

THE GOSPEL

(from a series of sermons preached from 9/3/00 to 11/5/00 at Sovereign Redeemer Assembly by Marc D. Carpenter)

The Gospel - What It Is

Please turn to Romans chapter 1 if you would. I'd like to start with verse 8 and go through verse 17:

Romans 1: (8) First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of in all the world. (9) For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son, how without ceasing I make mention of you (10) always at my prayers, beseeching if by any means now at length I shall be blessed by the will of God to come to you. (11) For I long to see you, that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, for the establishing of you; (12) and this is to be comforted together among you, through the faith in one another, both yours and mine. (13) But I do not wish you to be ignorant, brothers, that often I purposed to come to you, and was kept back until the present, that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among the other nations. (14) I am a debtor both to Greeks and to foreigners, both to wise, and to foolish, (15) so as far as [lies] in me, I am eager to preach the gospel to you in Rome also. (16) For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is [the] power of God to salvation to everyone believing, both to Jew first, and to Greek; (17) for in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; even as it has been written, "But the just shall live by faith."

Today I'm going to be talking to you about the gospel. It's the most important subject in the whole world – the whole universe! This is the most important subject you will ever hear. I'll be showing you, the Lord willing, why it's so important. Everybody needs to pay very close attention to what I'm about to say. In fact, it's so important, that every sermon that's preached needs to talk about the gospel. Now each sermon doesn't need to have the gospel as its subject, but each and every sermon needs to define the gospel and to be preached in light of the gospel. Because if the gospel's not there, the preaching may mislead people. For example, if I preached on the way Christians should conduct themselves in this world, and I didn't preach it in light of the gospel, then it could be misinterpreted to mean that the works a Christian does somehow form at least some part of the ground of acceptance before God. So the gospel MUST be presented in every sermon.

Let's look at one Scripture passage that show how serious this issue is. Let's look at Mark 16:15-16:

Mark 16: (15) And He said to them, Going into all the world, preach the gospel to all the creation. (16) The [one] believing and being baptized will be saved. And the [one] not believing will be condemned.

I'm just going to focus on the negative part of that verse for now. "And the [one] not believing will be condemned," or as the King James puts it, "he that believeth not shall be damned." So what is it that those who will be damned don't believe? Verse 15 – the gospel. Now think about this. Those who do not believe the gospel will be damned in everlasting torment in hell. Now, from this passage, just how important is believing the gospel? It's a matter of eternal life or eternal death. That's how important it is. Now, if it's that important, we'd better know exactly what the gospel is, don't you think? Because if we don't know what it is, we can't believe it.

Okay, let's get into what exactly the gospel is. I read Romans 1 right at the beginning, and I'd like for us to read verses 16 and 17 again:

Romans 1: (16) For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is [the] power of God to salvation to everyone believing, both to Jew first, and to Greek; (17) for in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; even as it has been written, "But the just shall live by faith."

So let's look closely at what the Holy Spirit is saying here. What is the gospel?

Well, first we see the gospel's effects. It's the POWER OF GOD TO SALVATION. Now what does that mean – the power of God to salvation? Does it mean that the words of the gospel have some mystical power, so when anybody hears the words or chants the words or thinks of the words, they become saved? Of course not. We see many times in the Bible where the gospel was preached and some of those who heard it remained unsaved. In fact, look at verse 16 again: it is the power of God to salvation to whom? EVERYONE BELIEVING. That's important. It's not the power of God to salvation to everyone who hears the gospel. It's

the power of God to everyone who hears it AND BELIEVES IT. Now, before we go on, I'd like to ask this: Can anyone believe what they've never heard? Can anyone believe what they don't know about? Can anyone believe what they don't understand? No. The gospel, in order to be believed, must be proclaimed and understood.

Okay, let's get back to the power of God to salvation. This means that God has chosen to display His power to save His people through His gospel. There is NO SALVATION apart from the gospel. Don't believe ANYBODY who tells you that they or others remained ignorant of the gospel after they were saved. This is a DENIAL of the gospel as the power of God to salvation. The Lord willing, I'll talk about what it means to be ignorant of the gospel in a little while. But here, the Bible plainly puts forth, that SALVATION and THE GOSPEL are INSEPARABLY CONNECTED.

So what do we find in the gospel? Verse 17 gives us the answer: "for in it (THE GOSPEL) the righteousness of God is revealed." Now sometimes we tend to skip over the "for's." But the "for's" are very important in understanding the Bible. "FOR in it the righteousness of God is revealed." Whenever you see a "for" in this way, it is saying, "for this reason." And what is the "for" pointing to? Is it pointing to something that's about to be said or something that's already been said? Something that's already been said. So let's look back at verse 16. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is [the] power of God to salvation to everyone believing, both to Jew first, and to Greek;" Now this verse also has two "For's" in it. "FOR I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." Look back at verse 15. Paul was eager to preach the gospel to those in Rome; he was not ashamed of the gospel. The second "for" is this: "FOR it is the power of God to salvation to everyone believing." Why is Paul not ashamed of the gospel? Because it is the power of God to salvation! Why should anyone be ashamed of the very thing God uses to save His people? Now let's look at the "for" in verse 17. Why is the gospel the power of God to salvation? Because in the gospel the RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD is revealed!

Now, if the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel, and those who do not believe the gospel are lost, then we'd better know what the righteousness of God is. Because if we don't know what the righteousness of God is, we don't know the gospel. Let's look at Romans 10:3:

Romans 10: (3) For being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit to the righteousness of God.

Do you see that? Those who are ignorant of the righteousness of God – that is, those who don't know what the righteousness of God is – are seeking to establish their own righteousness and do not submit to the righteousness of God! They're lost! So this RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD is the key element of the gospel! If there's no knowledge of the righteousness of God, there's no belief of the gospel. If there's no belief of the gospel, there's no salvation. That's serious stuff here, isn't it? We'd better know what the righteousness of God is, or else we're lost!

Thank God that He has not left us in the dark as to what the righteousness of God is. God clearly reveals it in His Word. Even as Paul by inspiration of the Holy Spirit introduces the gospel in chapter 1 of Romans as the revelation of the righteousness of God, he goes on to tell us what the righteousness of God is. Let's turn to Romans 3, and we'll start reading with verse 9:

Romans 3: (9) What then? Do we excel? Not at all! For we have charged both Jews and Greeks before, all [with] being under sin; (10) according as it has been written, "[There is] not a righteous [one], not even one!" (11) "[There is] not [one] understanding; [there is] not [one] seeking God." (12) All turned away, [they] became worthless together, not [one is] doing goodness, not so much as one!" (13) "Their throat [is] a tomb being opened;" "they used deceit with their tongues; [the] poison of asps [is] under their lips; (14) whose mouth [is] full of cursing and bitterness. (15) Their feet [are] swift to shed blood; (16) ruin and misery [are] in their way; (17) and they did not know a way of peace; (18) there is no fear of God before their eyes." (19) But we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those within the Law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world be under judgment to God. (20) Because by works of Law not one of all flesh will be justified before Him, for through Law [is] full knowledge of sin. (21) But now a righteousness of God has been revealed apart from Law, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, (22) even the righteousness of God through faith of Jesus Christ toward all and upon all those believing; for there is no difference, (23) for all sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (24) being justified freely by His grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus,

First, we see that every human being is unrighteous by nature; there is no difference between the pagan, immoral Gentiles and the religious, moral Jews. He had pointed this out in the previous chapters. He shows in verse 20 that righteousness does not even come from one's best efforts to keep the law. Then, in verses 21 and following, we see the righteousness of God revealed. In verse 21, we see that the righteousness of God is revealed apart from the law. This means that the righteousness of God has NOTHING TO DO with our law-keeping. It has NOTHING TO DO with our attempts at obedience and service.

So what does this righteousness have to do with? Well, let's read verses 22 through 26:

Romans 3: (22) even the righteousness of God through faith of Jesus Christ toward all and upon all those believing; for there is no difference, (23) for all sinned and fall short of the glory of God (24) being justified freely by His grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus, (25) whom God set forth [as] a propitiation through faith in His blood, as a demonstration of His righteousness through the passing over of the sins that had taken place before, in the forbearance of God, (26) for a demonstration of His righteousness in the present time, for His being just and justifying the [one] that [is] of the faith of Jesus.

First, the righteousness of God is THROUGH the FAITH, or actually, the FAITHFULNESS, of Jesus Christ. The righteousness of God has to do with Christ's FAITHFULNESS. Faithfulness to do what? Verses 24 and 25 - "being JUSTIFIED freely by His grace through the REDEMPTION in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a PROPITIATION through faith in his blood." Jesus accomplished REDEMPTION, JUSTIFICATION, and PROPITIATION. And look at the next words in verse 25: "for a showing forth of His RIGHTEOUSNESS." We're on the right track here! Justification, Redemption, and Propitiation show forth the righteousness of God. I'd like to save JUSTIFICATION for last, because it is talked about further in verse 26.

Let's first talk about PROPITIATION. To propitiate means to appease or to pacify. Christ appeased or pacified God's wrath when the sins of His people were imputed to Jesus Christ, when Jesus Christ became sin for His people, and He incurred the judgment for that sin. There is no fellowship with God when there is sin. Why is that? It is because God is RIGHTEOUS. RIGHTEOUSNESS is the opposite of SIN. So in order for God to fellowship with sinners, the sin of those sinners MUST BE PUNISHED in a substitute who is a man who is totally without sin. The only one who qualifies for that is Jesus Christ. Christ took on the sins of His people, and God punished Christ for those sins, and God was pacified. God was at peace, not at war.

The next is REDEMPTION. To redeem means to pay the price for a possession so as to rescue or deliver that possession. Ransom is another word that is used. Christ's blood paid the price for His people's sins and bought them as his very own. What did His people do to make themselves into God's own possession? Absolutely nothing. It is CHRIST ALONE who paid the price. We had nothing to pay. Nothing that we ever did or were enabled to do would pay the price. It is only through the blood of Christ.

Now let's talk about JUSTIFICATION. Let's read verse 26. "For the showing forth of His righteousness in the present time" – there's the mention of the righteousness of God again. How does God show forth His righteousness? Let's read on: "for His being just and justifying the one that is of the faith of Jesus." Here he talks about JUSTIFICATION. But if you notice, he doesn't just talk about justification of His people. He talks about His own JUSTICE. God is a JUST God. This means that He is faithful to BLESS those who are righteous and CURSE those who are wicked. His justice demands that all who are not righteous MUST be punished. Now to JUSTIFY someone means to declare that the person is RIGHTEOUS, NOT GUILTY. But we read further up in chapter 3 that there's NO ONE who is righteous! We read that no one will be justified by his best efforts to keep the law! So how can it be true that God declares some to be RIGHTEOUS who have no RIGHTEOUSNESS in themselves? It can only be through the perfect righteousness of a substitute! And that substitute is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ lived a perfect life. He obeyed the law perfectly for his entire life.

So how does God declare US to be righteous, when it is only Jesus Christ who lived a perfect life? The answer is in Chapter 4. Paul first shows that Abraham could not have been justified by his works. He says that justification is not by works; instead, God JUSTIFIES the UNGODLY. And how does God justify the ungodly? The Holy Spirit through Paul goes to the Psalms for the answer. Look at verses 6-8:

Romans 4: (6) Even as also David says of the blessedness of the man to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: (7) "Blessed [are those] whose lawlessnesses are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; (8) blessed [the] man to whom [the] Lord will in no way charge sin."

What does it mean that God COUNTS righteousness apart from works? It means that God justifies the ungodly based on a righteousness that is COUNTED to him. Another word for this is IMPUTED. It means LEGALLY CHARGED TO THE ACCOUNT OF. Jesus Christ lived a perfect life and was perfectly obedient, even unto death. This righteousness of Christ is IMPUTED to, or COUNTED to, or CHARGED to God's people. Even though God's people are not righteous in their own character and conduct, they are COUNTED righteous because the righteousness of Christ is IMPUTED to them.

Let's look at Romans 10:4 for a minute. Remember when we read verse 3 to show that those who do not know about the righteousness of God are lost? The Holy Spirit then goes on to define what the righteousness of God IS in this verse:

Romans 10: (4) For Christ [is] the end of Law for righteousness to everyone that believes.

This means that righteousness does not come through our law-keeping but through the righteousness of Christ!

We can see how God remains JUST to JUSTIFY those who are not righteous in and of themselves. Look at Isaiah 45:21:

Isaiah 45: (21) Declare and bring near; yea, let them consult together. Who has revealed this of old; [who] has told it from then? Is it not I, Jehovah? And there [is] no God other than Me; a just God and a Savior; [there is] none except Me.

How is God both a JUST God AND a Savior? Because the sins of God's people were imputed to Christ, and Christ bore the punishment that our sins deserved, and because the righteousness of Christ is imputed to God's people, and God declares His people righteous. Two imputations – sin imputed to Christ, and righteousness imputed to God's people. As Paul said way back in Romans 1, the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel. The gospel means “good news.” What is this good news that reveals the righteousness of God? It is the good news that God saves His people based on these two imputations! When the sins of God's people were imputed to Christ, Christ endured the wrath of God for those sins and paid the price in full. When the righteousness of Christ is imputed to His people, God declares His people not guilty. This is good news! This is the righteousness of God that is revealed in the gospel!

2 Corinthians 5:21 is a good summary of the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel. Let's read it to close:

2 Corinthians 5: (21) For He (that's God the Father) made Him who knew no sin (that's Jesus Christ the perfectly righteous one) to be sin for us (that's our sin imputed to Him), that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (that's Christ's righteousness imputed to us).

Praise God for this good news of the gospel, wherein His righteousness is revealed. It is the power of God to salvation to everyone believing. Amen.

The Gospel - What It's Not

Last week, I preached a message entitled, “The Gospel - What it Is.” Today, I'm entitling the message, “The Gospel - What It's Not.” The foundation was laid last week as we went over what the gospel is. I'd like to do a quick review of some of the key passages we went over.

First, let's look at Romans 1, verses 16-17:

Romans 1: (16) For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is [the] power of God to salvation to everyone believing, both to Jew first, and to Greek; (17) for in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; even as it has been written, "But the just shall live by faith."

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone believing, and the gospel is the revelation of the righteousness of God. What is the righteousness of God? Let's turn to Romans 3, verses 21-26:

Romans 3: (21) But now a righteousness of God has been revealed apart from Law, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, (22) even the righteousness of God through faith of Jesus Christ toward all and upon all those believing; for there is no difference, (23) for all sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (24) being justified freely by His grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus, (25) whom God set forth [as] a propitiation

through faith in His blood, as a demonstration of His righteousness through the passing over of the sins that had taken place before, in the forbearance of God, (26) for a demonstration of His righteousness in the present time, for His being just and justifying the [one] that [is] of the faith of Jesus.

Now let's read Romans 4: 6-8:

Romans 4: (6) Even as also David says of the blessedness of the man to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: (7) "Blessed [are those] whose lawlessnesses are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; (8) blessed [the] man to whom [the] Lord will in no way charge sin."

The righteousness of God shows forth that God is just to justify the ungodly based on two things: the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ after the sins of His people were imputed to him, and based on the righteousness of Christ that is imputed to His people. Romans 10:4 says that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes. And the summary of the gospel is in 2 Corinthians 5:21:

2 Corinthians 5: (21) For He (that's God the Father) made Him who knew no sin (that's Jesus Christ the perfectly righteous one) to be sin for us (that's our sin imputed to Him), that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (that's Christ's righteousness imputed to us).

The gospel is a specific message. It is the specific message of salvation based on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ alone. It is a promise from God He will save His people based on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ alone. Last week, we saw how important the gospel is. We saw that Mark 16:16 says that those who do not believe the gospel are lost, and we saw that Romans 10:3 says that those who don't know about the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel are lost.

Now it's time to talk about what the gospel is NOT. This, too, is a very important subject, as I hope you will see, because when we hear people give a wrong definition of what the gospel IS, then this tells us a lot as to how they make their judgments. Again, like I said last week, the gospel can be expressed in different ways, so I'm NOT saying that you need to use the exact same words as I do, but whatever words you use, it must include the message of salvation that is based on the work of Christ alone and leaves no doubt that this work of Christ ENSURES and DEMANDS the salvation of ALL whom Christ represented.

Let's first go over one of the more blatant heresies when it comes to defining the gospel. The false gospel known commonly as Arminianism is a gospel of salvation conditioned on the sinner. Different Arminians will define it in different ways, but what they all have in common is that salvation, in some way, to some degree, is conditioned on the sinner. The Arminian gospel is the good news that God loves everyone and showed that love by sending Christ to die for everyone so as to make it possible for everyone to be saved. In their gospel, what is the ultimate ground of salvation? Well, if Christ died for everyone, and not everyone goes to heaven, then does Christ's work make the ultimate difference between heaven and hell? Of course not. It is the work of the SINNER that makes the ultimate difference between heaven and hell. This is not only NOT the gospel, but it is the very ANTITHESIS of the gospel. Arminianism has this in common with all false religions, from Hinduism to Buddhism to Islam to all the false gospels that come under the name of Christianity: salvation conditioned on the sinner.

What I'd like to focus on are the wrong definitions of the gospel that are given by those who claim to believe the doctrines of grace. And I hope you will see that wrong definitions of the gospel give rise to many wicked things.

First, the gospel is NOT the entire Word of God. It's a very popular notion among those who profess to believe the doctrines of grace to define the gospel as everything that is contained in the Bible. Now what difference does this definition make? Isn't it true that the entire Bible records the very words of God? Yes. Isn't it true that God's Word must be believed? Yes. Isn't it true that the gospel is contained in God's Word? Yes. Isn't it true that the gospel is throughout God's Word? Yes. So why is defining the gospel as the entire Word of God such a horrible error? Well, let's think about it for a little while. If the gospel is the entire Word of God, then how is the gospel preached? Does the preacher have to read or preach the entire Bible in order to preach the gospel? Well, the advocates of this definition have a little out that they will always mention eventually. They will say, "No! A preacher doesn't need to read or preach the entire Bible; instead, a preacher can read or preach ANYTHING in the Bible and still preach the gospel." So they believe that the power of God unto salvation is ANYTHING in the Bible. Now notice what this means about BELIEVING the gospel. Mark 16:16 says that those who do not believe the gospel will be damned. If they were consistent, they would have to

say that those who do not believe **EVEN ONE PART** of the Bible are lost. And, as I mentioned in last week's sermon, you can't believe what you don't know. So, if they were consistent, they would have to say that someone who doesn't know that Zelophehad the son of Hephher had no sons, but daughters: and the names of the daughters of Zelophehad were Mahlah, and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah," which is from Numbers 26:33, they are lost. But no – they do not say that someone who doesn't know about a particular truth in the Bible is lost. Instead, they say that **WHEN THIS MESSAGE IS PREACHED**, they will believe it. And **UNTIL IT IS PREACHED**, a believer can be ignorant of it. Now this is all well and good, when it comes to the daughters of Zelophehad. But what about when it comes to the work of Christ that demands and ensures the salvation of all whom He represented? Here we get to the bottom of it all, and the real reason why some would want to define the gospel in this way. They use the **SAME REASONING** for the daughters of Zelophehad as for the atoning work of Christ. After all, since it's **ALL** the gospel, one passage of Scripture is no different than any other passage of Scripture when it comes to salvation.

So here's what they say: They say that a regenerate person can be ignorant of what Christ's work accomplished, but when they are confronted with what Christ's work accomplished, they will believe it. This is their way of speaking peace to those who are ignorant of the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel, including speaking peace to Arminians. They will say that a regenerate person may believe for a period of time that Christ died for everyone, but when they are shown their error from the Bible, they will repent of their error and believe the truth of the Bible. But what they are really doing is speaking peace to those who believe that Christ died for everyone. They do not judge as lost those who are ignorant of what the atonement accomplished. In speaking peace to them, they are participants in their evil deeds.

Second, the gospel is not a well-meant offer of salvation to all who hear it. We're not using the word "offer" in the old sense of the word, which meant "to bear," "to bring," or "to present." We're using the word "offer" in the sense in which most religionists use it, including those who claim to believe the doctrines of grace. The word "offer" now implies that the offerer desires that the offeree accept the offer. For example, if Mr. Smith offers Mr. Jones an apple, it is because Mr. Smith desires that Mr. Jones accept the offer of the apple. In the same way, if God offers salvation through Christ to all without exception, it is because God desires the salvation of everyone to whom He offers it. Now if God desires the salvation of everyone who hears the gospel and yet not everyone is saved who hears the gospel, upon whom is this salvation conditioned? You only need to hear the appeals of the well-meant offer advocates to see their conditionalism. They preach that Christ is ready and waiting and willing to save every lost person within the sound of the preaching. So if Christ is **READY** and **WILLING** to save them, what is He **WAITING** for? Of course, it is for the sinner to do his part. They will even go so far as to say that God **ENABLES** the elect to fulfill the condition. Yet it is still salvation conditioned on the sinner, and it is damnable.

