

Evangelicals, Repent! (Interview W/ Paul Washer)

by Kevin Swanson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of the gospel, repentance, and faith in Jesus Christ, and warns against the dangers of gospel reductionism and a lack of understanding of true repentance.

Duration: 29:15

Scripture: Psalm 119:105, Matthew 6:33, Acts 20:21, Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Topics: "Interview"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the issue of gospel reductionism in our society, where the true message of the gospel has been simplified and diluted. He emphasizes the importance of reassessing our understanding of the gospel and seeking the truth. The speaker highlights four texts in the Bible that clearly define the gospel of Jesus Christ. He also discusses the offensive nature of the gospel, as it challenges man's self-centered worldview and presents the problem of sin.

Transcript

Welcome, my friends, to the Generations radio broadcast. This is Kevin Swanson broadcasting from my basement out here in the eastern plains of Colorado, from the Shepherd Center, surrounded by young men that are helping us with the video and audio for this particular edition of the Generations broadcast. But, my friends, hey, we are living in a time where faith, family, and freedom are dying, and the reason family and freedom dies is because faith dies.

So the root of the problems that you see around you, the reason we live in a nation that's no longer Christian, but at one time had a rich Christian heritage, the reason you are losing your liberties is because nobody fears God as they ought to. We're losing a concept of the Christian faith. But then again, once we lose the concept of the Christian faith, you've got to ask yourself the question, what is the Christian faith? What is the gospel? I'd say an important question, if you believe that God exists and God cares about what's going on on planet Earth.

If you believe that there is a place of judgment, if you believe there is such a thing as heaven and hell, then I would think it would be important for you from time to time to reassess the question, hey, what is the gospel? What is the truth? Well, the gospel is pretty clearly laid out in the Bible. There's four texts that pretty much identify what the gospel of Jesus Christ, what the Christian faith is all about. You'll find them in

the Gospels and in the entire New Testament.

Revelation 14 says, I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them, saying with a loud voice, fear God. Okay, so there it is. Number one, the gospel is to fear God.

So wherever you have people talking about the fear of God, there must be something about the gospel. It's one of the reasons why on this radio program we're constantly saying the beginning of wisdom and knowledge is the fear of God. Any form of education, any form of bequeathal of knowledge or wisdom that does not include a factor called the fear of God is the very fundamental, basic building block of all of knowledge.

You don't have the truth. You don't have the gospel. You don't have any kind of a Christian faith going on.

The gospel includes the fear of God. 1 Corinthians chapter 15 says the gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So that's part of the gospel.

You got to fear God, and then you got to start believing that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was dead, buried, and was risen on the third day. Matthew 28 says the gospel is to go out throughout the entire world. You baptize people, and then you teach them to observe whatsoever Jesus has commanded.

So I would say the gospel includes whatsoever Jesus has commanded, because you got to teach that kind of stuff in order for them to observe whatsoever things Jesus has commanded. Acts chapter 20 also boils down the ministry, the gospel ministry, of the apostle Paul, who said, I came to you, you folks in Ephesus, and I preached faith in Jesus Christ and repentance towards God. Both faith and repentance, vital parts, vital parts of the gospel.

A lot of people say, well, I've heard about Jesus. I gave my heart to Jesus a long time ago. I believe in Jesus.

I believe, I believe, I believe in Jesus. But they never, ever, ever heard the message of the gospel, which includes a message concerning repentance. They say, well, repentance, what is that? Metanoeo in the Greek refers to a change of heart and mind, a change of direction in your life, a change in perspective towards God, towards sin, towards His law, towards righteousness.

Repentance is basic. If you are a Christian, if you're going to heaven, you got to be a repenting person. Ain't going to be any unrepentant person going to heaven.

Holiness is something we seek after without which no man shall see the Lord. Well, ladies and gentlemen, just talking about some of the basics of the gospel of Jesus Christ today on this edition of Generations, but there are other people very concerned about the dying of the faith in America. That includes a man named Paul Washer.

And in 2002, Paul Washer spoke to 5,000 screaming, teena-bopping, Southern Baptist kids at some youth conference, and he got serious with them. At one point, he turned to them and said, why are you clapping? I'm talking to you. Paul Washer is passionate about the gospel, and he's afraid that there are a lot of people going to nice little evangelical churches that don't have a concept.

