

Lions, Wolves & Sheep, Oh My!

Part 5: The Gospel & The Believer

(preached 5/22/22)

Please turn to *Romans 8:18*.

The last 3 sermons have brought a much needed Gospel Reset, showing how the Gospel defines God's relationship to unbelievers.

- Due to Adam's disobedience, we are born separated from God & sinners who have fallen short of His glory (Romans 3:23).
- No unbeliever is righteous, not one (Romans 3:9-11).
- All unbelievers need to recognize this and realize their desperate need for Salvation and a Savior (2 Corinthians 7:9-10).
- They must understand that Jesus didn't die on the Cross and rise from the dead to condemn them, but to Save them because of His great love (John 3:16-17).
- That He will forgive all and restore what Adam lost when He sees a repentant heart (Ephesians 1:7).
- Jesus is the only way to Salvation (Acts 4:12) and relationship with God the Father (John 14:6).
- We cannot Save ourselves, no other human can, no institution, government, organization, philosophy, or way of life. Even if we do our best to restrain from evil and do good for others, nothing can pay the debt of sin we owed God as unbelievers.
- A false Gospel that leaves out the sinful condition of humankind produces false converts.
- Signs of a false convert are people who are self-focused, refuse Sanctification, treat God like a restaurant waiter, wants God to realize all their hopes and dreams.
- The true Gospel results in real converts: God focused, pursuing Sanctification, seeks & submits to God's will vs. their own.
- Jesus doesn't stop at forgiveness, but is making us joint heirs of His Kingdom (Romans 8:17).

TODAY we make the transition and will begin talking about how the Gospel defines the relationship of God to the believer—so this applies to you and I and how we should be walking, right now, as Christians.

Romans 8:12-17 (ESV)

¹² So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

BAD UPBRINGING. Imagine that you grew up in an abusive and impoverished environment where your father had fled and wanted nothing to do with you, and your mom was a self-absorbed alcoholic. Unfortunately, as you grow older, these bad influences lead you into a lifestyle of criminality, addiction, and repeating some of the same patterns as your parents. At some point you come to the end of yourself and cry out to God for a Savior.

JUDGE JESUS. A rich and morally upstanding fellow named Jesus Immanuel, who is also the Town Judge, comes into your life and wants to legally adopt you into his family and claims he was sent by his father, a famous Supreme Court Judge. He's not a weirdo—this is a real offer. He promises to pull you out of your life of crime and poverty, move you into his mansion, and make you a joint-heir of his entire fortune! You'll lose your old name, your old identity, your record will be wiped clean of all crimes, and you'll start over with a clean slate.

PLAN & TURN FROM OLD WAYS. Judge Jesus has a plan for your new life and intends to keep you busy. First and foremost, he wants you to completely forsake your old lifestyle: no more drugs, stealing, hanging out with a bad crowd, getting in trouble, cussing...none of it. He's a holy man who lives a righteous life and, not that you're His Father's son, you're remade into his image ... so he expects the same of you. He knows you won't be perfect, but at the same time he encourages & empowers you to turn from your old ways and become more like him.

PERSONAL GOALS. You also had some personal goals you wanted to fulfill before your adoption and while he'll listen, *his priority is submission to his goals and plans and he wants his plans to be your priority*. The more time passes, you come to discover this **his plans become your passion vs your own**.

#2: SHARE GOOD NEWS. He wants you to share the same opportunity you had with others who were like you: caught up in lifestyles of crime, addiction, poverty, and abuse. He desires for you to share the good news of his salvation with those who don't have it yet.

#3 RELATIONSHIP. He wants relationship with you and for you to stay connected with him. He always has more to teach you, great pearls of wisdom and knowledge, but he also just wants to spend time with you. Being in his presence empowers you to do his will not just for holiness but to share his opportunity for adoption with the lost.

Let's exposit *Romans 8:12-17*.

