

A POSITIVE CHURCH IN A DARK WORLD

Nehemiah 12:43

I. INTRODUCTION-

- a. The people of Israel... who had returned from captivity to rebuild the land of Israel... were living in perilous times.
- b. The task they faced... was hard and difficult.
- c. They had very little resources ... they were outnumbered and surrounded by enemies... who constantly threatened them and who were determined to stop their work.
- d. And the support of the Persian King... which had allowed them to return to their homeland... could change the moment the next king came to power.
- e. For the nation of Israel today... these are still perilous times.
- f. When the Jews were re-granted their homeland in 1947 by a UN resolution... they immediately came under attack by the Arabs who surrounded the land of Israel ... and the nation of Israel has been essentially at war ever since.
- g. As we sit here in America... we may have little interest in what happens in the land of Israel.
- h. What happens to the nation of Israel... may seem irrelevant to your life.
- i. But if you believe that the Bible is the Word of God... you know that what happens with the nation of Israel... is key to understanding how close we are to the end times and the Second Coming of Christ.
- j. I can promise you this... if you look at what is happening in the world today... and what is happening with the nation of Israel... through the pages of the Bible ... you have to believe that we are in the last days.

II. PERILOUS TIMES-

- a. The Bible teaches that the closer we get to the end time events... and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ... the more perilous the times will be...not just for the nation of Israel...but for the church... and the entire world.
- b. 2 Timothy 3:1 (NKJV) “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come.”
- c. The word translated “perilous”... means something that is dangerous, chaotic and violent.
- d. As we approach the Second Coming of Christ... perilous times will increase for the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- e. The closer we get to the Second Coming of Christ... the greater the presence of false teachers, false teaching, apostasy will be in the church... and the more ungodly living, evil, sin and sinful lifestyles... will be tolerated and accepted in the professing church.
- f. The closer we draw to the Second Coming of Christ... the more the Bible as God’s inspired Word... and the final authority for Christian belief and practice... will be forsaken by many in the church.
- g. The closer we draw to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ... the more the true gospel will be forsaken by the church... and the more exclusivity of salvation through Jesus Christ alone will be abandoned.
- h. The closer we draw to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ... the more the church will compromise with the morals, standards and beliefs of the world.
- i. The closer we draw to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ... the more the persecution of true Christians and the true church will increase.

- j. The closer we draw to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ... the further away the world will pull from truth of God... and the more evil, dark, dangerous and chaotic the world will become.
- k. In 2 Timothy 3:1-5... the Bible says the closer we get to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ...the more people will be.
- l. *“Lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power.”*
- m. That certainly is a description of many people...who are living in the world today.
- n. So in these perilous times of today... how are we as Christians supposed to live?
- o. In this final sermon in our study of spiritual renewal from the book of Nehemiah... these verses show us that in the perilous times in which they were living... the people of Israel resolved to remain faithful to God.
- p. For the church to fulfill its mission in today’s perilous world... we cannot be like the world.
- q. For the church to fulfill its mission...we must be decisively distinctive and different in our behavior, language, life, lifestyle, values and morals from the world around us.
- r. It is impossible for a worldly church... to make an impact on the world for Christ.

III. TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THIS PERILOUS WORLD WE MUST REMAIN FAITHFUL TO THE TRUE GOSPEL-

- a. In today's perilous times... as the hatred for the church... the Christian faith... and the truth of God is increasing in the world... many churches, ministers, ministries and denominations ...have abandoned... the true gospel of Jesus Christ.
- b. In some churches in America... the true, biblical gospel of Jesus Christ... has not been preached and proclaimed in years.
- c. In order to protect themselves from the rejection and the attacks of the world ... in an attempt to make themselves acceptable to the world... many churches today proclaim a watered-down, politically correct, less offensive message that they call the gospel.
- d. But the message they proclaim is not the true gospel... it is a false gospel.
- e. In Galatians 1:8-9... the Bible warns of the danger of preaching a false gospel.
- f. Galatians 1:8-9... Paul wrote... *“But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel other than what we have preached to you, a curse be on him! As we have said before, I now say again: If anyone preaches to you a gospel contrary to what you received, a curse be on him!”*
- g. The word translated “curse” is the Greek word “anathema”... which literally means deserving of destruction.
- h. The Bible says that the person who preaches a false gospel ... a gospel that is different from the true saving gospel of the Bible... is deserving of eternal destruction in hell.
- i. When it comes to the gospel of Jesus Christ... the church cannot play around... we must make sure that the gospel we preach is the true gospel of the Bible.

