

The Simple Gospel

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Date: 27 January 2013

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[0:00] Well, my message this morning will be simple because it is on the simple gospel.

! Hear the word of the Lord written to us by the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 11. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Let's pray. Amen. Gracious Lord, I stand before this wonderful church to speak of the simplicity of Christ, the simple gospel.

I thank you, Lord, for those who have gone before. And I thank you, Lord, that the Spirit of God has given us your word that we may cling to the simple gospel.

And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. 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.

[1:53] 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.

It raises an immediate question. Does the gospel need recovering? And I would say to you this morning 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.

I also want to add to you that there are churches that hold fiercely to the true gospel. And there are men who preach the true gospel, even in this room, and have in some cases for many years, speaking of Brother Don and our dear brother Ralph Dursham, who held and hold to the true gospel.

[3:18] But does it need recovery? And before I set out to show you some of the reasons the gospel globally became lost, and in need of recovery, let me first make it clear just how important it is to recover the true gospel, the simple gospel, and to preach and teach and witness that simple gospel.

And to do this, one need only to look at the inspired words of Paul in the opening chapter of Galatians, verses 6 and 7.

So, these words constitute, I believe, the most dire and essential warning to every human that has ever lived and ever will live.

Listen to what the Holy Spirit had Paul write. 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 that, what we have preached, let him be accursed.

[5:02] As we have 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.

Powerful words. Frightening words. Frightening words. There is but one true gospel.

There is only one. It is the good news, and that is what gospel means, the good news concerning Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit gave it to Paul, and he preached it, and he wrote about it. 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.

That's what that word means. The anathema of God. This is such a serious matter that the Holy Spirit had Paul repeat the warning twice for emphasis.

[6:21] Repeated it twice. This is how important the true gospel is when compared to another or a different gospel. And while we have lived somewhat sheltered lives here on the buckle of the Bible belt, let me tell you, there are other gospels out there.

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 might say here especially, the gospel.

This was caused by a number of circumstances and reasons coming together at a particular point in time. It included such things as denominations and seminaries buying into the higher critical school of German theologians that, and these guys basically viewed scripture as some giant allegory or metaphor concocted by men.

It also involved the leaders of denominations and seminaries accepting as fact Darwinian evolution. Not as theory, but as fact.

Once evolution was accepted by many mainline denominations in the early days of the 20th century, then it became necessary to fit the Bible, especially pre-Abrahamic history, which is the first 11 chapters of Genesis, with science.

[8:12] They had to fit it to the scientific model. If science said that something was true, then the Bible had to have been in error, and there were a lot of other reasons that we're not going to focus on today.

We'll save that for another time. Now, the result of all this was very subtle, but startling at the same time. It was subtle because it crept into mainline denominations, not by storm, but by some creeping London fog, which just creeps along until it envelops you.

It was startling because the human race still suffers from the damage. There was immediate damage.

There was long-term damage. And the human race suffers from that damage. Those who were captured and subverted and turned away from the true gospel and turn to another gospel.

And there is not another gospel. Paul says there's only one. What were the results of this subversion? And ironically, it was not so much what the false gospel did, but rather what it failed to do.

[9:36] What it failed to do. Here is a partial list of that which was abandoned when the false gospel captured seminaries and churches and whole denominations.

And first, you can see this up on the screen, lost was a deep reverence for God. A deep reverence for God.

A deep and genuine repentance. That was the second thing. Only now are we really and truly recapturing repentance.

The pastor and I have talked. Repentance has been the missing jewel in the church for a long time.

And only now are we starting to realize that it is one of the essentials for salvation.

Lost was deep humility. Lost was a spirit of worship in the church, in the family, and in the individual.

[10:37] Lost was the teaching of holiness, church discipline, and the legitimate practice of evangelism. These are the things that were lost when this other gospel came in.

And as I say to you this morning, this is only a partial list. But this is what was lost. And sadly, there are many denominations that have never recovered from that time.

The reason the new gospel, which is really no gospel at all, failed in all of these categories and those not even mentioned, was that it failed to make men and women God-centered in their thoughts, God-fearing in their hearts.

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

And ladies, that's generic. You're included in that. The focus became man-centered. The new gospel was designed to be helpful to mankind by ushering in a state of peace, comfort, happiness, and satisfaction.

[12:11] That basically was the focus. Now, those qualities sound good. And you may be thinking, what's wrong here? You know, people want peace and comfort and happiness and satisfaction.

The answer is, there's nothing wrong with those if they are produced God's way. If they are produced the way God wants them produced.

The old gospel achieved those things as well and achieved it for generations. We might even say millennia in some places. But they were achieved because the church held fiercely to the saving gospel and the saving gospel's goal was to bring God glory in all things. That's the true gospel. It brings glory to God in all things. And that is so important. So utterly important. 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 not only do we benefit from it, but we are to transmit it, isn't that right?

