

How the Gospel Changes Us - Part 2

It Brings a Life Giving Balance

1 Cor. 15:1-4

INTRODUCTION: There was an article that appear in the Sterling City Bulletin a while back, it read like this: A young preacher being interview for his first Pastorate claimed that he really knew the bible. So the interviewing board asked him if he would tell the story of the **prodigal son**. He said,

“Yes, I will - one night there was a man of the pharisees named Nicodemus the same came to Jericho by night. And he fell upon stony ground and thorns arose and choked him half to death. The next morning Solomon and his wife Gomorrah came by and carried him down to the Ark for Moses to take care of. As he entered the eastern gate into the ark he caught his hair in a loom and he hung there 40 days and 40 nights and he was afterwards hungered and the ravens came and fed him. The next day three wise men came and carried him down to a boat dock where he caught a ship to Nineveh and there he found Delilah sitting on a wall and he said, “Chunk her down boys”, and they said to him, “how many times shall we chuck her down” and he said, “70 times 7” So they chucked her down 490 times and she burst asunder in their midst. The disciples picked up 12 baskets of fragments that were left over. And in the resurrection whose wife will she be?”

The story goes that after he left one of the elders said, ***“I don’t know about hiring this fella, he’s awfully young, but he sure knows his bible”***.

Sadly enough, That’s kind of the way we approach the bible, a conglomeration of facts but at times we miss the main thrust of the message. That is the case very often when it comes to the Gospel. The key message, the main idea of Christianity. I would like to talk to you about that today. Not so that you would be **saved**, but so that you would be **sanctified**... let me explain.

INTRODUCTION: What causes a person to change radically and deeply from the very core of their being? And, what causes that change to last?

We all have theories, maybe they aren’t developed or written out, but they are there none-the-less. If you want to know what your personal theory of change is - look at:

- How you **Parent**
- How you **Criticize**

Here are a few examples:

- **Shame** - That is *guilt* and *fear* motivates change. This parent tends to shame their child into change. Putting them in an emotional if not literal, “time out”. It may be a disappointed look, the point of a finger, or just a sullen tone in the voice.
- **Reward** - That is, if reward them they will obey. This person tries to obey God because of a cost benefit analysis. God has to bless me if I do good. The fact is, there are blessings to obedience. But be careful with this. It has a tendency to cause you to make God a genie in the bottle that is there to serve your true IDOL.
- **Pride** - You are better than that. You come from a better family, you were raised better.
- **Mysticism** - Somehow God is going to zap you. The problem with Mysticism is that I am not at all responsible. If God wants to change me, he must zap me. Ultimately, it makes sin God’s problem not yours.

Now there is some truth to each of those avenues, but those are NOT the primary means that God uses to change us. But rather - ***God changes us through the Gospel.***

Now when I say the Gospel what comes to mind? Several years ago Dr. Grey Allison asked the students of Mid-America Seminary that question and he got a variety of answers. Some said it was basically the bible, others it was a style of music. But Dr. Grey showed them how the essence of the Gospel is found in

TEXT: **1 Corinthians 15:1–4 (ESV)**

¹ Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ² and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. ³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

That is what we would call the **MICRO** or SPECIFIC gospel. The **MACRO** Gospel refers to God’s plan to set right all that went wrong in Eden and it does cover the whole story of God throughout human history. But its climactic focus is still the cross.

I remember hearing someone says years ago - the Gospel is the front door, but there is so much more to Christianity than the ABC’s of the Gospel. I know what they

meant, but somehow, many of use fail to recognize that the Gospel is more than the front door. The Gospel is the living room, the kitchen, the roof and the floor.

No aspect of your life is not touched in some way by the implications of the Gospel.

Paul said it this way in **Colossians 2:6 (ESV)**

⁶ Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him,

So what you will notice is that the *New Testament writers constantly point back to the Gospel* as a **source of direction** and motivation or **power for change**.

NOW I could give you tons of examples but let me show you three that are of supreme importance. Notice how the Apostles dealt with three of life's most difficult issues: **Marriage, Money and Sex**.

