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## ELEMENTS OF THE GOSPEL

By Dean Fugett

In II Corinthians 4:3-4 Paul says, "*But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*" The subject of Paul's statement here is the gospel and the refusal of some to receive it and obey it. The term "Gospel" means "good news". It is God's good news to man concerning the Christ who was sent into the world to bear man's sins and through the grace of God, to take away the sins of all who would accept the sacrifice of Christ on His terms. Paul stated to the Romans in Romans 1:16 that the Gospel of Christ is God's power to save. To refuse to receive and obey the Gospel of Christ is to be lost forever. ". . . *the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.*" (II Thess. 1:7-9). In I Peter 4:17, Peter says, "*For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God;*"

In Romans 10:13-17, Paul shows the importance and necessity of preaching the Gospel, God's power to save, to all the world. "*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith,*

*Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.*" Thus, "calling on the name of the Lord" is equal to obeying from the heart, the gospel commands.

The gospel is called by Paul in II Cor. 4:4 a glorious gospel. It is called a glorious gospel because of its origin, its spirit, its object, and its extent.

1. It came from God. "*But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*" (Gal. 1:11-12).

2. It was given in a spirit of Love. "*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*" (Rom. 5:8-10).

3. Its object is to save all who will really hear and believe it. "*For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to all that believe it . . .*" (Rom. 1:16).

4. It knows no bounds in its extension. "*But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste of death for every man.*" (Heb. 2:9) "*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.*" (Titus 2:11).

Paul further states that it is by preaching of the gospel that God hath chosen to save men. (I Cor. 1:21). The hearing and application of which makes men wise unto salvation. (II Tim. 3:15).

But the Gospel is a composite of elements. It is important for our salvation that we be aware of these elements.

The gospel is composed of truth . . .

things that are evident and certain. These truths we must accept. Among them is the truth that God is (Heb. 11:6); and that he will reward those who diligently seek his ways and his pleasure. And He wills that none perish, but that all be saved . . . concerning which he has done all that he could without violating our free moral agency.

**The gospel is composed of facts . . . things done.** These we must believe . . .

1. Christ is God's begotten Son, sent to deliver the world. John 3:16 "*For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*"

2. Christ died for our sins. "*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 have preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures",* (I Cor. 15:1-3).

3. We must also believe that he was buried and also that he did of a truth rise from the dead. I Corinthians 15:4 states "*And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures"; "and if Christ be not risen then our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain . . . And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.*" (I Cor. 15:14 & 17).

**The Gospel is composed of some commands - things required of those who would appropriate the Grace of God to their lives for the benefits of Christ's blood.** These we must obey . . . "*He became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him . . .*" (Hebrews 5:9).

1. We are commanded to believe in Christ. This is a command. "*And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.*"

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2. We are commanded to repent. *"And the times of this ignorance, God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent."* (Acts 17:30).

3. We are commanded to be baptized. *"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."* (Acts 2:38) *"Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized."* (Acts 10:47-48).

**The gospel is then, composed of promises that are contingent upon obedience.** Things that we may enjoy if we obey the Lord . . . We must not despise the Gospel of Christ if we would enjoy the promises of Christ.

1. The remission of sins, Acts 2:38, 22:16;

2. Everlasting life, I John 2:25 *"And this is the promise he has promised us even eternal life, and that life is in the son."*

Review the major elements of the Gospel . . . Truths, Facts, Commands, and Promises. Christ made the Good News. Now he invites all to partake of the good blessings by obeying a form of the doctrine in faith, repentance and obedience from the heart in baptism into a covenant relation with Him. *"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you, being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."* (Romans 6:16-18).

# The Lost Art Of Preaching

By Oran Rhodes

It strikes me that we have reached the point of impending crisis in the pulpits of the church. I am convinced that in the past one hundred fifty years never have there been more men standing in the pulpits of the Lord's church and less gospel preached than today. Faithful preaching has not gradually passed from the scene, but rather, it seems as if it has almost disappeared overnight. It is not that so many men teach error; it is that they teach so little truth. It is not that they wittingly teach denominational concepts; it is that far too many simply know no better. It is not that they vociferously espouse strange sounds; it is that they are so quiet about everything, including sin and falsehood.

I am not interested in living in the past nor am I for idolizing earlier preachers, great though their work was, but, oh, how I long for more who have the conviction those earlier proclaimers had and who are willing to loudly, firmly, convincingly proclaim it. No wonder we have fewer responses today. Most preaching wouldn't convict a willing sheep much less a goat! When people on rare occasion do hear convincing preaching, they usually are shocked into inactivity or else are indignant that someone should actually call sin by its name.

