

The Gospel
The Gospel
By David Simpson

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Bible Text: Galatians 1:1-9; 1 Corinthians 9:16
Preached on: Sunday, June 30, 2013

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This message was recorded June 30, 2013. The speaker is David Simpson.

Now, please take your Bibles and turn to Galatians 1. After Paul finished his first tour of preaching, he went back to Antioch and there was a council meeting regarding the conversion of Gentiles and how God saved sinners and it was determined that God saved by grace. When Paul traveled on his second journey, he went back through the area in Galatia where he had preached and found that there were those who had come in behind him and had tried to mix grace and works and so he wrote back the letter to the Galatians and it's very insightful, very helpful to see how he begins in this first chapter. So, we're going to read in Galatians 1, we'll begin with the first verse and Troy will lead us.

“Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 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.”

Turn in your Bibles to the book of 1 Corinthians and if you would please, to chapter 9. Paul was on his second preaching tour. He moved from Asia Minor over into Europe and he preached in Philippi and traveled south then to Thessalonica and from Thessalonica he traveled to Athens and from Athens he moved a little back west and he came to Corinth. And he spent about a year and a half in Corinth preaching the Gospel to them. Obviously, he had some success in terms of believers but he also had a great deal of difficulty and some have called this the troubled triumphant church in Corinth. After Paul left, he traveled back out of Europe, back into Asia Minor and went back to Ephesus where he

had been before. And while he was in Ephesus, there were a group of men, apparently, probably just a few, a handful, that came to him with a report from the congregation, of questions. And the letter of 1 Corinthians is a series of answers to these questions. We don't have the questions but we have the answers, so when you go through the Book of Corinthians it's good to study it in that way to see the questions and the answers that are there.

He begins in the first chapter and he talks about the love of his life, the calling and the commitment of his heart which is to preach the Gospel. And he doesn't return to that subject until he comes to the ninth chapter, but when he comes back to this ninth chapter he speaks of himself as being called and appointed to preach the Gospel. So, I want us to look at one verse and focus on verse 16, if you would, please. The Apostle said,

“For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”

I want to talk with you about three things in this little verse. First of all, I think we cannot help but see the meekness that is in the Apostle for he says, “though I preach the gospel,” which is the highest calling in all of the world outside of being a mother or being a father, but to preach the gospel is a calling that is unparalleled to anything else in all of the world. So, he lays high stress upon it but he said, “though I pray the gospel, I have nothing whereof to glory.”

Now, as a man, Paul had plenty of reasons that he could glory. His mind was exceptional; his achievements were very notable; his religious zeal was incomparable; his faithfulness was rare; among the Jews he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews; among the Gentiles he was called an Apostle from God. Yet, before God, he had no reason for which to glory. He knew to have no confidence in the flesh, he said that in the Book of Philippians. He knew he had nothing that he did not receive, he said that in the letter of 1 Corinthians. He knew, along with the Apostle Peter, that “all flesh is as grass, it withers and dies away” and he knew that of himself. He knew, with James, that life is just but for a short time; it's like a vapor, it's here and then it's gone. He knew, with John the Apostle, that “the world passes away and the less thereof but he that does the will of God abides forever.”

He knew those things, they were in his mind. He understood that he had no reason for which to glory before God. He understood that his gifts, his qualifications, his appointment and his calling all were from God. He could say with a good conscience as he did later in this letter, “but by the grace of God I am what I am and his grace was bestowed upon me not in vain but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I but the grace of God which was with me.”

So, when I look at this phrase and he says, “I have nothing to glory of,” he is saying that he knows that all that he is and all that he has an all of his calling and anyone who comes to the knowledge of grace has not to do with him but it has to do with God. He knows that he is the one who preaches and he knows that Apollos is one that waters but he knows that it is God who gives the increase. So, he knows that all of it is of God and he

says, "I have no place in which to glory." And that's the problem with man, is he's always looking for a place to glory, so I see his meekness.

But I also see his ministry because you'll notice that he says "that for necessity is laid upon me." The word "necessity" is a word that means "something that is compelling; a compelling force." In this case, he's talking about a compelling force from within. There's something inside of him that is compelling him. It wasn't money that was compelling him but he said more than once, "for a bishop must be blameless as the steward of God, not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no stricker," and lastly he said, "not given to filthy lucre."

