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# Introduction

How well do you know the gospel? Do you know it well enough to be sure that you have embraced it to the salvation of your soul? Paul speaks of “false brethren” (Gal. 2:4), of “evil workers,” of “the false circumcision” (Phil. 2:2), and of “false apostles who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ” (2 Cor. 11:13). He speaks of those who proclaim a “different gospel” or of a “distorted gospel” (Gal. 1:6-9). Jesus spoke of the “false apostles who will come in sheep’s clothing, bearing no genuine fruit” (Matt. 7:15) and of those hypocrites who were white washed tombs (Matt. 23:26-29).

Teaching elders, how well do you know the gospel? Do you know it well enough to cogently speak it to those who reside in darkness? Church member, do you know it well enough to testify to its glorious message? If the occasion arose, could you take someone through the Scripture and its plan of salvation, showing them specific biblical references on how to come to saving faith?

According to Jesus, the kingdom of heaven is the pearl of great price that one should be willing to sell all in order to obtain it. The gospel is the message that shows one the way to that great treasure (Matt.13: 45-46). Paul says to young Timothy that the gospel is itself a treasure that must be guarded (2 Tim. 1:14). It is worth suffering for and being imprisoned (2 Tim. 1:8; 2:3,9). The gospel

is of immense value that one must never be ashamed of (2 Tim.1: 8, 12; Rom. 1:16).

If someone were to ask you to formulate a gospel presentation, could you do it? How do we know what should be associated or not associated with the gospel? The Scripture plainly gives us the answers. Faithful or biblical presentations of the gospel are not of human origin. We can piece together what the salient features of the gospel are by essentially doing a word study. A word study looks up all the usages of the word that is translated as “gospel” and sees what is associated with it. This booklet is simply a study of the word “gospel.”

As I go through this word study, determine if you have sufficiently understood the greatest message the world will ever know. There is no greater message than to know how to be freed from Satan and sin’s bondage. What greater message than to know how to avoid eternal destruction in hell and how to possess eternal life in the presence of God forever?

## **Greek Words Associated With the Gospel**

There are several words associated with the gospel. The Greek word “*euangelion*” is commonly translated as “gospel” and is used 77 times in the New Testament. The word “*euangelistes*” is translated as “evangelist” and is used 3 times. The word “*euangelizo*” is commonly translated in various ways as “preach,” “preach the gospel,” “bring glad tidings,” “show glad

tidings,” and “declare glad tidings.” These various usages are used 55 times in the New Testament.

There is an important distinction between the words “*euangelizo*” and “*keruso*.” These two words are often translated as “preach,” but it is important to note the distinction. The noun form “*keruyx*” refers to the “preacher.” A “*keruyx*” is a herald, who is an official representative of a sovereign. The word therefore stresses the office of the one who is proclaiming. There is a close association of the two words because the “*keruyx*” is the preacher who is heralding the authoritative apostolic message, which is the “*euangelion*” or “gospel.” Sometimes the word “preach” refers to the one who is proclaiming the gospel where the emphasis is upon the message being proclaimed rather than the nature or responsibility of the herald.

## **The Difference Between Preaching and Witnessing**

I will not do an extensive word study of the words associated with “preaching” and “witnessing.” We could say that all Christians witness or bear testimony to the gospel but not all Christians are “heralds” or “preachers” of the gospel. Paul speaks of being appointed a preacher and an apostle (I Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11). Paul even said that Jesus preaches through Paul’s gospel (Rom. 16:25). The point is that when Paul faithfully preaches the gospel, it is Jesus preaching to men through His anointed representative. The preaching

of men cannot save, but the preaching of Christ through His ambassadors can save men's souls (Rom. 10:13-17). Noah was a "preacher" of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5). Jonah was a "preacher" (Matt. 12:41). John the Baptist "preached" repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Mk. 1:4). Jesus preached repentance and the "gospel of the kingdom" (Matt. 4:17, 23). Jesus sent out the twelve disciples to preach that the kingdom of heaven was at hand (Matt. 10:7). Philip was a preacher of the word, especially to the Samaritans (Acts 8:5). Peter preached the gospel to the gentiles at Cornelius' house (Acts 10:34-48).

A preacher is one who has been called and ordained by a sovereign to proclaim the word of the sovereign. Not every Christian has been commissioned or appointed to do this. What value is there in understanding this distinction? Men do not take it upon themselves to be Christ's heralds. One must be appointed, and who does this appointing? Those who have been previously ordained to the gospel ministry, having been taught and faithful, (II Tim. 2:2). This is what is called the "Presbytery," that is, those Elders who have been called, trained, examined, and ordained to the gospel ministry. So, presbytery does it (I Tim. 4:14). The reason for this is for the protection of the purity of the gospel. There are false apostles or heralds who pervert the gospel; they preach another Jesus (2 Cor. 11:4). It is the role of presbytery to examine potential preachers as to their orthodoxy and to hold accountable those already ordained as preachers. Since the gospel is a treasure that

must be guarded at all costs, it behooves the elders of the church to guard the pulpits of the Lord's churches.

There is an important relationship between preachers and the message preached. The "*euangelion*" (gospel) is the message that the "*keruyx*" (preacher) preaches. The gospel is what the herald boldly proclaims as the official word of the King. There is a wonderful imagery portrayed in Romans 10. In the first part of the chapter, emphasis is made that the righteousness of God that we must possess is not by the works of the Law but by faith in Jesus, who is the end of the Law, that is, the one who perfectly kept the Law. Paul says that the Word is near to us and that all that we have to do is confess in our hearts that which is being preached to us. We believe in our hearts that God has raised Jesus from the dead for our salvation (Rom. 10:9-10). This gospel of salvation is for all who call upon Jesus, but men cannot believe in Jesus if they have not heard Jesus, and men cannot hear without a preacher (Rom. 10:13-14). And then the preacher must be sent in order to preach (Rom. 10:15). This tells us that preachers are appointed or commissioned for a royal task, which is what Paul says elsewhere. Then there is this beautiful description of the preacher that Paul quotes from Isaiah 52:7. The preacher's feet are said to be beautiful because his feet bring "glad tidings of good things." The word for "glad tidings" is our word "*euangelion*" (gospel). Literally, the verse says how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel. Paul does not quote verbatim the Isaiah passage. Isaiah 52:7 speaks of the bringing of

good news of happiness, which is salvation. The preacher's feet are beautiful because it is by his feet that he moves from one place to another. Wherever he goes, the preacher carries the great treasure that explains how men can be saved. Men cannot exercise faith in Christ unless they hear the word of Christ. Without the herald, they normally do not have the chance to hear and be saved.

