

Evangelism Sermon

1 Corinthians 15:1-11 (NKJV)

¹ Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand,

² by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain.

³ For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: 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,

⁵ and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.

⁶ After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.

⁷ After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.

⁸ Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God *which was with me.*

¹¹ Therefore, whether *it was* I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

The elders have a simple goal this morning. We want to define **what the Gospel is**. We are doing this to prepare you next Sunday morning in our small discipleship groups to present the Gospel. We do this because, after all, it is impossible to make disciples if we do not know the gospel that is the foundation that discipleship is based on. A person must be a follower of Christ before they can become a disciple of Christ.

Now the Gospel is different than our testimony. Our testimony is **our story** about how we came to Christ. And our testimonies are probably all different. Some of us grew up in Christian families. Some of us were surprised by God's grace in a different setting. Some were inspired to avoid hell. Some were enticed by God's love. We all have a story. And it would be good for us to sit down and write down our story, our testimony. While the Gospel is often offensive to people, our testimony is not. A person can think we are **crazy** when we tell our story, but it isn't usually offensive to them. Because it is about us, not about them. And hopefully when we tell our story we are skilled enough to embed the Gospel

message in our story. That is often the most effective way of telling people the Gospel. But what we are talking about this morning is not **our testimony**. It is not **our story** of how we came to Christ. What we are talking about this morning is the message of what the Gospel is. It is the message that God uses to save people. It is the truth that lives at the core of how anyone gets right with God. Now, first, what does Gospel mean?

It is the Greek word "You On Gel' Eon"

And it really means A Good Message. Good news.

Now is it Good News? Well, I hope you and I think it is tremendously good news. Great news. You and I can have a relationship with God that is not hindered by our sin standing in the way. It is an amazing thing. It really does not matter what you have done. Your record, your sins, your failures, will not keep you from being right with God. That is astounding news. Almost unbelievable news once we get to truly know ourselves.

But is it good news to everyone? Not exactly.

John 3:18-21 (NKJV)

¹⁸ He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

¹⁹ And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

²⁰ For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

²¹ But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

We see here that those who love darkness will not like the light. So we don't need to be surprised at all when people get angry when we share the Good News. Some people want what God is offering. They learn to love it. This truth becomes the very center of their world. Some people hate it. And the longer they live the more they hate it and reject it. The question is, which are you? Do you love light over darkness or darkness over light?

So, what is this gospel?

Well it is best to take it directly from the ones who were preaching it. I Cor 15 is one of the clearest concise presentation of the Gospel.

1 Corinthians 15:1-11 (NKJV)

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² by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain.

³ For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received:

Paul is talking here to maybe one of the poorest examples of a church in New Testament times. He was talking to the Corinthians. They lived in a world much like ours. Free sex. Rampant immorality. The primary ideology was hedonism, the love of pleasure. And Paul says right up front that what he is about to say is **the gospel**. It is the way all of these people who were far from God came to Christ, if they are still standing in this faith. Notice the requirement here. It is not that they live it out perfectly. But it is that they **hold fast** to what was preached as the only way to be saved. The word for hold fast means to grip something solidly, possess it, retain it, seize on it. This is not a word for something you would put in safe keeping like a bag of gold. It would be more like a life saving ring you would grip with all your might if you were in the ocean adrift and this was the only thing keeping your head above water.

So those who are saved by the gospel are those who are clinging to this message, this truth, for all their lives.

Now, what is the content of the gospel? What is it that people need to hear from our lips?

I like to ask this question because it helps get concise on what a person believes the Gospel is.

If you were standing at the gate of heaven and someone there were to ask you, why should I let you in, what would you say? Now not every believer can explain this well, but this is where the gospel should gush out if properly understood.

Paul puts it this way:

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,

In less than a sentence that lays out the gospel. This is the message that must be believed in order for us to be right with God. Now notice there is no long checklist of what our behavior must be. There can't be. Because there is not a single thing we can do to earn our way into heaven. It is impossible.

Now let's break this up to make it easier to present.

First we start with bad news. We start with our condition. And our condition is not good. We have sins. This is normally how I present the gospel to someone. I just break it down into bad news and good news and explain both.

Paul says it in 3 words, **for our sins**. Other scriptures have more to say.

Romans 3:23 (NKJV)

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Isaiah 53:6 (NKJV)

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Ecclesiastes 7:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ For *there is* not a just man on earth who does good And does not sin.

Psalms 53:2-3 (NKJV)

² God looks down from heaven upon the children of men, To see if there are *any* who understand, who seek God.

³ Every one of them has turned aside; They have together become corrupt; *There is* none who does good, No, not one.

Psalms 51:5 (NKJV)

⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.

I have a handout for all of you with many of the verses we will use this morning so you don't need to worry about capturing every one. But I am trying to make the point very solid. We have bad news. We have sinned. And it isn't just the bad human beings who have sinned. In fact, there is no good human being from a strictly moral sense. We are all spiritual washouts.

