

Is It Real?
 Sermon 21
 07/30/23

Gal 1:

8 "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed.

9 As we have said before, so now I say again, If any one is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed."

Very strong language from the Apostle. Why so emphatic concerning the Gospel? After all, don't we receive it by believing and by saying the right prayer or making the correct confession? That's what the majority of the church will tell you. And if you do it right you too can have eternal life, meaning primarily that you'll go to heaven when you die. Just make sure that your thoughts and words are correct or it will invalidate your effort. I remember being in a discussion many years ago with men that I looked up to because of their education and understanding of scripture. The debate was something along the line of what is the minimum prayer you can pray and still know that you're saved. So different verses were thrown out beginning with the old standby,

John 3:

16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

Well that was pretty good but what about

1 John 5:

13 "I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life."

The consensus choice, however, was

Acts 16:31 with a caveat

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your whole household."

Without the "you and your whole household" it was the shortest and most concise. It was ok to use in order to make the case because no one knew what to do with the second half of the verse anyway since it didn't fit the Evangelical narrative.

So this was their acceptable minimum, simply believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved and by the way that will punch your ticket so you'll go to heaven one day when you die. What that belief entailed wasn't totally clear other than you must believe that He is the Son of God. There's certainly truth in that but is that the whole gospel? If you think that reciting a verse, no matter how short or long is the ticket to heaven, then you've missed the entire point. As stark as it may sound that's akin to witchcraft, reciting a spell or incantation to achieve an end. Paul even uses the term in

Chapter 3:1 "Oh foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you..." The word has a very similar meaning to Eve's statement in

Genesis 3:13

" the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman replied, "The serpent beguiled me, and I ate."

Both beguile and bewitch mean to have one's mind involuntarily controlled by an outside entity. Beguiled means to cause to forget, bewitched to malign or gain power over by casting a spell. Neither have anything to do with the Gospel.

What Paul is saying is that no matter who preaches something different let him be accursed. In fact he says it twice. Does he mean as many have interpreted that they are to be damned to Hell, the same idea as to crucify. Not exactly but he is so riled about a gospel of grace and works, which is no gospel at all, that he even says that the purveyors should emasculate themselves.

Gal 5:

12 "I wish those who unsettle you would mutilate themselves!"

Strong language indeed.

- No, this is about far more than faith in our own behaviors. The word accursed is the Greek word anathema and is left untranslated in many Bible versions. It is ana meaning to return or to reverse while tithemi means to be laid down or that which is placed in a passive horizontal position. We see it clearly in John 20:15 when Mary asks Jesus, assuming him to be the gardener, where have you laid Him, meaning His prostrate dead body. Herein is the point of Paul's argument. The gospel isn't about keeping a mixture of law and grace, it is about life from death, that which only God can administer. He then remarks that if that's what these foolish Galatians want then so be it. They can remain in their state of death and darkness by refusing the gospel of grace. God has awakened us from our horizontal position in death and raised us to life in Christ. To not know this is to remain asleep in a state of separation. Unfortunately this is where most people in the world reside.

Deut 31:

19 "I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live,

Paul uses the same reasoning as Moses with the children of Israel who were finally, after 40 years, preparing to enter the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua. The name Joshua means Yahweh saves or heals and is the Hebrew name for Jesus and only He could lead the people into the Promised Land instead of Moses. Moses could not lead them nor was he allowed entrance for the Law has no place in the Promised Land, another name for the Kingdom of Heaven. We're not to choose blessing and cursing meaning reward and punishment for our behavior. This is continuing to eat off The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the tree that ascribes to religion as the means for gaining life. Only by choosing The Tree of Life are we able to gain access that we may live. Jesus told Nicodemus that only by being restored from death to life can we enter the kingdom.

Joshua led the people across the Jordan River into new life. There is so much imagery and symbolism in the verses concerning this event that we'll read them through then come back to each one.

Josh 3:

15 and when those who were carrying the ark came up to the Jordan and the feet of the priests carrying the ark stepped down into the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks all the days of harvest),

16 then the waters which were flowing down from above stood and rose up in one heap, a great distance away from Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan; and those which were flowing down toward the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. So the people crossed opposite Jericho.

17 And the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan while all Israel crossed on dry ground, until ALL had finished crossing the Jordan.

In verse 15 who were those carrying the ark of the covenant and for that matter what was the ark? The word carry is nasa meaning to lift up. The ark is the place of rest in God, the Word of promise of The Father who does not do abandonment. It is Jesus Christ. He entered death and retrieved humanity within Himself. He is the safe place and the vessel of rescue. The people, led by the priests, carried Him to His crucifixion.

