

RECOVERING THE GOSPEL

2 CHRONICLES 34:21 • TV-029A

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By

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2 Chronicles 34:21

“Go, enquire of the LORD for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do after all that is written in this book.”

I'm going to speak to you on the subject: **“RECOVERING THE GOSPEL.”**

Now, if you'd like to follow as I read God's Word; I invite you to turn to the book of **2 Chronicles chapter 34.**

Now the nation of Israel had departed from the true worship of the Lord. The temple was deserted and in ruins. Evil kings and evil priests had led the people of God, the Israelite nation, into idolatry and turned their hearts to covetousness, greed and sin.

Well, a young man came to power by the name of Josiah. God uses strange instruments. God moves in a mysterious way, the song writer said, “His wonders to perform.” This young man was only eight years old when he became king of Israel.

And when he was 26 years of age he ordered the temple to be restored. He ordered them to rebuild the house of God. And he ordered all the idol groves to be destroyed. And he ordered all of the evil priests to be slain.

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Well, while they were cleaning out the temple; it was in total ruin, and while they were cleaning out the temple, Hilkiah one of the priests, found a book. He dusted off that book, cleaned it up, and found it to be the Word of God, the part of Scripture written by Moses, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

He dusted it off and he brought it to the king. And they read this Bible to the king. He'd never heard the Bible read before. All he knew about the God of their fathers was what had been handed down to him, tradition and custom.

He'd never heard the Word of God read at all. And when they read this book to him; now you look at **verse 19 of 2 Chronicles 34**; this is what it said:

“And it came to pass when the king heard the words of the law, (when he heard God’s Word), he rent his clothes and he said to the priest; (now listen to this) go inquire of the Lord for me and for the people of Israel concerning the words of this book. For great is the wrath of God because our fathers have not kept nor taught us the words of this book.”

Now I could stop this message right there and you could probably complete it for me. You could make the application to our present day because you know and I know that our fathers have neglected the Word of God.

This book has been neglected. It has been lost in all of the religious ceremony and tradition and custom and foolishness that’s being carried on today in the name of God.

The most humbling and heart searching and challenging thing that we face today is to get back to the Word of God, the recovery of the Gospel, the cry of our hearts, not only men in the pulpit but men and women in the pew.

The cry of our hearts ought to be that our generation experience what these people under Josiah experienced, a return to the Word of God, a return to the Gospel, a return to the Word of God, not only in our message, but in in our message and our methods for the glory of God.

Now I’m convinced that what is called the, “Gospel” today is not the Gospel at all. I’m convinced that what is going under the title “Gospel” today is not the Gospel, but as Paul said, it is *“Another Gospel.”* And then he said, *“There’s not another.”*

This is a perversion of the Gospel. *“There’ll be those that’ll come to you preaching another Jesus, another Gospel, by another Spirit.”* And what we’re hearing today; tragedy it is for all of us is, *“another Gospel.”*

And I’m going to point out to you about five or six things that I believe are true. Now you listen carefully to them. If you want to, jot them down.

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First of all: Today's Gospel emphasizes what men should do for God and not what God must do for men! Now, did you hear what I said? Today's Gospel emphasizes what men should do for God and not what God must do for the sinner.

Now the Publican in the temple; Christ said, "*He was justified. He went home justified.*" But he was not, he was not adding up his good deeds for God as was the Pharisee but he was crying unto God to show mercy unto him. He was asking for mercy.

He was not telling God what he'd done for God and what he'd given up for God and what he'd given to God. What was he asking for? He was asking God to do something for him. He said, "*God, be merciful to me the sinner.*"

Blind Bartimaeus who sat by the wayside was not offering his services to God; he was pleading for mercy. Today's Gospel says this, "I made a decision." Paul said, "*I obtained mercy.*" Do you see the difference?

Today's Gospel says, "I accepted Jesus." Paul said, "*God accepted us in the beloved.*" Today's Gospel says, "Give God your heart." The Word of God says, "*God gave us a new heart.*" Can you see the difference?

The Scripture says, "*We love Him because, He first loved us.*" He sought us, He bought us, He called us, He quickened us, and He awakened us. It's not what we have done for God; salvation is what God has done for us.

Paul said, "*I am what I am by the grace of God.*" I'm not what I am because of what I've done; I am what I am because of what God's done, by His grace, by His mercy, through the sacrifice of His Son.