[13 : 33] Even to the uttermost parts of the world, we are to bring glory to God in all things and in all circumstances.

When the primary focus of the church was centered upon the glory of God, the church of the Spirit of God indwelling the church achieved peace, comfort, happiness, and satisfaction.

The church did that even in the midst of terrible persecution. and that is still true today. In those areas where the church is restricted or forbidden, there are many people in this room who have been to some persecuted countries.

I am looking at some of them now. Pastor Don just returned from one. But let me tell you, I have never seen people at more peace than members of the underground church in China and Vietnam and Indonesia and Saudi Arabia.

Love the Lord, they have a peace about them. You can identify the true gospel because it was and is always a proclamation of divine sovereignty dispensing mercy and grace.

[14 : 46] The true gospel is always a call for men and women to repent, bow down, and worship our mighty God on whom we depend for everything.

When I say everything, that is precisely what I mean. No living thing on this earth can even take another breath were it not for the undeserved grace of God.

We depend on the Lord for everything. in the new gospel that supplanted the true and biblical gospel, the center reference point was changed from God to man.

It had a new center God put aside. The subject of the true gospel was God and His ways with mankind. The subject of the false gospel was man and how God might come alongside if invited and help him feel better and, of course, prosper by the world's definition of prosper.

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

[16 : 29] That may be the oxymoron for the ages. The very word theology means the study of God. It's the science of God, the study that we have of God.

The false gospel had a devastating result in the area of evangelism and witnessing. salvation under the false gospel was reduced downward to its lowest common denominator.

What will excite a crowd the most? It was taught that salvation was nothing more than a formula of certain words that if you spoke them in the proper order, you were assured of eternal life.

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

So the question we want to answer today is very basic. What is the simple gospel? What is the gospel of Jesus Christ?

[17 : 39] There is no more important question to answer because the gospel of Jesus Christ stands at the center of Christianity. It's the very center.

Everything flows from that. As one writer has said very appropriately, an emaciated gospel leads to emaciated worship. It lowers our eyes from God to self and cheapens what God has accomplished for us in Christ.

The biblical gospel, by contrast, is like fuel in the furnace of worship. Wow, that's good stuff. So what is the gospel and where do we find it?

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 and in all thirteen of his books.

I got that in, Pastor. I love it the way the gospel is presented in the book of Romans. First, Paul tells us this, and I think we have this, guys.

[18 : 53] We are accountable to God. Romans chapter one. We, everyone in here, regardless of your relationship to God, even if you are without a relationship to God, you are still accountable to

God.

Paul begins the very first chapter of that great book of Romans telling his readers that every person, every man, woman, and child in every age are accountable to God.

And then he gives a frightening warning. He says, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven.

Because God has created every human, he has the right to demand that we worship him.

God has that right. Every person on earth is required to worship the true God. God, because we are created beings, we have an absolute obligation to give our creator God honor and glory.

The honor and glory that is due him. He created us and he owns us. Therefore, we are to live and speak and act and think in a way that both recognizes and acknowledges God's authority over us.

[20:26] We are made by him, owned by him, dependent on him, and therefore accountable to him.

Remember, the wrath that is revealed is revealed to creatures that know there is a God. Sometimes this is a confusing point.

What if they never heard? The Lord says, and Paul writing the words of God says, that the very creation cries out to all humanity that there is a God.

We can know the existence of God. Look up in the sky. Look at the stars as they chart their course. Look at the sun.

Look at nature. We know the very existence of God by those things. The psalmist said that even the heavens declare the glory of God.

[21:28] That is why men and women standing before God will have no excuse as to why they did not honor and worship him. They'll be without excuse. You can't make excuses. They will be silent.

So the first point that Paul makes in presenting the simple, true, biblical gospel is that we are owned by God and therefore accountable to him.

But there's a problem. And that problem makes up Paul's second point in his presentation of the true saving gospel.

The problem is this. We have all rebelled against God. Every human at some point in his or her life have been in rebellion to God.

The entire human race has rebelled against the creator God. That started in Genesis chapter 3 in the Garden of Eden. It started right there.

[22:36] Read it. 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 of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

If you think about that, that is a very revolting statement. Just think about what the Lord said there. Men who thought themselves wise think of God, their creator, as some type of an image to be made of wood, stone, or metal that resembles all kinds of birds and animals and crawling insects.

That is the depravity of mankind. That they would even have a thought that way, much less to fashion something with their hands. That is a rebuke to God.

To compare Him to created things. It is a rebuke to God. That has to be very near the height of rebellion against the true God to fashion something out of your hands and say, we are going to worship this object.