John 12:

"and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw ALL to myself."

This is a picture of the crucifixion and burial. The image is of all people, led by the priests, lifting Christ upon the cross. Jordan means the place of descent and describes the fallen lineage of man.

Eph 4:

9 "(In saying, "He ascended,") what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth?

10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill (complete) ALL things."

The types and shadows in the OT are unmistakable concerning events to come. Just as mankind lifted Him up to death, He entered it and lifted mankind to life once more! He descended into man's Hell, gathered us into Himself, all the way back to Adam and carried us out, collapsing Hell and destroying death in the process!

The waters is somewhat graphic but deserves to be shared. It represents life or more specifically the juice from the loins of man which could not sustain humanity for its seed was that of Adam, a seed of mortality, a dead seed.

Looking ahead to 4:7 we read "Then you shall answer them (your children) that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off."

The river of descent into death was ended by the Word of God, the Covenant. He who became one of us, yet without sin, destroyed death by entering death.

In verse 16 we read that the waters that flowed forth all the way back to Adam reached a point in which it could go no further. It was heaped up and formed a mound at the feet of Jesus, representing the hill of Golgotha. And there He was pierced, Zaretan. The old life of the people was consumed in the Salt or Dead Sea, then passed through to Jericho. The meaning of Jericho is fragrant but it is also the root of

Ruach, the breath of God and the Hebrew name for the Holy Spirit. In the Holy Spirit we are to God the fragrance of Christ. (2 Cor 2:15)

Verse 17 "...all the people were passed clean (made complete or whole) over the Jordan, the waters of death."

This, of course, was a shadow of Christ's victory in fallen Adam. Notice that ALL were made whole for ALL were included in Him, just as we see in

Jeremiah 31:

34 "...for they all will know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their wrongdoing, and their sin I will remember no more."

This is the Gospel! Does it sound anything like the anemic language the modern church purveys as Good News?

We were dead and sin reigned in our death. Until the Incarnation man was hopeless, relegated to a life of death being passed from one generation to the next through the mortal loins of Adam. That is until the fulness of time. Tic tok, tic tok. The seed of the woman promised by God would enter our reality in love and comfort for our condition. Not to judge us as sinful creatures but with eyes of compassion to make whole once more. In the first few centuries of the church sin wasn't treated as something to be punished rather as a sickness. It availed nothing to try and punish sickness out of someone.

We're told in John 20:16 that Mary, upon hearing Jesus speak her name turned, recognizing Him. The word for turn is strepho and means more than to simply turn around. It means to turn back at the harkening of a voice that penetrates to our very core. One that separates soul and spirit, joint and marrow. Upon hearing His voice from behind her call her name she turned back to behold the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. The lamb who was also her creator and her Bridegroom. Her excitement could hardly be veiled for she was the first in all humanity to behold the resurrected Jesus. She represented a new species of human, one who eagerly embraced her Beloved.

We further read in Revelation 1:

10 "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet."

The word behind points to that which is behind in place and time, something that in its prophetic context has already taken place. The voice to both John and Mary was from He who is and was and is to come, the Alpha and Omega. The very same voice that echoes across time and space calling "Adam, my beloved, where are you," now calls each of us by name. From our time in the Garden forward, He never left us. Contrary to popular thought, He never separated Himself from us because the God who IS Love, does not do abandonment!

We see the same story in the account of Abraham and Isaac.

Gen 22:

13 "And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, "behind him" was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son."

He too had turned to look behind him and beheld the lamb. Jesus refers to this event in John 8 when He says,

John 8:

56 "Abraham saw my day. For before Abraham Was, I Am."

Humanity has been deceived into believing that the world we see is reality, whereas the world of life in God is at best myth and legend and at worst an elaborate fabrication. This is exactly the opposite to the truth and even though God has regenerated creation and restored it to His image, most do not recognize Him and still walk in their own darkness and blindness. The proof is revealed every time Moses and the Law are read a veil lies on their heart, a veil of blindness. Whether people subscribe to ancient Hebrew law or they aspire to their own lists in their minds, everyone is religious. People justify themselves by it. Surveys on the street asking whether a person thinks they'll go to heaven when they die overwhelmingly produce a response of 'only if the good I've done outweighs the bad'. What they're hoping is when it comes to judgement, they'll be considered because they're not nearly as bad as many. Maybe it's been said but I don't ever recall hearing yes because I am a new creation in Christ who has taken away the sin of the world. Why? Because the flesh desires almost universally to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. All the religions of the world subscribe to it, including the Christian Religion, the ugliest of all. It is not a religion nor was it ever intended to be. It is simply LIFE. For that which is love and beauty has been transformed by adding performance. The modern church has ignored the Finished Work of Christ and created a hideous bastardization. They've combined law and grace and called the monster good.

