

What Does It Mean To Hear The Gospel?

Charlie L. Snodgrass (2010)

The Scriptures, the Word of God, the “Good Book” and the Gospel are just a few expressions used in reference to the Holy Writ we call the Bible. To some, it is an excellent moral compass. Others see it as an archeological map. Atheists see in its pages interesting, yet fictitious fables. However, to those who worship the one true God, the Bible is the Divine resource on the subject of salvation.

So then, what is the Gospel? The word “Gospel” means “a good message” or “the good news.” The first verse of the book of Mark states: “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1 KJV). Mark 16:15 says, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.” This wonderful story in the book of Mark ends with Jesus ascending to heaven and taking his place at the right hand of God, and his disciples preaching the good news!

What is so good about this news? The good news is SALVATION! The purpose of the Gospel is to restore man to God, through Jesus Christ. There are six basic steps which the Gospel teaches must be observed if we wish to benefit from the privileges offered by God.

First, we must hear the Gospel. Paul pens these precious words: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

Next, we must believe, as the Gospel states in the words of Jesus: “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24).

Third, we must repent. We must have a change of heart. Our Savior states, “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:5).

Confession is also necessary. The Bible teaches us we must confess Christ before men. “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 10:32).

After confession is made, we must submit to the will of God, and be baptized for the remission of sins. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached the Gospel, and “then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38).

Finally, the Gospel states we must live faithfully. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21). Ω



Publishing Peace

A monthly journal published by West Virginia School of Preaching under the oversight of the elders of Hillview Terrace Church of Christ, Moundsville, WV 26041 (888) 418-4573

Vol. 8 No. 2 February 2012

“Behold on the mountains the feet of him who brings good tidings, who proclaims peace!...” (Nahum 1:15)



From the Associate Director's Pen

Our Responsibilities to the Government

Jefferson A. Sole

In society today there is an ever-growing distrust between governments and their citizens. The United States of America is not immune to this distrust, perpetuated by what appears to be a failure on the government’s part to fulfill her responsibilities. While it is true that the government has responsibilities to her citizens, it is equally true that citizens have responsibilities to their government. Interestingly, many of these responsibilities are not subject to opinion, rather God set them forth clearly in His divinely inspired Word. In Romans 13:1-7 there are three clearly defined responsibilities that every citizen has to their government.

Paul commands each person to “subject” (submit) themselves to the government (Rom. 13:1). The responsibility of citizens to submit to the government is found elsewhere in the Scripture (Tit. 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13-15) and the same word is used in reference to the interaction between husband and wife (Col. 3:18). Just as wives are instructed to “submit” themselves to their husbands so too should citizens submit (literally, continue submitting) themselves to the government. Submission is more than mere obedience but a willful, respectful, humble obedience. Submission in the marriage relationship is not as one wife described “doing whatever that dumb husband tells me to do.” Likewise, being submissive to the government is not using every disrespectful adjective to describe her then ultimately doing what she has instructed. Paul gives five reasons why Christians should be submissive to their government: 1) it has God given power (Rom. 13:1; John 19:10, 11); 2) it is ordained of God (Rom. 13:1); 3) resistors resist God (Rom 13:2); 4) resistors will be punished (Rom. 13:2, 5); 5) resistors violate their own consciences (Rom. 13:5). The only exception to this principle is when the government demands Christians to do something contrary to God’s law (Acts 5:29).

Citizens are commanded to “do good” (literally, continue doing good) in the sight of the government. Obviously Paul is referring to the ideal government when he provides the reasons for this command. The ideal government is “not opposed to good works” (Rom. 13:3), praises good (Rom. 13:3), and serves as ministers and revengers of God (Rom. 13:4). Undoubtedly Paul was aware that governments could violate this ideal, for Nero was persecuting Christians during his lifetime. A government that is fulfilling her responsibilities according to God’s standard will not neglect the obligation of punishing evil, for the government “bears not the sword in vain” (Rom. 13:4). Instead she is a minster (“servant,” same word sometimes translated deacon) for good and a revenger to carryout punishment. Vengeance belongs to God (Rom. 12:19) and God uses governments as a means of executing His vengeance. The sword is imagery of punishment (Matt. 26:42; Luke 21:24; Acts 12:2; etc.) and may include capital punishment (Gen. 9:6).

Citizens, who are following the Word of God, must also pay (literally, continue paying) tribute to the government (Rom. 13:6-7). Citizens should pay tribute to the government because they are minsters of God continually punishing those that are evil (“this very thing”) (Rom. 13:6). Those in governmental power ought to remember that tribute is not paid for their own personal luxury but to carry out the duties for which they were appointed. Some justify cheating on their taxes by citing the numerous ways in which the government misuses tax revenue. Christ taught the Jews to pay tribute to Caesar (Matt. 22:21) and few would argue that Caesar always used tax revenue for moral ends. Ultimately citizens will be held responsible by God for their honesty in paying taxes, and government officials will be held accountable for how they spend it. Let us fulfill our God-given responsibilities to the government and continue submitting, doing good, and paying our taxes. If you are interested in attending the West Virginia School of Preaching please check us out at WVSOP.com , e-mail us at dirwvsop@aol.com, or call 304-845-8001. Ω

Hillview Terrace Church of Christ
West Virginia
School of Preaching
PO Box 785
Moundsville, WV 26041



What Can Become

Andy Robison

The incomparable, unchanging Lord first met the historically bold apostle Peter when he was yet a flip-flopping fisherman. The encounter records a predicted name change indicative of character development: “You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas’ (which is translated, A Stone)” (John 1:42 NKJV).

