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# GOOD NEWS.

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“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”  
MARK XVI. 15.

THE word Gospel is the old English word God-spel—that is, good speech, good news, good tidings; and in Scripture it is taken in a peculiar sense for the good tidings of grace and salvation by Jesus Christ.

In the Old Testament there was a little Gospel in the prophecies, and in the sacrifices, and in the visions, but law mingled with the Gospel. In the New Testament, especially after the resurrection of Christ, there is a perfect Gospel—there is only good news and glad tidings. And so it is to be understood here, “Go preach the Gospel.” It is as if Christ had said, “I do not bid you go and give them, now good news and then bad—a little of the law, and a little of the Gospel; but go preach the *Gospel* emphatically—that which is purely Gospel; for now I am risen, and the Gospel in its fulness is made known.”

“Preach the Gospel *to every creature*,” saith Christ. That is, “I will now have no distinction of persons. I do not now say, take heed of the way of the Samaritans; but go which way you will; go to the Gentiles, to sinners, to any man or woman that you call creatures—barbarians, Scythians, bond or free; go and preach the Gospel to them; bring them glad tidings; tell them that Jesus Christ hath life, and grace, and salvation for them.”

The Lord Jesus, because he would not have his disciples

make any exception, calls them "creatures," as if he would say, "Though they be so sinful that you would not call them men, yet they are 'creatures;'—and go, preach the Gospel to '*every creature*;' to the greatest sinner in the world—to those whom I will not vouchsafe to call a people; they are *creatures*, go preach the Gospel to them." So that I come to this lesson, *that the ministry of the Gospel contains nothing but glad tidings, good news even to the worst of sinners.*

The ministry of the Gospel, if rightly dispensed, doth not contain a little of good news in it, but perfect good news for the worst of sinners. For this is the proper difference between the law and the Gospel. *The law speaks good news only to the righteous,*—"If thou doest well thou shalt be rewarded." But the Gospel is quite the contrary. All the good that the Gospel brings, is to man *as a sinner*; not as a regenerate man, or a righteous man, or an humble man, but *as a sinner*. And here is the excellency of the Gospel,—the more sinful any man is, the more suitable the Gospel is to him; the more sin abounds, so much the more doth grace abound; therefore you read, that they that had the benefit of the Gospel, are they that are called "ungodly,"—"He justifieth the ungodly." They are called *aliens, strangers, enemies, without strength, the chief of sinners*. Thus to enemies, aliens, strangers, lost ones, unrighteous, ungodly, and the like, the Gospel brings perfect good news—glad tidings of life, and grace, and salvation, by Jesus Christ.

The ministry of the Gospel is *only* good news; there is not one line—not one word of bad news, not one syllable or tittle, but only glad tidings, sweet and good news to the heart of the worst of sinners. We are told in the fourth of Luke, that our Lord took the Book of Isaiah, and read, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor." Such was Christ's divine commission. There is nothing in the Gospel but good news. And what is the good news?—that the poor should have salvation; that the broken-hearted should be healed; that the

captives should be delivered; that the blind should receive their sight; that they who were bruised should be set at liberty; that they who were slaves should have the year of Jubilee, the acceptable year of the Lord. There is not one tittle in all this but only good news.

The Gospel proclaims to sinners that there is in God's breast a love, an eternal love, an infinite love to them. A man might naturally think that God would hate such a one as he is; and reason would persuade that love should proceed from something amiable in the object—from some beauty or bounty; but God sees me to be wicked and sinful; and therefore reason would say that God, who is infinitely holy, would damn me, world without end. The Gospel comes to such a sinner, and tells him that the case is otherwise. It is not so, poor sinful man or woman; and though God hates sin above all things in earth or hell, yet God's love flows towards sinners, wicked as they are. God hath an infinite, special love to poor sinners—yet He hates their sin. His love is *not a cold love, that ended in nothing*; but out of this pure and perfect love, God sent His Son—the image of His person—the Son of His love—His eternal delight—into the world, to lay down his life for sinners such as I am. This is love indeed! And this love is revealed to us in the Gospel, so that the believing soul can say, “When I was *an enemy to God, He was my friend*; when I *hated Him, He loved me*; nay, before I was born, God had thoughts of infinite, eternal love towards me.”

