

Text

Main Point

The Exclusivity of the Gospel

Introduction (300)

Hook

Have you ever wondered about all the other religions in the world?

Do they they have some good?

In a way they show people living for something more than themselves and displaying love and devotion in.

Will God see that as good and grant them entry into heaven?

There may be some general good, but there is no salvation in other religions.

Only the Gospel of Jesus Christ can save.

Now this is incredibly offensive in our day and age.

Not only offensive, but is condemned.

This truth is seen as hateful.

We should be loving and inclusive and seeking unity and peace. How dare you say that only your religions saves.

But which is more loving:

To agree with your Hindu friend that they are going to heaven or to confront them on the realities of hell?

Yes they may be genuine, they may be sincere, they may even demonstrate extreme self-denial, but if they deny the Gospel of Jesus Christ they cannot be saved.

The Gospel is exclusive.

From the confession

As we continue our study through the 1689, we turn our attention to this topic: “The exclusivity of the Gospel”

The end of chapter 10 of the 1689 makes this statement:

After talking of those who hear the gospel but reject it, the confession says

much less can men that receive not the Christian religion be saved; be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature and the law of that religion they do profess.

This statement is talking about the exclusivity of the Gospel. A critical truth to cling to and defend in our time.

To help us work through it we are going to divide our time into three parts:

Outline

1. Exclusivity Targeted

2. Exclusivity Taught
3. Exclusivity Taken (Evangelism and Missions)

Part 1 – Exclusivity Targeted

Some human reasons against exclusivity

So let us begin with our first point. Exclusivity Targeted.

The truth that faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation is under attack today.

The reasons behind wanting to include others in salvation can be varied.

- Maybe it's a sense of fairness "It's not fair that those who have never heard the Gospel are condemned to Hell"
- Maybe it's a sense of unity. Some don't want to let doctrine divide. Let's put aside our differences and work together without condemning one another.
- Maybe is a desire for peace. Wars of religion have caused countless deaths.
- Maybe it's driven from a sense of humility. "How can I know if they Buddhist is not saved..."
- Or maybe it's a desire to defend God. We don't want to picture a God who sends all those people to hell. "Surely a merciful God would accept a genuine muslim..."
- Maybe it's out of fear of being "politically correct", not offending, and tolerating everyone else...?

The reasons are diverse, and I'm sure you have encountered many such arguments.

All reach God....?

Other religions are simply different paths to the same destination.

Different languages of the same truth.

Different branches of the same tree.

Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Taoism and all others are all paths to the same Deity (...whoever or whatever that may be....).

And we can understand secular philosophers, and may be even people in those various religions agreeing that their religion is simply a different road to God.

But it is shocking when those in the Christian camp make such claims.

Examples of Christians denying exclusivity

Let me give you a couple of examples:

Worldwide evangelist: Billy Graham (age 79)(later in his life/ and career) said this during an interview:

*"I think there's the body of Christ, which comes from all the Christian groups around the world, **or outside the Christian groups. I think everybody that loves Christ or knows Christ, whether they're conscious of it or not, they're members of the body of Christ.**"*

Another example of this, is Charls Pinnock, who was a Christian apologist and theologian, said

"God the Logos has more going on by way of redemption than what happened in first century Palestine."

That is to say, faith in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross **is one** way to salvation, but there are other ways...Christ is one way among many...

Their theories

Now these are just some examples of men within the Christian camp who deny the exclusivity of Christ. They want to affirm that people from other religions are able to be saved.

The arguments are varied and complex. They try and argue from general revelation or natural theology and push for a “**wider mercy view**”. Arguing that God’s mercy is wide enough to accept these other religions.

Some try to be subtle and affirm that it is by Christ alone that people are saved, but they don’t need **to know** that it is Christ who is saving them to be saved.

The sincerity in their religion and their good work in that religion, somehow connects them to Christ and saves them.

This creates what can be termed a group of “**Anonymous Christians**”. Like billy Graham said “they are members of Christ’s body without being conscious of it.

Absurd Ploy of Satan (Application)

Friends, this is not only foolishness, unbiblical and absurd, but also evil.

Who benefits the most if people believe that all religions save? The enemies of Christ do. Satan does.

This is all a big ploy of Satan to dishonour Christ and undermine the work of the church. To undermine the mission of the church.

Because if all religions save what is the point of the church?

- What is the point of getting out of your comfort zone and talking to my Buddhist colleague?
- What is the point of learning how to evangelise?
- What is the point of praying for the souls of men and women to be saved?
- What is the point of giving money for missions?
- What is the point of translating the bible in obscure languages?
- What is the point of giving up your comforts, your home, even your life to share the Gospel?
- What is the point?

Targeting the exclusivity of the Gospel is a ploy of Satan. No matter the mask of unity, peace, or humility.