Paul writing in **1 Corinthians 1:30** says this; "*But of Him are you in Christ Jesus who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, that according as it is written; he that glorieth let him glory in the Lord.*"

Can you see the difference? I certainly can see. It's clear to me. Today's preaching, today's Gospel emphasizes what men should do for God. "Won't you do this for God?" We have made a beggar out of the King. And in reality we're the beggars. We're the ones suing for mercy. We're the ones crying for grace.

Mercy is in the hands of the Lord. He said, "*I will be merciful, I will be gracious.*"

**“Depths of mercy
Can there be
Mercy still reserved for me?
Can my God**

**His wrath forbear
And me the chief of sinners spare?
Lord be merciful to me.”**

I’m saying that what we’re listening to today, unfortunately, is not the Gospel; *“it’s another Gospel.”* And Paul said; *“Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel; let him be accursed.”*

Secondly: Today’s Gospel, emphasizes heaven and hell, not Christ and sin!

Now the message from most pulpits today is, “Wouldn’t you like to go to heaven? Wouldn’t you like, when you die, to be transported into a beautiful place whose streets are paved with gold, whose walls are made of jasper and precious stone, where the gates swing outward, never, no night there, nothing but happiness and rest and peace? Wouldn’t you like to go to heaven when you die?”

Man’s goal in religion is to somehow make it to heaven. Isn’t that the ultimate goal of most all religious people? Isn’t that what is being preached today? Paul’s desire was to, *“Win Christ and be found in Him.”*

That was his desire. That was the beat of his heart. That’s what he said; *“O that I may win Christ and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness of God which is by faith of Christ (or through faith in Christ Jesus) that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection.”*

When Paul talked about heaven it was to depart and be with Christ. *“I have a desire to depart and be with Christ which is far better.”*

My friends; you cannot give a man a title to heaven without union with Christ. You needn’t even talk about a man going to heaven without being vitally, personally, united with Jesus Christ, for Christ said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me.”*

The Lord said; *“This is eternal life; that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”*

And John wrote over in **1 John 5:11**; *“This is the record that God hath given us eternal life.”* And it’s not just a place in a beautiful city; it is a union with a living Lord. *“This is eternal life that God hath given to us. He that hath the Son of God hath life. This life is in His Son.”*

Congregations today are drenched, literally drenched, with the terrors of hell. There’s a motion picture going about now being shown in churches called, “The Burning Hell.” And they show this picture; it’s a horrible thing I’m told.

And after they show this picture they drag people down the aisle. “You don’t want to go there do you?” Well who does? “You want to go to heaven don’t you? You don’t want to go to hell do you?”

Men are made to fear hell, to flee from hell, to fear punishment, to flee from punishment, but men of old feared sin. That’s what they prayed to be delivered from. David said, *“My sins are ever before me.”*

He never said, “Hell is ever before me; my sins are ever before me. Cleanse me O God. Create within me a right spirit and a clean heart. Blessed is the man to whom God will not charge sin.”

John said, *“If we confess our sins He’s faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* I

It was sin that these people feared. It was sin that they wanted forgiven. It was sin from which they wished to be delivered. You don’t hear them talking about a fear of hell and a fear of punishment; they talked about a fear of sin.

When Paul gave his farewell message to the elders from Antioch; they brought them up there to Ephesus and he spoke to them before he left to go to Jerusalem to die. And he said, *“I’ve not shunned to declare unto you the all counsel of God. I’ve kept back nothing profitable unto you.”*

And this is my message; this is the summary of my message, *“I’ve preached unto you repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ.”* That’s the summary of the whole message, repentance and faith.

Christ came to save His people from sin. He’s not a fire escape from hell. That’s not what the Lord is. He’s not an insurance policy guaranteeing you a place in a beautiful city. He’s a living Redeemer who brings men to Himself and consequently to life eternal.

And I’m saying that the emphasis is all wrong. And when we get up before a congregation of people and make heaven the issue and hell the issue we’re not preaching the Gospel.

The issue is Christ, the issue is sin, and the message is, *“Repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ.”* And the man who has Christ has heaven. Christ came to save His people, not from hell, but from sin.

Thirdly: Now today’s Gospel (I want you to stay with me now; I may offend you but that’s all right too, but you stay with me) today’s Gospel is preached to the head and not to the heart!

That’s right; *“We’re ever learning.”* We’re a generation of intellectuals. We’re not only intellectuals in all these other fields but we’ve messed up our faith with it too. *“We’re ever learning and never coming to a knowledge of the truth.”*

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We're picking God's Word to pieces. We're trying to answer the unanswerable. We're leaving Christ and getting to these little old picky things in the Word of God and questions that have no bearing whatsoever on the need of our souls.

