

Keep the Gospel intact !

Introduction

Thank you Charis !

We are so happy about this event, which is extremely important for all of us, specifically for those of us from Europe:

- Our churches are small in size and number, and Charis has given us a sense of family and security that is reassuring and encouraging.
- I brought ideas/tools from France that I found in the EEFs elsewhere. Notably, discipleship groups (LTGs) and the Seven Miracles of Jean. The use of these resources are helpful and enriching for our churches.
- Our churches have sound theology and yet are confronted with significant cultural challenges. Therefore, it is important for us to ask ourselves important questions and examine together our Biblical teachings in order to better respond to the challenges of this generation.

Charis, is therefore that brotherly platform which allows us to encourage one another in this domain.

Charis = grace

A group of Oxford professors were discussing the differences between religions. They wanted to understand if there was something distinctive or particular about Christianity. However, they were unable to reach a conclusion. C.S. Lewis also pondered this question, and the professors seized the occasion to ask him: "What distinguishes Christianity from other religions? Lewis responded, "It's simple...grace."

In all other religions, men try their best to merit heaven, to merit God. They imagine themselves at a great judgment where the good and the bad will be weighed on a balance and the result will determine who enters into the presence of God...

- In monotheistic religions: you must do good, pray, fast, participate in services at the synagogue, church or mosque...
- In atheistic religions and Eastern spirituality: you must do good and/or pay in suffering for the bad/evil done to other lives...
- In the naturalistic religions of Africa and Asia: you must do good, honor ancestors, and keep peace with the spirits...

But the problem, of course, is that none of this works.

- Doing good to enter into heaven is like piling up chairs to reach the moon. It's completely disproportionate!
- Suffering, honoring ancestors, keeping peace with spirits, carrying talismans or good luck charms, these things don't open the door to heaven, and they certainly don't change the heart.

I believe you all agree with all this, right? It's not our efforts nor our suffering nor our rituals/traditions that save us, right?

But for those of us who love Jesus, there is a real need to make things clear. Because, there is an "evangelical version" of this false gospel:

- They might say, you only have to accept Jesus into your heart - as if this proves their worthiness! I said to him, "come into my heart" and now, he owes me heaven.
- They might say something like, you must be baptized to be a part of the church - but being consecrated to Jesus and worshipping Him with all your heart and soul aren't mentioned.
- They might say something like, you must not commit adultery, don't lie, give your money to the poor (or to pastors!) - yet, they don't speak of intimacy with Christ who knows and understands our weaknesses and want to help us in our struggles.

I was in Israel this summer. Pray for Israel. Pray for the Jews. That God opens their hearts. Many Messianic Jews spoke of their mission and work in this country - A difficult country where disciples of Christ are few. A young man spoke words that affected me. He spoke to the pastors and urged the elders with grace and tact saying, "PLEASE, preach the Gospel. When I was young, the only thing I heard at church was "'you must pray,' 'you must read the Bible,' 'you must witness,' 'you must, you must, you must,'...but it was only much later that I understood what the Gospel meant and how much it set me free."

And I said to myself..."Voilà, there it is, my subject for Charis. Beloved friends, it is my honor to finish this series of messages. And the final words that come to me are the words of the Apostle Paul as he addresses his young colleague at the end of his first letter.

Reference: 1 Timothy 6:20-21

²⁰ O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge," ²¹ for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you.

We will look at the following :

- Make sure your disciples know it
- Make sure that your deposit is correct
- Ensure that your deposit is pure
- Ensure your disciples know it

Make Sure Your Disciples Know It

²⁰ O Timothy...

Can you feel the weight, the solemnness of his words? It becomes all the more amusing that Timothy is a friend and one that Paul has just finished writing six long chapters. And yet, his tonality changes radically... " Ô Timothy... "

Imagine that Dave Guiles or Augustin Hibailé comes in front of you, places his hands on your shoulders, looks you in the eyes and says "O Franck... O Paul... O Florent " I think I might start trembling!

- Trembling with fear – Did I do something wrong/make a mistake?!
- Trembling in anticipation – Is he going to tell me Jesus is coming back soon?!
- In any case, he would have my full attention because I would understand he wanted to tell me something fundamentally important.

Paul wants to communicate something fundamental to Timothy. Something that Timothy shouldn't miss.

Before looking into this fundamental issue, let me ask you a question. What will you leave behind [as a legacy]? What will your disciples remember of your life, of your ministry?

There is a tragic example in the Old Testament. Jehoiada was the priest, and King Joash was an 8 years old when he becomes king...

- ² "Joash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all the years of Jehoiada the priest." 2 Chronicles 24:2

And once his mentor Jehoiada dies, Joash obeys the people. I don't know what happened/ Did Jehoiada fail in equipping the King? Was the King weak and easily influenced?

"[O] Timothy"... Who are your disciples and what legacy do you leave them?

Make Sure Your Deposit is correct

Guard the deposit entrusted to you

Here, Paul uses a verb that describes the actions of a guard that monitors a city while everyone is asleep.

- As if they have a treasure that wolves want to steal.
- As if it is something essential for God's servant to protect.

The verb also implies the actions: to obey, to follow, to dwell/focus/stay connected to.

In this way, Timothy must protect this treasure just as he should let it guide him. It is both a pearl to keep unharmed and intact, as well as the road on which to follow until the end of the path.

It's "this deposit" that worth keeping, that needs to be guarded. Paul is the only one to use this word and uniquely does in his two letters to Timothy (2 Tim. 1:12, 1 Tim. 6:20, et 2 Tim. 1:14). It is therefore, a treasure that God entrusted to Paul and in turn, Paul entrusts to Timothy, urging him to preserve it faithfully.

