

**BAD NEWS AND THE GOSPEL?**

*"And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people. (Luke 3:18)."*

Gospel means "good news." What is curious is John the Baptist's preaching on the surface sounds like anything but good news. Luke's summary of John's preaching contains repeated references to the wrath of God, which sounds like bad news.

*"Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Luke 3:7)*

*"And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." (Luke 3:9)*

*"Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable." (Luke 3:17)*

Why does Luke characterize John's preaching as good news? Keep in mind that these were warnings, not mere predictions. John was telling the people that judgment and wrath were coming, but there was a way to be saved. That was the good news. Often times we do not like to talk about judgment and wrath. But not talking about it doesn't do anything to lessen the reality of it all. John warned of it here. Jesus does so many times (Matt 7:19; Mark 9:44; ). Paul does (2 Thess 1:8); Peter does (2 Pet 3:7). Even Paul's sermon on Mars hill to those unfamiliar with the true God concludes with a warning:

*"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." (Acts 17:30-31)*

I could go on and on, but you get the picture. There are a lot of warnings in nearly every book of the Bible about God's judgment and wrath. It is not pleasant. It is not something we want to dwell on. It is not something we need to dwell on. We have been taken out of the kingdom of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of light, however, not dwelling on it does not mean we should ignore it.

It is good to talk about the proofs that God has provided, such as raising Jesus from the dead. It is good to discuss how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament promises. We should share who Jesus is and what he accomplished at the cross and tomb. But do not avoid the messages of sin and judgment. Hell is real every bit as much as death is real. Ignoring it will not make it go away. Teaching about it doesn't lessen the goodness of the good news in any way. If anything it strengthens it. Bringing it to the attention of your loved ones doesn't make you mean. It may be the most compassionate thing you can do. After all, we do want them to be saved. It also can wake sleepy people up to the urgency of the gospel.

*-Larry Fife*

# THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

*"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)*

A little girl went up to her mother one day while holding her stomach saying, "Mommy, my stomach hurts." Her mother replied, "That's because it's empty. You have to put something into it!" She then prepared a bowl of soup.

Later that day the preacher and his wife came over for dinner. The preacher began to feel bad. Holding his head he said, "I have such a terrible headache!" The little girl looked up at him, giving him a sweet smile, and said, "That's because it's empty. You have to put something into it!"

**A GODLY ADDICTION**

Text: \_\_\_\_\_

I. A Ministry of \_\_\_\_\_

A. Without \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_

B. Without \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_

II. A Ministry of \_\_\_\_\_

A. For \_\_\_\_\_

B. For \_\_\_\_\_

III. A Ministry of \_\_\_\_\_

A. The \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_

B. The \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_

**THE P.L.O.M. DISEASE**

Years ago, when a childhood friend of ours was in a foul mood and complaining bitterly about almost everything, her mother would, sooner or later, interrupt the proceedings. “Melinda,” she would say. “It seems to me that you’ve got a bad case of P.L.O.M.” This was an abbreviation her mother used for “Poor Little Old Me” disease. She would then send Melinda to her room with a paper and pencil to write down a list of things she ought to be thankful for. When the list was long enough and her attitude improved enough to satisfy her mother—she would let Melinda rejoin the group.

We all, adults as well as well as children, occasionally overemphasize the good. Some of us do it a lot more than others. Yet the fact is, we all have things to be thankful for. It’s also a fact that, no matter what your situation, things could always be worse. We all like cheerful people more than gloomy ones.

When you personally are suffering from “Poor Little Old Me” disease, it might help to do what Melinda’s mother had her do. Take a pencil and paper and write down some of the things you ought to be thankful for. Then start being thankful and cheer up!

