

## The Glories of the Gospel Series – Part One – Ashamed of the Gospel?

### 1. Humor

- a. Perhaps you heard of the large two-engined train was crossing Canada. After it had gone some distance, one of the engines broke down. "No problem," the engineer thought, and carried on at half power.
- b. Farther on down the line, the other engine broke down, and the train came to a standstill.
- c. The engineer decided he should inform the passengers about why the train had stopped, and made the following announcement:
- d. "Ladies and gentlemen, I have some good news and some bad news. The bad news is that both engines have failed, and we will be stuck here for some time. The good news is that you decided to take the train and not fly."

### 2. Introduction to the Gospel –

- a. Because we are reaching beyond our walls of the church beginning this week, we will be learning about the power, the priority and the price of the Gospel. We are going to start at the basics, the beginning today.

### 3. What is the Gospel...what does the "gospel" mean?

#### a. The Gospel means 'good news' -

- i. Gospel is euaggelion (is used 76 times in the NT in the NASB) and means good news, glad tidings".
  1. The word euaggelion was in just as common use in the first century as our words good news today. "Have you any good news for me today?" would have been a common question. [http://www.preceptaustin.org/philippians\\_13-5.htm#GOSPEL%20EUAGGELION](http://www.preceptaustin.org/philippians_13-5.htm#GOSPEL%20EUAGGELION)
- ii. Euaggelion was also commonly used in the Greco-Roman culture as "a technical term for "news of victory."
  1. The messenger appears, raises his right hand in greeting and calls out with a loud voice: "rejoice ...we are victorious".
  2. How much more radiant should we be who are the bearers of the great news of Christ's eternal triumph over sin, Satan, and death!
  3. Unlike secular news, ours IS THE POWER OF GOD.
- iii. Romans 1:16 " *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes....*"
  1. The Good News we bear is that God has sent us a Savior!
  2. And our gospel, **our Good News has within it the inherent power to generate salvation in those who hear it proclaimed.**
  3. If this is true (and it is), then why are so many saints shy about speaking forth the good news of the greatest story ever told?!

#### b. Notice in Romans 1:16, that Paul says that "he is *not ashamed of the gospel*"

- i. The second phrase follows: "*...for [the gospel] is the power of God for salvation....*"
- ii. And the third phrase follows: "*...to everyone who believes*"
- iii. Why would Paul link the idea of shame with what is marvelous news?
  1. That's an important question for us.
  2. You might be ashamed of bad news.
  3. You might feel bad about it and be hesitant to share bad news.
  4. You might be ashamed of wickedness, failure, hypocrisy, and all kinds of bad things.
  5. But why would one be ashamed of good news?
- iv. The concept of shame spoken of here is that of an embarrassing association.

1. For example, Paul wrote to Timothy at one point, "*Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner.*"
2. In other words, don't be embarrassed by the testimony of Jesus or of being associated with me.
3. Have you ever been with someone and felt embarrassed to be seen with that person in public?
  - a. Teens often are so embarrassed by their parents that they won't walk within 20 feet of them at a mall.
  - b. Maybe you knew someone who had poor social skills and felt funny being seen with them in public?
  - c. Why is that so?
  - d. It is because you want people to think of you differently.
- v. The reason for the gospel to be something people are shy or embarrassed by is that the gospel message begins with a denouncement of what it means to be human, to be a descendant of Adam and rebellious against God.
  1. This wonderful good news of the gospel message begins with the calling of people to look at who they are and to repent of it.
  2. To use the language that is familiar to us these days, the world is in denial.
  3. The term denial is used in talking about counseling situations where people have to face something about themselves for the first time and are defensive.
    - a. The husband or wife comes to their beloved and says, "Honey, we need counseling. Our marriage is in trouble; we're not doing well. We need the intervention of someone else." And immediately the defenses go up: "What do you mean? We don't need anybody else messing with our marriage. We're doing just fine. There's nothing to be uncovered here." Yet there's pain everywhere, and it's being denied.
    - b. Or a teacher calls a parent on the phone and says, "Your son is having a hard time in school. I think there are some serious problems. Maybe he needs some extra testing." And the parent blows up: "What do you mean, my son's having a hard time in school? There might be something wrong with his teacher, but there's absolutely nothing wrong with my son." There's an immediate sense of denial: I have no problem; it's not me, it's not my fault.
    - c. We're born defensive, with an immediate reaction of wanting to hide failure and inadequacy.
  4. The gospel message always begins by saying, "Tear down the defenses, destroy the denial."
    - a. And because no one wants to hear that, the gospel is always going to draw hostility.
    - b. Those who have gained power and influence don't want to hear that they don't have the answers and that their wisdom and genius are really not worth much.
    - c. And the ordinary people who are trying to survive don't want radical surgery done because they're terrified of what they'll discover on the inside.
    - d. It is the reason people put off going to the doctor when they find a lump or a suspicious spot because they don't want to know they are sick!
- vi. The gospel starts by saying to people, "You need help. It doesn't matter who you are, you're not good enough."
  1. For that reason it will always be hard for us to begin the story of the love of God.
  2. It will never be a popular message.

