

# The Heart of Christianity

## The Biblical Gospel and the Future of the Church

### 1-The Command of Jesus

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January 6, 2019

#### Mark 1:14&15

Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, **The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.**

#### Mark 13:10

**The gospel must first be preached to all the nations.**

#### Mark 16:15&16

**Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.**

To the Glory of God

Now the word "Gospel" is one of those terms that everybody knows, but finds it hard to define. It is probably one of the most *commonly* used words in the Christian Church, and yet, many find it quite elusive. And so, there have been efforts to place other words either in front of or behind the word "Gospel" to help define it. So, now, today, we have strange terms like:

The *social* Gospel

... or ...

The *feminist* Gospel

... or ...

The *prosperity* Gospel

And various Teachings are said to be “Gospel-centric”, or “Gospel-oriented”, or “Gospel-based”, if they contain a lot, or even a little, of Bible in them.

Now the Bible itself talks about a “gospel” that is “contrary” to what the Apostles preached (**Galatians 1:7&8**). And the Mormon religious system has even created what they call “another Gospel of Jesus Christ”.<sup>1</sup> While many of us, who are at least *trying* to “get the Gospel right”, have created *other* terms to describe false Teaching, like a “man-made Gospel”.

Now many people are familiar with the four Bible Books that are collectively called “the Gospels”, like “**Matthew**”, “**Mark**”, “**Luke**”, and “**John**”, which are inspired, inerrant, and written, *narratives* of the Birth, Life, Ministry, Teaching, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus, the Christ.

And because their writings constitute the four “Gospel Records”, each of these men, the Apostle Matthew, or Levi (the former tax collector), John Mark (who was commissioned by the Apostle Peter), Dr. Luke (the Gentile, medical doctor, who was commissioned by the Apostle Paul), and John (who was also an Apostle), were known for the first thousand years of Christianity (as the Church was developing) as the “Four Evangelists” (*heralders* of the Good News) of the Christian Church, and were *symbolized* as “creatures” by the Apostle John in **The Revelation 4:7**:

**The first creature was like a lion [Mark], and the second creature like a calf [Luke], and the third creature had a face like that of a man [Matthew], and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle [John].<sup>2</sup>**

... so, the four “Gospel Records” that these men wrote (as they were “moved along” by God the Holy Spirit) are collectively called “*The Gospels*”. And each Book bears a title, like “**The Gospel of Matthew**”, or “**The Gospel of John**”<sup>3</sup>. The three Books of **Matthew**, **Mark**, and **Luke** are known by theologians as the “*Synoptic Gospels*”, which means they

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<sup>1</sup> This is how the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints officially describes a book called, “*The Book of Mormon*”.

<sup>2</sup> This interpretation was first developed by the Church Father, Irenaeus (140AD- 202), but did not become popular until Victorinus (martyred in 303AD) taught it. It was also taught by Jerome (who developed the Latin Vulgate). Many religious groups continue to teach this in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

<sup>3</sup> The titles of the Books of the Bible were not originally put there by the writer; nor were they attached to the Books until much later- to help the reader.

*complement* each other, while John's infallible Record is often called "The *Spiritual Gospel*", because it deals a lot with the Deity of Jesus.

But when Jesus commanded us to "*go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature*", what did He mean by the term "Gospel"? Did Jesus mean that we are to recite all the words of all four of the Books that we call "The Gospels"? Or did He mean something else? This Sermon Series is about us finding out exactly what we are supposed to believe, and what we are commanded to teach and preach to every human on earth.

So, as is my custom, we are going to begin this new year by taking a short "vacation" from our "journey" through **1 Peter** to answer the Questions, "*What constitutes the 'Gospel'? What Biblical Truths are to be included in our preaching and teaching to the world? What Issues are not included in the Gospel?*" And, even more importantly, "*What must a lost sinner believe and trust in and confess in order to be saved (forgiven and made Righteous)?*"

Now, first of all, we need to define the word "Gospel". This word is used 99 times throughout the English New Testament, but it was a word that had to be *invented* since nothing before or since was like it. In the Greek New Testament, the word "*Gospel*" is the translation of the Greek noun *euangelion* (occurring 76 times), which *literally* means "good news," and the verb *euangelizo* (occurring 54 times) which means "to bring or announce good news."