Verse 12: the flesh is the old us, the old self who grew up with disobedient Adam as a dad and the wicked world was our mother. We were sinned against and we sinned against God and others in turn. Despite ourselves, we acted like our parents in many ways because we were made in their image. Romans 12 says we were “be not conformed to the world” which means we were before Salvation—we looked, thought, spoke, and acted like the world.

Verse 13a: indeed we lived by the deeds of our flesh and followed its desires...and both ourselves and others paid for it. We were slaves to our passions and the result of the same hurt us and others.

Verse 13b: Upon our adoption into the family of Judge Jesus, he empowered us to turn away from our former desires and crime based lifestyles by the loving Holy Spirit Who always seems to radiate from Him. It’s almost as if we cut all ties with our bio parents and Jesus’ Dad became our Dad.

Verse 15: Now that we are Father’s sons and daughters, He declares our old identity is gone forever. We’re no longer made in the image of our bio parents to act like them, but now are born again into the image of Jesus to act like Him instead! We’re pleased to no longer be like we once were, a slave to our addiction and a life of crime! He has set us free and whomever Judge Jesus sets free, is free indeed.

Verse 16: Judge Jesus drew up a legally binding document of adoption—in every sense that makes a difference, we are now His kid and a full fledged member of His family, just as if He we were blood. Any court of law on any level will immediately recognize our legitimacy.

Verse 17: Judge Jesus then reveals another document to us—His Living Will. Right there, written in blood red, is our name saying that we are set to inherit his entire estate: the mansion, all his lands, his money, his assets, his cars, his stocks, all the crypto, everything! We’ll be so rich it would literally take an eternity to spend and enjoy it all!

SUMMARY. Let’s all these things one by one and start with a summary. Now that we’re His sons, we:

- Completely forsake our old life and identity.
- Take on the new identity as a son of Father God, including His Name and character.
- Turn away from our old sins, desires, and behaviors, with Jesus’ help.
- Forsake our own hopes and plans, and completely submit to that of Jesus to the point where His plan becomes our passion and priority
- Rest in the hope of our divine inheritance as joint heirs of the Kingdom!

FORSAKING THE OLD LIFE.

Luke 9:23 (ESV)

²³ And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

THE FLESH. Whenever you see references to the flesh in the Bible, it's talking about our old selves—who we were before Jesus saved us.

THE CROSS. The Cross was and is an instrument of certain death and unlike death by firing squad, each part of the flesh/body felt it and for a long time—it was a slow and agonizing way to die. ***Following Jesus means being just like Him.*** He'd already identified Himself as the Psalm 23 Good Shepherd and those who count themselves as His sheep must follow their shepherd and know His voice. The Good Shepherd is on a journey and the end is glorious! Immortality, God's Shining and Everlasting Kingdom, eternal peace, love, and joy!

JESUS TOOK UP CROSS. To get there, however, even the Lord Jesus took on flesh, denied its desires, picked up His Cross, and died first. ***We must do the same.***

Romans 6:6-7 (ESV)

⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

⁷ For one who has died has been set free from sin.

Who we were before Christ is dead.

What we wanted before Christ is dead.

Our goals, hopes, and dreams before Christ are crucified and buried.

Our lifestyle BC is dead.

How we talked, acted, and what we thought about things BC is dead.

RAMON OFF TO ARMY. In the early 70's my oldest brother left home for the Army. When we saw him off, his hair was down to the middle of his back, a few days unshaven, red bandanna around his head, and bell bottom jeans. He loved to party, raise Hades, and crank Led Zeppelin as loud as it would go. 8 weeks later, after Boot Camp, he came home...and I almost asked what the Army did to my brother. Brush cut, clean cut, green enlisted man uniform, ramrod straight posture...but most of all was his face.

BACK FROM BOOT CAMP. Gone was the goofy party hardy casual smile replaced by a look of complete focus that I'd never seen before. He began telling me that his goal was to go to OCS and get his degree. When his old party buddies came around and wanted him to go get drunk, he refused. He left Addison with a reputation as a "ladies man" and now told us he met a lady, also in the Army, and was going to marry her and start a family (he did). He used to get in big arguments with dad and be disrespectful, now he was calling dad "sir."

