

Reclaiming the Gospel

by Art Katz

To restore the gospel is to reclaim the lifestyle and mindset from which it issues, and to be radically separated from the values of this world.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:3

Topics: "Lordship Of Christ", "Reclaiming the Gospel"

Description

Art Katz emphasizes the need to reclaim the true essence of the Gospel, warning that it is often veiled not only to unbelievers but also to nominal Christians. He argues that the Gospel should not be reduced to a mere formula for salvation, but must flow from a life fully surrendered to Jesus as Lord. Katz highlights that true proclamation of the Gospel requires a lifestyle of servitude to Christ, and that without recognizing His lordship, our understanding of salvation becomes inadequate. He calls for a restoration of the apostolic mindset, where the Gospel is seen as a treasure in earthen vessels, and encourages believers to view their afflictions in light of eternal glory. Ultimately, Katz urges the church to embody the Gospel's transformative power in a world blinded by the god of this age.

Transcript

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Some reflections on the Context of the Gospel of Christ

"And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus sake. For it is God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:3-6).

I confess to a growing suspicion that not only is this gospel veiled to the unbelieving, but also to those who are more nominal in their faith. The very reduction of Paul's glorious gospel to a formula for salvation to

those who "accept" the Lord almost assures that what will follow will itself be nominal and fall short of the light of the glory which Paul proclaims. We must be as radically separated as Paul from the god of this world, or else we will suffer 'blindness,' to the degree that we subscribe, adhere, or share in, the values of this world.

For Paul, the gospel was not an optional extra to his apostolic life. It flowed out from his life, and was integral to it. To restore the gospel is to reclaim the lifestyle and mindset from which it issues. To proclaim "Jesus Christ as Lord" is possible only to those for whom He is Lord. This can only be measured by the degree to which we are slaves (bond servants) for Jesus sake. Anything other is essentially "proclaiming ourselves," even though we may be well-meaning and correct in our faith. In that condition, our proclamation will be infrequent, shallow and unconvincing. How shall we call others to the totality which we have ourselves ignored?

The same condition by which the pronouncement came in Bethlehem at the advent of Christ's birth must accompany every reiteration of that birth: "a savior who is Christ the Lord." No lordship, no saviorhood! How many of us are languishing spiritually on the same basis by which the unbelieving perish? How many of us have more of a truncated, inadequate view of God, not seeing the light of the glory of Christ who is the image of God!

Paul continues, "but we have this treasure in earthen vessels...(v.7). This rhapsodic language is not inflated. It is altogether one with a man who actually sees the gospel as the light of the glory of Christ, who is the light of the glory of God in the face of Israel's Messiah! Then does the message become personally dear ('my gospel, our gospel'). This alone saves the gospel from becoming a mechanical formula for salvation. Then also does a new degree of opposition follow ("afflicted, perplexed, struck down" vv.8-9) that will invariably follow those whose message and person, one and the same, is hated by the god of this world who prefers mankind blind! But Paul replies twice, "We do not lose heart"(4:1, 16) confident that "the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus"(v.14) not only at the consummation of all things, but also, by the same power, presently!

To restore this gospel, then, is to restore the matrix from which it had its first expression: the apostolic lifestyle of the apostle. His view of eternity by which his afflictions were seen as "momentary and light" in view of the "eternal weight of glory" (v.17) needs also to be regained. All is set in the overview of "the judgment seat of Christ" to which we must all appear (2 Cor. 5:10) so that "knowing the "terror of the Lord" we persuade men! We cannot and ought not to detach the gospel from this context. The message of the gospel flows inexorably out of it. This should be one of the defining characteristics of the church's witness in society. May the Lord bring us again to this purpose for our being.

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