

The True Gospel

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Date: 21 July 2013

Preacher: Tom Holland

[0:00] When Diane and I joined Highland Park, I was around 30 years of age.

! She was around 29.! I am now 65, soon to be 66.

She, on the other hand, is still 29. I've often been accused of being crazy, but never stupid. I've got to go home with her tonight.

To some of you, that seems young. If Ralph and Mary Lou were here, they would certainly say that's young. In fact, Brother Ralph, I think, had a birthday last week. To most, though, it's like over the hill.

Do people really get that old, you know? And if I've learned one thing in the sojourn in this life called the Christian faith, it is this.

[1:19] The gospel is everything. I guess my library at home is approaching 2,500 or maybe 3,000 volumes.

At last count, I think I had seven libraries at the house, if you include beside the bed and in all the bathrooms. Diane can tell you more about stacks of books than I can.

And they're on a variety of scriptural and spiritual topics, but it all comes back to the gospel. The gospel of Christ is everything.

Listen to how important the gospel was to the apostle Paul, who was writing down the words of the Holy Spirit in the first chapter of Galatians.

Starting in verse 6, chapter 1 of Galatians. I'm amazed, and I'm told that's a strong word in the Greek language. I'm amazed that you are so quickly deserting him who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel.

[2:46] 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 have said before, so I say again, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed.

Very strong word. Speaking of eternal condemnation. The gospel is obviously very important to God.

The gospel is the greatest treasure ever handed to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[3:51] It is the power of God. I want you to concentrate on that. Just let that run around a little bit in your minds.

It is the power of God. People, you know, demand a sign. And they really demand a sign in our day. We live in a day of signs.

When I'm flipping through the Christian channels, so-called Christian channels, trying to get to 378, which seem to have only the solid teachers, I'm amazed.

I only linger a few seconds on my journey, but they're all wanting a sign. Demanding a sign. The greatest sign of the truth of the gospel is a transformed life.

People say, if I can only see a miracle. We're all miracles, aren't we? The gospel of Christ is transforming. And all too often I run into somebody that has not been transformed, and yet they say, you know, but I have a strong faith, and I know I'm going to heaven someday, and it doesn't work that way.

[5:13] The gospel of Christ transforms lives. It makes alcoholics, non-alcoholics. It makes wife abusers to love their families and be loving toward their wife and children, and, you know, we could go on and on and on.

There is nothing more powerful from the human standpoint than a redeemed and regenerated life now being lived for the glory of God.

It is an amazing thing to watch. The gospel is also the greatest revelation of the wisdom of God. Think about what happened back in the Garden of Eden. Think about the fall of the human race. I told Dr. McBride one time, you know, we have never plumbed the depths of what that meant to God.

It sealed the fate of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, God knew that before the foundation of the world, but we've never really plumbed the depths of the depravity of humankind that initiated at the Garden of Eden.

[6:29] Everything that flowed from the wellhead of Adam was polluted with sin. Everything. And everything changed instantly. And yet God came to us with the gospel.

Who among the gods of the human imagination, and there are millions of them, could have ever devised a plan where sinners could be reconciled to God by God coming to this earth, taking upon himself human flesh, and dying in their place, and taking their punishment.

The human mind could not invent that. You couldn't write a novel and claim that. People wouldn't buy it. They said, there's no way that would happen. And yet it did happen.

I think often of the birth of Christ. If I had written that, where would we have had him born? Son of God? Oh, a palace, you know, gold plates, and servants, and, you know, God's ways are not our ways.

Humble. Humble origin. And as the gospel has been handed down from generation to generation, God has given the church the responsibility to protect the purity of his gospel.

[8:00] That's our charge. We are charged with the purity of the gospel, holding it in our hands and in our hearts.

This very generation of which we're all members are the stewards of God's truth, and we are called upon to hand it down to the next generation.

Some of the next generation are seated back there. And that's our calling. We're to hand it down without stain or blemish. We have been commissioned by the Spirit of God to guard the truth of the good news.

And that's what gospel means. It is the good news. We have been commissioned to spread the gospel to every nation. It's happening right now in the Ukraine.

We have been commissioned to understand the gospel and to put the gospel on display every day in our life while we are on this planet.

[9:13] It doesn't just end when we leave church tonight, right? It's to be on display. Now, we must admit that as the people of God on a global level and certainly in America, we at times have done a poor job in accomplishing the task I just mentioned.

I always enjoy teaching on Sunday night and Wednesday night because in those services you really and truly find the remnant. And I wonder, do all of you understand the concept of the remnant?

Throughout the pages of Scripture, God has always had His remnant of believers. believers. And when you look at the Bible, there are many instances, Old and New Testament, when people turned their backs and they walked away from the revelation of God.

It happened to Christ in John chapter 6. It said, many followed Him no more. So it happens. And yet, God has always been able to preserve a seed of believers to carry on.

I'm not implying that if you don't show up on Sunday night or Wednesday night, you're unsaved. It's not what I mean at all. But, as Dr. McBride used to say, if you want to know who your church is, look at Sunday night and Wednesday night.