Isa 5:

20 "Woe (self inflicted grief) to those who call evil good and good evil; that put darkness for light and light for darkness."

Paul captures the lie in the Garden in the following verse...

2 Cor 11:

3 "But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

The word serpent is ophis which comes from optomai meaning to gaze or to present a visual idea through illusion. The thoughts of Eve succumbed into believing a lie about herself, one of separation and loneliness, resulting in the loss of identity. As mentioned, to be deceived can mean to cause to forget. The Mirror Bible, however, defines the source of deception as apathy, that is to be without faith and easily convinced into believing a lie about yourself. Israel died in the wilderness for this very reason. They refused to believe who God said they were.

Luke 11:

34 "Your eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is sound, your whole body is full of light; but when it is not sound, your body is full of darkness."

Better yet in the Mirror Bible

34 "The eye is the lamp of the body. When the eye is entwined with the light, the entire person is illuminated! But when the ponderous or religious system of wearisome rules and regulations is in focus, it's all darkness." (A futile mentality of labor, hardship & annoyance; the flesh)

Any system that is based in darkness is based in fear. For the light casts out the darkness and love casts out fear. To attempt to maintain an image of law keeping is to undergird with the fear of failure. There is no rest in this type of belief system and a relationship of love is impossible for they are mutually exclusive. This describes the bulk of modern Christianity, having no idea of covenant relationship and yet demanding to be continually fed and entertained, even while being sustained with only drinking milk.

1 Peter 1:

18 "knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers,"

Our religious system is a hodgepodge of illogical beliefs and ideas that have been passed down to us for centuries, yet finally the institutional church is crumbling before our very eyes. People can no longer accept the teachings that Father and Son have totally different attitudes toward man. They make God an angry and wrathful Father who murdered His own Son in order to appease His own rage toward us. In so doing they've attempted to separate the Trinity in its beating heart. The Trinity cannot be separated. God consists of three persons. To separate any one of them means God no longer exists.

Because of our perception of God, we've been led to believe that we are all precariously balanced on a precipice of judgement and condemnation for a long overdue and terrible payday. This has given rise to fiction such as a Rapture which removes the church, the very testimony of light to a world of darkness; a seven-year Tribulation involving the bloodletting and destruction of the better part of mankind because of God's wrath; and a thousand year reign of absolute Law in order to keep the peace to teach man strict obedience and punishment before a cold and judgmental God. This is the ugliness of where the modern church finds itself and its all based on a perception of darkness as reality. It's the illusion resulting from erroneous teaching that says God detests us and can't stand the sight of sin, therefore He separated Himself from us in the Garden in anger and disdain. It's the virtually hopeless corruption of man immersed in the default state of a sin nature and bound for eternal conscious torment. Even to this day we're perceived as totally depraved. That in spite of the fact that we're told in

1 Peter 1:

3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us (all humanity) to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,"

The church consists of saints not depraved sinners. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes today to what is true. To turn your eyes from darkness to light as it penetrates the canopy of unreality that envelopes the world. Believe in that which is just through the wardrobe of Narnia, not the blackness and gloom of the world that the fallen mindset has been conditioned to accept. What if the world is the beautiful Edenic place that is just below the surface but we simply haven't been able to see it? What if we're surrounded by Burning Bushes of truth and light but never stop long enough in our busy lives to acknowledge them. What if we're who scripture tells us we are but we've been conditioned not accept it. What is our true self is one of blameless innocence with absolutely no sense of guilt, suspicion, regret or accusation. One who is beautiful and full of joy, peace and love.

Romans 10:

15 "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the Gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things."

In other words, you who have seen the Gospel of a God who is love are beautiful in your walk for you bring only a message of good things to those around you, not condemnation and death.

It's there if we allow it. The church appears to be in a mess because the people are starved for truth. But the reality is that He says it is "His Church" and He is revealing that truth even now. If He hasn't already, ask Him to reveal it to you. He promises to give us the desires of our hearts. Don't be anxious, for Love makes even the weakest of us brave and strong.

2 Cor 3:18 Mirror Bible

"In Him every face is unveiled. In gazing with wonder at the blueprint of God displayed in human form, we suddenly realize we are looking into a mirror where every feature of His image, articulated in Christ, is reflected within us."

We are one in Him and therefore we now honor that truth as we "Remember" that He has redeemed us in love by His hand, not our works. We therefore nourish our bodies not with the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil but of the Tree of Life, for its fruit is the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Amen.