IV. THE OFFENSE OF THE GOSPEL-

- a. If the gospel of Jesus Christ is good news... then why is the true gospel message of Jesus Christ hated by so many in the world?
- b. From the very beginning the gospel of Jesus Christ ... has been offensive to many people.
- c. *1 Corinthians 1:23 (NKJV) "But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness."*
- d. In Galatians 5:11... the Bible speaks of the "offense" of the cross... and in 1 Peter 2:8... the Bible calls the true gospel... "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense."
- e. What is so offense about the gospel?... #1, The gospel declares that without Jesus Christ... you are not spiritually a good person ... you may be good in a lot of ways... but without Jesus Christ... you are not spiritually a good person.
- f. By rejecting Jesus Christ... and refusing to believe in Him... you have rejected God's grace... God's mercy ... God's love... and you have rejected the Son of God who died on the cross for your sins.
- g. The true gospel of the Bible declares that without Jesus Christ... you are not spiritually a good person.
- h. #2, The gospel declares that without Jesus Christ... you are an enemy of God ... and you are in a state of rebellion against the God of the universe who created you... and the God before whom you will one day stand in judgment.
- i. The true gospel declares that no person who refuses to receive Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord... is right and acceptable to God.
- j. *1 John 2:23 (NKJV) "Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also."*
- k. #3, The true gospel declares that the person without Jesus Christ is spiritually lost... spiritually dead in trespasses and sins... separated

from God in this life... and if they die without Christ... they will be separated from God for all eternity.

- l. #4, The gospel declares that there is nothing a person can do to make themselves right with God... the gospel declares that the person without Jesus Christ is hopeless and helpless to make themselves right with God.
- m. The gospel declares that no amount of good works... religious works ... or works or efforts of any kind...can make a person right with God.
- n. A dead corpse in a casket can do nothing... in the same way... a person who is dead in trespasses and sins can do nothing to make themselves right with and acceptable to God.
- o. #5, The gospel declares that if a person is going to be right with God and accepted by Him ... then God is going to have to do something radical in their life.
- p. You may say... "I thought the gospel meant good news... none of that sounds like good news."
- q. The gospel is good news... but before a person can believe the good news of the gospel... they must be willing to accept the bad news of who they are before God.
- r. Before a person can be saved... they must understand how lost they are.
- s. It offends many people when you tell them... that they are not good enough to be right with God.
- t. Do you know how good you have to be to be right with God based on your own goodness?... you have to be perfect.
- u. God is perfect... His Heaven is perfect... do you possibly think that God is going to allow any imperfection into His presence in Heaven?

- v. If you are not perfect... then you are not good enough on your own to be right with God and go to Heaven... no matter how good you are.
- w. Even the best person in the world without Jesus Christ... is not good enough to be right with God based on their own goodness.
- x. It offends people when you tell them that without Jesus Christ ... they are lost... spiritually dead... an enemy of God... and in rebellion against the God of the universe.
- y. It offends people when you tell them that they are hopeless and helpless to do anything... to make themselves right and acceptable to God.
- z. It offends many people when you tell their only hope of being right with God ... their only hope in this life... and their only hope of Heaven... depends on what they do with a man who lived on this planet over 2,000 years ago... Jesus of Nazareth.

V. THE GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL-

- a. That is the bad news of the gospel... but here is the good news of the gospel.
- b. Out of His love, grace and mercy... God has done for us what we could not do for ourselves.
- c. God has made a way that we might be forgiven of our sins... God has made a way that can receive the perfection we need...a perfection that is not our own... God has made a way that we can have spiritual life and be right with Him.
- d. And God made that way... through the perfect life, sacrificial death and victorious resurrection of His only begotten Son... who came into this world... as Jesus of Nazareth... God in human flesh.
- e. After living a perfect life... Jesus went to the cross... and on the cross He took our sins upon Himself... and then God poured the wrath and

judgment we deserve for our sins upon Jesus... on the cross Jesus the Son of God literally died for you and me.

- f. But three days later... Jesus arose from the dead... the resurrection of Jesus from the dead... proves that the death of Jesus on the cross was accepted by God as payment for our sins.
- g. Now when a person accepts the truth of their lostness...when in sorrow and repentance they turn from their sin and evil ... and trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior and the Lord of their life.
- h. Then God takes what Jesus did on the cross... and He applies it to our sin account... and our sin debt before God is paid finally, fully and forever.
- i. And not only that... when a person believes in Jesus... the perfection of Jesus is imputed to them... so that when God looks at the one who trusts in Christ... He sees us through the perfection of Jesus and because of Jesus we are accepted by Him.
- j. Even though believers will not be perfect in this life... the Bible says that when we get to Heaven... God will make us perfect... because of our faith in Jesus Christ.
- k. That is the good news... and that is the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

VI. CONCLUSION-

- a. In these perilous days... the world needs the gospel... not a fake gospel... not a false gospel... but the true gospel.
- b. *Romans 1:16 (NKJV) "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."*