Then the Gospel tells us that Jesus Christ took our nature upon him, and in that nature died as our surety, our substitute; and that as he died for our sins, so he rose again for our justification; that hereby poor sinners who believe in him, may be assured that they are justified and freed from all their sins, and that they are brought into grace here, and shall rise to glory hereafter. Every tittle of this is glad tidings to poor sinners.

Then the Gospel tells you that, after his resurrection, he

conversed with his disciples, giving them instructions how they should order the Churches of God, and preach the Gospel to the end of the world; that he went up into heaven, and as soon as he came there, sent the Holy Spirit to us to unite us to himself, to be our Teacher, to make known the heart of Christ to us, to lead us into all truth, and to comfort us in all distresses; that when he went up to heaven, he prepared a place for poor sinners there, and that there he pities us, and intercedes for us, and succours us who are in the flesh as he once was; that in due time he will come again from heaven as he went, and bring a crown with him, and subdue all his people's enemies, and give them the same glory that he hath himself, that they may be where he is, and as he is. The Gospel tells you, moreover, that all this love, and grace, and mercy, and salvation, by Jesus Christ here and in heaven, is made sure to us by an "*everlasting covenant*," sure and perfect in every point. Put all together, and from the first to the last you shall not find in the ministry of the Gospel, if it be truly and soundly opened, a single syllable but what is wholesome and comfortable, and sweet and glad tidings to the worst of sinners.

When the Gospel commands anything, it doth not bid you do it or else you shall be condemned, as the law did; but the Gospel saith thus—"Thou poor drunkard, and thou proud woman, here is a gracious God that hath loved you, and hath sent Jesus Christ to die for you; here is everlasting redemption and salvation by him, just because you are lost sinners, and for no other reason in the world." Thus the Gospel speaks. And here is no bad news.

And the Gospel does not leave the heart where the law did; but it gives you a new nature to hate sin; and when it bids you leave sin, it gives you power to leave it. It is not like the law, "a voice of words," but it is a voice of power. It is the power of God to salvation. So I see salvation is sure, and hell and damnation shut out. I see God my Father and myself His child. I am in an everlasting covenant,

sealed by the blood of Christ; and there is nothing in heaven or hell that shall be able to separate me from the love of God. Now I am redeemed from my enemies and without fear, as the Scripture saith; why should I not delight to serve Him, and study to do whatsoever he tells me? Whatsoever the Gospel tells me to do, it inclines the heart to do the same, and then it is no bad news. If a man bid me pay a thousand pounds for my neighbour, and gives me a thousand pounds in my hand, it is easy to do it.

This, then, is the door of the Gospel, the very entrance into the Christian religion, that God gives life and salvation through Christ to sinners, *as sinners*. Though they be hard-hearted, back-sliding, the chief of sinners, yet as long as they be sinners, and but sinners, they may always look upon Jesus Christ, and salvation in his hand, as ready to be bestowed upon them. This is a truth that thou must learn and be taught it of God, or else thou canst not go one step in the Gospel journey; for, beloved, till you know and learn this, you will be like men in the dark; you will be groping for Christ Jesus, but you will never be grafted into him—you will never be knit to Christ.

I say this is the first step to religion, to understand this truth aright, that the Gospel brings glad tidings of salvation to *the worst of sinners*. Therefore, though I see no good in me at all whereby I might receive good news of the law, and although I do not see that I am an humbled sinner, as such a preacher teacheth, or a penitent sinner, or a broken-hearted sinner, yet I know I am a sinner, and, *as a sinner, I am the proper object of the Gospel*. Beloved, you will be off and on, and never be knit to Christ, but will be as a bone in and out of joint, till you come to that; for if you think to lay hold on Christ in any other way—on any other consideration, such as that you are humbled sinners, or broken-hearted sinners, or mortified sinners, all will soon be gone again; the bone will be out of joint again, and so you will be as a reed tossed of the wind—you will never be fastened to Christ. *Whosoever*

*fancies he holds Christ upon any qualification on his side, will be sure to let go.*

Therefore, many persons, after many years' profession of religion, have never felt their souls knit to Christ, till God rightly and truly taught them this lesson. But *then* they were knit to him, and their souls were never more in and out. For though the devil tell a man he is no saint, the soul can say, *I am a sinner*. And it was for such, the Gospel is set up. The soul can then say, "Though I have no real interest in Christ *as a saint*, yet I see a great deal of love in God to poor sinners; and, as a sinner that trusts in Christ, I have an interest in his promises.

