

This morning I am finishing up a series I've entitled "The Practical Gospel." My goal for this series has been to examine what the implications are of the gospel for various areas of our life. In this way I am essentially trying to put into practice what Paul said in *Philippians 2:12-13*, where he told the Philippians to "*work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*" Now that you have been saved, now that you have believed the gospel, work out the implications of the gospel into every area of your life as God works in you. Not "work for your salvation" but "work out the implications of your salvation."

So far we have looked at the gospel and your love life, parenting & family, work, money, personal growth, and community and friendships. This morning, I want to finish up the series by asking what difference the gospel makes for your relationship with the world. How must we be different because of the gospel?

Here is the gospel summary statement I will be using this series: "**We are sinners who have been saved and justified by grace, learning to live as new creations according to God's will, trusting in a certain and glorious eternal hope and future.**"

If you read that statement closely, you will recognize that it has a past, present, and future dimension. Let me unpack those three aspects and examine what the implications are for the world. For this sermon, I want to work backwards, beginning with the last part of that statement.

**We are sinners who have been saved and justified by grace**

We are sinners means that we are separated from a holy God, so full of wickedness that we can not save ourselves by our own good deeds. But we have been saved and justified by grace. The second part means that God loves us so much that His Son, Jesus, died for us, to rescue us from our sins. We are justified, declared not guilty, perfect in the sight of God, not because of anything we did, but because of what Jesus did for us. There is no condemnation and nothing can separate us from the love of God.

***Ephesians 2:8-9** - For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- <sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast.*

The more the gospel shapes our identity, how does this affect our friendships and community?

## 1) We do not look to anyone or anything in this world to save us

So much is wrong with this world. If you take a moment to look around the world, the hurt and the needs are overwhelming. Joblessness, addictions, broken families, hunger, poverty, and so on. Polarization of society. Inflation. Covid. Drugs. Loneliness. There is so much brokenness around us. Who will rescue us? Where is hope to be found?

We do not look to politicians. We do not look to a love interest. We will not put our hope in education, or money, or Elon Musk, or Bill Gates, or any person. We know that nothing else will save us or fulfill us but Jesus. Saves us from hopelessness, loneliness, arrogance, division, and so on. Not that he saves us from inflation, but he saves us from the fear that comes when our hope is in our money. Not that he promises to give us a spouse or friend, but that He is closer than any human and loves us better. He rescues from the hopelessness that leads to drug abuse, the rage that leads to murder, the jealousy and greed that leads to theft, the contempt for others that leads to assault. He brings the humility and compassion that rescues from judgment and polarization. The answer is found in Jesus.

***Romans 1:16** - I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.*

## 2) There is no place for pride or arrogance in our lives

The gospel tells us that we are saved and justified by grace. Paul puts it this way:

***Ephesians 2:1-5** - As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup> All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. <sup>4</sup> But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-- it is by grace you have been saved.*

It's not that we are bad people who have become good, or stupid people who have become enlightened. We were dead, and now we are alive. We could not save ourselves. We could not make ourselves right with God. And so we interact with the world from a place of humility and compassion. We are one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.

### 3) We are motivated by love, not fear or guilt

We have been justified. The verdict is in. We are loved, we are worthy, we are enough. And so we do not need to operate out of guilt, or out of fear.

**Many of you know that if you are a thinking and caring person, you can quickly become overwhelmed by the needs of this world.** For example, you may know people who want to rescue animals, and before they know it they have 20 cats in their house and it's become unsafe, because there is always another cat in need of a home. Or, people who want to take in children who have been harmed, but by doing so end up doing more harm than good. The point is, you can quickly become overwhelmed, because the needs never end.

But we know that we are not the Savior. And we are saved by grace. And so we can serve without being motivated by guilt, or by fear of punishment.

*1 John 3:17-20 - If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? <sup>18</sup> Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. <sup>19</sup> This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence <sup>20</sup> whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.*

God is greater than our hearts, greater than the condemnation we often feel. Guilt is not the motivator of the gospel. Guilt will not work, because it will overwhelm you. You are not doing this to earn your salvation. You are saved by grace, and you are loved no matter if you do anything to help others or not. But you are saved in order to do good works.

### We are learning to live as new creations according to God's will.

When we repent and come to faith in Jesus, God adopts us into His family and gives us His Holy Spirit. We have a new heart, a new spirit, a new hope, a new family, a new future. We have new desires. We are being renewed in our minds. We begin to learn how to live according to God's will, according to the values of the kingdom. What are the implications of this for the world?

#### 1) We have been saved in order to do good works

***Ephesians 2:8-10*** - For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- <sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

You have been saved by grace, but not just for your own personal benefit. You have been saved and made a new creation so that you might join God in His mission, doing the good works He has given to you to do, to love your neighbor and bring people to God.

“Good deeds” comes from the Hebrew word “**Mitzvot**”, which refers to actions taken to heal and repair the world. God calls us as His church to heal and repair the world.

***Micah 6:8*** - He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to **walk humbly** with your God.

The fact that you have been transformed by the gospel should be great news for your family, for your neighborhood, for your company. Is it?

Perhaps no one has put this better than St. Francis of Assisi in his classic prayer:

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace;  
 where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
 where there is injury, pardon;  
 where there is doubt, faith;  
 where there is despair, hope;  
 where there is darkness, light;  
 and where there is sadness, joy.  
 O Divine Master,  
 grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;  
 to be understood, as to understand;  
 to be loved, as to love;  
 for it is in giving that we receive,  
 it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
 and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.  
 Amen.

2) God has called us to be a part of a Spirit-filled community that would love as He loved

The disciples had to wait in Jerusalem until they were filled with the Holy Spirit. And if we are to be a supernatural community that loves like God, we will need to be filled with the Spirit, devoted to prayer. The world should be different because we are here. You are a part of God's mission in the world. You have a part to play.

**Matthew 5:14-16** - "You are **the light of the world**. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Our call is to be outward focused, bringing His love and grace wherever we go. One of the best examples I have heard to illustrate this grace that we are to bring to the world was from **Tony Campolo**, a sociologist from Eastern University in Philadelphia who also preaches. He shares about being at a conference in Hawaii, and being wide awake at 3 AM due to the time change, and going to a seedy diner to eat. As he sat there eating, 10 prostitutes walked in and sat around him, and he heard a conversation between 2 women where one said that tomorrow was her birthday, and that she had never had a birthday party in her life. After they left, Tony turned to Harry, the owner of the diner, and proposed throwing this woman, Agnes, a birthday party the following day and inviting all of her friends. And so, the following evening, Tony and about 20 prostitutes decorated the diner and yelled "Surprise!" when Agnes came in. As they sang "Happy Birthday" to Agnes, she was in tears at the incredible surprise. When it came time to cut the cake, she asked if she could save it and bring it down to her mother to see, promising that she would be right back. As she was gone, Tony asked everyone if they could take a moment to pray for Agnes, and he prayed for God to heal her of the pain that had been caused to her, to love her and to make this next year the best year of her life. When he was done, Harry leaned over and said, "You never told me you were a preacher. What kind of church do you belong to?" And Tony said, "I belong to the kind of church that throws birthday parties for whores at 3:30 in the morning." To which Harry replied, "no you don't – if there was a church like that, I would belong to it."

Jesus identifies with the poor and outcast and calls us to love them:

**Matthew 25:31-46** - "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. <sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a

shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. <sup>34</sup> "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the **creation of the world**.' <sup>35</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, <sup>36</sup> I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' <sup>37</sup> "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?' <sup>38</sup> When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?' <sup>39</sup> When did we see you sick or in prison and **go to visit you**?' <sup>40</sup> "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' <sup>41</sup> "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. <sup>42</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not **look after me**.' <sup>44</sup> "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' <sup>45</sup> "He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' <sup>46</sup> "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Begin by being generous with your brothers and sisters in the church, and then move out from there to the world.

**Galatians 6:10** - *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*

Julian, the last pagan Roman emperor (361-363 AD), irritated by the spread of Christianity, which he was trying to stamp out, said this - *"Do we not observe how the benevolence of Christians to strangers has done the most to advance their cause. It is disgraceful that the Christians support not only their poor but ours as well, while everyone is able to see that our own lack aid from us."*

This kind of love takes the filling and power of the Holy Spirit.

**We trust in a certain and glorious eternal hope and future.**

We know that this life is not all that there is. We will live forever with God. Love will never end, death will be conquered. And all that our heart truly desires will

one day be ours. We will spend eternity with God, in a place beyond comprehension. What does this mean for our world?

### 1) God will one day put an end to evil and suffering

Think of the brokenness around us: drought. Famine. Flood. Tornados. Hurricanes. The gospel proclaims that one day it will be made right.

**Revelation 21:1-5** - *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." <sup>5</sup> He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."*

This in itself is good news for the world. The gospel means that not only are we reconciled to God, but in the end the world will be reconciled as well. So when we feel we are making no difference, we can remain confident that God will one day set things right.

Paul describes the world as broken and longing for things to be made right

**Romans 8:19-23** - *The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. <sup>23</sup> Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.*

The world is groaning, waiting for the day when God's people will rule over the world and the curse will be broken.

### 2) The greatest work is to reconcile people to God

*2 Corinthians 5:17-21 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! <sup>18</sup>All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: <sup>19</sup>that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup>We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup>God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

The greatest of these works is to bring people back to God. We exist to help relieve the suffering and brokenness of the world, and no suffering is worse than the eternal suffering that some will experience if they do not know Jesus. So as we go and do good works, remember that the greatest work is to bring people back to God.