

The Gospel of Jesus Christ

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It is good on a day like today to believe in the Holy Spirit and I believe in the Holy Spirit as I open God's word to you here this morning, not only in his ability to give understanding but in his ability to produce eternal fruit from the proclamation of his word. I'm very glad that you're with us here today.

We've been studying in the book of Philippians and this is a little bit of a tangent this morning from Philippians but not completely. Back at the end of this 16th century, there was a godly pastor in Anwoth, Scotland, named John Welsh. John Welsh was the son-in-law of the great John Knox and it is said of John Welsh that he often left his bed in the middle of the night, wrapped himself in a warm blanket and interceded for the people of his parish. When his wife would beg him to go back to sleep, he would say to her, "I have the souls of 3,000 to answer for and I know not how it is with many of them." So he would continue praying on through the night for those souls that were under his charge in the geographic parish that was assigned to him by the Church of Scotland. John Welsh was not willing to assume that all was well with everyone that was under his care and in that attitude, he was indeed a most biblical pastor.

Hebrews 3:12 and 13 say, "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'Today,' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." What was true 400 hundred years ago when John Welsh was pastoring in Scotland, what was true 2,000 years ago when the writer of Hebrews gave warning to his readers to take heed to the condition of their hearts, is the same spiritual reality that we find ourselves in as we come together here this morning. God's word would encourage us, it would warn us, it would caution us, it would admonish us to take heed to the true condition of our heart because the sad reality of men is this, it is entirely possible, indeed it is quite common to be acquainted with the Gospel of Jesus Christ to one degree or another, but to have a heart that has never truly been changed; to have a heart that is still in the bonds of sin; to have a heart that was still under judgment. The sad reality, my friends gathered together here in this room and over the live stream, the sad reality is that you are subject to self-deception. You're subject to thinking that things are well with your soul when they really are not. There is a great tendency to be satisfied with kind of a superficial familiarity with the Gospel of Christ, never having really understood its deep and profound principles, and to be satisfied with an external display of religion before men without having come truly in humility before Christ in a vertical

way that has submitted to Christ, that has called to him for mercy and salvation from the deep and profound problem that you have with sin. And I in a lesser way, a lesser degree of devotion can certainly identify with the spirit of my fellow pastor, John Welsh, from 400 years ago. There is something encouraging about reading biographies of pastors from bygone ages and see that the things that were on their hearts are the same things that are on your heart in ministry later. It gives you a sense of encouragement and it also gives you a sense of direction about what you feel like you need to emphasize at particular times in the life of a church, and I want to emphasize something to you today, I want to emphasize to you the most basic and yet the most important thing that we could emphasize, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Sometimes it's easy to use words and assume that you know what they mean. That's why we took our time over the past couple of weeks to talk about what it means to be a slave of Christ Jesus, to be a saint in Christ Jesus. We take our time because we just don't want to, we don't want to take anything for granted. We don't want to make assumptions. Well, to be a slave of Christ, to be a saint in Christ, are terms that are critical but they are based on a foundational reality of what the Gospel of Jesus Christ is. What is the Gospel and what does it mean? If someone were to ask you what is the Gospel, would you know how to answer? Would you have something to say to them in response? Would you have to stammer for things that are not clear in your own mind if someone came to you and said, "I know that I need eternal life. Can you please tell me what is the Gospel." Well, we don't want to be in that position before others in a setting of evangelism, but here today we don't want to be in that position before God as we're gathered together as a local church. The reality that motivates a man to get up in the middle of the night and pray for people because he does not know the true condition of their hearts is something that is informing the things that we are going to see from God's word here today.

