

Sunday Morning Message

July 7, 2019

For the Gospel's Sake

Text – 1 Corinthians 9:1 - 27

Congregational Reading – 1 Corinthians 9:20 - 23

Introduction

Why do we do what we do? As a church, and as individual Christians?

Why do we decorate an auditorium in a super hero theme, and have four evenings of VBS?

Why did we decorate a float and encourage our church to march with us in the July heat as part of an Independence Day celebration?

Why do we buy busses and vans, and spend the money that we do on fuel, maintenance, and insurance?

Why do we send kids to teen camp and junior camp?

Why do we give large portions of our income in an area where it is already very expensive to live?

Why do we do what we do? The answer is found in v. 23 - *For the Gospel's Sake*.

In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul explains to the Church at Corinth why he did what he did.

[Read the Text – 1 Corinthians 9]

In verses 1 – 5, Paul explains why he lived a very sacrificial life?

In verses 6 – 18, Paul explains why he worked as a tentmaker when he should have been fully supported by the church at Corinth. He later apologized to them for not asking them for their support:

"I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except [it be] that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong." (2 Corinthians 12:11-13)

The bottom line is that Paul decided not to take anything from this very carnal church because he did not want anything to hinder the work of the Gospel. Paul was willing to sacrifice much financially so that he could more effectively communicate the gospel to them.

What is the gospel? The gospel (εὐαγγέλιον – *euaggelion*) is the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the sins of the world. Jesus Christ died for our sins. He was buried and stayed in the grave for three days, and after the third day, He rose again to prove He had power over the grave; and, now He *"ever liveth" to make intercession for [us]* (Hebrews 7:25).

Because Jesus died for our sins, we do not have to be punished by God for them. Jesus took our punishment for them. That's the gospel; that's good news:

"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. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which [was bestowed] upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether [it were] I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed." (1 Corinthians 15:1-11)

In verses 19 – 27, Paul sums it all up. All that he did, he did for the gospel's sake.

By the way, Paul also suffered for the gospel's sake:

"Are they Hebrews? so [am] I. Are they Israelites? so [am] I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so [am] I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I [am] more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty [stripes] save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; [In] journeyings often, [in] perils of waters, [in] perils of robbers, [in] perils by [mine own] countrymen, [in] perils by the heathen, [in] perils in the city, [in] perils in the wilderness, [in] perils in the sea, [in] perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." (2 Corinthians 11:22-28)

All that we do, we do for the gospel's sake. We do crazy things like this VBS, like our weekly Kid's Club program; like running busses and vans; so that little boy and girls (and their parents and grand-parents) can hear the gospel, place their faith in Christ, and be saved.

"But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, [even] in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; 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. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 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!" (Romans 10:8-15)

Everything we do is either directly or indirectly related to communicating the message of the gospel – it's for the gospel's sake. We have Sunday School and preaching services to educate and strengthen Christians so that they can be stronger Christians and can more effectively preach the gospel. It's for the gospel's sake. Why do we give money to missionaries? For the gospel's sake. Why do we help people who are struggling. It's for the gospel's sake. It's all about the gospel.

The church's responsibility – your responsibility - is the gospel. It is up to you and me to get the good news of the gospel to everybody that needs to hear it:

*"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."
(Mark 16:15)*

That is why we do some of the seemingly crazy things that we do.

This VBS program is designed to attract the attention of children, to get them to want to come to this church, so that they will hear the gospel, trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved.

When the disciples tried to keep little kids from bothering Jesus, Jesus said, *"Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."* (Mark 10:14).

In fact, Jesus twice said:

"Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein." (Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17)

Adults need to be like children in order to receive the gospel. We need to have simple, child-like faith.

Illustration:

The America Culture and Faith Institute, founded by George Barna and the Barna Group, discovered that Americans are most likely to confess their sins and accept Jesus Christ as their savior – i.e., become born again – before they finish high school. Overall, two out of every three individuals who become born again (68%) do so before reaching the age of 18. Another 8% do so during the period traditionally thought of as college years (ages 18 to 21); 8% more do so from age 22 through 29; and another 8% do so during their thirties. Only 9% of adults accept Christ as their savior at age 40 or later.

The data indicated that the most fertile time for the gospel is when children are in the 10-to-12 age bracket: 20% accepted Christ during that window of time. Overall, three out of ten Christians embraced Jesus as their savior between the ages of 8-to-12.

Our VBS program may seem a little crazy to you, a little irreverent even; but if it brings little boys and girls in so that they can hear the gospel and receive Christ, it is not crazy at all.

Children will come to this that would not have come otherwise.

Children and adults will hear the gospel.

Children and adults will trust Christ as their Saviour, and will be saved.

Children who get saved go to Heaven when they die. They are eternally secure in Christ. They cannot lose their salvation.

Many who get saved as children, grow up to live for the Lord.

Conclusion

The Apostle Paul did what he did for the gospel's sake. He sacrificed everything, he served, and he suffered greatly so that people could hear the gospel and be saved.

What are you willing to do for the gospel's sake? What am I willing to do for the gospel's sake?

Here's what we can do:

- 1 We can participate – find out what needs to be done around here and get involved. For the gospel's sake. Ask Ashley what needs to be done at this VBS, and get in on it. You and I can have a part in the eternal salvation of a soul.
- 2 We can pray – Whatever our role might be in VBS, we all can pray that the gospel will have free course:

"Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:" (2 Thessalonians 3:1)

Pray that the weather is good.

Pray that God puts a hedge of protection around this place, and the children and their families.

Pray that nobody gets hurt.

Pray that God would work powerfully in the lives of these kids.

Pray that souls will be saved.

- 3 We can provide – Your giving enables us to do what we do so that people can be saved. All of this stuff costs money. Everything is expensive today. Please give.

Illustration – Stephanie, Lexi, Sisi, and Roman were reached as a direct result of a VBS program. Stephanie teaches in our Sunday School; Lexi is in Bible College. Issan was reached as a result of a soulwinning outreach geared for teens. He is now a deacon.

Illustration

A Philadelphia congregation watched as three 9-year-old boys were baptized and joined the church. Not long after, unable to continue with its dwindling membership, the church sold the building and disbanded.

One of the boys was Tony Campolo, who is now an author. He remembers: "Years later when I was doing research in the archives of our denominations, I decided to look up the church report for the year of my baptism. There was my name, and Dick White's. He's now a missionary. Bert Newman, now a professor of theology at an African seminary, was also there. Then I read the church report for 'my' year: 'It has not been a good year for our church. We have lost 27 members. Three joined, and they were only children.'"