

Is Your Good News Really Good News?

BY RICHARD JORDAN

In modern evangelism, there is much talk about preaching the gospel while far too little is actually being preached. Many are talking in vague language about Christ - language which misses the key issues altogether. Much of the common language presently used to “preach the gospel” is confusing at best and heretical at worst. Surely this is not the arena in which to be shoddy and imprecise. Evangelism is like heart surgery - it demands our total concentration; it requires maximum precision.

Today, the gospel message is being confused with a “gooey” evangelism that asks man to imagine he must do, feel, experience or surrender in order to find peace with God. This is dangerous, for when we add *anything* to the age-old formula: “*faith in Christ’s blood,*” we lose *everything*.

Notice how some commonly used appeals that seek to “present the gospel” and at the same time lessen the “offence of the cross” totally lack an adequate basis for salvation:

“*Give your heart to Christ*” sounds positively romantic. But we are not saved by simply falling in love with Jesus. We are saved by believing in His finished work on Calvary. Yet, this appeal in no way encourages a person to rely upon the sufficiency of His work there, as a basis for acceptance with God.

Moreover, salvation is not my gift to God; it is His gift to me: “*the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*” (Eph. 2:8, 9; Rom. 6:23)

“*You must forsake and turn from your sins (i.e., repent).*” This is a popular appeal, yet it is an utterly absurd statement.

Did *any* of us stop sinning when we were saved? Have we stopped even yet? Of course not! The book of 1 Corinthians alone provides ample evidence that sin *remains* a problem in the life of every believer long after he is justified.

Why, then, tell unbelievers that they must turn from their sins and forsake them in order to find salvation in Jesus Christ? How much better to tell them the truth: that God accepts us just as we are, and that it is *God* “that justifieth the ungodly.” (Rom. 4:5)

Forsaking sin and changing the way we live clearly has to do with Christian conduct *after* salvation. In Christ, the believer has been made a part of an absolute and total victory program over sin—but the order of Eph. 2:8-10 is definite. First, we are saved by grace through faith, totally apart from *any* human merit or works; then, as *His* “workmanship,” we are to walk in the “good works” for which He created us.

“*You must surrender all to Christ,*” we are told. No. No. It was Jesus Christ who made the full surrender when He yielded His life on Calvary. It is His surrender that saves us, not our surrender in any way to Him. Again, Rom. 12:1 is written to believers – not unbelievers.

“*You must make Jesus Christ Lord of your life.*” But this too has the cart before the

horse, for this is the obligation of the believer to his Saviour *after* he is saved.

There is a vast difference between acknowledging Christ to be Lord (as in Rom. 10:9) and making Him Lord of your life—in other words, promising to obey Him for the rest of your life. Christ is first to be the Saviour of our souls, *then* Lord of our lives. To exhort the *lost* to make Jesus Christ their “Saviour and Lord,” is to mix salvation and service into one impossible package and confuse the issue.

It is sometimes said that, “If Christ isn’t Lord of all, He isn’t Lord at all.” But this is simply a preaching ploy – and not a very accurate one at that. My friend, Jesus Christ is Lord whether you, I, or anyone else recognizes or likes it! He is Lord; it is the believer’s privilege to recognize His Lordship and to live in light of this blessed fact. For the unsaved to recognize His Lordship, would be nothing less – nor more – than to trust Him fully as the One who died for their sins and rose again for their justification.

“*Make your decision for Christ*” is another popular invitation. But again, no adequate basis for salvation is found in this proposition. We cannot pass over the blood that was shed at Calvary and merely receive Christ. (Heb. 9:22) An invitation that focuses on the person of Christ and ignores the work of Christ in our behalf is dangerous.

“*Have you made your commitment to Christ?*” This too is heard over and over again when invitations are given. But God is not asking the unbeliever to make any commitments to Him. He *offers* salvation as a *FREE GIFT* to those who will put their trust in Him who died for them.

WHY THESE TERMS?

In our day of mass media mania, we are constantly under the pressure and temptation to dilute “the offence of the cross” in order to appeal to greater and greater audiences. No doubt, this is one important reason why neo-evangelicalism has flourished in our day. It is a system of compromise mainly concerned with eliminating the offensive aspects of our message so as to appeal to greater audiences.

“The offence of the cross,” of course, lies in its total disregard for all human effort and merit. If we clearly understand the wretchedness of our lost condition, the horror of our enmity against God, the deep-rootedness of our sinfulness, we would not attach human requirements to the gospel of the grace of God.

This is no minor issue. The souls for whom Christ died are at stake. There is no room for a mixture of human works; rather, the only issue is what Christ has done *for us* at Calvary.

This is exactly why, amid the theological confusion of our times, we should be careful to rightly divide the Word of Truth so that we will clearly *know* and fully *understand* God’s great message for today.

Never allow yourself to stray from the bedrock issue. Make those five blessed words of 1 Cor. 15:3 the issue: “*Christ died for our sins.*” At Calvary, Christ *paid in full* the penalty for our sins—this is the issue, the truth for the lost to believe, the message for the saved to boldly make known! Our message to the world, like Paul’s, should be “*the preaching of the cross.*” (1 Cor. 1:18) Remember: this is the message that is “*the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.*” (Rom. 1:16)