

What Paul Preached

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Bible Text: Romans 1:16

Preached On: Thursday, September 19, 2013

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When I read my Bible and examine what the Apostle Paul preached and compare that to what is preached in the majority of our churches in America today, I see little similarity and if old Paul was to show up today and enter a pulpit and preach the message that he preached in his day, he would be quickly escorted out of the church by the good deacons. I submit to you that the Apostle Paul would not be allowed to preach in the majority of the churches in America today and, not only that, he would be persecuted by the church for preaching the message that he preached in his day. Some of you may be saying to yourself, "How can you come to that conclusion, Preacher? That's a pretty bold statement." It's true, friends, if old Paul came back today to the church in America, they would persecute him and reject his message. "Well," you might ask, "what in the world did Paul preach that would make him an enemy of the church today?" I will tell you, friend: he preached the unvarnished gospel of the Son of God and you start preaching that gospel to this generation, to the churches in America today, and they will surely hate you for it. You will be considered a trouble-maker, a church-divider and a heretic.

Well, what did old Paul preach? The best place to look is in our Bible. Let us first turn to 2 Corinthians 4:5,

"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord."

Let's start there because that is where Paul began. The Apostles preached a risen Lord, Christ Jesus the Lord, Christ on a throne sitting at the right hand of the Father and he earned that right by way of a bloody cross. Jesus is Lord. If you want to come to him savingly, you have to come to him there, friend, to where he is, on a throne. He reigns there and if you want to be savingly converted, you'd better listen to old Paul and receive Christ as Lord.

You see, friends, the church in America parted with the gospel about 50 years ago when they separated Jesus from Lord. They made two things out of one. The church in your day and mine declares you can have Christ as a Savior and go to heaven but you don't have to submit to his claims on your life as Lord. You can accept Jesus as your personal Savior and go on in your sins and reign on the throne of your heart and go to heaven just fine. That's the gospel of our day.

But not in Paul's day, no sir. Paul preached Jesus the Lord and if you wanted him, you had to approach him there and bow to him in utter surrender because if you don't bow to him now, friend, he will put his foot on your neck at a future day and make you bow then when he makes his enemies as footstool because any person, any church member or non-church member who has not submitted to the Lordship of Christ, that salvation is lost.

Now, you start preaching that, friend, and the good deacons will wring your neck. They'll take the shoes off and throw them at you because the church in America has told people, "You can have Jesus as a Savior but you don't need him as a Lord." And thousands upon thousands and millions upon millions have walked an aisle with a grin on their face and accepted Jesus as their personal Savior and they never saw themselves as lost, in a ruined estate and an enemy of God. They never threw down their shotgun of rebellion and surrendered to the King of kings who is Lord. They were never convicted of their sins, nor were they converted because they never repented from their sins. They were never filled with the Holy Spirit and they call themselves Christians and they run our churches and seminaries and denominations.

And if old Paul came back today and addressed a national convention for a major denomination and if he dared preach the message that he preached while he was here in the flesh, he would not last long at the podium because the heads of that denomination would be shouting for his head. The Apostle Paul preached the Lordship of Jesus Christ, a risen Lord, who sits on a throne and if you want him savingly, you have to do business with him there. Is that too hard for you? Can't swallow that? Well, take it up with old Paul and the old book.

The next thing Paul preached is found in Ephesians 2:1-4, and this will really make you mad,

"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

Now, Paul mentions several things here that are foreign to many in our churches today. They've not heard this message because it's not preached much. Many sermons grab their texts from unoffensive passages of Scripture and men preach those up because they won't offend anybody. After all, you can't upset your congregation. If you do, you won't have a congregation. We live in a day of the positive encouraging word and a positive encouraging God. We have positive encouraging Christian radio, positive encouraging Pastors and so-called Christian bookstores that sell positive encouraging books. That's the day we live in, friends, a positive encouraging day when society is falling all apart all around us and people drop into hell by the minute and we preach nice, little, positive encouraging sermons to soothe their little minds and calm their little hearts.

And if old Paul came back today and preached that, that all mankind is dead in trespasses and sins, that they serve the devil because he is the Prince of the Power of the Air, that because they are lost and ruined, they live in a kingdom of darkness and they are the children of disobedience who live to fulfill the lusts and desires of their flesh and they drink iniquity like it's water because they have a nature, a nature, friend, that is ruined and they are the children of wrath. They are objects of God's wrath. Now, do you want to go preach that message, Brother Preacher? If you want to be like Paul, you can but be willing to have his scars because he was mobbed and stoned and beaten and whipped and run out of town for the message he preached which was Christ and him crucified.

Well, let's look at the next thing old Paul preached. Turn over in your Bibles to the book of Acts and chapter 17:30. Paul was addressing the pagans in Athens and if old Paul came back to pagan America today and addressed it, he would preach the same message to it that he preached to those pagan Greeks. This is what he preached to them,

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.”

