

The Simple Gospel

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Preacher: Tom Holland

[0:00] Hear the Word of the Lord, written to us by the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 11.

So your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

First, the most important thing for the true church in the 21st century is the recovery of the gospel that was once delivered to the saints.

First, the gospel that I am speaking of was that which was preached by Christ and written about by Paul and the other apostles.

When I mention those five words, the recovery of the gospel, it may cause some people to stir just a bit.

[1:31] It raises an immediate question, does the gospel need recovering? And I would say to you that the short answer to that is yes.

The longer answer is yes, and the need for recovery is verified by the history of the church in the 20th and now 21st centuries.

But before I set out to show you some of the reasons the gospel became lost and in need of recovery, let me make clear just how important such a recovery is to all of us.

To do this, one need only to listen to the inspired words of Paul in the opening chapter of Galatians 1. Verses 6-7.

These words constitute the most dire and essential warning to every human that has or ever will live. Paul says, writing by the power of the Holy Spirit, I am amazed.

[2:48] That is about the strongest word we have in the Greek language. I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting him who called you, by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel.

Which is really not another, only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed.

As we've said before, so I say now again, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed.

There is but one true gospel. It is the good news concerning Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit gave it to Paul and he preached it and he wrote about it.

And if someone comes to you and preaches any other gospel than that which Paul preached, that person has already been declared by God to be eternally condemned.

[4:11] That's the Greek word for accursed. Anathema. This is such a serious matter that the Holy Spirit had Paul repeat the warning twice for emphasis.

That is how important the true gospel is when compared to another or a different gospel. Do I mean to say there are different gospels out there?

We can get in the car and go five miles and I'll show you churches that are preaching a different gospel. Sadly, another gospel was introduced to the church in the early years of the 20th century, not quite a hundred years ago.

There was a shift in what men and women thought about the scriptures, including, and we should probably say especially, the gospel.

This was caused by a number of circumstances that came together at a particular point in time. It included such things as denominations and seminaries buying into the higher critical school of German theologians who had basically come up with the idea that scripture was one giant allegory or a metaphor and that it did not teach truth.

[5:35] It was concocted by men. It also involved the leaders of denominations and seminaries accepting lock, stock, and barrel Darwinian evolution as fact and not theory.

And once evolution was accepted as fact, it then became necessary to fit the Bible and especially pre-Abrahamic history.

The first 11 chapters of the Bible in Genesis had to be fitted into a scientific model. If science said something that was true and the Bible held a contrary view, then the Bible was in error.

This was the German higher critical school. Now there were a lot of other reasons, but they are not our focus this evening. The result of all this was both subtle but startling at the same time.

It was subtle because it crept into mainline denominations not by storm. It was like a creeping London fog.

[6:42] And if you've been in London and seen their fog, you know what I'm talking about. It was startling because the damage was both immediate and long-term.

The human race still suffers from those who captured and then subverted the true saving gospel. Well, what were the results of this subversion?

Ironically, it was not so much what this false gospel did, but rather what it failed to do. Here's a partial list of what was abandoned when the false gospel captured the church.

Lost to many churches was deep reverence for God, deep and genuine repentance, deep humility, a spirit of worship in the church, in the family, and in the individual, any teaching on holiness, church discipline, and the legitimate practice of evangelism.

Now, as I say, this is only a partial list. But this was what was lost. And sadly, there are many denominations today in the world and in America that never recovered from that time.

[8:08] The reason the new gospel failed in all these categories, and even those that I haven't mentioned, was that it failed to make men and women God-centered in their thoughts and God-fearing in their hearts.

It was not even designed to do so. The new false gospel that replaced the old biblical gospel had as its primary focus the well-being of men.

This new gospel was designed to be helpful to mankind by ushering in a state of peace, comfort, happiness, and satisfaction.

Now, those qualities sound good, and you may be thinking, what's wrong with that? And the answer is nothing if they are produced God's way, if God's producing those things.

The old gospel actually achieved these things for generations. But they were achieved because the church held fiercely to the saving gospel and the goal of the saving gospel, which was to bring glory to God in all things.

[9:23] That is of utmost importance, and it bears repeating. The gospel that Paul preached was designed to bring glory to God in all things. That is why the church, as the beneficiary of the good news and the transmitter of the good news to the lost world, are to bring glory to God in all things and in all circumstances.