If preachers are the commissioned ones to proclaim the gospel, then where does this leave the typical church member regarding evangelism? What does the church member do? Does this mean that if a church member has a friend or a loved one at his house that he must call up the preacher to come over to preach the gospel? No, of course not. . He should, first of all, be careful to make sure the gospel he bears witness to is in fact the Apostolic gospel. The church member can witness to the truth of the gospel; he can bear testimony to its power in his own life. He can and should present and explain the plan of salvation. And he should also get that person under the ordained authoritative preaching of the Word of God and the shepherding oversight of the elders of the church as well. To them has He given the "keys of the kingdom."

This is not to say that no one could ever be saved by church members who go out and share the gospel. I was genuinely saved through the efforts of a Para church organization in college. Even though my parents were members of a Protestant church, I cannot say that I was raised in a Christian home. Rarely did I attend church as



a youth and by high school, I never went. The first time I can remember hearing the gospel was through the efforts of a campus Christian organization. Upon confessing Christ, I did start attending local evangelical churches, but it was years before I actually joined the local church even though I had been baptized as an infant in the Methodist church.

So, did these college students “preach” to me the gospel? I cannot say that they officially preached the gospel, but they did bear witness to the truth of the gospel by testifying of its transforming power. As I vaguely remember, I knew that I did not have a personal relationship with Christ. One passage that they bore witness to was 2 Corinthians 5:17 which speaks of all those who are in Christ are a new creation and that the old things are passed away and that all things have become new. I knew I was living a meaningless life, and that if all that was being testified was true, then I wanted it as well. I cannot say that I fully understood much. I never really questioned all the various aspects of the gospel message that I shall lay forth in this booklet. I cannot say that those college students set forth all the salient features of a gospel presentation that I would use today. Yet, after some 36 years now, I still believe that the Lord genuinely saved me at that point. There was a significant change in my thinking and actions that my family noticed.

Someone might ask, “In Acts 8:4 and in Acts 11:20, the texts state that ordinary Christians “preached” the word and the Lord Jesus. How does this fact square with the

argument in this booklet that only ordained men “preached” the gospel?” The answer lies in the use of the particular Greek word that is translated as “preach.” Acts 8:4 reads, “Therefore, those who had been scattered went about *preaching* the word.” There were more than the apostles who were scattered. Another instance is found in Acts 11:20 which reads, “But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, *preaching* the Lord Jesus.” The Greek word used in both passages is “euangelizo.” It is **not** the Greek word “keruso” that refers to a “herald.” The word “euangelizo” can be translated as “preaching,” but it fundamentally means “bringing the good tidings.” This is an example that the Greek language is more precise than the English. We see that two separate Greek words can both be translated as “preaching,” which can be somewhat misleading. The mistake is made by thinking that ordinary Christians can be official preachers of the gospel, being no different than ordained preachers. In Acts 8:5 we read, “And Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and *preached* Christ to them” (KJV). This word in verse 5 is the Greek word “keruso,” which refers to the actions of a “keruyx” (herald). The significance of Acts 8:4-5 is that Christians were sharing the good news and then an ordained evangelist (Philip), as an official representative of the Sovereign of the universe, brings the message of Christ to the Samaritans. Hence, any Christian can share the good news (preach in this sense) without being an ordained “preacher.” This sharing of the good news is related to

the act of “witnessing” by all Christians as we shall soon see.

What does “witnessing” precisely mean? The Greek word, “*martus*,” is commonly translated as “witness.” In Acts 1:8, prior to His ascension, Jesus told His disciples that when the Holy Spirit comes, He will make them “witnesses” to men everywhere. This power came upon all the believers who were gathered in an upper room in Jerusalem, a total of 120 people (Acts 1:13-15). All of these became powerful witnesses. Peter says that they bore witness to Jesus’ resurrection. There was an incident where Peter and John were arrested for preaching Jesus to the people of Jerusalem. After being warned not to speak anymore in Jesus’ name, they were released. Peter and John relate the incident to the Christians who had gathered for prayer. After the prayer meeting, the disciples were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to “speak the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31).

Bearing witness to the truths of God’s word, which includes the gospel, may not be official preaching, but God still can use it for evangelistic purposes. When Peter and John were before the Sanhedrin for a second time, they indicated that they were witnesses of Jesus’ resurrection, of His ascension, and that repentance was necessary for forgiveness of sins. They mentioned that the Holy Spirit enables all to be such witnesses- to those who obey Him (Acts 5:29-32). Now we know that John the Baptist was a special preacher who preached repentance for the forgiveness of sins. We are told that

John bore witness of the light that all might believe through Him (John 16-7). Witness bearing can lead to saving faith in those who accept the witness. Jesus told Nicodemus of His own witness bearing that some refused to receive (John 3:11-13). Jesus was once speaking with some Jews who were seeking to kill him. Jesus referred to His witness that could lead to their salvation (John 5:33-34). His witness consists of all of His works that bear testimony that He is truly from God, which should lead to their faith in Him but doesn't (John 5:36-38). We are told that whoever believes that Jesus is the Son of God is born of God (I John 5:1). How do men come to believe that Jesus is the Son of God? It is because of the inner witness of the Holy Spirit (I John 5:7). As important as the witness of men is, the inner witness of the Spirit is greater because it convinces men of what the external witnesses are saying about Jesus – that He is the Son of God (I John 5:9-10). Not only does the Holy Spirit convince men that Jesus is the Son of God, but the Spirit convinces them that there is eternal life in the Son of God and that believing in Him leads one to possess that eternal life (I John 5:10-13).

The power of the gospel lies in the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that makes the witness bearing of men so powerful. Men can lie and be misled; so, how do I distinguish a true preacher of God from a false one? The answer is not that complicated. First, they must proclaim only that which is in conformity with sound doctrine as found in the Bible (I Tim.6:3-4;

2 Tim. 4:3-4). It doesn't matter if they even have amazing signs. One of the most important passages conveying this truth is Deuteronomy 13:1-5. The text states that even if the prophet comes with signs and wonders but is preaching service to another god besides Jehovah, one is to ignore the signs, for God is testing him to determine if he loves God with all his heart to follow His commandments. Second, the Holy Spirit bears witness in our hearts that we have heard the word of God from a true preacher. This was true of the Thessalonians when they heard Paul's preaching. When they heard Paul's preaching they received it for what it really was – not from men but as the word of God (I Thess. 2:13). How did they know Paul's preaching was Christ preaching to them through him? The gospel came to them not in word only but in the power of the Holy Spirit with full conviction (I Thess. 1:5). All of us know in our hearts that we have heard true preaching the same way. The Holy Spirit takes that preached word and drives it deep into our very being (Heb. 4:12). Men come to saving faith in the same way. Since the Bible teaches that all men are dead in their sins, slaves to their sin and to Satan to do works of disobedience (Eph. 2:1-3; John 8:32-34; 2 Cor. 4:3-4; 2 Tim. 2:25-26) with no hope, the only way a man can believe in Jesus is if the Holy Spirit changes his heart of stone to a heart of flesh (Ezek. 36:24-27) and gives him ears to hear. Only God can supernaturally transform a person by raising him spiritually from the dead (John 5:25-26; 6:35-40, 44; 8:47; 10:25-30).

