

THE GOSPEL
Feb. 19, 2005
Gal. 1:8-9

INTRO: (Read Gal. 1:6-9). Let us say that you are beginning to experience some strange pains and they persist, and finally you go to the doctor. What is the doctor supposed to do? Well, he is to diagnose the problem and then determine the right action to take from there. So, you have gone to the doctor. He is a very caring doctor, and will do almost anything to help you. But he is often too hasty in his diagnosis, and therefore he comes to the wrong conclusions. And so he checks you over. And when he has correctly diagnosed you, he gives you medication, and sends you home. The problems persist and you go back several more times. In his great care for your comfort, he prescribes various other kinds of medication. Nothing helps and so you go for a second opinion. And the second doctor is more careful, and he finds out that you have a particular kind of cancer. And if he had found out about it at the time you first went in to the other doctor, he might have been able to help, but now it is too late. What do you think of a doctor like that?

Now take a minister of the Word of God. It is his task to diagnose what the problem is with man, and then give the right prescription. I mentioned in the last two messages, that the error of both the social and saleable gospels was that they were man centered. In the one you feed and clothe man and see to it that he has a peaceful environment to live in. You bring his life standard up to that of the rest of society. In the other, you determine what his felt needs are and then you minister to those.

To be man centered in our approach to the gospel, is a fatal error. In order to find the correct problem and prescribe the right solution, our approach must be God centered.

Now consider what happens when a doctor makes a wrong diagnosis. Well, some of you may have lost a loved one because of something like this. It is well possible that if my dad's doctor had been true to the profession that my dad might be alive today yet. But what happens when a minister of the Word makes an error in his approach to the gospel? Well, depending on his influence, hundreds, if not

thousands could end up in the unending flames of hell on account of that.

Such, is the importance of preaching the Word rightly. And with those thoughts in mind, we want to look at what I have called the saving gospel.

III. THE SAVING GOSPEL

A. Definition of the Saving Gospel

I have called the true gospel the saving gospel. The word gospel means good news. This need for good news is there because first there is the bad news. The bad news is this: all people, by sin have offended a holy and just God. There is a key verse to this and it is Romans 3:23, "for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

It would be nice to give a message on that topic alone to show what it means to come short of the glory of God. However, in brief, if I have broken any of God's commandments, I have sinned. I have missed the mark of God's perfect will and character. 1. You shall have no other gods before Me. 2. You shall not steal. 3. You shall not bear false witness ect... If I have failed God in anything, I have sinned. And what is the purpose of God's law? It is simply to show me that I am a sinner, and I need a Savior.

And because of sin, all are doomed for hell for all eternity. And the bad news is further that there is no purgatory, nor is there any second chance. The moment we die, every chance for salvation is completely lost forever! That is very bad news.

If we had to leave it at that, it would not only be bad news, it would be the worst news. But there is good news. The Gospel is the good news that God Almighty has provided a way by which saves sinful man can be saved from the penalty, power and finally the very presence of sin. This salvation changes man's relation to God from enmity to friendship; it changes man's character from sinner to saint, and ultimately redirects man's destiny from hell to heaven. The saving gospel saves!! It saves man from hell and from sin!

The saving Gospel meets the requirements of a righteous, holy and just God; not man's empty tummy or his felt needs. Paul Lee Tan records that years ago, the ship Shanunga was on the way to Liverpool. The weather was very foggy, and in the fog it ran into a Swedish boat named Iduna. The Shanunga's life boats were put out immediately and all they managed to save was 34 survivors. 172 people drowned, including the captain of the Iduna. He writes that captain Patten, of the Shanunga reported the catastrophe and said that no statement could exaggerate the horrors of that awful moment. What do you think those people fighting for life out on the open, foggy sea felt like when they were picked up by a life boat? That is salvation.

And why were not more saved? Because they sought to have their felt needs met. And what did they feel they needed? They could not imagine the ship going down with their valuables and so they tied their money belts with gold and silver coins around themselves. And in the water, the weight of these coins pulled them under water before the life boats could get to them.

Captain Patten has said that no statement could exaggerate the horrors of that awful moment. Put yourself in that scene for a moment. Listen to the screams of 172 drowning people, before the watery grave enveloped them. How many indescribable moments like that, and worse, has this world not witnessed? But there is an indescribable moment worse and beyond any that this world has ever witnessed. It is, when upon death, the horrors of hell envelop the unbeliever, and an unending eternity in hell begins. So horrendous is that moment, that most of mankind fails to believe that will even happen. A just God, they say, could never do that. And yet, God, to remain just, must do that.