It's not my desire at all to bring doubt to people who are genuine Christians, and I trust that the Spirit of God will give his aid and bring affirmation and encouragement to those who are truly in Christ, but I will confess to a glad willingness and a glad eagerness, even, if somehow the Spirit of God would take what is said today and, as it were, grab those people who are slumbering in self-deception and shake them to wake them up and to bring them to a saving reality of what the Gospel of Christ is because, you see, some I know here have started well but it seems like maybe you're losing interest in the things of Christ. How am I to know as a pastor that it's well with you when you're losing interest in the things of the Gospel? How am I supposed to know that? Some of you are legitimately young people that have grown up in Christian homes or under the influence of the Gospel and you're kind of a little bit in a transition period spiritually. Are you living off of faith that belongs only to your parents or have you personally repented of sin and put your faith in Christ? Have you personally been born again?

There is no way for me to know that and so it makes it important for me to emphasize the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For others of you, you're visiting, we are so glad that you're with us. Welcome. We would love to have you back. We trust your time with us will minister to your hearts today. Others coming along just starting to find their way in Truth Community Church, you're new here, haven't had the opportunity to sit down and get to

know you. Our relationship is too brief for me to know how it really is with your soul. You see, there is just a time where you just stop and say we need to plant on the Gospel for the sake of everybody because the time will come soon enough when our earthly breath no longer fills our lungs and we are suddenly finding ourselves in the presence of Christ, and as I've said to you many times in the past, I'll say to you again, I want that day to go well for you but some of you just seem so indifferent to the Gospel that I just worry about you and I pray for you and I say, "Lord, I don't know what to think about this person. I don't know what to think about them, Lord, only You know." But I do know this, that the only thing that will help you is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The only thing that will awaken your slumbering soul is the Gospel of Jesus Christ and so today I want to give you the Gospel of Jesus Christ in five brief points to give you an orientation and to just trust by the work of the Spirit of God that this might have an impact on those who are slumbering in darkness that God might awaken your darkened soul and shed abroad the light of Christ that you so desperately need. So that's what we want to talk about here this morning.

The word "Gospel" comes from the Greek word "euangelion" which in the New Testament means this, it means God's good news to man. The Gospel is a declaration of good news from God to man. That is the overarching meaning of the word and so to preach the Gospel is to preach good news to lost men, to men who are in danger of judgment, to men who are enslaved to sin, the Gospel comes and says there is a means of deliverance for you; to men, to women, to boys and girls, the Gospel comes and declares good news to their soul.

Let's look at a classic text for the meaning of the Gospel in 1 Corinthians 15. We'll just use this by way of introduction, 1 Corinthians 15 in the first four verses. The Gospel is good news. It's not news that you must try harder. It's not that you must find the rules and obey the rules. It is something different than that. 1 Corinthians 15, beginning in verse 1 says, "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel," ah, there is our word, "I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved." So this Gospel is good news by which men may be saved, by which they might be delivered from sin, by which they may stand spiritually. It was the Gospel that Paul had in mind as he was writing these verses. He says, "by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain." Then he gives content to the term in verse 3, he says, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." The Gospel is a declaration of what happened in history in the life and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ according to the Gospel, did a work for sinners. He did something to help them. He did something to aid those who were helpless and unable to save themselves.

The Gospel tells us that Jesus Christ was crucified, buried and raised on the third day. There are historical facts to the Gospel and look at verse 3 with me there in 1 Corinthians 15:3, as it explains the meaning of those historical facts. Three words in your English text should leap off of the page to you when it says that Paul delivered to you "as of first

importance." This was the priority. Elsewhere he said, "I desire to do nothing among you but to preach Christ and Him crucified." First importance, first priority of any man of God, of any true Church of God, is to proclaim these things again and again and again and again and again and again and again and again because we are so spiritually dull, so slow to learn, so dead and lethargic that we say these things again and again. 1 Corinthians 15:3, notice what it says, "Christ died for our sins." There was a theological reason, there was a spiritual reason that Christ died and he died for our sins. His crucifixion, his burial and his resurrection was for the sins of men and in the meaning of that death, burial and resurrection is the only hope that you have of avoiding eternal judgment.

