

CCB TEACHING /SUMMER 2011: 03 July 2011 – NK @ CCB KINGS HALL; ‘THE MESSAGE’ – WHAT THE GOSPEL IS: SUMMARY / OUTLINE: 1 COR 15:1 – 5a

The Message is.. the offer of good news for people about Jesus --

It is Delivered in words (1a). And it is Received in words (1b). The Message is Reliable (1c). If you trust it, it will Rescue you..(2) Because – it is grounded in Christ (3, 4); it is rooted in Scripture (3, 4); and it is founded on Fact (5 – 11)

The Message has Content; the Message is Trustworthy; the Message is Good for Salvation; the Message is a Matter of Priority; the Message is Grounded in Christ; the Message is Rooted in Scripture; the Message is Recorded in History because the Message is Based on Fact.

1. THE MESSAGE COMES AS AN OFFER IN WORDS (1a, b)

Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the Gospel I preached to you, which you received; and on which you have taken your stand. (15:1)

What Paul does here, at the end of his letter, is what he had in mind from the start. The Gospel was not welcome in Corinth. Its people were materialistic idolatrous and immoral. So he arrives in trepidation. Still, some had responded: now, he brings to their minds (those who were Christians) what it was that they had committed themselves to: ... **the Gospel** ..(to *euaggelion*) the *announcement of good news* **preached** (*euaggelisamen*) **to you** (15:1a).

Paul here uses 2 words with the same basic meaning - the verb translated ‘*preach*’ deriving from the noun – translated ‘*Gospel*’. He makes a verb out of the noun – literally he is ‘*good-news-ing*’ the ‘*good news*’. Now, in English, we have a cluster of words with this single idea: *to announce* or *proclaim*; going to the heart of *who we are* theologically – ‘*evangelical*’; derived from *what we do* – ‘*evangelism*’; which is based on the ‘*evangel*’ –the good news that Jesus brings to people.

In other words, who we are & what we do is derived from the good news of the Gospel: that Jesus comes to rescue people. This is our Message.

So, what did Paul proclaim? He resolved to *know nothing ..except Christ Jesus and Him crucified..*’ (2 Cor 2:2). He underscores what he wrote a few sentences before: ‘*..but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews & foolishness to Greeks..*’ (1:23). To the former, the religious & self-righteous (morally superior) – the evangel was a barrier; to the latter, the intellectually proud, the message of the cross of Christ was a matter for scorn. To both, the message was repellent. They were arrogant & inimical to it – and that same animosity persists today.

People have over the centuries tried to reinvent Jesus.

The message of Christ crucified – ‘*..humbles vanity and condemns idolatry. It calls the covetous to contentment and sinners to repentance & self-denial*’ – (Stott, *Evangelical Truth* – p31).

I want to remind you of the Gospel I preached to you, which you received ...So having set out his stall early, Paul now reminds the Corinthian Christians about what they’d signed up to – nothing less than Christ crucified. Evidently, they got the message - **..which you received** (15:1b). But, not all do so. God does not railroad us into belief. Some in Corinth did. They were Christians – albeit wracked by divisions & duped by false teachers. They even sullied the Lord’s table and immorality had seeped into their fellowship. Still, they’d accepted the truth of Paul’s proclamation – they were followers of Christ.

Like the folk at Corinth, we need reminding: sometimes with a shout (perhaps even jostled & jolted); at other times just a gentle word will do. Ultimately -- we need to keep the main thing the main thing. Then as now the reminder comes as an offer in words. A messenger delivers words and hearers receive them – some to little effect, others to great & lasting effect. The remarkable events of Acts 2 bear witness, when, as a result of Peter’s proclamation over 3000 believed. Little has changed, even 2000 years: the message had content then, it has intelligible content now.

2. THE MESSAGE IS UTTERLY RELIABLE (1c).

So, we come to the third part of this verse.

It was, moreover, on this Gospel that.. **you have taken your stand** (15:1c). Hence **..the Gospel..preached** (*euaggelisamen*)..**received** (*paralabete*)..**& on which they stand** (**they have taken their stand..estekate**) –

It is dependable – you can put your trust in it. Literally, you can stand on it; it will take your weight. This is a message that stands up to scrutiny that changes lives that heals deeply – from the inside; that makes a difference in our world.

3. IF YOU TRUST IT, THE MESSAGE WILL RESCUE YOU.

By this Gospel you also are saved (*sodzo – sozesthe*) **if you hold fast** (*katexete*) **to the word which I preached** (*euaggelisamen*) **to you, otherwise you have believed in vain.** (15:2).

The message comes in words (1a, b); it’s a dependable offer – one on which you can stake your life (1c); & --- it is personally good for salvation.

4. THE MESSAGE WILL RESCUE YOU BECAUSE IT IS GROUNDED IN CHRIST (15:3f); IT IS ROOTED IN SCRIPTURE (15:3f); AND IT IS FOUNDED ON FACT (15:5ff).

(3) **For, what I received** (*parelabon..*) **I passed on to you** (*paredoka ..umin*) **as of first importance, (en protois..)** **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** ..

The message is an offer in words – dependable, reliable, effective for salvation ..&, now, *transferable*. What Paul *..got..he ..gave..* what he received he delivered. He passed on what he considered foremost in importance – hence the priority & commitment he gave to it in his own life-work & mission. Jesus had

captured his heart & the zeal he previously demonstrated in pursuing adherents of 'the way' he now pressed into use as he advances the cause of Christ ..& Him crucified.