We talk about, "We know what we believe." Paul said, "*I know whom I have believed.*" There's a well of a lot of difference. "*I know whom I have believed.*"

The disciples were identified by the name of their Lord; they were called, "*Christians.*" Men today are identified; you know it's so and I do to, by the man whose doctrine they follow. We're Lutherans, Calvinists, Wesleyans, Presbyterians, Baptists, Catholics, and Romanists, and all these other things.

We're identified by the names of men whose doctrine we've memorized and learned and to which we adhere. The disciples were known by the name of their Lord.

Religion today is debated and argued and fought over because men's heads are full of creeds and full of doctrines and full of logic and their hearts are empty of love and mercy and grace. And our Lord condemned that very thing in the lives of the Pharisees.

He said, "*You call me Lord with your lips but your hearts are far from me.*" "That's about as close as you'll ever get to knowing Me is with your lips."

We believe in the sovereignty of God and we'll fight for it. "*Noah moved with fear.*" Do you see the difference?

We believe in the fall of man, yes we do. We believe in all of the aspects of the fall. But Paul cried, "*O wretched man that I am.*" There's a difference.

We believe in the atonement. Thomas fell on his knees at the feet of Christ and touched those precious wounds and cried, "*My Lord and my God. By His stripes I'm healed.*" That's what Isaiah believed.

And then we believe in life after death. And Paul talked about, "*I have a desire to be with Christ, to depart and be with Christ.*" We talk about life after death; he talked about being with Christ.

Christ said; "*Peter, do you love me, (not do you love my doctrine, do you love my people, do you love my church, do you love my Word, do you love the creeds) do you love me?*"

Preachers go forth today ordained by the churches. Men of old went forth sent of God, anointed of God, whether they had the blessings of men upon them or not; they went forth sent of God.

Preachers today go forth with degrees and credentials from the schools and the ceremonies. Men of old went forth in the power and unction of the Holy Ghost.

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Men today preach what folks want to hear. Back yonder, years ago, they cried, *“Thus saith the Lord.”*

Preachers today give themselves to programs, promotions, visitation, committees, and community activities. The disciples, the Scripture said, *“Gave themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word.”*

Preachers today preach and men are convinced in their heads. When Peter preached at Pentecost; *“They were pricked in their hearts.”* There’s a lot of difference.

Preachers today pray, somebody says, “and the organ plays softly.” Elijah prayed, *“And the fire of God fell.”*

Preachers today are afraid they’re going to offend somebody; Paul was afraid he wouldn’t. He called his message, *“The offense of the cross.”*

Preachers today are afraid somebody will quit church and go away and our Lord Jesus Christ turned to His 12 precious disciples and He said, *“Will you also go away?”*

I’ll tell you; salvation is a heart work and we’re going to have quit just preaching to men’s heads and minds and intellect and ask God the Holy Spirit to give us a message to reach men’s hearts.

“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus to be Lord and believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” It’s a heart work, heart work!

But today’s Gospel is a message to the head, to convince someone of our way of thinking, or to convince someone of our denominational persuasion, or to convince someone of our particular theology instead of to bring that sinner trembling to the feet of the Son of God that he might be saved.

Fourthly: Today’s Gospel calls on men to stand up and be counted!

Isn’t that right? “Stand up for Jesus. Stand up and be counted. Be a man, show your colors, and fly the flag.” The prophets of God commanded men to; *“Bow down and worship. Be still and know that I am God. The Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him.”*

One great old preacher who is long since dead said this; “The two-fold message of evangelism is this, all flesh is grass and behold your God.” That’s the two-fold message. How long has it been since you’ve heard it, all flesh, all the dignity and the glory of man is as of the grass of the field that withereth and dieth.

“Behold sinner your God.” It’s a message which takes away the so-called glory of man and gives all the glory to God. Paul actually called the Gospel, *“The Gospel of God’s glory.”* That’s what he called it. That’s how he identified it, *“The Gospel of God’s glory.”*

If you want to identify your Gospel; what would you call it? How would you identify it, “*The Gospel of God’s glory*” or the Gospel of your glory or the church’s glory, or the denominational glory, or man’s glory? It’s God’s glory.

And the results of this kind of preaching; I’ll tell you what it’ll be; the results of this kind of preaching, the preaching of God’s grace, not what you do for God, but what He does for you through Christ, in Christ; this Gospel that reaches the heart and not the head only, this Gospel of God’s grace to helpless sinners; I’ll tell you what will happen.

There will be an awful sense of the presence of God breaking the hearts of sinners and bringing them trembling to the feet of Christ crying for mercy.