In terms of witness bearing, both the preacher and the average church member bear witness to the truth. God uses both to work in men's lives. However, we can say that God works in ways through His anointed preachers differently in terms of degree. More people have confessed Christ via preachers preaching throughout the history of the church than by individual Christians bearing witness. Yes, every Christian should bear witness to the truth and when they have the opportunity to set forth the gospel they should do so, but they should then diligently get that person in front of God's heralds on the Lord's Day. Psalm 87:1 states that God loves the gates of Zion more than any other dwelling place. God manifests Himself in a more significant way among the gathered saints with the elders of the church exercising leadership as those who have the keys to the kingdom of heaven with God's preacher boldly proclaiming the words of eternal life.

## **What Are the Essential Elements of the Gospel?**

By doing a word study on "gospel," we can discern the elements or doctrines that comprise the gospel. Remember, every element is a doctrine, for doctrine is simply biblical truth. Those that disparage the idea of doctrine do not understand that this is a disparaging of the gospel itself. Nothing is more practical than the gospel, and the gospel is nothing more than biblical doctrine regarding men's salvation.

## **It Is the Gospel of God**

Jesus came preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and He is said to have preached the gospel of God (Mark 1:14). We should not overlook the importance of this phraseology. The gospel is God's message to men; it is not of human origin. All the world's religions with the exclusion of Christianity are man made attempts to reach God. They would be seen as the gospel of men. The true gospel originates in the mind of God; it is His plan to redeem lost men. Since the gospel is the gospel **of God**, men had better pay attention to it. When God sends out His commissioned heralds to proclaim this message, it is the message of the sovereign One of the universe, the I AM That I AM who is speaking to men. To refuse to heed God's message is foolish, leading to the destruction of one's soul forever in hell.

From Jesus' sending out his disciples to preach to the cities of Israel (Matt. 10:5-23), we learn several valuable lessons. First, Jesus will entrust the greatest message known to man (God's gospel) to mere men. They are His official heralds; they are His ambassadors. Second, Jesus preaches through them. Third, refusal to heed these human heralds is to refuse the Savior Himself. Fourth, it is a greater crime to refuse the preaching of these human heralds carrying the gospel than to be wicked perverts as were the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. Those who refuse the gospel preached to them will be beaten in hell with more stripes than the wicked people of those cities utterly destroyed by God with fire from Heaven. And Fifth,

every official herald and even testifier of the gospel needs to not take it personally when men reject the gospel, for they are not rejecting the human agent but Christ Himself. The heralds' responsibility is simply to faithfully proclaim the gospel as a steward of the mysteries of God; it is God's job to use that preached word as God sees fit. The gospel is the gospel of God, and men had better heed this message!

### **The Gospel Is A Message About the God/Man Jesus**

The gospel is a message about Jesus Christ who is no ordinary man. Jesus is both truly God and truly human in one person forever. He is the God/Man. The true gospel is an accurate understanding that Jesus is the Son of God, fully divine and equal in power and glory with God the Father. In His essence, the Son of God is eternal; He is not subordinate to the Father in terms of deity (Col. 1:19; 2:9; Heb. 1:1-3; John 8:56-58; 10:30-38). Moreover, He is truly man; he is not some phantom. God has come in the flesh (John 1:14; Heb. 10:4-18; I John 1:1-3; 2:15-24).

The gospel demands that we accept these two doctrines about Jesus Christ. He is fully divine and fully human in one person. A person cannot be a Christian in a genuine sense without affirming these two doctrines. I John 2:15-24 is a vital passage. Verse 22 states that the antichrist is one who denies that Jesus is the Christ. In verse 19 those who deny that Jesus is the Christ are those who permanently leave the Christian fellowship, proving that they were never really part of it. In



Matthew 11:1-6 Jesus answers John the Baptist's disciples about His true identity. He affirms to John that He is doing the works of the Messiah or Christ. To be the Christ is to be the Son of God. Even the unbelieving Sanhedrin understood this. Caiaphas insisted that Jesus declare whether He was the Christ, the Son of God (Matt. 26:62-63). When Jesus said yes, Caiaphas declared that there was no more need of questioning since Jesus had blasphemed. To be the Son of God is to be divine. In John 10:30 Jesus declared that He and the Father were one, and this meant that He was equal to the Father. John 10:31 states that the Jews sought stones to kill Him. Jesus asked them what good works was He doing that justified His stoning. In verse 33 they said that it was not for the works but that He being a man makes Himself out to be God. In verses 36-38 Jesus says that if He does the works of His Father than this is proof that He and the Father are one in terms of deity. Believing in the Trinity is essential for salvation, which rules out all Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses to name a few. It is the spirit of antichrist to deny Jesus' divinity.

It is necessary that a person believe that Jesus was a real man; otherwise, he cannot be saved. The Son of God had to be the Son of man as well. Since a real man, Adam, transgressed the Law and brought sin and destruction to the human race, it was necessary that the second Adam, Jesus, be a real man in order to undo what Adam did and to accomplish what Adam could not achieve. The God/Man had to die a substitutionary death to atone for the sins of Adam's race, and He had

to live a perfect life in conformity to all of God's Law in order to merit eternal life for Adam's race. Hebrews 10:4-11 clearly states that it was necessary for the Redeemer to have a body to be sacrificed in order to take away sins. Verse 10 states that "*we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*"

### **Jesus Is the Only Savior of Sinners**

Christianity has always been accused of being an exclusive, narrow-minded religion in that it maintains that only through Jesus can a person find salvation. The accusation is a correct observation. Jesus said in John 14:6 that He is the way, the truth, and the life, and no man comes to the Father but by Him. Acts 4:12 affirms that there is no name under heaven whereby a person can be saved other than Jesus. This means that pluralism is greatly mistaken. It means that all other religions are falsehoods that cannot save anyone. Jesus said that anyone attempting to reach God by climbing up any other way than by entering into the door of the sheepfold is a thief and a robber (John 10:1-3, 7-9). This truth is a great challenge to all who proclaim and testify because the world hates such exclusiveness.

