

THE BLESSINGS OF THE GOSPEL

Preached by Rev. Samson Etuk Ekanem



The Gospel means good tidings, good news. The good news was brought by our Lord Jesus Christ. The Gospel is a living entity, the Gospel is a changeless Gospel; and the changeless

Gospel changes lives. The Gospel is wonderful. Everything may change in this world but the Gospel will remain forever.

"But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away:

"How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?

"For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. "For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remain eth is glorious" (2 Corinthians 3:7-9,11).

There are so many reasons why the old dispensation gave way to the new. Even though the old dispensation was glorious, it was the dispensation of death and condemnation. 'Do or die' was the ethics of the old dispensation. The Law was so strict that it took faith before the Children of Israel could observe it. Without faith, it was impossible for the Children of Israel to keep the Law. If a child was rebellious and disobedient to his parents, such a child would be taken out of the camp and stoned to death.

Under the new dispensation, the ethics is 'look and live.' Even though it is just 'look and live,' faith must be exercised. Without faith no one can receive any blessing from God. Before we can receive anything from God, the faith of the old time must be practised today. Without faith, we cannot please God. When we believe God and are saved from our lives of sin, the fear of death is removed from us. At sanctification, we have a holy and pure heart.

Why should a saved soul fear death? A saved soul should not fear death because he knows that death is the chariot that transports one to Heaven. The old dispensation was glorious but the new dispensation is more glorious. The Law was written with the finger of God on the Tables of Stone, but today, in the new dispensation, when one is saved and sanctified, the Word of God is written in his heart. It is our aspiration that the Word of God be written in our own hearts. It should be through your desire; God cannot force you. God will not write His Word by force in anybody's heart. But when you have a zeal, a desire for it, and you are saved, and sanctified, that is the time God writes His Word in your heart. This is a blessing of the Gospel.

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful" (Psalm 1:1).

The man with the Word of God written in his heart is a happy man. His happiness is neither a matter of riches nor poverty, knowledge nor ignorance. That is the blessing of the Gospel. When the Word of God is written in your heart, no matter the place you go, the Word of God will go with you. Even if you are in a place where there is no teacher or preacher, the Word of God will lead, safeguard, keep, help and protect you.

In the old dispensation, the Israelites were commanded to bring animals to the Tabernacle for sacrifice. Today, we come to worship God without bringing animals, because Jesus Christ is our sacrifice; He sacrificed Himself for our sins. This is a blessing of the Gospel.

The Bible explains the simplicity of the Gospel. Jesus is the Essence and Foundation of the Gospel. He laid down His life and made it very simple for us to worship God. The Bible says, "The sacrifices of God are a broken

spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." When we come to worship God, He doesn't demand bullocks or goats, but a contrite spirit.

The Gospel provides sufficient blessings for whosoever wants, but God will not force you to take them. If God would force someone to be a Christian, the whole world would have become Christians, because our God is powerful. But He wants your own freewill decision. If you want to be a Christian, obey His commandments and do what He requires. Then you will receive the blessings of God. People will know that you are a Christian, because they will see the bright and shining light in you.

The Bible says that you are the epistle written by our Lord Jesus Christ, not with ink, nor on the Tables of Stone, as the Ten Commandments, but written by the Spirit of God (2 Corinthians 3:2). Your life must be an open book for people to read, and through you, many people will be saved. That is the reason why Jesus is still keeping you alive and has not taken you to Heaven. We have not seen Jesus with our naked eyes, but we see Him in the life of a child of God. Let your light shine before men. Jesus Who saved you has made you a light, an epistle, and an open book to the world, so that people will read and understand the Gospel.

In the Old Testament, people were bound to keep the Law. But they longed for deliverance. The Gospel is far better than the Law and its ceremonies. The Apostle wrote that we should stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. This is a warning to you. Stand fast if you have been delivered from the bondage of sin, from sacrificing to idols and from the vanities of the world. It is the Gospel that delivers from all troubles and bondage. If you have been delivered from the things of the world by the Gospel, don't go back, stand fast — that is the way to Heaven. Stand for it. See the blessings of God and be a partaker of the Gospel.