How are those historical facts from 2,000 years ago good news today? In simple terms, I want to explain that to you here today and if you're a Christian, this should bring you great joy to be refreshed on these matters. It should also help you to refresh your understanding so that you can share it more clearly with others in evangelism, but today I'm just particularly burdened by those who perhaps need to examine their hearts to see if they have truly been born-again at all. It's not because I'm upset with anyone, it's because I'm concerned for you. It's because I don't know how it really is with you and all I can do in my position is lay open the word of God in the clearest way I know how and let the Spirit of God minister to that to your heart and that the Spirit of God would then apply it to your heart and mind and give you understanding and ultimately lead you to faith in Christ, true saving faith in Christ that would lift you out of your realm of indifference on the margins of spiritual life and bring you into the heart of what is real, what is true, to a vibrant, saving, living faith that animates everything that you do and the way that you live. That's the only kind of real faith that there is. The real faith, the true faith, the one who has truly been born of the Spirit is a man whose life overflows with these things, it's a woman whose life overflows with these things in one way or another.

So we answer this question today: why is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ good news for us here today? Let me start with point 1, point 1: why is the Gospel good news? Well, we start here, where you should start your thinking about everything, we start in a God-centered way, we start with point 1: the great holiness of God. The great holiness of God. You must start here in order to understand the Gospel. You see, my friends, the Bible tells us that the God of the Bible is the one true Creator of heaven and earth, and that that one and the same God is also the giver of life to men. The God of the Bible is the one who has given life to every one of you. You live on earth today because God appointed that, God gave you life, God formed you as Psalm 139 says, formed you even in your mother's womb, and he has given life to you because he is the giver of life. Acts 17:28 says, "in Him we live and move and have our being." You have your being, you have your existence as a gift, as a product of the work of God. No man exists apart from the God of the Bible.

Now, who is this God? What is this God like who has given us life? Well, it's good but it's also scary. There's a little element of fright that comes in. Scripture says the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. You see, the Bible tells us that this God is holy. He is morally perfect. He is perfectly good. He is separate from sinners and exalted above the

heavens. Isaiah 6 declares that, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts and the whole earth is full of His glory." This God is great. He is transcendent. He is majestic, he is holy and he dwells in absolute perfection.

Now, why does the great holiness of God matter to you? You seem to be getting along in life just fine without him, you might say, and even if you wouldn't say that with your lips, you are more likely to think it in your heart, "Who cares that God is holy, holy, holy? Get to something that's relevant, preacher." Well, I've got news for you, the holiness of God is the most relevant thing in your existence. Why does the holiness of God matter to men? What does the holiness of God have to do with you? It's this, just trying to make this as simple and plain as I know how to do: the God who is the giver of your life is the God who is going to hold you accountable for how you lived your life in the end.

Look at the book of Acts 17 with me. I alluded to it earlier. I want you to turn to Act 17 and see this text with your own eyes in your own Bible. If perhaps you don't have a Bible, there's a black Bible in the seat in front of you in the little rack there underneath. We would love for you to just take that Bible as our gift to you and turn to Acts 17, beginning in verse 30. Acts 17, beginning in verse 30, the Bible says this, "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead," Acts 17:30 and 31. Beloved, notice the universal language with which the apostle spoke there. He said God is declaring to all men everywhere, to all the world. He has given proof to all men about the reality of what he has said and what he has appointed by raising Christ from the dead.