And gone, gone, will be the voice of that proud sinner and I’ve seen them so many times standing in the back of the church debating whether or not they’ll patronize the Son of God, debating whether or not they’ll recognize the Saviour.

“Christ is knocking at my heart’s door. Shall I bid Him enter or shall I bid Him to depart?” Gone will be the cry of the proud sinner who says, “Shall I let God save me,” and instead we’ll hear the heart-breaking sob of a broken hearted sinner crying:

**“Depths of mercy
Can there be (That’s one of Charles Wesley’s greatest hymns)
Mercy still reserved for me?
Can my God
His wrath forbear
And me the chief of sinners spare?”**

Today’s Gospel and today’s preaching, is a Gospel that calls on men to stand up and be counted. And the glory of the church use to be the presence of the Lord. The glory of the church use to be the power of the Holy Spirit. The glory of the church use to be, “*Where two or three are gathered in my name; there I will be in their midst. I will be with them.*”

But the glory of the church now is what, the height of its steeple, the size of its building, and the numbers of people in the Sunday school? The church today will do anything under the sun to get a crowd, just anything in the world.

And I believe if we were truthful that we would write outside of most of these buildings frequented by people playing church Sunday after Sunday and ministers who are fearful to preach, “*Thus saith the Lord*” and seek to please the desires of the people; we’d write on the outside of these buildings: “*Ichabod, Ichabod, the glory of God has departed.*”

“*Somebody inquire of the Lord.*” Josiah told them to rebuild the temple; “*We’re going back to the worship of God almighty.*” And old Hilkiah the priest in cleaning out that temple; he found the Book of God.

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I wish some preachers, deacons, elders, and Sunday school teachers would not just take quarterlies and Sunday school literature and what somebody said and what somebody told them to say but they'd go and find this old book and dust it off and open it up like Hilkiah the priest and take it to the pastor, take it to the preacher, and say; "Look; we've found the book. Our fathers have sinned against us. Our fathers have sinned against the Lord. Our fathers have departed from the Word of God. We've found God's Word. Listen to what it says."

And Josiah the king sat on that throne there and he listened to that man read that book and he tore his clothes; *"He rent his clothes in anguish and agony and he said to the priest, go and require of the Lord. Surely God's wrath is against His people for our fathers have sinned against God and sinned against us in departing from the words of this book. Go and inquire of the Lord. It may be that there'll be mercy for us."*

I don't know; it may be too late. We may have compromised the Word of God so long it may be too late. The measure of a cup of God's wrath might be full. There may be nothing for this generation; I don't know.

Old Jonah went down there to Nineveh; he preached to them and the king of Nineveh called the people together and he said: *"Everybody put on sackcloth and ashes and let's cry unto God. It may be that God will repent of the evil that He has decreed to pour out upon us."*

It may be that God will show mercy; I don't know. But some of us are going to have to get on our knees and we're going to have to open the Book. And some preachers are going to have to get off the streets and get back in their studies and start opening the Word of God and say; "Lord, whatever it costs and whatever confusion it causes and whatever I have to suffer."

You remember they wouldn't let John Wesley preach in his home church. He came back home after he made a trip to America and they wouldn't let him in the churches, over there in the churches of England. They wouldn't let him preach in the pulpit.

So what did he do? He went out and got on his daddy's tombstone and stood there and preached the Gospel of Christ. And I'll tell you this; if I have to preach on my daddy's tombstone, if I have to preach to five people or four people or two people or just preach to my family; I'm going to preach the Gospel.

Paul said, *"Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel."* I would to God, like old Josiah, that somebody would inquire the Lord. It may be, it may be in His providence, it may be in His purpose, it may be in His divine plan, that there's still some mercy reserved for this generation. But we're going to have recovery of the Gospel.

God's not going to bless error. He's not going to bless lies. He's not going to bless a misrepresentation of His Word. He's not going to bless us presenting a false, false picture of Him.

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He's going to bless that Gospel that is of the glory of God. It's not what sinners do for God; it's what God does for sinners, that Gospel that has to do with Christ and sin, that Gospel that has to do with the heart, that Gospel that tells men to bow down in the dust and cry with Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus, "*Lord, what will you have me do?*"

Is there somewhere a prophet or a preacher or a man who feels called of God who has the boldness and courage and care for his own soul? "*We preach as those who must give an account*" and care for the souls of His people who dares to go back to the Book, back to the Book.

And if it's offensive, if it makes men glad or makes them mad; He's going to preach, "*Thus saith the Lord and the Lord will add to the church such as should be saved,*" not our ingathering's but His out callings!