

Good News For Sinners 01
It's Really About Good News
By Bill Denton

INTRODUCTION

A. People do not always find Christianity a positive experience

1. Some hear a message of moral and behavioral reform
2. Some hear a message of duty and obligation
3. Some hear a message of austerity and loss
4. There are possibly other things that people hear that leads them to believe something strange about Christianity – it's anything but good news!

B. At times, even good efforts are slightly off the mark, and end up communicating things we don't intend to say

1. One example is the HBRCB formula – hear, believe, repent, confess, be baptized
2. We've even called this the gospel of Jesus
 - a. the problem is that it all sounds like something I need to do – I need to hear, I need to believe, I need to repent, I need to be baptized
 - b. actually, that may all be true, but the problem is the focus
 - c. if the focus of Christian faith is what I have to do, then at some point a person is left wondering where the good news is

C. During the month of July, I'm going to present a series titled, "Good News For Sinners"

1. It's not all about a demand for people to reform themselves into something better
 - a. reform certainly happens because of the gospel
 - b. but we're not talking about another "shape yourself up" concept
 - c. that message is plentiful elsewhere
2. It's not about a new philosophy for life
 - a. it is true that Christianity teaches a wonderful philosophy of life
 - b. but we're not talking about another in a long line of religious and non-religious philosophies
 - c. if it's philosophy you want, you can pick and choose from thousands
3. It's not about deciding to follow a different religion
 - a. yes, the Christian faith is a distinct religion
 - b. but we're not talking about simply changing one's religion
 - c. people do that all the time, choosing from among thousands of religions
4. We're going to talk about good news for sinners – a message we need to relearn ourselves and then share with others

I. BE ABLE TO RECOGNIZE GOOD NEWS

A. It appears that some of us don't know how to recognize good news

1. We're charged in the great commission passages to preach the gospel to the whole world, to teach people the good news
2. Then all we focus on is the bad news
 - a. I've said before that good news is really only good, when the bad news is really bad
 - b. but that doesn't mean we have to continue to pound people with the bad news
3. The bad news is that we're all sinners
 - a. it's important that every person be able to recognize their sins – not the other guy's sins, but their own
 - b. it's important that people understand the consequence of sin
 - c. sin leaves us separated from God, estranged from God, condemned by God
 - d. there's nothing good about sin

B. But if you listen to some people, they never get off the message of condemning sin and showing people where they are wrong in their thinking, feeling and behaving

1. There is certainly a need to know and understand these things
2. But I want you to know this isn't the focus of our message

C. We need to be able to recognize good news

1. Let me illustrate with an imaginary lady by the name of Mabel
2. Mabel wasn't feeling well, so she went to the doctor and tests showed some kind of mass in her lower abdomen
 - a. the first thought was cancer – she thought it, as did her doctor, her children, her friends, her neighbors, and the folks at church
 - b. she asked for prayers, and for a couple of weeks, everyone prayed that Mabel would be OK
 - c. she underwent more tests, all of which were inconclusive, so she was scheduled for surgery
 - d. when she woke up, her doctor came into her room with a big smile on his face
 - e. “good news, Mabel,” he said – “it's not cancer”
3. Let's illustrate with another story that could happen anywhere
 - a. Teresa left her 2 year old daughter playing in the yard for just a minute while she ran into the house to answer the phone
 - b. when she came out, the little girl was gone
 - c. police, neighbors, volunteers combed the neighborhood to no avail
 - d. good news came a few hours later – she was found, safe and unharmed

4. Let's illustrate another way
 - a. Thomas had been unemployed for months, since losing his job in one of the corporate downsizing moves
 - b. like many families, they were already stretched financially and the unemployment compensation didn't cover all the bills
 - c. each month the family had cut back more and more, but now it looked like they would lose their home
 - d. Thomas had been everywhere looking for work, but he found none
 - e. A meeting was scheduled for later in the week at which time the mortgage company would probably foreclose on the house since there was no prospect of income any time soon
 - f. then the phone rang, and a company Thomas had applied to several weeks earlier was calling with a job offer
 - g. good news!

D. Good news comes in lots of different forms

1. Health, a job, safe return of lost children – you name it
2. Most of us could list any number of times we got some good news
 - a. sometimes it's big news (like in our illustration)
 - b. sometimes it's not huge, but still good
3. Only in the area of Christian faith do we sometimes seem unable to recognize good news, or if we are able, we seem to minimize it and treat it as if it were unimportant

E. Nothing is bigger, more important, or better than the good news of Jesus Christ

II. WHAT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT

A. I've had many different responses when I've asked people what the good news of Jesus Christ is

1. Sometimes people look at me funny as if to say, "What kind of question is that?"
2. Sometimes they do that quick "look away" as if they're trying to figure out whether I'm trying to trick them up
3. Sometimes they answer with some stock "church" or "Sunday School" answer
 - a. "the first four books of the New Testament"
 - b. "hear, believe, repent, confess, and be baptized"
 - c. "Jesus"
 - d. ask "what's the gospel" – answer "good news"
 - e. ask "what's the good news – answer "gospel"
4. I'm not suggesting there is only one correct way to answer, but I am saying that we need to be able to put into words what the good news is

B. Let's focus on two of many verses where the Bible uses the word "gospel"

1. **2 Timothy 1:8-10 (NAS)** —

8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, **9** who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, **10** but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

2. **1 Corinthians 15:1-4 (NAS)** —

1 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, **2** by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which 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 according to the Scriptures, **4** and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

4. The word gospel

a. comes from the Greek word (euangelion) meaning "good news"

b. but "good news" is actually used in several different ways in the Bible

- 1) Mt 4:23 – Jesus preached a message of good news of the kingdom
- 2) Mt 11:5 – Jesus quoted from Isaiah a statement about the poor having the gospel preached to them
- 3) Mk 1:1 – we're introduced to the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God
- 4) Mk 16:15 – the gospel was a message for the whole world
- 5) Lk 3:16-18 – John the Baptist preached about judgment and reward which Luke described as the gospel

c. there are several other examples where the context determines a particular way the word gospel or "good news" is used

5. But generally speaking, gospel or good news carries an idea associated with forgiveness of sins, salvation, and eternal life

a. 2 Tim 1:8ff

- 1) we're saved and called with a holy calling
- 2) it's not by our works that happened
- 3) it's according to God's own purpose and grace granted in Christ
- 4) he abolished death and brought life and immortality to light

- b. 1 Cor 15:1ff
 - 1) again, we're saved by the gospel
 - 2) the content of the message has to do with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus

CONCLUSION

A. An evangelist is somebody who proclaims good news

1. I want you to know that Jesus died on a cross for you
 - a. he became the perfect sacrifice for sin
 - b. not just any sins, but your sins
2. Jesus was buried in a grave, but he rose from the dead to give you life
 - a. he can cleanse you from your sins
 - b. he can give you the gift of eternal life
3. It's good news to know that none of this depends on you achieving something great or good – it's good news that comes to you through Jesus
4. You don't have to let sin destroy you
 - a. you can be forgiven
 - b. you can be free from the power and consequence of sin
 - c. you can look forward to an eternal home with God and your Lord and Savior
5. Somebody says, "Yes, but you don't know how many sins I've got or how bad they are"
 - a. to which I say, "I've got good news for you"
 - b. Jesus can forgive the worst of sinners

B. This really is the good news

1. We sometimes get so caught up in things we forget what the good news is
2. If we do our job right, this is what people will hear from us

C. Invitation