Now that is the bad news. That is part of a diagnosis no preacher enjoys giving. And if that was all I could give, I would not give it. I think I would do everything I could to make the rest of your time on this side of death as good as possible. But I have truly good news for you, that is what we mean by the

gospel, and it is this: According to the Word of God, the salvation declared therein, offers a salvation that saves us from the unending flames of hell fire. God Almighty found a way to save sinners. And God does not have to break any rules to do so. He has found a way in which He can in full righteousness justify the sinner, while He remains fully just in doing so.

If you are here this morning, and if I should ask you, "Do you know where you would go if you died this moment?" and you answered, "I am not ready" or "I am not sure" then I have bad news and good news. The bad news is that every moment you live, you live in jeopardy of dying and ending up in hell. At any moment you might have a heart attack, or an accident etc... and at that very moment, your destiny is irrevocably sealed. That is the bad news.

The good news is that this morning, in a moment of repentance from sin, you could reverse that destiny. That is incredibly good news. Someone might think this morning, "Well, here is just another preacher trying to scare us into heaven by saying such things." If I could scare you into heaven, I would do it. And some day you would thank me for all eternity for that. But the facts are I can't scare you into heaven. I can only tell you the facts of what is coming and how to avoid it. What would you think of a doctor who did not tell you that you have cancer because he might scare you into having it cared for?

But I fully believe that what I have told you so far about hell does no justice to the horrors that await the lost. And if the lost could speak to you, they would do anything they could, even scare you into heaven, if no other means worked (you read Luke 16).

B. The Text of the Saving Gospel

Is there a very popular text for the saving gospel? (John 3:16). Now if there are no words to describe the moment a person enters hell; on the other, there are no words to adequately describe the price God Almighty paid when He gave His Son up to the death of the cross. For those of you who have heard the railroad story, of the man who put his only son

through the gears of the big bridge, that might be all I need to say to bring to your minds a bit of a picture of the price God Almighty paid.

Now God paid that horrendous price so that He might remain just while bringing sinful man back to Himself. And He paid that price because He loves you.

C. The Aim of the Saving Gospel

The aim of the gospel is not to fill our tummies with food, or to clothe our bodies, nor yet to bring peace and justice to this world. Nor yet is it to meet man's felt needs. It is to save souls from hell! Because we have all sinned and come short of God's glory, we are bound for hell! And to avoid that horrible consequence of sin, we must be saved. But not only does the gospel save from hell fire, it will save us from the power of sin during our life on earth so that we can be set free to live righteously. Once we have been delivered from the penalty of sin, hell; then the gospel begins to set us free from the power of sin. But that is not all. Someday, we will be saved from the very presence of sin and live the rest of eternity with God Almighty and the Lord Jesus Christ. Such is the aim of the gospel. It is not to fill our tummies, though that may well happen to those who accept the Lord as Savior. It is not to bring peace to this world, but peace to our hearts. It is not to meet my felt needs, but to satisfy the wrath of God Almighty, whose holiness I have offended!

D. The Method of the Saving Gospel

Now how do true Christians propagate the gospel? What is the method of the gospel? How do Christians bring people to accept the biblical message, when they are a stench of death to unbelievers and their message is foolishness to the lost? Do they do it by making people feel good? There is a method, still the only true method. Here is what they do. They expose sin and wrong and its consequences, and then apply the gospel message to that.

1. By the preaching of the cross.

What is the method of the saving gospel? How is it presented? Well, it is presented by the preaching of the cross. That is a proclaiming of the cross of Christ. (Read 1 Corinthians 1:17-18). The word, in verse 17, which says to preach is the word *euangelizo*. It is the word *gospel* in verb form. We might translate it like this: "He sent me to *gospelize* the gospel. He sent me to good news the good news." In verse 18 it is explained as the message of the cross. It is the word of the cross. The preaching of the cross is simply putting the message of the cross into words. It is an explanation of the whole concept of Christ's death, burial and resurrection.

2. By proper Reasoning

What is the method of the saving gospel? It is presented in a declaration of the message of the cross. Now how do you put the gospel into words that people will accept? Should we use the seeker friendly approach, and not convict people? No. We must be honest about sinful man's destiny, but you can reason it out with people. Let me tell you this about the gospel. It is reasonable. You can reason it out and come to a conclusion on the basis of truth. It is not a blind leap in the dark. Listen to Isaiah 1:18 we read, "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, 'Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.'

When the apostle Paul began to reach out with the gospel, listen to what he did, (Acts 17:2), Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them (The Jews), and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures; Acts 17:17 Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the *Gentile* worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there; Acts 18:4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks; Acts 18:19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there; but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.

Now let me show you what happens when the reasonable gospel is reasoned. Turn to Acts 24:25. In this passage, Paul reasons with a political leader of Rome, "Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, 'Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.'" This passage says Paul reasoned with Felix about these biblical facts. That brings us to another important point in the method of the true gospel, and that is that when it is properly presented, it brings conviction of heart.