This universal warning goes out to everyone which means, beloved, let's keep it simple here, you're each a part of everyone, right? If it goes out to everyone, then it goes out to you individually. Here in Acts 17:30 and 31, there is a sense in which you could stick your own name into what is spoken. Let's say your name is Don like mine is, you know, God is now declaring to Don that he ought to repent because he has fixed a day in which he'll judge the world in righteousness having furnished to Don by raising him from the dead. All men everywhere is simply a way of saying that this applies to everyone. You can insert your own name there and realize and recognize with great force and power upon your heart that God is graciously giving you advance notice of the fact that there is a day of judgment coming where the one who has given you life will hold you accountable for the way that you have lived it. That's pretty sobering. That's really serious. I want to tell you, that matters a whole lot more than presidential politics, it matters a whole lot more than your economic condition, it matters a whole lot more than anything you're doing today. Here we're talking about the ultimate issue that matters to every man, woman and child. God is holy. God will judge us. Judgment is coming. My friend, you will stand before a holy God one day soon and give an account for your life. This matters more than any personal sorrows or difficulties you might be having in your family even, as important as those heart matters are. Until you have come to realize the transcendent importance of the judgment and holiness of God, you haven't begun to

understand why you're on earth. You are moving toward a time of judgment and that day will come quicker than you think.

Now with all of that and for all of that, someone might still say in a slumbering way and perhaps a slightly challenging or mocking way, or in a prideful way, pride is certainly a problem, someone might say in response to the great holiness of God, "So what? What do I have to fear?" Or, "This has nothing to do with me today. I'll let tomorrow take care of itself." Well, to the extent that you want to step onto that black ice with your slick leather shoes, let me assure you that that kind of mindset is guaranteed to make you slip and fall with a great fall. Don't think that way, my friends. Don't think that way because God is not mocked and he does not speak without purpose. He speaks these things to all men everywhere in order to warn them that they might seek after the well-being of their own soul.

Why is the great holiness of God a problem for friendly folks like you? Point 2: the great sinfulness of man. The great sinfulness of man. In the Gospel, Scripture declares the great holiness of God and then alongside it brings to bear the great sinfulness of man. You see, this moral perfection of God creates a barrier to you and to me. This great holy God who has declared he will judge all the world one day, this great holy God will not receive guilty sinners like you into his presence. 1 John 1:5 says "that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all." Perfect moral purity cannot receive and cannot accept into its presence unforgiven guilt and the unaccounted sin of which we are all guilty. No, God requires perfection to enter into his presence. Jesus said in Matthew 5:48, "you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." God is greatly holy, this is what he requires to be in his presence, and it is precisely here that you have reason to fear because you do not measure up to God's required standard of perfection.

Turn to the book of Isaiah in your Old Testament, Isaiah 53. Isaiah 53 in the first half of verse 6, Isaiah 53:6, God having given a universal warning that a day of judgment is coming to all men, gives a universal word of condemnation to all of us. Verse 6, "All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way." The New Testament echoes that kind of thinking when it says in Romans 3, just listen as I read to you, "There is none righteous, not even one. There is none who understands. There is none who seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have become useless. There is none who does good, there is not even one for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Beloved, beloved, let's just be real and honest with what Scripture is saying here and that it applies to each one of us. It says all men are going to face an appointed day of judgment, and it goes on to say in negative universal language that none have done good, that all have turned aside, that none are fit for the presence of God, indeed none even actively seek him on their own. Oh, oh, you see, the Gospel is painful. The Gospel makes us uncomfortable. The Gospel promotes fear into the hearts of those who understand because it brings us face-to-face with the reality that we are not prepared for judgment before a holy God and that guilt of unrighteousness, my friends, carries a death sentence. Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death." Death. Death. The word comes in the room kind of like a black cloud, it just settles down upon us, doesn't it? And you see, in biblical language, and biblical theology, when the Bible talks about death it's

not simply talking about the physical cessation of life, you die and then someone puts you in a casket and you're lowered into the ground. Death means more than that. Death includes the concept of spiritual alienation from this holy God. There is hostility. Spiritual death has the idea of spiritual hostility, of alienation that God is an enemy to the unsaved man. Can you imagine, can you imagine having a sovereign, holy, majestic, all-powerful, all-knowing, ever-present God arrayed against you as your enemy? That's the way Scripture describes the position of an unsaved man. We were enemies, it says.