I never knew my own soul knit to Christ till God had taught me this. It was off and on, as a bone in and out; calling God Father to-day, and fearing Him as an enemy to-morrow.

Ponder this, then, ye that are professors of religion—that have spent ten, or twenty, or thirty years, and your souls are not knit to Christ. Beg of the Lord to teach you this lesson.

And you, brethren, who know God; do you cherish a temper of soul like that of a child towards a father? Some saints have a little of this, but much of the spirit of bondage mingled with it. "Oh! thou art not right," say they in the secret whisperings of their heart, "Christ is not thine. His Spirit is not in thee. If it were so, it is impossible that thou shouldst be so weak and easily overcome." Thus it is, there will be some flaw in the heart, and soakings in of guilt that will eat out a man's peace, so that sometimes he shall call God Father, and at another while, he will look strangely upon God, and be afraid to come into His presence. Whereas, in the New Testament we are taught to live in the full spirit of adoption.

And what is the spirit of adoption? It is that there be nothing in my heart towards God but pure love, and perfect confidence, because in His dealings towards me there is not a

syllable but love, and grace, and glad tidings to me, and my heart and life should be answerable thereto. If I be perfectly justified from all my sins, and have the Spirit of Christ given me, and am one with him for ever by an everlasting covenant—if I have eternal life as a free gift, and shall have a crown of glory for ever, and my sins shall not be laid to my charge—oh! what a clear and sweet spirit should I have in God's presence—not a moody, dogged, and froward spirit, that ariseth from guilt soaking into the soul.

When I view this truth, and turn it over, and pull it by piecemal, and see that there is no gall in it—that there is nothing in the Gospel, first or last, but what is amiable and beautiful—none but blessed news to sinners, then there should follow this consideration, why should there be any thing in my heart towards God but amiable thoughts—thoughts of love and confidence? Why should there be any of those cores of unbelief, and distrust, and fear, and horror? Why should not the carriage and frame of *my* heart be clear towards Him as my loving Father, as *His* is towards me as His adopted child?

These tidings are great; therefore inquire into them. They are true tidings; *they are not fables*; they are tidings of common concernment to every one; therefore give heed to them more and more. I make this solemn appeal to you. If all this be true, you shall be your own judges, how just will be your damnation if you receive not the Gospel. *It comes to you in a full stream*, as that in which there is nothing but love, and light, and grace, and salvation; and all is freely laid down at your feet for your reception. How great, then, will be thy damnation in the last day, whosoever thou art, that maketh light of the Gospel, and will not receive salvation!

Oh! let us take heed of corrupting this blessed Gospel with our own wisdom. Take heed of mingling the law and the Gospel together. It is thus that many ministers undo the souls of the people. I know this by experience, so that one

that is but weak in Gospel light and grace, had better lie a year in a close prison, rather than be a year under a ministry jumbling old and new together—the law and the Gospel; for it routs and confounds a poor soul. Thus we do but harden the sinner, and make him run farther from God than before.

I will conclude only with this last word. Seeing it is clear out of the Word that the whole Gospel is good, and is nothing but sweet and glad tidings to the worst of sinners, then I exhort you, in the name of Jesus Christ, that you receive this good news. Oh! there is no reason why you should shrink back from Christ, when we beseech you earnestly to receive him. You hearken a little, and then you go away. Oh, beloved, there is no reason for it. God deals plainly. There is not a tittle in the Gospel but what is really glad tidings and true to the worst of sinners; therefore receive it. Believe it; for the Lord Jesus, who is “the faithful witness,” hath said it.

Give thyself up wholly to Jesus Christ; that since he died for sinners like thee, and giveth them abundant righteousness and everlasting salvation, so thou mayest rejoice in this soul-satisfying possession, and give thyself and all that thou hast and art to him, to live to his glory, and to obey his blessed voice.

[The preceding Address is extracted from a discourse by Rev. Walter Cradock, London, 1648, some slight revisions being made.]



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