It would appear that the modern breed of preacher has been schooled well in the "Feel-Good" school of "I'm O.K., you're O.K." The first lesson observed in action seems to be the given ability to whisper an entire sermon. I'm not for yelling and screaming, but whispering?? I suppose this is to be the more "spiritual" approach but it makes me wonder if the speaker is sure of what he is saying or if he himself really believes it. The second lesson evidently learned is to mention two or three verses of scripture in passing, cast out to the congregation like posies to passify cranks who would complain if the Bible were never used. Thirdly, a new vocabulary is used which is so nebulous that one can never be sure of what is meant, and, if the preacher is questioned, you can rest assured he is always misunderstood! And fourthly, one who would respond to the invitation must surely be well taught, because too often one could sit under

some "preaching" for months and never hear what one must do to be saved. Instead one is told, "Trust in the Lord," "Come to Christ," "Commit your life to Jesus," ad nauseum.

What is wrong brethren? Ignorance is rampant in the church, but that will not improve by putting ignorance in the pulpit. Preachers today, in general, have more education than ever before and less knowledge of the Bible. Schooling can be beneficial or it can be detrimental, and too much of the latter is in evidence. Schooling is not an end in itself, but rather should be a tool-gathering experience for growth throughout the remainder of one's life. To depend on what one gained in school or upon what the instructors said, is folly. For one who seeks to preach to neglect life-long diligent study of the Bible is a crime -- not a misdemeanor, but a felony. If one does not have the desire, ability, and self-control to study, then he has no business standing before an audience and trying to preach. People are not interested in a parrot telling them what other men think.

In spite of all modern day sophistication, man's need to hear the Word of the Lord has not changed. We still need scripture-quoting, Bible thumping, five-stepping preachers. It is totally inane to think that the church can grow and be what it is suppose to be under wishy-washy, pansy-type preaching - and even statistics of growth, or lack thereof, prove it.

Brethren, if changes are not made quickly, you can kiss goodbye the concept of restoration of New Testament Christianity. **IT IS THAT SERIOUS!** We need men who, like Jeremiah, can say, *"... But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forebearing, and I could not stay."* (Jeremiah 20:9). These men will study and will be diligent to boldly proclaim the truth (I Corinthians 1:21).

The men who faithfully study and proclaim God's truth are yet among us and I love everyone of them dearly for their work's sake; but they face a herculean task when they must not only face a world of unbelief, and a denominationally polluted religious surrounding, but also must try to overcome the ill effects created by these modern-day Zedekiahs. May God help all who preach to see the seriousness of the task and recognize the need to preach the Word boldly, faithfully, and clearly.

# Youth & Alcohol

By Bubba Phillips

Youth and alcohol - the two don't go together. In fact, human beings and alcohol really don't go together. Alcohol is not really fit for human consumption!

A fifteen year old former cheerleader is quoted as saying "we got high every single morning. During and after school too. And, if I didn't go to school, we'd go to the woods and party there. My whole life revolved around drinking. It went on for two years." This statement should help us realize young people do drink, and many are having drinking problems!

Recent statistics reveal that more than three million young people under the age of eighteen have serious drinking problems. Six percent of the nations high school seniors drink every day.

Richard Schweiker, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Human Resources, says "if alcohol abuse is a sickness, then today an epidemic is stalking our young people."

Research in 1982 indicated that there are 40,000 teenage alcoholics in metropolitan Chicago says Karen Sincere, Administrator of the Comprehensive Health Council of Chicago.

Brethren, this information should cause us to think and be more than concerned. Youth and alcohol - a real, frightening, damaging, harmful sinful way of life.

**No wonder young people drink.** Television commercials appear to present the drinking life as the happy "sociable" life style. But they don't show the results: incoherent speech, fights, staggering, driving while intoxicated, needless deaths on the highway, battered wives and children, murder, rape, divorce and many others.

We as Christians must take a stand. We **must** speak out against drinking and alcohol, and set the right example. We **must** pray and voice our strong convictions through letters and other means of communication to our legislators. Read Prov. 23:29-35.

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# SPIRITUAL SMOKESCREENS

By Ordell Heavin

Smokescreens are used in warfare to conceal or disguise the true objectives of the armed forces. This camouflaging device has been highly successful in many warfare encounters. The devil has often used spiritual smokescreens in his battle against the truth. Paul warns of "the wiles of the devil" and reminds us that we should not be "ignorant of his devices", (Eph. 6:11). "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." And II Cor. 2:11 reads, "Lest Satan should get the advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices." Peter affirmed, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that we must live soberly and diligently, faithfully withstanding Satan's schemes of spiritual diversions, (I Peter 5:8-9). We must never forget the devil is the arch enemy of our souls. He must be resisted (James 4:7) "Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." He constantly strives to hinder and hide the truth! There are basically three spiritual smoke-screens used by the devil as he fiendishly attempts to veil the gospel. Satan's three-point temptations goes like this.