Because that is what it is. It is almost as high a rebellion as when men think of themselves as more glorious than the true God of the universe.

[24:09] The vast majority of the world is presently living out their lives in rebellion to the creator God of the universe.

Right now as we sit here, the vast majority of humans on this earth are in rebellion to God. That is what makes the biblical command for the church, the true church, to go to the uttermost parts of the world so vitally important.

Most people on this earth need to hear the true gospel and they haven't heard it. That is why we are commanded to go. We find this rebellion in the world's religions, in cults, in the occult, in agnosticism, and in atheism.

It is all around us. There I say this, but in a crowd this side, there may very well be people presently living in rebellion to God. There could be.

And before you leave here today, you will have the remedy for that rebellion. So stay tuned. Paul then moves into chapters 3, 4, and 5 of Romans, and he indicts all of humanity.

[25 : 25] He issues a stinging indictment. He focuses on the Gentiles, then he focuses on the Jews, and that's everybody, but just in case he left everyone out, he focuses on the entire human race that ever lived, ever would live, including those in our generation.

And in chapter 3, he issues an indictment, charges against us, us being the human race. Here's what he has to say.

writing by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, there is not a single righteous person, not even one. Sometimes on Monday night when I quote that I say, guys, how many righteous people are there? And of course the answer comes back, not one. That's what the Spirit of God says there. There is no one that even understands God.

No one. there is no one who seeks God. And you're sitting here saying, wait a minute, I sought Him. God came to you first, trust me.

[26 : 36] He sought you before you sought Him. He may be seeking some of you today. 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. That is a stinging rebuke. What an indictment.

And what a rebuke. That indicts every person who has ever lived or ever will live. But remember, the standard here is God. The standard here is God.

There's a lot of good people here when compared to me. But when God is a standard, it's something different. No one will ever stand before the living God in judgment and offer the slightest defense for their behavior.

It won't happen. They will be silenced. And as I said earlier, the gospel though, means good news. Well, these two first points have been anything but good news.

[27 : 48] Paul says you need the good news and he starts out and says, well, you've rebelled against God. You're going to be judged and condemned by him. That's anything but good news.

The truth with this is this. All of the bad news that I've already given you, all of this bad news, is the pavement on the highway that leads to the good news.

that leads to the gospel. The bad news is the concrete that's going to take us to the good news. It is the highway that leads to Christ and salvation.

Why is that? It is useless to tell someone there is a pathway to God whereby they will be saved unless that person really believes and understands they need to be saved.

They need to be saved. This is one of the reasons in presenting the good news, it's sometimes good to start with the law, the Ten Commandments, and show people they have violated God's moral law and they need a Savior who has kept that law.

[29 : 12] only when we see Christ does the gospel become 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 to us God's solution for the problem.

He presents to us God's solution for our rebellion. And please underline the thought that this is God's solution. It is His only solution and it wasn't concocted by men and women.

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

That's the solution. There is no other solution. If you're sitting here saying, but I'm a good person, I'm trying to do better, you can come up with any example you want to.

[30 : 38] if it leaves this out, you haven't grasped the solution. The solution is the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we've heard the bad news. Please, Paul, give us some good news. And he does so beginning in verse 21 and he begins with these words and these words thrill my heart.

They absolutely thrill my heart. And he begins this way, but now. That'll preach. But now.

You and I are accountable. But now. You and I were in rebellion. But now. Those two words may be the two most important words in the entire Bible.

But now. Elsewhere, the Spirit uses the words, but God. Just as thrilling. But now. But God. Those are thrilling thoughts.

[31 : 48] But now, God has revealed a righteousness that can be attained. Because if you're going to stand before God, you have to be righteous.

And he's revealed a righteousness that can be attained. it is apart from the keeping of the law, which no one ever did. It is 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 their guilt removed. The stain of guilt removed. God. And the way spoken of here has nothing to do with our external behavior.

It doesn't come to us by acting more righteous or pretending to be righteous. It doesn't come by living better or being more good, if that's proper English.

[32 : 55] That was my view of salvation for a long time. There's this scale. scale. And I'm just trying to be a little bit more good than bad. I just want to tip the scales.

I just want to tip those scales. I was following a false gospel. I asked a guy one time when I was in the FBI, a fellow agent, I said, you know, tell me how you're going to get to heaven.

He said, I'm trying to be more good than bad. I said, how are you doing? He said, not too good this week, but I'm going to do better next week. You know what? Next week never comes. next week never comes.

We're talking about God's standard of goodness. So how is this righteousness achieved? And Paul is very clear on this point in Romans chapter 3 verse 24.

