

The Gospel without sin?? (J. Peterson)

1. Examine Romans 1:16. What is the Gospel? How does society and culture view the Gospel?

I have been concerned these days that we are missing something in our culture, and in our churches. We are missing part of the Gospel. The part we are missing is the part about sin. Sin – S I N.

We toss around a lot of words: “injustice,” “poverty,” “ignorance,” “weakness,” “error,” “bad judgment.” Some of the words are even ethical terms, like “immorality,” “injustice,” “abuse.” But we don’t use the word “sin.” You probably won’t find it in today’s newspaper, nor will you hear it on the television. It probably won’t be used in any discussions at work this week. Unless, perhaps, you run across it in a book or movie or song title.

Unfortunately, you can go to a lot of churches these days and not encounter the word there either! Too many churches are interested in accommodating their message to what the culture finds acceptable, so they talk a lot about living a good life, finding love and acceptance, and building a just community. They talk very little about sin and God’s righteous wrath.

In a recent survey of 13-17 year olds, the conclusion was drawn that teens have a very inadequate concept of God and the Gospel. They think this way: “God exists. God wants me to be nice... wants me to get along with people. The purpose of life is to be happy and feel good, and good people go to heaven. And nearly everyone’s “good.” This attitude is spread across all religious traditions and denominations. But the idea that people are sunk deeply into sin and desperately need a Savior is entirely missing.

When I talk to children, I find that it’s very difficult to get them to volunteer the idea that it is their SIN which caused Jesus to die for them. They know the concept, but they have trouble verbalizing it. I think this is because, even though they have been taught it, the word “sin” is pretty foreign to their everyday environment.

I want you to understand that *if* there is no such thing as real sin, there is no Gospel, no salvation, and no truth to this book.

When Paul says there that he is not ashamed of the Gospel, he means that he is not ashamed of any of it, including that nasty part about sin. In fact, he spends the next three chapters of Romans on the sin part! Before he talks about believing, or about Christ’s sacrificial death, or about justification, or about new life in the Spirit, he talks about sin.

There are several very helpful tools to remind us of the essential parts of the Gospel. One tool is the PPRR outline – God’s **P**lan, Man’s **P**roblem, God’s **R**emedy, Man’s **R**esponse.

God’s Plan, of course, is that men should have peace and life forever with Him.

Man’s Problem, however, is that sin separates him from God.

God’s Remedy is the Cross – the death of Jesus Christ on our behalf as the sacrifice for our sins.

Man’s Response has to be accepting Jesus by faith. The second step – Man’s Problem - is crucial. If man doesn’t have a problem, none of the rest of it makes sense.

Maybe you have seen the Wordless Book that illustrates the Gospel, a book with 5 colors: green, black, red, white, and gold.

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The **green** page represents God's ultimate plan, that man should be fellowshiping and growing in Him.

The **black** page represents the darkness of every person's heart. (By the way, we teach that the colors represent what is on the INSIDE of a person, not what it looks like on the outside! On the outside, we are "red and yellow, black and white," just like the children's song. On the inside, we are all black with the darkness of sin before Jesus cleanses us!).

The **red** page stands for the death of Jesus on the cross, which purchases our salvation, if we believe in Him.

The **white** page represents our standing before God after He declares us righteous.

The **gold** page suggests our eternal life with Him in heaven.

The **green** page is the P, God's Plan. The **black** page is the next P, Man's Problem. The **red** page is the R, God Remedy. And the **white** and **gold** pages show what happens with the next R, Man's Response.

Without the **black** page, there's no need for the **red** page. And so there's really no need for the Gospel at all.

But this Gospel, this Wordless Book, is not how our culture would like it to be. Our culture prefers a Wordless Book, a book of 3 colors – green, white, and gold - to represent how our world would like it to be.

The **green** page represents everybody, because everyone wants to live a satisfying life.

A mostly **white** page represents the cultural view that we're not perfect, but most people are decent and good.

The **gold** page represents our desire that we all want to go to heaven, if there is one.

The **black** and **red** pages are missing!! There's no sin to worry about, and so there's no need for anybody to die. Isn't that nice? Everybody can like this Wordless Book! In fact, you can make the pretty green, gold, and off-white pages to mean anything you like.

Trouble is, this is the Wordless Book from hell – "Satan's Wordless Book." This is not the Gospel. The biblical Gospel has all the pages, and they don't mean just any old thing we would like them to mean. They mean what the Bible says.

Let's look now at Romans 1:16. Paul says he is not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. If you discovered a cure for all kinds of cancer, would you be ashamed of it? If you discovered a new fuel for automobiles that would be cheap, plentiful, universally available, and non-polluting, would you be ashamed of it? If you knew a way to make an engine that could propel spaceships faster than the speed of light, would you be ashamed? No, of course not.

The Gospel is more powerful than any of these things, because it can do the one thing that nothing and no one else can do. It can change the hearts of people who are in rebellion against their Creator, and bring about restoration. It can cause an angry, selfish, stubborn, immoral, malicious, greedy, perverted, arrogant, foolish man or woman to become a peaceful, happy, contented, self-less, humble, righteous and wise man or woman. It can turn someone who hates God and righteousness into someone who loves God and who wants to be righteous.

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That's nothing to be ashamed of!

But our culture is determined to make us ashamed of it. The message about a real, righteous Creator, who cannot tolerate sin, and Who offers a way – only one way – to be right with Him – that message is viewed as intolerant, and something that we should really just keep to ourselves.

This all goes back, of course, to what we think of God. The reason our culture is so caught up in relativism is that it has rejected the real God and His absolute truth.

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