WHAT CHANGED? I finally worked up the courage, years later, to ask about his transformation and this was his response: "the Army tore me down then built me back up again. They remade me into something different and it's who I am now." 20 years later Ramon retired from the Army at the rank of Major with honors.

BIGGER THAN HIM. The Army was bigger than my brother and had its own plans for his life. Joining them meant denying his former desires, dying to his old self, and being born again into a different image.

JESUS BIGGER THAN US. Jesus and His Church are bigger than us, and the Lord is the Man with a Plan. Just as my brother was shaped by the Army and sent to fight in Desert Storm, we are reshaped by Christ and sent into the spiritual field of battle to fight against the rising tsunami of darkness by being the Light of the world.

ARMY DIDN'T ASK HIS PLANS. When my brother got off at the bus at Ft. Benning to start boot camp, the Army didn't ask what his hopes and dreams were then do everything they could to realize them. It was only after they tore down his old self, then built him back up that they discovered his gifts and put him to work. Even then, it was to realize their plans and not his...to see where he fit in to the Army body.

Same with the Christian faith. Jesus isn't a DI screaming in our faces, no, but as unbelievers we followed Jesus to the death of our flesh and were born again in the Spirit. We've been moved out of our old "home" and into a new one. We have a new name, a new identity, a new family, and a new purpose. All of what we were before died.

YOUR PLANS LORD. A Christian with this understanding humbles themselves before God their Father and declares "thy will be done." The Lord will bring forth the gifts and skills He's given us, yes, but will do so to realize HIS plans and not ours. The Lord will attempt to fit us into His Body—Who is the Church—so that we'll serve Him and carry out His goals.

MY WILL? A Christian who lacks this understanding boldly approaches Father and says "why aren't You doing more to enact my will?!"

OUR NEW IDENTITY. We're now sons and daughters of Father God.

Ephesians 1:4-5 (NKJV)

⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,

⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

WHITE ROBES. A beautiful thing happened the moment we grabbed the lifeline and Jesus pulled us in. As soon as He set our feet upon solid ground, he cleaned us up and dressed us in resplendent white robes:

Ephesians 5:25-27 (NKJV)

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,

²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

Isaiah 61:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

FIG LEAVES. Remember how Adam and Eve, after they sinned, tried to cover up their shame with fig leaves? Because of Jesus we have some far better and everlasting: **this shining white robe draped around us that IS the righteousness of Christ.**

RIGHTEOUSNESS IS IDENTITY. Consider: we went from drowning in an ocean of our sin to having the complete and total righteousness of Jesus draped around us after He pulled us out. This righteousness is our identity and its important we kneel in abject humility before the King of kings all the time for this.

IF TAKEN OFF.... If this robe were stripped off us, we would not go back to what we were...we would be far worse:

2 Peter 2:20-22 (ESV)

²⁰ For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

²¹ For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.

²² What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire."

WASHINGTON DC STORY. I told you my story of being in Washington DC years ago to attend a revival and prophetic training at Morningstar Church. On the way down, the Holy Spirit purposefully turned Himself down to a bare flicker inside me, and I became a reprobate who cursed God, hated Him with burning passion, and wished eternal damnation upon every human being I laid eyes on. The Lord did this to me, the very first year of being a Pastor, to show me my continuing desperate need for Him and to help me avoid becoming arrogant.

NOT GOOD PERSON. ***Without Christ I'm not a good person and would return to my own vomit or wallow in the mud seconds after my robe of righteousness were taken off.***

MAINTAINED BY JESUS. The righteousness draped around me was put there and is maintained completely by Jesus and no one else. I belong to Him completely.

NOT POSSESSIVE. His Name is mine, His destiny is mine, His plan is mine, and **I don't make these declarations from a position of ownership, but only submission.**

HUMILITY & SUBJECTION. When I approach Jesus, it must be with humility and subjection to Him. While confident and secure He won't remove the robe He gave me, I realize it's the only thing hiding my old nature.