No, the necessity that he's talking about is the necessity of God's call. He said, for example in 2 Corinthians 4, "seeing we have this ministry we have received mercy, we faint not." He didn't consider himself the originator, the author of the ministry. He didn't consider himself the one who brought it to pass or caused it to be, but he simply said, "seeing we have this ministry." I see myself in the same light, seeing we have this ministry, seeing we have people who want to hear the Gospel, I feel the necessity, the compulsion to declare the Gospel. That's what Paul said.

He also said in the Book of Ephesians 3:7 and following, "Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Yes, this was a ministry that was given to him by God and he was called to preach what he referred to as "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

His call, this necessity that he speaks of, I suggest to you was from heaven. I suggest to you that it worked in his conscience, that his calling was equal to any prophet of the Old Testament or any Apostle of the New Testament. He was moved because he wanted to give God all of the glory. He was moved within because he wanted to honor the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He was moved within because he saw the need of immortal souls and because he saw the reality of a judgment to come. He was moved by the weight of and the gratitude for the Gospel. It was all of these things that moved him within. He was moved knowing "for the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness but unto us who are being saved, it is the power of God." So, all of this is what moved him from within and he calls it a necessity, it's his ministry to preach the Gospel that moves him within.

But there's something else here that is the greatest weight of this verse in this statement and it is the weight that we see in what he says that bears upon my mind when I read in the last of this verse. If you'll look in your own Bible, he says, "yea," and then he says, "woe." Yea and woe are interjections, something that you put in to make an emphasis. He says "yea" to stop and he says "woe" as an interjection of grief and of indignation and of judgment.

“Woe is unto me,” not unto you. He’s not looking out. “Woe is unto me.” It reminds me of Isaiah when he looked up and he saw God and then he looked in and he saw himself and what did he say when he saw himself? He said, “Woe, I am a man of unclean lips.” And that’s what Paul did, he looked up and he saw God, he looked in and he saw this great calling but he said, “Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel.” The failure to fulfill his calling would wound his conscience and offend the divine calling and grieve, as he said in another place, “the very Spirit of God.” So, he says, “woe is unto me.” Judgment is unto me; indignation is unto me; grief in my heart, “if I preach not the gospel.”

The word for preach is the word euaggelion. The root word is the word for message. It is the word for angel, angelos, but it is a word that means “messenger or message messenger.” But he put the little preposition eu on the front of it, it would be e and u to you and me, on the beginning of that and it means “good message” but the way it is put in a verb, it means “to proclaim a good message; to declare a good message.” So, it is to proclaim or declare a good message. So, he says, “woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel.” And the word “gospel” is also this word euaggelion and it is the word for “good message.”

So, the necessity was not simply that he preach, this is very important, it was not simply that he preached but it was that he preach the Gospel. It’s not the action though the action is important because God doesn’t save and convince the mind and the heart by puppets and by plays and, as much as we love music, that’s not the way God does it. God has authorized one way and that’s the preaching of the Gospel. Preaching generally has fallen upon hard times in our day. Give a 15 or 20 minute moral lesson for the most part in our day, they are saying something that entertains and soothes their congregation but preaching, declaring the Gospel, laying out the Gospel, as I say to you, has fallen upon hard times. But it’s not just the action, it’s the content that really matters. When Paul says back at the beginning of this letter that it refers to the foolishness of preaching, it means not just the foolishness of the act of preaching but God saves by the foolishness of that which is preached, so it’s the content that is important.

There is a critical question that a thinking people must ask and must approach unto and that is: what is the Gospel of Jesus Christ? So, let me spend a little time talking with you about what are the contents of the Gospel message in the 21st century, in the 20th century, in the 19th century or in the 1st century, it’s all the same. What is the content of the message of the Gospel? Well, I suggest to you that it first of all begins where the Bible begins. Where it begins is, “In the beginning God,” and the Gospel begins with a sovereign God. Do we not see God sovereign in the very beginning? Did he not call that which was not into being and did he not call that which was being into life and did he not call that which was life to be a man? That’s exactly what he did. God is sovereign and so the Bible declares his sovereignty at every page, every crook and every turn.