That's just one small example. When the primary focus of the church was centered on the glory of God, the church achieved peace, comfort, happiness, and satisfaction.

The church did that even in the midst of terrible persecution around the world. That's still true today in those areas where the church is restricted or forbidden.

You can identify the true gospel because it was and is always a proclamation of divine sovereignty dispensing mercy and grace.

the true gospel is always a call for men and women to repent, to bow down, and to worship our mighty God on whom we depend for everything.

[10:41] And when I say everything, that is what I mean. No living thing on earth, including us, can even take another breath were it not for the undeserved grace of God.

He holds our very breath in His hands. In the new gospel that supplanted the true biblical gospel, the center reference point was changed from God to man.

The subject of the true gospel was God and His ways with mankind. The subject of the false gospel was and is man in His cosmic setting and how God might come alongside to help him to feel better and to prosper.

This was summed up by a modern day pastor who holds fiercely to the false gospel. He writes and he preaches that the Bible is man-centered and that even theology is the study of man in His cosmic setting.

Now that's the oxymoron of the ages. How can theology be the study of man? The very word theology means the study of God. Theology, it's the study of God.

[12:02] The false gospel had a devastating result in the area of evangelism and witnessing. Salvation was reduced downward to its lowest common denominator.

It was then taught, this came in the 50's, that salvation was a formula. It was a formula of certain words and if they were spoken in the proper order, then that person could be assured of eternal life no matter what they did the next five minutes or the rest of their life.

Consequently, millions were led astray by a false gospel and have or will stand before Christ not as the merciful king but as the judge to execute justice.

So the question this evening is very basic. What is the gospel of Jesus Christ? There is no more important question to answer because the gospel of Christ stands at the very center of true Christianity.

One writer has said this very appropriately. an emancipated gospel leads to emancipated worship. It lowers our eyes from God to self.

[13:24] It cheapens what God has accomplished for us in Christ. The biblical gospel by contrast is like fuel in the furnace of worship. So what is the gospel and where do we find it?

Well, of course it is found throughout the pages of the Bible especially the New Testament. Within the ranks of the New Testament writers inspired by the Holy Spirit Paul gave us the gospel message thoroughly in all 13 of his books.

It is most clearly presented in the book of Romans. Paul I've taught the book of Romans I usually take my shoes off anytime I mention the book of Romans.

You're on holy ground. Paul tells us there one we are accountable to God. We're accountable to God. Paul begins in the very first chapter by telling his audience that men and women in every age are accountable to God.

In chapter 1 verse 18 the wrath of God is revealed from heaven. Because God has created every human he has the right to demand that we worship him.

[14:38] But we are created beings and because of that we have an absolute obligation to give our creator God honor and glory that is due him. He created us and he owns us.

Therefore we are to live and speak we are to act and think in a way that both recognizes and acknowledges God's authority over us.

We are made by him owned by him dependent upon him and therefore accountable to him. remember the wrath that is revealed is revealed to creatures that know there is a God.

How can I say that? Well Paul tells us that even creation cries out to mankind verifying the existence of God.

The psalmist said that even the heavens declare the glory of God. that is why men and women standing before God are without excuse as to why they did not honor and worship him.

[15:46] He places in every human heart that God shaped void that there is somebody more powerful greater and worthy of worship. So the first point that Paul makes in presenting the simple and true and biblical gospel is that we are owned by God and therefore we are accountable to him.

But there is a problem and this problem makes up Paul's second point in his presentation of the true saving gospel and the problem is this we have all rebelled against God.

And underline that word all in your thinking. We the human race rebelled against our creator God. Again Romans chapter 1 verse 22 and 23 professing to be wise they became fools and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and the birds and of four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

And if you think about that it is a very revolting statement. Men who thought themselves wise certainly wiser than God think of God their creator as some type of an image made of wood stone or metal and that resembles all kinds of birds and animals and crawling insects and created things. That is a rebuke to God. That's a rebuke to God. That has to be near the very height of rebellion against the true God.

[17:30] It is almost as high rebellion as when men think of themselves more glorious than the true God of the universe. Now the vast majority of the world is presently living their lives in rebellion to the creator God of the universe.