Paul Washer is going to share from his heart in just a moment on this radio program, Generations. Stay with me, folks. Folks, we are in the middle of the greatest recession since World War II.

Unemployment continues to rise after 22 months of recession. Will the national bailouts and the massive redistribution of the wealth into irresponsible banks really help the situation? Will John Maynard Keynes' fractional reserve indebted system work out in the long run? I mean, he didn't think it was going to work in the long run. If you're a Christian father and mother and you care about the future of your children and grandchildren, I'm telling you, it's time to work on Plan B. That's why we're doing a family economics conference coming up here on March 5th and 6th, 2010.

This will be a hands-on practical conference bringing biblical perspectives to bear in every area of family economics. We're talking work. We're talking family entrepreneurship, debt-free living, contractual employment, inheritance, being a faithful employee, taking care of aging parents, living without Social Security, which by the way will happen, saving in investments, retirement, family charity, education, mentorship, taxation, healthcare decisions, seeking employment, raising dominion-minded daughters.

We have found the best speakers in America who have studied and written on biblical family economics. It's time to work on Plan B, my friends. If you have a family and you are living in the American economy today, you need to check out this family economics conference on March 5th and 6th, 2010.

Check it out at KevinSwanson.com. That's KevinSwanson.com. Check it out now. And we're back on the Generations Radio broadcast today. The topic is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a very, very important question, vitally important for ourselves and for our children.

And with me is a man who has been writing on this, speaking on this topic for a long time. Paul Washer is Director of HeartCry Missions. He homeschools three children in Muscle Shoals, Alabama.

Paul, welcome to the Generations broadcast. Paul, it was a delight working with you at the Cincinnati Conference, Sufficiency of Scripture Conference, and maybe we should start right there. I think it's a passion of mine to bring the authority, the sufficiency, the adequacy of the Word of God back.

It's been largely displaced by fun stories, by anecdotes, by humorous presentations, by video clips, by man psychology, etc., etc., and in the end we lose the message. Right. That is very, very true.

It's all because we simply have a distrust in the power of God's Word. That's right. And the Spirit of God, working through that.

As you preach the Gospel, there's much in the Gospel itself that's offensive. What is that? What is offensive about the Gospel of Christ? Well, first of all, man sees himself, especially in our culture, as the very center of the universe. The Gospel doesn't begin with man.

It begins with God and who He is. When it finally does reach man, it is not good news. The problem in the universe is man, and man does not want to see himself that way.

That's the bad news. But if they don't get the bad news, I think somebody once said they'll never ever appreciate the good news. It's sort of a synopsis of the problem, isn't it? Yes, it is.

I like to use the illustration of the sun and the stars. You get up later on in the day and you see no stars out. It's not because they're removed.

It's just because the light of the sun has made it impossible for you to see all the stars. In the same way, you cannot see the glory of God's grace apart from the backdrop of man's radical depravity. Exactly.

And that's got to be presented in some form. As we look at our nation and we look at evangelicalism, it does appear that things are falling apart. Newsweek magazine a couple of months ago came out with an article called, The End of Christian America.

At one time we had a Christian heritage of some sort. Now we don't. Where does the fault lie for that? I think the fault lies primarily in we have just walked away from Scripture.

We've come to believe that the Scripture is not enough, that somehow we have to do something to bring men to God. What we are required to do is to proclaim the truth, the full counsel of God's Word, and the power of the Holy Spirit. We know that if we preach in that manner, God will gather for himself a people because he has promised his Christ that he would give him a people from every tribe and every nation.

It is a lack of confidence in the God of the Word and the Word of God. Which is really the root of good preaching when it comes down to it. As I hear you preach, Paul, I get the sense that you believe the stuff that you are preaching.

Yes. The Bible has been used of God for the last 27 years of my life to change it and transform it. It is still doing that.

As I look through human history, I see the greatest transforming factor in the history of man being a return to the Bible, a return to the Scriptures. When you recognize that God is all-powerful, and you also recognize that men are radically depraved and they cannot be manipulated to God, they cannot be manipulated by human eloquence, the only thing that can change a man is the power of God. You cut yourself off from every confidence in the flesh with regard to the ministry, and you trust only in the proclamation of God's Word, the Spirit of God, intercessory prayer, and sacrificial service.