[10:39] Those were His words. That's really who your church is. Powerful statement. The prophet Elijah, when he was on earth, got to the point where he thought he was the only believer on earth.

He thought he was the last one. And this is, this is what happened. Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel. Israel had become pagan.

And Elijah says, Lord, they have killed your prophets. They have torn down your altars. And I alone am left. And they are seeking my life.

Wow, that's, that's a call of desperation. And listen, the scripture says, what is the divine response to him? This is God spoke to Elijah and he said, I have kept for myself 7,000 men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.

Comforting words. In the same way then, there are also, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice.

[11:50] I love what Dr. McGee says on this. He has a commentary on this and also on his radio program. He said, I don't have much respect for those 7,000 men.

Where were they? They weren't helping Elijah. You know, they were just out there somewhere. In my own travels throughout the world, I have always found a believer regardless of the culture I am visiting.

I run into believers. I ran into Beijing on the elevator. A Chinese man that had the dove on his lapel and he saw me looking at he couldn't speak English, I couldn't speak Chinese, so we just taught Christianese.

There was just this unity with us. I have run into believers in Hanoi. I have run into them in Indonesia.

Shane, you know what I'm talking about. Wherever you go, there are believers. In our day, we are the remnant and we are charged with the responsibility of preserving the gospel and passing it on unsullied to the next generation.

[13:07] That's our charge. I note, however, there is a problem in our own generation concerning the gospel even, I would have to say, among the elect remnant of God, and I'm speaking here more nationally than locally and more probably nationally even than globally.

I'm kind of pointing my finger at America right now. The gospel has been lost in its fullness in many churches today.

It's been lost. when I was just a shirt tail boy, I was growing up on a dirt street just a few blocks that way. We looked out our back door and all we saw were farms looking toward the east.

This was barren land. I used to come here and shoot my BB gun. I remember when they started building this church and I was scared to death because I thought you guys handled snakes and did all kinds of weird stuff and didn't know that I would someday join here.

that was another time. There's one thing I hated though when I was little and that's when I'd be in school and the teacher would come in and!

[14:26] put away your books and get out a piece of paper and a pencil. I hated that. Oh, I hated that. I hadn't cracked that book and if there wasn't a real smart girl sitting next to me I was doomed.

I mean really doomed. Now, I'm not going to do this to you tonight. I'm not going to suggest you get out a piece of paper and a pencil. I wouldn't want you to do that to me because we'd all be uncomfortable.

But can you imagine if tonight our assignment was to get out a piece of paper and kind of separate and let's write down the gospel.

And you know probably everybody in here would get some. Everybody would get some of it. None of us would get all of it of course. But it would be a frightening experience and they would all probably be a little different.

When you go to some churches and say what is the gospel they will look at you like you're from another planet. That's not their focus. It's not their focus at all.

[15:34] I'm going to read to you what I consider to be probably the greatest description of the gospel that I've ever read. Bear with me please.

This is to answer the question what is the gospel? In accordance with the father's good pleasure the eternal son who is equal with the father and is the exact representation of his nature willingly left the glory of heaven was conceived by the holy spirit in the womb of the virgin and was born the God man Jesus of Nazareth as a man he walked on the earth in perfect obedience to the law of God in the fullness of time men rejected and crucified him on the cross he bore man's sin suffered God's wrath and died in man's place on the third day God raised him from the dead the resurrection is the divine declaration that the father has accepted his son's death as a sacrifice for sin

Jesus paid the penalty for man's disobedience satisfied the demands of justice and appeased the wrath of God 40 days after the resurrection the son of God ascended into the heavens sat down at the right hand of the father and was given glory honor and dominion over all there in the presence of God he represents his people and makes requests to God on their behalf all who acknowledge their sinful helpless state and throw themselves upon God upon Christ God will fully pardon declare righteous and reconcile unto himself this is the gospel of God and of Jesus Christ his son I don't think it gets any better than that and if perchance you agree with me and would like a copy of that

I've made some and Chris got some when it's over he'll be available and I've put some on the very back pew! feel free to take some we've got plenty of copies yet this gospel so essential to salvation can't be saved apart from it has been ignored and neglected by much of the church in our day as a result the generation to follow will be ignorant of what the gospel requires of them if we don't pass it along basic truths concerning God Christ the gospel and mankind are not being proclaimed from many pulpits today not being proclaimed the things that are absent are the justice of God the radical depravity of man the blood atonement the nature of conversion and the biblical basis of assurance many if not most evangelical churches today teach that the gospel is little more than a few creedal statements that conversion is made up of mere human decision apart from the outworking of the spirit of

God and that assurance belongs to anyone who has prayed a prayer or walked forward in a church or taken the pastor by the right hand or done something in some man invented manner in order to be saved and often those folks disappear after a few weeks some have called this gospel reductionism or Christianity light and it has had devastating results first it has hardened the hearts of many of the unconverted and we could probably say in there or the falsely converted those who think they are in a relationship with the Lord and they are really not one of the reasons Billy Graham once said the most fertile evangelistic roles in the world are on the church roles their fertile grounds for evangelism there are millions of people out there who do not pray to

