

Lions, Wolves & Sheep, Oh My!

Part 4: The Great Gospel Reset 3: Jew & Gentile

(preached 5/15/22)

Please turn to *1 Corinthians 1:18*.

LAST WEEK:

- We expounded *John 3:16-21*.
- **Verse 16** spoke of the deep marital commitment that Jesus has made to everyone—He's already ALL IN no matter who we are or what we've done.
- Not just in His mind but in His heart too!
- He gave Himself to us like this before we even knew Who He was or loved Him—He truly fell in love with us first.
- **Verse 17**: at this point, the Age of the Cross, He's not looking to judge or condemn anyone—He desires that none should perish but that all unbelievers would come to repentance.
- He will go far beyond forgiveness of our sins, but will give us the Holy Spirit, seal us for resurrection, bring us to the NJ to live with Him, and seat us upon heavenly thrones!
- **Verses 18-20** show that despite His great love and compassion, some will still reject Him.
- If they do the wrath of God remains on them.
- Why is God angry? Answer: *because He is completely just*.
- Whenever He sees injustice on any level, His "wrath" builds and Scripture compares it to debt.
- The Blood of Christ paid the debt for any who repented and grabbed His lifeline, but for any who reject they still owe God and will pay with their own blood...which means eternal separation from God in Hell.
- A final judgment is coming at the end of time, what's commonly called The Great White Throne Judgment spoken of several places in Scripture but most notably in Revelation 20.
- All unbelievers will stand before the Lord and will be judged according to their deeds by God Who is 100% just and righteous.
- Any who have not grabbed the lifeline of Jesus will be condemned at said Judgment.
- As for those who have cleaved to Jesus, we have been Saved from God's wrath! Is has not been appointed to us and never will be!

REPENTANCE. The first thing I want to address is the need for repentance and to refute the claim of some that it's a "work" and therefore not required to be Saved. Why do some say this? Because of this famous verse:

Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

“WORKS.” After reading these 2 wonderful verses, some Christians want to make sure that no credit is given to any “works” when it comes to being Saved, lest anyone should brag. While I clearly sympathize with this stance, *repentance is not a work.*

WORKS OF LAW. Being raised Jewish, the “works” Paul is referring to are *the works God required under the Old Covenant—to obey God’s commands*. Some of His commands called for restraint (think “thou shalt not”) and others called for proaction (think “thou shalt”). God told His people to restrain from adultery, stealing, and lying and then to be proactive things like honoring parents, generosity to fellow man, and worship and glorification of the Lord.

WORKS OF ATONEMENT. *He also commanded both the Priesthood and the common people to perform acts of atonement.* Priests prepared the Temple, themselves, and the offerings people brought. The people were responsible for bringing an animal offering to said Priests. Therefore when the Apostles specifically referred to “good works” or “the works of the Law” in the NT, THIS is what they were referring to.

ACTS OF RESTRAINT FROM SIN DO NOT SAVE.

Proactive acts of generosity and service that benefit others do not save.

Acts of OC atonement do not save.

Repentance is not a work, but something that takes place in the heart.

It’s when we realize that we need saving and cannot do it ourselves.

It’s when we realize we’re swimming in the middle of an ocean of our own trespass and no other human, no system, no government, can save us.

It’s when we realize the only One Who can pull us up out of this quicksand is Jesus and we believe that He is able, merciful, and loving to do so.

REPENTANT HEART. Both Jesus and the Apostles looked for a repentant heart within unbelievers so that they might be Saved:

Mark 2:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ When Jesus heard *it*, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call *the* righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

Luke 24:45-47 (ESV)

⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,

⁴⁶ and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,

⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

Acts 20:21 (ESV)

²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 2:4-5 (ESV)

⁴ Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

⁵ But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

MORE I COULD QUOTE. There are a whole lot more verses I could quote to support this and I preach this now because this heart-based response needs to be evident within an unbeliever.

TODAY: *is there a "right way" to share the Gospel?*

- Is there a "one size fits all" or do we need to approach people differently?
- Did the Apostles share it the same way with everyone?
- How do we overcome fear and lack of boldness to approach someone and share?