Link

Now if we tried to show all the holes in the arguments of those who deny the exclusivity of the Gospel, we would never be done. False teaching simply springs up in a different form

But what we can do is look to the Bible which affirms the exclusivity of the Gospel. Know the truth and you can debunk any falsehood that comes your way.

Which brings us to our second section:

Part 2 – Exclusivity Taught

Exposition

Overview

Now I want to start by looking a couple of verses which are explicit about the exclusivity of the Gospel to save.

They we will remind ourselves the state of natural man and God's view of other religions which underpins the exclusivity of the Gospel.

And finally, we will look at the necessity of faith in Christ for salvation

Explicit statements – Acts 4:12

So turn with me to Acts 4, we are looking at verse 12.

Here we have Peter preaching before the Sanhedrin after the healing of the lame man. After highlighting the death and resurrection of Christ, he finishes his address by saying:

*¹² Salvation **is found in no one else**, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."*

Where is salvation found? Only in the Risen Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is found nowhere else.

And notice he includes all human existence: "*no other name under heaven*". It is not limited to the Palestinian context.

Mankind must be saved and mankind is lost without Christ.

Explicit statements – Teaching of Christ

And our Lord Jesus made this clear when he taught.

Matt 7:13-14

¹³ “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

The gate is narrow. The road is narrow. And not only that *“few are they that find it”* . the Lord Jesus explicitly teaches a narrow way. There is no “wider mercy view” in the theology of Our Lord.

And listen to John 14:6.

⁶ Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Here Jesus makes a positive and negative statement. First he affirms that through Him, people find life.

And then in the second statement, he excludes all other attempts at reaching life and the Father. All other ways are futile.

Jesus Christ alone is the way to salvation. And no one can experience reconciliation except through the Son.

Natural Man does not seek God – Rom 1

The thing is, when we understand what we need to be saved from, we can only come to the conclusion that **only** Christ is able to save us.

What does Romans 1 tell us? People know God exists. Turn to Romans 1 with me.

People all around the world know that God exists, whatever religion or philosophy they follow.

Creation declares a God of Power, a God of order, a God of wisdom, and furthermore a God of morals as each individual has a moral code written on their hearts.

People are without excuse verse 20 tells us.

And what does sinful, deprived people do about the knowledge of God? Do they seek him? Do they turn from their sins and want to find God? What does verse 21 tell us?

²¹ For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Sinful man has no intention to give glory to God, or to thank him. Their thinking is futile and foolish.

Now in their foolishness they construct all sorts of religious practices. Some more elaborate than others. But all active rebellion against God. They make their own god's. Gods in the image of animals and birds. They worship the creation instead of the creator.

That is what verse 22 tells us.

²² Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

Sinners love their sin. They don't want to stop sinning. They suppress the truth because they love their sin. And sin is their destruction. That is what the rest of the chapter explains as they are given up, and given up, and given up in a downward spiral of depravity.

General revelation only enough to condemn

We can know a lot about God from general revelation. In fact Rom 1:20 clearly says all people know enough to condemn them. They are without excuse.

But general revelation is not enough to save. Without special revelation through God's Word people create false gods, which enables them to continue to sin as their hearts desire.

Without the Gospel people are condemned to the righteous judgement of God in Hell.

God's view of other religions

And the formation of other religions increases that condemnation, it does not decrease it.

While we are still in Rom 1. Look at verse 18.

There are some who say that God will see the sincerity and good works of the pagan in their religion and that will be enough to save them.

But what does verse 18 tell us God's view is on other religions?

¹⁸ The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness,

The wrath of God is against those who worship false gods of their own making. Making false gods does not bring grace to the pagan. It brings the wrath of God

And listen to 1 Cor 1:18-19

¹⁸ For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written:

*“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”^[c]*

What will God do to the “wise” religions of this world, or the “intelligence” of this world which seeks to offer salvation? He will destroy them. He will frustrate them. That is speaking of judgement and condemnation. There is no salvation in other religions.

Application – Sincere and Good - not enough

And this must be seared in the thinking of each and every one of us.

Think of your sweet grandparents who are not Christians.

They are kind, they give you presences, they love to have you over for meals. They love you and you love them. They are good and kind and genuine people.

But they tell you that Christianity is not for them, Now they believe in love and unity and peace. Maybe they like a few of Jesus’ teachings like loving your enemies and turning the other cheek, but Buddha also had some good teachings for a fulfilled life and the Hindu culture has some helpful tips.

Your grandparents do their best to lead a good life, to not hurt others and to do help the community.

We must remember that our nice, sincere and “good” grandparents are still under condemnation and need to hear the gospel. Only Christ can save.

And this is true for all those “good and nice” people in our lives. They need Christ to be saved.

One Mediator

When we recognise the magnitude of our problem:
Slaves to sin, Dead to sin. With no ability to be freed,
we have to accept that then there can be no other way
than Christ.

If people think there is another way, they do not
understand the **magnitude of the problem of sin** or
the magnitude of What Jesus Christ has done.