In light of the well-meant offer, I would also like to mention some terminology in preaching that comes very close to, if not crosses the line into, well-meant offer preaching. Suppose a preacher says to lost sinners, "the gospel is God's promise to save you based on the righteousness of Christ alone." What does that "you" imply? It implies that God promises to save every person in the audience based on the righteousness of Christ alone. Some preachers will just come out and say, "God will save every one of you based on the righteousness of Christ alone." Now if this is a promise from God, then God **WILL** save every one of them. But this is **NOT** a promise from God. God **NEVER** promised this. And to say so is to say that God's promise is a conditional promise – that God will save every one of you, **IF** you do your part.

There's another way that the gospel is stated that could be misunderstood (or understood, as the case may be) as teaching conditional salvation. Some preachers say that the gospel is God's promise to save sinners based on the righteousness of Christ alone. You might be wondering, "what's wrong with that?" Certainly, God saves sinners based on the righteousness of Christ alone. I have no dispute there. But how could this be interpreted when preached to an audience that includes unbelievers? When one uses the word "sinners" in this general sense, then it could easily be interpreted to mean "every sinner." And some who use this general word **DO** mean it as that. In fact, the well-meant offer preachers **LIKE** to use these general terms, so they can straddle the fence between universal and particular redemption. What could the unregenerate people in the crowd think when the gospel is presented in such a way? They could think, "God promises to save sinners, and I'm a sinner, so God promises to save me." It's like the old Arminian Roman Road. You first admit you're a sinner, then

you admit that Christ died for sinners, and then, based on these two facts, you come to the conclusion that Christ died for you. So be wary of such things.

The gospel IS a promise. But it is a promise from God to save HIS PEOPLE. It is a particular promise. It is NOT a universal promise. If it were a universal promise, then it would be the will of the sinner that thwarts God from fulfilling his promise.

Third, the gospel is not a COMMAND. Some who say they are against the well-meant offer say things like, “The gospel is not an offer; it’s a command.” They will say, “the gospel is the command to repent and believe.” Or “the gospel is repent or perish.” Or “the gospel is repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” But do you notice – in each one of these definitions, the emphasis is on the work of the sinner! The gospel is about Christ’s accomplished work. It has nothing to do with our work. Some go to Acts 16:31 to try to prove their definition of the gospel. Let’s read Acts 16:30-31:

Acts 16: (30) And leading them outside, he said, Sirs, what must I do that I may be saved? (31) And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.

What they fail to read is verse 32: “And they spoke the WORD OF THE LORD to him, and to all those in his house.” Paul and Silas did not just say, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved”; they preached WHO this Jesus Christ is and WHAT he accomplished! I have one more comment on those who say that the gospel is the command to repent and believe. Look at Mark 1:14-15:

Mark 1: (14) And after John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God, (15) and saying, The time has been fulfilled, and the kingdom of God draws near. Repent and believe in the gospel.

If you replace “gospel” in this verse with their definition, you will come up with this: “Repent and believe the command to repent and believe.” It makes no sense.

Fourth, the gospel is not the death, burial and resurrection of Christ considered apart from that the death, burial, and resurrection actually ACCOMPLISHED. People go to 1 Corinthians 15 to try to prove this definition. Let’s read verses 1 through 5:

1 Corinthians 15: (1) But, brothers, I reveal to you the gospel which I preached to you, which you also received, in which you also stand, (2) by which you also are being kept safe, if you hold fast the Word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. (3) For I delivered to you in the first place what I also received, that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, (4) and that He was buried, and that He was raised the third day, according to the Scriptures, (5) and that He appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.

What do we see in verse 3? Does it just say “Christ died?” No! It says, “Christ died FOR OUR SINS!” Christ’s death actually accomplished something! And he doesn’t stop there. He says, “Christ died for our sins ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES”! So in order to know what Christ accomplished on the cross, we go the Scriptures. In this passage, the Scriptures to which he was referring were the Old Testament Scriptures. Now what do the Old Testament Scriptures say about what Christ accomplished on the cross? Let’s look at one familiar passage, Isaiah 53. Let’s read verses 4 through 6:

Isaiah 53: (4) Surely He has borne our sicknesses, and He carried our pain; yet we esteemed Him plagued, smitten by God, and afflicted. (5) But He was wounded for our transgressions; [He was] bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His wounds we ourselves are healed. (6) All we like sheep have gone astray; we have each one turned to his own way; and Jehovah made meet in Him the iniquity of all of us.

What was Jesus wounded for? OUR TRANSGRESSIONS. He bore our sicknesses and He carried our pain. AND his wounds heal us. And look at verses 10 and 11:

Isaiah 53: (10) But Jehovah pleased to crush Him, to make Him sick, [so that] If He should put His soul as a guilt offering, He shall see [His] seed; He shall prolong [His] days; and the will of Jehovah shall prosper in His hand. (11) He shall see [the fruit] of the travail of His soul; He shall be fully satisfied. By His knowledge the righteous One, My Servant, shall justify for many, and He shall bear their iniquities.

Jesus Christ was made a guilt offering for us. He bore our iniquities. He was punished in our stead. And God was satisfied with the offering and shall justify many based on Christ’s obedience unto death. Romans 4:25 says that Jesus Christ was delivered because of our offenses and raised because of our justification. So the gospel DOES include the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. But it doesn’t stop there. It also includes the

ACCOMPLISHMENT of that death, burial, and resurrection. The work of Christ ENSURES and DEMANDS the salvation of ALL whom Christ represented. And those who do not believe THIS, do not believe in the accomplishment of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

The gospel is not just the person of Christ or just the work of Christ. The gospel is not just “Jesus is God.” The gospel is not just “salvation.” It is SALVATION BASED SOLELY ON THE WORK OF JESUS CHRIST, THE GOD-MAN MEDIATOR.

I could go on forever about what the gospel is not. But I hope I touched on some of the important ones that we have and will come across as we talk with other professing Christians. I hope this will help equip the saints in their daily warfare, and if anyone listening to this has not believed in God’s definition of the gospel, I hope the TRUE gospel will be used by God to bring you to life. Amen.

Essential Gospel Doctrine (1)

Two weeks ago, I preached a message on THE GOSPEL - WHAT IT IS. We saw that the gospel reveals the righteousness of God. We saw that the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel involves two imputations – First, the sins of God’s people were charged to Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ was punished in the place of God’s people. Second, the righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed to God’s people. We saw that this is how God is just to justify the ungodly. We saw that the gospel is the good news of salvation conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ alone.

Last week, I preached a message on THE GOSPEL - WHAT IT’S NOT. We saw that the gospel is not the entire Bible, it is not an offer, it is not a command, and is not the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ considered apart from what the work of Christ accomplished. The gospel is a UNILATERAL, UNCONDITIONAL promise from God to save His people based on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ alone. This promise is NEVER thwarted.

This week, and in coming weeks, the Lord willing, the subject will be ESSENTIAL GOSPEL DOCTRINE. By “essential,” I mean that if you do not have this doctrine, you do not have the gospel. I’m using the word “doctrine” instead of “doctrines,” because this is how the Bible emphasizes the unity of all the necessary parts of the gospel. There ARE different doctrines of the gospel, but they all make up THE doctrine.

Now, we shouldn’t be intimidated by the word DOCTRINE. It simply means “teaching” or “instruction.” The Greek words that are translated “doctrine” are didaskaleia (did-as-kal-EE-a) and didace (did-AH-kay), which both come from the same root. That root is also found in didaskalos (did-AS-kal-os), which means “teacher,” and didasko (did-AS-ko), which means “to teach.” In the context in which these words are used positively, it means “teaching the truth.” So I’m going to be talking about ESSENTIAL GOSPEL TEACHING, or ESSENTIAL GOSPEL TRUTH.

Let’s think about the definition of the gospel again. It is good news, and the only way it can be good news is if it is a unilateral, unconditional promise from God. So it is a PROMISE from God to save His people based on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ alone.

Now let’s think about what are the necessary truths that are part of the gospel. Well, we’ve gone over some of them already. Imputation is a necessary truth; in fact, double imputation is a necessary truth. Justification, redemption, and propitiation are necessary truths. Substitution and satisfaction are necessary truths. And some of the truths that we’re going to go into a little more detail on overlap with these truths, and this is necessarily so; because these truths are so intertwined, that you cannot destroy one without destroying all.

Now let’s get into more of the necessary truths that come from the gospel. Again -- the gospel is God’s promise to save His people based on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ alone.

So what do we see in the first word of this definition? We see GOD. The existence of God is an essential gospel doctrine. If you don’t have God, you don’t have the gospel. And if you don’t have the gospel, you don’t have salvation, as we’ve already seen. But the gospel doesn’t just stop at God’s existence. What does God do? God PROMISES. And the only way the gospel can be good news is if God HAS THE POWER TO KEEP ALL HIS PROMISES WITHOUT EVEN A SINGLE FAILURE.

What does the Bible say about the ability of God to keep His promises? Let's turn to some Scripture passages. We're going to be spending some time here. As I was preparing this message, I saw again how full the Scripture is not only of God's promises but His fulfilling of these promises. Let's spend some time in these verses and meditate on and rejoice in God's faithfulness to keep His promises. These are precious truths to God's people.

Deuteronomy 7:8-10:

Deuteronomy 7: (8) But because Jehovah loved you, and because He kept the oath which He swore to your fathers, Jehovah has caused you to go out with a strong hand, and redeemed you from the house of slaves, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. (9) Because of this, know that Jehovah your God, He [is] God, the faithful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to those who love Him, and to those who keep His commands, to a thousand generations; (10) and repaying to his face those that hate Him, to destroy him; He will not delay, He will repay him who hates Him, to his face.

Joshua 21:44-45:

Joshua 21: (44) And Jehovah gave them rest round about, according to all that He swore to their fathers. And not a man of all their enemies stood before them. Jehovah delivered all their enemies into their hand. (45) Nor did fail a word from any good word which Jehovah had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass.

Joshua 23:14:

Joshua 23: (14) And, behold! Today I [am] going in the way of all the earth, and you know with all your heart and with all your soul that there has not failed one thing of all the good things which Jehovah your God has spoken concerning you; all of it has come to you; there has not one thing failed of it.

2 Samuel 23:3-5:

2 Samuel 23: (3) The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me: One ruling over man righteously, who rules [in] the fear of God, (4) is as the light of the morning, as the sun shines; a morning without clouds; through shining after rain the tender grass [sprouts] from the earth. (5) For [is] not my house so with God? For He has made an everlasting covenant with me, ordered in all things, and sure; for all my salvation, and all my desire, will He not make it grow?

Psalms 89:24-37:

Psalms 89: (24) But My faithfulness and My mercy [is] with him; and his horn shall be exalted in My name. (25) And I will set his hand in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers. (26) He shall cry to Me, My Father, You [are] my God, and the rock of my salvation. (27) And I will make Him [My] first-born, higher than the kings of the earth. (28) I will keep My mercy for him forever, and My covenant shall hold fast with him. (29) And I have established his Seed forever, and His throne as the days of the heavens. (30) If his sons forsake My Law, and do not walk in My judgments; (31) if they profane My statutes and do not keep My commandments; (32) then I will visit their transgressions with the rod, and their sins with stripes. (33) But I will not annul My mercy from him, and I will not be false in My faithfulness. (34) I will not profane My covenant, nor change what goes from My lips. (35) Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David. (36) His Seed shall be forever, and his throne as the sun before Me. (37) Like the moon, it shall be forever; and a faithful witness in the sky.

Psalms 132:11:

Psalms 132: (11) Jehovah has sworn to David [in] truth; He will not turn from it; I will set [one] of the fruit of your body on the throne for you.

Isaiah 45:23:

Isaiah 45: (23) I have sworn by Myself, the Word has gone out of My mouth [in] righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.

Isaiah 46:9-11:

Isaiah 46: (9) Remember former things from forever, for I [am] God, and no one else [is] God, even none like Me, (10) declaring the end from the beginning, and from the past those things which were not done, saying, My counsel shall rise; and, I will do all My desire; (11) calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of My counsel from a far off land. Yes, I have spoken; yes, I will cause it to come; I have formed; yes, I will do it.

Isaiah 54:9-10:

Isaiah 54: (9) For this [is] the waters of Noah to Me; [for as] I swore [to refrain] from passing over the waters of Noah over the earth again, so I have sworn from being angry with you and rebuking you. (10) For the

mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My mercy shall not depart from you; nor shall the covenant of My peace be removed, says Jehovah who has pity on you.

Jeremiah 33:20-21,25-26:

Jeremiah 33: (20) So says Jehovah, If you can break My covenant of the day, and My covenant of the night, and there should not be day and night in their time, (21) [then] My covenant with My servant David may also be broken, that he should not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levitical priests, My ministers. ... (25) So says Jehovah, If My covenant [is] not with day and night, [and if] I have not appointed the ordinances of the heavens and earth, (26) then I also will reject the seed of Jacob, and My servant David, not to take of his seed [to be] rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For I will bring back their captivity and have pity on them.

Acts 13:32-33:

Acts 13: (32) And we preach the gospel to you, the promise made to the fathers, (33) that this God has fulfilled to us, their children, raising up Jesus; as also it has been written in the second Psalm, "You are My Son, today I have begotten You."

Romans 15:8-9:

Romans 15: (8) And I say, Jesus Christ has become a minister of circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises of the fathers, (9) and for the nations to glorify God for mercy, even as it has been written, "Because of this I will confess to You in the nations, and I will give praise to Your name."

2 Corinthians 1:19-20:

2 Corinthians 1: (19) For Jesus Christ the Son of God, the [One] proclaimed among you by us, through me and Silvanus and Timothy, did not become Yes and No, but has been Yes in Him. (20) For as many promises as [are] of God, in Him [they are] yes, and in Him [are] Amen, for glory to God through us.

1 Thessalonians 5:24:

1 Thessalonians 5: (24) Faithful is the [One] calling you, who also will perform [it].

Titus 1:1-3:

Titus 1: (1) Paul, a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ according to [the] faith of [the] elect of God and full knowledge of [the] truth according to godliness, (2) on hope of eternal life which the God who does not lie promised before [the] eternal times, (3) but revealed in its own times in a proclamation of His Word, with which I was entrusted by [the] command of our Savior God;

2 Peter 3:9-13:

2 Peter 3: (9) The Lord of the promise is not slow, as some deem slowness, but is long-suffering toward us, not having purposed any [of us] to perish, but all [of us] to come to repentance. (10) But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in [the] night, in which the heavens will pass away with rushing sound, and having burned [the] elements will be dissolved, and earth and the works in it will be burned up. (11) Then all these being [about] to be dissolved, [of] what sort ought you to be in holy behavior and godliness, (12) looking for and hastening the coming of the Day of God, through which [the] heavens having been set afire will be dissolved; and burning, [the] elements will melt? (13) But according to His promise, we look for "new heavens and a new earth," in which righteousness dwells.

And then let's go to Hebrews 6:13-20:

Hebrews 6: (13) For God having made promise to Abraham, since He had no [one] greater to swear by, "[He] swore by Himself," (14) saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." (15) And so, being long-suffering, he obtained the promise. (16) For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath to make things sure [is] to them the end of all gainsaying. (17) In which way, desiring to more fully declare to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His counsel, God interposed by an oath, (18) that through two unchangeable things, in which [it was] not possible [for] God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, those having fled to lay hold on the hope set before [us], (19) which we have as an anchor of the soul, both certain and sure, and entering into the inner [side] of the veil, (20) where Jesus entered as forerunner for us, having become a High Priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.

Aren't these precious? We haven't even covered a small percentage of the passages in God's Word that talk of His faithfulness to keep his promises. But I hope this has given you a glimpse into the sure promises of God. If God's promises were not sure to be fulfilled, then all is in vain.

Now how can we be sure that God is able to keep all His promises? Some of the verses we just read mentioned this, and there are a ton of other verses that mention it as well. The reason we can be sure that God is able to keep all His promises is because God is SOVEREIGN. That means he is in total control of all things. He CREATED all things, and He ORDERS all things. There is not a single thing in the universe that is not CONTROLLED by God. If there is anything that is not under God's control, then whatever it is that's not under God's control can get in the way of God's fulfilling His promise. If God promises to do something, yet there are some people around who are not controlled by God, then those people could thwart God's promise. God MUST be in control of EVERY SINGLE THING. And we have so many Scriptures that say this. Let's just turn to a few.

Job 23:13:

Job 23: (13) But He [is] in one [mind], and who can turn Him? Yea, His soul desires, and He does [it]. (14) For He fulfilled my lot, and many like these are with Him.

Psalms 115:3:

Psalms 115: (3) But our God [is] in Heaven; He has done all that He has pleased.

Psalms 135:5-7:

Psalms 135: (5) For I know that Jehovah [is] great, and our Lord [is] above all gods. (6) Every [thing] which Jehovah [was] pleased to do, He did, in the heavens and in the earth, and in the seas and all deep places. (7) He causes the vapors to rise from the end of the earth; He makes lightnings for the rain; He brings the wind out of His storehouses;

Proverbs 16:33:

Proverbs 16: (33) The lot is cast into the lap, but all ordering of it [is] from Jehovah.

Proverbs 21:1:

Proverbs 21: (1) [As] streams of waters, the king's heart [is] in the hand of Jehovah; He turns it wherever He desires.

Isaiah 45:6-7:

Isaiah 45: (6) that they may know from the rising of the sun, and to its going down, that [there is] none besides Me; I [am] Jehovah, and there is none else; (7) forming light, and creating darkness; making peace, and creating evil. I, Jehovah, do all these things.

Thus, those who believe the gospel believe that God is SOVEREIGN over all things and is thus able and faithful to keep all His promises. If you don't believe that God is sovereign, you don't believe that His promises are sure and certain. If you don't believe that His promises are sure and certain, you don't believe the gospel.

Inseparably connected with the doctrine of God's sovereignty and faithfulness to keep His promises is the doctrine of PREDESTINATION. To "predestinate" means to "determine beforehand." We've already seen that God is in control of everything, meaning that he determines everything. Now the question is, WHEN did He determine everything? Does He determine things based on what His creation does? If He did that, His promises would not be sure and certain, because they could be changed by the will of man. So – if God does not determine things in reaction to His creation, He must have determined things BEFORE creation. God is an infinite God – that means He has no beginning and no end. So when we talk about God determining things BEFORE creation, we're not saying that it is possible to pinpoint a particular TIME before creation, because time did not exist before creation, and because God's determination of all things was in His mind from eternity past. It is enough to say that he determined all things BEFORE He created all things. (Just as a side note, we see that the doctrine of God as creator of all things is essential gospel doctrine, because God cannot be in control of that which He did not create, unless some higher being is the one that created and then designated God to be in control. But a God who is in subjection to another being cannot be God. Many Scriptures, when they talk of God's sovereignty, link God's sovereignty with God as creator.)

Let's turn to some Scriptures on God's predetermination of things. Some of these are going to overlap with election, which I will talk about later, the Lord willing. Let's first turn to Isaiah 42:9. This is God speaking:

Isaiah 42: (9) Behold, the former things have come to pass, and I declare new things before they happen, I cause you to hear.

Now let's turn to Isaiah 46:9-10:

Isaiah 46: (9) Remember former things from forever, for I [am] God, and no one else [is] God, even none like Me, (10) declaring the end from the beginning, and from the past those things which were not done, saying, My counsel shall rise; and, I will do all My desire;

Now we'll go to the New Testament. Matthew 25:34:

Matthew 25: (34) Then the King will say to those on His right, Come, the blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from [the] foundation of the world.

Acts 13:9:

Acts 13: (9) And hearing, the nations rejoiced and glorified the Word of the Lord. And as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.

Acts 17:26:

Acts 17: (26) And He made every nation of men of one blood, to live on all the face of the earth, ordaining fore-appointed seasons and boundaries of their dwelling,

Romans 8:29:

Romans 8: (29) because whom He foreknew, He also predestinated [to be] conformed to the image of His Son, for Him to be [the] First-born among many brothers.

1 Corinthians 2:7:

1 Corinthians 2: (7) But we speak [the] wisdom of God in a mystery, having been hidden, which God predetermined before the ages for our glory,

Ephesians 1:4-5,11:

Ephesians 1: (4) even as He elected us in Him before [the] foundation of [the] world, for us to be holy and without blemish before Him in love, (5) predestinating us to adoption through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ... (11) in whom we also have been chosen to an inheritance, being predestinated according to [the] purpose of the [One] working all things according to the counsel of His [own] will,

Ephesians 3:11:

Ephesians 3: (11) according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,

2 Thessalonians 2:13:

2 Thessalonians 2: (13) But we ought to thank God always concerning you, brothers, beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to salvation in sanctification of [the] Spirit and belief of [the] truth,

2 Timothy 1:9:

2 Timothy 1: (9) the [One] having saved us and having called [us] with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to [His] own purpose and grace given to us in Christ Jesus before eternal times,

Titus 1:2:

Titus 1: (2) on hope of eternal life which the God who does not lie promised before [the] eternal times,

1 Peter 1:20:

1 Peter 1: (20) indeed having been foreknown before [the] foundation of [the] world, but revealed in [the] last times because of you,

Revelation 13:8:

Revelation 13: (8) And all those dwelling in the earth will worship it, those of whom the names had not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb having been slain from the foundation of the world.

And the Bible says that the most important event in history, even though it was carried out by evil men, was pre-determined.

Luke 22:22:

Luke 22: (22) And, indeed, the Son of Man goes according as was determined, but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!

Acts 2:23:

Acts 2: (23) this One given [to you] by the before-determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, [you] having taken by lawless hands, having crucified [Him], you killed [Him].

Acts 4:27-28:

Acts 4: (27) For truly both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the nations and [the] peoples of Israel, were assembled against Your holy child Jesus, whom You anointed, (28) to do whatever Your hand and Your counsel before-determined to be done.

And as we'll see in a later message, the Lord willing, God chose a certain number of people before the foundation of the world and predestined that they would be saved by the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ. This is called ELECTION, and the people God chose are called the ELECT.

What we have seen today are some of the truths that are revealed in the gospel. We've seen that God is a promise-keeper. He CANNOT, because of His nature, fail to keep even ONE of his promises. God is a sovereign God, one who is in control of everything, one who determined everything before He created the world. He determined the promises, and He determined how, when, and where these promises would be fulfilled. He is true to Himself; He is true to His Word. When God says that something will happen, it will happen. When God promises salvation conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ, that promise is as SURE and as CERTAIN as God Himself. Everyone to whom this promise is given SHALL be saved.

Let's close with Psalm 111:

Psalm 111: (1) Praise Jehovah! I will thank Jehovah with all [my] heart; in the council of the upright, and of the assembly. (2) The works of Jehovah [are] great, sought out by all those desiring them. (3) His work [is] honorable and glorious; and His righteousness [is] standing forever. (4) He has made a memorial for His wonders; Jehovah is gracious and full of pity. (5) He has given food to those who fear Him; He will always remember His covenant. (6) He has shown to His people the power of His works, to give to them [the] inheritance of the nations. (7) The works of His hands [are] truth and all His commandments [are] true, (8) standing firm forever and ever; [they are] done in truth and uprightness. (9) He sent redemption to His people; He has commanded His covenant forever; holy and awesome [is] His name. (10) The fear of Jehovah [is] the beginning of wisdom; all who do them [have] a good understanding; His praise is standing forever!

Amen.

Essential Gospel Doctrine (2)

Turn to Romans 6 if you will. I'm going to read 6:15 to 7:11:

Romans 6: (15) What then? Shall we sin because we are not under Law, but under grace? Let it not be! (16) Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves [as] slaves for obedience, you are slaves to whom you obey, whether of sin to death, or obedience to righteousness? (17) But thanks [be] to God that you were slaves of sin, but you obeyed from [the] heart the form of doctrine to which you were delivered. (18) And having been set free from sin, you were enslaved to righteousness. (19) I speak as a man on account of the weakness of your flesh. For as you presented your members [as] slaves to uncleanness and to lawless act unto lawless act, so now yield your members as slaves to righteousness unto sanctification. (20) For when you were slaves of sin, you were free as to righteousness. (21) Therefore what fruit did you have then [in the things] over which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things [is] death. (22) But now having been set free from sin, and having been enslaved to God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end everlasting life. (23) For the wages of sin [is] death, but the gift of God [is] everlasting life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (7:1) Or are you ignorant, brothers, (for I speak to those knowing Law), that the Law lords it over the man for as long a time as he lives? (2) For the married woman was bound by Law to the living husband; but if the husband dies, she is set free from the Law of the husband. (3) So then, [if] the husband [is] living, she will be called an adulteress if she becomes another man's. But if the husband dies, she is free from the Law, [so as for] her not to be an adulteress [by] becoming another man's. (4) So that, my brothers, you also were made dead to the Law through the body of Christ, for you to become Another's, to [the One] raised from [the] dead, so that we may bear fruit to God. (5) For when we were in the flesh, the passions of sin were working in our members through the Law for the bearing of fruit unto death. (6) But now we have been set free from the Law, having died [to that] in which we were held, so as [for] us to serve in newness of spirit, and not [in] oldness of letter. (7) What shall we say then?

[Is] the Law sin? Let it not be! But I did not know sin except through Law; for also I did not know lust except the Law said, "You shall not lust." (8) But sin taking occasion through the commandment worked every lust in me; for apart from Law, sin [is] dead. (9) And I was alive apart from Law once, but the commandment came, and sin came alive, and I died. (10) And the commandment which [was] to life, this was found [to be] death to me; (11) for sin taking occasion through the commandment deceived me, and through it killed [me].

Today I'm going to continue to preach on essential gospel doctrine. Let me again give the definition of the gospel: It is God's promise to save His people conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ alone. Last week, we went over the first two words of the definition: GOD'S PROMISE. We went over some essential gospel doctrine that had to do with God and God's promises. God is the sovereign creator and controller of the universe. When God promises, He keeps His promises. The gospel would not be good news if it were a promise from a being who failed even one time to keep His promises.

Now let's go on to the next two words in the definition. In the gospel, what does God promise to do? He promises TO SAVE. Let us consider what it means TO SAVE.

Now, we hear a lot of religious phrases using various forms of this word. They say, "Jesus saves." They say, "I'm saved." They ask, "Are you saved?" But what does it mean to be saved? And what does it mean to SAVE? The Hebrew word that's usually translated "save" is YA-sha, and the Greek word that's usually translated "save" is SO-zo. One of the meanings of these words is to deliver or to rescue. So the gospel speaks of God's promise to deliver or rescue.

First of all, what is the necessary implication of deliverance or rescue? Well, if I'm going to RESCUE someone, does that mean that everything's okay with the person I'm going to rescue? No! It means that there's something terribly wrong. That person is in a situation in which he is in need of RESCUE. And if I'm going to DELIVER someone, it's because that person is BEING HELD or IS BOUND by someone or something. Since the gospel speaks of God saving certain PEOPLE, what is the terrible situation from which these people need to be RESCUED? What are they bound by from which they need to be DELIVERED?

The Bible clearly tells us the state of these people before they are rescued and delivered. In fact, it tells us that the state of THESE people – that is, the ones that are mentioned in the gospel – their state BEFORE salvation is no different than the state of EVERYONE WITHOUT EXCEPTION by nature. Let's turn to Ephesians 2:1-3:

Ephesians 2: (1) and you being dead in deviations and sins, (2) in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit now working in the sons of disobedience, (3) among whom we also all conducted ourselves in times past in the lusts of our flesh, doing the things willed of the flesh and of the understanding, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as the rest.

What does this say about us, before we were saved? We were DEAD in trespasses and in sins. Now when it says we were DEAD, does that mean that we didn't breathe, or that our heart wasn't beating, or that our brain wasn't working? Well, we can see from verses 2 and 3 that it doesn't mean that, because it says that we were DOING THINGS. So when we talk about unbelievers being DEAD, we don't mean that they don't do anything. This is a certain kind of death. As verse 1 says, it is a kind of death that is in TRESPASSES and SINS. We were dead IN OUR SINS. Colossians 2:13 says that we were dead in the offenses and the uncircumcision of our flesh. As John 3:19 says, unsaved people love darkness rather than light, because their works are evil. Romans 6:17 and 20 says that we were SLAVES of sin. So we were DEAD in sin and SLAVES to sin. This means that everything we did was evil, and we COULD NOT do ANYTHING good. We couldn't even understand the difference between good and evil. In the second part of Romans 6:20, it says that we were "free as to righteousness." This means that when we were slaves to sin, we were WITHOUT righteousness. We did not have a righteousness that answered the demands of God's law and justice.

Let's turn to several passages that illustrate the points I just made.

Romans 3:9-12:

Romans 3: (9) What then? Do we excel? Not at all! For we have charged both Jews and Greeks before, all [with] being under sin; (10) according as it has been written, "[There is] not a righteous [one], not even one!" (11) "[There is] not [one] understanding; [there is] not [one] seeking God." (12) All turned away, [they] became worthless together, not [one is] doing goodness, not so much as one!"

1 Corinthians 2:14:

1 Corinthians 2: (14) But a natural man does not receive the things of [the] Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he is not able to know [them], because they are spiritually discerned.

Romans 8:5-8:

Romans 8: (5) For the ones that are according to flesh mind the things of the flesh. And the ones according to Spirit [mind] the things of the Spirit. (6) For the mind of the flesh [is] death, but the mind of the Spirit [is] life and peace; (7) because the mind of the flesh [is] enmity towards God; for it is not being subjected to the Law of God, for neither can it [be]. (8) And those being in the flesh are not able to please God.

Another essential doctrine comes from the answer to the following questions: “WHY were we dead in our sins before we were saved, and WHY is EVERYONE dead in their sins who is not saved?” For the answer to this question, we should look at Romans 5. Let’s look at verses 12 and 19:

Romans 5: (12) Because of this, even as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, so also death passed to all men, inasmuch as all sinned. ... (19) For as through the one man's disobedience the many were constituted sinners, so also through the obedience of the One the many shall be constituted righteous.

Sin entered the world through ONE MAN. Through ONE MAN’S DISOBEDIENCE, the many were constituted sinners. Who is this ONE MAN? The first man ever to be created – Adam. What was this one man’s sin? Disbelieving God’s promise. What does that have to do with us? Adam’s sin is imputed to all whom He represented. How many people did Adam represent? All of Adam’s posterity. The doctrine of original sin is essential gospel doctrine.

So what is God’s attitude toward those who are dead in their sins and who are void of righteousness? Look back at Ephesians 2, at the end of verse 3. What does it say we were by nature? CHILDREN OF WRATH. As we saw in the first message of this series, God will not fellowship with those who have no righteousness. And it goes even further than that. He can ONLY SHOW WRATH to those who have no righteousness. This is why, when we were dead in trespasses and sins, we were children of wrath. We were under God’s wrath. And look at the very end of verse 3. It says, “even as the rest.” This shows that everyone without exception by nature is a child of wrath. They are under God’s curse. Everything they do is under a curse.

Now someone might ask, “Everything they do is cursed? Don’t they do at least a little bit of good? Isn’t God pleased with some of what unsaved people do? Are you saying that God doesn’t bless them or have some kind of mercy upon them?” My answer is, This isn’t just my opinion; it’s revealed by GOD. And if you have a problem with it, you have a problem with God. Let’s see what God says. Turn to Psalm 14:2-3:

Psalm 14: (2) Jehovah looked down from Heaven on the sons of mankind, to see if there were any discerning [and] seeking God: (3) they [have] all turned aside; together they have become filthy; [there is] none doing good, not even one!

Part of this is quoted in Romans 3. There is NONE doing good. Now let’s turn to Matthew 7:18:

Matthew 7:(18) A good tree cannot produce evil fruits, nor a corrupt tree produce good fruits.

What does this say about a corrupt tree? It’s very obvious – a corrupt tree CANNOT bring forth good fruit. It is an IMPOSSIBILITY. But someone might ask, “Isn’t an unbeliever doing good when he is kind to others? What about if he’s kind to the environment or to his animals?” Let’s look at Proverbs 12:10:

Proverbs 12: (10) The righteous knows the life of his animal, but the mercies of the wicked [are] cruel.

Even the MERCIES of the wicked are CRUEL! His so-called goodness to others is actually CRUELTY in God’s sight! Again, there is NONE doing good, and a corrupt tree CANNOT bring forth good fruit. Let’s turn to Hebrews 11:6:

Hebrews 11: (6) But without faith [it is] impossible to please [God]. For it is right [that] the [one] drawing near to God should believe that He is, and [that] He becomes a rewarder to the [ones] seeking Him out.

It is IMPOSSIBLE for unbelievers to please God. Do you see any exceptions in here? Does an unbeliever’s so-called good deeds or acts of kindness please God? God says that is an IMPOSSIBILITY. And if it is impossible for an unbeliever to ever please God, what is God’s attitude toward those who do not please Him? ONLY A CURSE. NEVER a blessing. Let’s turn to Proverbs 3:33:

Proverbs 3: (3) The curse of Jehovah [is] in the house of the wicked, but He blesses the abode of the just.

The house of the wicked is CURSED. Is everything he does CURSED? Let’s turn to Deuteronomy 28:15-19:

Deuteronomy 28: (15) And it shall be, if you will not heed the voice of your God, to take heed to do all His commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today, even all these curses shall come on you and overtake you: (16) You [shall be] cursed in the city, and you shall be cursed in the field. (17) Your basket and your kneading-trough [shall be] cursed. (18) The fruit of your body [shall be] cursed, and the fruit of your land, the offspring of your oxen, and the young ones of your sheep. (19) You shall be cursed when you come in, and you shall be cursed when you go out.

Sounds pretty comprehensive, doesn't it?

Now remember – The Bible isn't just talking just about the immoral pervert when it talks about those who are dead in their sins, who are slaves to sin, who are bringing forth fruit unto death, who cannot bring forth good fruit, who cannot please God, and who are under God's curse. It is ALSO talking about the one who is doing his best to obey God and to be moral and dedicated and sincere but who does not believe the gospel. Paul's testimony about himself is the most vivid example. In Philippians 3, he shows that he was not an immoral pervert when he was lost; in fact, he was just the opposite. He was a moral, sincere, zealous, religious person. Yet because he did not believe the gospel then, Paul counted all that but loss. And look what he says in Romans 7:5: "For when we were in the flesh, the passions of sin were working in our members THROUGH THE LAW for the bearing of fruit unto death." What was Paul's fruit unto death before he was saved? It was his LAW-KEEPING. Paul, although he was moral and religious, was dead in his sins, was a slave to sin, was bringing forth fruit unto death, could not bring forth good fruit, could not please God, and was under God's curse. Proverbs 15:8 says that the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to God. It's all an abomination, even if it comes in the name of Christ. The so-called "Christians" of our day who claim to love and worship God but who do not believe the gospel are bringing forth fruit unto death. All of their prayers, all of their preaching, all of their giving, all of their singing, all of their hard work, all of their zeal, all of their outreach to the poor, all of their evangelism, all of their witnessing, all of their pro-life work, all of their anti-homosexual work, all of their morality, all of their dedication, all of their supposed kindnesses to their spouses and their children and their neighbors, all of their religious education, all of their decrying of sex and violence in the media, all of their decrying liberalism, all of their letters to the editor, all of their volunteering, all of their modesty, all of their abstaining from foul language and fornication and drunkenness and gluttony, all of their tears of joy, all of their tears of remorse, all of their happiness, all of their sadness, all of their home-schooling, all of their home-churching, all of their stands against Roman Catholicism and Mormonism and Buddhism and Islam and the New Age Movement, all of their separating from corrupt churches, all of their proclamations of the doctrines of grace, all of their ENTIRE LIVES are an ABOMINATION to God. They have a zeal, alright, but it is not according to knowledge. They are ever learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. The state of the religious unbeliever who comes in the name of conservative Christianity, even in the name of the doctrines of grace, is the same as the state of the irreligious, unconcerned, immoral liberal homosexual. In fact, Jesus Christ said that it would be more tolerable in the day of judgment for the sodomite than it would be for the moral religionist who does not believe the gospel.

And speaking of the judgment, I'd like to briefly talk about what sin earns. We've already seen that those who are dead in their sins are under the curse of God, even God's people before they're saved. But what about those who remain under the curse of God until their death? Here we come to another essential gospel doctrine. For if certain people are saved from their sin, they are also saved from the consequence of their sin. Let's look at what the consequence of sin is. Romans 6:23 is something we already read at the beginning, but let's read it again:

Romans 6: (23) For the wages of sin [is] death, but the gift of God [is] everlasting life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Sin earns death. Sin DEMANDS death. Verse 16 talks about "sin to death." Verse 21 says that "the end of those things is death." And back in chapter 5, when it speaks of Adam, it speaks of condemnation and death as a result of sin.

Now what is this condemnation and death, which is also spoken of as damnation? Well, the Bible clearly states that it is the state of the wicked after they die in which they are eternally punished for their sins. The place in which they are eternally punished for their sins is called HELL. Let's look at some Scriptures that tell us of the horrible state and place of those who die in their sins.

Isaiah 33:14:

Isaiah 33: (14) The sinners of Zion are afraid; terror has seized profane ones; who of us shall tarry [with] consuming fire? Who of us shall tarry with everlasting burnings?

Matthew 3:12:

Matthew 3: (12) whose fan [is] in His hand, and He will cleanse His floor and will gather His wheat into the storehouse. But He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Matthew 13:40-42:

Matthew 13: (40) Then as the darnel is gathered and is consumed in the fire, so it will be in the completion of this age. (41) The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all the offenses, and those who practice lawlessness. (42) And they will throw them into the furnace of fire; there will be weeping and gnashing of the teeth.

Mark 9:43-48:

Mark 9: (43) And if your hand offend you, cut it off. For it is profitable for you to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go away into Hell, into the unquenchable fire, (44) where their worm does not die, and the fire is not put out. (45) And if your foot causes you to offend, cut it off, for it is profitable for you to enter into life lame, than having two feet to be thrown into Hell, into the unquenchable fire, (46) where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched. (47) And if your eye offends you, cast it out. For it is profitable for you to enter into the kingdom of God one-eyed, than having two eyes to be thrown into the Hell of fire, (48) "where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched."

2 Thessalonians 1:8-9:

2 Thessalonians 1: (8) in flaming fire giving full vengeance to those not knowing God, and to those not obeying the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, (9) who will pay the penalty: everlasting destruction from the face of the Lord, "and from the glory of His strength,"

Revelation 14:9-11:

Revelation 14: (9) And a third angel followed them, saying in a great voice, If anyone worships the beast and its image, and receives a mark on his forehead, or in his hand, (10) he also shall drink of the wine of the anger of God having been mixed undiluted in the cup of His wrath. And he will be tormented by fire and brimstone before the holy angels and before the Lamb. (11) And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever. And those worshiping the beast and its image have no rest night and day, even if anyone receives the mark of its name.

Revelation 21:8:

Revelation 21: (8) But for the cowardly and unbelieving, and those having become foul, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all the lying ones, their part will be in the Lake burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

We see from these passages two main truths about hell. First, it is a burning with fire that causes unimaginable pain and agony and torment to all who are there. Second, this burning fire and torment will last for eternity. The fire will never go out, and the pain and agony will never end. What a sobering thought. I cannot imagine hell. Even the worst suffering on earth can't even begin to compare with the torment of hell.

But why does hell exist? And why are its occupants tormented forever? Some people say that this is too harsh and that God wouldn't do such a thing. Some people say that God doesn't torment the wicked forever. The reason people say these things is because they don't know who God is. Hell is what it is because God is who He is. God, first and foremost, is HOLY. He is TOTALLY, EVERLASTINGLY, PERFECTLY PURE. God's Holiness means that God is Just. Because of His HOLY and UNCHANGEABLE JUSTICE, all transgressions against His Holy Commandments, which are TOTAL affronts to His infinite Holiness, MUST be punished in proportion to His Holiness. Those who die not having a righteousness that equals the holiness of God CANNOT EVEN BEGIN TO PAY for their sins. Sin against an eternally Holy God must be punished with eternal punishment. Those who do not believe in the eternal punishment of the wicked do not believe in the utter sinfulness of sin. They do not believe that sin is that much of an offense to God. And the reason they do not believe that sin is such an offense to the eternal God that the wicked must be punished eternally is because they do not believe the God of the Bible.

In conclusion, we have seen that the doctrines of original sin, total depravity, and the wages of sin are all part of essential gospel doctrine. In John 16:8, Jesus Christ says that the Holy Spirit convicts His people concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. If one does not believe that by Adam's sin, all humans are constituted sinners; if one does not believe that the unregenerate have no ability nor desire to come to the true and living God and are void of a righteousness that answers the demands of God's law and justice, and if one does not believe that sin demands everlasting punishment in hell, we can be sure that the Holy Spirit has not wrought a saving work in that person.

But thank God that He HAS revealed the truth to His people through His Word and His Spirit, so we know not only that sin demands everlasting death, but righteousness demands everlasting life. And we know that we, in our character and conduct, can never meet up to God's standard of perfect holiness, and self-generated righteousness demands everlasting death, but the righteousness of Christ, freely imputed to His people, demands their everlasting life in heaven with our Sovereign Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Essential Gospel Doctrine (3)

Let's turn to Matthew chapter 1. I'll be reading verses 18 through 23:

Matthew 1: (18) And the birth of Jesus Christ was this way (for His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph) before the coming together of them, she was found having [babe] in womb by [the] Holy Spirit. (19) But her husband [to be], Joseph, being just, and not willing to make her a public example, he purposed to put her away secretly. (20) And [as] he [was] thinking about these things, behold, an angel of [the] Lord was seen by him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary [as] your wife. For that in her is generated by [the] Holy Spirit. (21) And she will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins. (22) And all this happened so that might be fulfilled that [which was] spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, (23) "Behold! The virgin will conceive in [her] womb and will bear a son, and they will call His name Emmanuel" (which translated is, God with us).

Today I'm going to continue preaching on the truths that are essential to the gospel. Without these truths, you do not have the gospel. The gospel is God's promise to save His people conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ alone. Even though we can summarize the gospel in one sentence, there are a number of necessary truths that are part of this one sentence, and we're going through some of these truths. Last week, we looked at original sin, total depravity, and the wages of sin. We saw how these are necessary gospel truths, because the gospel is God's promise to SAVE. If the people whom God promises to save are in good shape already, then there is no need to save them. If the people whom God promises to save are able to save themselves, then there is no need for God. But the Bible says that Jesus came into the world to SAVE his people FROM THEIR SIN, which we just read in Matthew 1:21, and last week, we saw many verses that show that all whom God saves are, by nature, dead in their sins, slaves to sin, and bringing forth fruit unto death, and who cannot bring forth good fruit, cannot please God, and are under God's curse. We also saw that this is the state of everyone without exception by nature.

Today, we're going to see what this salvation entails, according to God's testimony. What happens to a dead sinner when he is saved?

First, let's get into our minds some of what we've already heard in this series of messages. First, God saves His people under the true gospel, and no other way. Second, those whom God saves are in rebellion against Him by nature and have no ability to come to Him. Third, God is sovereign and does whatever He pleases. So when God appoints a time to save one of His people, there is ABSOLUTELY NO STOPPING IT. And we saw in a previous message that God has appointed everything before the world was created. So – when God, before He created the world, appointed a time to save me, NOTHING could stop it. For every one of His people, God has appointed a specific place and a specific time and a specific circumstance to save each one. We've seen in so many Scriptures that when God decides to do something, it is done. Not even the rebellious person whom God chose to save can stop it from happening! God's saving power is IRRESISTIBLE. That means that NO MAN can RESIST God's intention to save when the appointed time comes. Let's turn to John 6:37:

John 6: (37) All that the Father gives to Me shall come to Me, and the [one] coming to Me I will in no way cast out.

Are there any exceptions there? Are there any whom God has given to Jesus who WILL NOT come to Him? Now look at verse 44:

John 6: (44) No one is able to come to Me (that's talking about the total inability of man to come to Christ by nature) unless the Father who sent Me draws him, and I will raise him up in the last day.

What does it mean when it says that God DRAWS a person? Does it mean that God draws a picture of them? No. Does it mean that God says, "Please, please, will you please come to me"? No. The word DRAW here means to DRAG BY FORCE. To show you what this word really means, let's see how it is used in other parts of the New Testament:

John 21:11:

John 21: (11) Simon Peter went up and dragged the net onto the land, full of big fish, a hundred and fifty three. And [though] being so many, the net was not torn.

Was Peter PLEADING with the fish net to come ashore?

Acts 16:19:

Acts 16: (19) And seeing that the hope of their gain went out, having seized Paul and Silas, her lords dragged them to the market before the rulers.

Did they PLEAD with Paul and Silas to come to the market?

Acts 21:30:

Acts 21: (30) And the whole city was moved, and there was a running together of people. And laying hands on Paul, they drew him outside of the temple, and at once the doors were shut.

Did they PLEAD with Paul to come out of the Temple?

James 2:6:

James 2: (6) But you dishonored the poor one. Do not the rich ones oppress you, and they drag you to judgment seats?

Did the rich ones PLEAD with them to come to the judgment seats?

As you can see, this word doesn't have anything to do with PLEADING or with PROFFERING or even with ASKING. It is a UNILATERAL, FORCEFUL DRAGGING. A better translation of John 6:44 would be, "No one is able to come to Me unless the Father who sent Me DRAGS him."

Does this mean that God DRAGS a person kicking and screaming? Does the person being DRAGGED say, "I don't wanna go! I don't wanna go!" No – God CHANGES their hearts so that they are willingly dragged to Him. Psalm 110:3 says, "Your people shall be WILLING in the day of Your power." John 10:27 says, "My sheep HEAR My voice, and I know them, and they FOLLOW me." I'll talk later in more detail about the change of heart that happens at salvation.

So we have seen that God drags His people to Himself at the time He appointed through the preaching of the gospel. Now let's talk about the CHANGE that takes place at this time.

There is first a change of STATE before God. We have already seen in last week's message that God's people by nature are in a state of WRATH and CONDEMNATION. They are under God's CURSE. They do not have a righteousness that equals God's righteousness. What happens at salvation to a person's STATE before God? At salvation, the righteousness of Christ is IMPUTED to His people. This means that they are LEGALLY CONSTITUTED RIGHTEOUS – as righteous as God Himself. This is an amazing truth. God, because He is holy, only fellowships with those who are as righteous as He is. And He will admit no one to heaven who does not have a righteousness that equals His. Imputation is the only way that God can be just to justify sinners.

Because of imputation, there is a change from DEATH to LIFE. We, by nature, in our own righteousness, were dead in sins and could only bring forth fruit unto death. But what does the Scripture say about our state when we are saved?

Ephesians 2:4:

Ephesians 2: (4) But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love [with] which He loved us, (5) even we being dead in deviations, [He] made us alive together with Christ (by grace you are being saved),

Colossians 2:13:

Colossians 2: (13) And you, being dead in the deviations and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all the deviations,

We were dead once, but we were made alive. This making of a new life is sometimes called being born of God.

Let's read John 3:3-8:

John 3: (3) Jesus answered and said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, If one is not generated from above, he is not able to see the kingdom of God. (4) Nicodemus said to Him, How is a man able to be generated, being old? He is not able to enter into his mother's womb a second [time] and be born? (5) Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, If one is not generated out of water and Spirit, he is not able to enter into the kingdom of God. (6) That having been generated out of the flesh is flesh, and that having been generated out of the Spirit is spirit. (7) Do not wonder because I said to you, You must be generated from above. (8) The Spirit breathes where He desires, and you hear His voice; but you do not know from where He comes, and where He goes; so is everyone having been generated from the Spirit.

1 Peter 1:23:

1 Peter 1: (23) being regenerated, not by corruptible seed, but incorruptible, through the living Word of God, and remaining forever.

Regenerate is another word for born again. Generate = born, and re = again. So when we talk about regeneration, we are talking about being born again.

As part of being born again, there is a change of HEART. Let's look at Ezekiel 11:19:

Ezekiel 11: (19) And I shall give to them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you. And I will remove the stony heart out of their flesh, and I will give them a heart of flesh,

And Ezekiel 36:25-36:

Ezekiel 36: (25) Then I will sprinkle clean waters on you, and you shall be clean. I will cleanse you from all your defilement and from all your idols. (26) And I will also give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit within you. And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give to you a heart of flesh. (27) And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments and do [them]. (28) And you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers. And you shall be a people to Me, and I will be God to you. (29) I will also save you from all your defilements, and I will call for grain and increase it, and I will not put a famine on you. (30) And I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field, in order that you will not any more receive the disgrace of famine among the nations. (31) And you will remember your evil ways and your doings that [were] not good, and you will despise yourselves in your own eyes for your iniquities and for your abominations. (32) Let it be known to you that I am not doing [this] for your sake, states the Lord Jehovah. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel. (33) So says the Lord Jehovah: In the day I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities [to be] inhabited, and the wastes shall be built. (34) And the desolated land shall be cultivated, rather than being a ruin in the eyes of all passing by. (35) And they shall say, This land that was desolated has become like the garden of Eden. And the wasted and desolated and razed cities [are] fortified [and] inhabited. (36) And the nations left all around you shall know that I, Jehovah, built the razed places and planted that which was desolated. I, Jehovah have spoken it and will do it.

Before salvation, God's people have a heart of stone. After salvation, God's people have a heart of flesh. What does this change mean? Does it mean that the heart that's beating inside you used to be made out of stone, and now it's a human heart? No, that's not the way the Bible uses the word in these situations. Let's turn to some passages that show what the heart does. While I'm reading each of these passages, think about what the heart is DOING in each of these.

Genesis 6:5:

Genesis 6: (5) And Jehovah saw that the evil of man [was] great on the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart [was] only evil all the day long.

Genesis 24:45:

Genesis 24: (45) Before I had finished speaking within my heart, even behold, Rebekah was coming out, her pitcher on her shoulder. And she went down to the well and drew. And I said to her, Please let me drink.

Genesis 27:41:

Genesis 27: (41) And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him. And Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning [for] my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob.

Exodus 35:35:

Exodus 35: (35) He has filled them [with] wisdom of heart, to do every work of a smith, and an artisan, and an embroiderer in blue, and in purple, and in crimson, and in bleached [linen], and a weaver; doers of every work and devisers of designs.

Exodus 36:2:

Exodus 36: (2) And Moses called to Bezaleel, and to Aholiab, and to everyone wise of heart, to whom Jehovah had given a heart of wisdom, everyone whose heart had lifted him up to come near the work, to do it.

Deuteronomy 15:9:

Deuteronomy 15: (9) Beware that there is no evil thought in your heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release draws near; and your eye [be] evil against your needy brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry to Jehovah against you and it be sin to you.

1 Kings 3:9:

1 Kings 3: (9) Also give to Your servant an understanding heart, to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this, Your great people?

Psalm 14:1:

Psalm 14: (1) The fool has said in his heart, [There is] no God! They acted corruptly; they did hatefully in deeds; there is none doing good.

Psalm 15:2:

Psalm 15: (2) He who walks uprightly and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart.

Psalm 49:3:

Psalm 49: (3) My mouth shall speak wisdom, and the thoughts of my heart [shall be] of understanding.

Proverbs 14:10:

Proverbs 14:(10) The heart knows the bitterness of its soul, and a stranger does not mix in its joy.

Ecclesiastes 7:22:

Ecclesiastes 7: (22) For also your own heart knows that you yourself have also cursed others many times.

Isaiah 33:18:

Isaiah 33: (18) Your heart shall ponder terror: Where is he counting? Where [is] he weighing? Where [is] he counting the towers?

Matthew 13:15:

Matthew 13: (15) For the heart of this people has grown fat, and they heard heavily with the ears, and they have closed their eyes, that they not see with the eyes, or hear with the ears, and understand with the heart, and be converted, and I heal them.

Luke 2:19:

Luke 2: (19) And Mary kept all these words, meditating in her heart.

Acts 8:22:

Acts 8: (22) Repent, then, from this wickedness of yours, and petition God if perhaps you will be forgiven the thought of your heart.

Romans 10:9-10:

Romans 10: (9) Because if you confess [the] Lord Jesus with your mouth, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from [the] dead, you will be saved. (10) For with [the] heart [one] believes unto righteousness, and with [the] mouth [one] confesses unto salvation.

Hebrews 4:12:

Hebrews 4: (12) For the Word of God [is] living, and powerfully working, and sharper than every two-edged sword, and piercing as far as [the] division of both soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge of the thoughts and intentions of the heart;

Do you know how many verses I skipped over? There are a TON of verses like this in the Bible. They clearly show that the HEART is what THINKS, UNDERSTANDS, KNOWS, and BELIEVES. So a change of HEART is a change of THINKING, UNDERSTANDING, KNOWLEDGE, and BELIEF.

Those who are NOT saved are lacking knowledge and understanding. Let's turn to Isaiah 45:20:

Isaiah 45: (20) Gather yourselves and come; draw near together, escaped ones of the nations; the ones who set up the wood of their carved image, and the ones who pray to a god who cannot save; they know nothing.

The KJV reads, "they have no knowledge." What knowledge are these idolaters lacking? Look at verses 21-25:

Isaiah 45: (21) Declare and bring near; yea, let them consult together. Who has revealed this of old; [who] has told it from then? Is it not I, Jehovah? And there [is] no God other than Me; a just God and a Savior; [there is] none except Me. (22) Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I [am] God, and there [is] no other. (23) I have sworn by Myself, the Word has gone out of My mouth [in] righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. (24) He shall say, Only in Jehovah do I have righteousness and strength; to Him he comes; and they are ashamed, all who are angry with Him. (25) In Jehovah all of the seed of Israel shall be justified, and shall glory.

These idolaters were lacking the knowledge of the true God, the one who is both a just God and a Savior. They were lacking the knowledge that only in God is there righteousness and strength. They were lacking the knowledge that God is a justifier of His people. Let's turn to Romans 10:2:

Romans 10: (2) For I testify to them that they have zeal to God, but not according to knowledge.

What is this knowledge that they were lacking? Look at verses 3 and 4:

Romans 10: (3) For being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit to the righteousness of God. (4) For Christ [is] the end of Law for righteousness to everyone that believes.

They did not know about the righteousness of God, which is the imputed righteousness of Christ. Let's turn to 2 Corinthians 4:3-4:

2 Corinthians 4: (3) But also if our gospel is being hidden, it has been hidden in those being lost, (4) in whom the god of this age has blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving, [so that] the brightness of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God, [should] not dawn on them.

What are these unregenerate people blind to? The brightness of the gospel of the glory of Christ. So we see that those who do not have a knowledge and understanding of the GOSPEL have not been SAVED.

Now let's look at descriptions of those who are saved. John 17:3:

John 17: (3) And this is everlasting life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.

What is everlasting life? It is KNOWLEDGE of God and of Jesus Christ.

John 8:32:

John 8: (32) And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

What is the TRUTH that God's people KNOW that sets them free? It's that same TRUTH that those who do not believe are IGNORANT OF! It is the truth of the righteousness of God revealed in the Gospel; the truth of the person and work of Jesus Christ!

Romans 6:17-18:

Romans 6: (17) But thanks [be] to God that you were slaves of sin, but you obeyed from [the] heart the form of doctrine to which you were delivered. (18) And having been set free from sin, you were enslaved to righteousness.

What is that DOCTRINE that believers believed when they were made free from sin? Again, it is the same DOCTRINE that unbelievers are ignorant of! 2 John 9 says that those who do not stay in the DOCTRINE of Christ do not have God. It is the DOCTRINE of Christ's PERSON and His WORK. It is the DOCTRINE that I have been preaching on.

So we see that upon regeneration, God gives His people KNOWLEDGE. There is not a single regenerate person who does not have KNOWLEDGE. And this KNOWLEDGE is a SPECIFIC knowledge. It is not just ANY knowledge. It is KNOWLEDGE of the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel. It is knowledge of what I've been preaching and am going to be preaching, the Lord willing. Without this KNOWLEDGE, there is no salvation. Are we making knowledge a condition of salvation? By no means. If we were doing that, we would be lost. We are saying that God UNCONDITIONALLY saves His people based on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness alone and UNCONDITIONALLY gives His people a knowledge of the gospel upon regeneration. Those who say that God saves people and leaves them ignorant of the gospel do not believe in the

God of the Bible, because the God of the Bible says that all who do not believe the gospel are lost and all who are ignorant of the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel are lost. IGNORANCE of DOCTRINE, in this case, is a SURE SIGN OF LOSTNESS.

Another effect of the change of heart is REPENTANCE. When God's people are given knowledge of the true gospel, they REPENT of believing a false gospel. This means that they turn TOTALLY away from the false gospel of salvation conditioned on the sinner and submit to the righteousness of God revealed in the true gospel of salvation conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ alone. They count all their works while believing a false gospel as dung, as dead works, as evil deeds, as fruit unto death. They realize that their belief of a false gospel showed that they were lost. They will NEVER speak peace to their former selves. The Lord willing, I'll be preaching a sermon on judgments based on the gospel, so I won't go into detail on speaking peace at this point. But repentance and judging go hand-in-hand. If one believes that he was lost while believing a false gospel, then he obviously will not think that someone else is saved who believes that same false gospel.

It is important to note the passages in which repentance and belief of the gospel are mentioned together. For example, Mark 1:14-15:

Mark 1: (14) And after John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God, (15) and saying, The time has been fulfilled, and the kingdom of God draws near. Repent and believe in the gospel.

Acts 20:21:

Acts 20: (21) earnestly testifying both to Jews and to Greeks repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now if repentance is connected with belief, of what does this repentance consist? We are given an example in Philippians 3:4-9:

Philippians 3: (4) Even though I [might] have trust in flesh; if any other thinks to trust in flesh, I more; (5) in circumcision, [the] eighth day, of [the] race of Israel, [the] tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; according to Law, a Pharisee; (6) according to zeal, persecuting the assembly; according to righteousness in Law, being blameless. (7) But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss because of Christ. (8) But, no, rather I also count all things to be loss because of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count [them to be] trash, that I might gain Christ (9) and be found in Him; not having my own righteousness of Law, but through the faith of Christ, [having] the righteousness of God on faith,

When Paul believed in the true gospel of the righteousness of God, he counted his former religion as loss and as trash. He realized that when he believed in salvation conditioned on the sinner, he was bringing forth evil deeds, dead works, and fruit unto death. He realized that now that God has changed his heart to believe the gospel, he would never go back to bringing forth evil deeds, dead works, and fruit unto death. They were on the dung heap. THIS is true gospel repentance. If somebody says that he repented of a false gospel at conversion and then needs to continue to repent of a false gospel as a Christian, then that person is still dead in his sins, because he HAS NO IDEA what true gospel repentance is. True gospel repentance is a one-time occurrence, just as regeneration is a one-time occurrence.

This morning we've seen some of the aspects of salvation. We have seen that when God chooses to save someone, that one will be saved. God's people are irresistibly dragged to him at the appointed time by means of the gospel. We've seen that when God saves a sinner, that sinner's state is changed from wickedness to righteousness by imputation. We've seen that God gives new life to the one who used to be dead in trespasses and sins. He gives a new heart, which includes giving knowledge and understanding of the true gospel. We've seen that when God gives a new heart to His people, he gives them repentance, which includes the knowledge that they were lost while believing in salvation conditioned on the sinner and that everything they did during this time was dung; and includes turning from dead works to serve the true and living God, never to return to the false gospel.

Praise God for His irresistible saving grace by which we are made partakers of Christ and all heavenly blessings. Praise God that He has given us a knowledge of Him, whereby He is glorified in our hearts. Praise God that He has purged our consciences of dead works and has caused us to turn away from believing a false

gospel to being constantly submitted to Christ's righteousness. May we do good works out of a love for Him who first loved us. Amen.

Essential Gospel Doctrine (4)

Let's turn to Philippians 1:3-6:

Philippians 1: (3) I thank my God on all the remembrance of you, (4) always in my every prayer on your behalf making [my] prayer with joy (5) over your fellowship in the gospel, from [the] first day until now, (6) being persuaded of this very thing, that the [One] having begun a good work in you will finish [it] until [the] day of Jesus Christ;

We are continuing to study the essential doctrine that is part of the gospel. We have, as a basis for this study, the following definition of the gospel: God's promise to save His people conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ alone. Two weeks ago, I began expounding on the phrase TO SAVE. We looked at one of the meanings of "TO SAVE," which is to DELIVER or RESCUE. Two weeks ago, we saw what sinners are delivered or rescued FROM, and last week, we saw what was involved in the person's deliverance and rescue.

This week, we're going to be looking at the other primary definition of "TO SAVE," and from this, we will see another essential gospel doctrine. As I said before, yawshah (YA-sha) is the Hebrew word that is usually translated "save," and sozo (SO-zo) is the Greek word that is usually translated "save." These words do not only mean "to deliver" and "to rescue." There is another important meaning to these words. These words ALSO mean "to preserve" "to be safe," and "to do well." So here we see that SALVATION doesn't ONLY have to do with the initial deliverance and rescue from the bondage of sin, but it ALSO has to do with being PRESERVED from evil. Once we are delivered and rescued, we REMAIN in this state FOREVER. So the gospel also includes God's promise to PRESERVE. It is GOOD NEWS that God promises to PRESERVE. What kind of good news would it be if God promised initial regeneration, but then said that these regenerate people can become unregenerated and finally perish in hell? This is not good news at all. In fact, it is a blatant form of salvation conditioned on the sinner, because it says that a person's BAD WORKS can UNDO their salvation. Well, if their BAD WORKS can UNDO their salvation, what do they think will REDO their salvation? Their GOOD WORKS.

Let's turn to some Scriptures that show that God PRESERVES EVERYONE HE SAVES, and that not a SINGLE PERSON whom God saves will return to a state of lostness.

Psalm 37:23-28:

Psalm 37: (23) The steps of a [good] man are established from Jehovah; and He will delight in his way. (24) Though he falls, he is not cast down; for Jehovah upholds his hand. (25) I have been young and am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, or his seed begging bread. (26) All the day he [is] gracious and lends; and his seed [is] for a blessing. (27) Turn away from evil and do good and live forever. (28) For Jehovah loves judgment and does not forsake His saints; they are preserved forever; but the wicked's seed shall be cut off.

Notice that in verse 23, preservation is tied to God's SOVEREIGNTY. God ORDERS our steps, AND He preserves us. This is an important passage, because it shows two things: FIRST, that God causes us to remain in a state of justification, and SECOND, God causes us to remain submitted to His righteousness. We see both OBJECTIVE and SUBJECTIVE preservation here. God does NOT keep His people in a state of justification while at the same time having them engage in unbelief and denying the gospel. God does BOTH. There is NEVER one without the other. I'll be speaking more on that in a little while, the Lord willing.

Psalm 73:23-28:

Psalm 73: (23) Yet I [was] continually with You; You have taken hold of my right hand. (24) You shall guide me by Your counsel; and afterward [You] will take me [to] glory. (25) Whom have I in Heaven? And I have no desire on earth besides You. (26) My flesh and my heart waste away; God [is] the rock of my heart and my portion forever. (27) For, lo, those who are far from You shall be lost; You have cut off all who go whoring

away from You. (28) [As for] me, [it is] good for me to draw near to God; I have made my refuge in the Lord Jehovah, to declare all Your works.

See here that preservation is ALL THE WAY to final glory. And notice again the objective and subjective preservation. God's people are guided by His counsel, AND God takes hold of their hands and takes them to glory.

Psalm 121:3-8:

Psalm 121: (3) He will not give your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber. (4) Behold, He who keeps Israel will not slumber nor sleep. (5) Jehovah [is] the One keeping you; Jehovah [is] your shade on your right hand. (6) The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night; (7) Jehovah shall keep you from all evil; He shall keep your soul. (8) Jehovah shall keep your going out, and your coming in, from now on and till forever.

Take a look at what God is saying here. He is saying that He keeps His people from slipping, keeps them from all evil, and keeps their soul. Isn't that a glorious passage? God keeps our souls SAFE, and not only does He keep our souls safe, He keeps us from slipping! Let me say it this way – God has made it so that it is IMPOSSIBLE for His people to slip! I'm planning to get into more detail as to what it is IMPOSSIBLE for God's people to do, but this is just a little introduction. We CANNOT slip! What does it mean to slip? We'll go into more of that later, the Lord willing. But also remember here that we're talking about a PROMISE from God! Remember when we went over GOD'S PROMISE? Well, here's a PROMISE. God PROMISES that He will not give your foot to slip, that He shall keep you from all evil, and that He shall keep your soul – not only now, but FOREVER! Praise God!

And speaking of promises, let's turn to Jeremiah 32:39-40:

Jeremiah 32: (39) And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me all the days, for good to them and to their sons after them. (40) And I will cut an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do good to them. But I will put My fear in their heart, that they shall not depart from Me.

Do you see how God's preservation of His people is tied right in to His promise to deliver them and to give them a new heart? God promises that He will put His fear into their new heart and that they will NEVER depart from Him.

John 6:37-40:

John 6: (37) All that the Father gives to Me shall come to Me, and the [one] coming to Me I will in no way cast out. (38) For I have come down out of Heaven, not that I should do My will, but the will of Him who sent Me. (39) And this is the will of the Father sending Me, that of all that He has given Me, I shall not lose [any] of it, but shall raise it up in the last day. (40) And this is the will of the [One] sending Me, that everyone seeing the Son and believing into Him should have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

How can you be any clearer than that? Look at verse 39. How many whom God has given to Jesus will Jesus lose? "I shall not lose ANY of it!" Look at verse 40. How many who believe in Jesus will have everlasting life? "EVERYONE"! And again, see that this preservation goes all the way from regeneration to final glory.

John 10:28-29:

John 10: (28) And I give eternal life to them, and they shall not perish to the age, never! And not anyone shall pluck them out of My hand. (29) My Father who has given [them] to Me is greater than all, and no one is able to pluck out of My Father's hand.

Who is able to pluck the sheep out of God's hand? NO ONE! They shall NEVER PERISH.

Now, can anyone or anything STOP or HINDER God's people from being saved eternally? Romans 8:28-39:

Romans 8: (28) But we know that [to] the [ones] loving God all things work together for good, [to] those being called according to purpose; (29) because whom He foreknew, He also predestinated [to be] conformed to the image of His Son, for Him to be [the] First-born among many brothers. (30) But whom He predestinated, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

So when God justifies someone, is there any question as to whether or not he will glorify that person? Romans 8:31-39:

Romans 8: (31) What then shall we say to these things? If God [be] for us, who [can be] against us? (32) Truly [He] who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up on behalf of us all, how will He not freely give all things to us with Him? (33) Who will bring any charge against God's elect? God [is] the [One] justifying! (34) Who [is he] condemning? [It is] Christ who has died, but rather also [is] raised, who also is at [the] right [hand] of God, who also makes intercession on our behalf. (35) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? [Shall] tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? (36) Even as it has been written, "For Your sake we are killed all the day; we are counted as sheep of slaughter." (37) But in all these things we more than conquer through Him loving us. (38) For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, (39) nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

NOTHING can separate us from God's love! **ABSOLUTELY NOTHING!**

Now what do these verses tell us about God's people once they are saved? It tells us **ONCE SAVED, ALWAYS SAVED**. I am not ashamed to say that I believe in **ONCE SAVED, ALWAYS SAVED**. The Arminian will ask, "No matter what he does, he remains saved?" And I answer, "Exactly. No matter what he does, he remains saved. Nothing he **HAS** done or **IS** doing or **WILL** do will **EVER** return him to a state of condemnation."

Now we're all thinking of the common objection, aren't we? The objectors say, "So regenerate people can sin any kind of sin, engage in the most wicked perversions, deny the gospel, go off and live a life of irreligion and unconcern, and still be saved?" Let's go over this one for a while. The same objection was raised in Paul's day. Let's turn to Romans 6. Paul just got finished saying in chapter 5 verse 19 that through the obedience of **ONE**, many were counted righteous. He said that our own personal obedience has **ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO DO** with our being counted righteous before God. He said that where sin abounded, grace much more abounded.

So here come the objectors. If our salvation has **ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO DO** with our obedience and has **ONLY TO DO** with the obedience of Christ, why can't we just go ahead and sin all we want to, since God's grace through Christ is the only thing that matters in salvation? Look at verse 1 of chapter 6:

Romans 6: (1) What then shall we say? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

Isn't that just like the Arminians who hold to conditional preservation? And isn't that just like the Calvinists who condition final glory on perseverance? They accuse us of antinomianism. They accuse us of believing that it doesn't matter what a Christian does.

But pay close attention to how Paul answers the objectors in verses 2-13:

Romans 6: (2) Let it not be! We who died to sin, how shall we still live in it? (3) Or are you ignorant that all who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? (4) Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that as Christ was raised up from [the] dead by the glory of the Father, so also we should walk in newness of life. (5) For if we have been joined together in the likeness of His death, so also shall we be in the resurrection, (6) knowing this, that our old man was crucified with [Him], that the body of sin might be nullified, so that we no longer serve sin. (7) For the [one] that died has been justified from sin. (8) But if we died with Christ, we believe that also we shall live with Him, (9) knowing that Christ being raised from [the] dead dies no more; death no longer lords it over Him. (10) For in that He died, He died to sin once for all; but in that He lives, He lives to God. (11) So also you count yourselves to be truly dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (12) Then do not let sin reign in your mortal body, to obey it in its lusts. (13) Neither present your members [as] instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as [one] living from [the] dead, and your members instruments of righteousness to God.

Does this sound like a license to sin? No – it is just the opposite. Verse 2 says that we have died to sin and shall not live in sin. Verse 4 says that we should walk in newness of life. Verse 6 says that we no longer serve sin. Verse 11 says that we count ourselves dead to sin. Verse 12 says that we should not let sin rule in our bodies. Verse 13 says that we are not to present our bodies as instruments of unrighteousness to sin. Make no mistake about it – Christians **DO NOT** live in sin. Do Christians still sin? Yes. We are constantly falling short of the glory of God. Yet our walk is **NOT** in sin but is in newness of life. Look at 1 Corinthians 6:9-11:

1 Corinthians 6: (9) Or do you not know that unjust ones will not inherit [the] kingdom of God? Do not be led astray, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexuals, (10) nor

thieves, nor covetous ones, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor plunderers shall inherit [the] kingdom of God. (11) And some [of you] were these things, but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and in the Spirit of our God.

Here is a description of what these Christians WERE like before they were saved – notice verse 11, “some WERE these things” – but now they are NOT these things. We see in verse 10 that NONE of these kinds of people will inherit the kingdom of God. Some like to gloss over this by saying that Christians are STILL these things in their walk but are declared righteous, so they will inherit the kingdom of heaven. Some say, “we’re all adulterers, but we’re covered by the blood.” But the context will not allow that interpretation. NO HOMOSEXUAL will inherit the kingdom of God. If a person DIES A HOMOSEXUAL, he will go to hell. So the objector who says that we believe that someone can be a homosexual and be saved does not know what we believe. If they say, “But you just said that a person can’t lose his salvation no matter what he does,” I say, that’s true. But a person who has been truly saved WILL NOT be a homosexual.

Does this mean that one’s remaining saved is conditioned on one’s doing or abstaining? In no way. One’s remaining saved is conditioned on the finished work of Christ alone. But one who IS saved WILL NOT walk in a certain way. They WILL NOT walk in these sins. Call me a legalist if you want to, but that’s what the Bible says. And if you think that this is legalism, you don’t have a clue as to what legalism is.

There is one other area in which we need to see that God’s people are preserved. It is a VITAL AREA. God’s people are preserved from believing, confessing, and following a false Christ and a false gospel. Let’s turn to John 10:5:

John 10: (5)But they will not follow a stranger, never! But [they] will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of the strangers.

Does it say that we will SOMETIMES follow a stranger? Does it say that we will follow a stranger and follow the true Shepherd at the same time? No! It says that we will NEVER follow a stranger! Let’s turn to Matthew 24:23-24:

Matthew 24: (23) Then if anyone says to you, Behold, here [is] the Christ! Or, Here! Do not believe. (24) For false christs and false prophets will rise up. And [they] will give great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.

Christ Jesus is saying that those false teachers will come with their subtle deceits and certainly will lead many astray -- but it is IMPOSSIBLE to lead the elect astray! God preserves His people from being led astray by the false gospels of these false prophets!

Let’s turn to 2 Thessalonians 2:3-17:

2 Thessalonians 2: (3) Do not let anyone deceive you in any way, because [that Day will not come] unless first comes the falling away, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, (4) the [one] opposing and exalting himself over everything being called God, or object of worship, so as for him "to sit in the temple of God" as God, setting forth himself, that he is God. (5) Do you not remember that I told you these things, I yet being with you? (6) And now you know the thing holding back, for him to be revealed in his time. (7) For the mystery of lawlessness already is working, only he [is] holding back now, until it comes out of the midst. (8) And then "the Lawless One" will be revealed, "whom" "the Lord" "will consume" "by the spirit of His mouth," and will bring to nought by the brightness of His presence. (9) [His] coming is according to the working of Satan in all power and [miraculous] signs and lying wonders, (10) and in all deceit of unrighteousness in those being lost, because they did not receive the love of the truth in order for them to be saved. (11) And because of this, God will send to them a working of error, for them to believe the lie, (12) that all may be judged, those not believing the truth, but who have delighted in unrighteousness. (13) But we ought to thank God always concerning you, brothers, beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to salvation in sanctification of [the] Spirit and belief of [the] truth, (14) to which He called you through our gospel, to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (15) So, then, brothers, stand firm and strongly hold the teachings you were taught, whether by word or by our letter. (16) But may our Lord Himself, Jesus Christ, and our God and Father, the [One] having loved us and having given everlasting comfort and good hope by grace, (17) encourage your hearts, and may He establish you in every good word and work.

After warning the Thessalonians about the falling away, the man of sin, the son of perdition, and God’s sending “a working of error, for them to believe the lie, that all may be judged, those not believing the truth, but

who have delighted in unrighteousness” (v. 11), Paul then states, “BUT we ought to thank God always concerning you, brothers, beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to salvation in sanctification of [the] spirit and belief of [the] truth, to which He called you through our gospel, to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (vv. 13-14). Notice the contrast! He talks of those who are deceived into believing the lie and delighting in unrighteousness, and he contrasts this with those who have been sanctified by the spirit and have believed the truth of the gospel. Paul is saying to the Thessalonian believers, and to all of us who are regenerate, that it is IMPOSSIBLE for us to believe the lie and delight in unrighteousness! God preserves us from these things!

Now let’s turn to a passage that we read when we went over total depravity. It’s Matthew 7:18:

Matthew 7: (18) A good tree cannot produce evil fruits, nor a corrupt tree produce good fruits.

Now I want you to get the impact of this. Just as much as it is IMPOSSIBLE for a totally depraved sinner to bring forth good fruit – it is JUST AS IMPOSSIBLE for a regenerated sinner to bring forth evil fruit. Are you getting the full impact of this? When we talk about the TOTAL INABILITY of an unregenerate person to bring forth good fruit, we mean TOTAL and ABSOLUTE INABILITY. And you know what, a believer is TOTALLY, ABSOLUTELY UNABLE to bring forth evil fruit!

But wait a minute. Don’t we still sin? Yes, we CONSTANTLY fall short of the glory of God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ, and we CONSTANTLY cry “O wretched man that I am!” How can it be said, then that believers CANNOT bring forth evil fruit? Luke 6:45 gives us the answer:

Luke 6: (45) The good man brings forth good out of the good treasure of his heart. And the evil man brings forth evil out of the evil treasure of his heart, for his mouth speaks out of the abundance of his heart.

This is not talking about all the thoughts, words, and deeds of either the regenerate or unregenerate man; it is talking specifically about what GOSPEL the men believe and confess. It is IMPOSSIBLE for a regenerate man to believe and confess a false gospel!! Those who are in the flesh bear fruit unto death, and those who are in the Spirit bear fruit unto God (Romans 7:4-5), and it is JUST AS IMPOSSIBLE for one who is in the Spirit to bear fruit unto death as it is for one who is in the flesh to bear fruit unto God.

When we see descriptions in the Bible of sins that are necessarily indicative of lostness, we know that a believer is PRESERVED from doing such things. For example, God says that saying in one’s heart, “There is no God” is indicative of lostness (Psalm 14:1); thus, it is impossible for a regenerate person to say in his heart, “There is no God.” God says that praying to a god who cannot save is indicative of lostness (Isaiah 45:20); thus, it is impossible for a regenerate person to pray to a god who cannot save. God says that being ignorant of the righteousness of God, seeking to establish one’s own righteousness, and not submitting to the righteousness of God are indicative of lostness (Romans 10:3); thus, it is impossible for a regenerate person to be ignorant of God’s righteousness, to seek to establish his own righteousness, or to not be submitted to God’s righteousness. God says that preaching a false gospel is indicative of lostness (Galatians 1:8-9); thus, it is impossible for a regenerate person to preach a false gospel. God says that saying we have no sin and saying we have not sinned are indicative of lostness (1 John 1:8,10); thus, it is impossible for a regenerate person to say he has no sin or say he has not sinned. God says that denying that Jesus is the Christ is indicative of lostness (1 John 2:22); thus, it is impossible for a regenerate person to deny that Jesus is the Christ. God says that not abiding in the doctrine of Christ is indicative of lostness (2 John 9); thus, it is impossible for a regenerate person to not abide in the doctrine of Christ. God says that speaking peace to one who brings a false gospel is indicative of lostness (2 John 11); thus, it is impossible for a regenerate person to speak peace to one who brings a false gospel. Now if one says that a regenerate person CAN do these things, then that person DOES NOT KNOW the God who promises to preserve His people. But WE who DO KNOW the God of all grace, KNOW and REJOICE in God’s preserving grace. It is so precious to us. Let’s turn to Jude 24-25 to close:

Jude 1: (24) Now to Him being able to keep you without stumbling, and to set you before His glory without blemish, with unspeakable joy; (25) to the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty and might and authority, even now and forever.

Amen.

Essential Gospel Doctrine (5)

Thus far in our series on Essential Gospel Doctrine, we have seen that God keeps his promises and that He promises to save. There's been a lot of essential gospel doctrine in these areas, and NONE of them can be missing, or else there's no gospel. Let's remember again what the gospel is. It is God's promise to save ... who? The gospel is God's promise to save HIS PEOPLE based on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ alone. This morning, the Lord willing, we'll be looking at those whom God promises to save.

Let's turn to Matthew 1:21, which is a passage we read a couple sermons ago:

Matthew 1: (21) And she will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.

We see here that the angel of God promises that Jesus will save a group of people called "His people." "His" obviously refers to Jesus Christ -- so who are Christ's people? In John 10, Jesus Christ puts himself forward as the Good Shepherd. Now see how he talks about the sheep. As I read through verses 1 through 30, notice how possessive Jesus is:

John 10: (1) Truly, truly, I say to you, The [one] not entering through the door into the sheepfold, but going up by another way, that one is a thief and a plunderer. (2) But the [one] entering through the door is the shepherd of the sheep. (3) The doorkeeper opens to him, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls [his] own sheep by name, and leads them out. (4) And when he puts forth his own sheep, he goes in front of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. (5) But they will not follow a stranger, never! But [they] will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of the strangers. (6) Jesus spoke this allegory to them, but they did not know what it was which He spoke to them. (7) Then Jesus again said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you that I am the door of the sheep. (8) All who came before Me are thieves and plunderers, but the sheep did not hear them. (9) I am the door. If anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in, and will go out, and will find pasture. (10) The thief does not come except that he may steal, and kill, and destroy. I came that they may have life and may have [it] abundantly. (11) I am the Good Shepherd! The Good Shepherd lays down His life on behalf of the sheep. (12) But the hireling, not even being a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and forsakes the sheep and flees. And the wolf seizes them, and scatters the sheep. (13) But the hireling flees because he is a hireling, and there is not a care to him concerning the sheep. (14) I am the Good Shepherd, and I know those that [are] Mine, and I am known by the [ones that are] Mine. (15) Even as the Father knows Me, I also know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. (16) And I have other sheep which are not of this fold. I must also lead those, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock, one Shepherd. (17) For this reason My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life, that I may take it again. (18) No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down from Myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again. I received this commandment from My Father. (19) Then a division occurred again among the Jews, because of these words. (20) And many of them said, He has a demon and is insane. Why do you hear Him? (21) Others said, These are not words of one having been possessed by a demon. A demon is not able to open [the] eyes of blind ones. (22) And [the Feast] of Dedication took place in Jerusalem, and it was winter. (23) And Jesus was walking in the temple, in Solomon's Porch. (24) Then the Jews encircled Him, and said to Him, Until when do You lift up our soul? If You are the Christ, tell us publicly. (25) Jesus answered them, I told you, and you did not believe. The works which I do in the name of My Father, these bear witness about Me. (26) But you do not believe for you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. (27) My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. (28) And I give eternal life to them, and they shall not perish to the age, never! And not anyone shall pluck them out of My hand. (29) My Father who has given [them] to Me is greater than all, and no one is able to pluck out of My Father's hand. (30) I and the Father are One!

Jesus says here that these sheep are HIS sheep, that He calls His own sheep by name, that He lays down His life for the sheep, He knows them that are His, He gives eternal life to His sheep, His father has given the sheep to Him, and His sheep shall never perish. So is Jesus saying that everyone without exception are His sheep? Well, if that were the case, then everyone without exception will be given eternal life and will never perish. We know that's not the case. But just to make it as plain and as clear as your own hand right in front of you, Jesus

says something in verse 26 that most of religion that comes in the name of Christianity absolutely HATES. Let's start with verse 24:

John 10: (24) Then the Jews encircled Him, and said to Him, Until when do You lift up our soul? If You are the Christ, tell us publicly. (25) Jesus answered them, I told you, and you did not believe. The works which I do in the name of My Father, these bear witness about Me. (26) But you do not believe for you are not of My sheep, as I said to you.

Jesus first tells the Jews that He already told them He was the Christ, and they didn't believe. But JESUS DID NOT STOP THERE. Think about it. He told them WHY they did not believe! He said that THE REASON they did not believe was because they were NOT OF HIS SHEEP. It can't get any plainer than this. He didn't say, "You are not of My sheep because you don't believe." He said, "You don't believe because you are not of My sheep." Look at verse 15 again in light of what we just read:

John 10: (15) Even as the Father knows Me, I also know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

Jesus said that He lays down His life for the SHEEP. Okay – clear enough? Now in verse 26, Jesus said that these Jews were NOT of His sheep. Got that? So – did Jesus lay down His life for these Jews? Can there be any doubt in the mind of ANYONE who really believes in the Jesus of the Bible? There can't be. Jesus did NOT lay down His life for these Jews. So, even if there were NO OTHER PLACE in Scripture that talked about this, we would have to conclude that there were at least a FEW for whom Christ did not die.

Before we get away from John 10, I'd like to point out verse 30. After Jesus goes through the whole discourse of who His sheep are and what He does for His sheep, He says that He is God. He connects His deity to His saving work on behalf of His sheep. Here is another essential gospel doctrine: Jesus is God. I won't go into detail on this or go over all the Scripture references regarding this; that's the topic for another sermon. But we need to realize that this is vitally important. Those who deny that Jesus is God are lost. And on the other side, those who deny that Jesus is man are lost. In order for Jesus to fulfill His mediatorial work, He must be BOTH God AND man.

Okay, let's get back to the topic of Christ's people. Let's look at Ephesians 5:25:

Ephesians 5: (25) Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the assembly and gave Himself up on its behalf,

For whom did Christ give Himself up? For the CHURCH.

Turn to Acts 20:28:

Acts 20: (28) Then take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit placed you [as] overseers, to shepherd the assembly of God which He purchased through [His] own blood.

Whom did Christ purchase with His own blood? Again, it is the CHURCH.

So Christ's people are the ones for whom Christ died. And we have already seen in past messages that Christ's work DEMANDS and ENSURES the salvation of ALL whom Christ represented, because it fully satisfied the demands of God's law and justice on their behalf. Those who believe in universal atonement DO NOT believe that Christ's work demands and ensures the salvation of all whom Christ represented. They DO NOT believe that it is Christ's work alone that makes the difference between heaven and hell. Instead, they believe that it is the work of the SINNER that makes the difference between heaven and hell. This is damnable heresy.

Remember back in John 10 where Jesus said that His Father gave the Sheep to Him? When did that GIVING take place? Well, if you remember, a few sermons ago, I talked about PREDESTINATION. I showed that God determined ALL THINGS before He created the world. If He determines ANYTHING in REACTION to what His creation does, then His promises would not be sure and certain, because they could be changed by the will of man. This is most strongly shown in God's PREDESTINATING a certain number of people to be given to Christ and saved based on Christ's work alone. This kind of PREDESTINATING is sometimes called ELECTION. And the people whom God ELECTED are sometimes called the ELECT.

Let's first turn to Ephesians 1. Let's read verses 3 through 14:

Ephesians 1: (3) Blessed [is] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies with Christ, (4) even as He elected us in Him before [the] foundation of [the] world, for us to be holy and without blemish before Him in love, (5) predestinating us to adoption through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, (6) to [the] praise of [the] glory of

His grace in which He favored us in the [One] having been loved, (7) in whom we have redemption through His blood, the remission of deviations, according to the riches of His grace (8) which He caused to abound toward us in all wisdom and understanding, (9) making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, (10) for the administration of the fullness of the times to head up all things in Christ, both the things in the heavens, and the things on earth, in Him, (11) in whom we also have been chosen to an inheritance, being predestinated according to [the] purpose of the [One] working all things according to the counsel of His [own] will, (12) for us to be to [the] praise of His glory, the ones who had previously trusted in Christ; (13) in whom also you, hearing the Word of Truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also believing you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, (14) who is an earnest of our inheritance, to [the] redemption of the purchased possession, to [the] praise of His glory.

We see that God chose His people before the foundation of the world. But we also see that bare election is not enough. God chose His people before the foundation of the world TO BE REDEEMED AND ADOPTED IN CHRIST! God chose His people before the foundation of the world TO MAKE US UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL AND TO BE TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY! God chose His people before the foundation of the world TO BE SEALED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT that is the earnest of our inheritance! God did not just choose to save a people without His law and justice being satisfied! There have been debates down through the centuries as to whether God could have chosen to save His people without sending Christ to die for them. Well, I can tell you this: those who were of the view that God could have chosen His people without Christ did not know God. God CANNOT save apart from His law and justice being satisfied. So the true doctrine of election MUST take all this into consideration.

Now let's turn to 1 Peter 2. Let's read verses 1 through 10:

1 Peter 2: (1) Then laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil words, (2) as newborn babes desire the pure soul-nourishing milk, that you may grow by it; (3) if indeed you "tasted" "that the Lord is good;" (4) to whom having drawn near, a living Stone, indeed having been rejected by men, but chosen by God, precious; (5) you also as living stones are being built a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (6) Because of this, it is also contained in the Scripture: "Behold," I lay in Zion" an elect, "precious Stone," "a Corner-foundation;" "and the [one] believing in Him shall not be ashamed, never!" (7) Then to you who believe [belongs] the preciousness. But to disobeying ones, [He is the] "Stone which those building rejected; this One became [the] Head of the Corner," (8) and a Stone-of-stumbling, and a Rock-of-offense" to the [ones] stumbling, being disobedient to the Word, to which they were also appointed. (9) But you [are] "an elect race," "a royal priesthood," "a holy nation," "a people for possession," so that "you may openly speak of the virtues" of the [One] who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; (10) [you] who then were "not a people, but now [are] the people" of God; "the one not pitied [then] but now pitied."

We see in verse 4 that Jesus Christ was chosen by God. We see in verse 5 that Jesus Christ is called "an elect, precious Stone." And we see in verse 9 that God's people are called "an elect race." Notice two other things in verse 9. First, God's people are also called "a people for possession." This has to do with what I mentioned a little while ago, which is that Jesus Christ is POSSESSIVE of His people. He calls them "MY sheep" and says that they are "MINE." These are people who are Christ's own possession. Second, notice that at the end of this verse, it talks about the CALLING out of darkness into light. As we saw in a previous sermon, this darkness is the darkness of IGNORANCE, and this light is the light of the KNOWLEDGE of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. God does not ELECT someone and then SAVE that person and leave that person IGNORANT of the person and work of Christ. Now look at verse 8. Those whom God did NOT choose to salvation were APPOINTED to disobey and stumble at the word. This is no mere "passing by." This was an APPOINTMENT. Compare this with Acts 13:48:

Acts 13: (48) And hearing, the nations rejoiced and glorified the Word of the Lord. And as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.

These people believed because they were APPOINTED to believe, just as the reprobate do not believe because they were APPOINTED not to believe. Notice that the Bible does not say, "as many as believed were appointed to eternal life." It says, "as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed." Remember what Jesus said about those Jews in John 10? They did not believe BECAUSE they were not of Christ's sheep.

Again, notice that election and belief are connected. What is this BELIEF to which the elect are predestinated? Belief of the TRUTH. What is this UNBELIEF to which the reprobate are predestinated? Unbelief of the TRUTH. And the truth is the gospel.

Now let's turn to Romans 9. Let's start with verse 9 and go through verse 24:

Romans 9: (9) For the Word of promise [is] this, "According to this time I will come, and a son will be to Sarah." (10) And not only so, but also Rebekah conceiving of one, our father Isaac, (11) for [the children] not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of the [One] calling, (12) it was said to her, "The greater shall serve the lesser;" (13) even as it has been written, "I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau." (14) What then shall we say? [Is there] not unrighteousness with God? Let it not be! (15) For He said to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will pity whomever I will pity." (16) So, then, [it is] not of the [one] willing, nor of the [one] running, but of the [One] showing mercy, of God. (17) For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very thing I raised you up, so that I might display My power in you, and so that My name might be publicized in all the earth." (18) So, then, to whom He desires, He shows mercy. And to whom He desires, He hardens. (19) You will then say to me, Why does He yet find fault? For who has resisted His will? (20) Yes, rather, O man, who are you answering against God? Shall the thing formed say to the [One] forming [it], Why did You make me like this? (21) Or does not the potter have authority over the clay, out of the one lump to make one vessel to honor, and one to dishonor? (22) But if God, desiring to demonstrate His wrath, and to make His power known, endured in much long-suffering vessels of wrath having been fitted out for destruction, (23) and that He make known the riches of His glory on vessels of mercy which He before prepared for glory, (24) whom He also called, not only us, of Jews, but also out of nations.

Here is a great example of unconditional election. God chooses to have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He chose the objects of mercy before they were even born, even before they had done anything good or bad. Verse 23 says that God PREPARED the vessels of mercy beforehand. Notice also in verse 11, it says, "that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works." The Holy Spirit through Paul presents two opposing views. The doctrine of election is totally contrary to salvation by works. If one does not believe in the biblical doctrine of unconditional election, he automatically believes in salvation conditioned on the sinner. If one believes in salvation conditioned on the sinner, he automatically opposes unconditional election.

Turn back a page to Romans 8, verses 29 to 30:

Romans 8: (29) because whom He foreknew, He also predestinated [to be] conformed to the image of His Son, for Him to be [the] First-born among many brothers. (30) But whom He predestinated, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

In verse 29, when it says, "foreknew," it means "loved beforehand." God loved His people before the foundation of the world, and He predestinated out of love. Notice that he again does not talk about bare election but says that God predestinated His people to be conformed to the image of Christ. And as we see the chain of grace in this passage, we see that there are no broken links. ALL whom God foreknew, He predestined. ALL whom God predestined, He called. ALL whom God called, He justified. ALL whom God justified, He glorified. It goes all the way from eternity past to eternity future. It's all sure and certain. ALL whom God predestined will be called, justified, and glorified. NO EXCEPTIONS.

Let's look at 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14:

2 Thessalonians 2: (13) But we ought to thank God always concerning you, brothers, beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to salvation in sanctification of [the] Spirit and belief of [the] truth, (14) to which He called you through our gospel, to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God chose His people from the beginning, and not only that, He chose them to SALVATION in sanctification of the spirit and BELIEF OF THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL. There are some so-called "High Calvinists" who would say that they believe in absolute predestination but who also claim that not all who are saved believe the truth of the gospel. Let me tell you, these people know NOTHING of true, Biblical predestination and election. God predestinates His people to be called by the gospel, to be saved based on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ alone, and to KNOW that they have been saved based on the

atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ alone. Without this, predestination and election are empty doctrines of self-righteous religionists.

Lastly, let's turn to 2 Timothy 1:8-11:

2 Timothy 1: (8) Then do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor [of] me, His prisoner. But suffer hardship with the gospel, according to [the] power of God, (9) the [One] having saved us and having called [us] with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to [His] own purpose and grace given to us in Christ Jesus before eternal times, (10) but now revealed through the appearance of our Savior, Jesus Christ, indeed making death of no effect, bringing life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel, (11) for which I was appointed a herald and apostle and a teacher of nations.

Again, we see that God's people were chosen in eternity past. And again, we see that this choosing is in direct opposition to salvation by works. And we see that this choosing was to salvation by means of the calling of the gospel, which brings life and incorruptibility to light. As we meditate and rejoice in the precious truths of election and Christ's possession of His people, let us also rejoice that God predestines us and Christ possesses us unto knowledge and belief of the truth, so that we might glorify Him as the One who came to establish a righteousness that demands and ensures our entire salvation. Amen.

Essential Gospel Doctrine (6)

Last week, in our continuing series on Essential Gospel Doctrine, we saw who God's people are. They are the ones whom God had chosen before the foundation of the world and for whom Christ died. They, and they ALONE, are the ones to whom the gospel promise is made. God does NOT promise EVERY sinner or ANY sinner that He will save them. God promises HIS PEOPLE that He will save them. And EVERY ONE whom God chose and for whom Christ died SHALL BE SAVED, NO EXCEPTIONS.

We also touched on the WAY in which God's people are saved. God chose His people to be saved in a SPECIFIC way. It's a way that manifests all of God's attributes and gives God all the glory. This way is through the work of Christ alone. And God does not keep His people ignorant of that work when He saves them. The Bible shows in many passages that ALL whom God saves are given a knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, which is revealed in the gospel.

Today, we're going to get into more detail about this work of Christ. God saves His people in a way that is consistent with His character. God does not go against one attribute in order to manifest another. Thus, His plan of salvation is a PERFECT plan. It could be NO OTHER WAY. The only way that God can be just to justify the ungodly is through the work of Christ alone.

Let's again remind ourselves of the definition of the gospel that is the basis of these studies of essential gospel doctrine. The gospel is God's promise to save His people conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ alone. In past sermons, we have gone over "God's promise to save His people." Now we will focus on the last part of the definition: "conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ alone."

I first want to define what "conditioned" means. We say that God saves His people CONDITIONED on the work of Christ alone. What does it mean to CONDITION something on something else? "Condition" as a noun means "an essential requirement of." So if A is CONDITIONED on B, then A cannot happen until the requirement of B is met. In the gospel, SALVATION cannot happen unless the requirement of Christ's obedience and death is met. When we talk of those who believe in salvation CONDITIONED on the sinner, we are saying that these people believe that SALVATION cannot happen unless the requirement of the WORK OF THE SINNER is met. Are we clear on what CONDITIONED means? Okay.

So the last part of the definition of the gospel goes into WHAT is the requirement for the salvation of God's people. We've already seen that God is so holy that He will not enter into communion with anyone who is not as righteous as He is. And He is so holy that He must punish everyone who does not meet up to this standard. And He is so holy that He must punish in proportion to how much offense He takes at the sin. And because of

His infinite righteousness, all sin is an infinite offense to God, so all who are void of a righteousness that answers the demands of God's law and justice MUST be punished with eternal torment in hell.

We've also seen that God's people before salvation are sinners. They deserve eternal punishment. They are void of a righteousness that answers God's demand of perfect holiness. They are dead in their sins, slaves to sin, bringing forth fruit unto death, at enmity with God, unable to please God, and under God's curse. How is it, then, that God, who is absolutely holy, can bring these vile sinners into communion with Him? Some would say, "He can do it because He can do whatever He wants." But does God ever WANT to bring sinners into communion with Him at the expense of His law and justice? The answer is "NO". There are certain things that God CANNOT do. God CANNOT deny Himself. God CANNOT lie. God CANNOT do ANYTHING that is contrary to His perfect holiness and justice. How, then, does God remain perfectly holy and perfectly just when He brings sinners into communion with Him? This is where the great gospel of grace is manifested. This is where the heart of the gospel is revealed. God remains perfectly holy and perfectly just when He brings sinners into communion with him because the salvation of these sinners is conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ alone. There is no other way. All other ways are false ways, and they only lead to death. The way of life is through Jesus Christ.

If you've heard me even for a short period of time, you know that I say "the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ" a lot. The reason I say this so much is that it is the very heart of the gospel. I'd like to separate out the two aspects of Christ's work and go over each of them separately.

First, let's go over the ATONING BLOOD of Christ. But before we go into what Christ's blood accomplished, we must first go over the concept of IMPUTATION. To IMPUTE means to LEGALLY CHARGE TO THE ACCOUNT OF. Another word for impute is COUNT. The sins of all God's people were IMPUTED or COUNTED to Jesus Christ. This was typified in the Old Testament in the sacrifice of atonement. Let's turn to Leviticus chapter 16. Let's read verses 2 through 22. Pay attention to how imputation and atonement are connected:

Leviticus 16: (2) And Jehovah said to Moses, Speak to your brother Aaron, and he shall not come in at all times to the sanctuary within the veil, to the front of the mercy-seat. (3) With this Aaron shall come into the sanctuary: with a bull, a son of the herd, for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering. (4) He shall put on a holy linen coat, and linen underpants shall be on his flesh, and he shall gird himself with a linen girdle, and he shall wrap himself in a linen miter; they [are] holy garments. And he shall bathe his flesh with water and shall put them on. (5) And he shall take from the congregation of the sons of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering. (6) And Aaron shall bring near the bull of the sin offering which [is] his own, and shall make atonement for himself, and for his house. (7) And he shall take the two he-goats and shall cause them to stand before Jehovah, [at] the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. (8) And Aaron shall give lots over the two he-goats, one lot for Jehovah, and one lot for a complete removal. (9) And Aaron shall bring the goat on which the lot of Jehovah fell and shall make it a sin offering. (10) And the goat on which the lot fell for a complete removal shall be made to stand living before Jehovah to atone by it, to send it away for a complete removal into the wilderness. (11) And Aaron shall bring the bull of the sin offering which [is] his own, and shall atone for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bull of the sin offering which [is] his own. (12) And he shall take a censer full of coals of the fire from off the altar before Jehovah, and his hands full of fragrant perfumes beaten small, and bring [it] within the veil. (13) And he shall put the incense on the fire before Jehovah, and the cloud of the incense shall cover the mercy-seat on the testimony; and he shall not die. (14) And he shall take [some] of the blood of the bull, and shall sprinkle with his finger on the front of the mercy-seat eastward. And he shall sprinkle at the front of the mercy-seat seven times from the blood with his finger. (15) And he shall kill the goat of the sin offering which [is] the people's, and shall bring in its blood to the inside of the veil, and shall do with its blood as he has done with the blood of the bull, and shall sprinkle it on the mercy-seat, and at the front of the mercy-seat. (16) And he shall atone for the sanctuary because of the pollutions of the sons of Israel, and because of their transgressions for all their sins. And so he shall do for the tabernacle of the congregation dwelling in the midst of their pollutions. (17) And not any man shall be in the tabernacle of the congregation as he goes in to atone in the sanctuary, until he comes out. And he shall atone for himself, and for his house, and for all the congregation of Israel. (18) And he shall go out to the altar before Jehovah, and shall atone for it. And he shall take [some] of the blood of the bull, and [some] of the blood of the

goat, and shall put [it] on the horns of the altar all around. (19) And he shall sprinkle on it from the blood with his finger seven times, and shall cleanse it, and shall purify it from the uncleannesses of the sons of Israel. (20) And when he has finished atoning [for] the sanctuary, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, and has brought near the living goat; (21) then Aaron shall lay his two hands on the head of the living goat, and shall confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel, and all their transgressions, and all their sins, and shall put them on the head of the goat, and shall send [it] by the hand of a chosen man into the wilderness. (22) And the goat shall bear on him all their iniquities to a land cut off. And he shall send the goat away into the wilderness.

Now this is a rich passage of Scripture, and I can't go into it all right now. I'd love to preach on this chapter some time. But for now, let's look at one aspect of this passage. We see that there were two goats. In verses 15 and 16, one of the goats is killed as a sin offering for the people of Israel. You see – it is FOR the people of Israel. The goat was killed FOR the sins of Israel. This is a picture of IMPUTATION. And it is even clearer when it talks about the second goat in verses 21 and 22. Aaron put his hands on the head of the goat and confessed the sins of Israel. This confession of sins with the laying on of hands typifies the sins of God's people being charged to the account of Jesus Christ. Let's read verse 22 again:

Leviticus 16: (22) And the goat shall bear on him all their iniquities to a land cut off. And he shall send the goat away into the wilderness.

The goat BEARS all the sins of Israel. This is imputation. We even see in the Old Testament how this is a direct picture of Christ BEARING the sins of His people. Let's turn to Isaiah 53 and read verses 4 and 5 and 10 through 12:

Isaiah 53: (4) Surely He has borne our sicknesses, and He carried our pain; yet we esteemed Him plagues, smitten by God, and afflicted. (5) But He was wounded for our transgressions; [He was] bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His wounds we ourselves are healed. ... (10) But Jehovah pleased to crush Him, to make Him sick, [so that] If He should put His soul as a guilt offering, He shall see [His] seed; He shall prolong [His] days; and the will of Jehovah shall prosper in His hand. (11) He shall see [the fruit] of the travail of His soul; He shall be fully satisfied. By His knowledge the righteous One, My Servant, shall justify for many, and He shall bear their iniquities. (12) Because of this I will divide to Him with the great, and with the strong He shall divide the spoil; because He poured out His soul to death; and [He] was counted with those transgressing; and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for those transgressing.

Jesus Christ BORE the transgression of His people. The sins of His people were IMPUTED to Him. Jesus Christ actually became GUILTY by imputation. He remained perfect in His character and conduct, but He was counted guilty because sin was imputed to Him. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says that Jesus Christ was actually MADE SIN for us.

Now let's get into the atonement. You can already see by the passages in Leviticus and Isaiah how imputation and atonement are connected. If Christ atoned without imputation, then he must have either atoned for no one or atoned for Himself. We know that both of these are impossible. In order to make atonement, Christ must be the SUBSTITUTE and REPRESENTATIVE of a certain number of people.

What is ATONEMENT? It is reconciliation. What does it mean to RECONCILE? To RECONCILE means "to restore to friendship or harmony." Jesus Christ, when He suffered, bled, and died, restored friendship between God and those for whom Christ died. How was this friendship restored? Jesus suffered the just punishment for the sins of all His people; God's wrath was poured out on Jesus; and God's wrath was appeased. Let's turn to Romans 5:10-11:

Romans 5: (10) For if [while] being enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life; (11) and not only [so], but also glorying in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we now received the reconciliation.

This reconciliation is atonement. Let's now turn to 2 Corinthians 5:18-19:

2 Corinthians 5: (18) And all things [are] from God, the [One] having reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and having given to us the ministry of reconciliation, (19) as, that God was in Christ reconciling [the] world to Himself, not charging their deviations to them, and having put the Word of reconciliation in us.

God restored friendship between His people and Himself through Jesus Christ, not charging their trespasses to His people, but instead charging their trespasses to Christ, who suffered the just punishment that their sins deserved. Let's turn to Ephesians 2:14-16:

Ephesians 2: (14) For He is our peace, He making us both one, and breaking down the middle wall of partition, (15) in His flesh causing to cease the enmity, the Law of the commandments in decrees, that He might in Himself create the two into one new man, making peace, (16) and might reconcile both in one body to God through the cross, slaying the enmity in Himself.

Jesus Christ stopped the enmity and made peace between us and God. He killed the enmity between us and God through Himself, who took all the wrath that we deserved and suffered the torment that we deserved in order to reconcile us to God.

The Bible uses other words to describe what Christ accomplished on the cross. In the first sermon in this series on the gospel, I went over PROPITIATION, REDEMPTION, and JUSTIFICATION. All are tied into atonement. One can't be present without the other.

Let's consider the BLOOD for a little while. It is the atoning BLOOD of Christ. We hear about the BLOOD from every religionist who comes in the name of Christianity. But why is BLOOD a necessary part of the gospel?

Let's first turn to Leviticus 17:11:

Leviticus 17: (11) For the life of the flesh [is] in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar, to atone for your souls; for it [is] the blood which makes atonement for the soul.

The LIFE is in the blood, and it is the BLOOD that makes atonement. Let's now turn to Hebrews 9:22:

Hebrews 9: (22) And almost all things are purified by blood according to the Law; and apart from shedding of blood no remission occurs.

This is a powerful statement. There is NO REMISSION without the shedding of blood. REMISSION means "a releasing of the guilt or penalty of." Notice here that it does not just say "blood"; it says "SHEDDING of blood." This blood actually has to be SHED for remission. Why? Well, first, let's think about what Leviticus 17:11 said. The LIFE is in the blood. Thus, the SHEDDING of blood is the pouring out of one's life. We know that if someone loses too much blood, he will die. Christ's shed blood means that Christ died. But is that all it means? Well, we know that people die of things other than shedding too much blood. So why did Christ have to die a bloody death? Why did blood have to come out of His body? Let's look up at verses 12 through 21 of Hebrews 9:

Hebrews 9: (12) nor through the blood of goats and of calves, but through [His] own blood, [He] entered once for all into the [Holy of] Holies, having procured everlasting redemption. (13) For if the blood of bulls and goats, and ashes of a heifer sprinkling those having been defiled, sanctifies to the purity of the flesh, (14) by how much more the blood of Christ (who through [the] eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God), will purify your conscience from dead works, to serve [the] living God! (15) And because of this He is Mediator of a new covenant, so that, death having occurred for redemption of transgressions under the first covenant, those being called might receive the promise of the everlasting inheritance. (16) For where a covenant [is], the death of him having covenanted must be offered. (17) For a covenant [is] affirmed over [those] dead, since it never has force when he who has covenanted [is] living. (18) From which neither the first [covenant] was dedicated without blood. (19) For [when] every command had been spoken according to Law by Moses to all the people, having taken the blood of the calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and he sprinkled both the scroll and all the people, (20) saying, "This [is] the blood of the covenant which God enjoined to you." (21) And he likewise sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the service vessels with the blood.

First, what was done in the Old Testament with the blood of the sacrifice? It was sprinkled and poured -- mostly sprinkled. So Christ's shed blood is one of the evidences that He was sacrificed. But there's more. What did this sprinkling signify? Verses 19 and 20 refer to Exodus 24:8. Let's turn there. Let's begin with verse 6 and go through verse 8:

Exodus 24: (6) And Moses took half of the blood, and he put it in basins. And he sprinkled half of the blood on the altar. (7) And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the ears of the people. And they said, We will do all that Jehovah has spoken, and we will hear. (8) And Moses took the blood and sprinkled on the people, and said, Behold, the blood of the covenant which Jehovah has cut with you concerning these words.

This blood was sprinkled as an outward, visible seal to the people. It was an outward, visible seal of God's promise. The shed blood of Christ is an outward, visible seal of God's promise to save His people. Hebrews 13:20 says that Christ's blood is the "blood of the everlasting covenant." And 1 Corinthians 11:25 says that the cup in the Lord's Supper is the New Covenant in Christ's blood.

Another reason that the blood of Christ must be shed is because it is a GIVING from one to another. Christ GAVE His blood, which was His life, TO His people. Blood that stays inside a human cannot be GIVEN to another. It cannot be SPRINKLED onto another. Christ did not keep His blood to Himself. He SPRINKLED our hearts from an evil conscience, as Hebrews 10:22 says. He WASHED our sins by His blood, as Revelation 1:5 says. His blood cleanses us from all sin, as 1 John 1:7 says. This SPRINKLING is a PURGING; it is a CLEANSING. Christ gave up His own blood – His own life – so that we might be cleansed by that blood. Praise God!

We saw in the Old Testament how the blood and reconciliation (or atonement) were tied together. Let's look at some verses in the New Testament that tie these together.

Ephesians 2:13:

Ephesians 2: (13) But now, in Christ Jesus you who then were afar off, came to be near by the BLOOD of Christ.

Earlier on in this sermon, I read verses 14 through 16, which talk about making peace and causing to cease the enmity. And verse 13 says that Christ's blood made us COME TO BE NEAR because of that reconciliation.

Colossians 1:20:

Colossians 1: (20) and through Him making peace by the BLOOD of His cross, to reconcile all things to Himself; through Him, whether the things on the earth, or the things in the heavens.

Again, we see that Christ's blood makes PEACE and RECONCILES.

The Bible also talks about REDEMPTION through Christ's blood. To redeem means to pay the price for a possession so as to rescue or deliver that possession.

Acts 20:28:

Acts 20: (28) Then take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit placed you [as] overseers, to shepherd the assembly of God which He purchased through [His] own BLOOD.

Ephesians 1:7:

Ephesians 1: (7) in whom we have redemption through His BLOOD, the remission of deviations, according to the riches of His grace

Colossians 1:14:

Colossians 1: (14) in whom we have redemption through His BLOOD, the remission of sins;

1 Peter 1:18-19:

1 Peter 1: (18) knowing that not with corruptible things, silver or gold, were you redeemed from your worthless way of life handed down from [your] fathers, (19) but with precious BLOOD of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot,

Revelation 5:9:

Revelation 5: (9) And they sing a new song, saying, Worthy are You to receive the scroll, and to open its seals, because You were slain, and by Your blood purchased us to God out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

The Bible also speaks of JUSTIFICATION by Christ's blood in Romans 5:9 and of SANCTIFICATION by His blood in Hebrews 13:12.

So the BLOOD of Christ that MAKES ATONEMENT between God and His people. It is a seal of the everlasting covenant of grace. None of these verses we read say that the blood of Christ makes salvation possible for everyone. In fact, these verses clearly show that the blood of Christ ACTUALLY ACCOMPLISHED reconciliation, redemption, justification, and sanctification. And remember – atonement means nothing without the doctrine of IMPUTATION. Christ, as a representative and substitute, bore our sins and was made sin for us. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. Praise the Lamb of God who was sacrificed, who poured out His precious blood, so that we might live. Amen.

Essential Gospel Doctrine (7)

Turn in your Bibles to Psalm 32. Let's read the whole Psalm:

Psalm 32: (1) Blessed [is] he whose transgression is lifted, whose sin [is] covered. (2) Blessed [is] the man to whom Jehovah does not charge iniquity, and in whose spirit there [is] no guile. (3) When I kept silence, then my bones became old, through my howling all day. (4) For by day and by night Your hand [was] heavy on me; my sap was turned into the droughts of summer. Selah. (5) I confessed my sin to You, and I have not hidden my iniquity; I said, I will confess over my transgression to Jehovah; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah. (6) On account of this let every godly one pray to You, at a time of finding; surely, when great floods come they will not reach him. (7) You [are] my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble; You surround [me] with songs of deliverance. Selah. (8) I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you, My eye [shall be] on you. (9) Be not like the horse, like the mule, with no understanding; with bit and bridle his gear to be held in, [that] they do not come near you. (10) Many sorrows [are] to the wicked; but he who trusts in Jehovah, mercy embraces him. (11) Be glad in Jehovah and rejoice, you righteous [ones]; and all the upright in heart, shout for joy.

Today I hope to conclude our point-by-point study of the definition of the gospel. The gospel is God's promise to save His people conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ alone. We have five words left – "imputed righteousness of Christ alone." There's a lot packed into these words, and many sermons could be preached from these words, but I'd like to preach one that touches on each of the main points of these words.

We just read Psalm 32. Verse 11 says, "Be glad in Jehovah and rejoice, you righteous ones; and all the upright in heart, shout for joy." Now what are David and all the people of God rejoicing in? They are rejoicing that God imputes righteousness apart from works. Now someone might say, "Wait a minute. You're reading too much into this Psalm. David isn't even talking about imputed righteousness here. He's talking about his sins being covered and his NOT being charged with iniquity. How can you get imputed righteousness out of this?" Well, let's turn to Romans 4, verses 4 through 8:

Romans 4: 4 Now [to one] working, the reward is not counted according to grace, but according to debt. (5) But to the [one] not working, but believing on Him justifying the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. (6) Even as also David says of the blessedness of the man to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: (7) "Blessed [are] those whose lawlessnesses are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; (8) blessed [the] man to whom [the] Lord will in no way charge sin."

See what it says? It says that David was talking about imputed righteousness! The word "counts" in verse 6 is the same as "imputes." The King James Version translates it "imputeth." David was talking about imputed righteousness.

I've talked about imputation many times. Imputation is legally charging to one's account. Last week, I talked about the sins of Christ's people being IMPUTED to Christ, and Christ suffering the just penalty that these sins deserved. Now I'm talking about an imputation that is in the opposite direction – something is imputed FROM Christ TO His people. Again, if imputation is to occur, there must be REPRESENTATION. Jesus Christ must be a REPRESENTATIVE of a people.

What is imputed FROM Christ TO His people? We see from Romans 4 that it is RIGHTEOUSNESS that it is imputed. What is RIGHTEOUSNESS? It is perfect obedience, or you could say, the MERIT of perfect obedience. Why is perfect obedience necessary? Why can't God accept just the best someone has to offer? It is because God is HOLY. And if you understand God's HOLINESS, you will understand that God CANNOT fellowship with ANYONE who is not as righteous as He is. So in order for any human being to fellowship with God, that human being must either be perfectly righteous in His OWN character and conduct, or he must be CHARGED with the perfect righteousness of ANOTHER human being who is perfectly righteous in His character and conduct. In either case, there has to be at least one perfect human being! Well, we can eliminate anyone who's ever sinned. That leaves only one person – a sinless human being. We know that this is Jesus Christ.

Let's go into some Scripture verses that show that Jesus Christ was sinless:

1 John 3:5:

1 John 3: (5) And you know that that [One] was revealed that He might take away our sins, and sin is not in Him.

2 Corinthians 5:21:

2 Corinthians 5: (21) For He made the [One] who knew no sin [to be] sin for us, that we might become [the] righteousness of God in Him.

Hebrews 4:15:

Hebrews 4: (15) For we do not have a high priest not being able to sympathize with our weaknesses but [One] having been tried in all respects according to [our] likeness, apart from sin.

Hebrews 7:26-28:

Hebrews 7: (26) For such a High Priest was fitting for us: holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners, and having become higher than the heavens; (27) who has no need, as do the high priests, to offer sacrifices day by day, first for His own sins, then for those of the people. For He did this once for all, offering up Himself. (28) For the Law makes men high priests who have infirmity, but the word of the oath-taking after the Law [appoints the] Son to the age, having been perfected.

Remember last week when we read from Leviticus 16? What did Aaron the high priest have to do before he offered sacrifices for the people? He had to make atonement for himself and his household. But Jesus Christ, the GREAT high priest, did not need to offer a sacrifice for himself, because he was already sinless!

There are other verses that talk of Christ's sinlessness in that He was a perfect sacrifice. We see all throughout the Old Testament that the one who brought a sacrifice should bring the best of the flock, one without spot or blemish. This is a type of Christ, who was untainted by sin. Let's turn to Hebrews 9:13-14:

Hebrews 9: (13) For if the blood of bulls and goats, and ashes of a heifer sprinkling those having been defiled, sanctifies to the purity of the flesh, (14) by how much more the blood of Christ (who through [the] eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God), will purify your conscience from dead works, to serve [the] living God!

Now let's turn to First Peter. Let's first look at chapter 1, verses 18 and 19:

1 Peter 1: (18) knowing that not with corruptible things, silver or gold, were you redeemed from your worthless way of life handed down from [your] fathers, (19) but with precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot,

Now let's look at chapter 2, verses 21 through 24:

1 Peter 2: (21) For you were called to this, for even Christ suffered on our behalf, leaving behind an example for us, that you should follow His steps; (22) "who did not sin, nor was guile found in His mouth;" (23) who, having been reviled, did not revile in return; suffering, He did not threaten, but gave [Himself] up to Him who [was] judging righteously; (24) who "Himself carried up in His body our sins" onto the tree; that dying to sins, we might live to righteousness, of whom "BY His wound you were healed."

So Jesus was totally sinless. And not only was He totally sinless; He was a totally sinless MAN. Jesus Christ was fully human. Matthew 1:25, Luke 2:7, and Galatians 4:4 clearly show that he was born of a woman. Matthew and Luke say that he was a child and grew up, just like any of us. Jesus got hungry and thirsty and tired and sleepy, just like any of us. In fact, 1 John 4:3 says that anyone who does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not from God. Jesus came in the flesh, a flesh just like ours, and had all the same bodily needs that we do. Yet, UNLIKE any of us, He did all this without sin. And it HAD to be this way, or else there would be no imputed righteousness. The merit of Christ's perfect obedience to God's Law is charged to His people, and His people are counted perfectly righteous. Christ also had to be a human because a HUMAN must be punished for the sins of HUMANS. Just as Christ was our representative and substitute in His life, He was our representative and substitute in His death. And since sin demands death, and God cannot die, Jesus Christ HAD to be a human who could and did die. He HAD to be a human who could and did pour out His blood. He HAD to be a human who could and did rise again from the dead, giving resurrection life to us. The humanity of Christ is an essential gospel doctrine.

But not only was Jesus Christ human, He was also God. And He HAD to be God. He HAD to be God because only GOD can forgive sin. Only GOD can deliver us from the power of sin and death. Only GOD is without sin. Only GOD can satisfy His own justice. And only GOD can sanctify the offering. We see in

Matthew 1:18-20 and Luke 1:35 that Jesus Christ was conceived by God the Holy Spirit. We see in Isaiah 7:14 and Luke 1:34 that Jesus Christ's mother had not had sexual relations with any man before Christ was born. Isaiah 9:6 says that Jesus Christ is THE MIGHTY GOD. John 1:1 and 14 says that the Word was God and became flesh and dwelled among us. Titus 2:13 says that Jesus Christ is our great God and Savior. Jesus said in John 10:30 that He and God the Father are ONE. John 1:14 and 18, John 3:16 and 18, Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5 and 11:17, and 1 John 4:9 say that Jesus Christ is the only begotten son of God. And 1 John 4:15 says that whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God is regenerate. The deity of Christ is an essential gospel doctrine.

Jesus Christ HAD to be a GOD-MAN. He HAD to be one person with two distinct natures: a divine nature and a human nature. He HAD to be both of these AT ONCE because He HAD to be the MEDIATOR between God and men – the only One who could go between God and man. Let's turn to 1 Timothy 2:5-6:

1 Timothy 2: (5) For God [is] one, also [there is] one Mediator of God and of men, [the] Man Christ Jesus, (6) the [One] having given Himself a ransom on behalf of all, the testimony [to be given] in its own time,

Who can make peace between Holy God and sinful man? Only a GOD-MAN MEDIATOR.

So we see in the gospel how God is just to justify the ungodly. The key is in the God-Man Mediator. The sins of His people were imputed to Him, and He suffered the just penalty of those sins. His righteousness is imputed to His people, and His people are counted righteous. God then remains just, remains holy, remains undefiled, because He is communing and fellowshiping with those whose sins have already been punished and those who are righteous by imputation.

So we've gone into imputed righteousness, and we've gone into the person of Christ. And last week, we went into the atoning blood. But let's not forget the last word of the definition of the gospel. The last word of the definition is a very important word. That word is "ALONE". God saves His people conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ ALONE. There are so many false gospels out there that say "the work of Christ – PLUS" or "the blood of Christ – PLUS." Well, my friends, if a "PLUS" is added to the equation, then it is no longer the true gospel of grace. The atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ MUST demand the salvation of ALL whom He represented WITHOUT ANY CONTRIBUTION FROM THE SINNER. Look again at Romans 4:4, which we read right at the beginning:

Romans 4: (4) Now [to one] working, the reward is not counted according to grace, but according to debt.

If salvation is conditioned in ANY WAY to ANY DEGREE on the works of the sinner, then God is NOT showing grace; instead, the sinner has obligated God to save him. God would owe a debt to that sinner. And that god is an idol. Look at Romans 11:6:

Romans 11: (6) But if by grace, no longer [is it] of works; else grace no longer becomes grace. But if of works, it is no longer grace; else work is no longer work.

Grace is NOT REALLY grace if the works of the sinner are introduced as forming ANY part of the ground of his salvation. And we have seen in this series that salvation does not only include initial regeneration and conversion; it includes being preserved throughout one's lifetime and being brought to final glory. If someone conditions ANY PART of salvation, from regeneration to final glory, on ANYTHING that proceeds from the sinner, then what they call "grace" is actually no grace at all. It's a system of works, and it's an abomination to God. In Galatians 5:2, Paul says that if one is circumcised thinking that this forms at least some part of the ground of his salvation or acceptance before God, Christ will profit him nothing. It is Christ's work ALONE that is the ground of all salvation and all blessing. Why is it that God's people cannot lose their salvation? Because no one can undo what Christ has done. If one believes that he can lose his salvation, he does not believe in the finished work of Christ. If one believes that he cannot lose his salvation, BUT ALSO believes that his everlasting habitations are based on his present stewardship, he does not believe in the finished work of Christ. Our works form NO PART of our initial salvation, our being kept saved, our being blessed, our being recommended unto God, or our right to inherit the kingdom.

Let's turn to John 19:28-30:

John 19: (28) After this, knowing that all things have now been finished that the Scripture be completed, Jesus said, I thirst. (29) Then a vessel full of vinegar was set, and having filled a sponge [with] vinegar, and putting hyssop around, they brought [it] to His mouth. (30) Then when Jesus took the vinegar, He said, It has been finished. And bowing [His] head, [He] delivered up the spirit.

It is finished! There is no work for the sinner to do for salvation! To say that there IS still work for the sinner to do for salvation would be to say, "It is NOT finished" and to call the blessed Lord Jesus a liar. But we who are Christ's people, Christ's sheep, Christ's church – those who have been given by God the Father to God the Son, for whom Jesus led a perfect life and died on the cross – WE know that it is finished. We have a Sabbath rest, as Hebrews 4 says, because God has caused us to rest from our works and to trust in Jesus Christ ALONE for ALL of our salvation. The gospel is GOOD NEWS. It is a PROMISE. It is an UNCONDITIONAL PROMISE. It is a PROMISE from GOD, who KEEPS His promises, who is a JUST God and a SAVIOR. It is a PROMISE from GOD to SAVE, to rescue, to deliver, to preserve. It is a PROMISE from GOD to SAVE HIS PEOPLE, those who have been chosen from before the foundation of the world, those for whom Christ died. It is a PROMISE from GOD to SAVE HIS PEOPLE CONDITIONED ON THE ATONING BLOOD AND IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST ALONE, with no contribution from the sinner in any way to any degree. This atoning blood and imputed righteousness DEMANDS the justification, sanctification, and glorification of ALL whom Christ represented, ALL for whom He lived and died, NO EXCEPTIONS. Jesus Christ finished the work. Let's turn to Hebrews 10:11-14 to close:

Hebrews 10: (11) And indeed every priest stands day by day ministering, and often offering the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. (12) But He, offering but one sacrifice for sins, "sat down" in perpetuity "[at the] right [hand]" of God, (13) from then on expecting "until His enemies are placed [as] a footstool" of His feet. (14) For by one offering He has perfected in perpetuity the ones being sanctified.

Amen.

Gospel Repentance and Judgment

Let's turn to Philippians 3. Let's read the entire chapter:

Philippians 3: (1) For the rest, my brothers, rejoice in [the] Lord. To write the same things to you truly [is] not tiresome to me, but safe for you. (2) Look out [for] the dogs, look out [for] the evil workers, look out [for] the concision [party]. (3) For we are the circumcision, the ones who worship by the Spirit of God, and who glory in Christ Jesus, and who do not trust in flesh. (4) Even though I [might] have trust in flesh; if any other thinks to trust in flesh, I more; (5) in circumcision, [the] eighth day, of [the] race of Israel, [the] tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; according to Law, a Pharisee; (6) according to zeal, persecuting the assembly; according to righteousness in Law, being blameless. (7) But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss because of Christ. (8) But, no, rather I also count all things to be loss because of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count [them to be] trash, that I might gain Christ (9) and be found in Him; not having my own righteousness of Law, but through the faith of Christ, [having] the righteousness of God on faith, (10) to know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, having been conformed to His death, (11) if somehow I may attain to a resurrection out of the dead. (12) Not that I already received or already have been perfected, but I press on, if I also may lay hold, inasmuch as I also was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. (13) Brothers, I do not count myself to have laid hold, but one [thing I do], forgetting the things behind, and stretching forward to those things before, (14) I press on after a mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (15) Then as many as [are] perfect, let us be of this mind; and if you think anything differently, God will also reveal this to you. (16) Yet [as] to where we have arrived, walk by the same rule, [being] of the same mind. (17) Be fellow-imitators of me, brothers, and consider those walking this way, even as you have us [for] a pattern. (18) For many walk [as] hostile [to] the cross of Christ, of whom I often told you, and now even weeping I say it, (19) whose end [is] destruction, whose god [is] the belly, and who glory in their shame, the [ones] thinking earthly things. (20) For our citizenship is in Heaven, from where we also wait for a Savior, [the] Lord Jesus Christ, (21) who will transform our body of humiliation, for it to be conformed to His body of glory, according to the working [of] Him to be able even to subject all things under Himself.

Over the past seven weeks, we've gone point-by-point through the definition of the gospel. Some of the things we saw were that God exists, that God is sovereign, that God predestinated everything before the

foundation of the world, that God is all-powerful to keep His promises, that man by nature is dead in sins and at enmity with God and can do nothing to please God, that Adam's sin is imputed to all whom He represented, that sin deserves everlasting punishment in hell, that God's saving power is irresistible, that there is a change of state and a change of heart upon regeneration, that God preserves everyone He regenerates so that they will not perish and will not believe or confess a false gospel, that God chose to save a people before the foundation of the world, that Jesus Christ died for those people and those people alone, that all of the sins of His people were imputed to Christ, that Jesus Christ was punished by God and paid the penalty in full for all of His people by shedding His precious blood, that Jesus Christ lived a perfectly sinless life, that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to His people, that God saves His people in a way that is consistent with His law and justice, that Jesus is fully God and fully man, that the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ demands and ensures all of salvation, from regeneration to final glory, for all whom He represented, and that salvation is by the work of Christ alone without any contribution from the sinner.

These are all precious truths. We who are believers confess that they are true. We hold to these truths and will never let them go.

But there's a group of people out there who will say they agree with us on every one of the points I just mentioned, yet they are children of the devil. They will even say that the doctrines that oppose these truths are false doctrines, such as the doctrines that God did not predestinate everything before the foundation of the world, that God chose to save people based on what He knew they would do, that God's saving power is resistible, that fallen man can choose to be saved, that regenerate man can lose his salvation, and that Jesus Christ died for everyone without exception. They will call these things false doctrines. They will say that these doctrines oppose the glory of God. Yet they are children of the devil.

How can this be? How can it be that these people who say they agree with us on so many things are still children of the devil? How can it be that these people, who say that they exalt the glory of God in salvation, are actually enemies of the God they claim to exalt?

The answer is this: Even though they claim to believe this gospel, they do not VALUE it. They do not value it to the point of seeing that it is a life-and-death matter. They do not value it to the point that they consider everything opposed to it as dung. They do not value it to the point that they make judgments based on it. They say they love it, they say that it is precious to them, they say they hate what is opposed to it, yet they do not really VALUE it.

At the beginning of this message, I read Philippians chapter 3. Paul said that all of his religious deeds before he was saved were nothing but wickedness. In verse 6, he said that before he was saved, he was BLAMELESS according to righteousness in Law! Yet he counted himself LOST when he was in this religion. Why did he count himself lost? Because of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. When God saved him, God gave him the KNOWLEDGE that his salvation was conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ alone, his works totally excluded. And when God gave him that KNOWLEDGE, he counted his former religion as nothing but self-righteous dung, because he realized that in his former religion, he believed in salvation conditioned on the sinner. This is called REPENTANCE. This repentance is a change of heart, wherein one turns FROM believing in, worshiping, and serving a false god and a false christ TO believing in, worshiping, and serving the true God and the true Christ. The person turns FROM believing in the false gospel of salvation conditioned on the sinner TO believing in the true gospel of salvation conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ alone. And in order for the person to TRULY turn from one to the other, he must RECOGNIZE that the gospel he USED to believe was a FALSE GOSPEL, the god he used to worship was a FALSE GOD, and the christ he used to trust was a FALSE CHRIST. He must RECOGNIZE that these sins are indicative of LOSTNESS. He must RECOGNIZE that when he believed in a false gospel and a false god and a false christ, he was an open idolater, bringing forth dead works and fruit unto death. Without this RECOGNITION, there is no repentance. Paul RECOGNIZED that in his former religion, he was bringing forth fruit unto death. Let's turn to Romans 7:4-5:

Romans 7: (4) So that, my brothers, you also were made dead to the Law through the body of Christ, for you to become Another's, to [the One] raised from [the] dead, so that we may bear fruit to God. (5) For when we were in the flesh, the passions of sin were working in our members through the Law for the bearing of fruit unto death.

Paul RECOGNIZED that when he was lost, he was IN THE FLESH, and he was BRINGING FORTH FRUIT UNTO DEATH. Now was Paul talking about his old party days where he engaged in all kinds of immorality? NO! When he was lost, he was BLAMELESS according to righteousness in Law. Paul was talking about his life of RELIGION, DEDICATION, and MORALITY! He counted it as bringing forth fruit unto death. He RECOGNIZED it to be so.

Now I'd like to give you a scenario to illustrate this point.

Here's the scenario: A man claims to believe the doctrines of grace. He claims to agree with the definition of the gospel. He says that salvation is by the sovereign grace of God alone, based on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ alone, without any contribution from the sinner. He says that the work of Christ demands and ensures the salvation of all Christ represented, that Christ only died for His people, and that universal atonement is heretical. So far, so good. But then he says that when he was unregenerate, he was an irreligious drug dealer, until God saved him and changed his life. He says that when he first became a believer, he believed that Christ died for everyone without exception in the whole world, based on his misunderstanding of some Scripture passages that seemed to teach universal atonement. He says that it wasn't until a few years after his conversion that he encountered a Reformed book that explained particular redemption, and then he saw the precious truth of particular atonement and the heresy of universal atonement. He now considers his spiritual life to be much more enriched now that he has come to know the truth of particular atonement.

What is this man's current spiritual state? This man is still as lost as when he was an irreligious drug dealer. He was lost as an irreligious drug dealer, he was lost as a religionist who believed in universal atonement, and he continues to be lost as a religionist who has now "come into" the doctrines of grace. How do we know this? It has to do with his REPENTANCE, which shows how much he VALUES the gospel. When this man saw the truth of particular redemption, what did he think of his former religion in which he believed universal atonement? Did he count it as dung? Did he say that he was in the flesh and bringing forth fruit unto death? Did he say that he was worshiping and serving a false god and a false christ? Did he say that he believed a false gospel? No. He believes that he was regenerate while he believed in universal atonement. And remember – universal atonement is equal to salvation conditioned on the sinner, because those who believe in universal atonement DO NOT believe that the work of Jesus Christ ALONE demands and ensures the salvation of all whom He represented. They DO NOT believe that the work of Jesus Christ ALONE is what makes the difference between heaven and hell. They believe that it is the work of the SINNER that ultimately makes the difference between heaven and hell. So, since this man believes that he was regenerate while he believed in universal atonement, it is clear that HE HAS NOT REPENTED. He does not consider belief in universal atonement to be belief in a false gospel. Instead, he believes that one can believe the gospel and believe universal atonement at the same time. So not only has he not repented, he does not really believe the gospel. Do we all understand this? Okay.

Now I'd like to show you how REPENTANCE is directly connected to how one judges the spiritual state of OTHERS. I'm not going to go into the fact that Christians are commanded to judge the spiritual state of others and the objections raised to this by false religionists. For this sermon, it's a given that Christians judge the spiritual state of others.

Think of the man in the scenario I just presented. This man believes that he was regenerate while he believed in universal atonement. Now what if another man comes along who professes to be a Christian and says that he believes in universal atonement? Is the first man going to judge him lost? Of course not. If he judged THIS MAN lost, he'd have to say that HE was lost when HE believed in universal atonement. In fact, this is what we hear a lot from those who speak peace to such people. They do not reason from the Bible; instead, they go back to their own so-called "salvation experience." They'll say, "All Arminians aren't lost, because I was an Arminian for a period of time after I was regenerated." Again, this peace-speaking is a sure sign that he does not VALUE the gospel to the point of JUDGING by it. They'll say that they agree with the gospel doctrine, but they will not consider it ESSENTIAL gospel doctrine. They will not consider it VITAL gospel doctrine. Instead, they will consider it to be merely a MORE CONSISTENT version of the gospel than the Arminian version. And they MUST say that the Arminian version of the gospel is STILL the gospel, even though it is less consistent. Thus, they believe that the Arminian gospel is the BEGINNING POINT of their own faith. They are just as lost as the Arminians.

Let's turn to a passage of Scripture that irrefutably shows that those who speak peace to those who confess a false gospel are just as lost as those who confess a false gospel. That passage is 2 John 11. Let's start reading in verse 9 and go to verse 11:

2 John (9) Everyone transgressing and not abiding in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. The [one] abiding in the doctrine of Christ, this one has the Father and the Son. (10) If anyone comes to you and does not bear this doctrine, do not receive him into the house, and do not speak a greeting to him. (11) For the [one] speaking a greeting shares in his evil works.

First, we see that everyone who does not remain in the doctrine of Christ is lost. What is the doctrine of Christ? It is the GOSPEL. It's what we've been going over in the past seven weeks. The GOSPEL includes all the doctrine that I've gone over. THIS is the doctrine of Christ. If anyone does not remain in this doctrine, he is lost. Mark 16:16 says that those who do not believe the gospel are lost. Romans 10:3 says that those who are ignorant of the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel are lost.

Second, we see the command not to receive a person who brings a false gospel into your house. This is talking about having religious fellowship with him. The last part of verse 10 says, "and do not speak a greeting to him." Does that mean that you are not to say "hello" to such a person? No — this is a specific kind of greeting. The Greek word translated "greeting" is usually translated "rejoice." I'm going to give some examples of how the New Testament uses this Greek word:

John 4:36:

John 4: (36) And the one reaping receives reward, and gathers fruit to everlasting life, so that both the [one] sowing and the [one] reaping may REJOICE together.

Romans 16:19:

Romans 16: (19) For your obedience reached to all; therefore, I REJOICE over you. But I desire you to be truly wise [as] to good, but simple toward evil.

Philippians 2:17:

Philippians 2: (17) But if indeed I am poured out on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I REJOICE; yea, I REJOICE with you all. (18) And you also REJOICE [in] the same and REJOICE with me.

Philippians 4:4:

Philippians 4: (4) REJOICE in [the] Lord always. Again I say, REJOICE!

Did you notice the intimate meaning of the word "rejoice" in these passages? It is obviously talking about speaking peace to a person -- calling that person a brother in Christ. So when 2 John 10 says, "do not speak a greeting to him," it's saying, "do not speak peace to him"; "do not call him a brother in Christ."

Now in verse 11, we see a VERY grave, weighty statement:

2 John (11) For the [one] speaking a greeting shares in his evil works.

The one who speaks peace to a person who does not abide in the doctrine of Christ actually SHARES in the evil works of that person. What does it mean to "to share in" these evil works? The Greek word used here is koinonei. I'm sure that many of you recognize the root; koinos (Koy-nos) means "common" or "communal," koinonia (Koy-no-nia) means "partnership" or "fellowship," and koinonos means "partner" or "sharer." Let's go into some verses that give some examples of how this word is used in the New Testament. Notice again the intimate nature of sharing:

1 Corinthians 1:9:

1 Corinthians 1: (9) God [is] faithful, through whom you were called into [the] FELLOWSHIP of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Hebrews 2:14:

Hebrews 2: (14) Since, then, the children have partaken of flesh and blood, in like manner He Himself also SHARED the same things, that through death He might cause to cease the [one] having the power of death, that is, the devil;

1 Peter 4:13:

1 Peter 4: (13) but according as you SHARE the sufferings of Christ, rejoice; so that you may rejoice exultingly at the revelation of His glory.

Titus 1:4:

Titus 1: (4) to Titus, a true child according to [our] COMMON faith: Grace, mercy, peace from God [the] Father and [the] Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.

1 Corinthians 10:16:

1 Corinthians 10: (16) The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a PARTAKING of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a PARTAKING of the body of Christ?

Jude 3:

Jude (3) Having made all haste to write to you about the COMMON salvation, beloved, I had need to write to you to exhort you to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.

Philippians 1:5:

Philippians 1: (5) over your FELLOWSHIP in the gospel, from [the] first day until now,

Philippians 2:1:

Philippians 2: (1) [So] then, if [there is] any comfort in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any FELLOWSHIP of [the] Spirit, if any tenderesses and compassions

Philippians 3:10:

Philippians 3: (10) to know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the FELLOWSHIP of His sufferings, having been conformed to His death,

1 John 1:3:

1 John 1: (3) We announce to you what we have seen, and [what] we have heard, that you also may have FELLOWSHIP with us. And truly our FELLOWSHIP [is] with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

Matthew 23:30:

Matthew 23: (30) And you say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been PARTAKERS with them in the blood of the prophets

2 Corinthians 1:7:

2 Corinthians 1: (7) and our hope for you [is] certain, knowing that even as you are SHARERS of the sufferings, so also of the comfort.

Hebrews 10:33:

Hebrews 10: (33) indeed being exposed both to reproaches and to afflictions; and having become PARTNERS of those so living.

1 Peter 5:1:

1 Peter 5: (1) I, a fellow elder, exhort the elders among you, I being also witness of the sufferings of Christ, and [being] SHARER of the glory about to be revealed:

2 Peter 1:4:

2 Peter 1: (4) by which means He has given to us the very great and precious promises, so that through these you might be PARTAKERS of [the] divine nature, escaping from the corruption in [the] world by lust.

Do you see what sharing means?

So 2 John 11 is saying that the person who speaks peace to one who brings a false gospel is actually SHARING in the evil deeds of that person. What are the evil deeds of that person? It is the evil of not abiding in the gospel -- the evil of abiding in a false gospel. Verse 9 says that the one who performs these evil deeds (who does not abide in the gospel) "does not have God." One who "does not have God" is lost. So the one who speaks peace to that person is SHARING IN the false gospel of that person. And we can see how this happens. If Mr. Smith believes in universal atonement, and Mr. Jones claims to believe the true gospel of grace but calls Mr. Smith a brother, Mr. Jones SHARES IN the false gospel of Mr. Smith, because Mr. Jones believes that he SHARES the same gospel as Mr. Smith. And, in fact, Mr. Jones DOES share the same gospel as Mr. Smith. They both share the false gospel of salvation conditioned on the sinner. They are both bringing forth evil deeds and fruit unto death.

My hearers – do you believe the true gospel of salvation conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ alone? If you say you do, do you VALUE it to the point of considering all your former religion as dung? Do you VALUE it to the point of believing that you were lost when you were in such a religion? Do you VALUE it to the point of believing that ALL OTHERS who are in such a religion are lost? If you do not VALUE it so as to judge yourself and others by it, then you remain dead in your sins, no matter if

you call yourself Reformed or a Calvinist or a believer in the doctrines of grace. God commands you today to repent – to TRULY repent – and to TRULY believe the gospel.

Are you one who believes that Jesus Christ died for everyone in the world without exception? Then you don't believe the gospel. You don't believe that it is the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ ALONE that demands and ensures the salvation of ALL for whom He lived and died. You believe that it is the work of the SINNER that makes the ultimate difference between heaven and hell. God commands you today to repent – to consider all of your religion and all of your life as wickedness and idolatry, to turn from that wickedness, and to believe in the TRUE God who promises to save EVERY one of His people based on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ ALONE.

And to those of you who believe the true gospel, have repented of dead works and former idolatry, and who judge based on the truth of the gospel: REJOICE in this precious gospel! WORSHIP King Jesus! LOVE your brothers in Christ! EVANGELIZE to the irreligious and unconcerned! EVANGELIZE to those in false religion! PRAY for the salvation of the lost! DO GOOD WORKS out of a love for the one who first loved us! MEDITATE on the truth!

We'll close with a truth that we should ALWAYS keep in our minds. It's in 2 Corinthians 5:14-21:

2 Corinthians 5: (14) For the love of Christ constrains us, having judged this, that if One died for all, then all died; (15) and He died for all, that the living ones may live no more to themselves, but to the [One] having died for them and having been raised. (16) So as we now know no one according to flesh, but even if we have known Christ according to flesh, yet now we no longer know [Him so]. (17) So that if anyone [is] in Christ, [he] is a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new! (18) And all things [are] from God, the [One] having reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and having given to us the ministry of reconciliation, (19) as, that God was in Christ reconciling [the] world to Himself, not charging their deviations to them, and having put the Word of reconciliation in us. (20) Then on behalf of Christ, we are ambassadors, as God [is] exhorting through us, we beseech on behalf of Christ, Be reconciled to God. (21) For He made the [One] who knew no sin [to be] sin for us, that we might become [the] righteousness of God in Him.

Amen.

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