It is a real important contrast between the confidence in self and the confidence in the God behind the Word. Those are two forms of confidence. You need confidence to do anything in life and to be a good leader, but boy, as pastors, preachers, evangelists, it is critical for us that we not yield anything to confidence in the flesh, but everything in God.

That's exactly right. And here's another important issue. It can't be 90% confidence in God and His Word, and then throw in some stuff from humanism.

It is better to be all and out humanistic than it is for you to try to make some truce between what we would see as the science of humanism and the Scriptures. We have to stand up there as men, knowing that we are preaching to dead men, and the only way they can come to life is through supernatural resurrection. It's a work of God.

And watering down the Word is not what God wants in this. I mean, God has assigned the means of preaching His Word to bring about radical transformation to peoples and families. And if we start to compromise on that Word in order to kowtow to the humanists of the day, we're just contributing to the ongoing massive apostasy in the West.

I don't understand why preachers still do it. We're losing people. We're losing the faith.

The faith is dying. Why compromise now? Right. As a matter of fact, right now provides us with one of the greatest opportunities we've ever had.

It is living in a non-Christian culture that we're able to act like first century Christians. And they stood upon the Word of God. It was a work of the Word, a work of the Spirit of God.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, speaking with Paul Washer from HeartCry Missions. He has a passion for reaching people with the true gospel of Jesus Christ. A lot of false ones out there, and it's important to say that at this point.

And Paul, I really truly believe we are in the greatest apostasy, numbers-wise, that we've ever seen in thousands of years, largely because we're coming out of a Christianized Europe, Canada, America, and people are turning away from this faith by the millions and millions and millions. Now, you spoke to a youth conference something like seven years ago, and you spoke with tremendous passion and concern for the souls of these young men and young women. What did you say? What did you tell them? Well, primarily, our country has gone through what I call a gospel reductionism, where almost everyone believes they're Christian, and it's actually the fault of the preachers.

We've taken the glorious gospel of our blessed God and reduced it down to four spiritual laws, or five things God wants you to know. Let me give you an example. If today, in modern evangelism, an average evangelist will walk up to someone and say, do you know your sinner? If the person says yes, then they're immediately ready to go on to the next question.

Well, would you like to go to heaven? If they say yes, then the next question is, would you like to pray and ask Jesus to come into your heart? If they say yes, then they pray and ask Jesus into their heart, and then the person is asked, did he come in? If the person says, well, I don't know, then the evangelist says, well, of course he did, because Jesus doesn't lie and he promised to come in if you ask him. Well, let's just look at that for a moment. First of all, do you know you're a sinner? Well, that doesn't matter.

If the person answers yes, it means nothing. The devil knows he's a sinner. The question should be this.

Since I have preached the gospel to you, the full counsel of God, has God done such a work in your heart that the sin you once loved you're now beginning to hate? Then the question is not, do you want to go to heaven? Everybody wants to go to heaven. They just don't want God to be there when they get there. The question is, do you want God? Do you esteem God now? After hearing this message I've proclaimed to you, has God done such a work in your heart that there's literally a paradigm shift, that you desire Christ, you see, as worth? Then the call or the invitation to the gospel is not, would you like to pray a prayer and ask Jesus to come in? The call is a command.

God commands all men everywhere to repent and believe the gospel. Then we should explain to them what repentance is and allow them to judge their life based on Scripture, whether or not there's been a work of repentance. We explain to them what faith is and allow them to judge by comparing their life to Scripture, whether they have truly believed.

Then there are the gospel warnings that preachers no longer give. That is this, the true evidence of conversion at that moment will be the ongoing work of God in your life, particularly in the work of sanctification. These things are never taught.

Plus, when we come down to the gospel, I always say this, this gospel isn't so much, this country isn't so much gospel hardened as it is gospel ignorant. It's gospel ignorant because most of its ministers are. Let me give you an example.

Let's say that we have a Bible institute or a Bible seminary or something. You know, I always ask students the question, how many semesters did you study only the gospel of Jesus Christ? People say, well, I don't even know what you're talking about. It's a given that the gospel is Christianity 101, that you learn it in just a few minutes and go on.

Yet the gospel is the greatest truth that we have in the Scriptures and the greatest truth we have to proclaim. I think it's critical to bring together what you said, faith and repentance. They're both absolutely essential.

Paul in Acts 20 says, I preach faith towards Christ and repentance towards God to you while I was with you in Ephesus. That was a summary of what he was doing, but it seems to me we're getting kind of a watered down version of whatever faith is, but we're losing the idea of repentance. Why don't you define repentance? Because I think this is key.