Scripture says, as David is concluding his life in 1 Chronicles 29, David said, “Thine O Lord is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty. You reign over all, your hand is power and might.” God is sovereign in all things but most of

all, God is sovereign in the salvation of a single sinner or of a host of sinners. God does what he wills, he does when he wills, he does with whom he wills, he does it as he wills, he does it that way all the time. God is sovereign. Notice in that word “sovereign” is the word “reign” and what we’re saying is that God reigns. God reigns over the most important element in revelation and that is salvation. God is sovereign. To begin a Gospel declaration without talking about a sovereign God is to strip away all the foundational truth of what we would know in the Gospel.

The second thing is that it has an election of grace; it declares an election of grace. For example, Paul said in Romans 11, “Even so at this present time also there is a remnant,” that is, some who are left out of the vast numbers of humanity, “according to the election of grace and if by grace then it is no more of works.” Now, it’s important to understand the difference between grace and works. Grace is salvation conditioned upon Jesus Christ and him alone. It is important to know that salvation is conditional. God didn’t say it in a vacuum. No place is it revealed that God saves in a vacuum. It is simply by his will or an act of decree. God saved on the condition of Christ obeying until death the law and establishing righteousness. So, grace is salvation conditioned on Christ alone.

When the Bible speaks of works, as Paul does here, it’s talking about conditions based upon something that man thinks or says or does. So, when he says and if by grace salvation conditioned on Christ alone, it is no more of works - salvation conditioned on something man thinks, says or does. Otherwise, grace is no more grace and if it be of works then works is no more works because grace and works do not mix together. Salvation conditioned on Christ alone or salvation conditioned on man alone.

Now, what the degree of election did was strip all of man works out of it. But the degree to which a so-called proclaimer of the Gospel strips God’s election of grace out of the Gospel, the message ceases to be the Gospel. The Gospel must be declared in terms of who God is and it must be declared in terms of this election of grace in order to establish the very grace of God. So, we cannot talk about the grace of God and be Scriptural and be legitimate if we do not place it in terms of God’s election.

So, it has a sovereign God, the Gospel message does. It has an election of grace and I say to you that it has 3. an effectual Savior. An effectual Savior. When I use the word “effectual” I mean the job was actually done. A Savior came to save; he actually saved. Not a potential Savior, not a hope-so Savior, not a Savior that says, “I’ll leave it up to you,” but a Savior who actually and truly saves.

The first thing this effectual Savior had to do was he had to satisfy God’s law and he had to satisfy God’s justice. Jesus spoke of this in the Sermon the Mount when he said that “I came not to destroy the law but to fulfill the law.” You see, the law had to be fulfilled in every part of it. In the Hebrew language there are a couple of little marks that are called jots and tittles, they’re just little marks and he said “I came to fulfill that every jot and every tittle, every part of it from the smallest part to the biggest part, the moral law, the ceremonial law, every part of the law.” He said, “I came to fulfill the law.” That’s what his obedience was all about.

But he also had to fulfill justice; justice had to be satisfied. Justice is God's charge, God's reckoning of his law, the reckoning of his wrath against the failure to keep the law. And so, Christ had to endure this wrath of God in order to satisfy it. There's a word that is used for this in the Scripture, it is that word "propitiation" and propitiation refers to the mercy-seat where the blood was sprinkled on the mercy-seat and that blood became a satisfaction to God who is the judge of all.

What we learn is that Christ had to satisfy God before he could become a substitute for sinners, he had to satisfy God's law and God's justice. And the question is: Did he do it? That's the only question that you really have to answer in these things is: Did he do that? If he did it, then salvation was complete. If he didn't do it, then there's something else to be done. I say to you, he did it.

But not only was he a satisfaction of law and justice but he also was, as I just said, a substitute for chosen sinners, for elect sinners. In history, some have tried to work their way around this, recognizing God's election in Scripture, they've tried to work around with different ideas and different plans, different thoughts about it. One of those has said that what Christ did was effectual only for the elect but it was good enough, more or less, for everybody. That's imposing man's language upon the Scriptures because the Scriptures are clear that Christ came for a certain people. He came for those elect people, that's why that must be declared, it must be understood. It doesn't give me a right to tell a man generally that "God loves you," because I don't really know that. To say that you're going to witness for God or preach for God and for me to say to you that "God loves you," I cannot say that. I couldn't have said it to Esau, could I? If I would, I would've been a liar because Scripture tells us that he didn't love Esau.