### **God's Gospel Is A Gospel of Grace**

Paul declares that he has been testifying to the **gospel of grace** (Acts 20:24). The opposite of a gospel of grace is a gospel of works. Titus 3:4-7 states that God's kindness appeared to mankind in the display of His love. This

love is that we are saved not on the basis of our deeds of righteousness but according to God's mercy and grace demonstrated in His regenerating work by the Holy Spirit. We are justified by His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ (vs. 6-7).

We must carefully delineate between good works done out of a love for Christ, having been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and good works as the basis or cause of our justification before God. Good works are the fruit of saving faith, not the cause of it. Paul makes this very clear in Romans 4:1-5. Abraham's faith justified him independent of his works. Verse 4 unmistakably states that wages are given to those who earn things by their works, but faith in Christ is not reckoned according to something earned.

Ephesians 2:8-10 clearly teaches that salvation is by faith and not by works. The salvation that is graciously given through the instrumentality of faith is a gift of God (v.8) and is not by works (v.9). Verse 10 states that we were created **for** good works that were predestined to be the evidence of our saving faith.

Confusion regarding the relationship of faith to works is no minor issue. Eternal life is at stake. Romans 3:19:19-31 emphatically declares that no flesh will be justified by the works of the Law but by the righteousness of Christ through faith. Paul had severe words for those that taught salvation by the works of the Law (Gal. 1:6-9). They were perverting the true gospel and were accursed of God. It is important that one gets this right.

All the religions of the world with the exclusion of Christianity are a works based religion with man attempting to atone for his own sins and by trying to do enough good works to merit eternal life. The problem is that we cannot do enough good works to please God. Actually, the problem is that we cannot perfectly keep the Law that God has given.

## **The Relationship of God's Law To Man's Salvation**

There is an inseparable connection of sin to the Law of God. Sin is defined as lawlessness (I John 3:4). Paul states that it is through the Law that he comes to understand that he stands condemned before a Holy God (Rom. 3:19; 7:5-13). There is a curse upon everyone who does not perfectly obey God's Law (Gal. 3:10-14; Rom. 10:5). It is because of this that mankind needs a savior. No one can keep the Law for justification! If men can keep the Law for justification, why the need for a Savior? The very definition of a savior is that someone needs to be rescued who cannot do it themselves. Men cannot redeem themselves. God does not sweep our sins under a rug pretending they do not exist. He doesn't grade on a curve; He doesn't cut us any slack because He is a Holy God. The justice of God demands the payment for violation of His Law. The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). The soul that sins must die (Ezek. 18:4). Man's sins need to be atoned for.

Any presentation of the Gospel must emphasize this proper relationship of the Law of God to man's salvation; otherwise, it is not the Gospel of God. In my mission work in Corpus Christi, Texas, I use the Ten Commandments as a prelude to talking to men about the Gospel. Men must come to realize that they are sinners deserving the wrath of God, that they cannot keep the Law perfectly as God demands, and this is why they need Jesus as their Savior.

# **The Gospel Is A Message of Peace Through Jesus Christ**

In Acts 10:36; Peter indicated that the Gospel he preached was about peace through Jesus Christ. This tells us that mankind is in need of being reconciled to God. Because of our sins, we are separated from God (Isa. 59:2). We are enemies of God because of our sins (Rom.5:8). The unique fact about Christianity is that men can do nothing in themselves to initiate or bring about reconciliation with God. In Romans 5:8, the love of God is that God provides the means of reconciliation through the Lord Jesus Christ. If there is to be peace with God something needs to be done about our sin. The reconciliation is only accomplished by the substitutionary death of Jesus for us.

An integral part of this reconciliation is that God must be propitiated. God is a righteous judge who is angry with us (Ps. 7:11). The reason that God is angry with us is because we have violated His Law (Ex. 32:8-10). Moses had to intercede as a mediator for Israel to turn away God's wrath from destroying Israel (Ex. 32:11-14; Deut. 9:25-29). What does propitiation mean? It is the satisfaction of God's justice by means of a bloody sacrifice. In Romans 3:24-25, redemption is displayed through propitiation in blood. In Hebrews 2:17, Jesus as mediator makes propitiation for the sins of His people.

God's justice demands punishment for a violation of His Law. Jesus is the perfect Law keeper whose bloody

sacrifice pays the penalty that God's justice demands. Redemption is through Christ's blood. We were bought with a great price (I Cor. 6:20). The redemption that we have in Christ is for the forgiveness of sins. Redemption implies that we need to be ransomed from our captivity to sin and Satan. The payment of the ransomed price secures the release of the captives. Jesus purchased men with His blood from all nations (Rev. 5:9). This ransom price that secures our deliverance from sin and Satan is paid to God the Father because He is the one we have offended by transgressing His Law.

There is no Gospel without propitiation through blood. Any message that leaves this out has gutted the Gospel, making it no Gospel at all. Those groups that want to erase this bloody aspect have no Gospel at all! The problem is that men have no biblical concept of the holiness of God; they have no understanding of the importance of Law keeping; they do not realize that God is very angry with them, demanding payment for their transgressions; they do not realize that someone must die for this violation. Without a bloody sacrifice of a perfect substitute, there is no salvation. No one has had the Gospel explained to them who does not understand the necessity for the atoning sacrifice of a Savior. The problem with most people is that they think they can make it into heaven on their own terms, that God will simply be pleased with their good efforts no matter how far these efforts fall short.

## Men Must Repent and Believe

Jesus came preaching the gospel of God, proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand and that men must repent and believe. The Greek grammar reveals that this repenting and believing were commands of Jesus that men must do on a continual basis. The whole ministry of John the Baptist as the forerunner of Christ was one of preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. One cannot be forgiven without repenting. Repentance presupposes that one realizes that he is a sinner, having transgressed God's Law. Repentance is a grievance over one's sins, but the shedding of tears is not proof that one has repentance. Esau is the prime example. Esau sought with tears to have his blessing restored, but he found no place for repentance (Heb. 12:17). Genuine repentance entails a sincere desire to turn around and forsake one's previous sinful life. There must be fruit of repentance, meaning evidence. John the Baptist commanded the Pharisees and Sadducees to bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance (Matt. 3:3-8). This fruit of repentance demonstrates itself in deeds of goodness and righteousness (Eph. 5:8-9). Zaccheus is a good example of genuine repentance. When Jesus said that he wanted to dine with Zaccheus, the tax collector said that he was willing to give half of his money to the poor and give back four times the value if he had defrauded anyone. Jesus' response is crucial: *"Today salvation has come to this house because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:1-10). Giving



money to the poor is not in itself the cause of salvation; it is merely the evidence of a changed heart. Jesus, being God, could see into the heart of Zaccheus and see that it was genuine repentance.

