

Go and Tell – The Sinfulness of Man

I Have Good News and Bad News

As I mentioned last week, we will be looking at four key points that must be included in our understanding and presentation of the Gospel. Just to give you a quick overview of where we will be going, the four points we will be discussing can basically be boiled down to Man, God, Jesus, Response. That makes it sound so simple, but figuring out exactly how to approach each point and what to include and what I'm going to have to leave out has been unbelievably difficult. We could spend months on each one of these points, but I only have a month to cover all of them, so I'm going to try to keep this very focused. I'm going to use the book of Romans as our springboard to discuss each point, so we'll be jumping around in chapters 1-11 over the next few weeks.

To begin, I want to back up and ask a question from last week again. What is the Gospel? The word itself actually means "good news." One thing we know about good news is that it usually goes along with bad news. You almost can't have good news by itself, or at least it doesn't make a whole lot of sense by itself. What would you say if I told you that I had just sold my house to buy the drug that cures a certain terrible disease you've never even heard of as a gift for you? You'd definitely think I was nuts! You might even be offended. You don't have any need or desire for my good news. It doesn't make sense. But what if I told you that I believe you have this disease and I spent some time pointing out several clear symptoms that I see in you to the point that you become convinced that you really do have it. Then when I tell you that I sold my house to buy you the cure, you'll grab it from me desperately and thankfully take it because now my good news makes sense. The same is true with the Gospel – the "Good News." We must start with the bad news so that the Good News will make sense and people will be desperate for it.

If our goal in all things is to glorify God, this is how we do it in evangelism. Our goal is to magnify the grace of God. We want to make His grace look as amazing as it really is. To do that, we need to see the bad news as clearly as we can. That's where we're going to begin in our study of the Gospel as we tackle the first key point – the sinfulness of man.

The Sinfulness of Man

Romans 1-11 is an awesome section of Scripture. The book of Romans has been called "the greatest letter ever written," and these chapters are a big reason why. Paul was writing to address some issues in the Roman church, specifically dealing with the relationship of the Jews and Gentiles, but in so doing he gave us one of the most thorough, amazing accounts of the Gospel in one book in the Bible. He doesn't beat around the bush. After the conventional letter introduction in 1:1-15 he gives somewhat of a preview of where he is going in 1:16-17, and then he jumps in with both feet. Paul's first point is man's condition before God. I'm going to use 1:18 as our basic outline as we bounce around a little.

Romans 1:18 "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth."

We are Ungodly (Romans 1:19-32)

- We have no desire or affection for God, but rather live as if He did not exist. In reality, our desire is to throw God off of His throne and take His place. We would kill Him if that is what it took to get Him out of our way, and when we had the opportunity, that is exactly what we did.

Romans 1:19-32 "19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, **25** because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; **27** and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. **29** They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, **30** slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, **31** foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. **32** Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them."

We are Unrighteous (Romans 2:12-23; 3:10-20)

- We violate the moral demands that God has set for us which He has written in our heart, and given us in the Law.

Romans 2:12-23 "**12** For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. **13** For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. **14** For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. **15** They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them **16** on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

17 But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God **18** and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law; **19** and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, **20** an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— **21** you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? **22** You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? **23** You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law."

Romans 3:10-20 "**10** as it is written:

"None is righteous, no, not one;
11 no one understands;
no one seeks for God.
12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;
no one does good,
not even one."
13 "Their throat is an open grave;
they use their tongues to deceive."
"The venom of asps is under their lips."
14 "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness."
15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood;
16 in their paths are ruin and misery,
17 and the way of peace they have not known."
18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

19 Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. **20** For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin."

We are Truth-Suppressors (Romans 1:21-23, 28, 32)

- We are completely aware of God's existence and demands, but we refuse to acknowledge Him and rebel against Him.

Romans 1:21-23 “**21** For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. **22** Claiming to be wise, they became fools, **23** and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.”

Romans 1:28 “And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.”

Romans 1:32 “Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.”

The Sinfulness of Sin

We are too quick to assume that everyone knows what the Biblical definition of sin is. They don't. They think of and talk about sin merely as a weakness, a slip-up, an “oops”, and only in terms of how it affects other people. They tend to think that we basically have good intentions; we just “goof up” once in a while.