Old Paul preached man's duty of repentance that God commands all men, Greeks and Americans and Chinese and Russian and African and Indonesian and all men everywhere, to repent. You start preaching man's duty of repentance today and you will have a mob at your door. They horse-whipped Mordecai Ham for preaching repentance; they pistol-whipped him in Texas for preaching repentance. But Mordecai Ham, although he had some scars on his body, he was like old Paul. Old Ham saw over 200,000 people come to Christ during his ministry and one of them was Billy Graham.

But we soft-soak the gospel today and the problem is people join our churches and sit Sunday after Sunday and listen to our encouraging words for the day and we are not honest with men and honest with women and honest with girls and honest with boys. We just don't warn them of the fact that Jesus declared, “Unless you repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” That means that if you came into a church any other way than through repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ, you are a hell-bound sinner who needs to repent even if you are the chairman of the deacons. But if you preach on repentance, then you have to mention sin and then you have to mention a place called “hell,” and then you have to talk about a holy God who hates sin and, “Why that's just not politically correct.”

So, the gospel of our day and the gospel of Paul's day are two different gospels, friend, and here is the difference: we don't see many true conversions today with our peanut God-shrunk gospel. But Paul had his because the gospel he preached is found in Acts 20:27 which states,

“For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.”

You see, friends, old Paul preached the gospel in its purity and proper order. He preached the full counsel of God. He didn't leave anything out to make it more palatable to sinful man. He was not ashamed of it like we are today and we are so ashamed of it, we don't want to preach all of it. But the gospel Paul preached had something that today's modern gospel lacks: P-O-W-E-R. In Romans, Paul declares,

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”

But our gospel of today lacks power because we have diluted it of all its threatenings and terrors and warnings to sinful man. We don't want to warn sinners to flee from the wrath to come today, we just want to give them some encouraging word and smile and play church and sit back while society crumbles all around us and this nation turns its back on God and the churches are too afraid to preach the full counsel of God and be honest with men and tell them what they are: ruined, lost, rebels, enemies of God.

We paint God all wrong, too, and say he's just a God of love when in reality he is also a God of wrath and who declares,

“God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready.”

We don't tell men that God is ready to cut them down any moment because of sin, that's the only prayer God ever hears of an unsaved person and that's this: “God, be merciful to me a sinner.” No, the God of today is only a God of the encouraging word. Why, the God of today just wouldn't punish sin. He wouldn't send anybody to hell. But old Paul knew better. He warned men. He called a spade a spade. He didn't soft-soap the gospel and shrink God down to man's level like many of us have done today.

Well, what else did Paul preach? If you're not mad yet, you will be after you hear what he preached next. Turn to Ephesians 1:4-5,

“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: saving predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.”

This speaks of election, that God is the God of salvation and not man,

“For by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God not of works lest any man boast.”

Old Paul would surely be thrown out of many of our churches today for preaching that message and if he capped it off by saying that we were saved to be holy, why, that would drain the blood out of the good deacons' faces. You start saying that without holiness no

one shall see the Lord and they will scream, “We will not have this man rule over us.” And if you really want to make some church-folks mad, tell them that the Christian life is a crucified life where self is dethroned and another is enthroned there.

Old Paul preached on the crucified life,

“I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live yet not I but Christ liveth in me and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Old Paul preached that when we come to Christ we have a new master, our life is not our own for we are bought with a price. Our body is not our own; our time is not our own; our money is not our own. Jesus is Lord and as Christians, we live crucified lives as we follow a crucified Savior. Paul said in Colossians 2:6,

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.”

Old Paul would be in bad shape if he came back today and tried to evangelize the American church. Vance Havner used to say, “I could’ve led a few more people to the Lord had they not already joined the church.” Yes sir, you start preaching up election and holiness and repentance and start calling man a rebel, why, you just might as well wear a football helmet when you preach for the rocks will surely come. But Old Paul knew that because in his day, man was as wicked as he is in our day and in Paul’s day, he had his share of rocks thrown at him.

When I sit in big congregations and listen to big dogs preach, I often hear a big round of applause when they are done with their message. Boy, the crowd just loves them. Do you want to hear the kind of applause old Paul received? I will close with Paul’s laundry list for preaching the gospel of the Son of God as it is found in 2 Corinthians 11.

“In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.”

And you know what care that is, Brother Pastor. It’s a mighty care indeed.

Well, old Paul didn’t have a 401k and health insurance and a standing ovation when he left the pulpit and finished his ministry because he preached a different gospel than is preached in many of our churches today. I remember Leonard Ravenhill saying this,

“When we get to heaven, Jesus won’t be looking for medals pinned on us, but scars.” It is my prayer that a Sovereign Almighty will raise up a new generation of preachers who are willing to be scarred for preaching the gospel of the Son of God in its purity and proper order and they won’t be men who fear men, but that they will be men who walk humbly in the fear of the Lord.