They are trapped in religion. They are trapped in all kinds of other things that they think is going to suffice. That is what makes the biblical command for the church to go into the uttermost parts of the world so vitally necessary.

It's important. Vitally important. We find this rebellion when we look at the world's religions. We find it in cults. We find it in the occult. We find it in agnosticism and we find it in atheism.

Dare I say this but there are people within a stone's throw of us that are in rebellion toward God. They are in rebellion.

Paul then moves into chapter 3, 4, and 5 of Romans and there he indicts all of humanity. He focuses on the Gentiles.

[18:44] He focuses on the Jews. He then focuses on every human that ever lived. That includes all of us. In chapter 3 he begins by declaring that all have sinned and then he provides a list of indictments against the human race.

He says this, chapter 3, there is not a single righteous person, not even one. There is no one that even understands God.

Well this will really get you. There is no one who seeks God. Every person has turned away from God, making themselves useless.

There is not a single person who does good. There is no fear of God before anyone's eyes. What an indictment on the human race. It is a stinging rebuke.

This is the indictment of every person who has ever lived, ever will live. No one will ever stand before the living God and offer the slightest defense for their behavior.

[19:56] They will be silenced. This is why I so fear Matthew 7 where people stand before God in judgment and say, wait a minute, I did the following things. Don't ever do that.

When you stand before God and judge, remember, Tom said, don't make a defense, just throw yourself on the mercy of the judge. And I says earlier now, the word gospel means good news. Well, these first two points have been anything but good news, right? To tell me that I've rebelled against God, that I'll be judged and condemned by Him, is not good news.

And that's true, with this exception. All of this bad news is the pavement on the highway that leads us to the good news.

It is the highway that leads to Christ and the cross and salvation. It is useless to tell someone there is a pathway to God whereby He will save you unless that person really believes they need to be saved.

[21:05] Today, you'll see the great preachers when they're going to preach a message of salvation, they start in the law to show people their sinfulness. Ray Comfort is probably the best there is at that. They start with the law to show people they have rebelled against God.

once a person sees yes, I need salvation, then the gospel becomes good news.

That is why Paul spends so much time convincing people that they are fallen sinners in need of a Savior. So the apostle Paul does not leave us hanging and twisting slowly in the wind.

Instead, he presents us God's solution for our problem. God has a solution. And please underline this thought, God's solution is his only solution.

He's only got one solution. So what is the solution to our sin and separation from God? God's solution solution to our rebellion is the sacrificial death and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.

[22:27] That's the good news. That's the gospel. We've heard the bad news. So please, Paul, give us a little good news here. And he does that beginning in verse 21 of Romans 3, and it begins with these words, but now.

I'll tell you what, that's some of the prettiest words in the Bible, but now or but God. Great, great words. They may be the most important words in the entire Bible.

Elsewhere, the Spirit uses the words, but God. And they are absolutely thrilling thoughts. But now, God has revealed a righteousness righteousness that can be attained.

It is apart from the keeping of the law, because the law wasn't given to save you, it was given to drive you to a savior. No one was ever saved by keeping the law.

I have people often tell me, well, I'm just trying, I'm going to stand before God in judgment, but I'm just trying to keep the commandments. We've never kept the greatest commandment one second.

[23:47] Now, if you're going to keep any commandment, doesn't it make sense to keep the greatest one? Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength? No human's ever kept that for one second. Not when you apply the word all.

But God has given us a righteousness apart from law, and apart from any set of rules, or regulations. There is a way for human beings to be counted righteous before God.

There is a way for human beings to be declared innocent. To have our guilt removed by God. And the Bible uses a lot of metaphors or examples of that.

Cast your sins into the depths of the sea. Place your sins in the small of God places them in the small of his back. Do you ever look at the small of your back?

Don't use a mirror. Just look at it and then go to the chiropractor because you're going to need one. There is a way for humans to be counted righteous.

[24 : 53] There is a way to be declared innocent. The way spoken of here has nothing to do with external behavior.

here. It doesn't come to us by acting more righteous or pretending to be righteous or living better or being good even if we could ever achieve God's standard of goodness for even a moment.

How many people have you ever witnessed to who said, you know, I know what you're saying and I need to do something, but I'm not good enough right now. When I get better, I'll do that. You're not going to get better. It's not going to happen.