Both words are derived from the noun *angelos*, which means, "messenger." So, in classical Greek, an *euangelos* was one who, "*brought a message of victory or other political or personal news that caused great joy and celebration*". In addition, *euangelizomai* (the middle voice form of the verb) meant "*to speak as a messenger of gladness, to proclaim good news.*"<sup>4</sup> Further, the noun *euangelion* became a *technical* term for "*the message of eternal Victory*", even though it was *originally* used for a *political* or *private* message that brought joy.<sup>5</sup>

Now the fact that both the noun and the verb are used so *extensively* in the New Testament demonstrate how this word *developed*, over time, as a distinctly "Christian word", because of the *glorious* "News" announced to Mankind of the "*Salvation and Victory*

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<sup>4</sup> Colin Brown, general editor, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1976), Volume 2, 107.

<sup>5</sup> Colin Brown, 107.

*over Sin and Death that God offers to guilty sinners through the Person and the finished Work of Jesus Christ on the Cross as proven by His Resurrection, Ascension, and ongoing Ministry at God's "Right Hand". And that is shortened into the familiar phrase that the Gospel is "Good Tidings" or "Good News".*

Now that shortened *summary* may be very useful. But there is a danger in using *only* the summary and *not* the full-blown definition, because over-time, people lose sight of *why* we need "Good News". There is a vacancy in many minds today as to *why* the "Good News" of Jesus' Life, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and ongoing Ministry in Heaven matters to those of us who live in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, with our smart phones and cars that beep when we cross over the median. In my own travels, I have found a glaring ignorance in people, both inside and outside the Church, about something as fundamental as *why* the "Good News" is classified as being "Good".

Let me suggest to you that the "Good News" of Salvation in Jesus is "Good" only because there is some really "Bad News" out there. And the Bad News is:

### **Isaiah 52:7b**

**... "Your God reigns!"**

But why would it be "Bad News" for God to reign sovereignly over all His Creation. Because the Owner and Creator of the Universe, the God Who holds our next breath in His Hand, is angry with sinners. He is *very* angry. He is *fiercely* angry. Why is God angry? Because our sins have *belittled* and *insulted* His Glory (**Romans 3:23**).

But it won't get any better when He comes back, because God is determined to *adjudicate* that great insult. When Jesus comes back, He will *satisfy* His Own, Personal, Pristine Righteousness that has been offended by our sin by eternally damning all unrepentance sinners in Hell, forever!

And wise people are afraid of that. Smart people are *terrified* of that. People, who have been graced, to have their eyes open, *tremble* at that "Bad News". But foolish people brush the Bad News off and act as though it doesn't apply to them, or that due to some superior purity about themselves, they are somehow *exempt* from ever seeing the Wrath of God, even without repenting and without being born again.

But these people are merely deceived about the *certainty* of their own Damnation. And it is this horrific “Bad News” that makes the “Good News” very “Good” indeed. So, I am fine with using the summary, but only as long as everybody understands the full definition.

Now in many of the 99 instances throughout the New Testament, the word “Gospel” is used with *other* words that help to define it like:

- ✓ The Gospel *of God* (Mark 1:14; Romans 1:1& 15:16; 2 Corinthians 11:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:2,8,&9; 1 Peter 4:17)
- ✓ The Gospel *of the Kingdom* (Matthew 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; Luke 16:16)
- ✓ The Gospel *of Christ* (Romans 15:19; 1 Corinthians 9:12; 2 Corinthians 2:12; 9:13; 10:14; Galatians 1:7; Philippians 1:27; 1 Thessalonians 3:2)
- ✓ The Gospel *of Jesus Christ* (Mark 1:1)
- ✓ The Gospel *of Our Lord Jesus* (2 Thessalonians 1:8)
- ✓ The Gospel *of the Grace of God* (The Acts 20:24)
- ✓ The Gospel *of His Son* (Romans 1:9)
- ✓ The Gospel *of the Glory of Christ* (2 Corinthians 4:4)
- ✓ The Gospel *of Your Salvation* (Ephesians 1:13)
- ✓ The Gospel *of Peace* (Ephesians 6:15)

... and it is by exploring these different phrases that will help us understand what the Gospel *is*, and *is not*. For example, when the Apostle Paul was writing his inspired Letter to the saints in the Church at Ephesus (around 60-62 AD), in 6:13-17, he said:

**Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, *HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH*, and *HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS*, and having shod *YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE*; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*. And take *THE HELMET OF SALVATION*, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.**

Now the Apostle was “moved along” several times here, by God the Holy Spirit, to quote from various writings from the Prophet Isaiah. For example, the phrase:

## ***HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH***

... comes from **Isaiah 11:5**. And the phrase:

## ***HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS***

.. comes from **Isaiah 59:17**. And the two phrases:

## ***YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE***

... and...

