

13. The Gospel and the Church (4Q 2011—Galatians)

Biblical material: Gal. 6:1–10, Matt. 18:15–17, 1 Cor. 10:12, Rom. 15:1, John 13:34, Luke 22:3.

Quotes

- The gospel is the clear manifestation of the mystery of Christ. *John Calvin*
- The gospel begins and ends with what God is, not with what we want or think we need. *Tony Houston*
- The gospel is neither a discussion nor a debate. It is an announcement. *Paul S. Rees*
- The gospel has the hallmark on heaven upon it. *William J. C. White*
- The church should be a community of encouragement. *Fred Catherwood*
- If we accept the divine entry of God into human history through the man Jesus Christ, we cannot help accepting the unique nature of the fellowship which he founded. For in a sense it is an extension of the actual visit, sustained by the living God. *J. B. Phillips*

Questions

How should the gospel operate in the church? Why is it that the organized church frequently says and does things that do not seem to come from the gospel? How are we to live as true believers? Are we only to be a spectacle to outsiders, and not insiders? How do we represent God as part of the great controversy conflict even within the church?

Bible summary

Gal. 6:1–10 has two primary themes. The first is to help one another, recognizing our responsibility to others. The second is that we reap what we sow. This is how the gospel should operate in the church.

So the emphasis is on doing good as an expression of the transformed lives we live as followers of Jesus. The results are in a sense “automatic”—they spring from the kind of life you live. Jesus in Matt. 18:15–17 explained how to deal with issues between believers, operating from a redemptive perspective. Then a Word of caution for those who are over-confident: “If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall.” 1 Cor. 10:12 NLT.

And if we are truly strong, we are not to be insensitive to others, thinking we have right on our side. (Rom. 15:1). For as Jesus told us, we are to love one another (John 13:34). The alternative is to allow the devil in to take control, as Judas did (Luke 22:3).

Comment

Saying we have the gospel without any evidence is pointless—we are only fooling ourselves. Most importantly within the fellowship of faith we must be demonstrating the truth of what we believe—not as a requirement but as a natural consequence of the transformed people we have become...

What is the gospel? In the words of Jesus: “I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly.” So what happened? Between that simple announcement of truth by

the Church's Founder a couple of millennia ago, and now? The sad truth is that Jesus' greatest condemnation was for those denominational leaders who told everyone they were right and Jesus was wrong. Blind guides, he called them. So above all else, we must not become blind to the reality of the gospel, and its compelling demand to share God's truth, and not our own version of truth, our Galatian "other gospel."

The gospel: one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread. A pretty good definition. Keeps the one preaching humble, and points out that the source is not in ourselves. Yet the Structures of the Church, the Committees and Commissions and Councils and Congregations and Conferences and Congresses rather say otherwise, arrogating in a subtle way the responsibility for salvation to ourselves. Time to preach not ourselves, but Jesus Christ, with all he said and meant and did.

- To preach the Christian charter of the sermon on the mount, and be one with the meek, the merciful, peacemakers, and the hungerers and thirsters after righteousness.
- To love our enemies
- To not look at the speck in the eyes of others
- To not worry about your life
- To not pray like the hypocrites
- To not do our charitable acts to get attention
- To become the salt of the earth and the light of the world
- To not store up treasures on earth
- To not serve two masters

For this is life eternal, to know... Which is being really alive, with that abundance only God can bring. The abundant life that can't be hid and which demands sharing, spreading the real gospel.

Ellen White Comments

The understanding of the people of God has been blinded; for Satan has misrepresented the character of God. Our good and gracious Lord has been presented before the people clothed in the attributes of Satan, and men and women who have been seeking for truth, have so long regarded God in a false light that it is difficult to dispel the cloud that obscures his glory from their view. Many have been living in an atmosphere of doubt, and it seems almost impossible for them to lay hold on the hope set before them in the gospel of Christ. {RH, July 23, 1889}

It is the Christian's business to shine. The professed follower of Christ is not fulfilling the requirements of the gospel unless he is ministering to others. He is never to forget that he is to let his light so shine before men that they, seeing his good works, may glorify their Father which is in heaven. His speech is to be always with grace, and in harmony with his profession of faith. His work is to reveal Christ to the world. Jesus Christ and him crucified is his inexhaustible theme, of which he is freely to speak, bringing out of the good treasure of his heart the precious things of the gospel. {RH, February 12, 1895}