Bible students know the famous, early impetuosity of this wannabe leader. He leads in confessing the Christ, then lowers to rebuking Him (Mark 8:27-33). He walks by faith, then sinks in doubt (Matt. 14:22-33). He brazenly asserts loyalty, then bests the others in desertion and denial (Matt. 26:31-35, 69-75). Thus far in his history, one would wonder about the applicability of the moniker, Rock. A limp, flopping fish out of water might be a better comparison.

But, the Lord knew well the future, determined direction of this zeal. He saw Peter not for what he was, but for what he could become.

Without, obviously, the Divine omniscience of the Christ, could Christians still gain from this principle? They can; they must. Reaching out to the lost is all about seeing them for what they can become. If the focus remained on what they were without Christ, and hope for change with the power of the Gospel was abandoned, what would be the point of Christianity’s commission (Matt. 28:18-20)? The eyes of the teacher must be focused not on the present appearance of the profligate sinner—in manners, behavior, and dress—but on the lifting power of the Gospel. What can this person become? Peter, you are well aware, became the bold apostle who publicly, undauntedly affirmed the most controversial truth of history to the crowd of Pentecost, the council of hypocrites, and beyond (Acts 2-5). His free-will was nurtured along by a visionary, patient teacher—the Lord. Perhaps a portion of walking in the Master’s example is seeing people for what they can become.

By extension, perhaps such vision could be applied to entities that serve such growing people, such as the West Virginia School of Preaching. Thanks be to God that visionaries of twenty years ago—preachers, elders, and workers—dreamed and pursued the

possibilities of this sphere of training. While the number of graduates can be counted, the number of souls they have touched cannot.

Vision must never be abandoned. The convert to Christ has leaped forward by obeying the Gospel, but a lifetime of growth lies ahead (cf. 2 Pet. 3:18; Eph. 4:11-16). It is exciting to ponder some leaders’ dreams of what WVSOP can become: Always a preacher training school, aiming to more and more effectively equip men for evangelism and service in the Lord’s kingdom.

Thank you, you who have exercised foresight, and continue to so do. Ω



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The Cart Before The Horse

Steve Snider

In the gospel of Matthew chapters 14 and 15 Jesus on two occasions fed the multitudes. In chapter 14 our Lord fed 5,000 from five loaves of bread and two fish. In chapter 15 Jesus fed 4,000 from seven loaves of bread and a few small fish. There are no doubt many lessons we could learn from these miracles, but I want to call our attention to an important principle that I think is demonstrated here.

In both instances Jesus fed the multitudes because they had been following Him, were far away from home, and were hungry and in need of food. The point I am trying to make is that they were seeking Jesus first and were fed second! I realize that in many passages we are commanded to be benevolent and do what we can to take care of those who are less fortunate (Ecc.11:1, 2; Gal.6:10; I Tim.6:17-19). I also believe that what Jesus did on these occasions was indeed an act of caring and benevolence. I still, however, think it is important that they were following Jesus first and were fed second! The reason I think this is important is because it seems that in too many cases we have gotten the “cart before the horse.” In too many places churches have obviously decided that the drawing power is no longer Christ and the Gospel of Christ. Therefore, we must devise some other scheme in an attempt to get them to come and listen. After getting them to come we then hope to kind of “slip the Gospel” in on them and hope it will have some affect. But Jesus did not say, “If you will come and follow me and listen to me teach I will feed you when I am done!” They were following Jesus because they knew He had something they needed. As a result of that desire they wound up far from home with nothing to eat and Jesus had compassion on them. But the food was not a “ploy” to get them to listen!

Gen.1:1 states, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Right from the start God was teaching us that the spiritual always comes before the material! In the beginning there was God (spiritual) and God then created the material. It seems to me that Jesus was stressing this same truth when in response to the temptation of Satan our Lord stated; “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matt.4:4). Does not our Lord’s teaching in Matt. 6:19-21 stress this same important truth?

Surely, we are to be a caring, compassionate, and benevolent people. But let us never believe that we can convert people by stressing the material. To bring about spiritual renewal a person must come in contact with Jesus and His saving message. The power is still in the gospel (Rom.1:16) and let’s not cheapen that by believing that the way to win people is by appealing to their material side. In John 6 (after feeding the 5,000) Jesus taught the beautiful lesson that He is the “bread of life” and that only by taking Him into our lives do we have any hope of eternal life. (John 6:48-58) Our Savior taught this because they were following Him wanting the material things they thought He could provide. Jesus immediately demonstrated that they had the “cart before the horse.” Let’s not get caught in the trap of so many and forget that the “spiritual always comes before the material.” Ω

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