



Holding Fast the Gospel

Notes of a Sermon delivered by George Müller in Bethesda Chapel, Bristol,
March 1st, 1874.

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received and "Wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain." – 2 Cor xv. 1,2

Those who are in any measure familiar with the first letter written by the Holy Ghost through the apostle Paul to the Church at Corinth, know that there were three especial reasons why the letter was written.

1. To answer certain questions; as for instance, how those should do who were unmarried, and those who had unbelieving partners.
2. To notice the flagrant wickedness and moral inconsistency which had crept in among these true children of God; and, in doing so, not only sharply to rebuke them on account of these things, but to direct them how to cleanse themselves of them.
3. But there was one other especial object which he had in writing this letter, viz., to take notice of grievous errors which had come in among them, and one of these we have especially noticed in this chapter, and that is, the denial of the resurrection.

The apostle brings before them how this touched the very foundation of their holy faith. If there was no resurrection, there were no glad tidings at all, - no truth in any of these things, if there were no resurrection. But he shows that there is a resurrection, and not only so, but dwells on the blessedness connected with it.

The word "moreover" points to the other things on which he had been dwelling, "*I declare unto you,*" in the sense of, I remind you; I stir up your remembrance; I remind you of the gospel which I preached unto you. The word *Gospel* is one with which we are all familiar, and yet it is so deeply important that our hearts have right apprehensions, and that our hearts enter into the full meaning of the word "Gospel."

Now, then, though we are all familiar with the phrase, and have heard it from our earliest days, yet let us seek to ponder it and enter into it.

"Gospel," - good news, glad tidings. Good news about what? Glad tidings; what glad tidings? These: That while by nature we are lost, ruined, and undone, and must have remained thus for eternity, God, in the riches of His grace, in His abounding mercy, contrary to all human expectation, contrary to all angelic expectation, in the riches of His grace comes forward, in the wondrous power of His love provides a plan for the salvation of our souls. What a wondrous plan is this, not to give all the universe for the salvation of our souls, for that would be the merest trifle; but He gives - what? His only begotten Son; He gives His Holy Child Jesus, His perfect servant; He gives the God-man Christ Jesus to hang upon the cross, to die in the room of wicked, guilty, rebellious men. Oh, wondrous grace this! and this He does not bargain for; He does not say, if you do this, or if you give me this, I will give you my Holy Child Jesus. The only condition He makes is, that the sinner accept the unspeakable gift, the Lord Jesus Christ; and if he does this he shall never lose the blessing any more. Oh, this wondrous grace, this unspeakable grace! God gives the choicest gift He had to give; and He requires nothing whatever on the part of the vilest, most hardened sinner, who has lived ten, twenty, thirty or more years in sin, if he only receives Christ, puts his trust in Him, depends on Him for salvation; instantly he does so, all his numberless transgressions shall be forgiven, they shall be sought for and not found; shall be cast behind God's back; cast into the depths of the sea. Our great adversary shall seek them and not be able to find them. These are the good news and glad tidings. And the sinner may have it now. He has not to wait until the last judgment day, but instantly he obtains the forgiveness of his sins; for it is written, concerning the Lord Jesus, in the 10th

chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, 43rd verse: "Whosoever believeth on Him shall receive the remission of sins." Salvation is a *present* blessing, the forgiveness of sins a *present* blessing. The instant the sinner owns that he is a sinner, he obtains the full, free, eternal forgiveness of his numberless transgressions. If his sins were a million times more than the hairs of his head, all shall be instantly forgiven, when he trusts in the Lord Jesus for the salvation of his soul. This is not all: through the reception of this very gospel, through the belief of this very gospel, we become the children of God. It is through faith that we are born again, and thus become the children of God.

We are thus introduced by the reception of the gospel into the heavenly family, separated from the devil's family, separated from the kingdom of darkness, translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son: we are regenerated, begotten again, by this very faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; we become heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; we shall be manifested as the children of God, and shall share the glory with the Lord Jesus Christ. These are the good news which the gospel proclaims. No working for these blessings, no going to Rome, no going on pilgrimage. Instantly, on believing the gospel, we all receive these blessings for time and eternity. No devil shall be able to rob us of these blessings which we receive through faith.

The gospel is called by various names. In Romans x. 15, it is called the *Gospel of Peace*, and there is not much difficulty in seeing why. We are at variance by nature with God, we make manifest this variance by doing the things contrary to His mind. By this gospel the alienation between us and God is removed. We obtain a new nature, a heavenly life, a divine life, and so it comes that we are at peace with God, -now we love God, while formerly we hated Him.

It is further called the "*Gospel of God's Grace*" (Acts xx. 24.). It is called thus because these glad tidings have especially to do with the grace of God, not with the justice of God so much, not with the holiness of God, though the holiness of God and the justice of God are intimately connected with the gospel; but these glad tidings particularly bring before us this attribute of the true and living God. These blessings He bestows upon us in the way of grace, unmerited favour, through wounding and bruising His beloved Son in the room of the sinner, making Him a sacrifice in the room of the sinner. It is thus that God, forgives us our sins in the way of unmerited favour.

