

## ***Always Bring the Gospel***

I'm ashamed to admit that I find it easier to bring the law to other people than I do the gospel.

By "law" I mean all the "thou shalt" passages. You know, the ones we use to tell other people how they should live or how they're falling short.

Or better yet, to prove how we are right and they are wrong.

### ***Using the Law as a Weapon***

I find no comfort in the fact that others have the same inclination.

I once saw an entire elder board use the law as a weapon for over an hour. These guys knew the Bible inside and out. They quoted chapter and verse. But it was all used to put others down: "You should have ..." "You didn't ..." "I did ..." Every point dealt with human performance or human failure.

Not one word about what God had done for them through Christ. Not one word about love, atonement, redemption, mercy, forgiveness, reconciliation, sanctification.

Their church was falling to pieces around them and all they could do was beat each other up with the law.

The turning point came when I interrupted and asked them to imagine that we could go back to the beginning of their conflict and change just one historical fact: that Jesus had never died on the cross or been resurrected to life.

Then I asked, "Imagine that you could then hit the "play" button and start all over with your conflict. What would be different in how you'd treat one another?"

There was a long silence. At first they didn't see what I was getting at. But after a couple of minutes, one of them groaned and said, "Dear God, nothing would be different. We've been treating each other all along as though there is no gospel."

As that truth sank in, our conversation went in an entirely new direction ... one that eventually resulted in repentance and reconciliation.

All because we went back to the gospel ...

### ***The Law Is Good ... But Often Misused***

Don't get me wrong. I love God's Law. It is beautiful and perfect (Ps. 19:7). It reflects God's perfect righteousness and reveals our sinfulness, leading us to seek pardon in Christ. It restrains sin by establishing moral boundaries that support civil societies. And it teaches those who trust in Christ how to live a life that honors him and advances his kingdom.

These are proper uses of God's Law. But because of our sinful nature, we often ignore these benevolent purposes and instead use the commands of Scripture to vindicate ourselves and critique others.

It's a hard habit to break because it's fueled by our pride and self-righteousness.

### ***Bring the Gospel to Both the Saved and Unsaved***

One way to counteract this tendency is to develop a counter-habit, the habit of constantly bringing the gospel to others. Not only to the unsaved, but also to believers.

Many Christians think of the gospel only in terms of evangelism: good news that we share with nonbelievers in the hope that they will believe that Jesus died for their sins and was resurrected

to give them eternal life (1 Cor. 15:3-4). This is certainly one of its chief purposes, and something that every believer should be eager to do (1 Pet. 3:14-15).

But the gospel is for more than evangelism. The Lord also calls Christians to bring the good news of our redemption to one another to encourage thankfulness for God's mercy, to dispel doubts and fears, to remind us of our identity in Christ, to promote sanctification, and to motivate us to love others as Christ has loved us.

This is precisely what the apostle Paul did over and over in his letters to the early church. Even though he was writing to professing believers, he kept reiterating the gospel and all of its manifold implications (see, e.g., Rom. 5:1-5; Eph. 1:1-14; 5:1; Col. 1:11-14). He knew that we would easily forget the good news and would need to hear it again and again ...

Not just from the pulpit but also from one another.

### ***How to Bring the Gospel***

There are many ways that you can bring the gospel to other people. Here's one of the easiest.

As you read the Bible, look for passages that describe both the gospel and its manifold implications (grace, mercy, forgiveness, adoption, transformation, eternal life, etc.).

Compile a running list or journal of these blessings.

Mediate on them until you can easily paraphrase them (or better yet, commit key verses to memory).

Finally, look for opportunities to share these promises with other believers.

One of the most helpful times to focus on the gospel is when we are entangled in a conflict with others and need to counteract our tendency to use the law (the commands of Scripture) to vindicate ourselves or attack others (here's how I brought the gospel to my daughter at such a time: [blog entry entitled *Penetrating Barriers*]).

But we can also bring the gospel to people during the more mundane moments of life. We can share it spontaneously, simply to bless and encourage others. We can also share it when we sense that someone is discouraged or struggling with doubts, fears, guilt, or temptations (Rom. 15:4; 1 Thess. 5:11).

A Personal Note: I'm trying to develop the habit of spontaneously sharing at least one gospel truth with my wife every day ... and to start any difficult conversations with the gospel instead of the law. I'm still not as consistent as I'd like to be, but when I engage her this way, we enjoy each other so much more!

Here is a small sample of the promises you can pass on at any time to your spouse, children, coworkers, friends ... even your pastor (he needs to be reminded of the gospel too!). [See *list on final page.*]

This is just a small sample of the hundreds of promised blessings that are ours because of the gospel.

Dwell much on them ... for they will fill your heart with peace, hope and joy.

Share them freely with others ... for they can transform lives and relationships.

Thank God for them ... for they will deepen your love for him and your delight in him.

Please help me on a special project: I'm compiling a list of gospel promises like those [above], from both the Old Testament and the New Testament. When you find a new promise that's not already on the list, please email it to [Corlette@rw360.org](mailto:Corlette@rw360.org). We'll keep building the list so that you'll have many promises to share with others.

### ***Reflection Questions***

When you're drawn into a difficult conversation, are you inclined to focus on the law or the gospel? How has that approach worked for you?

Which of the gospel-based promises above mean the most to you today? Why?

[Read the story about how I shared the gospel comprehensively with my daughter when she was tangled up in sin. Be prepared to do the same when a similar opportunity arises.] [blog entry: *Penetrating Barriers*]

Think of a person to whom you'd like to bring the gospel every day. Make a note to remind yourself and pray that God would help you to remember.

When you're about to start a difficult conversation, resist the temptation to begin with a focus on human performance (or failure), and instead focus initially on what God has done for you and in you through Christ.

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## ***Gospel Promises***

“God has given you a priceless gift: eternal life through Jesus Christ” (Rom. 6:23).

“The Lord set his love on you before he even created the world ... so it obviously has nothing to do with your earning it” (Eph. 1:4).

“God’s love and approval don’t depend on your performance. While you were still enjoying your sin, he was already moving to save you” (Rom. 5:8).

“You are chosen by God, holy, and dearly loved” (Col. 3:12).

“God has rescued you from the dominion of darkness and brought you into the kingdom of the Son he loves” (Col. 1:13).

“I know you are weary and burdened today. Jesus promises that if you turn to him he will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28).

“Even though you feel like you’ve completely blown it, remember that Jesus has already paid the full price for your sins; he has separated them from you as far as the east is from the west” (Ps. 103:12; 2Cor. 5:21).

“Don’t give up on yourself. When you put your trust in Jesus, he began to change you into his likeness. And he will continue that process until the day he takes you home” (Rom. 8:29; 2Cor. 3:18; Phil. 1:6).

“If you are trusting in Jesus, you are a new creation. The old is gone the new has come!” (2 Cor. 5:17).

“If God gave his only Son for you, will he not also give you everything else that you need in this life?” (Rom. 8:31-32).

“You are God’s workmanship, created in Christ to do good works, which God prepared for you long ago” (Eph. 2:10).

“Did you know that you are part of a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation?” (1Pet. 2:9).