No one else has done what the Lord Jesus Christ has
done.

He is the one Mediator, Who came in humiliation and
now is in exaltation. Who came and fulfilled and is
fulfilling the role of Prophet Priest and King. There is
only one Mediator between God and Man. No one has
done or can do what Christ has done:

- Be it His incarnation,
- His perfect obedience,
- His perfect sacrifice,
- His resurrection,
- His ascension,
- His intercession.

No one else can be our mediator.

This is what 1 Tim 2:5-6 tells us:

⁵ *For there is one God and **one mediator between God and mankind**, the man Christ Jesus,* ⁶ *who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time.*

Must have faith in Him

He is the one mediator, and how do people put themselves under his mediation? How do people escape condemnation?

By faith in Him. By believing in him.

Faith is the necessary means of salvation.

And faith includes knowledge, acceptance and trust. There needs to be knowledge to have faith. It is impossible to have faith in Jesus Christ without knowing about him. It is impossible to call on the name of the Lord without knowing his name.

Rom 10:13-15 leaves us no doubt here:

¹³ for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”^[a]

There is the promise of salvation. But there is a commission with the promise.

¹⁴ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵ And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”^[b]

The message of salvation is the best news you will ever hear.

And this message must be proclaimed to those all around the world for them to be saved.

This is the great commission of our Lord.

This is the mission of the church.

This is the reason countless people have dedicated their lives to share the Gospel around the world.

This is the reason we have the Gospel here in New Zealand.

This is the reason we spend time and money and prayer for the work of evangelism and mission.

This is our mission, and this brings us to our third and final part: Exclusivity taken.

Part 3 – Exclusivity Taken

Feel the weight

You see when you take the exclusivity of the Gospel as true you are driven to take it to those who do not know the Gospel.

The exclusivity of the Gospel is true. And those who die outside of Christ are perishing. We should feel the weight of that.

Our job is to take the Gospel to those who have not heard so that they may know the name of the Lord and call upon the name of the Lord and be saved.

God has chosen to use us, the church, to proclaim this saving message. To preach the good news so that people can be saved.

We are ambassadors. That is part of our job description as a Christian. This is part of our brief from our King.

Listen to 2 Cor 5:10-11

²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore

you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin^[b] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Ambassadors posted all over

Now, if you are a Christian you are an ambassador. And God posts us in all sorts of different places with all sorts of different tasks before us.

Mums and dads you are ambassador to your children. Do you use every opportunity of disobedience and sin that comes out of your child to share the grace and Gospel of God? Do you teach your children that they cannot be good outside the Grace of God?

People in the workforce, you are ambassadors to your colleagues. You have been uniquely placed in that workplace. Do you believe that your “nice” non-believing colleagues don't really need the gospel?

As **we all** interact with our neighbours and acquaintances, do we have the exclusivity of the Gospel on our minds? They must have faith in the One mediator to be saved.

Practical encouragement for evangelism

Can I just acknowledge here that sharing the Gospel is hard. It does not come easily, and our flesh hates it. So Plan Practice and Pray

Plan for evangelism – Carve out a time in your calendar to make that phone call or talk to that neighbour, or to join the church's evangelism initiatives. Every second Sunday there is opportunity with others to share the gospel with those who have not heard

Practice sharing the Gospel. Practice at home, with your children or with your parents. Make the most of the evangelism training the church runs every second week. Make this priority and make it happen.

Pray for the lost. Pray for one another. We know it is the work of God in people's lives. So we pray. He works through us, so we pray for his strength and that He would do a work in people's lives.

Support other ambassadors

Our role as ambassadors affects

- how we interact with all people,
- how we spend our time,
- how we plan for the future and
- how we spend our money.

People need to hear the gospel to be saved, and God has chosen to use **you** to do that.

This of course, also includes supporting others who also do ambassador work. Support in both prayer and finances.

When you support the work of the local church financially and in prayer you are acting as an ambassador.

When you participate in prayer meetings to pray for the lost, for the work of church here and the work of the church abroad you are acting as an ambassador.

When you discuss and vote on how church funds should be allocated to various ministries and missionary work, you are acting as an ambassador.

Conclusion

Friends, the exclusivity of the Gospel is clearly taught in the bible. Our Lord Jesus said:

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)

Those who deny this deny the clear teaching of scripture. They also minimise sin and minimise the work and person of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one mediator.

There is no other way to be saved, so we must take the Gospel to those who are perishing.

We must take the gospel to our family.

We must take the Gospel to our friends.

We must take the Gospel to workmates.

We must take the Gospel to the streets of Timaru.

We must take the Gospel to university campuses.

We must take the Gospel to Fiji and the Philippines.

We must take the Gospel to the Ends of the Earth.

We are not all on the front lines of every battle, but we all have a role to play as ambassadors of Christ.

Let us pray.