Well, repentance, first of all, is dealing with the change of mind. It is. That's the basic meaning in the New Testament.

We also see that in the Old Testament. It is a change of mind. Some would say a change of heart.

But here's what you've got to understand about the mind and the heart. When the Bible speaks about the mind and the Bible speaks about the heart, it's talking about the very center of your being, the very essence of who you are. When someone says, well, they repented with their mind, but that was it.

But no, they did not repent with their mind. If the mind, the heart of an individual, the very core of who they are, if they have changed their manner of viewing reality, it is going to affect the rest of their life. It is going to affect every aspect of their life.

And it leads to repentance is we are walking away from God and we are thinking wrong thoughts about self, wrong thoughts about reality itself. When we repent, our mind is changed. We begin to see everything in a different light.

A perfect example of this is Paul the Apostle on the road to Damascus. Just think about this. When Christ appears to him, his entire view of reality itself was shattered.

Here he is going to persecute a bunch of people that he thought were blasphemers and the very enemies of God. He discovers that he is persecuting the very people of God almost as a pharaoh. He believes that the man Jesus is nothing more than a blasphemer and a disgusting rebel, a lawless beast of a man, only to find out that he is the Son of the Living God.

It would be like us getting up in the morning and the color of the sky being completely orange or green and the grass being blue and everything being changed. That is what repentance is. It is a completely different view of life that is now orientated towards the Word of God and it is that affecting the rest of our life, the way we walk, the way we talk, the way our life is orientated.

It is not to say that everything changes overnight, but that process begins and it is a radical process. Here is the thing about repentance and faith that people do not understand. You can get in trouble on this truth either way.

I will have young people who have come up to me who have been reading the Puritans and things which I delight in that. What they have done is they have got this view of a perfect biblical Puritan repentance and faith and they say to themselves, I do not possess that, therefore I am lost. They realize that faith and repentance are two things that are also subject to sanctification.

When I was saved I repented, but my repentance at that moment, though genuine, it was very meager compared to my life now after 27 years. It is the same way with my faith. It would be better perhaps to say, when did you start believing and start repenting because you do not want to be saying, I started repenting and believing and then I stopped and that was the end of it, but I know I am saved.

True repentance, true faith continues on and on. It is a continual process here. Jesus said when he came to Israel, the time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe the gospel. Both those commands are present tense imperatives. What he is basically saying is the time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand, now spend the rest of your life repenting.

Exactly. It is a state of being. We walk in a state of being where we are trusting, holding to Christ and hopefully the knuckles are getting whiter as the years go by and God is opening up our eyes to more areas in our lives that need to be changed.

Another thing that is amazing about repentance, again the old writers talked about this, was repentance from good works. We are not only repenting from sin, but we are repenting from any confidence whatsoever in the flesh. The purpose of trials and struggles and great hardships and pains throughout the Christian life to wean us away from any confidence in our own virtue and merit.

Paul, this is the gospel. It has been around for a long time and I think what has happened is we have lost our grip on what it really was. Hence my problem with evangelicalism today.

I am not sure that people have a real solid grasp on these things. I am having a hard time calling myself an evangelical anymore. Right.

When that term was coined I believe it really did have meaning. Nowadays, for example, even if an unbeliever looks at the full scope of people who called them evangelicals they would find so little in common. I can say I would find little in common myself.

Here is one of the great problems. When you make grand assumptions, for example, when we assume that a person knows the gospel. We assume just because they were supposedly led to the Lord that they understand the gospel.

Then they go on to Bible college. It is assumed they already understand the gospel so we are going to teach them other things. Very few people understand the gospel.

One of the things that I like to do when I sit down with a person, if I am on an airplane or something, I will just ask them, let me ask you a question. Have you ever really understood the gospel? I was preaching several years ago and this is what I preached. I preached that God is a just God and a good God.

Therefore, he merely cannot turn away from sin and pardon. He must satisfy his justice. God has satisfied the justice that ought to be poured out on his people by sending his son who lived a perfect life and that on that tree he bore our sin, our guilt and was crushed under the wrath of God.

Thereby, he satisfied the justice of God, appeased the wrath of God and made it possible for a just God to forgive men, wicked men, and it would be just. I preached that message in an evangelical church. It would call itself a conservative Baptist evangelical church.

