

Easter 2010: Good News, not Good Advice (Romans 4:25)

Intro: He has risen from the DEAD!! What kind of Savior is this, who rises from the dead? What kind of hope is given to those who trust in Him? Death no longer reigns over Him and no longer reigns over those who are in Him!! But, is this all, an escape from death? What about judgment? What about evil? What about justice? Brothers and sisters, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is not merely the symbol or sign of His victory over death, but rather His victory over the power of death, which God's Word says is sin. When Jesus rose from the grave, He rose as an accepted sacrifice for our sins. God approved His Son in our place, so that His justice would be met and our righteousness would be secure in the righteousness of Jesus. That's the beauty of the cross and the glory of the resurrection! Jesus Christ lives today to stand for His people, not those who do everything right, but those who place their trust in Him. The Gospel is not good advice on how we are to live so that we can be saved, whereby Jesus becomes the teacher or sage to show how to love to the end, or to be humble and give our lives, or to serve others with compassion. He does teach us these things, but the gospel is more than that. The Gospel is good news declaring that He has done it! He has defeated our greatest enemy and has left nothing left for us to perform but to repent and believe in Him! There are no works which we can do to defeat sin or death, but Jesus has done them all for us. This living Savior is the one in whom we hope; in whom we have hope that our sins are forgiven and that we are righteous in the eyes of God, not by our works, but by His righteous life and holy death imputed to us.

Romans 4:24b-25 – [Righteousness] will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord,²⁵ who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

1. There is Bad News: Sin Leads to Death
 - a. There is the reality of bad news that must always precede the good news.
 - i. The Scripture teaches that every person is enslaved to sin and as due wages of this sin are condemned to death, the wrath of God, and Hell
 1. Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1 Thess 1:10; Heb 2:14-15
 - b. We have a predicament to be rescued from: Death due to sin
 - i. Sin is pervasive
 1. Pervasive in our souls (Rom 1:32; 3:10-12; 7:15-21)
 2. Pervasive in our communities (Rom 5:12)
 3. Pervasive throughout humanity (Rom 3:23; 5:12)
 - ii. Hell is real
 1. God does not look on sin lightly (Ps 7:11-12; Matt 10:28)
 2. His holiness demands justice (Matt 25:46; Rom 2:5-11)
 3. There is a judgment coming (Dan 12:2; Acts 10:42; 2 Pet 2:1-11)
 - iii. We have an enemy
 1. The Devil wants us to be destroyed (John 8:44; 10:10)
 2. The Devil wants us to dishonor God (Gen 3:4; 1 John 3:8)
 3. The Devil works to keep us in fear and without hope (Heb 2:14-15)
 - a. In arrogance (Gen 3)
 - b. In despair (Heb 2)
 - c. The Wages of Sin is Death (1 Cor 15:56; Rom 6:23; James 1:15)
 - i. Death of the Spirit
 1. Wrath of God: judgment upon sin (1 Thess 1:10; 2:16; 5:9; Rom 5:9)
 2. Forgiveness of God: judged sin in Christ (in our place) (2 Cor 5:21; Rom 3:21-26)
 3. Adopted by God: made sons/daughters of God in position (Gal 4:5; Rom 8:15; Eph 1:5)

4. To Enjoy God Forever: purpose of redemption (Eph 2:1-7; Ps 16:11; John 17:5)
- ii. Death of Creation
 1. Resurrection
 2. Glorification
 3. Restoration of Creation
- iii. Death of the Soul
 1. Joy in fullness (Rom 14:17; Gal 5:22)
 2. Life in abundance (John 10:10; Rom 5:17)
 3. Hope in the LORD (Rom 15:13; 1 Tim 4:10; Col 1:27)

2. The Gospel is the Good News that Jesus Has Rescued Us from Sin and Death

- a. The Gospel is NOT Good Advice (Dr. Lloyd-Jones' example of a King's message back to the city)
 - i. "delivered over for our transgressions" (Rom 4:25; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 1:4)
 1. Indicates that Jesus died for our sins, He didn't merely come to show us how we could attain the law
 2. "The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law" (1 Cor 15:56-58)
 - a. As if Christ left the enemy undefeated
 - b. As if we need to build the ramparts up to God
 - c. As if our predicament will be solved by our works and attainment

"Advice is counsel about something that hasn't happened yet, but you can do something about it. News is a report about something that has happened which you can't do anything about because it has been done for you and all you can do is respond to it."
(Lloyd-Jones)

- ii. We live in a society that is deeply divided over the gospel
 1. There are two primary responses to gospel which both contain acceptance and rejection at the same time:
 - a. RELIGIOUS: accept the teaching of the Word on family values, sexuality, gender, Hell, judgment, etc. but reject the teaching on compassion, social justice, grace for sinners, and humble love and service of enemies
 - i. I accept the doctrine of the afterlife, and it's only for good people like me who do the right things
 - b. IRRELIGIOUS: accept the teaching of the Word on God's compassion, mercy, grace, forgiveness, nearness, but reject the teaching on Hell, judgment, sexuality, gender, family, humble love and service of enemies
 - i. I deny the afterlife: Death becomes "natural" and simply the end of consciousness, which is nothing to fear b/c I deny Hell, or any kind of punishment in the afterlife, only what dreams may come
 - ii. I accept the afterlife, but it's only good, God wouldn't send anyone to Hell
 2. This is why "Christianity" is partly received in our society by all, but not completely accepted by most and why people categorize Christians into labels (mainstream, liberal, conservative, fundamentalist, etc)
- iii. This division, though very different in emphases, is really rooted in the same thing: the avoidance of Jesus as a Savior