We must bring them to the point where they understand that sin is wicked, intentional rebellion against the holy God of the universe. If we do not give someone a true sense of the sinfulness of sin, they will never see their desperate need of a Savior.

The Sinfulness of Each Person

The tendency today also is to minimize sin by grouping everyone together. If we actually do say anything about sin, we try to soften it by only talking about how “we're all sinners.”

This is true, but it is not necessarily helpful at this point, because until someone understands their specific violation of the Law and their personal guilt, the Gospel will not make sense to them. Our Good News will seem foolish and offensive because they won't think that they are that bad – there are plenty of worse people all around them.

So how does this affect us as we Go and Tell?

Go and Tell Application

Use the Law (Romans 3:19-20; 7:7)

Romans 3:19-20 “**19** Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. **20** For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.”

Romans 7:7 “What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.””

“The Scriptures tell us that the Law was not given as a means of salvation, but as an instrument for exposing both the vileness of sin – that sin would be utterly sinful, and the sinfulness of man – that all the world might become accountable to God.” – Paul Washer

“We can see the work of God's Law illustrated in civil law. For example, when there is no visible sign of the law on a freeway, motorists often transgress the speed limit. Apparently each speedster says to himself that the law has forgotten to patrol his part of the freeway. He is transgressing the law by only 15 mph, and besides, he isn't the only one doing it.

Notice what happens when the law enters the fast lane, with red lights flashing. The speedster's heart misses a beat. He is no longer secure in the fact that other motorists are also speeding. He knows that he is *personally* as guilty as the next guy, and *he* could be the one the law pulls over. The fact that there are other people doing it is irrelevant. Suddenly, his "mere" 15 mph transgression doesn't seem such a small thing after all; it seems to abound." – Ray Comfort

"The Law serves a most necessary purpose. They will *never* accept grace, until they tremble before a just and holy Law." – Charles Spurgeon

Speak to the Conscience

"Never forget that the sinner's conscience is your ally. Rather than fight against you, it will work with you. It is independent of his sin-loving will. Sin, however, has the conscience tied hand and foot and its voice gagged. You must cut the ropes with the sharp edge of the sword of God's Law and untie the gag. Don't be afraid to appeal directly to the sinner's conscience: "God gave you a conscience; you know right from wrong. Listen to the voice of your conscience. It will remind you of sins that you have committed." You will be encouraged in battle when you hear the voice of conscience coming through. It is the work of the Law written on the sinner's heart, and it will bear witness with the Law of God (Romans 2:15)." – Ray Comfort

Ask Questions

The Gospel is an offensive message. The Bible makes that clear. We must be careful however that we are not offensive in the way we present it. This becomes a little bit of a challenge at this point. How do we confront someone with the Law of God and convince them that they have violated it and stand condemned before God in as inoffensive a way as possible? The best way that I've found to do this is to ask questions as much as possible when you are witnessing.

- Would you consider yourself to be a good person?
- Do you think you've kept the Ten Commandments?
- How many lies do you think you've told in your life?
- What does that make you?

This way you are not accusing or judging anyone, they are speaking for themselves and admitting what they are in God's eyes. Most of the time people will be very open to this style of conversation and we will not cause unnecessary offense.

Questions and Objections

My Good Will Outweigh My Bad

This is a common objection that you will face. The majority of humanity believes that some amount of good works is sufficient to gain them entrance into heaven. There are two problems with this.

- The Bible says that "no one does good, not even one." (Romans 3:12) They cannot do good in the first place.
- Even if they could do them, good works cannot atone for crimes. Justice must be served. We know this to be true in human courts.

Conclusion

"Unless a man sees himself as "not good," as truly filthy and sinful, he will never thirst for the righteousness that is in Christ. A man who is content with his own filthy rags will not see the infinite value of the robe of righteousness God extends to him. It is not until we see ourselves as God sees us that we can recognize our need for the Savior and come to Him in repentance and faith." – Kirk Cameron

"As stewards of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we do no service to men by making light of sin, skirting around the issue, or avoiding it altogether. Men only have one problem – They are under the wrath of God because of their sin. It is not unloving to tell men that they are sinners, but it is the grossest form of immorality not to tell them!" – Paul Washer