Merit has nothing whatever to do with these good news. If the question were, you shall only fulfil the tenth part of the law, it would be no longer in the way of grace. If we had the least to do for the salvation of our souls, it would no longer be in the way of grace. Works have their right and proper place, and we cannot make too much of works in their right and proper place. But the right place of works is this: we must have the forgiveness of our sins, we must have peace with God, be at one with God, before there can be found in us one single good work in which God can be well pleased. All is without blessing on the part of God until we have accepted the gospel. And therefore this is the first great business of every man, woman, and child, to accept the gospel. Except this be the case you may be a Sunday-school teacher, or you may give away tracts but not one of these things is acceptable to God. You must receive Christ first. But after we have received Christ, then works come in their proper place; not working for life, but from life, after having been born again, after having obtained heavenly divine life; then we cannot work too much for God, cannot be too much dead to the world, cannot make it too much manifest that we are dead to the world and alive to God.

It is also called the "*Gospel of Salvation*" in Ephesians i. 13; because these glad tidings do not bring merely good business, or health of the body, or family comfort, or prospects of any kind with regard to this life merely, but they bring us the salvation of the soul. These glad tidings, that the lost, ruined sinner, the one who must have remained for eternity in a state of wretchedness and condemnation, and who could look forward to nothing but the second death, to the lake which burns with fire and brimstone; that this vile, lost, ruined, hell-deserving sinner, may be saved from all the wretchedness, woe, and misery, which he must have endured for ever and ever. These are the glad tidings which announce blessing for eternity, the salvation of our souls.

It is also called the "*Gospel of the Kingdom*" (Matt. xxiv. 14). A rather remarkable phrase this. Glad tidings regarding the kingdom. In this day it would be much better understood if it were called the kingdom of the gospel. But we must cling fast to what God says, not what man says, or to what thousands of Christians say. If we do not do so it will be a miserable thing to us in the end. The days are coming when there will be neither buying nor selling, unless we have the mark of Antichrist in our foreheads or hands. These are the good news or glad tidings of the kingdom of Messiah, the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. That blessed One is coming.

The kingdom of Messiah would have been set up when He appeared, but for the rejection of Messiah by the Jews. But the kingdoms of this world shall yet become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ; and the manifestation of the sons of God is connected with all this. The weak ones, the hidden ones, the despised ones, shall share the throne of glory with Christ. With all these good news, with all these glad tidings particularly, this is connected, that Jesus will have the glory, and that each one who believes in Him shall share in this.

Further: it is said, "*Which also ye have received.*" These Corinthians were in a weak state, in a comparatively little instructed state, there were many failings among them. Nevertheless they had received the gospel. Now, how far is this true of my dear friends in the gallery? Is it true of all my dear young friends, my dear aged friends? You have heard it times without number. The Holy Ghost may have been knocking at the door of your hearts again and again; but have you received the gospel? Oh! the solemnity of this thought, the terribleness of this thought - received, or not received. It is the will of God that you should receive it. If you do not receive the gospel, you reject God's blessing, you slight the choicest of all blessings which God has to bestow. Let me press this particularly upon you, dear young people, - Have you received the gospel, or have you rejected it ?

Before passing on, turn to one or two passages where this is particularly enforced.

Romans x. 16. "*But they have not all obeyed the gospel.*" You perceive from this it is the will of God that the gospel should be received, believed, obeyed. It is no matter of choice on our part, no question whether we ought or ought not to believe it. It is as much a command of God, as that we should not steal, or that we should do no murder.

Turn also to 2 Thessalonians i. 8: *Taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.* There is the end of it, - in flaming fire; He will take vengeance on those who do not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ: because this is the one only way to obtain forgiveness of sins, to escape the wrath of God which shall be poured out on the ungodly. And therefore all those who have merely been the hearers of the gospel, and not believers in the gospel, oh! be besought to believe the gospel, to obey the gospel. As long as you are in a state of unbelief you are amongst those who obey not the gospel. This is your expectation; oh! think of it. On the other hand, if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, if you receive the Lord Jesus Christ, if you came into this place as the vilest sinner, as the most hardened sinner, at the greatest distance from God, you may be instantly pardoned, may become a child of God this very instant, and the prospect become bright and pleasing.

"*And wherein ye stand.*" What does this mean? It means we go on believing the gospel, we go on trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, resting on the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls. There is such a thing as receiving the gospel, and letting the gospel go again. We see this by the Epistle to the Galatians. They were so taught by false teachers that they had let go the gospel of Christ. Let us all be wary to avoid this; it is a matter of immense importance, not only to receive the gospel in all simplicity, but to go on from first to last, knowing none other than Christ in the matter of our salvation. So we must go on to the very last of our earthly pilgrimage. As to pleasing God, we need Christ in us; but in the matter of our salvation, we must know none other than Christ for us. Now this is the point, that we stand fast in the gospel; we must hold fast Christ, depend on the work and sufferings of Jesus Christ. And this is particularly important in these days, when, through the subtlety of the devil, ritualism is rampant, and the

devil would introduce priestcraft. When these things are so, how important that we should cling and cleave to the Lord Jesus Christ, and know nothing but Him in the matter of our salvation.

“By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I have preached unto you.” What does this teach us? Not merely that there is the necessity for receiving, or that for the time being we stand fast, but that to the end of our course we hold fast to Christ.

“Unless ye have believed in vain,” - What does this teach us? This is a word to young believers, to young converts, and those who have been stirred up to care about their souls: that they should be in earnest, that God would enable them to cling and cleave to the Lord Jesus, and to know nothing but Christ in the matter of their salvation. Those who have known the Lord for a long time, also, should see that they watch in love and kindness over those who have been stirred up to seek the Lord Jesus, that they may cling and cleave further to the Lord Jesus. We rejoice when we see persons stirred up to care about their souls; but it is one thing to begin, another thing to hold fast to the end of the course. So, while we rejoice, we rejoice with trembling; for the victory is not won, but the battle is only begun.



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