## ***THE HELMET OF SALVATION***

... come from **Isaiah 52:7**.

So, in reality, **Ephesians 6:13-17** is a "completed explanation" or an "Exposition" of what the Prophet Isaiah *meant* when he wrote those various verses some 700 years *earlier*. This Apostolic Command in **Ephesians** was *not* originated by Paul. God "moved" on the Prophet Isaiah to begin this Teaching some seven centuries earlier. And all Paul was doing here was giving the final, full, and completed understanding of what Isaiah was talking about.

And, you will notice that in this Passage, Isaiah spoke of the "Gospel of Peace", and he literally said:

### **Isaiah 52:7**

**How lovely on the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who announces peace And brings good news of happiness, Who announces salvation, *And* says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"**

So, in reality, **Isaiah 52:7** is a prophecy of the *First Coming* of Jesus, the Messiah. And from that, we see that the "Gospel", or the "Good News" of Salvation for sinners, was prophesied about 700 years *before* the *fulfillment* came through Jesus.

Now you will notice that there is a slight difference in what Isaiah actually said and what Paul wrote in **Ephesians**. Now why is that? Is Paul taking what Isaiah said "out of context" here and just making

things up? What gives Paul the Authority to take *some* of what Isaiah said, and then piece different statements together, and then write to the Church in Ephesus, and, by extension, all believers, that what *he* says in **Ephesians** is the “completed explanation” of what Isaiah meant?

This is part of what is called “Apostolic Authority”. As one of just a few men in all of human history, Paul was *specialy* empowered and specially gifted by God the Holy Spirit, to take the sacred Writings of the Old Testament Books and *interpret* them *fully, correctly, and finally*. And so, what Paul or Peter, or any of the other New Testament writers, teach that an Old Testament Passage means, *that* is the meaning. And that is the *only* meaning, the *fullest* meaning, the *completed* meaning, and the *final* meaning of that Old Testament text.

Now let me tell you how serious this is. Any *other* interpretation of an Old Testament verse or Passage that *differs* from what the Apostles gave us in the New Testament is wrong. It is *false* and should be *rejected* by the believer. And that means that every single Old Testament scholar who may arrive at the correct *context* and *background* of a particular Old Testament verse, and yet does *not* come to the same *conclusion* as what the Apostles wrote in the New Testament, have *mis-interpreted* the Old Testament, and have led people astray. The Old Testament only means what the Apostles say that it means.

So, even though Paul’s quotations in **Ephesians 6** differ somewhat from what the literal Hebrew of **Isaiah 52** actually says, what Paul says in **Ephesians 6** is what **Isaiah** *meant* as God the Holy Spirit was “*moving him along*”. So, what that tells us is that anyone who reads the Old Testament without, at least, a “working knowledge” of the New Testament will get off base rather quickly and will be deceived. So, while it is true that we can get *some* information about the Gospel from the Old Testament, the *main thing* that we get from the Old Testament as it regards the Gospel is the many Prophecies that foretell that it is coming.

Now, there is a clever slogan that goes something like this, “*Preach the Gospel, and, if necessary, use words*”. And this slogan is used all the time, and, in some sense, I agree with it. I agree that the way we believers live our lives gives *credibility* to what we preach. Because, nobody likes a hypocrite. But we must know that the way we

live our lives is *never* a “substitute” for actually preaching and teaching the Gospel to sinners, with words.

This slogan has been made popular due to a form of Evangelism known as “Relationship Evangelism”, which says that by befriending people and having them over for lunch, and by being nice to them, we can “win them for Jesus”. But when you actually get into the Bible, you will find that the Gospel must be “Preached”.