The Scriptures say that our light affliction is for a moment but it works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. This is another blessing of the Gospel. The affliction, which a Christian has, is a great blessing to him because it brings him closer to God. The wicked people in the world are also afflicted but their afflictions have no benefits. When they have afflictions, afflictions have no benefits. When they have afflictions, they may not turn to God.

The way of the Gospel is not just a flowery bed of ease. When we are saved, sanctified and baptised with the Holy Ghost and fire, it does not mean we will not be afflicted, but the affliction will be for a purpose, a blessing. The afflictions may be disappointment, persecution, grief, sorrow, or accident. All these are afflictions, but God has a purpose for them.

Paul was definite about what he received from God and preached. He preached the Word of God with certainty. Paul established the Church in Galatia, and he preached the sound doctrine. The Gospel which Paul loved, is the same Gospel that you and I love. The Gospel that he preached is the sound Gospel that we preach today. When he was away, some Judaisers came to establish a new doctrine different from what Paul preached.

There are many churches around us today, but we thank God for the Gospel of Jesus Christ which is the sound and wonderful Gospel given to the world.

In these churches, where a large crowd of people worship, there are no mourner's benches where sinners could go and pray. You can't hear preaching on sanctification, (without which no man will see God) or on the baptism of the Holy Ghost, as Jesus taught. When Paul visited the Galatians again, he saw the people embracing unsound doctrine. That was why he spoke with certainty: 'I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel which is not another but there be some that trouble you and will pervert the Gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed' (Galatians 1:6-8). We preach a wonderful Gospel. The Bible has not changed: holiness is still holiness, righteousness is still righteousness. That is the sound doctrine. It is the way to Heaven.

The Gospel offers peace. There is no peace in the world, in wealth, or education, but in the Gospel there is peace. The Gospel offers happiness, which money cannot buy. If you are in trouble and sorrow, and you embrace the Gospel, happiness, joy and peace will be yours. The Gospel offers healing. Many who are sick have been healed. The Gospel offers protection. Many people have looked for protection here and there and could not find it, except in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The money, education or wealth they have cannot earn them respect, but the children of

God are the only people in the world who earn true respect because they embrace the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Most of all, the Gospel offers us Eternal Life. There is unity in the Gospel. When we gather together and remain in harmony, no matter where we come from, there is unity. If you are alone and you embrace the Gospel, you are no more alone. When you have a problem, other brethren share it with you. If you miss the Gospel, you miss everything - honour, respect, and peace.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

"As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the daylong; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

"Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35-39).

Is there anything that can separate you from the love of God? I don't think there should be, because the blessings of the Gospel are wonderful.

"And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

"They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover" (Mark 16: 17, 18).

Jesus Christ the Son of God, Who founded the Gospel, mentioned some of the blessings when He sent His disciples out. The theme of the message that Jesus gave His disciples was, *"Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* He sent His disciples to go and preach the Gospel to every creature, whether young or old, learned or unlearned. Whosoever believes and is baptised shall be saved, and he that believes not shall be damned.

The capstone of the blessings of the Gospel is the hope of Resurrection. Children of God have the hope of Eternal Life, the hope of the First Resurrection. (2 Corinthians 4:1 3,1 4). We live in the world where we have tribulations, suffer sicknesses and all sorts of afflictions, problems, persecution and accidents, but only the physical body is subject to all these. However, a time is coming when there will be a great change. God is going to change us! This mortal body that feels pain, sickness, accident, tribulations or affliction of any kind, will be changed in the twinkling of an eye, when the trumpet sounds. (1 Corinthians 15:54). This is a wonderful blessing of the Gospel.

Man has been given the freedom to choose between good and evil. Choose for yourself today, either to believe the Gospel and be blessed, or reject the Gospel and be damned. Danger is coming. Eternal death is coming. Embrace the Gospel of Jesus Christ today!

Rev. Samson Etuk Ekanem was the District Overseer of the Gospel work in Akwa Ibom/Cross River, Oyo/Osun, Imo/Abia States of Nigeria at different periods between 1969 and 1995. He was also a member of the Board of Trustees of The Apostolic Faith work in Nigeria. Rev. Ekanem was called Home on September 12 1995.