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“Though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel,” I Corinthians 9:16.

Stewards of the Gospel

Central Truth: Believers should herald the gospel — not hoard it.

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Topic: Gospel; Stewardship.

Believers in Jesus should herald the gospel, not hoard it.

Think about that! Think of the gospel witness as a chain, each believer being one link. The faith was passed on from person to person through the ages until it came to you. Did it come all this way to stop with you? Never! Just as someone shared the gospel with you and you came to trust Christ, so you can share the gospel with another and he will trust Christ also.

One of the surprises of the witnessing Christian is how a simple witness can be used by the Holy Spirit to bring a sinner to the Savior. “If God can use me to witness, He can use anyone,” one soul-winner remarked. That is true. He can use anyone. The power is not in the witness but in the truth of the gospel. It is not our testimony which is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes; rather, it is the gospel which is His power (Romans 1:16).

We speak of the Great Commission of Jesus being given to the church (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15); but that does not mean we have no personal responsibility. “*Let the redeemed of the Lord say so*” (Psalm 107:2). Every believer has an opportunity/obligation to share his faith in Jesus.

We will account to God for our stewardship of the gospel. What a solemn truth!

I. COMMUNICATION OF THE GOSPEL (I Corinthians 15:1)

A. The gospel came from God. It began with His promise that one day the son of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent by whom the fall of mankind came. When Jesus came teaching religious truths, He explained them by saying, *“I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak”* (John 12:49). *“The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me”* (John 14:24).

The apostle Paul gave the same testimony concerning his teachings. *“I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ”* (Galatians 1:11, 12). Preachers today walk in that tradition, basing all their teachings on the Bible.

B. The gospel came through Jesus Christ. It was *“at the first . . . spoken by the Lord”* (Hebrews 2:3). He said, *“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life”* (John 6:63). Those who knew Him best testified, *“Thou hast the words of eternal life”* (John 6:68). *“The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ”* (John 1:17). He is the subject of its teaching and the source of its communication.

C. The gospel continues through us. When Jesus said, *“Ye shall be witnesses unto me”* (Acts 1:8), He meant for each Christian to respond, *“A dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me”* (1 Corinthians 9:17). So our text reads, *“I declare unto you the gospel”* (I Corinthians 15:1). There is no other message which all people need to hear. Every person needs that message. Jesus commissioned us to teach *“all nations”* by instructing *“every creature”* (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15). Our work will not be finished so long as there is one person who has not yet heard.

II. WORK OF THE GOSPEL (I Corinthians 15:2)

A. The gospel shows man his need. *“One died for all”* as the proof that all were dead in sin (II Corinthians 5:14). The depth of sin, the terrible judgment it deserves, and God's grace in saving the sinner are all clearly revealed in the Christian message. Since sin is so serious that God *“spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all,”* how deep sin's stain must be (Romans 8:32). Let the sinner tremble before the divine edict, *“The wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23). Where is there a clearer revelation of man's need than in the explanation of God's provision?

B. The gospel shows man God's provision. What is that provision? *“He died for all”* (II Corinthians 5:15). *“God commendeth his love toward*

us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (II Corinthians 8:9). Christ “bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (I Peter 2:24).

Such a price was paid! No wonder it effects salvation to those who believe. Jesus said, *“He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24).* That explains why *“if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (II Corinthians 5:17).*

III. CONTENT OF THE GOSPEL (I Corinthians.15:3, 4)

A. “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures” (verse 3). It was not only His death, but also His death according to the divinely revealed plan, which effected redemption. The Old Testament speaks much of the suffering of the Messiah. It announced that He would suffer for sins He did not commit. He would suffer in behalf of guilty sinners. His suffering would effect atonement so the guilty could be forgiven.

All of that is bound up in the Christian gospel. Jesus *“gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us” (Galatians 1:4).* His sacrifice was *“an offering and a sacrifice to God” (Ephesians 5:2).* He *“loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood” (Revelation 1:5).* The redeemed saints sing, *“Thou art worthy . . . : for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:9, 10).* Yes, Christ died for our sins.