Now if we have all sinned, that really can't be such a bad thing can it. Surely God will just forgive everyone's sin won't he?

Romans 6:23 (NKJV)

²³ For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Psalms 66:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear.

Psalms 5:4-6 (NKJV)

⁴ For You *are* not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, Nor shall evil dwell with You.

⁵ The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity.

⁶ You shall destroy those who speak falsehood; The LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.

Proverbs 14:12 (NKJV)

¹² There is a way *that seems* right to a man, But its end *is* the way of death.

Hebrews 9:22 (NKJV)

²² And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

The big deal is that **our sin damns us**. Period. Without exception. In fact we are all born into a state of separation from God. We are damned from our first breath as a baby. Well, it that is true, what can we do? How can we make this right?

Now maybe we can turn over a new leaf? Maybe we can make up for our sin by being good?

Isaiah 64:5-7 (NKJV)

⁵ You meet him who rejoices and does righteousness, *Who* remembers You in Your ways. You are indeed angry, for we have sinned-- In these ways we continue; And we need to be saved.

⁶ But we are all like an unclean *thing*, And all our righteousnesses *are* like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.

⁷ And *there is* no one who calls on Your name, Who stirs himself up to take hold of You; For You have hidden Your face from us, And have consumed us because of our iniquities.

Nope. This is all bad news and no good news. Even our goodness is bad. Even our best attempts are worthless. Every single attempt we make to get right with God on our own, to earn our salvation, is futile. There is nothing we can do, in and of ourselves to get right with God.

That is the bad news. And it is very important we understand the bad news and can support it with scripture. Otherwise the good news makes no sense. You see the good news is not that we can add Christ onto our life as it is and He will make our lives better. It isn't that he just teaches us a way to rationally live. It isn't just that we will no longer be lonely. It isn't just that he helps us with our addictions. Those are not the punch lines of the gospel. The gospel is given to save our lives, not to improve the quality of them. We need to understand that as we present this to people. We aren't telling people, your life is good and Christ will make it better. Our message is more like telling a person their house is on fire and Christ will get you out of it.

So what is the good news? The gospel?

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,**

Look how simple this is. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. What this means is that our sin absolutely demanded the death penalty. We had it coming. It was a certainty. God's justice demanded that God's wrath be poured out against the sin we had committed against Him. Even the state of being we were in deserved God's wrath. We need to understand the seriousness of this. That is the bad news.

But Jesus Christ took upon Himself **our sin** and received upon Himself **the wrath of God** that our sin deserved. That is what it means when it says that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

Then after that He was buried. Then three days later He rose from the dead. That is part of the Gospel. It has to be. Because there must be undeniable proof that Christ accomplished our redemption- our being bought back from the lost position. There had to be proof that **God did** what **Christ said He would do**. And the proof is the resurrection. And it is also the proof that **we too** will be raised from the dead as a result of what Christ did for us.

Now what do we do with these facts? Well, we hold fast to them. Other passages put it different ways.

John 3:16-18 (NKJV)

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

¹⁸ He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Some places we are told to believe. Other places we are told to have faith. Other places we are told to hold fast. Other places we are told to repent. But it is all essentially the same thing. We must trust that what Christ did He did for us. We must believe that what He did on the cross was for us and that now the penalty for our sins have been paid for. And all part and parcel of that belief is that we are now Christ's. We are a follower of His. We turn from our lives of sin and self determination. Our lives are now His to use as He sees fit. That is part of what faith is.

Some have said that coming to Christ is giving all that we know of ourselves to all that we know of God. That is faith.

Now immediately we are tempted to be confused. We will start to think, ok then. I need to do something to earn this. But that is impossible.

Ephesians 2:8-10 (NKJV)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is the gift of God,*

⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.

¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Scripture leaves no doubt. We aren't saved by trying hard. We can never earn what Christ did for us. We have salvation only by Faith in what Christ did, by believing what He did counts for us. But if we truly have faith in Christ it will result in us trying hard. We were created for Good Works. And God even prepared the spot we were to play before He created us. Faith will result in works. It always does. Because we now have the resurrection power of Christ flowing through our veins.

I hope you can see this morning how simple this message is. And I hope you can see what good news it is. If you have never understood this before, this morning is the best morning of your life. Here is the message that can make you right with God. It is the message that is being preached and shared all over the world this morning. Christ died for you. Now you can have new life in Him by believing in Him. Yes it really is that simple at its core. Will you respond to Him?

That is our message. Now don't worry if you can't say it perfectly. But prayerfully ask God to provide a clear opportunity for you to share it with someone. He will provide that opportunity.

Now next there are two very short videos about one method of sharing the Gospel. This is just one method. Maybe it makes it easier for you. If it doesn't, use your method. But this gospel we have is wonderful news. Let's do all we can to share it.

And if you have never responded to this message before this morning, you can be right with God before you leave the doors. Just talk with anyone here who seems to understand the Gospel and they will help you.