

Acts 26:20

But shewed.... that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

The true gospel is primarily a call to repent and believe in Christ for our salvation. To repent, presupposes straight away that we are sinners who need to turn from their sin and cry to God for mercy:

Luke 18:13

God be merciful to me a sinner.

THIS is the gospel. It is a gospel of God's grace, not a gospel of self-help. With the true gospel, we need to see our own inability to respond and our need of a Saviour to save us from our sins. Once we understand this, we will never boast about ourselves ever again:

Romans 3:27

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

If this false gospel was true, then when we get to heaven, we can always say that the difference between us being in heaven and our neighbour being in hell is that we "chose" Christ and our neighbour didn't. That is boasting, and so can't be the true gospel.

This false gospel is leading people further away from the true gospel and from seeing their real need of a Saviour. We all ought to see our sin for what it is, and flee from the wrath to come by embracing our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as the only Saviour from sin. Only then will boasting be excluded, when we realise that salvation is by grace alone:

Ephesians 2:8,9

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

We are born in sins, and conceived in iniquity:

Ephesians 2:1

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.

Psalms 51:5

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

No matter what we do, we can't get free from our bondage to our sin. We certainly can't "choose" to stop sinning at all, it is impossible! But once the Lord changes the heart, we are free indeed!

John 8:36

If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

The Do-it-Yourself Gospel

There is a false gospel being presented in many churches today, which we need to be aware of. It is not just a different way of preaching the gospel, but a completely different message altogether, and needs to be exposed as such, not least because it leads people into a false sense of security.

The way this "gospel" is presented is as follows: First of all, we are told that we need to "choose" or "decide" to follow Christ. Many Christians mistake this call for the true call of the gospel, which is to repent and believe in Christ for salvation, but the preachers of this message mean no such thing. Repentance and salvation in someone other than ourselves, are alien concepts to them. All the preacher means by "deciding to follow Jesus," is choosing to follow Christ's teachings. That is it. It is just a decision we make ourselves to stop following other teachings any more and to begin to follow the teachings of Christ instead, just as we may "decide" to follow the teachings of Buddha or Confucius or some other man. This "decision" involves no heart change, no repentance, and no salvation in a Saviour.

Once we have "chosen" to follow Christ, we are immediately told that now we are a Christian, so consequently all our sins past, present and future, are instantly forgiven and we can relax, because Christ has already dealt with them. We don't need to think about sin any more, and should not let it ever bother us again. In fact it is a sin to think about sin at all from now on. We must instead think positively,

and have a sense of self-worth, self-acceptance and confidence in ourselves.

This is nothing else but modern humanistic psychology dressed up in religious clothing, and it is the complete opposite of true Christianity, which should rather produce humility, meekness and self-abasement. It is no wonder that the preachers of such a message appear so proud and self-confident.

If we really should not let sin bother us any more, then we get further and further away from seeing our real need of a Saviour. This message leads people away from the true gospel, not closer to it.

But it doesn't stop there. Now we have "chosen" to follow Christ, we must in future make sure that we "choose" to live by every one of His precepts, taking each one in turn. So, in every decision we have to make, we must ask ourselves, "What would Jesus do?" We must "choose" to stop lying and "decide" to tell the truth. We must "choose" to stop cheating people and "decide" to live honestly, etc. etc. Notice that everything is done by ourselves, there is no concept of our need of a new heart and of the Holy Spirit to perform these things in us at all.

The whole point of real Christianity is that we can't do these things by ourselves, we need a Saviour to do it for us. The gospel is not that we should stop sinning and become righteous by our own effort, because we can't. The gospel is that we need the Lord to save us from our sins that we can't get rid of ourselves, and then for the Lord to work righteousness from within us by giving us a new heart. Only then can we truly serve the Lord, and not

before. By nature, we can't "choose" anything, except sin. We must be born again:

John 3:3
Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

We need a new heart:

Ezekiel 18:31
Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

This is something that we can't do ourselves, it is the gift of God:

Ezekiel 36:26,27
A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

The Biblical gospel is therefore completely different from this humanistic way of preaching.

Here are some examples from the Bible of how we should present the gospel:

Matthew 3:17
Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Matthew 16:24
If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Matthew 18:3
Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Luke 13:3 and 5
Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Acts 2:38,39
Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

Acts 3:19
Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

Acts 16:31
Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

Acts 17:30,31
God... now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Acts 20:21
Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.