



bits from bob....

The “death and life” message of the gospel April 5, 2021

The story of Jesus is a life and death story—perhaps more accurately, a “death and life” story! Hearing, accepting, and obeying the gospel is a death and life matter. Eternal life depends on obeying the gospel (2 Thess. 1:7-10). In the Bible, the death of the old precedes the new birth.

Easter is past! Now what? Perhaps we should take our cue from the early church in the months immediately after Jesus’ resurrection. The Good News of Jesus burst forth on Pentecost and echoed into the then-known world within a few years.

The message of Jesus was preached, again and again, urgently, because it was seen as a death and life message! On Pentecost, in the temple, in conflict with the Jewish leaders, in the face of suffering and even death, the gospel sounded forth. What was the message? Old Testament prophecy fulfilled, the coming of Jesus, the Incarnation, ministry, rejection, death, resurrection, exaltation. Life predicted, life lived, life taken in death, life restored, life eternal.

A first step—we must hear the story correctly, get the story right, a death and life story. Hear it anew, afresh. Read, study, think. We have oversimplified the gospel. The popular summary does not tell the whole truth and is therefore lacking in power. It is simplistic, does not reflect deep, intense Bible study.

Jesus came preaching the gospel (Mk. 1), the gospel was announced in advance to Abraham (Gal. 3), those who fell in the wilderness had the gospel preached to them (Heb. 4). The gospel that Jesus is the Messiah is rich, fulfilling, challenging (Ac. 18).

The world does not understand the gospel. The world was focused at Easter on resurrection life. The Jesus story says that life comes only through death.

- 1- The gospel is a death and life story because it is a message of salvation life.
- 2- The gospel is a death and life story because it tells the history of Jesus.
- 3- The gospel is a death and life story for everyone, because Jesus is the only source of life.
- 4- The content of the preaching in Acts makes it a death and life story.

The preaching of the early church was the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Because it is a death and life story, it has less appeal in today’s world. People want the life story without the death story. People want the blessing without the sacrifice. The story of Jesus has always been a death and life story.

→Acts 5:33, when they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death. The early followers of Jesus knew that this was a death and life story when their lives were threatened.

→Acts 7 tells of Stephen’s death; Acts 12 records the death of James the apostle.

Church history and church tradition tell the story of many who were martyred for their faith.

The story of Jesus is a death and life story today. Too many Christians have forgotten that the Jesus story, the gospel, is a death and life story, question, decision. We choose death to self to live to him, we choose death to sin to live to him. The old gives way to the new. Rom. 6:1-7; 2 Cor. 5:16-17.

It is easy to forget. Christianity becomes easy, comfortable, undemanding. We keep Christian commitments on the fringes of our lives. Life is not intentionally Christian, purposefully Christian, focused, discipleship-demonstrating.

We may never be called to give our physical lives for Jesus, but the gospel is still a death and life story. It is a story of dying to self to live to Christ (Gal. 2:20).

Baptism illustrates that following Jesus is death and life decision.

Christian living, biblical discipleship, demonstrates that following Jesus is a death and life proposition.

The story of Jesus is a death and life story for me, for you, for the church, for every person.

Deciding to follow Jesus is costly, demanding, sacrificial, life-changing.

Not a popular message, but this is the message that grows out of the resurrection. This is the message proclaimed by the early church following Jesus’ resurrection.