We can be justified, made righteous, as a gift by God's grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

[34 : 03] Put that on your refrigerator. Put that on the refrigerator of your heart. We can be made righteous as a gift of God's grace, and it is found and only found in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

There is no other way. there is no other name but Christ. And those are powerful words, and those words will stand the test of time.

Those words will endure for eternity to those who embrace Christ Jesus. will be made righteous. fear someday even people in hell will have going through their minds I could have been made righteous as a gift of God's grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

And I ignored it. God because of the sacrificial death and the resurrection of Christ because he shed his blood, he died, he rose again, sinners may be saved from the condemnation their sins deserved.

[35 : 23] We're saved from the righteous wrath of God if in fact we are one with Christ. lost. Now all of this is wonderful. It is wonderful to those of us whom the Lord has already saved, but what about those who are still lost and in rebellion to the God who created them?

How is it good news to the lost? And if there's anyone here today and you are counted among the lost, how can you be included in God's promise of salvation?

This is where the simple gospel really comes in to focus. Really comes in to focus. Where does this magnificent salvation come from?

It comes through faith in Jesus Christ. It is designed for all who believe.

And I'm told those words faith, believe, and trust are basically the same word in the Greek language. The simple gospel that we need to recapture, that we need to live and take to the uttermost parts of the world, is that if you will believe, trust, and have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and trust in no one else, including yourself, Christ will save you.

[36 : 56] He has given us that promise. And He is God in human flesh, and He cannot lie. It is impossible for Him to lie.

There's a great passage in Romans 4, 5, to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.

the one who doesn't try to work to earn his salvation. Well, Lord, I'm going to do really good today, and I'm going to pray, you know, 42 times, and I'm going to do this and that, but believe, put all that aside, believe, trust, commit your life to Him who is able and willing to justify the ungodly, then that person's faith is a credit and credited to His account as righteousness.

It goes into your account the moment you believe. You cannot work for your salvation. You cannot earn your salvation.

But right now, where you are seated, you can trust Christ. You know, I tell folks on my Monday night, guys, I say, God has VBE, very big ears.

[38:23] You can hear the slightest prayer from a sinner saying, Lord Jesus, save me. I believe. You can whisper that and He will hear you.

You may be thinking, but I'm not righteous. That's why you need a Savior. Who is? You may be thinking, I'm a sinner. That's why you need a sinless Savior.

Christ is perfectly righteous. righteous. And He has the ability to give His righteousness to anyone in this room as a free gift.

Only by His righteousness imputed to you and I can we stand before the Father without spot or blemish. That is an amazing thought, particularly for someone like me, the chief of sinners among you.

And you remember that indictment I read earlier? This is what's written in blood across those charges right there. Forgiven.

[39:29] Forgiven. Reminds me when, you know, Martin Luther, great reformer, he had a lot of problems with the devil. All of us do, I guess.

Luther wrote, he said, I don't know if I was dreaming in the Spirit or if I was awake, I don't know, but Satan came to see Luther.

and Satan handed Luther a scroll. And he told Luther, he said, this is a record of all your sins.

And Luther wrote and said, it was a big scroll. And Satan said, let's unravel that scroll, Luther. And so they started peeling it down and it was date, time, circumstance.

They were all there and they were all true. They were all true. And it went for a long time as he unraveled the scroll. Got down toward the bottom and Satan stopped, took the scroll back.

[40:36] And the Lord Jesus said, Luther, tell Satan to unravel the rest of the scroll. Luther told him. He said, no. And Jesus, according to Luther, said, tell him again.

And he did. He said, unravel the rest of the scroll. And according to Luther, Satan said no. And Jesus said, Martin, command him in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by my shed blood to unravel that scroll.

And he did. And Satan was powerless. And he unraveled it. And at the bottom in red, it said, all of the sins of Martin Luther have been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb.

and that's what I'm talking about. If you have anything here today to be forgiven for, it's available to you. May we pray?

May we pray? Do you understand that God made you a single sin?

[41:50] You are separated from God because He requires perfect holiness. A perfect record. Do you understand that God in Christ has come down to this earth and lived among us to save you and I from our sins?

And do you understand that you can be included in so great a salvation that many people in this room already enjoy? So it really boils down to this.

God, man, Christ, and a response. You can recognize that you're accountable to God and never be saved.

You can realize that your sin has separated you from the mighty God and never be saved. You can even come to the realization that Christ died to save sinners of which you may be the chief.

This calls for a response. Tell Christ. Tell the Father. They have very big ears.

[42:57] Tell them that you are a sinner in need of His gift of salvation. Now, if you're like me, when you do that, you still have a million questions and a million doubts, but you have at least settled your relationship right now by believing, trusting, and committing your life to Jesus.

Ask Him right now to save you from the wrath of His coming upon a lost, rebellious mankind. Thank you.