Another example of true repentance is the conversion of the Thessalonians. Paul writes them, noting how they had turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God (I Thess. 1:9). Here is the very nature of repentance – they turned from sin and toward obedience. Though the word “repentance” is not in Acts 26:18, it is definitely inferred. Paul is speaking to king Agrippa about his ministry. As the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul states that his ministry was – *“to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.”* We know that one must repent in order to be forgiven of his sins.

A gospel presentation that does not demand that men grieve over their sins and turn from them is not a true gospel presentation. There cannot be forgiveness of sins without repentance. True repentance would be seen as one who is “poor in spirit.” In Matthew 11:5, Jesus gives the evidence that He is truly the Messiah or the Christ by quoting Isaiah 61:1. The poor have the gospel preached to them. Jesus was not referring to the economically poor but to the poor in spirit. Jesus said that the poor in spirit shall inherit the kingdom of God (Matt. 5:3). The Old Testament spoke of the “contrite of heart” that God is looking for (Ps. 34:18; 51:15; 66:2).

The poor in spirit or the contrite of heart are those who know they are in need of a savior. The self-righteous do not need a savior (Luke 10:25-29).

There can be no salvation without faith in Jesus Christ. Now this may seem obvious, but not all faith is saving faith. James chapter 2 is a clear indication that faith without works is dead, that even the demons believe in Jesus, but it does them no good. Faith in true facts about Jesus is not saving faith. It is important to understand that good works are not the very essence of saving faith but the fruit or evidence of it. So, it is possible to have a false faith that does not save. Simon the magician is said to have believed and been baptized but then declared to be in the bondage of sin (Acts 8:13-24). When confronted with the grievous sin of wanting to purchase the gift of the Holy Spirit and Peter's insistence that he pray for forgiveness, Simon asks Peter to pray for him that judgment not befall him. It is obvious that there was no repentance; he would not even pray for forgiveness; all he wanted was to be spared of judgment. There were some Jews who believed in Jesus, but they are said to be children of the Devil by Jesus because of their evil deeds (John 8:31-47). Jesus said to them that they do not believe Him because they are not of God (verses 46-47). The amazing thing is that Jesus tells them that they do not believe in Him when verse 31 says they believed in Him. This means there is a false faith. Jesus' parable of the sower and the seed demonstrates that there is a false faith. The seed that falls on the rocky soil are those who hear, receive the word with joy but having no root,

they believe for a while and then fall away during temptation (Luke 8:13). The seed that falls among the thorns is choked out by the worries, riches, and pleasures of life and brings no fruit to maturity (Luke 8:14). This would correspond with those in I John 2:15-24 who love the world and are antichrists who leave the church, proving they were never really a part of the elect. The seed that falls on the good soil are those who hear in an honest and good heart and persevere, bearing fruit (Luke 8:15). These are the ones of true faith, being genuine Christians.

Saving faith is not simply a profession of faith. There are those who profess Christ and do some amazing things in the name of Jesus, but Jesus says that He never knew them and to depart from Him (Matt. 7:20-23). The faith that God demands and accepts is a trust, which is a wholehearted commitment to Him (Mark 10:29-30; Luke 14:25-36). Essentially, this is receiving Jesus as one's Lord, not simply as one's savior only. This demand for discipleship is not obedience that is the essence of saving faith; it is only the evidence that real saving faith is present. Now it is true that all genuine Christians do not come into the family of God with full maturity. We learn to be more committed to His Word as we grow in maturity. We learn to partake of the meat of the Faith, not simply the milk. We learn to train ourselves to discern good and evil (Heb. 5:12-14). Where there is true saving faith, there is a heart that is willing to follow Jesus according to His stipulations.

We must be sure that we do not mislead men in the presentation of the gospel. This doesn't mean that we must tell them every single detail; we don't say that they must be sure that they are not the seed that falls into the wrong soil. When a person expresses a desire to believe in Jesus, we don't shy away from telling them what Jesus expects of them. Jesus gave the call to discipleship to a multitude that was following Him. We don't want to communicate an easy believism, meaning a faith that does not express itself in serving Christ. Easy believism would demonstrate itself with someone believing in Jesus as one's savior but who sees no need to fellowship in the church, who has no real desire to read the Word of God, no desire to tell others about Jesus, and who sees no problem with living like the world.

### **We Must Believe In Jesus' Resurrection**

Belief in Jesus' resurrection is essential for one's salvation. Any expression of Christianity that denies or is skeptical about the physical resurrection is a false faith, which cannot save. Those "liberal" churches that see no need in believing in an actual physical resurrection are deluding themselves and are still lost in their sins. Without Jesus' physical resurrection there is no gospel!

In Peter's preaching of the gospel, the resurrection was of central importance. He said that he and the others were witnesses of Jesus' resurrection and that they were appointed to preach this and the fact that Jesus is the judge of the living and dead (Acts 10:39-43). Jesus'

resurrection was central to Paul's preaching. When in Athens, Paul's confrontation with the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers was over the resurrection of Jesus. These philosophers viewed Paul as a pseudo philosopher because of the ridiculous notion that men could rise from the dead. This did not stop Paul from preaching it, for he boldly proclaimed that men everywhere should repent because God has appointed a day whereby He will judge the world through the man Jesus by furnishing proof to all men that Jesus rose from the dead (Acts 17:30-31). Paul lays out powerfully the essential nature of the resurrection in I Corinthians 15. First, it is what he preached, which they received for their salvation (vs. 1-2). It is this preaching of the resurrection that the Corinthians believed in (v. 11). Paul then explains the necessity of the resurrection by showing the futility of life without it. If men are not raised at all, then Jesus is not raised, and if He is not raised, then Paul's preaching is in vain (vs. 13-14). Not only is his preaching in vain, but every Christian's faith is worthless, and he is still in his sins (vs. 16-17). Moreover, every Christian will have hoped in this life only and are to be pitied more than all others if the resurrection of Jesus did not occur (vs. 18-19).

Why are we still in our sins if Jesus didn't rise from the dead and why are we to be pitied more than all men? A dead savior cannot save! The atoning death of Jesus without the subsequent resurrection is no gospel. Paul goes on to explain in I Corinthians 15. If there is no resurrection there is no eternal life! There is no victory

over death. The hope of the Christian is said to be a living hope that obtains an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, and reserved for us which is the salvation of our souls (I Peter 1:3-9). All that we have longed for, been willing to sacrifice for to the point of death is in vain if there is no resurrection. All the time spent in reading our Bibles, going to worship services, witnessing to other people is a complete waste of time if it is all a hoax. Men who devote everything to lies are men most to be pitied.