EXAMPLE: **Marriage and GOSPEL**

Ephesians 5:25–27 (ESV)

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,

Do you see it - look at the Gospel and draw implications for how to treat your wife.

Scripture does give you instructions for how to treat your wife in every situation but rather it gives you one prime example and calls you to look to Him.

- Does how you speak to her echo how He speaks to his bride the Church?
- Does how you server her reflect His service to the Church?
- Does how you forgive her reflect His forgiveness of the Church?

EXAMPLE: **Money and GOSPEL**. When it came to giving... notice how Paul motivated generosity... Paul didn't use guilt or fear to motivate... look at these pitiful people.

2 Corinthians 9:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

EXAMPLE: **Purity and GOSPEL**

In Corinth sexual immorality was rampant. It was the most normal thing in the world for them to consort with prostitutes. How will Paul motivate them to stop?

1 Corinthians 6:13–15 (ESV)

¹³ ...The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴ And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. ¹⁵ Do

you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!

DO you see how the essence of the Gospel is the way of Change?

That is what Paul meant in **2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

OK, but HOW does it happen? Three ways -

1. The Gospel Balances our Extremes

You see this all throughout the scriptures -

- **Isaiah** was a proud, accomplished man - when he sees God, he falls down and trembles.
- **Jeremiah** was a fearful man - when he sees God, God tells him stop trembling.

James 1:9–10 (ESV)

⁹ Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, ¹⁰ and the rich in his *humiliation*, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away.

NOTE: Both are brothers, one tends toward **pity**, the other **pride**. Notice how each one uses the Gospel differently.

- The **poor/pitiful** - focuses on the aspect of the Gospel that says, “although you are poor in this world, the King of Glory died for you and he gives you a home in Heaven”
- The **rich/proud** - focus on the fact that you were so sinful that the Son of God had to die for you to save you, despite your wealth

Do you see how it works? The Gospel counters the excesses of your heart.

Tim Keller puts in this way -

To the **PROUD** - the Gospel says, “remember what your sin required”

Get rid of: Well, I’m from a good family, I went to a good school, I worked hard, I studied, look at all I accomplished.

To the **PITIFUL** - the Gospel says, “remember that Christ loved you so deeply, so wonderfully, that he was willing to suffer Hell for you”.

Get rid of: Self pity, inferiority complex.

Do you see - the Gospel produces **BOLD HUMILITY**.

If you understand the Gospel

- It destroys pride because I was so sinful Jesus had to do this for me
- But it also destroys pity - because he was willing to do this for me.

THE GOSPEL DESTROYS THE PRIDE WITHOUT DESTROYING THE PERSON

Not only does the Gospel Balance our Extremes...

2. The Gospel Purifies our Motives

ILLUSTRATION: Dick Lucas noticed how Jesus used the Gospel as Healthy Motivation in the sermon on the Mount.

If you read it at face value it seems to be very disjointed, all over the place. That's not uncommon with Hebrew sermons. ***The key to interpretation is the final verses.*** When you come to the end of the sermon the conclusion is very clear - ***There are two roads, two paths, two trees, so there are two ways.*** So Jesus says, “In summery you can live like this or like this”.

SO, “if the conclusion of the sermon is that there are two ways, then you will find the two ways scattered throughout the sermon”

But he noticed that Jesus wasn't contrasting:

- Those who pray, with those who don't pray.
- Those who give, with those who don't give.

But rather - both pray, both give... The difference is what **Motivated** them to pray or give? One is a business transaction if I do this... I get that... the other is because of who you know God to be and who you know yourself to be.

If you only obey because it is a sensible business transaction, life will inevitably bring you into a temptation that causes you to compromise to the very core. The enemy will make it seem as though the stakes are too high.

BUT, if your obedience comes from being convinced to your core of the truth of the Gospel - even death itself won't tempt you to compromise. Why? Jesus was raised and so will I be raised.

If God loves me enough that he would not keep Jesus from me, why would he keep anything good that I need out of my life.

See how that affects HOW you pray? I can assume God will answer my prayer and if He doesn't either - it isn't good for me, or he has something better. But it's not that he doesn't love me that's settled.