Now that doesn't mean that the Gospel cannot be “taught”; it *can* and it *should be*. But special emphasis is always placed on the Gospel being “Preached. And so, Relationship Evangelism is simply another way that the modern church manifests its ongoing rebellion by seeking to do God's Business by some other way than the way God has prescribed in Scripture. And the results have been disastrous. There is now literal sea of people out there, who have been told they are saved, who are not. And now these lost people are seeking to “live the Christian life” without the benefit of being born again, and they are doomed to fail.

So, the Gospel must be preached. But anytime I talk about Preaching and Teaching, people want to know what the difference is. So, I define Preaching by using five other words:

1. Anointed
2. Authoritative
3. Expository
4. Heralding
5. Worship

... so, true, genuine, biblical “Preaching” is not merely “excited teaching”. It is “Anointed, Authoritative, Expository, Heralding, Worship”.

First, Preaching is “Anointed” in that, in every sense of the word, Preaching is an “Unction” from God the Holy Spirit. And that means that true Preaching is *supernatural* and *miraculous*. It is *part* of the “Means” that God has chosen to “save them that believe” (**1 Corinthians 1:21**). I have been with God this week. I have spent time with the Eternal and the Absolute God. The Hand of God is on me, and I am giving to you, to the best of my ability, what God has given to me. The



proof that my Preaching is anointed is in the transformed lives in this Church.

Now I realize that this Anointing is not enough. But, unlike many in the Reformed camp- I don't *discount* the Anointing of God. I think it matters whether you are listening to a hypocrite. I think it matters how I live my life. I think it matters whether the Spirit of the Lord is upon me. I think it matters whether God has called me to do what I am doing this morning. And with that Calling comes an Anointing. When Jesus was beginning His Ministry, He went to His Own hometown synagogue and He preached to His Own extended family. And the Lord stood up and said:

#### **Luke 4:18&19**

***THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.***

... so, Jesus didn't merely get up and tell the Truth. He said He was "Anointed to Preach." And so, should we be.

But while Preaching should be "Anointed", it must *also* be "Authoritative". And by Authoritative, I mean Preaching has the power and the ability to "bind the conscience" and to bring real, "Holy Spirit Conviction" to the listeners. So, while I should be blood-earnest and passionate and sincere as I preach, my sincerity and passion and earnestness are *not* enough. The preaching of the Gospel must be "Authoritative" if it is to have an eternal Effect on the listeners.

But I can't make myself to be Authoritative. My individual Calling and my Anointing and my Position as a Pastor, my own personal experiences with God, *in and of themselves*, do NOT make my preaching to be Authoritative. What I am preaching is Authoritative *only* if it accurately reflects what God the Holy Spirit has already revealed in the sacred Scriptures.

So, the "bottom line" is that if my preaching is not "Biblical", then it is NOT Authoritative, and you have no business listening to me, at all. I am merely speaking words into the air. But, if my preaching *does*

accurately reflect what God put into the Scriptures, then my preaching is the Voice of God. And to reject *that* is to reject God.

But I didn't "create" the Gospel. The Gospel has already been revealed and defined and written down and published. I have no authority to add anything to it or to take anything away from it. I must preach the already revealed and defined Gospel. And when I do, rightly and fully, my preaching is as Authoritative as if Jesus Himself was here speaking it.

Now part of Preaching being Authoritative is that when a person hears the Gospel that is preached, and believes and repents, those who preach are authorized by Jesus Christ Himself to do an amazing thing. We have the Authority to tell that person that all his sins have been forgiven and he has been made righteous by Jesus Christ! And that is utterly amazing!

Another aspect of real preaching being Authoritative is that Preaching is not silly or foolish. Preaching is not "sparkle-sparkle", "happy-happy", or frivolous. We preach about things that matter, *eternal* things like: where people will spend eternity, and how Sin destroys people, and God's Determination to damn all unrepentant people. So, Preaching is *not* always "uplifting".

Whether preaching is uplifting depends on your relationship with Jesus. If you are striving for Biblical Holiness on purpose, than much about preaching will be uplifting. But if you are lost, or if you are in blatant rebellion, if you seek to be confirmed in your sins, if you are like many of the disciples of Jesus' day and you are looking for an excuse to walk away and leave Jesus standing in the middle of the road, then true, biblical preaching will be your worst nightmare. It will *decimate* your pride and arrogance. It will *crush* your self-righteous rebellion. And you will either be brought to overwhelming conviction, or you will be infuriated and angry. But whether you reject or repent, you will not be able to *ignore* the Gospel.