1. "It's those who hold to my understanding of 'good' that are true Christ-followers"
 2. Note that it's not the blood and righteousness of Christ imputed to me by faith, but rather some work of my ability or character, my "righteousness" that I hold to that is the basis for my goodness and therefore acceptability by God
 - a. Whether this ability is religious moral strength or irreligious strength of character, they are both "my righteousness", my attempt to beat sin and insignificance, to attempt to give myself hope beyond death
 - b. The gospel shows us that it is in our inability and the ability and accomplishment of Christ, His death for my sins, His resurrection for my righteousness, that is the basis for my acceptance
 - i. Leads to humility (I am a sinner, no more righteous on my own capability than the "worst" sinner)
 - ii. Leads to confidence (I am redeemed and belong to God because of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection)
 - iii. I come only by repentant faith, not my own capability or moral strength or character
 3. Same thing: Good Advice to save ourselves by our moral strength
 - a. "'Read your Bible, obey the 10, pray' and you will save yourselves"
 - b. "Be nice, tolerant, and non-judgmental, self-authentic and true to yourself and you're a good person"
- iv. Response by fear that acts
- b. The Gospel is Good News
- i. Proclaimed as task that is finished by Christ

"Every other religion sends military advisers to people. Every other religion says that if you want to achieve salvation, you will have to fight for your life. Every other religion is sending advice saying 'here are the rites and the rituals; here's the transformation of consciousness and laws and regulations.' We send heralds. We send messengers not military advisers" (Lloyd-Jones)
 - ii. Jesus has completed the payment for sin FOR US
 1. Col 2:13-14 (who did the work, even the nailing in v14?)
 2. **John 2:14-22** – Destroy this temple and I will build it up in three days
 - a. Temple was the place of atonement, of approach to God
 - b. The Temple, as the building of means of approaching God, was destroyed when He died for the final sacrifice of atonement had been made
 - c. The true Temple ("made without hands" acc. to Mark) was His body, raised up as the means by which we approach God, through the living Son
 - d. "when Jesus was raised...they remembered these things and believed"
 - i. What Jesus built by rising from the dead was the means by which we approach God in righteousness
 - ii. His resurrection secured our justification (Rom 4:25)
 - iii. The wages are paid, we are only to turn to Him (repentance) and trust in Him (faith)
 1. It is Christ who rescues us from sin, and therefore death, spiritual, physical, and soulsh.
 - iv. Nothing left for us to complete, no advice by which we can save ourselves and defeat death.
 1. We are not saved by our ability to conform to the Law or do rites/rituals, or even by character transformation, but only by responding in faith to the heralded message

2. Grace is the operative term
 - a. God's Rewards At Christ's Expense
 - b. Out of love
 - c. Grace is not the opposite of Law, but the operative fulfillment of the Law
 - i. Law still has a purpose, but it is not to save us
 - ii. The King has saved us by His gracious victory over our sin and over our death by taking on our sin and partaking of our death
- v. Respond by faith that acts
 1. We now "read the Bible, obey the 10, and pray" because we rejoice in the greatness of the victorious King!
 2. Obedience with joy that is full is the freedom for which Christ came to save us.
 3. We are now near to God, not by our works, but through Christ's work alone, so we respond with dependence upon Him and joyful obedience and grateful praise

Conclusion: The Gospel of Jesus Christ, His perfect life, atoning death for our sins, His glorious resurrection for our righteousness, and His ascension to the Father in majesty is truly good news. Jesus didn't die in order to merely show us the way, He is the way! The Gospel is not merely good advice whereby we can save ourselves by doing the right things and avoiding the bad things. Our acceptance with God and our hope of treasuring Him forever in glory is not due to our righteousness, but His. We simply respond by repenting of our sins, giving up our own "rightness" as the means by which we are deemed "good enough" and then place our dependence solely upon Jesus' blood and righteousness for that acceptance with God. Today is the day that we celebrate His amazing victory over our sin, our death, and our rightful condemnation. Like the apostle Paul wrote, "Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" If you have never given up relying upon your own righteousness, and know yourself right now to be a sinner for whom God's wrath and justice are due, then today is the day of your salvation. Turn from trusting your own good works, turn from living your life the way that you think it should be lived, and trust in Jesus as your atoning sacrifice, your substitute who bore God's wrath and justice in your place. He did it for you out of love, He calls you to Himself now. Heed the good news and rejoice.

I will leave us today with these wonderful words from a man of great faith almost 500 years ago:

"Every good thing we could think or desire is to be found in this same Jesus Christ alone. For he was sold, to buy us back; captive, to deliver us; condemned, to absolve us. He was made a curse for our blessing, sin offering for our righteousness; marred that we may be made fair.

He died for our life; so that by him fury is made gentle, wrath appeased, darkness turned into light, fear reassured, despisal despised, debt canceled, labor lightened, sadness made merry, misfortune made fortunate, difficulty easy, disorder ordered, division united, ignominy ennobled, rebellion subjected, intimidation intimidated, ambush uncovered, assaults assailed, force forced back, combat combated, war warred against, vengeance avenged, torment tormented, damnation damned, the abyss sunk into the abyss, hell transfixed, death dead, mortality made immortal.

In short, mercy has swallowed up all misery, and goodness all misfortune."

—John Calvin, preface for Pierre Robert Olivétan's 1534 French translation of the New Testament