

## Good News for Bad People



David Wilkerson September 1, 1981

I stood in the middle of Times Square in New York city, watching the mad parade of sinners flaunting their wickedness, and my spiritual blood began to boil. It was just after midnight and the sin-crowd was coming up out of the subways, converging on Times Square and 42nd Street from all over the city.

The underground crowd actually takes over the heart of New York after dark. Pale, sickly looking homosexuals pour onto the streets from their little one-room flop houses and cheap hotels. Teen-age junkies hang around in the theater lobbies, exchanging their stolen dollars for drugs of all descriptions. Others roam the streets aimlessly, stoned out of their senses. Scantily-clad prostitutes boldly grasp the arm of every passing man, trying to latch onto their next trick. Dirty old men and sex-crazed students drift in and out of x-rated theaters and peep shows. Sadomasochists parade around in drag — some with purple hair and cheeks pierced with safety pins. Cadillacs and sports cars pull up to the curb and the drivers brazenly purchase their drugs. The cops look the other way. Lesbians walk along arm in arm, flaunting their perversion. Poor, sad-eyed perverts slouch in theater seats to gape at films that feature blood, violence, mutilations and sadomasochist tortures of all kinds.

It is so hellish, you have to pinch yourself to make sure you are not in a dream about Dante's inferno. And even though I've been ministering on these same streets for nearly 23 years, this time it finally got to me. The wickedness is overpowering; the demonic spirits so numerous; the true lovers of Christ feel a kind of spiritual suffocation while walking in the midst of it all.

My heart began to cry out, "Oh God, what do I preach to this insane multitude? What is Your message to these whose eyes are so full of lust and perversion? Is there any help for them at all?"  
The Prosperity Message? Never!

I knew in the deep of my heart that the message of Christian prosperity and success so prevalent in the nation today will never help these poor lost souls.

I don't believe in a "welfare" Christ, who puts cash in your pocket, gives you a new Cadillac and a suburban home, success, and immunity from all suffering — if you only learn to master a certain quality or quantity of faith.

These street people are already suspicious of religion now being only for the rich and successful. Most of the young people I talk to who live in the ghetto tell me they are convinced the Gospel is now a "racket" with rich preachers who love Rolls Royces.

One Black teen-ager said, "I've tried everything to make it and nothing works. I'm tired of being poor. I guess I'll have to try religion; it seems to be the only way nowadays to make it big."

I refuse to preach a gospel that exempts people from suffering. Paul the apostle said, "Thou hast fully known my doctrine...one of long suffering, persecution...afflictions...which came to me...and I endured them...but out of them all the Lord delivered me" (2 Timothy 3:10,11).

It was Paul who said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ..." I once believed that meant, "I am not ashamed to

stand up for Jesus. I am not ashamed of the stigma of the Gospel."

But that is not what it means. It has nothing at all to do with boldness, but rather suffering. Paul said, "Let our Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus; for he has often refreshed me, and he was not ashamed of the chains of my imprisonment" (2 Timothy 1:16).

Paul was thanking God that his student was not ashamed that his teacher was in jail — and that a great faith preacher was suffering in chains.

Yet we have ministers today who are ashamed of Paul's suffering. I heard one say recently, "If Paul would have had revelation knowledge such as we have today, he would not have suffered. It was his own lack of knowledge that kept him poor and sickly."

What horrible blasphemy! They are ashamed of Paul! They make light of his poverty and suffering. How unlike the Galatian Christians, who so respected this suffering man. Paul wrote to them saying, "You know how, through infirmity, I preached the gospel unto you...and my temptation which was in the flesh, you despised not, nor rejected, but received me as an angel of God..." (Galatians 4:14).

I believe the Holy Ghost is about to vomit this "Christian humanism: out of His church. God will not much longer permit rich Christians to justify their affluent lifestyle with a prosperity theology. The so-called prosperity gospel is producing an arrogant, selfish, grasping, materialistic kind of Christian. Armed with prosperity Scriptures from the Old Testament, and a few taken out of context from the New, they shamelessly pursue a life of endless accumulation of worldly goods. It is causing people to set their affections on the things of this world. The starving masses of the world are ignored by them because they are too wrapped up in their whirlwind pursuit of success, wealth, and perfect health. They want a fantasy world free of all struggles, beds of ivory, the sweet smell of roses and success, where no sickness or sorrow is permitted. There is nothing sinful in being prosperous or successful — the sin lies in making material things the object of faith. It is not sinful to enjoy the good things in life — but it is sinful to become selfishly involved in the pursuit of things.

There is no such world! It's a lie! And one day when the fiery test of faith comes, those who are not prepared by the Word for tribulations and testings will turn on these teachers with bitterness, crying, "You deceived us."

I knew, standing there at Times Square, that I could never win a single soul through such a deceptive message — because I know that soldiers of the Cross do endure hardness, as they partake of the fellowship of Christ's suffering.

What About Starting a Moral Crusade?

After all, crusades against immorality are quite popular today. The majority of Christians today are fed up with the sinful flaunting of perversion and corruption. So the recent moral crusades are an outgrowth of an inner rage against the boldness and audacity of wicked men. In our feelings of helplessness, we don't know what to do — so we curse the darkness.

That night in Times Square, my blood was boiling because of what I saw. San Francisco had the same effect on me. I sat dumbfounded in a homosexual church there, as the minister closed the meeting by saying, "I hereby absolve you of all your sins." He claimed to be forgiving all their sins.

Their church bulletin angered me deeply. I quote their announcements:

Monday night — Wine tasting party in church basement.

Tuesday — All night drag party: bring your lover.

Wednesday — Prayer meeting, followed by disco and beer bash.

Thursday — Gay Rights caucus.

Friday — Gay cruise — moonlight dancing, drinking.

Saturday — Gay Pride dance: fund raising for gay rights.

Certainly this kind of flaunted sensuality offends any normal Christian. But even though I was angry at these brazen sinners, Christ Jesus was not.

The thought hit me so hard — "Jesus still loves hostile, alienated sinners. He died for them all — no matter how evil or bold in sin they may be."

Good News For Bad People!

Suddenly, the truth broke through to my soul — the message God wants delivered to these lost sinners is GRACE! Grace means God's favor and forgiveness to sinners — freely given, undeserved, unmerited, unearnable, unrepayable.

I argued with the Lord, "But I can't preach such good news to such bad people. It doesn't seem fair! They are evil — they need to hear about your wrath and judgment against their sins."

But instead, the Holy Spirit prompted me to tell them God still loves them. Listen to the language of faith: "You sinners who are hostile, alienated, strangers to the Gospel, without hope, without God, living in darkness, bound by the chains of your iniquity — God is not mad at you! He wants you to be reconciled to Himself through Jesus Christ."

- "For God was in Christ who has reconciled the world with his majesty — not counting their sins against them; and has committed to us the word of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:19 ancient Manuscript [A.M.]).
- "God has manifested his love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us...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" (Romans 5:8,10).
- "At that time you were without Christ...alienated...strangers to the covenant...without hope and without God in the world. But now through Jesus Christ, you who were sometimes far off are brought near by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:12,13).

We simply do not understand how God can still love the sadomasochist, the addict, the lesbian and homosexual, the prostitute, the massage parlor people, the pornographer, yes — and even the rapist and murderer. We don't comprehend this marvelous grace of God that offers forgiveness and reconciliation to anyone who repents and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ!

But it's true! We can boldly go out where the sinners are breaking loose — and tell them with all assurance that God is calling them back to Himself.

Even Christians Need This Message of Grace!

Martin Luther, the father of the protestant reformation, said, "I fear lest this doctrine [of grace] will be defaced and darkened again, after we are gone."

That is exactly what has happened — the church of Jesus Christ has, for the most part, forgotten Luther's message of full and free forgiveness and righteousness by faith.

His battle cry was, "The just shall live by faith." He said, "Satan loveth such saints, who try to earn this righteousness — who destroy their own bodies and souls, and deprive themselves of all the blessings of Christ's grace...Outwardly they seem to excel all others in good works..."

We do take sin too lightly! It's true! We have no shame about sin; we've grown too loose in our morals. We sin nowadays without much guilt, if any. We have mostly abandoned the fear of God and concern about the Judgment Day. It's a laid back society, a church at ease, with sin and pleasure and pursuit of happiness the goal.

As a minister of Christ's Gospel — I'm alarmed! I'm alarmed by all the sin and lust so freely indulged in; by the apathy and compromise in the church — the fading moral standards — and by the liberal bend of my own mind about what is right or wrong. Things I once deplored and preached against now seem tame and innocent.

So I want to do something about it! I want to scream aloud, "Hey, we aren't feeling guilt like we should! We don't condemn sin in our society and in our personal lives. We don't seem to regret it when we sin; it's getting too easy to do what the crowd is doing."

Yes! I want to see more guilt for sin. I want to feel condemned. I want to cry it aloud from the pulpit, "Shame on you! Shame on me! We're too soft on sin. Where's the old fashioned guilt for sin?!"

I want to see more of the fear of God! I want to thunder against the nudity, sensuality, drunkenness, adultery. I want to cry out, "The eternal fire of a godless hell upon all who sin and grieve God!"

I want to see more self denial! More separation and withdrawal from the world. I want to cry aloud, "We are too much like the world. Our music is the same; our habits are becoming alike; we go where the sinner goes; we do what he does. We are no longer a peculiar people!"

It sounds so much like the Old Testament prophets — to denounce sin and bring down the judgment of God on compromisers! But Jesus works on a higher law! A law so awesome it is more powerful than guilt, condemnation, or fear. It is love!

Christ refuses to put a weight of guilt upon anyone. He said He did not come to condemn the world, but to save men from their sins. The Cross was meant to let the guilty go free and allow Christ's followers the peace and blessedness of forgiveness.

No yokes of bondage! No condemnation! No thundering fear! But access — free and simple! Is that too good to be true? Do you find such goodness and love hard to accept? Here is proof:

- "Despiseth thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Romans 2:4).
- "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are wiped away. Blessed is the man whose sins God will not hold against him" (Romans 4:7,8 A.M.).
- "For the heart that believes in him shall be declared righteous" (Romans 10:10 A.M.).

But isn't that just what compromising Christians want to hear? If we tell them God doesn't put guilt on them — if they don't feel condemned — if they don't live under the fear of His wrath — won't they just ease their consciences even more and sin to the limits? Isn't it a mistake to preach the love of Christ to a failing Christian? Won't he take it as a sign that God is easy on sin? If God loves us so much and is so forgiving — why not just go on sinning?

But love is a burden far greater than guilt, fear, or condemnation! We have only our bodies to give back to God to show our love. In eternity, the choice will have been sealed. Only in time does a person have the right to choose to love God. We were born to love Him. We are redeemed because we accept His love!

The rejection of God's love, through Christ, is the damning sin. Think of it. Jesus is saying, "Go to the world. Don't put a guilt trip on anyone. Don't condemn. Don't try to make anyone more fearful than they already are. It is a world of fear and torment already. Tell them they are loved. They are forgiven, if they will simply accept My offer!"

Christ gave His life because He loved! Not because He was angry! Or vindictive! Or seeking retribution! Christ's Cross is reconciliation [peace with God]!

But what happens when a soul turns down this great and marvelous love? Talk about guilt! Shame! Condemnation! Fear! That's what the whole world sits in fear of right now. God says: "I have made it so simple. I want to love you, forgive you, save you. How can you expect to get away with turning such an offer down?"

Not guilt for sin! Not condemnation because of compromise. But guilt for rejecting Christ's love! Rejection of God's offer of complete forgiveness and grace is the sin that will draw the unbelieving.

Holiness has its roots in love! No commandments. No rules. No law. No heavy burdens of ordinances. But love! He says, "I love you! I forgive you! I want you as My friend — no strings attached! No works! No personal obligation! Take it by faith!"

How can anyone not feel guilt, shame, and condemnation for turning down such an offer?

So guilt is not the key! Shame, fear, or condemnation won't work. So what is the key? To accept the unsearchable

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love of God in Christ Jesus. It is a love that pities our frailty, a love that is longsuffering, merciful, and kind. Even when we don't pray as we should — or witness, or study, or worship. He love us even when we are cold, lukewarm, living in failure, despair, and doubt. He still loves us as His dear children, so much so, He disciplines us to prove that love over and over again.

- "Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" (Hebrews 12:5,6).

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