But part of Preaching the Gospel being Authoritative is that we preach with no "hesitation", no "second-guessing". In the Bible, preaching was done *fearlessly*. And that fearlessness was *not* based on them being "brave" or "courageous". It was based on a rock-solid conviction that God was absolutely Sovereign, and that they were *invincible* and *could not* die unless it was God's Will. And so, if it was God's Will for them to be persecuted or imprisoned or tortured or killed,

then *that* is what God had chosen to bring Himself Glory and to help further the spread of the Gospel and to assure the future of the Church. And, to a man, they called their suffering for the sake of the Gospel a “privilege”. And this is why the Apostle Paul could say:

### **Romans 1:16**

**For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.**

Preaching is to be carried out without *any* consideration of what that Preaching might do to us. Christians do *not* look at dangerous situations and say, “*What will happen to me if I preach the Gospel there?*” Instead we say, “*What will happen to them if I don’t preach the Gospel there?*”

But real Preaching is also “Expositional”. And “Expositional” has to do with “explaining”. It has to do with bringing an understanding of what the Bible says to the mind, so that the mind can inform the heart. So, preaching *expositionally* means that Preaching is *not* a “pep-rally”. Preaching is *not* about helping you to “psyche yourself up” so you can feel energized or important. Preaching is *not* about raising your own self-esteem or using psychology to *manipulate* you into believing that you can do everything that your heart can imagine.

God’s Word is true. And God’s Word is life. So, preaching *expositionally* is about helping you to believe that God isn’t a liar, and that what He said is true, and that you can trust what God said.

But genuine, biblical Preaching is also a “Heralding”. The Preacher is like the old “town-crier” who walked through the streets of the city saying, “*Hear ye, hear ye, I have an announcement from the King! He is offering you an eternal Pardon for all your transgressions! But this Pardon is “unconditional surrender”! You give up your rebellion and you come to hate your ways and you come to despise your sin and you turn away from all wickedness, and the King will be merciful. But, if you rebel, you will die in your sins!*”

And that means that Preaching is *not* “talking”. Preaching is *not* “sharing”. Preaching is *not* “conversation”. Preaching is *not* a “discussion about religious things”. Preaching is *Prophesying*. It is unimportant clay pots trembling before men and proclaiming, “*Thus says God!*” Preaching is an anointed, authoritative, expositional

"Announcement". It is a loud, unmistakable "Proclamation". It is a thundering "trumpet-blast". It is the Mountain shaking and quaking while the Law is being given. It is the bush burning, yet not consumed. So, Preaching is a "spiritual experience" that changes people's eternal destination.

And, finally, Preaching is "Worship". I don't get up here and talk *after* we worship. Preaching *is* Worship. And that means, that at the heart of true Preaching is that the Preacher is never *indifferent* to what he is saying. So, Preaching is *not* the same as giving a dissertation about the latest technique of plastic surgery. And Preaching is *not* a class on "how" to do important things. So, Preaching is *not* about learning "how" to raise better children, or "how" to make more money, or "how" to have a better marriage, or "how" to build a better chicken coop. Preaching is guilty sinners *exulting* in the greatness of God!

And that means that the main goal of Preaching is *not* merely understanding what the Bible says. Because the devil can do that. But the devil *cannot* worship God. So, Preaching is about "seeing" or "beholding" the indescribable Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ. And Preaching is about *loving* what you "see" and of being utterly *transformed* into what you "see". So, Preaching is *seeing* the Beauty of God and His Truth, and it is *responding* to the Value of God and His Truth through a transformed life.

So, Preaching, by definition, *cannot* be "second-hand". And Preaching can't be "second-hand", because Worship can't be "second-hand". I can't worship a God that I don't know myself. And I can't preach about things I have never personally experienced. How can I effectively herald a Message that demands that people repent if I have no idea what it means to actually turn away from my *own* sins? How can I effectively preach about trusting in Jesus if my *own* faith in a dead and risen Christ is not genuine? And how can I expect others to be captured by the magnificence of God's Glory if my own eyes have not beheld Him?