So how is this righteousness achieved? Paul is very clear on this in Romans 3.24. We can be justified, that means made righteous, as a gift.

A gift by God's grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. We can be made righteous. That implies, by the way, an external force, not internal.

[25 : 54] We can be made righteous, it comes to us as a gift of God's grace. It is found and only found in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

Now those are powerful words, beloved. Those are words that will stand the test of time and endure for eternity to those who embrace Christ Jesus.

Because of the sacrificial death and resurrection of Christ, because He shed His blood and died and rose again, sinners may be saved from the condemnation their sins deserve.

All of this is wonderful. It is wonderful to those of us of whom the Lord has already saved. But what about the lost? What about those still in rebellion to God and the very God who created them?

How is it good news to the lost? Well, this is where the simple gospel really comes into focus.

Where does this magnificent salvation come from?

[27 : 02] Well, in verse 22 it says this, through faith in Jesus Christ. That's why it's simple. Through faith in Jesus Christ.

That word faith, same word for believe, same word for trust, same word for commit your life to. The Greek word is pistou. They're all the same word in the Greek language.

A simple gospel that we need to recapture and take to the uttermost parts of the world is that if you will believe, trust, commit your life, have faith in Christ Jesus, and trust in nothing else or no one else, including yourself, He will save you.

He will save you. Jesus is still in the business of saving people, isn't He? He's still in that business. There's a great passage, I love it in Romans 4-5, I remember reading this many years ago, and I really come back to this a lot.

But to the one who does not work, who are they? Those are people trying to earn their salvation. Those are the people on the broad road that leads to destruction.

[28 : 21] You know, if I do enough Hail Marys, if I give enough money, if I do enough good works and help people, I'll be saved. But to those, to the one who does not work, but believes, there's that word, pistou in the Greek, belief, trust, faith, trust, commit, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly.

That's Christ. His faith is credited as righteousness. You want an account filled with righteousness? It comes from faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. God will credit that to your account. You cannot work for your salvation. You can never earn your salvation.

But where we are seated here tonight, we can trust Christ. Christ. And when we do, He will present us to the Father as perfectly righteous.

Perfectly righteous. The writer of Hebrews said that we can come boldly into the throne room of God there to receive grace and mercy in our time of need.

[29 : 40] How do we do that? You can do it only one way. Cloaked in the righteousness of Christ. The Father sees Tom Holland and I can promise you he sees a sinner.

But then he sees Christ cloaking me in his righteousness and he says I'm satisfied. My wrath has been satisfied not because of Tom Holland but because of Christ and what he has accomplished on the cross.

Christ is perfectly righteous and he will give his righteousness to anyone as a free gift who will come and receive it. Only by his righteousness imputed to us can we stand before the Father without spot or blemish.

And the indictment that I read to you earlier will have written across it in blood these words forgiven. Forgiven. I remember a story that Martin Luther told and whether you know it or not or whether you agree with it or not we are here tonight as a product of the work of Martin Luther.

And if I had time I could verify that. The great reformer. And Martin Luther, a lot of people don't know this, he did battle with the devil.

[31:06] You can go to a place in Germany in the room where Martin Luther lived and there is an ink stain on the wall where he threw an ink bottle at the devil. And he says he came into my room and he was harassing me and I threw this ink bottle at him and the stain is still there.

It was very real to Martin Luther. Martin Luther said he was in his bed and he says quite honestly I don't know if I was asleep or in the spirit.

I don't know. But he said Satan came to me and he had in his hands a scroll.

And he said Martin Luther you think you're something. You think you have a relationship with God. Let me show you something. He started to unravel the scroll and contained on that scroll was every sin Martin Luther had ever committed.

and it was lengthy. And he just kept unraveling. And they would come to Martin Luther's memory. And he got down to the bottom and he stopped.

[32:16] And he said the Lord Jesus came and said Martin Luther tell Satan to unravel the rest of the scroll. Martin told him. He said unravel the rest of the scroll.

Satan refused. Jesus said tell him to unravel the rest of the scroll. He told him. Satan refused. He wouldn't unravel. Jesus said Martin command Satan in my name and by my blood to unravel that scroll.

And Satan did. He had no power. He unraveled to the very bottom and it said Martin Luther's sins have been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb.

We all have a scroll. what does your say at the bottom? What does the bottom? What does bottom?