

"Wherein Do We DIFFER?"

Acts 24:14

Most people who deny the reality there is **ONLY ONE** true Gospel, **i.e. God's Gospel**, seem to be of the opinion that those who believe in "sovereign grace" or "free grace" are making a "mountain out of a mole hill." They seem to think there's **NO REAL DIFFERENCE** between what they believe and teach, and what I believe and preach. **They express it something like this:** *"We're all trying to get to heaven, and since everybody interprets Scriptures differently, God doesn't really care that much about all the **SMALL** differences in doctrine."* **Maybe you're of that opinion this morning.** Maybe you're sitting there thinking: **WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?** If that's your opinion, I would ask you to carefully consider Paul's words to those at Corinth concerning the Gospel - *"Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to **ONE HUSBAND**, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well **BEAR WITH** [him]."* Turn with me over to **Acts 24**. Here we see the Apostle Paul as he stood before Felix and preached the Gospel to him. Remember, **WHY** Paul been imprisoned, and **WHO** was responsible for his being before Felix. He was there because religious men, moral men, sincere men, **HATED WHAT HE PREACHED, AND THEREFORE THEY HATED HIM AS WELL**. Look at **Vss.10-14**. **WHO** was calling what Paul preached "**heresy**"? **WHO** hated and despised what Paul preached? It wasn't those who were openly immoral and unreligious, was it? **NO**, it was the Pharisees, the Sadducees, those who supposedly were religious teachers and leaders. Yet here stands God's true servant, and without apology or any fear he declares the true Gospel to Felix. What did the preaching of God's Gospel do to this great and powerful governor - **Vs.25**. Here is a Roman governor, with a chained prisoner before him, and he "**trembled**". That's because the true Gospel is the "**power of God**." Paul didn't argue with him, or debate with him, he simply declared the Gospel to him. That's exactly what God has called all His redeemed to do - *"Preach the word (**LOGOS**); be instant in season, out of season; reprove (**expose by bringing to light**), rebuke (**to show honor to**), exhort (**parakaleo - to call to one's side**) with all longsuffering **and doctrine**."* (II Tim.4:2) I don't see anything in this verse written by Paul to this young preacher Timothy telling him to argue, debate, or apologize to anyone for the Gospel he believed, the Gospel by which he was saved.

This morning I want to strive to show you **THE DIFFERENCE** between what I believe, love, and have dogmatically preached since the Lord was pleased to reveal it to me over 36 years ago, and what this religious world believes, loves, and preaches - **and THERE IS A DIFFERENCE**. It's **not just a little difference** in doctrine, or even just a little difference in interpretation, but the difference between eternal life and eternal death - *"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."* (Jn.17:1-3) This is serious business, and we can't afford to be wrong when it comes to eternal life.

First of all, we differ with this religious world on **WHAT HAPPENED IN ETERNITY**. What do the Scriptures tell us? They tell us that before the foundation of the world, before Adam or man was seen or considered as fallen, **God chose a people TO salvation**. **ELECTION** is what happened in eternity past – *“Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly [places] in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”*(Eph.1:3-6) Most religious church members don't have a clue about God's election of grace, and many of them don't even know it is in the Bible. But those who have spent some time reading and studying the Scriptures, **having seen** this word **“election”** put their own depraved human spin on interpreting it. They think election is God looking down through time, seeing what men or women do, and then because of what He saw, **HE CHOSE THOSE WHO BELIEVED to salvation**. That **IS NOT** what the Scriptures teach concerning election. **Matter of fact**, that is **absolute heresy** because it makes salvation a reaction by God to something **HE LEARNED** about some conditions mankind has fulfilled. The very words used by the Apostle, **“election”**, or **“elect”** or **“chosen”**, deny and destroy these false assumption. The words translated election, elect, or chosen are the same Greek word, **electos**, which means ‘called out ones, or to pick out’. Let me read you a few verses – *“But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*(II Thess.2:13,14); *“Who hath saved us, and called [us] with an holy calling, not according to our works, **but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began**, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”*(II Tim.1:9,10); *“And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: **and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.**”*(Acts 13:48) What I'm saying is that God sovereignly chose a people according to **“His good pleasure”** (Rom.9), and His choice was in no way conditioned on **ANYTHING SEEN IN or DONE BY** the sinner.

Secondly, we differ with them on **WHAT HAPPENED IN THE GARDEN**. I'm pretty certain you know what garden I'm talking about - **the garden of Eden**. Do you know what happened in that Garden? Did Adam just wound himself and his posterity spiritually when he rebelled against God, taking sides with Satan, or did he utterly destroy himself and all those he represented spiritually? I'm telling you, if you're wrong on the **FALL, YOU'RE WRONG ON IT ALL!** Here's the long and the short of it. When Adam fell in the garden, he along with **ALL MANKIND**, including God's election of grace, they all became **“dead in trespasses and sin”** – *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”*(Rom.5:12) This religious world thinks there is a spark of life in everybody and all we have to do is fan it into a flame - **THAT'S JUST NOT TRUE!** Men are dead spiritually, graveyard dead. As truly dead spiritually as Lazarus was dead physically in that tomb when Christ called him out – *“And you [hath he quickened], **who were dead in trespasses and sins**; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the*

flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)"(Eph.2:1-5) Every person born of woman "goes forth from the womb speaking lies". Hear God's word - **Rom.3:10-18**.