I Corinthians 15:50-58 reveals the absolute necessity of a bodily resurrection for the forgiveness of our sins. A key verse is – “*The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law*” (v. 56). By being resurrected, death has no victory over us (v. 55), for it has lost its sting (v. 56). It is paramount we see the relationship among sin, death, and the law. Elsewhere the Scripture affirms that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Sin is defined as being lawlessness (I John 3:4). Paul said that sin grabs hold of the Law and condemns him to death (Romans 7:8-10). If there is no resurrection, death’s sting remains intact, for we are still under the power of sin and its wages is death. The Bible teaches our vital union with Christ. Romans 6:5-10 is vital for us to see this connection. If we are united with Him in His death, we shall likewise be united with Him in His resurrection. This means that all the Christian’s hopes lay with Jesus. He is our champion. This is a spiritual union, for verse 6 states that in Jesus’ death, our body of sin was crucified with Him so that we would no longer

be slaves of sin. Verses 8 and 9 states that he who has died with Him shall also live with Him. Since Jesus has been raised from the dead, death is no longer master over Him, meaning that death and sin are no longer masters over us. The penalty for our sins has been paid by Jesus' death. Our sins have been nailed to the cross with Him (Col. 2:14). If He did not rise from the dead then the power of sin would be intact, and we would have no eternal life. But, when He arose, we arose with Him and the power of sin was forever broken.

Without the resurrection of Jesus there is no salvation. Romans 10:9-10 unequivocally states that we must believe in our hearts and confess with our mouths that God has raised Him from the dead in order to be saved. Without the resurrection there is no gospel. A person could be grieving over his sins, hoping there is forgiveness with Christ but cannot bring himself to believe in Jesus' resurrection. If so, he is still lost in his sins.

## **The Gospel Is a Message of Judgment**

In my talks with unbelievers, I am constantly finding people who don't want to think about a God who is a judge. If they do admit to it, they want to think of God as a being who is not that severe in judgment. The overwhelming amount of people want to believe in some kind of heaven, but they are often adamant that there cannot be or should not be a hell. We need to help people realize that our preference for what is reality doesn't change reality. My fervency in refusing to

believe that hell exists doesn't change anything. Truth is truth. Sometimes people will say, "I simply cannot believe in that kind of God." We must help them to realize that what we think is absolutely irrelevant.

There are consequences to unbelief, and they are horrifying to those who reject the gospel. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God for those who willingly go on sinning after receiving the knowledge of the truth (Heb. 10:26-31). Despite men's preferences, Jesus spoke of the existence of hell. In fact, He told men not to fear those who can kill the body only but to fear Him who can send both body and soul to hell (Matt. 10:28). Jesus said it was better to enter life crippled than to go to hell where there is unquenchable fire and where the worm does not die (Mark 9:43-44). Who goes to hell? Those who are self-righteous, thinking their good works are acceptable. Jesus told the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees that they help make proselytes as sons of hell like themselves (Matt. 23:15). Who goes to hell? All those who do not obey the gospel of the Lord Jesus (2 Thess. 1:6-10).

When Jesus returns in His second coming, He will come as the judge of all men. He will gather before His throne the sheep and the goats, which are metaphorical terms for Christians and non-Christians. The sheep will go into eternal life, but to the goats He says, "*Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels*" (Matt. 25:41-46).



The gospel has not been proclaimed unless men are warned of the consequences of refusing to believe in the risen Jesus as the only Savior of sinners. Men will scoff at this, refusing to believe that this is true, but what does it matter what they refuse to believe? We need to help people realize that this is the only Jesus that exists. He is the judge whether they like it or not. To refuse to believe is to call Jesus a liar.

There is an important question that arises from time to time. Somebody will ask you, “What about the savages in Africa or the Amazon rain forest that have never heard the gospel?” The answer is found in Romans 2:11-16. Two groups of people are identified: those who have sinned under the Law and those who have sinned without the Law. Those sinning under the Law will be judged by that very Law. Those sinning without the Law will be judged as a law unto themselves. The Gentiles who do not have the law show the works of the Law upon their consciences, which is why all human cultures have some standard of morality by which they seek to live. These Gentiles fail even to live up to their own standards. Will these Gentiles escape hell because they do not sin under the law, by having the Law of God before their eyes or by having the gospel preached to them? No. Both groups go to hell because Jesus will judge them as having failed. Some might object saying, “This is not fair, but who are we to question the justice of God?” However, the Scripture does indicate that there are degrees of punishment in hell (Matt. 10:11-15; 11:20-24; Luke 12:43-48). There are some sins more

heinous than others, especially the sin of refusing to believe in the gospel when it is preached to a person. The fools that say, “Well, at least I will have company in hell and there are some who are suffering worse than me,” are fools indeed. Consider this analogy. Suppose a person is in the hospital suffering with great pain, does it relieve this person’s pain to know that there may be somebody else suffering with great pain in the hospital? And those who think that they will be having wicked parties in hell are foolish as well. The Bible gives the imagery of hell as being “pits of darkness” (2 Peter 2:4).

## **The Gospel Is A Message of Hope For Eternal Life**

In every human being is the innate desire for life. We all want to live; we all would like to have immortality. All the religions of the world hold out some form of eternal bliss for their followers. People want to think that some kind of heaven exists. They surely don’t want to believe in hell, but they sure want to think about the prospects of eternal bliss. Surveys reveal that many people don’t think or want to think that hell exists, but they do overwhelmingly believe in some kind of heaven. For many, all one has to do is to be marginally good to make it. As long as their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds they will get to heaven, and they have a standard of good that is quite lenient.

This desire for eternal life is natural, for man was created to live forever. The human being innately has a disdain for death. Funerals are grim reminders to us all

that death awaits us. Of course, the Bible does say that there will be one generation of Christians in human history that will not experience death but will be instantly changed from mortal to immortal at the second coming of Jesus Christ (I Thess. 4:14-18; I Cor. 15:50-58).

Man was created with a body and a soul with both aspects as essential qualities. It is thoroughly unbiblical to view the body as some kind of prison house for the immortal soul. That view is a Greek philosophical lie. Unfortunately, this Greek dualist concept has infected Christian thought throughout the centuries. The truth is, the body is so important to God He will resurrect it one day. There will be victory over death for the Christian.