*“In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” (I Thessalonians 5:18)*

**WHO IS JESUS?**

- To the artist, He is Altogether Lovely.
- To the astronomer, He is the Sun of Righteousness and the Bright and Morning Star.
- To the baker, He is the Living Bread.
- To the biologist, He is the Life.
- To the builder, He is the Sure Foundation.
- To the carpenter, He is the Door.
- To the doctor, He is the Great Physician.
- To the editor, He is the Good Tidings of Great Joy.
- To the educator, He is the Great Teacher.
- To the engineer, He is the New and Living Way.
- To the farmer, He is the Sower, the True Vine, and the Lord of Harvest.
- To the florist, He is the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley.
- To the geologist, He is the Rock of Ages.
- To the hopeless, He is our Hope.
- To the juror, He is the Faithful and True Witness.
- To the jeweler, He is the Pearl of Great Price.
- To the lawyer, He is the Counselor, the Lawgiver, the Righteous Judge, and the Advocate.
- To the philosopher, He is the Wisdom of God.
- To the proud, He is the Rebuker.
- To the sculptor, He is the Living Stone.
- To the straying sheep, He is the Good Shepherd.
- To those who suffer, He is the Comforter.
- To the thirsty pilgrim, He is the Water of Life.
- To the troubled soul, He is the Pacifier.
- To the sinner, He is the Saviour.
- To the Christian, He is the All in All.

**UNDERSTANDING THE CHRISTIAN VIEWPOINT**

A Christian feels supreme love for the One whom he has never seen, talks familiarly every day to Someone he cannot see, expects to go to heaven on the virtue of Another, empties himself in order to be full, admits he is wrong so he can be declared right, goes down in order to get up, is strongest when he is weakest, richest when he is poorest, and happiest when he mourns. He dies so he can live, forsakes in order to have, given away so he can keep, sees the invisible, and knows that which passeth knowledge. “...God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise...” (I Corinthians 1:27).

## WHO IS GOD?

*“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork.”* The Psalmist, being inspired by God, certainly knew what he was talking about. Even if no other evidence was provided, man could sufficiently know that there is a God simply based on the basic design of the universe in which we live. However, thanks be to God that, in His infinite wisdom, He saw fit to provide additional proof of His existence. You see, that is because through nature man can know there is a God, but he cannot come to know God. In order to know God there must be a means through which man can know about God and understand, to some extent, who God is. The only means through which that could be accomplished was by God revealing Himself to man in some way.

In John 1:18, information is provided to let man know how he cannot come to know God. John recorded, *“No man hath seen God at any time...”* In other words, man cannot know God through physical senses such as sight for the countenance of God is far too glorious for mortal man to behold. However, John then went about to explain the means by which God can be known. *“...The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”* Wherein God could not be known through physical sensation, Christ brought with Him all that is necessary to know God. But what could that be?

Earlier in the chapter John is quoted as saying, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth”* (John 1:1-14). Who else could this Word be than Christ? And as Christ is the Word, and He is the source through which the Father hath been declared unto the world, then would the revealed word of God not be the means through which man might come to know God?

I can know that you exist by doing nothing more than looking at you. Your physical presence is sufficient evidence to prove your existence. But without having some sort of knowledge about you revealed to me by you or another source, then I can never truly come to know you or who you are. Such is the case with God. His existence is evident from His physical creation, yet knowing of Him is not sufficient to say that one knows Him. In order to know Him then careful attention must be given to what He hath declared unto us.

Therefore, what does inspired revelation indicate as to whom God is?

- God is one (Mark 12:32).
- God is true (John 3:33).
- God is a Spirit (John 4:24).
- God is faithful (I Corinthians 1:9).
- God is the judge of all (Hebrews 12:23).
- God is light (I John 1:5).
- God is love (I John 4:8).
- God is (Exodus 3:14).

By no means is this, or can there be, a complete list of God's qualities and characteristics, but maybe these brief descriptions help in revealing somewhat who it is that we as Christians have dedicated our lives to. In Psalm 46:10, the Lord's plea is *“Be still, and know that I am God...”* How is this possible? By examining who He claims to be and what He has proven of Himself, comparing the two, and realizing His glory, might, power, and dominion. Come to know who God is today through studying His word and applying His desires to your life. Then and only then will you truly know who God is.

-Andy Brewer