If you would, turn in your New Testament to the little New Testament book of 2 Thessalonians. Go past Romans, past Galatians and Ephesians and you'll find 1 Thessalonians and then 2 Thessalonians. We're considering at this moment the great sinfulness of man and now we're seeing the consequences of it, the consequences of this great spiritual alienation from God, the consequences of this spiritual death. What is God going to do in the day of judgment? Well, in verse 8 it says that he will be "dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." To reject the Gospel is to position yourself for eternal punishment at the hands of an offended God.

Beloved, what I want you to see here is this: is that your sin against an infinite God of infinite holiness, your sin against a God like that, an infinite God, requires infinite punishment. Infinite punishment. All men, women, boys and girls that have been born of women except the Lord Jesus, are born into the world in a sinful state and as a result of that they face eternal condemnation from God. This is the worst possible news that anyone could hear. This is the future of those who reject the Gospel. The sinfulness of man, your sinfulness, beloved, is great and it's an offense against a holy God, and that is not something that he will lightly brush away. You must, you must, you must take this earnestly, you must take this seriously because dealing with these matters no matter how unpleasant they may seem at the start, dealing with these matters are the greatest urgency that you face in life. You exist in order to deal with this very issue and to neglect it, to reject it, to brush it off as if it were only so much dandruff on a sports jacket, oh, I tremble at the thought. I tremble at the thought.

So the great holiness of God and the great sinfulness of man leaves us in a dilemma. That allows us to turn the corner to the good news of the Gospel, point 3, the good news of the Gospel which is: the great work of Jesus Christ. The great work of Jesus Christ. Now let me just say it one more time, a holy God holds the destiny of your sinful soul in his holy hands. He said, "Judgment. I've appointed a day for judgment. You've got a little window of time here to deal with it." Scripture says all men are ruined before him. They have no means of paying the guilt and the debt of their guilt. They cannot escape hell on their own. How could they? They're not even seeking this God. No one seeks for God, it said. How miserably lost men are. How miserably lost you are if you are not in Christ today. This is a miserable condition to be in. That is bad news, beloved. These truths of which I have been speaking, God's great holiness and the great sinfulness of man, extinguishes any hope and purpose in life. What possible benefit or good could your life be if when it's all said and done whether it's 30 years or 80 years, whether you build a fortune or you

live in poverty, what difference does it make if at the end of it you're before a holy God in your sin-stained soul and alone and you're facing him in a position of alienation? This is miserably bad. This is miserably bad but, beloved, I told you that the Gospel is good news, the Gospel is good news, and if there is good news, it must be good news that comes from God somehow, comes down from God to us because there is no good in us that can lift us up to God from earth to heaven. Good news must come from heaven to earth and that is what the Gospel tells us. Our Lord Jesus said in Luke 19:10, he said, "the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which is lost." Oh, oh, do you mean to tell me that in my miserable condition there is someone that has mercy, there is someone that has the power to deliver, there is someone that has the ability and the willingness to save? Tell me about him. Let me hear about him because that's the only possible thing that could matter to me in life is that someone like that would find me in my lost miserable condition before I die and face judgment at the hands of only God who is none too pleased with me.