Well, I don't know who God loves and who he doesn't love but I know this, that the Lord Jesus Christ came to this world for a chosen people and became their substitute. In Ephesians 5:2 it says that Christ became a sacrifice for us. That little word "for" is the Greek preposition, hyper, and it means "in the stead of; in the place of; in the room of." He became a sacrifice in our place.

The Apostle Peter said that Christ "bore our sins in his own body on the tree." That's substitution. It also says that "he who knew no sin became sin for us." That's substitution. All the way throughout the Bible it's substitution. Why were all of those lambs sacrificed? Because it's a picture of substitution. I declare to you the completeness of the substitution of Christ. It was so complete in his substitutionary work that nothing else could be required. Not one thing could be added to it. Not one thing could be taken from it.

He was the satisfaction to God, he was the substitute for his chosen people and in all of this work, he saved his elect from their sins. So, what the angel said, he said, "Call his name Jesus for he shall," not might, "he shall save his people from their sins." That's exactly what he did. That's precisely what he carried out. He saved us from the

damnation of our sins. So I say to you, he's not a potential Savior but an actual and effectual Savior.

The Gospel has therefore a sovereign God, an election of grace, an effectual Savior and one more thing: it has an irresistible call. This means a lot to us because this is where the rubber hits the road for us. How do I come to this? And I declare to you that it is an irresistible call. The Bible is so plain that it must be irresistible' it's not even a possibility that there could be another way, it must be irresistible. It's irresistible because of what man is. Jesus said that "men love darkness rather than light." We naturally love what we ought to hate and hate what we ought to love. We often love light but we love darkness. We are to hate darkness and love the light but we're the opposite because of what man is.

Paul said of man that "there is none righteous, no not one." Not one speck of righteousness in any of us and all of our righteousness combined together wouldn't be enough to even begin to commend us to God. What man is? In another place it says "dead in trespasses and sins." Paul used the most radical comparison to describe the natural state of man, "dead in his trespasses and sins." Dead spiritually. Not a spark of life in him. Not a faith in you that you can take and place in Christ. Not at all. Because of what man is, it must be irresistible.

Not only irresistible because of what man is but it must be irresistible because of who God is. I refer back to Isaiah, it says that when he "saw also the Lord high and lifted up, the seraphim," the angel, "cried," and what did he say? He said, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord." God is so holy that Moses had to take his shoes off because the very dust was made holy by the presence of God. God was so holy that when those boys touched the Ark of the Covenant they died. God is holy, infinitely holy. If we were to have to say one characteristic of God that defines him more than any other I think it would have to be this: that God is holy. God is holy.

And it is this holiness defined in the Book of Jonah that led Jonah to say, "Salvation is of the Lord. Salvation is not of me, salvation is of the Lord." It was salvation that delivered him out of that fish and out of the depths of the sea and out of death. Salvation is of the Lord.

Man has a basic problem. His basic problem is that his opinion of God is too low and his opinion of himself is too high. That's our problem. Naturally, we are that way. We're all that way. And religion fosters it, religion builds it up. You've seen it before. You've seen these signs where it says "Everybody is somebody." No, it's we're all nobodies, we're nothing. I mean, we're just dust and we're going back to dust. We're drying up every day. You put all the lotion on you want to, you're drying up and you're going to dry up. We're dust and we're going back there. I'll tell you this, when God shows you who he is, you'll realize that there is nothing about you, nothing about your will, nothing about your works, nothing about your ways that could commend you to God or apply what Christ did to your life. Not one thing that you can possibly do.

I tell you that it must be irresistible of what man is and it must be irresistible because of who God is, but it's also irresistible because of what Jesus said. Jesus said in John 5:40, "You will not come to me." That tells you all that you need to know about what Jesus thinks about man's will. Argue back and forth about whether man has a free will which, of course, is ridiculous to have a free will. We all have inclinations toward lots and lots of things, we're not free and Jesus said of man's will, "You will not come to me." The freest man's will ever was in the Garden and it didn't take him very long, we don't know how long, but it moves very quickly from God telling him that "You can eat of this fruit and not of this fruit," until we see him and his wife disobeying and rebelling against God. Not long at all. That's the freest man's will ever was and we see what he did with it.

