

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

An outline adapted and modified by Dave Eby from J.I. Packer. 1961. *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. Chicago, Inter-Varsity Press, 57-73 and a sermon/lecture series *What is the Gospel?* by Pastor Al Martin, Montville, NJ, USA, delivered in c. 1970.

1. THE GOSPEL IS A MESSAGE ABOUT GOD.

A. The biblical basis for this assertion:

1. The apostles proclaimed the gospel as a message about God.
 - a. Acts 2:14-39 (God is mentioned 10 times)
 - b. Acts 17:1-3 When speaking to Jews, Paul assumes Biblical theism.
 - c. Acts 17:16-31 When speaking with non-Jews (the nations) Paul does not assume Biblical theism, rather he teaches it.
2. Romans presents the gospel as a message about God. Romans is the most thorough, detailed and systematic presentation of the gospel in the New Testament. In Rom. 1:18-3:30 God is mentioned 31 times.

B. The gospel tells us:

1. Who God is:

- a. Creator (Gen 1:1; Acts 17:24)
- b. Sovereign Ruler of all things and human history (Acts 17:24, 26)
- c. Spiritual being (Acts 17:24)
- d. Independent (Acts 17:25)
- e. Personal (Acts 17: 29)
- f. Judge of the world (Acts 17:30)

2. What is His character: Holy (I Pet 1:15-16)

3. His standards: His holy law (Exodus 20:1-17; Matt 5:17-20; Matt 22:36-40)

4. His requirements: Love and worship God and obey to His holy law (Ex 20:3; Matt 5:17-20; 22:36-40; Gal 3:10)

5. Summary:

The gospel begins by teaching us that we owe our existence to God, we are completely dependent on Him, He has absolute claims on us, we are under solemn obligation to obey Him, and that our purpose in life is to love, worship, and serve Him. Our happiness, fulfillment and welfare comes in obedience to him.

2. THE GOSPEL IS A MESSAGE ABOUT SIN.

A. The biblical basis for this assertion:

1. **Matt. 1:21:** ...He will save His people from their sins.
2. **1 Tim. 1:15:** ...Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.
3. **Romans 1-3** (summarized in 3:10-11, 18,20,23) : No one is righteous, no not one. No one understands. No one seeks for God.... There is no fear of God before their eyes.... For by the works of the law no human being will be justified in His sight, since through the law comes the knowledge of sin.... All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

B. The problem of mankind: sin

Every human has a the problem of sin with its three parts:

1. Guilty; a **bad record** before our holy Judge (Ezek 36:25; Rom 3:19-20)
2. A wicked, evil, **filthy heart** (Ezek 36:26; Jer 17:10; Mark 7:18-23)
3. A helpless, **powerless life**, unable to obey God (Ezek 36:27; Rom. 5:6; 8:7). This can also be stated as enslavement to the **bad master** of sin and satan (John 8:34; Rom 6:17-20; Eph 2:2-3).

C. The biblical definition of sin

1. Sin is not primarily:
 - a. A personal problem – failure to meet my personal goals
 - b. A social problem – failure to adjust to and get along with others, failure to meet the expectations of others or to serve others; a lack of social adjustment
 - c. A psychological problem – a lack of happiness, confidence, a lack of personal adjustment, a poor-self image or inferiority feelings
2. Sin is a theological problem – a problem between us and our God.
 - a. We have fallen short of God's standards. Rom. 3:23
 - b. We are guilty of breaking His laws. 1 Jn. 3:4
 - c. We have defied His authority. Ps. 107:11, Rom. 8:7
 - d. We are filthy before His purity. Is. 64:6
 - e. We are helpless in our rebellion. Eph. 2:1-3

D. The results of sin

1. **Sin has ruined us; we are personally marred, distorted, diseased, damaged and spiritually dead.**
 - a. We are slaves to sin (John 8:34);
 - b. We are spiritually dead in sin (Eph 2:1-5);
 - c. We cannot save ourselves; dead people can do nothing (Eph 2:1-5) and no performance can make anyone right with God (Rom 3:19-20)
2. **Our relationship and fellowship with God is broken.**
 - a. We are alienated from God (Is. 59:2, Eph 2:12)
 - b. We are under His wrath (Deut. 28:15,20; Rom. 1:18, 5:9)
 - c. We are exposed and liable to His judgment now (Rom 1:18) and to eternal punishment in hell, a place for those who refuse to love and obey God and forsake sin (Matt 25:14-46; Luke 16:19-31; Rom. 2:1-6)

E. The source of sin: the human heart

1. **Mark 7: 20-23:** What comes out of a man is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a man.