4.1 IT IS GROUNDED IN CHRIST

Foremost among the words that Paul preached was these: ***Christ died for our sins.***

There is in the Bible an inescapable connection between sin & judgment. The soul that sins shall die. We moderns shrink away from the thought – who in their right mind sends to the gallows a man for an indiscretion. We think like this because we think wrongly about sin

The dirtiest word in our language is a 3-letter word: **sin**. This word gets lower and dirtier than a sewer filled with all the 4-letter words in the world. *Roms 3:23 – all have sinned & fall short of the glory of God.* It does no good to compare ourselves with a child molester, a murderer, Siddiq Khan (the leader of the radical Islamist gang); or any of the followers of Al Quaeda. It will not do to say I'm better than my neighbour because he's a grump. ALL have sinned. Your name may be Joseph Aloisius Ratzinger, his holiness Pope Benedict XVI; or Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu [*gontza bodtzaziu*] (the Albanian nun who became Mother Teresa of Calcutta) – all fall short of God's glory. It does no good – for all without exception fail to meet the mark.

Sin is blatant, insulting & mutinous. Society dresses it up to make it look better; we sweeten its bitterness to make it more palatable. Here are some euphemisms – a fault, an indiscretion, mistake, problem, disposition, error, failure....

Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth's had a pulverised conscience .. rubbing desperately away at her hand which bore the evidence of her sin .. We dare not mince our words: sin is blatant mutiny against God –

Sin supplants Him who rightfully calls the shots in your life & mine. However you try to dress it up – sin is out & out rebellion against God & God will have no truck with it. For *this* Christ died – to diminish sin is to make a mockery of the death Christ died. He *did not* die for frivolous human frailty, a or the death Christ died.

4.2 IT IS ROOTED IN SCRIPTURE (15:3f)

and that he ***was buried*** and that He ***was raised*** on the third day ***according to the Scriptures ..***

We do not know which writings Paul had in mind. He doesn't say. Doubtless they included what Luke refers to in his Gospel - as *..he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself..* at Lk 24:25ff; & which Peter deployed in Pentecost (Acts 2: 25-31) – notably perhaps Ps 22; & Isa 53.

4.3 AND IT IS FOUNDED ON FACT (15:5ff).

and that he ***appeared ..***

There are therefore in sum the following key points about the message which has been entrusted to us:

- 1 The ***Message is Propositional*** – ***..I want to remind you of the Gospel I preached to you, which you received..*** (15:1a, b). It is an offer with content. It arrives in words. And, we receive it in words – words we understand. None is forced to accept the message. But no-one can say they do not understand what 'Christ Crucified' means. There is no mystery or mystique about it. Moreover, we have a duty to pass it on – this ***message is transferable***. Since it is framed as propositional truth – we *get it* ..And, because we *get it* ..we must *give it*.. Jesus Himself said: *I have other sheep not of this sheep pen..* Paul asserts therefore: ***what I received I passed on to you..*** As recipients/ custodians of *the evangel* we commit ourselves to its work – that is why we do *evangelism*. This is what makes us *evangelicals*. This is our Message.
- 2 Although theological..the ***Message is Personal*** – The personal pronouns in this passage put this beyond doubt. Paul says *'I want to remind you..I preached the Gospel..what I received I passed on to you..'* what I had received
- 3 The ***Message is Reliable*** – ***. By this Gospel you also are saved..(15:2) .& on which you have taken your stand*** (15:1c.). Like the believers at Corinth we can take our stand on it. We are not on shaky ground if we do. The reason why we can be sure of the stand we take about the Message is first – because its ***Rooted in Christ***; second, because its ***Grounded in Scripture***; third, because its ***Based on Fact***. That is our Message.
- 4 The ***Message is Christological*** – At the heart of the message is that ***Christ died for our sins***. There are several tenets to a high Christology. Here are some: 1/ He *was* before He came (His eternal pre-existence); 2/ He came of woman only (His virgin birth) 3/ but He came & lived as a man among us; 4/ while with us He performed miracles; 5/ while aware of His divinity, only Calvary was His destiny; 6/ He left, as He came – confounding the laws of nature; 7/ He will come again. This is our Message.
This is what we believe & this is what we teach. Perhaps it is not the *only* thing but it is the main thing – a matter of first import. So, the Gospel is not preached if Christ is not proclaimed; & Christ is not proclaimed if the death & resurrection of Jesus is not at the heart of what we say. That is our message: it is grounded in Christ.
- 5 The ***Message is Biblical*** – What Paul proclaimed was the Christ of the Bible – the One who ***..died for our sins, according to the Scriptures*** (the writings) ***and was buried*** (4a); & who ***was raised ..according to the Scriptures*** (4b). We do not know which writings Paul had in mind. He doesn't say. But, as the first Christian evangelist he made much of the death & resurrection of Jesus – the fact that these events were corroborated by 2 witnesses – *the prophets & the apostles*, what we today would call the OT & the NT respectively. This is our message: rooted in Scripture.
- 6 The ***Message is Historical*** – it is based on fact. There is eye-witness evidence – reliably documented & corroborated. Paul remarks on both the death & burial of Jesus – but also on His appearances (v5a – 11).