saved from the wrath of God against our sin. Just as the blood was applied to the lintel and door posts in Egypt to provide escape from the wrath of God on the sins of the Egyptians, the world, so was the blood of Jesus on that Cross at Calvary our means of escape from the wrath of God against our sins.

The Cross and the Gospel are so tied together, that all throughout Scripture we are presented with this truth. We cannot have the salvation from our sins as presented in the Gospel without the Cross. The preaching of it is the power of God unto us who are saved. This is a positive message! If we look at things from God's perspective, that is, this is a positive message. You must ask yourself, am I just trying to find people that will tell me wonderful things about myself, or am I more interested in hearing from those that love me enough to tell me the truth.