And so, what is this deposit? this treasure? When we look at the uses of this term, we perceive that it is about the essence of the Gospel and our walk with Christ Jesus.

One commentator writes :

Because this charge occurs in the conclusion to the epistle, παραθήκη refers at least to the epistle (and perhaps to the gospel and Timothy's ministry as a whole), which can be summed up, as it is in these two verses, as a call to guarding the truth of the Gospel and avoiding the empty chatter of the heresy. Mounce, W. D. (2000). *Pastoral Epistles* (Vol. 46, p. 371). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

O Timothy, keep/protect the Gospel! The Gospel is not only the open door to salvation, it is the center of the whole Christian life. It is the core of every Christian preaching/message. It is the motivation for every Christian walk. It is the unmovable center of our ministry. The Gospel IS Jesus Christ. And, Jesus Christ is our life, Him and Him alone. Anything put about the centrality and authority of Christ places a church on a foundation of sand, and the church will crumble.

The Gospel:

- Is the cry from the mouth of Jesus: "It is finished."
- It is the theological affirmation God the Father makes at the cross.
- It is the belief that I can never please God on my own, but Christ alone made the way for me
- The Gospel is to trust in Jesus alone, to the point of surrendering your whole self to Him fully.

Keep the Gospel intact. Protect it, the centrality of Christ, and all-sufficiency of Christ's work. There is nothing to add to Him. He lived the perfect life I should have lived. He knew the death that I should have known. He resurrected to bring me into the Father's presence.

Why is this important? Because there is always the temptation to add something else to the Gospel...

Make Sure Your Deposit is Pure

Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge,"

There are Christians who become "experts" on unnecessary topics/questions. Some were interested in the time of genealogies, while others dedicated their whole lives around obscure and difficult questions.

One day, I had to speak at a Catholic university about the sacraments and how Evangelical Christians view them. And, I was sad to see that the Catholics bickered about the order of Mass!

- I have heard Evangelical Christians have strong opinions about musical instruments, about the style of the church service and worship, about the way the church must act.

- It's interesting, but...it's not the Gospel, and sometimes it testifies to a lack of good priorities.
- It's falsely called knowledge!

Protect the Gospel. [Keep it in tact.] Center your ministry on the Gospel: The Eternal Son of God who became flesh, carried our sorrows, and led us to the Father.

He calls us into a complete and absolute trust, to the point where we follow Him in faith until the end.

Make Sure Your Disciples Know It

²¹ for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you.

I know; this is the same point as the first. But, Paul emphasizes how some became so focused on things that are secondary that they missed the whole point. They missed the goal.

To the Corinthians, the Apostle even says:

⁵ Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test? ⁶ And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test. (2 Corinthians 13.5–6 (NIV))

I'm frightened by the way the Lord Jesus finished His sermon on the Mount:

²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. *Away from me, you evildoers!*' (Matt 7.21–23)

Conclusion

The Good Deposit is Redemptive

The Gospel is (1) intimately tied to Jesus Christ (2) a sort of universal commandment to surrender to and trust in Christ alone (3) the way in which man is saved and by which he attains and abides in God (4), and to reject it results in condemnation and eternal separation from the Lord.

Fundamentally, The Gospel is substitutionary (cf. 1 Cor. 15:2-4 ; 2 Cor. 5:21 ; 1 Peter 2:24 ; Isaiah 53:5-6 ; Heb. 9:28, 1 Cor. 1:30 ; Gal. 3.13)

The Gospel, is Christ Jesus who lived the perfect life I should have lived (but never did), who endured the death which I should have died (One I will not endure) and who resurrected a life that I should not live (and yet one that I will live eternally).

- The Gospel allows me to live with God: Jesus represents me before the Father and carries the weight of my sin, and sends me His Spirit when I repent with confidence that I might live only by Him and for Him until the final resurrection when I will be fully like Him.

- Jesus is the perfect revelation of the Father and the perfect representation of man. He is the Son of God who became the Son of Man to live a perfect life and to accept His death, physically and spiritually [separation from the Father] to pay the moral debt men owe God because of their sins.
- Jesus invited me to respond to the proclamation of the Gospel and the conviction of the Spirit to verbalize my faith in what He did for me. He gave me a new life, and He abides in me through His Spirit in order to progressively transform me into His image. When He returns, I will be resurrected to a new body, eternal and incorruptible, to live in His presence with all those who are saved.
- His life for mine. My life for His.

The Good Deposit and Preaching

The Gospel is the free and transforming gift of Christ that should be the center of your ministry,

- Do not preach the commandments - but the grace of God that teaches us to obey.
- Do not preach about threats – but the love of the God who embraces us and makes us plead for men to be reconciled to Him.
- Give hope to those who are hopeless and discouraged about their daily sanctification. Give young disciples the vision that God's love is all-sufficient. That Jesus Christ is sufficient.

I pray that the men and women of our congregations who have always believed the Gospel is just as series of commandments will become Christians by *grace*.

The Good Deposit and Missions

When the Gospel, the initiative of God to lift up fallen men and women, takes form in the entirety of your life, then you will see how great your sin is and how unmerited grace is. Then, you will understand the need to communicate to the nations, to people different than yourselves, those of other cultures and ethnicities, the need to know God. You will see how much evangelists go before pastors, and how pastors go before teachers, and how each person does their work so that the deposit of the Gospel continues to spread from Paul, to Timothy, to you, to your disciples, and to the Church God has entrusted to you.