3. We have to tell the story of human need, and we have to be about destroying denial as the first step in getting help for ourselves or anyone else.

4. **The biggest problem with the good news is that it exposes the bad news.**

**vii. The good news tells us WHY WE NEED A GOSPEL?**

1. It tells us that we **need** a Savior.

2. It tells us that we are lost, that we are all sinners, without hope, unable to save ourselves.

3. It tells us that we cannot make ourselves better, that we cannot change our ways.

4. The Good News exposes the truth that every person in the world is on their way to a godless, eternal hell because we all share a common rebellious nature.

c. The Good News is good...

i. Because...Sin is the most expensive thing in the universe.

1. Nothing else can cost so much.

2. Pardoned or unpardoned, its cost is infinitely great.

3. Pardoned, the cost falls chiefly on the great atoning Substitute; unpardoned, it must fall on the head of the guilty sinner.

d. What is the good news? A concise definition is found in 1Corinthians 15:3-4

i. *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.*"

e. For Paul, the gospel is not merely good news in the sense of its message, but is itself "*the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.*"

i. The gospel possesses the power to deliver otherwise lost sinners "*from the domain of darkness*" and transfer them "*to the kingdom of His beloved Son*"

ii. **The gospel is not just a stagnant system of ethics but it is the Word of Truth which is living, moving, growing, bearing fruit and spreading.**

iii. The gospel has the power to change us from the inside out. It changes our very nature!

iv. Illust. Of Apple Tree: whether an apple tree has 100 apples, 1000 or just one, it bears the fruit of its nature...it still bears apples. It is like us. We are all sinners, whether we bear one sin hundreds, we are all sinners. Even if you could knock off all the apples, the tree would still be an apple tree. For it to bear a different kind of fruit, it would have to have its nature changed.

v. That is the power of the gospel. It changes our very nature.

vi. Perhaps you have been trying to be good for God, to earn His favor. You cant do it! But there is good news! Jesus will change you from the inside out if you will put your faith in Him and Him alone.

4. The Greatest Threat to Christianity today

a. Robert Capon wrote about the greatest threat to Christianity today. "The most critical issue facing Christians is not abortion, pornography, the disintegration of the family, moral absolutes, MTV, drugs, racism, sexuality, or school prayer. The critical issue today is dullness. . . The good news is no longer good news, it is okay news. Christianity is no longer life changing, it's life enhancing. . ." (Mike Yaconelli in *Dangerous Wonder: The Adventure of Childlike Faith*)

b. **The biggest danger to Christianity is its own apathy for lost souls.**

c. **We have lost the imperative, we have lost the vision of hell, the motive of love and the memory of what it was to be lost and without hope...**

i. And we have substituted churchy experiences, pot luck dinners and good worship services for the Good News.

ii. Our church experiences exist to prepare us for our ultimate purpose, of sharing the Good News with others.