My Preaching must come from me, not someone else. Look, I admire many men who have come before me. But all the admiration in the world will not help me if I do not *individually* love and worship the God they preached about. So, *I* have to be born again. I have to study God's Word. *I* have to pray. *I* have to love Jesus. *I* have to dig deep into the biblical languages. And *I* have to agonize over my own sins and

struggle to develop my own sermons. I can't simply copy what others have rightly proclaimed. That isn't preaching.

Inspired Words have to be *individually* proclaimed by *individual* fallen men who have *personally* experienced what they are talking about. And that means that Preaching is the heralding of the Beauty that the preacher has *personally* seen of God in the Scriptures. And it is the *recognition* of the Beauty that the preacher has *personally* experienced.

We must understand that God is *not* calling Pastors to be "eloquent" or "clever" or "hip" or "cool". God has not called us to compete with one another to see how many people can be "wowed" by what we say. There are not new and creative ways to preach the Gospel. And technology and \$250,000 sound systems and smoke machines and colored lights are a poor substitute for genuine, Bible-saturated preaching from men who are broken and who are contrite and who tremble at God's Word.

God has called redeemed rebels to be faithful, fruitful, busy, and genuine in our own personal encounter with the one true and living God. And much of that encounter is personally coming into contact with very common nouns and pronouns and verbs and adverbs and adjectives that God has specially used to convey Divine Truth to a lost and dying world. And God wants Preaching to be carried out for the Glory of God, and for the sake of people that we genuinely love, so that lost people can be saved, and so that saved people can be made holy. So, the Gospel must be "Preached".

So, as we study God's Word, we will find that the Gospel must be "preached" in certain ways. For example:

### **The Gospel is to be preached to "all men" or "every creature".**

Those of us, who have actually studied the Bible, realize that the only people who will be saved are those who "repent" and "believe". Those who don't believe and those who don't see the need to forsake wickedness will die in their sins. Now the word "repent" has to do with *"turning away from one thing and turning toward something else, out of a change of mind"*. So, while "being sorry" or "feeling guilty" or having "godly sorrow" is *part* of Repentance, true genuine Repentance is more involved than simply *"experiencing"* Sorrow. We must actually turn

away from sin and turn toward Jesus Christ, or we really haven't repented. And this "turning", this "forsaking", involves God moving on us to cause us to literally "hate" our sin.

But notice that this "turning" is the *result* of having a "change of mind". And that "change of mind" comes from first "hearing", and then "understanding", and finally "believing" the biblical Gospel as it is being preached. So, without the Gospel being preached, the miracle of a wicked rebel having a change of mind will simply not occur. And without a change of mind, the turning from sin and a turning toward Jesus will not happen. And without that turning, there is no true Repentance, and without Repentance, there is no Salvation.

Now we realize that the only people who will actually see and understand and believe the Gospel and repent are those whom God has sovereignly and graciously *empowered* to do so. The Bible says that God has "set His Love" on *some* people from before the foundation of the world. And *those* are the people who will repent and be saved. So, we absolutely believe in "Sovereign Election", because the Bible teaches it.

But we have no idea who God has chosen. We have no idea who will eventually see and hear and repent and believe. That is not any of our business. God has not shared that information with anyone. And, therefore, we preach to *everybody*. We work with *everybody*. We hope and we pray for *everybody*. And simply because an individual has rejected our efforts does not mean he won't respond to somebody else. So, we are *not* in the business of rejecting *anybody*. My own way of understanding this is that if they walk through that front door, God expects me to work with them. And it really doesn't matter how sinful they are. Sovereign Election means that it doesn't matter how bad someone has been. Since Salvation has nothing to do with anybody *qualifying* for it, no one can say they have sinned too much or gone too far that God can't reach them. So, if my path crosses their path, on that day, God wants me to try to reach to them with the Gospel.

And so, in that sense, *all* believers are "Evangelists". Because, an Evangelist is merely someone who proclaims the "Evangel", or the Gospel. So, even though he had been "set in" as a Pastor, Paul told Timothy:

## **2 Timothy 4:5b**

**... be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill**

**your ministry.**

... so, the Apostolic Command to “**do the work of an Evangelist**” had nothing to do with some *special* Office or some *special* Calling. It was merely a Command for Timothy to preach and teach the “Evangel”, or the “Good News”, the Gospel.

Now, all through the history of the Church, people have been trying to come up with names and titles that would *distinguish* between real, sure-nuff Christians and a false converts, between a “true Church” and a “deceived religious organization”. And many centuries ago, that title was “catholic”. And so, a *real* Christian, a *genuine* believer, was said to be “catholic” in the sense that he was a part of the one, *universal* Church that Jesus had set up.

But that title soon lost its significance as many people were trying harder to fit in with being “catholic” than they were with trying to be biblical Christians. So, in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, during the “Arian Controversy”, a humble believer named “Athanasius” was used by God to help develop what became known as “Orthodoxy”, which has to do with “right *believing*”. So, the effort to be biblical was a search for “Orthodoxy”. And several Creeds were developed during that time that helped to define what “Orthodoxy” looked like. And new believers (who were basically illiterate) were commanded to *memorize* the various Creeds before they could enter into fellowship with the Church through Baptism, which was the “Public Profession of Faith”.

So, for many years, *believing* rightly (biblically) had to do with “Orthodoxy”, while *doing* or *behaving* rightly (obedience to the Bible) had to do with “Orthopraxy”. And that worked for a while, until about the 12<sup>th</sup> Century when a group broke off saying *they* were the ones who were “Orthodox”, while everybody else wasn’t.

And this went on and on, with many groups laying claim to having the Truth and having to come up with more names or titles to distinguish them from the others. And around the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century, God raised up a very devout man, named Nicolas Von Zinzendorf, who was the leader of a group known as “the Moravians”. And, on a particular Saturday afternoon, they gathered to pray and God came down and moved among them in a very powerful and unusual way. And that prayer meeting changed the world. And from that single encounter

with God, Prayer began and went on 24 hours every day and seven days every week, for over 100 years!

And from that Prayer, powerful, biblical Preaching, like no one had ever heard before, began to happen. And from that preaching, many lives were radically transformed, so much so, that many of those in attendance actually sold themselves into slavery so they could preach the Gospel to both the slaves and the slave owners!

And, sadly, even though this is all now ancient history, one of the vestiges of this amazing Awakening was a term that began to be used to distinguish those who believed that it was imperative that the Biblical Gospel was preached to every creature from those who didn't. And that term was "Evangelical". So, today, an "Evangelical" is part of those who place the preaching of the biblical Gospel to as many people as possible, every day, using every means at their disposal at the forefront.

But, sadly, like all the many terms that have come before us, that were attempts to describe genuine, Bible-believing, sin-hating, Spirit-filled Christians, like "Fundamental" and "Disciple" and "Covenant", "Evangelical" has been watered down to be really nothing more than a political "voting block" that Republican politicians can manipulate to their advantage.

But the reality is that every genuine believer is committed to fulfilling the so-called "Great Commission" that we find in **Matthew**, that says:

#### **Matthew 28:18-20**

**All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.**

... and the Apostle Peter commissioned John Mark to write the Gospel Record that bears his name. And, in that Record, we find Jesus saying:

#### **Mark 16:15&16**

**Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.**



Now Jesus spoke this to believers, to His Church. So, this is what the Church should be about. And, at a minimum, we see that the "Gospel" that we are to preach has several components:

- ✓ The Gospel is to be "Preached".
- ✓ The Gospel is to be Preached to "all Creation" (Go/into all nations).
- ✓ The Gospel must be "believed" (hear/understand) in order to be saved.
- ✓ Part of "preaching/believing the Gospel" is for people to become a "disciple" (follower of Jesus) (Obedience/Sanctification).
- ✓ Part of "preaching/believing the Gospel" is for those who have repented to be baptized in water.
- ✓ Part of "preaching/believing the Gospel" is to hold professing believers to observe (obey/submit) to all that Jesus commanded.

... and the miraculous Results that we will see when we obey this Divine Command are:

**He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.**

...and the Authority by which we go and preach and baptize and disciple and hold accountable is:

**All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth**

... and the glorious Promise that we take Comfort in, *especially* when we are persecuted and maligned by being obedient, is:

**I am with you always, even to the end of the age**

Dear friends, Jesus has issued a Command that we, as believers, are to take seriously. We are to, first, be radically transformed by this earthshaking Gospel *ourselves*. And then, we are to *unashamedly* herald this glorious Gospel to as many people as we can, every day, using everything at our disposal. And, we are to do this to the Glory of God, and for the Good of His people, so that when Jesus comes back, He will find Faith on the earth!

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.