

10. Living the Gospel (3Q 2019—The Least of These)

Biblical material: Rom. 8:20–23; John 3:16, 17; Matt. 9:36; Eph. 2:8–10; 1 John 3:16, 17; Rev. 14:6, 7.

Quotes

- The Word of God is not just for domestic consumption; it is also for export. *William Freeland*
- The sign of our professed love for the gospel is the measure of sacrifice we are prepared to make in order to help its progress. *Ralph P. Martin*
- If you believe what you like in the gospels, and reject what you don't like, it is not the gospel you believe, but yourself. *Augustine*

Questions

So how do we live the gospel? As we consider Christ's methods, what can we learn from this? How do we demonstrate the truth of the good news? In our mission, what are the positives and negatives? What is our wider responsibility before the whole universe? How do we in our own lives answer the Devil's charges against God?

Bible summary

The good news is that God has always been working to end sin and restore his universe, including us (Rom. 8:20–23). He shows this through the gift of himself through the Son (John 3:16, 17). Jesus had compassion on the crowds (Matt. 9:36). We are saved by grace (Eph. 2:8–10). Jesus giving himself for us shows us what love is (1 John 3:16, 17). The everlasting gospel is described in Rev. 14:6, 7.

Comment

When you ask for definitions of the gospel, it does seem that some of us are getting off-target. For example, there's health/wealth gospel maybe. (And yes, surely God wants us to be healthy, and he wants to bless us. But this is not the gospel, or the way of salvation.)

Or perhaps yours is the Gospel According to Saul. That's Paul before his conversion. Zealous for the faith. Charging ahead in the name of the Lord. As strict in the Law as a Pharisee of the Pharisees could be. Giving his all so he could destroy the pernicious heretics. But wrong, oh so wrong! (And in this context, what about those who claim to be for Apollos or Paul, or *****? Fill in appropriate names! Is that the gospel—all blindly playing follow-my-leader?)

Or maybe you follow the Gospel of the Elect. That gospel that is the prized possession of the elite minority, a set of eclectic ideas and creedal formulas that (like those held by the Essenes at Qumran) are jealously guarded since they must be enshrined and preserved. But like bread that's kept stored up, this type of bread of life tends to go a bit moldy... And if it is in the special possession of the Elect, it's hard to share... especially with just anybody!

Then there's the Gospel According to Me. That specially personalized version that moulds itself to your own particular obsessions—and makes salvation dependent on

everyone doing and being just like you. (And if you don't see that version yet, just look around you. Bees busy buzzing in bonnets, all manner of crankiness...)

Not forgetting, of course, the "Go With The Times" version. The version that says (in line with contemporary philosophy, to be sure) you must adopt the ways of the world and endorse any technique in order to communicate. Communication is desperately important--but not every vehicle is suitable. But then if the gospel can be explained as social ethics or psychological compensations or whatever other contemporary theory, is there any point in preaching it anyway?

One particular "gospel" favorite is the "Dustshaking" approach. This parallels a smash-and-grab raid—or is a hit-and-run driver more appropriate? Whatever, this scheme involves giving all the articles of doctrine as fast as possible, crashing through any possible objections, and then zooming on to a demand for decision. When the poor bewildered victim shakes his head in disbelief, the speeding converter says "Well, you've had your chance. I gave you the gospel and you've rejected it. I'm off." And consigning the woe-begotten unfortunate to the end-time flames, our gospel-proclaiming hero zooms off in a cloud of dust shaken from his speeding feet...

All these are distortions of the message that the Son of God came to us to show us God. He said he was the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He came from heaven (John 3:13, 6:38, "from above" John 8:23), he came to earth and fallen humanity. That is the greatest truth of the gospel. We do not have to try in ourselves to approach God—which is impossible in any case. He comes to us. He comes to us where we are. He comes so that God may be with us and save us. Jesus says that he came to call sinners to repentance (see Luke 5:32). That is the truth of God's approach to us in the person of Jesus Christ. In this he answers the charges the Devil brought, he demonstrates he is indeed the Truth in the great controversy.

God wants only disciples of truth, not for any other reason. This was the mission of Jesus: to reveal the nature and character of the Father, so we could be one with him.

Ellen White Comments

The love and honor and perfection revealed in the Gospel are a revelation to man of the character of God. {ST, February 24, 1909}

The work of Christ was to free the truth from the rubbish of error and superstition, that men might behold the true character of God, and serve Him in spirit and in truth. Those who proclaim the truth for today have a similar work to do. The truth must be lifted from the obscurity of men's traditions and errors, that the world may behold the marvelous light of the gospel of the Son of God. {PH078 23.2}

The work of the disciples was to spread a knowledge of the gospel. To them was committed the work of proclaiming to all the world the good news that Christ brought to men. That work they accomplished for the people of their time. To every nation under heaven the gospel was carried in a single generation. {MH 141}

From the beginning of His ministry men began more clearly to comprehend the character of God. . . . Christ's mission on earth was to reveal to men that God was not a despot, but a heavenly Father, full of love and mercy for His children. {HP 14}

When the object of his mission was attained—the revelation of God to the world—the Son of God announced that his work was accomplished, and that the character of the Father was made manifest to men. {ST, January 20, 1890}

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