When the gospel is proclaimed, we must be sure that we accurately inform people of the TRUTH. The truth is that most people's ideas of how to get to heaven are wrong. Yes, it is fine to desire eternal life. Yes, it is held out to us as an incentive to believe in Jesus. But, we must be careful to inform them that the way to heaven is very narrow (through Jesus only), that there is a judgment of hell for all who do not obey the gospel, which is to believe in Jesus. It is not uncommon for eulogies at funerals to emphasize that the deceased is in a better place, even if this person never confessed Christ as his Lord and Savior. At some point, we must not allow this concept to be perpetuated. Yes, it can be very difficult when some relative asks you, "Don't you think uncle Fred is in a better place now?" The difficulty is that you know that uncle Fred never did confess Jesus,

that he rejected the gospel when it was presented to him. Uncle Fred may have been a “good” man in the eyes of the world, who gave much money to charitable causes, who was the life of the party as a personality. So now, you must inform the questioner that uncle Fred didn’t make it to heaven. How do you tell the truth without coming across as some cruel, heartless, religious fanatic? The temptation is to avoid somehow answering directly the question, knowing that the questioner will be taken back at your answer. Failing to tell them the truth at some point is a betrayal of your witness. It leaves the impression to the questioner that the way to eternal life is as he perceives it. Letting this person have this impression is really heartless! It would only delude this man with a false understanding of the way of salvation. At the funeral is probably not the best place to answer the question. It would be best to say to the relative, “Your question is one of immense importance, and I want to take some time to adequately talk to you about it. I will give you a telephone call or better yet, I will come to your house so we can talk.”

For the person who has repented of his sins and believed in Jesus as the only savior of sinners, there is the hope of eternal life. Jesus said that He was the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). Jesus said that He came to give life and to give it abundantly (John 10:10). There is that marvelous scene recorded in John 11 where Jesus’ friend Lazarus has died. When Lazarus was very sick, his sisters Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus to come to Bethany so He could heal his friend just like He had

been healing many who were strangers. Jesus deliberately delays for two days until Lazarus is dead. When Jesus arrives at the home of Lazarus, He finds Lazarus' sisters, Mary and Martha, grieving over the loss of their beloved brother. Martha is very troubled that Jesus did not come and heal His dear friend (vs. 20-21). Jesus says that Lazarus will rise again, and Martha says he will rise on the last day, but she has lost him in this life. Jesus then gives one of the most comforting, awe-inspiring statements – *“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”* (John 11:25-26). Martha then responds to Jesus' question saying, *“Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God”* (v. 27). The promise of Jesus is that all who physically die shall live again physically and those who live and believe in Him shall never die spiritually; they shall never taste everlasting death. Martha's confession is powerful. Jesus wants to know if Martha believes that Jesus possesses the power of eternal life. Martha's confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God is a confession that the Son of God possesses the power over death. However, she has no idea that Jesus is going to give her and others present an object lesson of this truth. Jesus commands some people to remove the stone to the cave where Lazarus was laid. Martha is concerned that the stench from his dead body for four days would be overwhelming. Jesus says to her, *“Did I not say to you, if you believe you will see the glory of God?”*(v.40). When the stone was removed, Jesus raised

His eyes in prayer saying, *“Father, I thank Thee that Thou hearest Me. And I know that Thou hearest Me always; but because of the people standing around I said it, that they may believe that Thou didst send Me”* (vs. 41-42). Jesus then raises Lazarus from the dead to the utter amazement of those present. Jesus wanted those present to clearly understand that believing in the Son of God, who is the Messiah, the Christ, means believing that He possesses the keys to immortality. The gospel demands that one believes only in Jesus as the One who grants eternal life. Those who do not believe in Him shall not see eternal life. Many of the Jews present at Bethany witnessing this miracle believed in Jesus (v. 45). But to show the hardheartedness of the Pharisees, they plotted to kill Jesus even though they acknowledged that He was performing great signs. They feared that unless something drastically was done that all men would believe in Him (vs. 47-53).

Romans 6:23 affirms that the wages of sin is death but that the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. All men are sinners and will die, but there is the hope of eternal life in Him who has conquered death Himself. In I Corinthians 15:50-58 we see that in the resurrection of the body there is finally victory over physical death through Jesus Christ. Death has forever lost its sting. Jesus, the great conqueror of death, has opened up the portals to everlasting life to all who will simply embrace Him.

Colossians 1:5 refers to the hope laid up for us in heaven. We hear of this hope in the gospel of truth. The

truth is that there is hope for sinful mankind. I Peter 1:3-9 speaks of God's mercy as causing us to be born again to a living hope because of Jesus' resurrection. This hope is our inheritance in Christ, which is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, reserved by God, and protected by God Himself. The realization of this inheritance brings rejoicing and an inexpressible joy.

There are other ways in which this inheritance is pictured. Jesus referred to it as treasures laid up in heaven (Matt. 6:19-20). Jesus sought to bring comfort and hope to His disciples by His words in John 14:1-6. First, He says that they should not have troubled hearts about their eternal destinies. The key is to believe in Him (v. 1). Jesus then assures them that in His Father's house there are many dwelling places. He then says that when He goes away, it is for the purpose that He may prepare a dwelling place for them. Then, He will come again to personally escort them to this marvelous inheritance. What a marvelous promise that should indeed comfort all who believe in Him. Mankind's desire to live forever is fulfilled in Jesus. When Jesus returns and brings all of mankind that has ever lived before His judgment seat, He will declare to the sheep, the righteous ones, "*inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*" (Matt. 25:34). During His earthly ministry Jesus gave the parable of the talents whereby He declared that His faithful stewards will be rewarded by entering into the joy of their master (Matt. 25:21). The great joy of Christians is that they get to spend eternity with the One who was

willing to become the God/Man forever in order to save them from their sins. The day of the second coming is the day of resurrection as well. When that day occurs, all Christians who have ever lived will have their souls reunited with their resurrected bodies, and redeemed mankind will have their humanity restored in the way it was created, but this time with no chance of having sin come in and ripping apart body and soul (I Thess. 4:14-18). Redeemed man, perfect soul and perfect body, will go away with Jesus and dwell with Him forever. Hallelujah! This reality is referred to as glorification and is the culmination of man's redemption in Christ (Romans 8:18, 30).

The Christian inheritance is seen as a reward, but the reward is not seen as a typical reward. Normally, a reward is something that we achieve through our efforts. The Scripture makes it clear that the reward given to us is a gift to us. We did not earn eternal life through our efforts; it was earned by Jesus' works of righteousness done on our behalf. Yes, the Bible does speak of Jesus rewarding the faithful stewards, but we always need to understand that our good works are our response, our fruit, our evidence that Jesus has saved us (Eph. 2:8-10).

The Christian's inheritance is a crown of righteousness that is awarded to all who love Jesus' appearing (2 Tim. 4:8). It is the imperishable wreath that is awarded to all who finish the great race of life by believing in Jesus to the end (I Cor. 9:24).