2. **Genesis 6:5:** The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.
3. **Jeremiah 17:9:** The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked; who can understand it?
4. **James 1:13-15:** Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.
5. **"The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart"** (Dr. Henry Krabbendam).

F. The conviction of sin

1. Negative

- a. Not just a sense of shame, guilt and moral failure.
- b. Not merely depression, discouragement or lack of self-respect or a low self-image due to personal failure.

2. Positive

- a. Awareness of wrong relationship with God.
- b. A sense of guilt and shame before God.
- c. It involves a conviction of specific sins.
- d. It includes an awareness of my sinfulness, i.e. of my selfish and evil heart.

3. **Result** of conviction of sin: self-despair or poverty of spirit. Mt. 5:3
J. I. Packer: Self despair "is a necessary step. Not till we have learned our need to get right with God, and our inability to do so by any effort of our own, can we come to know the Christ who saves from sin." *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 59

4. **The instrument** for the conviction of sin: The holy law of God (Rom. 3:30; 7:7):

John Blanchard:

"... The law shows what sin really is – conflict with the nature, character and will of a holy God. Just for a moment, place your life alongside the Ten Commandments or the Sermon on the Mount. What is the result, *honestly*? Is it not true that the straight-edge of the law shows you how crooked you are? The law demands honesty; you are dishonest. The law demands purity; you are impure. The law demands humility; you are proud. The law demands unselfishness; you are selfish. In short, the law demands that you love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and that you love your neighbor as yourself. Can you honestly say that you do? The truthful answer to that question should make you see that in God's sight you are a guilty sinner – and the law will have pointed you to that truth" (1971, *Right with God*, Moody Press, 51-52).

G. The implications of a biblical view of sin:

1. The gospel does not present the Lord Jesus Christ as:

- a. A super-hero to meet our felt needs, or a “fairy god mother” (magician) to satisfy personal wants, i.e. to make us healthy, wealthy and prosperous in a physical sense.
 - b. A personal management counselor.
 - c. A social worker.
 - d. A super-psychologist or psychiatrist.
 - e. A symptom healer.
2. The gospel presents a Messiah who comes to deal with the root problem of sinners. We have turned away from God, the source of life and happiness, and this has produced legal and personal problems which we are unable to solve ourselves. Jesus came to solve the three problems of the bad record, the bad heart and the bad master.

3. THE GOSPEL IS A MESSAGE ABOUT *JESUS CHRIST, HIS PERSON AND HIS WORK*

A. His Person: The glory and uniqueness of Christ’s Person.

1. Biblical basis for asserting that the gospel is a message about the uniqueness of Christ’s Person:
 - a. **Acts 2:22-24:** Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified...But God raised Him up....
 - b. **Acts 2:42-43** This Jesus God raised up.... Being therefore exalted to the right hand of God.... God has made Him both Lord and Christ....
 - c. **Acts 4:12:** And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.
 - d. **Acts 5:42:** [The apostles] did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ [Messiah].
 - e. **Acts 7:52:** ...the Righteous One....
 - f. **Acts 9:20:** [Paul] proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues saying “He is the Son of God.”
 - g. **Acts 10:36, 38, 41-42:** ...Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all).... God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil.... He is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and dead. To Him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name.
 - d. **I Cor. 2:2:** I decided to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ....
 - e. **II Cor. 4:5:** But what we proclaim is not ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as servants for Jesus’ sake....
 - f. **Eph 1:21-22:** [Jesus Christ is] far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And [God] put

all things under His feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church....