JEW VS. GENTILE. The Apostles experienced a great difference sharing the Gospel with fellow Jews vs. Gentiles.

1 Corinthians 1:18-25 (ESV)

¹⁸ For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

¹⁹ For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

²⁰ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.

²² For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom,

²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,

²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

I highlight **verse 23** which shows that Jews have one reaction, and Gentiles something completely different. Christ crucified and risen from the dead is:

- JEWS a “stumbling block”
- GENTILES “folly” (or foolishness).
- JEWS seek to confirm or deny the Gospel message with a “sign” (or lack thereof).
- GENTILES seek to confirm or deny the Gospel message with “wisdom” (or lack thereof).

JEWS FIRST. Let’s start with the Jews as the Apostles preached to them first and let’s see how Peter shared the good news with them immediately after Pentecost. The first thing he does is quote OT Scriptures about the last days pouring out of God’s Spirit, then he says this:

Acts 2:22-24 (ESV)

²² “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—

²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

²⁴ God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

REPENT OF REJECTION OF JESUS. The repentance Peter is saying they need is their rejection of Jesus as their long awaited Messiah Whom was prophesied about in the OT Scriptures. That they were blind to Who He was and, instead of accepting and rejoicing in Him, they killed Him. Peter goes onto to say that Jesus was raised from the dead and is alive, just as Jesus said would happen, proving that He was above death. Peter goes on:

Acts 2:36-40 (ESV)

³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

³⁷ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

³⁸ And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

⁴⁰ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”

Verse 37 shows the conviction of sin. In the case of the Jews, said conviction is rejection of Jesus as their prophesied Messiah and their killing of Him instead.

Verse 38 shows they need to repent of their unbelief in Jesus as Christ, then their sins will be forgiven, they’ll receive the Holy Spirit, and be Saved.

FOUNDATION. Jews already have the foundation of Yahweh God, the inspiration of the OT Scriptures, and looking for a Messiah. They already know they’re sinners because they have the Law and the Prophets as witnesses to the same.

The Good News to a Jew is that Jesus is their long awaited Messiah, the One spoken of in their Scriptures, Who will forgive their sin and heal their land, ushering in God’s Kingdom on earth.

SEEK A SIGN. Therefore when Christ crucified and resurrected is shared with Jews, they seek a miraculous sign to confirm the same. A specific sign given from OT verses to prove out the Messiah such as the deaf hearing, mute singing, blind seeing, and paralyzed people walking.

STUMBLING BLOCK. Jesus is a “stumbling block” to Jews because 1) God prophesied the same and 2) a “partial blindness” has been given to Israel concerning Jesus. The modern day nation of Israel is unique in many ways but one that applies to today’s message is this: they hate Jesus. Even now in the 2020’s His Name is an anathema, a curse word, and blasphemy to them. They don’t refer to Him by His Hebrew name Yeshua, but rather by a derogatory nick name of “Jesu.” When you were a kid, did anyone ever take your real name and then twist it into something insulting? That’s what they call Jesus today in Israel. Just as God prophesied in the Bible thousands of years ago, they continue to reject and despise Him.

Gentiles are a different story. When the Apostles preached to them, Gentiles didn’t get it. The Greeks of the 1st century might have responded like this:

- Which “god” are you talking about? There are many.
- What makes the Hebrew God so special and why is He above our gods? Why do I care if He “judges” me?
- Which “scriptures” are you referring to? We have Plato, Socrates, and the ancient writings about our gods Zeus, Hera, etc.
- Why do you think your scriptures are any more valid than ours?
- What is sin? How do you define that? Who has the authority to judge right from wrong?
- Why do I need to be “forgiven”? Who has decided I am bad?

- What's a "Messiah" and why do I need one? Who was He? What was His purpose? Why do I "need" Him?
- What's this "coming Kingdom" you're talking about? Just in the nation of Israel, the whole planet, or what?
- Wait...you're saying He died and came back to life?! That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard!