Man does not have a free will and Jesus declared, "You will not come to me." It's also clear because of what Jesus said when he said, "No man can come to me." The word "can" is the word for ability, "no man has the ability to come to me." That tells us all we need to know about man's ability. Jesus thought of man's ability as lower than the lowest. "You cannot come, you will not come to me and you cannot come." So, people have argued it back and forth: is it a man will not come because he can't come or he can't come because he will not come. Both are true. It's clear: he will not come and he cannot come.

It's irresistible because of what man is, of who God is, because of what Jesus said and because of what the Scriptures declare. The Scriptures declare spiritual awakening, regeneration is a sovereign, a free act of God. James said of his own will, James 1:18, "Of his own will, begot he us." Not your will, but his will. And if you wanted to look at the most recognized place where regeneration or spiritual awakening is spoken of, Jesus said in John 3:7, "You must be born again or from above." Right after that he compared the rebirth which comes by the Spirit of God, to the wind and he said, "The wind blows where it will," meaning you can't control the wind, you can't stop the wind, you can't move the wind. It can be going east at one moment and it can turn around and go west in the next moment. You can't do one thing with it. So it is with being born from above, it is of God's will, regeneration is of God. To the idea that somebody can bow their head and pray a so-called Sinner's Prayer and invited Jesus in and be born-again, that means that it is by man's will. That cannot be done. That does not work. That is nothing. That is emptiness. That's just false religion. Regeneration is by the sovereign act of God.

Secondly I say to you, that repentance is the gift of God. Regeneration is the act of God, repentance is the gift of God. In Acts 11:18 the Scripture says, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted," notice this, granted, given, "repentance unto life." He has to give it to us, you don't have it. You can't just change your mind which is what repentance is. He has to give you repentance, he has to grant repentance, he has to put it in your mind and put it in your heart to repent and change. It doesn't come with a snap of your fingers, I've never seen that. What I observed is that it takes the preaching of the Gospel, the sound of the Gospel being under the sound of the Gospel that changes our mind and moves us, but it is God who grants it. No matter how much preaching is done, it's God who must grant it.

Then I say to you not only is regeneration the act of God and repentance the gift of God but faith also is the gift of God for by grace are you saved or literally have been saved, are being saved, shall be saved. That's one complete statement in itself, "for by grace have you been saved through faith." By faith, we see this salvation, we rest in that salvation. But he hastened on to say, "and that," meaning the faith, "is not of yourselves but it's the gift of God." God has to give you the faith to see his salvation.

And then I say to you the calling to the Gospel is the gift of God. 2 Thessalonians 2:13, "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation," see how he brings in election, "through sanctification of the Spirit," setting apart of the Spirit of God, "and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel." You see, the Gospel must be brought to bear upon our lives by an irresistible call. Those who are not his, they'll resist it, they'll turn away from it, they will shun it, that is true but those whom he has chosen cannot and will not and never will turn away. The Gospel will keep them.

One more thing, Paul said when he's defining the Gospel, "I'm not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ for therein," in the Gospel, "is the righteousness of God revealed." Righteousness is a result of something that he's talking about. Righteousness resulted from the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ in life to the requirements of law and in death to its penalties. So, he fulfilled its requirements and he endured its penalties. And when he had endured it to the very end, to the very end, righteousness was what remained. So, when the Scripture says "there is therefore now no condemnation," it is because of that righteousness which God, at the cross, accepted and imputed or reckoned to the account of his people. It was so complete, so thorough, nothing could be added to it, that it says that God "became just and justifier." His attribute of justice and his work as justifier met and kissed in Jesus Christ at the cross and God justified his people.

That is forgiveness. That is redemption. That is justification. It's not just the ground, it's the very salvation of a sinner itself. Regeneration, repentance, faith, calling, certainly they occur in time and experience in order that all whom God chose before time could look back upon what he did for them and rejoice in it and rest in it in their minds and in their affections and in their will and in their conscience. It is my hope and prayer that you have that rest in your souls today.