- g. **Eph. 3:8**; To me...grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ....
- h. **Rev 1:5**: Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

2. Jesus Christ is true God

- a. **John 1:1-3**: In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.... All things were made through Him.
- b. **Rom. 1:1-4**: [God's Son] was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead....
- c. **Rom 9:5**: ...[F]rom their race [Israelites], according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.
- d. **Phil. 2:6, 11**: ...Though He was in the form (nature) of God, He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.... Every tongue [will] confess that Jesus is Lord....
- e. **Titus 2:13**: ...[O]ur great God and Savior Jesus Christ
- f. **Heb 1:3**: He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power.
- g. **II Pet 1:1**: To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

3. Jesus Christ is true man.

- a. **John 1:14**: The Word became flesh [took on human nature] and lived among us.
- b. **Rom. 1:1-4**: Descended from David according to the flesh....
- c. **Phil. 2:5-11**: [T]aking the form [nature] of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

4. Jesus Christ is one Person in two distinct natures. He is fully God and fully man in one person. He is the God/man.

5. Significance, implications: **Because Christ is truly God:**

- a. He alone has the power to rescue us.
- b. He alone has the worth to rescue us.
- c. He alone has the authority to rescue us.
- d. He alone deserves our complete trust, allegiance and worship as our Savior from sin.

6. Significance, implications: **Because Christ is truly Man:**

- a. Because He was truly man, He was able to represent us as the Second Adam, to flee sin's temptation and to keep the law for us, where the first Adam had failed.
 - b. Because He was truly man, He could suffer and be a perfect sacrifice for sin.
 - c. Because he is truly man, he is our elder brother who shares and understands our weakness and humanity. Heb. 2:18; 4:14-16; 7:24-2.
 - d. Because He was/is truly man He is our perfect and sympathetic High Priest to represent us before God.
7. Significance, implications: **Because Christ is truly the God/Man:**
- a. Jesus could be the trustworthy and obedient Second Adam and remain faithful to God's laws and demands.
 - b. Jesus could be the Mediator of the new covenant to save us from sin. He could fulfill all the demands of the law for his people and suffer the punishment due to their sin. Jesus could obey and suffer in our place, as our substitute.
 - c. Jesus could fulfill the three offices promised to the Messiah in the OT:
 - 1. As Prophet, he could perfectly teach us the will of God;
 - 2. As Priest, he could pray for us and bring the perfect sacrifice to God for sin, his own death;
 - 3. As King he could perfectly rule over the world, Satan and the people he saved and also defend his saved ones.
 - d. Jesus could purchase, by his life of obedience, his death on the cross and his resurrection, the three solutions required to address our sin problem:
 - 1. The new record of his righteousness (justification);
 - 2. The new heart (regeneration);
 - 3. The new master and new power of the Spirit to enable us to live a new life (sanctification).
 - e. Jesus Christ is the Savior and Lord of His People, the King and Head of the Church, the One having all authority in heaven and on earth, the ruler of the kings and rulers on earth, our Sovereign Lord and God today, ruling from His throne in heaven (Matt 28:18-20; Eph. 1:20-23; Heb. 1:3; Rev 1:5).
 - f. **J-E-S-U-S**
 Just
 Exactly
 Suits
 Us
 Sinners

B. His **Work**: The facts, significance and sufficiency of His work

- 1. Biblical basis for asserting that the gospel is a message about the work of Christ:
 - a. **Luke 24:45-47**: Thus it is written [in the Law and the Prophets]

that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

- b. **I Cor. 15:3-5:** ...Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ... He was buried, ...He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures....
- g. **I Pet. 1:18-21; 2:24; 3:18:** ... You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers... with the precious blood of Christ.... He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.... For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God....