You see, beloved, the Gospel tells us that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God came from heaven to earth and he came with an intention, he came with a purpose, he came with a goal. Mindful of the sinful condition of lost men, he came with a goal to save them, to help them, to deliver them from the miserable chains of sin and Satan that kept them in bondage until the day of judgment. Somehow in unspeakable, immeasurable, infinite grace, the eternal Son of God became man in order to identify with men, those men meaning those who are children of Adam, the whole human race. The Son of God, bless his great and holy majestic name, the Son of God had concern for eternal souls like yours. Jesus Christ dwelling in glory, Jesus Christ according to an eternal covenant of redemption established before the beginning of time, accepted responsibility to come to earth and to pave the way for forgiveness and redemption and reconciliation for sinners like you. That's great news. That's the best news and unlike you, and unlike me, Scripture tells us that he lived a perfect life of righteousness. He said in John 8:29, "I always do the things that are pleasing to My Father." He always pleased the Father, unlike us. Christ is distinct. He is someone separate. He's someone different. His nature as God in human flesh is different. His attitude and his obedience to the Father is something completely different from anything that you and I have ever known or done and the marvel of marvels, the glory is that this holy God of whom I have spoken, when he looks on Jesus Christ he accepts that righteousness of Christ. It is sufficient to please the Father. He said in Matthew 17:5 at the Transfiguration, speaking after Peter had foolishly spoken, he covered the scene with a cloud, removed the cloud and Christ alone was left and in that moment he said, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased." You see, beloved, stay with me here: God is not pleased with you and me but he's pleased with his Son. He's pleased with Christ. The righteousness of Christ satisfies everything that he demands. That's why he can say, "I am pleased with Him."

So in Christ there was one man who lived a perfect life on this earth that was pleasing to his Father and Scripture says that this one man was living that life with a mission of redemption on his mind. He came to seek and to save that which was lost, and at the conclusion of his appointed earthly time in God's saving plan for sinners, this blessed Lord Jesus, remember this is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, this is the Gospel about Jesus

Christ, this blessed Lord Jesus offered his life up on the cruel cross of Calvary, shed his blood as a sacrifice to satisfy the wrath of God against sinners like you, to atone for the sins of his people. That's what Paul was saying in 1 Corinthians 15:3, Christ died for our sins. 1 Peter 3:18 puts it this way, "Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God." This is the Gospel. This is the heart of the only thing that can save your guilty soul is that the perfect Lord Jesus, God in human flesh, lived a perfectly righteous life and then offered that righteous life up to his Father in an act of substitution, taking your place, standing in your appointed place of punishment, as it were, he sets you aside, he steps into that circle where your judgment was to be poured out and God punished an innocent victim, an innocent willing victim in your place. God punished Christ. Christ absorbed the wrath of all of God's anger against your sin so that that wrath would not be spent on you throughout all of eternity. Christ died in the place of sinners just like you. He absorbed the wrath of God that sinners deserved in his own body. There was a spiritual transaction taking place on the cross of great consequence. It's why the earth went dark for three hours according to the Scriptures. Somehow in a way that we can't fully understand, Christ in his infinite essence as God in human flesh, absorbed that infinite punishment for sinners and the world goes dark as somehow the Father pours out his wrath on his own Son and on that cross Christ died. Christ absorbed that death penalty. Christ took it in himself.

And beloved, he was really dead. Those Roman soldiers were trained in the art of death. They knew he was dead. They stuck a sword in his side to make sure and blood and water flowed out. It wasn't that he swooned. His human life was gone.

And as a historical matter, he was buried in a grave. As a historical matter, God raised him from that grave on the third day and Scripture says, turn to Romans 4 with me for just a moment, Scripture says in Romans 4:25, at the end of verse 24 it said, God "raised Jesus our Lord from the dead," this Jesus, verse 25, "who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification." In his death, burial and resurrection, Jesus Christ accomplished redemption for his people. He accomplished what was necessary for their justification, to be declared righteous in the presence of a God who had previously been offended; to have forgiveness of sin credited to your account, that perfect righteousness of Christ laid upon you, given to you, appropriated to you so that everything that caused your prior alienation from God has been removed and God now accepts his people on the basis of the work of Christ alone. God forgives sin and declares righteous those who are clothed in that perfect righteousness of Christ.

Christ did a work like that for sinners like you. You in guilt and judgment, Christ in perfect righteousness sacrificed that life to deal with your problem of guilt and it's in that work of Christ alone that you can find deliverance from spiritual and eternal death. The Gospel tells us what Christ did for sinners and it's good news. It means that though we are condemned, someone, namely Christ, has done something for us that can answer all of the problem that our sin and guilt brings on to our account before a holy God who intends to judge the world in righteousness one day soon. That's what Christ did 2,000 years ago.