Not only does the Gospel Balance our Extremes... and purify our motives...

3. The Gospel Disrupts and Replaces our Rhythm

Psychologists have discovered that people never really break bad habits, they can only replace them. In order for you to BREAK a current habit, you need a WEIGHTIER replacement, a more glorious replacement. The Gospel is the only thing that is weightier.

Romans 2:4 tells us that the kindness of God is meant to lead us to repent or change... how does that work?

ILLUSTRATION: Thomas Chalmers, "The Expulsive Power of a New Affection"

It is seldom that any of our bad habits disappear by a mere process of natural extinction. At least, it is very seldom that this is done through reasoning...or by the force of mental determination. But what cannot be destroyed may be dispossessed. One taste may be made to give way to another.

So a young man that idolizes pleasure may cease from seeking it because he discovers that it drains him of his wealth. So his love for wealth drives out the idol of pleasure.

Perhaps then his love of money is driven out by his worship of ideology or politics. He is willing to give up his money for his new idol influence and superiority.

This is the way the heart operates. ***The old IDOL must be conquered by the new one.***

When the Gospel is believed it becomes ***the weightiest of all potential realities.***

By the way, one of the best ways you can be certain that you are saved is when God moves from the realm of concept to reality. Has that happened for you? Because if it has - all these other things begin to shake.

The more you think on who God is and what he has done through the Gospel the more old idols are expelled. That's how change happens.

ILLUSTRATION: In 1999 there was a movie called, "Three Seasons". You've probably never seen it. It was shot in Vietnam.

It's about this Rickshaw rider (which is one of those cycle taxis). His name was Hai and Hai is on the lowest part of the social food chain. At one point he gives a ride to this beautiful woman named LAN who has just finished her job at one of the nicest hotels in Hanoi. He is smitten by this woman, so every day he goes to this same spot to give the same woman a ride.

Eventually, he realizes that she is a prostitute. As he gets to know her she tells him how she wishes she could afford to stay in that hotel without having to "Work" and order room service and just enjoy a good nights sleep.

Then one year there was a race, for all of the rickshaw riders. To make a long story short...Hai wins the race. He wins. He gets all this money. Now he can actually do something with his life. Now he can actually be the person that God has created him to be. He can go do something. He can go learn a trade. He can get out.

What do you think Hai does with all the money? He gets a room at this expensive hotel, which took almost all of his money, almost all of his money. He tells Lan, you know, I want to purchase a night with you.

The cinematography of it, it just shows them entering this room and it's a beautiful hotel, and you're expecting things are going to get steamy.... All of a sudden he stops her and he reminds her of their conversations. "Hey, do you remember how you told me on the way home back to your house that your dream was that you would stay in a room like this, right." She's like, "Yeah," "And that you would be able to sleep and not be kicked out in the morning and order room service, right?" She's like, "Yeah." He goes, "I remembered that."

Then he's like, "Sit down on the bed," and he just talks to her. Before you know it, she's asleep on the bed. Morning and he's in a chair and she's in the bed. She wakes up, and he's got room service there, so they have breakfast together. Then he takes her home.

He doesn't see her for many weeks. Always there at the hotel waiting for her, waiting for her. Finally, he just gets up the nerve and he goes to her house. She's comes in the window and she's yelling at him, "*Get away. I don't want to see you.*" He's like, "What?" Finally, she explains. "*I can't do my job anymore. I can't go back to that lifestyle, because of you, you ruined me.*"

See what happened was Lan was loved unconditional and it caused her to see that she was truly valuable and not just an object.

That's why she was a little bit upset. "What else am I going to do?" She couldn't go back to her life of sin because someone had loved her.

Somebody had used their power to love her, and honor her, and meet her in her brokenness, and it changed her. That is good news.

That's what happens when you experience the gospel. That's our message that we get to share. Loved despite our imperfections, adored as a son and daughter. That's got to be real in here, good people, if we're going to share it with people out here.

HAS THE GOSPEL RUINED YOU? Are you unable to go back into your own life because of a greater reality?