3. By Bringing Conviction

What is the method of the gospel? It is declared in the message of the cross, and reasoned with facts. And when the message of the cross is reasoned, it will bring conviction. When the Lord Jesus ascended to heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit. And before He left, He told the disciples why He would send the Holy Spirit (read John 16:7-11). You see, the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, He convicts of righteousness, and He convicts of judgement. If you are not saved this morning, I do not have to convince you that you are a sinner. You know it. I do not have to convince you of your need for righteousness. You know it. I do not have to convince you that you will some day give account of it. You know it is true. The Holy Spirit convicts us of these truths.

And how does conviction work? It shines the light of the truth on our hearts and exposes darkness, or sin. And when you see it there, it brings shame, and a realization of a need for righteousness. And then I am convicted about my lack of righteousness before a holy and awesome God. And misery sets in as I realize I must stand before the judgment bar of God and be condemned to hell for my sin.

When conviction sets in deep enough, we will do almost anything to come free. We will swallow our

pride and do what is needed to be done to take care of that horrible feeling of guilt.

Now I want you to see this in Felix. Scripture says this, "Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid..." Paul reasoned the message of the cross with Felix. Felix knew inside that it was right. His heart condemned him. And Felix did not want to face his own sin. His pride kept him from dealing with his sin. Felix was afraid. He wanted to wait for a convenient time.

If the Lord is speaking to your heart this morning I want to let you in on a little secret. There is never going to be a convenient time. If you are going to get saved, you must do it at an inconvenient time.

Now let me tell you something about Felix. He has a lot of felt needs, but dealing with sin is not one of those. There is a very wicked and ugly tumor inside Felix. It will kill him in the end. He knows it. And his felt need is for a convenient time. Does he have a felt need for his sin to be dealt with? Does he have a felt need for his pride to be broken? But what does he decide? "Go away Paul. When I have a convenient time I will call for you." We have no record of him ever having a convenient time.

What is the method of the gospel? The method is the preaching of the cross. The message of the cross is reasoned, and presented to the heart and there the Holy Spirit goes to work to bring about conviction, and conviction makes one miserable, very miserable. You may be here this morning and say, "That is how I feel. Miserable. I wish I hadn't come. Now I am in a very terrible predicament."

That, precisely, is the method of the gospel. Sin must become exceedingly sinful to us before we get saved. And when that happens, we can just become miserable enough to swallow our pride and come to the Lord for salvation.

What is next? When I believe that God gave His only Son to die in my place, then I need to repent of my sins. What is that? Repentance is a change of mind about my sin. I need to confess to the Lord that I am a sinner, confess what I know is in my life to Him, and then I need to receive Him as my Savior.

E. The Outcome of the Saving Gospel

What is the outcome of the gospel? Well, let me tell you a little story. He was a young man, he lived in drugs and alcohol and about every vice that goes with it. But night after night he came and sat spell-bound under the preaching of the Word. The preachers were the Sutera Twins. The presence of the Lord was there. He was a brute for punishment, and so night after night he came back, but he could not bring himself to bend. Pride lurked in every recess of his heart. He battled. He battled big time. Every argument under the sun presented itself to him in the subtle voice of the serpent. It was not that the message was not reasonable. Obviously it was true. It was not that he did not know what he should do. It was that sin held him back, until one night. That night, he went forward and repented of his sins, received Christ, and was set free! Peace, at long last, beautiful peace.

What is the outcome of the Gospel? Well, man is delivered from the penalty of sin in a moment of time. Then the Lord sets about to set him free from the power of sin in everyday life. And finally, the believer is delivered from the very presence of sin. God's justice is satisfied, and His longed for relationship with man is restored. And when that person dies, he is taken to glory by an angel (Luke 16). And some day God will create a new heaven and a new earth, and He will come down out of heaven and dwell with man for all eternity (Rev. 21-22). All of salvation, ultimately is not about me; its about Him!

CONCL: And so we bring this brief series to a close with these thoughts. Throughout the history of the church, false gospels have come and gone. They are here today, in full menacing bloom. Our present evangelical world, I believe,

is being set up for the final church; a false church brought about by a false gospel.

But in the midst of all of that we are reminded of the words of Christ Himself, "On this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." What will happen? At any moment, the Lord might call the church home. And the gates of hell will open, and the bodies of church age believers will be reunited to their soul and spirit, and they will ascend into heaven to be married to the Lord Jesus Christ! And those who are alive at that moment, their bodies will be changed, and they will meet with the resurrected believer in the air. And from there, many many wonderful things will happen!

This is no pie in the sky, it is reality!!