- iii. But we have taken those church experiences and made them the purpose instead, and have let the fate of lost souls drift to the bottom of our list of priorities.
- d. Let me share with you the imperatives...
  - i. **Vision of Hell** –
    - 1. Jesus said more about hell than anyone else in the New Testament. He knows the reality of hell.
    - 2. The bible tells us that it is inevitable, inescapable and everlasting for those without Christ.
    - 3. There is no hope or chance to escape...ever. There will be no rest...ever. There will be no peace, only turmoil, eternal panic and fear, no beauty, no majestic mountains, no lakes, no trees, no flowers no sunset, no sunrise. There will be no music, only the cries, screams curses and groans of lost people in total despair and pain. Hate fills every corner of hell.
    - 4. There will be no relief...from depression, desperation, sorrow or grief. There will be no doctor to alleviate the burning pain that will rack your eternal body, you will cry for mercy and no one will hear you. No one will take any notice as you scream, “My God what a fool I was!”
    - 5. There will not be a single moment free of pain in the lake of fire. One moment will feel like an hour, an hour like a day, and a day like a month and the eternity will never end. Like the rich man in the story of Lazarus, you will scream for water and no one will hear you. You would give all you have, all you ever had for just a drop of water, but you cannot change your fate. Your time has passed for doing that.
    - 6. You will be separated from God forever.
      - a. With this vision of hell, is it possible to let people go there without warning them?
  - ii. **The Motive of Love**
    - 1. Can we really say we love our neighbors if we let them live and die – without Christ?
    - 2. If the greatest thing God ever did for me is to give me Jesus and eternal life, can I say I love someone if I withhold that from them?
  - iii. **The Memory of Being Lost.**
    - 1. Do you remember what it was like to be without hope, lost, on your way to hell?
    - 2. Do you remember the helplessness and desperation your life was filled with?
    - 3. Do you remember the joy of forgiveness and the joy of discovering you had eternal life?
  - iv. If you have lost these important imperatives, these motives, I beg you to fall on your knees and ask God to re-awaken them in you!

5. Getting On Task – A little known fellow in Colossia The example of Epaphras

- a. Colossians 1:6-7 *“...the gospel which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth; just as you learned it from Epaphras*
- b. God used men like Epaphras to proclaim His gospel of grace.
  - i. This principle is taught in Romans where Paul writes that *“Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved”* and follows with the question *“How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!” (Ro10:13-15)*
  - ii. Epaphras had taken the good news and delivered it to the Colossians.

- iii. And Epaphras did not simply lead the Colossians to Christ and then abandon them.
  - 1. He taught them the Word and sought to establish their faith. In short he "discipled" them (because of the word "learned).
  - 2. Every church needs to disciple the new converts, lest they "*be carried away by varied and strange teachings*" (Heb13:9).
  - 3. Have you been discipled?
  - 4. Are you discipling anyone?
    - a. I read a story last week about a fellow who rescued some goose eggs when their mother had been killed by a car. When they hatched, they "imprinted" on their new "mother"...this fellow who had rescued them. They followed him everywhere. When they grew older they flew after his car, and much to their demise, were promptly run over by a tractor trailer.
    - b. We have a responsibility to make and develop disciples so that they can *survive* in a hostile world and be capable of reproducing themselves in the Kingdom of God.
- 6. I taught a series on "What is a disciple" not too long ago.
  - a. I called us to consider if we were in fact living like disciples.
  - b. But today, I want to go a step deeper than merely asking if you are one.
  - c. Are you making disciples? That is the command of Matthew 28:18-20
    - i. *And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*
    - ii. This was not the great suggestion.
      - 1. It is called the great commission.
      - 2. It is the purpose statement of the Christian.
      - 3. Just as our church has a mission statement, so too does the church of Jesus Christ and every Christian is called to live it and fulfill it.
  - d. So, are you a bearer of Good News?
    - i. I would like you to imagine what it would be like to never get some important life changing news.
      - 1. George Sweeting, in his book *The No-Guilt Guide for Witnessing*, tells of a man by the name of John Currier who in 1949 was found guilty of murder and sentenced to life in prison. Later he was transferred and paroled to work on a farm near Nashville, Tennessee. In 1968, Currier's sentence was terminated, and a letter bearing the good news was sent to him. But John never saw the letter, nor was he told anything about it. Life on that farm was hard and without promise for the future. Yet John kept doing what he was told even after the farmer for whom he worked had died. Ten years went by. Then a state parole officer learned about Currier's plight, found him, and told him that his sentence had been terminated. He was a free man.
      - 2. Would it matter to you if someone sent you an important message—the most important in your life—and year after year the urgent message was never delivered? *Our Daily Bread*, November 6, 1994
      - 3. There are millions and billions of people, your neighbors, your coworkers, your friends, who are enslaved, imprisoned by sin and hopelessness, and have not heard the "good news." .
      - 4. Could you look them in the eye on judgment day and say, "oh, I'm sorry, I never got around to it."
    - ii. Can you tell me who the last person you shared the Good News with was?
    - iii. Can you tell me whose life you had a part in discipling?