I preached it that night. The next morning, which would have been the second day of the meeting, the leadership came to where I was staying and said the meetings have been cancelled. Why? Because you said that on the cross the son of God suffered the wrath of his own father and we don't believe that.

We've never heard that in our life. I took them to Isaiah 53, it pleaded the Lord to crush him. No.

You see, they didn't even understand the gospel. Our sins have not been atoned for because the Romans beat up Jesus. It's because on that tree, the wrath of God, that cup of God's wrath that should have been poured out on the nations, should have been poured out even on his people, was poured out on his son and his son made atonement for our sins.

And I think that's the point of departure with many many people because they don't want to think that their rebellion, their sin can be that bad to require the son of God to go through that in order to reconcile us to God. They just simply cannot grapple with that. The magnitude, the magnitude of these thoughts, the seriousness, the severity of that sin is just something people just do not want to deal with on first base.

Therefore, they never make it home when it comes to the gospel. Right, and they don't want a God like that. They really do not want a God like that.

That's why I say Sunday morning in evangelical America is the greatest hour of idolatry. Why? Because you have people meeting all over this country, worshiping a God that really is more a figment of their imagination than the God of the scriptures. And if you were to simply stand before them, open up a historical confession, let's say the Westminster or the 1689 London Confession, or open up a well-respected systematic theology and simply read it and explain it with regard to the attributes of God, you would have church people standing up angry saying, that's not my God and I could never love a God that way.

Yeah, well, on the other hand, Paul, as you preach around the nation and as I have taught around the nation, I find people receiving this word as we attempt the best as we can to give them the unadulterated law of God and grace of God in Christ at the cross. People are receiving it. Are you seeing that yourself? If someone had told me ten years ago that I would be seeing what I am seeing, I would not have believed it.

We are literally, now please understand this, the general so-called Christian media, I don't believe has a clue about this. They don't see it and I don't think they even want to see it. But there is a great awakening going on in this country and I am seeing it.

And now here's another thing. Typically, it's not even understood or desired among those who I would say, even those in the ministry 40 years old and older. But I see young people.

I mean, I've gone into the inner city of Chicago and met with young men from the inner city that are studying Jonathan Edwards. You know, guys on college campuses walking around reading Spurgeon. And I'm telling you, something absolutely astounding is going on.

Now here's something though that is, well, it is disturbing. And it's this. God usually only does this in history.

Prior to a time of either great national catastrophe or persecution of the church war. He's preparing his church and these are great opportunities for the growth of the church and this is his modus operandi for growing the church. Unfortunately, we can't go to heaven on flowery beds of ease while others fight to win the prize and sail through bloody seas.

Just ain't going to happen with the kingdom of God. And therefore, the preaching of the word is going to be hard and the persecution comes. And that's the way the church grows.

You know, hey, we follow in the footsteps of our Christ. Well, apart from a national revival, I think that most of us who are in our 40s or 50s will probably spend the end of our life in prison. Very possible.

Very possible. And with those extremely positive, optimistic words, and I mean that, Paul. I mean that.

This is God's way of growing us in the kingdom. With those words, we need to wrap up this interview. Folks, if you want to be in touch with Paul Washer, his website, heartcrymissionary.com. Again, that's heartcrymissionary.com. Paul Washer, thank you, brother, for sharing a little bit on our Generations broadcast today.

Well, thank you. It's been a privilege. And ladies and gentlemen, you've been listening to the Generations radio broadcast, where we get back to the important topics of life.

The Bible speaks to faith, family, freedoms, all of these things, because God is a good God. He has provided us a way of escape from the problems that we deal with. And our fundamental problem is the problem of sin.

You say, what is sin? Sin, as defined by John himself, is the breaking of the law of God. So you've broken the law of God, you've sinned against Him. And therefore, you need to go to Him in faith, faith in Christ, and repentance, which is a change of mind, change of heart towards God, towards your sin, and towards righteousness, which means you walk away obeying Him and loving Him, keeping His commandments.

Ladies and gentlemen, that's the gospel of Jesus Christ. And you can interact with the program if you have questions relating to the gospel. Just email me at host at kevinswanson.com, where you can hear the program anytime, anywhere in the world.

That's kevinswanson.com. This is Kevin Swanson, inviting you back again next time, as we continue to lay down a vision for the next generation.

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