SQUARE ONE. When the Apostles began preaching to the Gentiles, they ran into questions/statements like these and needed to start from square one...hence the Book of Romans. ***Whereas Jews already knew they were sinners in need of Saving, Gentiles didn't.*** Jews were already looking for a Messiah sent from God, but Gentiles weren't.

DESTROY "WISDOM." Going back to 1 Corinthians 1: now we see why Paul is saying God will destroy the "wisdom" of the self-proclaimed wise and demands to know where the "debater of the age" is. ***The true foolishness is that of the Gentiles believing they could come to truth themselves and didn't need Jesus to do SO.*** Not for the fact that they're questioning, but weren't truly seeking God or Salvation, but only more "knowledge" because it was all about the mind/intellect, and not about spirit.

SAME APPLIES NOW IN 2020'S! Such is the case here in the 2020's where "Gentiles" are still asking all the same questions they did 2000 years ago, despite America being predominantly Christian now and in our history. While modern Americans know the name Jesus—the whole world does—and may not despise Him the way modern Israel does, they still dwell completely in unbelief. Westerners still believe they can arrive at truth and righteousness themselves and don't need God to reveal it to them.

- They don't know they're sinners, but think they're inherently good people.
- When asked, most will say they're going to Heaven when they die.
- Most reject the Bible as God's Word.
- Most have created their own version of morality, righteousness & truth.
- They believe there are many ways to righteousness and salvation.

"ACCEPT JESUS." Just getting them to say a prayer and to "accept Jesus" is creating false converts because they don't truly believe they need Saving. ***Someone who already believes they're good will only seek a version of Christ who will serve them whereas a true convert lives to be the one serving Jesus.***

START FROM BEGINNING. When we share the good news with our fellow Gentiles, we cannot assume they have any Godly foundation whatsoever. We must start from the beginning.

I like the Gospel sharing method used by Ray Comfort and Kirk Cameron.

- They normally start out by asking someone if they believe they're good people.
- Then they ask "if you were to die right now, do you believe you would go to Heaven or Hell?"
- When people answer "heaven" they'll pose a scenario: "suppose you were judged by the 10 commandments."
- They'll go through several of the commands for which people are always guilty: lying, adultery, stealing, hate.
- When people admit their guilt, they'll attach the labels: "so you're a lying, thieving, adulterous murderer. Based on this, do you still believe you're going to Heaven?"
- Then they'll begin to speak of Jesus' great sacrifice on the Cross, that He shed His blood for all sins.
- That forgiveness of sin is available for any who repent and turn to Jesus.

We must start with the commandments when sharing the Gospel to bring an unbeliever to the point where they realize they need a Savior:

1 Timothy 1:8-11 (NKJV)

⁸ But we know that the law *is* good if one uses it lawfully,

⁹ knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for *the* lawless and insubordinate, for *the* ungodly and for sinners, for *the* unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,

¹⁰ for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine,

¹¹ according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.

SHOW VIDEO.

OVERCOMING FEAR. Getting past fear is, in my opinion, the biggest obstacle that stops Christians from sharing the Gospel. In my experience, it's a very small portion of the church who will randomly approach a stranger or go door to door to share the Gospel.

PRAYER. I have a prayer that will help you: ***ask God to set up the meeting***. Instead of picking someone you believe needs to hear the good news, clasp your hands together and ask the Lord:

- To put you together with a person He has in mind.
- To "nudge" you when that moment comes and remind you: "this is what you prayed for and now is the time."
- To realize it's not about you or your ability to share, but about the power of His Gospel to lead someone to Him.

I don't like the idea to "pray for boldness" because boldness is a by-product of what I just said: not making it about our ability to present or "get it right." We're the glove that God's hand is in. We are the tool He is using.

Fear comes when we center on us and will paralyze us from taking action. If we're worried that we don't know the Bible well enough, aren't good at articulating things, aren't a "people person," aren't very smart, etc. then Jesus is no longer the central figure...we are.

Our skills or lack thereof don't save or condemn anyone.

Our calling is to obey and bring Christ front and center, and we cannot and will not do that if we give in to fear.

We'll only give in to fear if we make it about us.

Romans 1:16-17 (ESV)

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."