2. The historical facts:

- a. A real **incarnation**
- b. A real **life**
- c. A real **death, burial**
- d. A real, **bodily resurrection**
- e. A real **ascension** to His enthronement in heaven

3. The theological significance of these facts.

- a. His incarnation was the enfleshment of God Himself (Matt. 1:21; Phil. 2:5-11; John 1:14);
- b. His life was a life of sinless obedience to God's law (Rom. 5:19, 8:3-4; II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; I Pet. 2:22);
- c. His baptism was His appointment to the office of high priest. See Ex. 29:1,4,9; Numbers 8:6-7; Heb. 3:1, 4:14, 5:1-10, 9:11; Num 4:3,47 and Luke 3:23;
- d. His death was His suffering as the representative, sin-bearer and surety (debt-payer), for the sins of His people, paying their penalty for them. Is. 53; Gal. 3:13-14; II Cor. 5:21; I Pet. 1:18-21, 2:24;
- e. His resurrection was the public vindication that He had paid the debt for His people. Rom 4:25;
- f. His ascension was his appointment to the place of authority and power over all authority and all nations as the Mediator between God and man:
 - (1) Acts 2:32-33, 36
 - (2) Acts 5:31
 - (3) Eph. 1:19-23
 - (4) Psalm 2; 110
 - (5) Matt 28:18-20
- g. His intercession as the enthroned Mediator (Prophet, Priest and King) is the guarantee that He will complete the work of salvation which He started.
 - (1) Rom 8:34: [He] is at the right hand of God, [and] indeed is interceding for us.

(2) Heb 7:25: Consequently, He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

C. A summary of the person and work of Christ as the mediator of the new covenant (Westminster Confession of Faith, 8:1-2,):

I. It pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man,^[1] the Prophet,^[2] Priest,^[3] and King,^[4] the Head and Savior of His Church,^[5] the Heir of all things,^[6] and Judge of the world:^[7] unto whom He did from all eternity give a people, to be His seed,^[8] and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.^[9]

II. The Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon Him man's nature,^[10] with all the essential properties, and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin;^[11] being conceived by the power of the Holy [Spirit], in the womb of the virgin Mary, of her substance.^[12] So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion.^[13] [This] person is very God, and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man.^[14]

III. The Lord Jesus, in His human nature thus united to the divine, was sanctified, and anointed with the Holy Spirit, above measure,^[15] having in Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;^[16] in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell;^[17] to the end that, being holy, harmless, undefiled, and full of grace and truth,^[18] He might be thoroughly furnished to execute the office of a Mediator and Surety [substitute debt payer].^[19] Which office He took not unto Himself, but was thereunto called by His Father,^[20] who put all power and judgment into His hand, and gave Him commandment to execute the same.^[21]

IV. This office the Lord Jesus did most willingly undertake;^[22] which that He might discharge, He was made under the law,^[23] and did perfectly fulfil it;^[24] endured most grievous torments immediately in His soul,^[25] and most painful sufferings in His body;^[26] was crucified, and died,^[27] was buried, and remained under the power of death, yet saw no corruption.^[28] On the third day He arose from the dead,^[29] with the same body in which He suffered,^[30] with which also he ascended into heaven, and there sits at the right hand of His Father,^[31] making intercession,^[32] and shall return, to judge men and angels, at the end of the world.^[33]

V. The Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience, and sacrifice of Himself, which He through the eternal Spirit, once offered up unto God, has fully satisfied the justice of His Father;^[34] and purchased, not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for those whom the Father has given unto Him.^[35]

4. THE GOSPEL IS A SUMMONS TO REPENTANCE AND FAITH

A. The biblical basis for this assertion:

1. **Luke 13:3:** ...Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

2. **Luke 24:47:** ...[R]epentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations....

3. **Acts 10:43:** ...[E]veryone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name.

4. **Acts 16:31:** Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your household.
5. **Acts 17:30-31:** ...[N]ow [God] commands all people everywhere to repent because He has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this He has given assurance to all by raising Him from the dead.
6. **Acts 20:20-21:** ...[T]estifying to both Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.
7. **John 3:23:** And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ....

B. What is a summons? An authoritative call, order or command

C. What is repentance?

1. Children's Catechism Q56. *What is it to repent?* A. To be sorry for sin and to hate and forsake it because it is displeasing to God.
2. Westminster Shorter Catechism Q. 87: Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and understanding of the mercy of God in Christ, does, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it to God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience.
3. J.I. Packer: "Repentance is a changed attitude of heart and mind, leading to a new life of denying self and serving the Savior as King in self's place." 1976. "What is Evangelism?", *Theological Perspectives on Church Growth*, ed. Harvie Conn, Nutley New Jersey, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 102.

D. What is faith?

1. Children's Catechism Q. 57. *What is it to believe or have faith in Christ?*
 - A. To trust Christ alone for salvation.
2. Westminster Shorter Catechism Q. 86: Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation, as He is offered to us in the gospel.
3. J.I. Packer "Faith is credence and conviction regarding the gospel message, and it is more; born of self-despair, it is essentially a casting and resting of oneself on the promises of Christ and the Christ of those promises" (1976, "What is Evangelism?", 102).

E. Faith and repentance are inseparable.

1. Faith embraces the gift aspect of the gospel.
2. Repentance embraces the shift/change element or demand of the gospel.
3. They can be distinguished as different but they cannot be divided.
4. They are two sides of the one coin of coming to Christ for salvation.

F. The genuineness of faith and repentance is known and discovered only in their fruit.

1. **Matt 13:23:** As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.
2. **Luke 3:8-9:** Bear fruits in keeping with repentance.
3. **Matt. 7:17-23:** So every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.
4. **Matt 12:33-35:** ...[T]he tree is known by its fruit.... For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.... I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give an account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.
5. **John 15:4-7:** Whoever abides in Me and I in Him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.
6. **Acts 26:19-20:** ...I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared [to Jews]... and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.

5. THE GOSPEL IS A CALL TO *DISCIPLESHIP, HOLINESS AND OBEDIENCE*

A. What these terms mean:

1. **Discipleship:** "... Discipleship is a matter of relating oneself to the living, exalted Christ as a learner and a follower, and to the rest of Christ's disciples as one who longs both to learn from them and to give to them, and who knows that his master's will is for him to be in their company." J. I. Packer 1976, "What is Evangelism?", 102
2. **Holiness:** God making a sinner pure and like Christ in heart and conduct; putting off sin, putting on love, righteousness and conformity to God's law.
3. **Obedience:** to follow, to practice instructions of a leader; to submit to authority.

B. Our discipleship, holiness and obedience are not the foundation of our salvation. We do not contribute these to earn salvation. Jesus' discipleship, holiness and obedience are the foundation for our salvation. But our discipleship, holiness and obedience are the purpose and fruit of his gracious salvation. See the texts below.

C. The biblical basis for this assertion that the gospel is a call discipleship, holiness and obedience:

1. **The Lord Jesus teaches this.**

- a. **Matt. 5:17-20:** I have not come to abolish [the Law or the prophets], but to fulfill them.... Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.
- b. **Matt. 7:21-23:** Not everyone who says to Me “Lord, Lord” will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.
- c. **Matt. 25:14-30:** The parable of the talents; two servants are faithful and one is unfaithful. The two obedient servants are commended: “Well done good and faithful servants. Enter into the joy of your master.” But the disobedient is condemned to eternal punishment.
- d. **Luke 9:23; 14:26-27:** If anyone would come after Me let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.... If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Me cannot be my disciple.
- e. **John 8:30-31; 10:27; 14:15:** If you abide in My word you are truly My disciples.... My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.... If you love Me you will keep My commandments.

2. The apostles teach this.

- a. **Acts 26:20:** ...[R]epent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with...repentance.
- b. **Rom. 6:1-2, 19-23:** Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?... [N]ow present you members as slaves of righteousness leading to sanctification. When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? The end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- c. **Rom. 8:12-14:** So then brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put [are putting] to death the deeds of the body [sin], you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit are the sons of God.
- d. **Gal. 5:19-23:** [W]alk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.... Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

- e. **Eph. 2:8-10:** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not of your own doing; it is the gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.
- f. **Titus 2:13-14:** ...[O]ur great God and Savior Jesus Christ ...gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works.
- g. **Heb. 5:9; 12:14:** [Christ] became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey [are obeying] him.... Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness [sanctification, obedience] without which no one will see the Lord.
- h. **James 1:22; 2:14-26:** But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves....So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.
- i. **I Peter 1:13-19**

13 Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. **14** As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, **15** but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, **16** since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." **17** And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, **18** knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, **19** but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.
- j. **I John 2:3-4:** And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. Whoever says "I know Him" but does not keep His commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps His word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in him: whoever says he abides in Him ought to walk in the same way in which He walked.
- k. **I John 3:4-10:** ...[S]in is lawlessness.... No one who abides in Him keeps on sinning.... Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does

not love his brother.

D. The new covenant provides for and requires discipleship, holiness and obedience:

1. Ezekiel 36:25-27

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and **you shall be clean** from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And **I will give you a new heart**, and a new spirit **I will** put within you. And **I will** remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And **I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes** and be careful to obey my rules.

2. Jeremiah 31: 31-34

31 "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when **I will make a new covenant** with the house of Israel...**31 I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.** And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. **34** And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

3. Jeremiah 32: 38-40

38 And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. **39 I will give them one heart and one way**, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. **40** I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And **I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.**

4. The new covenant provisions demand it:

- a. The new record (justification);
- b. The new heart (regeneration);
- c. The new master and power to live a new life by the indwelling Holy Spirit (sanctification).

5. Definition of God's new covenant: the gracious plan by which God chooses to make us His friends and to give us His salvation in Christ, and by which we promise, out of gratitude, love and worship, to live for Him. God's covenant gives us the gifts and privileges of the new record, new heart and new master and the responsibilities of living the new life of justification, regeneration and sanctification.

6. Hebrews 10:16-17 and the two distinct blessings of the new covenant

- a. Forgiveness of sin.
 - b. God's law written on our hearts and minds, changing and enabling us to walk in the ways of obedience and holiness.
 - c. "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds," then he adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more."

E. Discipleship, holiness and obedience are not optional in the new covenant.

1. The Lord Jesus teaches this in John 15:1-6:

1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. **2** Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. **3** Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. **4** Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. **5** I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. **6** If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. **7** If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **8** By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

2. The apostles teach this.

a. **James 1:22; 2:14-26:** But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves....So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

b. **I John 1: 6-7**

6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. **7** But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin

c. **I John 3:10** By this it is evident who are the children of God and who are the children of the devil: whoever

does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

6. THE GOSPEL IS A MESSAGE ABOUT *POWERFUL GRACE*

A. Mankind's problem

1. Man is not a struggling swimmer, about to drown, but who is still capable of swimming over to the life-saver (or canoe) and cooperating with the life-guard (or fisherman) in the rescue. The biblical picture is that man is dead on the bottom of the lake. See Eph. 2:1-10.

2. The Biblical pictures of God's solutions to man's problem and man's spiritual rescue are pictures of God's sovereign grace, not pictures of man's work, cooperation or contribution to his salvation.

a. **New creation** (II Cor. 5:17): Therefore, if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation.

b. **New birth** (Jn. 3:1-15): Unless one is born from above he cannot see the kingdom of God. Unless one is born of water and the Spirit [Ezek 36:25-27], he cannot enter the kingdom of God. You must be born again.

c. **Resurrection** (Eph. 2:1-10): And you were dead in your trespasses and sins.... But God, being rich in mercy,...made us alive together with Christ...and raised us up with him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

A. Applications

3. If I am ever going to respond to the gospel with faith and repentance, **God must:**

a. **Open my mind to receive the truth of Christ** and the gospel

(1) **I Cor. 2:10-16:** [He must reveal] to us [the gospel] through the Spirit... that we might understand the things freely given us by God....

(2) **II Cor. 4: 3-6:** Open my blind mind-eyes to see the light of the gospel and the glory of God in Jesus Christ.

b. **Change my desires so that I want Christ**

(1) **Phil 2:13:** [God must work in me to will and to do His good pleasure. If God must work in the believer to will and do His will, how much more must He work in the unbeliever to bring repentance and faith.]

(2) **Prov. 21:1:** Since He has the heart of the king in His hand like a channel of water which He can turn wherever He chooses, He certainly can change my heart to desire Christ instead of self and sin.

c. **Change my will so that I am willing to bow and submit to Christ**

(1) **Matt. 11:25-27:** [The Father, Lord of heaven and earth, can hide or reveal Christ and the gospel. He reveals Christ according to His gracious will so that people choose (with their renewed will) to come to Christ to and take up His yoke of discipleship.]