- iv. If you are like most Christians in America, it has been a few years since you shared the good news with someone.
- v. And...you probably haven't disciplined someone lately.
- e. Let me tell you something that broke my heart this last month. I am sure it broke our Father's heart much more. We offered an opportunity for you to learn how to share your faith in an everyday, conversational, non-confrontive way...and only about 15 or 20 of you participated.
  - i. I can only assume that the other 60 of us here in this room already know how to share our faith and are doing it regularly...am I right?
  - ii. Maybe, you had pressing issues, maybe you were out of town, maybe you were ill. That's okay. But why haven't you called me for a personal one-on-one time of training?
  - iii. I have had to go to God and ask Him, have I done something wrong?
    - 1. Have I preached and emphasized the wrong things these past few years?
    - 2. Why do your people have no passion for the lost?
    - 3. Is it because I have too little passion myself for the lost?
      - a. I confessed that as sin to my Father in heaven.
      - b. I asked Him to burn His love for the lost in me.
      - c. Will you do the same today?

**7. Folks, this is serious stuff I am sharing with you.**

- a. Only 3% of the average Christians in a local church share their faith with the lost or disciple young Christians. That is the average in America.
- b. We CANNOT be like the average Christians in America.
- c. We CANNOT be like most pew warmers...because revival is already breaking out in Cleveland.
  - i. People are making decisions for Jesus Christ.
  - ii. Children are signing up to hear the Good News at VBS and Sports Camp.
  - iii. Children are making professions of faith at these events. Their families are following.
- d. You CANNOT come to Here's Hope and be a spectator to what God is doing, like a fan in the stands of a good football game...
  - i. Will you someday say to your grandchildren..."I watched when revival broke out at Here's Hope and in Madison Ohio"
- ii. Wouldn't you rather say, "I was a part of the revival that took place...I was a part of children and their families receiving eternal life!"
- e. Last week Micah shared that of the children that attended sports camps in Cleveland area, nearly ½ of the attendees accepted Christ.
  - i. **Which means if we have 200 children attend OUR camp, that about 100 will be brand new Christian believers by the time it is over.**
  - ii. What would you call 100 people coming to know Christ in one week in the town of Madison.
    - 1. You would call that an extraordinary work of God, akin to revival. How about 100 in one church? Our church? You might even call it revival.
  - iii. Now here is the serious part that requires our action...we must then go to their homes and share the GOOD NEWS with their parents!
    - 1. They will want to come to our church and we will also have to disciple them.
    - 2. Will we say...
      - a. "I can't work with the children or new Christians...I don't want to leave my Sunday School class because I like the fellowship."
      - b. Or "I have never taught children"
      - c. Or "I don't know how to teach,"
      - d. or "I did my turn at kids a few years ago"
      - e. or "I served at VBS"
    - 3. **God has no retirement or vacation clause in a Christian's contract.**