Should the perception of having these eternal rewards be a conscious motivation for us to serve God? Absolutely! This reward may not always be in the forefront of all our actions, but it is surely meant to give us hope. Paul speaks of the reward of our inheritance for service to Christ (Col. 3:23). The cursings and blessings of the covenant given in the Old Testament under Moses were meant to be warnings and incentives for obedience. God said – *“I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants”* (Deut. 30:19).

As noted earlier, all men want to live forever. Who would want to consciously go to hell to suffer forever? The bottom line is that the gospel is not only the way for men to be forgiven of their sins and be spared from the fires of hell, but it is the way to eternal life with a perfect soul and body. We can legitimately say to men, “Repent lest you perish and choose Christ that you may live, you and your descendants.”

## **The Free Offer Of the Gospel**

When Peter was preaching the gospel, he said that God shows no partiality but that men in every nation who fear Him and do what is right are welcome to Him (Acts 10:34-35). Both Jews and Gentiles have been brought near through the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:12-13). Romans 10:13 remains ever true – *“for whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.”* Paul’s

quote is actually taken from Joel's prophecy in the Old Testament. In this prophecy, Joel foresees a day where God will display wonders in the sky and earth, where the sun will be turned into darkness, the moon into blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And it will be that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be delivered (Joel 2:30-32). Peter refers to this prophecy on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out with great power upon the disciples and they testified of Jesus in Jerusalem (Acts 2:14-21). On that basis, Peter continues his sermon intending to bring a conviction of sin to those who had participated in Jesus' death. As a result of his sermon, God did convict 3000 people of their sins (Acts 2:37-47).

Someone might say, "Hold on. I thought you were a Calvinist who believes in predestination? How can you speak about a free offer to people to choose Christ, if you believe in election?" The problem is that people think that God's sovereignty and man's responsibility are mutually exclusive. Acts 13:48 speaks directly to the issue when it says, "*And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.*" Being appointed to eternal life is being elected or predestined to eternal life. The elect will believe! That is the proof they are elect. I once had a man tell me, "How do I know if I am one of the elect?" I said to him, "Do you believe in Jesus as your Lord and Savior? If so, then you can be assured you have eternal

life.” Now, the Bible assumes that this belief is a saving belief and not a false faith.

Do men choose Jesus as their Lord and Savior? Technically, the answer is yes and no. The answer is yes in the sense that any act of the will to receive Christ and follow Him is a choice of the will. God told Israel to choose life and not death (Deut. 30:19). Any time that a command is given by God, a response of obedience is expected. This is a volitional act, that is, we choose. The answer is also no in the sense that salvation is not of human origin but is of God. God must initiate; God must soften the hardened heart; God must remove the scales from our eyes; God must deliver us from the bondage of sin and Satan. John 1:12-13 says that those who received Jesus were given the right to be called children of God, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man but of God. The origin of salvation is in God, not man’s will. The regenerating work of God precedes the ability to receive Jesus. The point is – the Holy Spirit gives us a new heart which then dictates to our will the choices that we make. This is exactly what Jesus said in Luke 6:45 – *“The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.”* Jesus said to His disciples *“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit”* (John 15:16). Jesus is saying nothing different than what is meant in John 1:12-13. Salvation is of divine origin, not

of human origin. Men do not choose to be elected; they are elected in order to choose. This is consistent with the entire biblical testimony. Jesus told His disciples that they could not come to Him unless they were given to Him by the Father (John 6:37, 44). This relationship of election to human decisions is seen in Matthew 11:27-30. In v.27 Jesus says that no one can know the Son except those whom the Son wills to reveal Himself. And then immediately in v.28, Jesus says, *“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls.”*

The responsibility of the herald or preacher of the gospel is to simply proclaim the good news, the message of salvation, and leave the results to God. None of us know who the elect are; we don't need to know. Those who have been ordained to eternal life will hear the gospel and choose to come to Jesus to find rest for their souls. Jesus told His disciples: *“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”* (Mark 16:15-16).

## **One Methodology I Use**

One evangelistic method that I use to meet people, with the intent of proclaiming the gospel, is the use of a survey relating to the Ten Commandments. I go to parks, the beach, college campuses, or any outside

public place to talk with people. I approach a person or couple, telling them that I am surveying people in the community about the Ten Commandments, and if they graciously consent, I give them a nice 5 x 7 rendition of the Ten Commandments that they could frame if they so choose. With this copy of the Ten Commandments, I enclose a brochure that I wrote on the relevancy of the Ten Commandments for society. In this brochure I explain how God's Law relates to our salvation. I enclose a church business card of how they can reach me.

I have devised several questions that enable me to learn how they view God's Law as it relates to them and society in general. The six questions are: (1) What is your personal view of the Ten Commandments? (2) Do you seek to pattern your life after the Ten Commandments? (3) Do you think that the Ten Commandments should be displayed in public buildings such as in courthouses and schools? (4) Do you think the Ten Commandments are relevant for our present society? (5) Do you think that the Ten Commandments can be perfectly kept? (6) What do you think is God's attitude about our relationship to His Ten Commandments?

Giving this survey is most illuminating. I learn very quickly their view of God, of sin, and how they think man can be right with God. After I give the survey, I ask them if I can explain to them what the Bible says about God's Law and how it pertains to man's salvation. Virtually all of the unbelievers that I survey have the

concept that God judges us on the basis of our good deeds. Asking them whether they believe that the Law of God can be perfectly kept is extremely helpful. I will use their answer to show them that God does expect perfect obedience and how our failure to perfectly obey leads to our condemnation before a Holy God, which is why we need a Savior.

I have found that the issues we discuss during this encounter are quite diverse. They will deal with the nature of truth, with whether other religions are viable ways to God, with the nature of man and of sin, with the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, and with whether Jesus was a real person in history just to name a few. I have had the opportunity to put to use presuppositional apologetics.

The reason that I like using this methodology of beginning with the Ten Commandments is because there is biblical precedent. It was the discovery of the law of God in the temple during the reign of Josiah that brought conviction to the king, which in turn God used to bring a revival to the society (2 Chronicles 34). We do know that the works of the Law are written on the hearts of all men (Romans 2:15, 27). I found in my surveys that even unbelievers have a respect for the Ten Commandments and see their value in human society.

Regardless of the particular method you may choose, the gospel is the pearl of great price; the precious treasure that we must never be ashamed of, for it is the power of God unto salvation. It is mankind's only way

and hope of eternal life. We must have the same perspective as did Jesus in Matthew 9:36-38, *“And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.’”*

**The main points in this booklet, with Bible verses, have been made into a gospel tract that you can leave with someone.**