(2) **John 6:37, 44:** All that the father gives Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me I will never cast out.... No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him....

4. **The Bible teaches that faith and repentance are gifts from God.**

a. **John 6:64-65:** ...[S]ome of you do not believe.... This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted [given as a gift] him by the Father.

b. **Matt 11:25-30:** ...[N]o one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him. [The Son reveals the Father and the Father reveals the Son. No one can come to the Son and rest in Him without faith. So the Father must give the gift of faith in His revealing the Son to enable us to come to Christ.]

c. **Luke 24:45:** The He [Jesus] opened their minds to understand the Scriptures [and the gospel the OT proclaims]. Faith comes as a result of the Lord opening our minds. If the Lord does not open our minds, we cannot believe.]

d. **Acts 11:18:** Then to the Gentiles also God has granted [given] repentance that leads to life.

e. **Acts 13:48:** As many as were appointed [or ordained] to eternal life believed. [The cause of our belief in the gospel is God's choosing or appointing us to eternal life i.e. faith is His gift to the appointed.]

f. **Acts 16:14:** The Lord opened her [Lydia's] heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. [Without the Lord's gracious intervention, our hearts will remain closed to Christ and the gospel. No one will "pay attention."]

g. **I Cor. 1:27-31:** God chose what is foolish to shame the wise; God chose what is weak to shame the strong...so that no human being may boast in His presence. He [God] is the source of your life in Christ Jesus.... Therefore, as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord." [We are united to Christ and to His life by faith. Since God is the cause of our being in Christ, He must choose us and give us the gift of faith.]

h. **II Cor. 1:21:** And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ.

i. **Eph. 2:8-10:** It is the gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. ["It" can refer specifically to faith or to all of salvation by grace through faith; in either case sinners are completely dependent on God's gift of grace in order to respond in faith to Christ. Faith is not our gift to God, but God's gift to us.]

j. **Phil 1:29:** For it has been granted [given as a gift] to you that for the sake of Christ you should...believe in Him....

k. **I Thess. 1:2-5:** We give thanks to God [for] your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers loved by God, that He has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. [God gives the gifts of faith, love and hope. His choosing grants these gracious gifts.]

5. The Bible teaches that God saves sinners and that no man or woman can rescue himself or herself.

a. **Psalms 3:8:** Salvation belongs to the Lord.

b. **Jonah 2:9:** Salvation belongs to the Lord.

c. **Matt 1:21:** Call His name Jesus for He will save His people from their sins. [Jesus does the saving, not any human or any human contribution.]

d. **Rom. 3:9-21:** [No one can save himself by any performance or work. The gift of God's righteousness is a gracious gift given in Christ to all who believe. Salvation is not by our efforts but by Christ's finished work on our behalf.]

e. **Rom 9:16:** For [God] says to Moses "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. [The power of this God-centered passage and its pride-destroying character is self-evident. Sinful man contributes nothing to salvation.]

e. **John 1:11-13:** He came to His own, and [the majority of] His own people [the Jews] did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become the children of God, [and the only explanation for these people receiving and believing Him, when so many did not, is that these]...were born, not of

blood, nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. work of grace in giving the new birth precedes the faith that sinner. God does not give the new birth in response to our would mean that the sinner saves himself by providing the salvation, faith. Rather, our faith is the first the heart of the newly born child of God.]

[God's saves the faith. This crucial link in response from

f. **Eph 2:8-10:** [We are saved by grace alone. Our works contribute nothing. We cannot save ourselves. Good works follow salvation as the fruit of grace that God has ordained for the ones He has saved.]

6. Therefore, **the message of powerful grace teaches sinners:**

- a. Humility or the destruction of pride.
- b. Dependence on God or the destruction of self-dependence.
- c. Hopelessness or the destruction of self-trust.
- d. Helplessness or the destruction of confidence in self-activity.
- e. To cry to God alone and expect deliverance from Him alone.
- f. To boast in God alone when He grants salvation (I Cor. 1:26-31).
- g. To be God-centered and not man-centered.

Soli Deo Gloria: To God Alone be the Glory

Last edited December 18, 2018