- a. We serve for life!
- 4. When God brings brand new Christians into our church, we must set aside all of our old priorities, our old ways of doing things and get busy DISCIPLING them!
- 8. Last week, after worship, about a dozen of us gathered together to discuss how we would disciple the hundreds of children and adults who would be coming to Christ next month.
  - a. People were there like Hank and Dorothy, Bill Hill (these folks aren't youngsters), Micah and Kara, Jennifer, myself, Melissa, Georgette, April, Chuck, and a few others.
    - i. **We all said** we would do **WHATEVER IT TAKES** to be sure that the kids and New Believers are ministered to and disciplined.
    - ii. But I am sorry, 12 of us cannot do the work of 100.
  - b. I am asking this morning for partners in the harvest who will say, "**I will do whatever it takes,**" "I will make any sacrifice" to see that these new Christians are disciplined.
  - c. God is seeking people who are willing to say, "**I will do WHATEVER IT TAKES...** to lead these children's parents to Christ or to disciple these kids."
    - i. You may be physically unable to do some things...
      - 1. If you are in a wheelchair or a walker you are exempt from everything but prayer.
    - ii. But if you can walk or drive, then we need you.
      - 1. You can make yourself available to pick up a family and bring them to church.
      - 2. You can make yourself available to HELP in a child's class, even if it is to sit and help a child color a picture while their teacher does the teaching.
      - 3. You can make yourself available to love on the kids so they will learn first hand what Jesus love is like.
    - iii. If you have never taught a child before, you can **choose** to learn.
      - 1. Are you are willing to do WHATEVER IT TAKES.
    - iv. What I am asking today is for you to express your willingness to do whatever it takes to minister and reach these folks that God is bringing us.

- d. In the Greek Islands, you can see the home of Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine. Near his house there is an olive tree, supposedly dating from his time. The trunk of this tree is very large but completely hollow; it is little more than thick bark. There are a few long, straggling branches, but sturdy wooden poles positioned every few feet support them. It has an occasional leaf here and there and might even produce a few olives each year. In the nearby fields, however, there are olive groves in many directions. These are strong, healthy, young trees with narrow trunks and a thick canopy of leaves, under which many olives can be found each year. The tree of Hippocrates can still be called an olive by nature, but it has long since ceased to fulfill the function of an olive tree.
- e. Is this us? The form is there, but the function is not. They have stopped reproducing and are satisfied just being big, or having a noble history. (Illustration by Keith Copley) How shameful it is for any church or a Christian to be content with the status quo! We have been given good news to tell, but good news is only good if it is shared.
  - i. Have you forgotten what it was like to be lost, without hope, on your way to hell?
  - ii. Have you forgotten the joy of being a new believer, and having so much to learn, looking for someone to show you and teach you?
  - iii. Bad news travels fast. Within two hours the whole world knew that President Kennedy had been killed, who killed him, where he was killed and how he was killed. Today, still half the world does not know the good news that Jesus died, where He died, and the purpose of His death. People do not know that Jesus died for them.
- f. (Requires a can of Coca-cola) Coca-cola is one product that has far outgrown its humble beginnings. In 1886, Dr. John Pemberton first introduced Coca-Cola in Atlanta, Georgia. The pharmacist concocted a caramel-colored syrup in a three-legged brass kettle in his backyard. He first "distributed" Coca-Cola by carrying it in a jug down the street to Jacobs? Pharmacy.
  - i. After little more than 100 years, surveys show that 97% of the world has heard of coca-cola. 72% of the world has seen a can of coca-cola. 51% of the world has tasted a can of coca-cola. All due to the fact that the company made a commitment years ago that every one on the planet would have a taste of their soft drink.
  - ii. We should stand up and take note here...97% of the world has heard of this sugar and water concoction while 1.7 billion people world-wide have no access to the good news of Jesus Christ! It is estimated that 17 million people die every year without having heard the name of Jesus!
  - iii. When I hear those facts, I should not hang my head in despair and shame. Instead, I should be challenged, motivated, and inspired to a new level of commitment in sharing the message of forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ.
- g. Paul Harvey said, "Too many Christians are no longer fishers of men but keepers of the aquarium."
- h. Elton Trueblood, the Quaker scholar, once compared evangelism to fire. Evangelism occurs, he said, when Christians are so ignited by their contact with Christ that they in turn set other fires. It is easy to determine when something is aflame. It ignites other material. Any fire that does not spread will eventually go out. A church without evangelism is a contradiction in terms, just as fire that does not burn is a contradiction.+
  - i.

The gospel produces fruit both in the internal transformation of individuals, and also in the external growth of the church. The living gospel is the power that transforms lives. As it does so, the witness of those transformed lives produces fruit, including new converts. So as the gospel produces fruit in individual lives, its influence spreads

Colossians 1:6 which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth;