

Why Promote the Gospel? - Part 2

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Date: 10 June 2012

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[0 : 00] Some years ago my wife Michelle and I had the opportunity to visit her brother in Sweden for his wedding. We hired a car and had to head off early one morning before there was much traffic on the road actually.

And I remember as we were driving up over a crest another semi-trail was coming in the opposite direction, down the crest of the hill.

And as we got closer I thought, what is this guy doing? He's heading straight for us. And so I started to flash my lights at him and then he just simply flashed his lights back.

And the closer and closer I got, the more and more scared we were getting. And then suddenly Michelle goes, you're on the outside of the road! And I quickly swerved to the other side of the road.

I'd forgotten you see that in Sweden you drive on the other side of the road. And we had just missed a big Volvo truck. I know it's a Volvo because I got a real good look at it. And I actually thanked Michelle for yelling at me that time.

[1 : 06] No, that's just a joke. It doesn't normally yell at me. But what would you do if you saw someone in danger? A child reaching for a hot cup of coffee?

Or a car reversing in a car park about to hit another car behind them that I haven't seen? Or at an indoor pool where a toddler crawls towards the edge of the pool while the mother is unaware?

There's three situations that I've been in not too long ago. And assuming you were close enough and able to say something, would you? Today we're going to continue our series in promoting the Gospel.

And again, we're considering the question, why? Why promote the Gospel? Last week, as Matt reminded us at the beginning of the service, the fundamental reason the Bible gives for promoting the Gospel is so that people will become Christians and give Jesus the honour he deserves.

Because he is Lord of all people, whether they realise it or not. And so that was the big reason. This week we're going to cover a little bit more territory and we're going to look at three related reasons why we should promote the Gospel.

[2 : 09] The first one will be the longest and is point one on the outline. We're going to promote the Gospel because people are in danger. Now, I know you know this, but we need to be reminded of this reality because it's not politically correct to believe it or even talk about it.

And so society and even some churches today actually deny God's judgement, deny the fact that people are headed for hell. And we, well, we all too often simply forget all about it or simply forget how real this reality is.

And so let's have a look at the Bible reading, what it says. So you've got two Thessalonians open there, chapter one. Here Paul describes the destination of those who don't believe. In verses three to four, he thanks God for the faith of the Thessalonian Christians who have been persecuted for their faith.

And then in verse five and six, he says this. He says, this is evidence of the righteous judgement of God and is intended to make you worthy of the kingdom of God for which you are also suffering.

For it is indeed just of God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, it says. Paul says all this, verse five, that is their faith under fire from the first couple of verses is evidence of God's judgement.

[3 : 29] It's evidence that God's judgement is right, in other words. That is because people were persecuting them, then it shows God's judgement is necessary. It is warranted. People persecute others, people afflict others and cause trouble.

And so God is indeed just to pay them back for their wrongdoing. He is indeed just to pay back people for what they have done. Now I know some people don't like the idea of God's judgement.

God's love is a much nicer concept. But the thing we need to remember is that God's love means he must judge. I mean, would it be loving for a judge in a human court to let all the criminals go free?

Is that loving? Oh, you've killed someone, that's okay, don't worry, you've had a hard week, that's alright. We'll let you go. Don't worry about the family getting justice, you go and enjoy your day.

Is that loving? Of course not. In the end, God's love demands God's justice, you see. It demands he gives all people what they deserve and that, unfortunately, includes us too.

[4 : 32] Unless we believe in Jesus, who took that punishment in our place. And so if we believe in Jesus, we can escape the punishment we deserve for doing wrong.

And instead, we can find relief. See verse 7? He says he's not only going to pay back those who have done wrong, but, and to us, he's going to give relief to the afflicted, as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.

You see, when Jesus returns, God will judge. There will be payback for those who do not believe and have done wrong and ignored God, but to us who believe, who have perhaps even suffered for the gospel.

Well, there will be relief. And what a great relief that will be. People in Sudan who are Christians are suffering incredibly for their faith.

This verse is a great verse of comfort for them, for they will find relief. You see, there are two sides to God's judgment, punishment or relief.

[5 : 35] And it all depends on whether you know Jesus. See verses 8 to 10? He says that Jesus will be with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

These will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes to be glorified by his saints and to be marveled at on that day among all who have believed, because of our testimony to you was believed.

He's saying that which includes you because you've believed the gospel. You see, what he's saying here is it all depends on whether you, what he says, obey the gospel. What is the gospel message?

Well, repent and believe in Jesus. So in other words, to obey the gospel is to believe in Jesus. And whether or not we believe in Jesus determines whether we find punishment or relief.

A few months ago, the Roman Catholic Cardinal of Sydney, George Pell, appeared on an ABC TV show called Q&A.; You may have heard of it. It was during the rounds on Facebook and things like that.

[6 : 41] And he said that an atheist can go to heaven because hell is only for really bad people like Hitler. It doesn't matter what you believe. It just, you know, hell is just bad people.

Atheists can go to heaven. That's not what God is saying, is it? No. No. God says for those who ignore God, who don't know God, who don't obey the gospel, which is to believe in Jesus as king and savior.

Well, for those people, verse 9, they will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction. It's pretty clear, isn't it? And that's a terrible picture, isn't it? I mean, the destruction of people is never nice.

And the only relief is that it ends. But this doesn't. It's eternal. And this destruction includes being shut out of the presence of the Lord Jesus.

Now, the idea here is that hell is separation of fellowship from Jesus. The separation from God's blessings. Some people say hell is complete separation from God. It's not exactly right because God is still in control of everything, including hell.

[7 : 45] But it is certainly separation from a relationship with God in a right sense, from his blessings, from fellowship with him. I remember back in my uni days, I used to work at Macca's.

I was a Macca's boy. Don't knock it. I used the money to save up for Michelle's engagement ring. So I did good. And some guys used to tell stories about what they got up to on the weekend.

You know, how much they drank or what silly things they did. One guy stole a set of traffic lights and hooked them up in his bedroom. You know, all kinds of silly stuff. And if they heard it, if they did something really bad, one of the mates would go, Oh, that's bad.

You're going to hell for that one. To which this one guy said, Sean, his name was, said, That's all right. All my mates will be there anyway. But they won't be.

Friendship, mateship, that's a good thing. All good things come from God. And hell is the separation from all the good things that come from God, all his blessings.

[8 : 43] That includes mateship. Hell is terrible. A terrible place. And perhaps one of the most terrifying pictures of hell is from Revelation chapter 14. Just come with me.

You're going to do a bit of Bible flicking tonight. But it'll be good for you. Revelation chapter 14, page 1003.

Here we are giving a picture of God's final judgment on all those who have rejected him. Let me just read to you from verses 14 to 20. He says, He says, He says, He says, He says, He says,

That's about 200 miles, over 300 kilometers. See what it's saying? God's wrath, God's judgment. Blood flowing from the height of the horse's neck for 320 kilometers.

Especially glad you came to church tonight, aren't you? But you see, this is where people are headed, without Jesus. And it's real.

[10 : 51] And it's really bad. Surely this is motivation enough to promote the gospel. And if you are someone here tonight who does not believe in Jesus, then please, please reconsider.

So you don't end up here. Now for some of us here, we may be thinking that this is too excessive and too harsh. But we need to remember three things.

First, God is in the end giving people what they want anyway. If they want a life without a right relationship with Him, then He'll give them that. The problem is, a life without a right relationship with God means hell.

But He's giving them what they want. Second, we need to remember that God is just, which means some will suffer more than others in hell, but all deserve to be there. He is simply giving people what they deserve.

Third, if we think this is more than they deserve, then could it be because we've forgotten how harshly we've treated God? Or could it be because we've underestimated how dreadfully sinful sin is, and therefore how utterly deserving of judgment we are?

[12 : 02] Now Matt made us pull out the prayer book tonight. Mate, that wasn't the real prayer book. This is the 1662. This is the real deal that the 8 o'clockers use.

It's written by a guy called Kremler. Let me know, read to you. He got the seriousness of sin, because he writes, this is a prayer, O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.

Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer. And on it goes. He got. It was so important, didn't he?

Sin is serious. And he's so thankful for Jesus, who takest away the sins of the world. So finally, we need to remember the seriousness of sin and how deserving of judgment it is.

But I want to suggest a fourth thing. The fourth thing, we need to remember that God does not delight in judgment. On the screen, on the next slide, which will come up, is a verse from Ezekiel chapter 33.

[13 : 05] Next slide. It says this, As surely as I live, declares the sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live.

Turn, turn from your evil ways. Why will you die, O house of Israel? And on the next slide, it's from Isaiah. It says, The Lord will rise up to judge, this is the context, as he did at Mount Perzim.

He will rouse himself as in the Valley of Gibeon to do his work, his strange work, and perform his task of judgment, his alien task. That is, God's work of judgment is not what naturally comes to him.

It's his alien work, his strange work. It's alien to his character. For me, house work is alien to my character. It's not what naturally comes to me, but I still have to do it.

And for God, judgment is not what naturally comes to him, but he too must do it, in order to be just, you see. In fact, because he doesn't like to judge, he sent his son to take the judgment in our place, and to save sinners.

[14 : 13] That's why Jesus came, which brings us to point two. And Jesus came to seek, and to save, and Luke 19. So, please, flick with me to Luke chapter 19, in the Bibles, page 854.

Now, this is a pretty well-known story of Zacchaeus, that Alison referenced before.

Most people have heard of this story of Zacchaeus, or as my son likes to call him, Zacchaeus. He was short in stature, both physically and socially, because he was a tax collector, and so people hated him.

Yet, in verse 3, he desperately wants to see Jesus. The man he'd heard so much about, so in verse 4, as we heard, he climbs a sycamore tree to see, but he gets more than he bargains for, doesn't he?

Instead of just getting a glimpse of Jesus, he gets the privilege of hosting Jesus, which would have been a great honor, in those days, at his house. Let's pick up at Luke chapter 19, verse 5.

[15 : 23] Verse 5, When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today. So he hurried down, and was happy to welcome him, it says.

In verse 7, All who saw it began to grumble and said, He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner. You see, Jesus says here, I must stay with you, Zacchaeus.

Come down, I must stay with you. Why must he stay with Zacchaeus? Is it because he's got great food? Of course not. The answer actually comes out in verse 10.

Verse 10, Jesus must stay with Zacchaeus, because what's he come to do? Well, he's come to seek, and to save, the lost, like Zacchaeus, sinners like him.

And that's why he must stay with Zacchaeus. And look at how Zacchaeus responds. Our English translation says he's happy or glad to welcome Jesus, but the original Greek word means with rejoicing.

[16 : 24] Zacchaeus is cheering that Jesus is coming over for dinner. It was a real privilege to host someone as important as him. We think it's nice to go to other people's place, because we don't have to cook and we get free food and stuff like that.

In those days, it was actually reverse. The honor was for the host, and he got to host Jesus. But everyone else can't believe it, could they? They were muttering. And because of Jesus' love for him, that he would want to have fellowship with this man, an outcast, well, Zacchaeus responds with repentance and faith.

So in verse 8, we read this. Verse 8, Zacchaeus stood up there and said to the Lord, Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor.

And if I have to afford anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much, he says. Now, it seems somewhere between verse 7 and verse 8, we've kind of moved from the tree in the street to Zacchaeus' home.

And he stands up there, perhaps with others looking through the windows, trying to figure out what Jesus is doing in the sinner's house, and watching Jesus, as they often did as well. And here Zacchaeus stands up and says, I'm going to give back four times what I've afforded anyone, what I've stolen from anyone.

[17 : 36] Why four times, by the way? Well, because that's what the Old Testament law demanded of those who have stolen from others. And so what it shows us here is a genuine repentance. And presumably, he trusted in Jesus then, this Jesus whom he'd heard so much about.

For even though we're not explicitly told he trusted in Jesus, we are told in verse 9, then Jesus said to him, today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham.

For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost. You see, Zacchaeus is saved. Salvation has come to his house. And as verse 10 indicates, this episode of Zacchaeus shows us why Jesus came to seek and to save those in very real danger.

And a week later, he then went to the cross to suffer God's judgment for our sin in our place so that we and others can be saved from it. And so we are to promote the gospel not only because people are in danger, but because now there's a way to escape from this danger, to be saved from it.

And so we have something that is worth sharing, you see. We have an antidote or an escape plan that works. In other words, we're not wasting our time in doing what we can to promote the gospel for Jesus came to seek and save people in danger.

[18 : 56] For he too does not desire the death of a sinner. In fact, if you just skip over to verse 41 for a moment, same chapter, verse 41, at the bottom of the right-hand side of the page, verse 41, Jesus is way into Jerusalem and we read here, as Jesus came near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, if you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace, but now they are hidden from your eyes.

Indeed, the days will come upon you when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you and henry wing on every side. They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God.

You see, Jesus weeps because he knows where these people in Jerusalem are headed, these people who have rejected him. Now, the judgment here probably refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD by the Romans, but it points to a greater judgment, doesn't it, of hell for those who reject Jesus like the Jews did then.

But Jesus loves them so much that he weeps over their dreadful destination. And the word for wept in verse 41 refers to more than a couple of tears. It refers to full on wailing.

I remember speaking with a godly Christian man who was going on holidays. He was flying out from Sydney airport and heading up to the Gold Coast. And as he flew out he looked down in Sydney. The airport's right in the middle so you can see all these houses and cars and everything below you.

[20 : 32] And he was telling me that as he looked down watching people busily going about their lives his eyes actually started to well up. because as he looked down the first thing that came into his mind was look how many are headed for hell because they don't know Jesus.

Now I'm not suggesting that we ought to weep every time we see one Christian who'd be so emotionally exhausted we couldn't be able to do anything else. But I am suggesting that to follow Jesus is to share something of his love and concern for the lost.

And to follow Jesus is to remember that people without him are headed for very real danger. And so to follow Jesus is to do what we can to seek and save the lost which brings us to our final point point three in our last passage 1 Corinthians 10.

So it's the last one please turn there 1 Corinthians chapter 10 page 932. Doing well. We're going to pick up at verse 31 which is the last paragraph of the chapter.

So 1 Corinthians chapter 10 starting at verse 31. Paul writes Here Paul says whether you eat or drink certain food this is the summary to his chapter on certain foods that they were arguing about whether you could eat and so he's saying in the end whatever you do whether you eat or drink these certain things whatever you do should be governed by three simple principles.

[22 : 29] First one is verse 31 he says do everything for the glory of God. It's pretty clear isn't it? The second governing principle is verse 32 he says give no offence to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God.

Now when he says not to give offence he's not talking about being polite although we should be polite he's really saying don't cause others to stumble from salvation in other words talking about stumbling.

He said the Corinthians were eating certain foods in pagan temples which seems to have caused some Christians to turn from Christ back to idols and in so doing it caused them to stumble from Christ.

You see it was a salvation issue and so we had to make sure in everything we do that we don't cause people to turn away from Jesus. That's the second governing principle. The third governing principle really is just the flip side of that second one.

That is don't cause people to stumble from salvation instead do anything you can to help people to salvation. See verse 33 just as I try to please everyone in everything I do not seeking my own advantage but that of many so that they may be saved.

[23 : 46] Why are we to do all this? Because it's part of what it means to be a Christian. Chapter 11 verse 1 Be imitators of me as I am of Christ.

You see seeking to save those in danger is not an optional extra for us Christians. It's not an optional app we can download from the Christian life for the Christian life.

You know oh look I'll download and I'll take eternal life for sure. A bit of prayer I'll download that app for my life but not too much prayer because it's a bit too hard to do we don't want to go too excessive I don't want sore knees.

Seeking to save sinners yeah I might pass on that one that app's a bit too expensive why do they even have it at the iChrist store anyway? And so it goes. It's not an optional extra like apps are on our phones or iPads or whatever.

It's what it means to be a Christian. It's part of what it means to be a Christian. It's part of what it means to love your neighbour as yourself. There's a pretty famous pair of magicians in the US they're called Penn and Teller I'm not sure if you've ever heard of them before I wrote a picture of them I think they wrote a picture of Penn and Teller there they are and after one show Penn which is the tall one he was given a bible by someone who was in the audience the night before and he came back to give the bible to him.

[25 : 05] Now Penn is an atheist he doesn't believe in God but he recognises this man was trying to convert him or in Penn's words proselytize which just means trying to convert but look at how Penn responds let's see if the clip works well you were wonderful I believe he knew that I was an atheist but he was truly complimenting in any way it didn't seem like empty Friday he was really kind and nice and sane and looked me in the eyes and talked to me and then gave me this bible and I've already said you know that I don't respect people who don't proselytize I respect that at all if you believe that there's a heaven and hell and people could be going to hell or not getting eternal life or whatever and you think that well it's not even worth telling him this because he would make it socially awkward and atheists who think that people shouldn't proselytize just leave their life keep your religion to yourself how much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize how much do you have to hate somebody to believe whatever lasting life is possible and not tell them that if I believed we ought to shut up without that a truck was coming with you and you wouldn't believe it that truck was buried by there's a certain point where I tackle you and this is more important than that and I always thought that if I written about that

I thought it conceptually this guy is a really good guy he was polite and honest and sane and he cared enough about me to proselytize and give me a Bible now I know there's no God and one polite person living his life doesn't change that and I tell you he's a very very good man he's clearly impacted isn't he by this good man who loved him enough to say something well not even say anything just to give him a Bible he was an atheist who doesn't even believe in God and he is saying that if we don't do what we can to share Jesus then it's incredibly unloving he says how much do you have to hate them not to share with them you see to love our neighbor as yourself or to love whomever you have contact with means to seek their good and that means not just collecting the mail when they're away or dropping in meals when they're sick it includes that as well for sure but it also means seeking their ultimate good being saved from hell and headed for heaven now how are we to seek and save what is my part how can I play a part well keep coming back for the next two weeks and we're going to look at some ways from the

Bible at that but we are at the very least to keep praying for those non-Christians we know we are at the very least to spend time with them to build friendships with them help them and do what we can to share Jesus with them that we may see them saved a friend of mine called Mike became a Christian when he was a teenager and slowly drifted away from his non-Christian friends he got more and more involved in the church as you do and as he got more involved in the church he had less time for his non-Christian friends and so on and so on and he realised one day I've got no non-Christian friends now how am I going to share Jesus with non-Christians if I don't even know any non-Christians and so he started a soccer team and invited some of his old mates along he got on quite well with one guy in particular called Adam and his wife that is Mike and his wife had Adam and his girlfriend over at the time and slowly bit by bit took the opportunities to talk about

Jesus and now Adam is a Christian and so is his wife who's now his fiancée soon to be married because of their Christian beliefs now it won't always work out like that but the point is Mike realized that to share the gospel means you got to have relationships with non-Christians and so he took the time to connect with non-Christians because he knew they were in danger and we are to do what we can to do the same so we need to seek and save the lost and we can do this with a profound sense of thankfulness for we too were once in danger but for the grace of God we now have eternal life and so we are to promote the gospel firstly because people are in danger secondly because Jesus came to seek and save so there's an answer we're sharing and thirdly because following Jesus means doing what we can to see others saved we're to have Christ's mind when it comes to these people in danger as Paul wrote

I do not seek my own advantage but that of many so that they may be saved be imitators of me as I am of Christ let's pray our gracious heavenly father we do thank you for the gospel of Jesus we thank you that it does