I need Him as much now as I did when I was drowning in the ocean of my own trespass.

SOLID GROUND. He keeps me standing on solid ground. He's the only Person standing between me and the Angel of Death. He alone protects me from being overwhelmed by the wicked world and the Devil.

That's why I love the song we sang last week: "If the Lord had not been on my side..."

Psalm 124:1-8 (NKJV)

- ¹ "If it had not been the LORD who was on our side," Let Israel now say--
- ² "If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, When men rose up against us,
- ³ Then they would have swallowed us alive, When their wrath was kindled against us;
- ⁴ Then the waters would have overwhelmed us, The stream would have gone over our soul;
- ⁵ Then the swollen waters Would have gone over our soul."
- ⁶ Blessed *be* the LORD, Who has not given us *as* prey to their teeth.
- ⁷ Our soul has escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowlers; The snare is broken, and we have escaped.
- ⁸ Our help *is* in the name of the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.

AFFIRMATION GOSPEL. The modern day "everything is awesome" gospel inspires its converts to ***affirm the self as much or moreso than God***. I'm not trying to nitpick semantics here, but only trying to say the same thing Jesus did: what comes out of our mouths is a result of what's in our hearts.

IF WE THINK THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IS ABOUT US THEN OUR PRAYERS & EFFORTS WILL BE DIRECTED TOWARD BUILDING AND PATCHING OURSELVES.

TONY ROBBINS. Many worldly sayings and proverbs have come into the modern church that promote the self and inspire sermons and teachings that are inspirational and motivational like a Tony Robbins seminar.

“I REALLY LIKE MYSELF!” I get uncomfortable when Christians say “I’m a good person” and “I really like myself!” The same tend to go on to talk about self-confidence, self-esteem, & self-worth and then are inspired to quote worldly proverbs about being strong, I got this, I can accomplish anything.

NOT ME. I’m weak and my default mode is to abandon following Jesus and follow the shepherd of my fleshly desires wherever they may lead, like a sheep gone astray. ***The only Person I can brag about is Jesus:***

1 Corinthians 1:26-31 (ESV)

²⁶ For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.

²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;

²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are,

²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

³⁰ And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,

³¹ so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

WITHOUT JESUS...

- I have no confidence in myself.
- I’m not trying to build up my self-esteem.
- I’m not here to celebrate me and to make sure I take care of me first before others.
- I’m not a good person.

2 Corinthians 11:30-31 (ESV)

³⁰ If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.

³¹ The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.

SIGNAL KIM

- The only righteousness on me is Jesus.
- The only goodness in me is Jesus.
- The only reason I even want to be holy and turn from my old ways is Jesus.
- “You can have all this world...just give me Jesus.”

THEY MEAN THEIR NEW SELF. I realize that when some Christians say that they love themselves and they are good people, they mean their Christ self and not the flesh. Allow me to make a recommendation based on the Scriptures I just read to you: use the word “I” as little as possible and make sure your listeners know that it’s only because of Christ.

Psalm 34:2 (ESV)

² My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad.

I’M WEAK! As for me, my decision is to project that I am weak, completely, because it’s the truth. To only brag about the righteousness of Christ, His power, His authority, and His love.

HIS HEIR. I’m His heir...which means all that stuff is coming and some of is here right now because of Him. I already have those things and there’s nothing my flesh can do to obtain or maintain them. I never received this inheritance due to efforts of the flesh which includes pumping myself up.

SHOW UNBELIEVERS. I need to show unbelievers that they can have all that too if they just grab the lifeline Jesus is throwing to them. And as we just read, God chooses the weak and disenfranchised, ***so the same need to know that He’s chosen them based upon His love and His goodness, not theirs or mine....***

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (ESV)

⁷ So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.

⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me.

⁹ But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

PLAY SONG