Thirdly, we differ with them on **WHAT HAPPENED ON THE CROSS**. This religious world thinks that Christ's coming, living, dying, and being raised again put all men in a savable condition! All of us think this by nature before regeneration and conversion. They think that God loves everybody, that Christ died for everybody, and if you'll fulfill whatever conditions they think you must fulfill: **for example - Faith - Repentance - Obedience**, then God is obligated to save you. That's not salvation by **GRACE** - That's salvation by **WORKS**. **Let me ask you three questions:**
1) Who was on the Cross? "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."(I Tim.3:16) That person on the cross, was none other than God Himself – "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that [spirit] of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." (I Jn.4:1-3) **TO DENY THIS IS TO BE LOST.** **2) WHY WAS HE ON THAT CROSS?** So that God could be both Just and Justifier of the ungodly – "The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make [it] honourable."(Isa.42:21); "I, [even] I, [am] he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."(Isa.43:25); "Tell ye, and bring [them] near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? [who] hath told it from that time? [have] not I the LORD? and [there is] no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; [there is] none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I [am] God, and [there is] none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth [in] righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall [one] say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: [even] to him shall [men] come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."(Isa.45:21-25) Look over at **II Cor.5:18-21**. **3) WAS CHRIST THE "PROPITIATION for His people's sins?** Did Christ actually redeem His people from their sins, or did He merely make redemption possible? "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and **SENT HIS SON** [to be] **THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS**."(I Jn.4:10) These are Scriptural questions that demand an answer. **If the Christ you claim to be your Saviour didn't actually REDEEM you, didn't actually become a RANSOM for you; didn't actually BRING you to God through His perfect work and vicarious death, IT IS ANOTHER JESUS, and you are still "dead in trespasses and sin."**

Fourthly, we differ with this world concerning: **WHAT HAPPENS IN REGENERATION OR THE NEW BIRTH?** Turn over to **Jn.3**. The very idea conveyed by Christ to Nicodemus concerning being "**born again**" ought to forever settle this idea in our minds. How did Nicodemus respond to Christ's word? Just like every unregenerated, "**dead in trespasses and sin**" sinner will respond - "**HOW CAN THESE THINGS BE?**" We've already seen, **ALL MEN**, all of them, are **DEAD**, graveyard dead, with no spark of life in them whatsoever. In this truth of the new birth,

the third Glorious Person of the Godhead performs a work. The Father's work **was to choose sinners and predestinate** them to eternal life. The Son's work was **to actually redeem and justify sinners by His obedience and death** as the Surety and representative of all those God the Father gave Him in the everlasting covenant of grace. Now we come to the Spirit's work - **to regenerate or make alive those the Father chose, and that the Son redeemed - Jn.3:6-8. Listen to Peter's words** – *‘Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, [see that ye] love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh [is] as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.’*(I Pet.1:22-25) Most religious people think that the new birth is something that occurs **AFTER** a person has accepted Jesus as their personal Lord and Saviour. **One of the most famous evangelists in my generation wrote a book about it, telling everybody it is so.** But the Word of God tells us the Spirit comes to each elect and redeemed sinner **where they are**, **“dead in trespasses and sin”**, and by His power through the preaching of God's Gospel, makes the spiritually dead to **LIVE**. **Let me show you an excellent example of this in Jn.4.** Look at **vss.21-30**. Regeneration is by the will of God, not the will of man. I hope I am making myself as Scripturally clear as I can - **DO YOU SEE THE DIFFERENCE** between what I'm saying and what everybody else is saying? It's just not the matter of a little different doctrine. These are critical and essential doctrinal truths that are embraced, loved, and rejoiced in by God's redeemed - **“And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”** (II Thess.2:10)

Finally, we differ with them concerning this all important truth: **WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?** Turn over to **Matt.7:21-23**. Again, this religious world thinks a "christian" is a person who is different now than they were before. They believe they are people who are moral, sincere, dedicated, and faithful to their **RELIGION**. Remember what Christ said in **Matt.7**. A true Christian is infinitely more than a person who has reformed themselves spiritually. Everything today in religion is called "christian". We have christian bands, christian schools, christian companies, christian everything. My question is, who can really call themselves a Christian? **“And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.”** (Acts 11:26) **FIRST**, a true Christian is a **BELIEVER**, just like Abraham - **Rom.4:1-8**. **SECONDLY**, a Christian is a **"son of God"** - **Jn.1:12,13; I Jn.3:1-3**. **THIRDLY**, a Christian is an object of God's love - **Jn.3:16**. And **finally**, a Christian is a bondslave of Christ - **Rom.6:17,18; 7:4**. Let me try to make this clear to your this morning and we'll close. Look over **Exo.21:1-6**.

These are the doctrines that separate and distinguish us and what we believe from this religious world. If a person doesn't abide in these doctrines, **THEY ARE NOT OUR BRETHREN OR OUR FRIENDS**, but those who oppose the true and living God and the Gospel that declares Him as He is - **II Jn.9-11**.