Let's go to a fourth point here as we consider the Gospel: the necessary response of man. The necessary response of man. What Christ did fully accomplished redemption for his people but not everyone is saved. Jesus made that clear in Matthew 7 and other places, the way is narrow that leads to life, and now we are brought to this very critical point in the proclamation of the Gospel, this very critical question: how do you receive the saving benefits of Christ's death? How do you get from this point of judgment into him, so to speak, so that everything that pleased God about Christ would then affect you as well? That, in my humble opinion, is the most important question in the universe. It's certainly the most important question for anyone with a soul. How do I partake of what Christ has done so that I might not face that judgment that I so richly deserve? Well, the call of God, the call of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is stated like this in Mark 1:15, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." Repent and believe in the Gospel. This is the message of Scripture. The Apostle Paul said that when he preached, he testified to Jews and Greeks alike, Acts 20:21, he preached to them repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The message is that you must repent and you must believe in Christ. Those are two sides of the same coin; those two things work together; they're wrapped together. A repentant belief, a believing repentance, you could say.

Here's what that means. I'm going to speak in a metaphor here. Christ literally died on a cross, literally gave his life on a cross. He died on a cross. Metaphorically speaking when we talk about repentance and faith, you come to a point where you die. Your pride, your self-righteousness, your self, your autonomy, it all has to die in an act of repentance and receiving Christ in submissive faith. Here's what I mean by that, beloved: you must acknowledge your guilt before God. You must agree with what Scripture says, that when it says no one is righteous, you're included in that. When it says none have sought for God, you say, "That's true of me." When it says all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, your hand goes up and says, "Yes, that's me. The Bible just described the state of my soul. The Bible just described what my life is like. I'm a sinner and I confess that openly before God and willingly before men." And you must forsake any effort to please God through your so-called good works. You must realize that there is nothing good that you have to offer to God. You forsake any effort to find forgiveness in yourself, in your own goodness, in your own works. You forsake all of that as if you were on a sinking boat, throwing cargo overboard again and again and again in order to keep the ship afloat. You cast aside any self-righteousness of your own, any self-will of your own, any pride of your own, and you come humbly alone to Christ and ask him to save you according to the mercy that he displayed on the cross 2,000 years ago.

Look at the Gospel of Mark 8. In true conversion, a death takes place. A death takes place in true conversion, the death of an old man, the death of a sinner who has come to Christ for life. Mark 8:34, "He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and [Jesus] said to them, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the

Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." Christ – hear me out, beloved – Christ who is the author of salvation, Christ who is the one who did the work of salvation has the exclusive prerogative to tell us what the price of that salvation is to your soul. You see, you don't get to say, "I think I'll just love Jesus in my own way. I think instead of going to church, I'll just go out in nature and I'll hug a tree and I'll worship God in my own way." Well, you can do that but it ain't gonna do you any good on the day of judgment. That's not the worship that God requires. That's not the response that Christ demanded, as if you could just make up your own response to him. He not only did the work, he told us what the response to him must be if you are to be saved. It says you must deny yourself, take up your cross and follow him. You must repent of your sin and believe in him, receive him in a loving, submissive, grateful way that gives your life to him for salvation.

That's the necessary response. A true response like that produces enduring life change. The life change is not part of what pays for your sin, rather it is the product of having been born again from the Spirit of God who changes you at that moment of conversion and you live differently henceforth and forever more. I ask you, I ask you, those of you who have claimed the name of Christ, does your life show evidence of a love and a devotion and an obedience to Christ, this Christ that you say that you know? Or do you just go through life blindly just doing what you want to do, thinking what you want to think, watching what you want to watch, without any regard to the one that you say saved you? What kind of salvation is that? What kind of repentance and faith is that that doesn't produce a change?