[20 : 22] God who do not honor the son who do not worship in the spirit they do not worship in spirit and truth they have nothing but condemnation for the Lord's church it's filled with hypocrites anybody ever told you that just come back and say hey we got room for one more one more conjoined and at the end of a track that was placed in their hands 30 years ago they followed the pattern and they say I'm okay I'm okay the result of embracing a false gospel is people become anesthetized to the true gospel and when people really go to them with the gospel they say I took care of that don't bother me we've actually had people say that to us don't bother me with that these unsaved millions walk the streets and sit in the pews unaware of the danger they are in with God the second impact of the spread of the false gospel and the impact that it's had on our culture is the deforming of the church from a spiritual body of regenerated believers into a gathering of carnal people who profess to know

God but by their deeds give overwhelming evidence that they do not know him why do we come to church other than it is commanded of us we come because we desire to be with Christ we desire to learn more about him we come to offer him heartfelt worship we come looking for ways to serve him we come wanting to fellowship together there is strength derived here when we are together it's a worn out cliché but if you it's winter you start your fire in the fireplace I'm not suggesting it logs they'll go out you put them back together they'll go on it's a great image of the church as brother Don said last week our worship is our service and our service is our worship but when churches across this land fill up with the unconverted a lesser gospel is proclaimed and there is little if any interest in the

God of the Bible churches whose majorities are carnal and they abound will repackage the true gospel out of fear of offending the majority people show up to hear messages on how to meet felt needs or grab hold of your best life now I'm not making a statement there!

God we guard the gospel we pass down the true gospel to our children and to our grandchildren! we must be diligent students of the word and I promise you you dig into the word of God and you get into the New Testament the gospel is on every page know it so that you can pass it down to your children and to your grandchildren One writer that Jonathan and I are studying right now we do a book study every once a week and being Baptists we do it over food but he said this you know when you get to heaven you're going to be employed you're going to have a job you're not going to sit on a cloud and strum a harp I hope not I don't like harp music I'm not big I liked harpo marks when he did it but the idea that we're going to have an eternity we're going to plumb the depths of the gospel we're going to pick gold nuggets off the cross and examine them in minute detail seated at the feet of

[25 : 40] Christ and perhaps Paul and Peter and who knows and once we really capture that we're going to pick off another gold nugget and it's inexhaustible it is inexhaustible what Christ has done for us and if you're a parent here today if you're over 21 and you're a parent and you all are because these little people running around here may not be your physical children but they're your spiritual children and you're equally responsible for them and their spiritual upbringing you need to

know the gospel guard the gospel and pass down the true gospel to our children and grandchildren pick on Miss Hefner Jan Hefner has passed down that gospel probably to more kids in this town than anyone in here 30 plus years of teaching pass down the true gospel gospel we need to heed the words of the great baptist preacher

Charles Haddon Spurgeon who said this about the true gospel in these days I feel bound to go over again the elementary truths of the gospel in peaceful times we may feel free to make excursions into interesting districts of truth which lie far afield but now we must stay at home and guard the hearths and the homes of the church by defending the first principles of the faith in this age and he lived in the 1800s in this age they have risen up in the church itself men who speak perverse things I wonder what he would say today there may be many that trouble us with their philosophies and novel interpretations whereby they deny the doctrines they profess to teach and undermine the faith they are pledged to maintain it is well that some of us who know what we believe and have no secret meanings of our words should just put our foot down and maintain our standing hold forth the word of life and plainly declaring the foundation truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ and that is precisely what Spurgeon did right up until the point that the church voted him out a lot of people don't know the history there he died a broken man he was voted out of his Baptist church in London because he held to the inerrancy of scripture and I can't be totally sure of this I saw it one time but it was an astronomical vote it was something like 2001 to 4 it was an unbelievable vote of one of the greatest men that God ever raised up to preach the gospel if I may paraphrase Dr.

Francis Schaeffer who was at that time paraphrasing Jeremiah the prophet we have not done a very good job in the 20th and 21st centuries of running with the footman everybody know what a footman is stagecoach England if we've not run good with the footman how are we going to run with the horseman the guys that aren't walking or running they're riding what he meant was that the church has not done well when the assault was only piece meal and it was still piece meal I would suggest when Dr.

Schaeffer died in the early 1980s although it was intensifying and I thank God he saw it and wrote 24 books about it because he saw the attack coming what are we going to do now that the assault on truth is full scale and all out well we're going to do what Jude told us to do we're going to contend earnestly!

[30:01] for the faith the answer and the only answer is that we must hold on to the true gospel with all our might we must pass it down to our children as it was once delivered to the saints by the spirit of God so that they will do the same that's our call only then will we be able to say I have prepared my children physical and spiritual to run with the horse man the horse man