1. You cannot understand the Bible. How convincing has been this argument? Just a few basic questions, however, to the honest seeker, abolishes this deception. Did God make us? Does He love us? Did He give us the Bible? Does He want us to go to heaven? Surely these questions can only be answered in the affirmative. If God loves us, and if He gave us the

Bible we can be assured that He would not give us a book to confuse and bewilder us. In fact, I Corinthians 14:33 plainly tells us that "God is not the author of confusion". If we misunderstand the Book of Books it certainly must be our own fault and not the Creator's. Would a just heavenly Father base our eternal destiny upon hearing and obeying His Word and then use language and words difficult to be understood? Who would believe it? In Matthew 4:4, Jesus said, "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God". If the Bible could not be understood, this verse would be a hoax. But we know the scriptures can be understood, because Timothy knew them from a child up, (II Tim. 3:14-17). And we can know the truth which makes us free (John 8:32). In the book of Ephesians, we come face to face with the fact that only the unwise are incapable of understanding what they read in Holy Writ. "Whereby, when you read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." (Eph. 3:4). Again in Ephesians 5:17, "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding that the will of the Lord is." In other words, men have to "Be willfully ignorant" (II Peter 3:5), in order to misunderstand the word of God.

But if a person desires to know the truth, (John 7:17), and if he will make a diligent studied effort (II Tim. 2:15) he can certainly understand the way of the Lord. It has always amazed me that critics of the Bible expect us to understand them when they tell us we can't understand the Bible. Is man more capable of understanding mere men than the Creator of all things?

On the Day of Pentecost, thousands understood and obeyed Peter's sermon (Acts 2:41). Surely we today can understand that same sermon in written form. Yes, we can understand the Bible today. Satan leads us astray through false teachings of men. There are several reasons why men fail to understand the scriptures and one reason is the almost universal failure to study intelligently. We need to always remember that a "text out of context becomes a pretext". "If any man speak let him speak as the oracles of God." (I Peter 4:11). So we have to deliberately take time and put forth effort to learn who spoke, to whom he is speaking the age and period of Bible history, etc. Too many read, but don't study the Bible.



## SPIRITUAL SMOKESCREENS

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Certainly there is a great need for handling aright the word of truth (II Tim. 2:15). Some fail to understand due to prejudiced minds. Look at Paul's teaching in Acts 17:11. Few are as noble as the Bereans "who received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so." Disregard for truth will lead to closed eyes and ears and hardened hearts. Let us never read into the Bible our own traditions. "Through thy precepts I get understanding, therefore I hate every false way. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my pathway" (Psalms 119:104 & 105).

The more we study the Bible, the more we realize we are on trial, and not the Bible. Many people rob themselves of the help of Bible study by putting in their mind what it doesn't say. Where did Cain get his wife? If we knew her first, middle and last name, it wouldn't save a single soul. Some used to say Cain got her at his father-in-law's house. My usual answer is "It isn't proper to go through life worrying about another man's wife." Actually the real question should deal with the straightforward commands of the Bible applicable to you and me today, because we will be judged by the Bible. (Romans 2:16; John 12:48)

Quite a number of folks are ignorant of the will of God because some preachers know more about the Bible than they know of what is in the Bible. They study more about what men say about the Book than what the Bible says about men.

Some desire to hear only the "smooth things", and to have their ears tickled, (II Tim. 4:1-5). May God help us to return to the power of the Gospel. God has no other power to save, (Rom. 1:16; I Cor. 1:21). Unless we are willing to pay the price by diligent, daily, prayerful, and careful study, we can never say with the Psalmist "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." (Psalms 119:11). The devils smokescreens can be dissolved. Let's study it, live it, and teach it faithfully to others. It can save our souls (James 1:21; Acts 20:32). The fact that the Bible stands, in spite of the rabid opposition of its enemies through the years, is proof of its indestructibility. Let us then study to remove the smokescreens. Let us live according to its precepts, and teach others of its pages of the more abundant.

## How To Become A Christian

The most important question ever asked is: "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). Then, the **HOW** becomes equally as important. Notice the step by step process. First, we must have faith in the Author and Finisher of our faith, Jesus Christ. (Heb. 12:2). This faith comes by the hearing of the Word of God. (Rom. 10:17). "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Heb. 11:6). With the belief and trust that Jesus is the Redeemer, we must repent of sins. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." (Acts 17:30). In repentance, we turn from sin, **STOP** serving Satan and **START** serving the Lord. (Matt. 3:8,

Luke 13:3). With this new attitude we are ready to confess our faith, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. 10:9-10). Read Matthew 10:32-33. Acknowledging our faith, repentance and confession, the last step into Christ is baptism. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Gal. 3:27). Read Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38. Now that our past sins have been forgiven, the Lord has added us to His church and we are Christians. (Acts 2:47; Acts 11:26).

### BECOME A CHRISTIAN

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