I say it in love, beloved, but some of you really need to wake up. You really need to wake up in response to these things because the time is short and as Scripture says, today is the day of salvation. It's time. We say it in love but we're not playing games. Jesus meant every word that he said and Scripture means every word that it says. God is not trifling with us here in these warnings of judgment and this call to repentance and faith. This is the only way that you can escape the judgment of God. The only way.

This brings us to our fifth and final point about the Gospel of Jesus Christ and at this point, enough is not often said. This is a point that invites us, this fifth point is that which woos our heart to Christ, which calls our heart to Christ in addition to the other things of which we have spoken, what I am about to tell you is Christ clenching the deal for you and it's this, point 5: the glorious promises of Christ. The glorious promises of Christ. You see, Christ doesn't bring his Gospel to men in a remote, distant, uncaring way. It's not that he speaks these things from a remote position behind an altar on a stage, as some religions would try to make you think. Christ comes in perfect love, perfect grace, perfect kindness, and tells you what the consequences of a believing response to his Gospel is, and what we find is this, is that this great holy God is unspeakably immeasurably gracious to those who believe in his Son.

You see, the Gospel comes with promises, promises from a faithful God who always keeps his word, who always does what he says, because after all, he's holy. He cannot lie. And so when the Gospel goes out and declares the work of Christ to sinful men, when it

calls sinful men to repent and believe, it comes with promises like these. In John 1, it says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God even to those who believe in His name." Going from a son of alienation, a son of judgment to a child of reconciliation, a child reconciled to God; from his enemy to his child; from a hostile force to one welcomed and adopted into his family, John 1:12. To those who believe in Christ like what we've spoken about today, he says, "I'll bring you into the family of God. No more judgment. No more hostility. Fully reconciled in the full privileges of belonging to the family of God."

Eternal death, banished under the sound of the Gospel. Eternal judgment, eternal condemnation, taken away in the promises of the Gospel replaced with these blessed and familiar words in John 3:16, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." From eternal death to eternal life. From judgment to forgiveness. From guilt to a declared righteousness. From being an enemy of God to being clothed with that which God said the righteousness of Christ, "In this I am well-pleased," all received by that act of repentant faith. Jesus said in John 17:3, "This is eternal life that they may know You, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

Beloved, this is the Gospel of God. A holy God has declared judgment against your guilt and sin but Christ has stepped into the breach and done a magnificent work in his death, burial and resurrection that God accepts to atone for the sins of everyone like you, to atone for the sins of people just like you. God accepts the work of Christ instead of the righteousness that you would otherwise have been required to bring. God has told you through his word how this is received, you repent and believe in Christ and the call that goes out, when the command goes out, "Repent and believe with Christ," it comes attached with glorious promises of complete forgiveness from God, a perfect righteousness credited to your account that satisfies his demands, the promise of eternal life so that the fear of death and judgment are permanently banished from your soul because Christ is the Savior, Christ came to save his own and once you become his own, he keeps you forever and ever.

So there's this great promise. The threat of the day of judgment can be removed from you. In its place a promise of eternal life from a God who cannot lie, and in this, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is presented to you and Christ calls you and in John 6:37 he says, "The one who comes to Me, I will never cast out." Every reason for you to neglect Christ and neglect the Gospel has been taken away from you here this morning, beloved. That is the Gospel of Christ and so I ask you, will you repent and believe in him?

Let's pray.

Father, may it thus be for every soul under the sound of my voice, a true recognition of the person and work of Christ, a true repentance and faith wrought by Your Spirit in their hearts and the rest of previously dead souls on the great promise that comes with the Gospel, that the one who believes in You will never be cast out but the one who

believes in You shall not perish but have eternal life. Father, I've said all I can say. I pray for Your Spirit to bring it home and to apply it to each heart. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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