B. Christ was buried (verse 4). But be careful how you understand that statement. Only His physical body was buried. On the very day of His crucifixion and physical death, He was in the paradise of God with a converted believer (Luke 23:43). His body was buried, but not His immortal spirit. Luke 23:50-56 describes the burial of the body of Jesus in such detail that we know it for a fact.

C. Christ arose from death. *“He rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (verse 4).* His resurrection was predicted centuries before (Psalm 16:10). And it came to pass exactly as it was predicted! The resurrection of Jesus proves Him to be the Son of God (Romans 1:4) and qualifies Him to be the Savior of sinners (Romans 5:10). We have hope

because Jesus is alive beyond death (I Peter 1:3). The resurrection of Jesus is of such significance to our faith that it is recorded in all four Gospels of the New Testament. It was as Jesus said, *“I lay down my life, that I might take it again. . . . I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father”* (John 10:17, 18). Being redeemed by His death, we are saved because He lives.

IV. CONFIRMATION OF THE GOSPEL (I Corinthians 15:5-8)

A. The gospel is confirmed by the number of witnesses. Paul enumerates them: Peter, twelve apostles, five hundred brethren. He was seen by different people, in different places, at different times. Yet they all bear the same testimony that He is alive beyond death. That kind of testimony will stand in any court of law. God certified the resurrection of His Son.

B. The gospel is confirmed by the personal knowledge of the witnesses. They saw Him, touched Him, heard Him speak, and saw Him eat food (Luke 24:36-49). They saw the signs He did before them (John 20:30). *“We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty”* (II Peter 1:16). That kind of witness can be trusted.

C. The gospel is confirmed by the reliability of the witnesses. No one made up his testimony to prove what he already believed. Not one of them expected the resurrection or believed it until after it happened. They would never have believed if God had not convinced them after the event. Yet once convinced, they did not hesitate to declare clearly and repeatedly that Jesus is alive and active today.

A court of law examines the number of witnesses, the personal knowledge of the witnesses, and the reliability of the witnesses to tell the truth. In all those areas, Christians give a powerful witness to the gospel of Christ.

V GRACE IN THE GOSPEL (I Corinthians 15:9, 10)

A. Grace in the gospel gives hope to the undeserving. Even one who persecuted the church of God can receive mercy and be saved (I Corinthians 15:9). Amazing, isn't it? But it is true! It is always *“the grace of God that bringeth salvation”* which is proclaimed in our preaching and teaching (Titus 2:11). *“For by grace are ye saved through faith”* (Ephesians 2:8).

B. Grace in the gospel rescues the sinner. *“By the grace of God I am what I am”* (1 Corinthians 15:10). *“We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace”* (Ephesians 1:7). Since His grace is boundless in its riches, our forgiveness is limitless in its scope.

C. Grace in the gospel remains to enable the Christian. To saving grace is added serving grace. *“I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me”* (I Corinthians 15:10). We are not saved by grace to live by works. It is grace first, grace last, and grace all the way between: *“grace for grace”* (John 1:16). We preachers can say, *“I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me”* (Ephesians 3:7). In every trial we hear God saying, *“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness”* (II Corinthians 12:9). Praise God for His grace in the gospel!

VI. SHARING THE GOSPEL (I Corinthians 15:11)

A. God uses messengers to share the gospel. That is why He commissioned us, *“Ye shall be witnesses unto me”* (Acts 1:8). *“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”* (Mark 16:15). We work under that divine commission today. *“We are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him”* (Acts 5:32).

B. People believe the gospel when it is shared in truth. The conversion of sinners in every age is proof that it is true. God has ordained that men and women be brought to Christ today through the proclaimed gospel.

We have a treasure in the Christian gospel. God himself has entrusted it to us. One day we will report to Him for what we have done with this treasure while we were responsible for its propagation here. Let us be witnesses.

Believers in Christ should herald the gospel, not hoard it!

Questions

1. What does gospel mean?
2. What is “the gospel of Jesus Christ”?
3. How did the gospel come to us?
4. What does the gospel reveal to us?
5. How is the death of Christ good news?

6. How is the resurrection of Christ good news?
7. How can we be sure of the earliest witnesses of the gospel?
8. How is God's grace manifested in the gospel?
9. How can you share the gospel this week?
10. How can you help your church share the gospel?