

IV. The Gospel of Jesus Christ in Biblical Perspective

The Majesty, Message and Ministry of the Gospel

“A Message About Jesus Christ”

I Corinthians 2:1-5

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September 30, 2012 – Morning Sermon

This is our fourth study in this series. Let's look at I Corinthians 1. This is the Word of God. It's the Truth. I Corinthians 1:17-21 says [17] *For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. [18] For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. [19] For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.” [20] Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? [21] For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through **the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.***

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

Again, we are in our fourth study of the series the Majesty, Message and the Ministry of the Gospel and I want to make three comments before we dive into this one. The first is that I realize in this study I am focused on the greatest, most glorious, most beautiful message, proclamation and subject of preaching that could ever come from my lips and my mouth and that is the glorious Good News that Jesus Christ has come to save sinners and His salvation is gloriously sufficient and everlasting true. I'm so grateful I don't stand before you today to tell you of a religious ritual that you may or may not be able to do to may or may not be able to get to some heaven and some god. I can tell you there is a God who made you, sustains you and who is sovereign over you, who will judge all sin and that God has graciously chosen to save sinners through His Son Jesus Christ. I get the privilege to share with you in this study with focus the message of 1500 years with forty plus human authors was devoted to give you in the Bible.

This is everything the Bible is here for – the Old Testament pointing to Him and the New Testament explaining Him. It is the message of the glorious, preeminence and sufficiency of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The second thing I want to share with you is as glorious, unique, exquisite and majestic as this message is, I know today that unless the Holy Spirit works in your heart you will consider it foolishness or a scandal. You will consider the wisdom of God manifested in Jesus Christ, the power of God manifested in Jesus Christ foolishness or a scandal. It is scandalous because we don't want to be told we're sinners or we need a Savior or we can't save ourselves or that are religion can't save us.

Do you realize how unique, contrastive Christianity is? It stands in contrast to every –ism, philosophy and religion in the world that all tell you thoughts and opinions of perhaps what you can do to perhaps obtain something called salvation. The Bible says what you do is not the answer, what you do is the problem and religion can't save you but there is a God who will save you and give you a true religion of walking with the Lord because the Lord has saved you from your sin. It is absolutely unique that God has

humbled Himself to come down and save us from our sins fully, finally and forever but it's foolishness to the sophistication of our sinfulness or it's a scandal because we don't want to hear its message that we need a Savior and we can't save ourselves. Only the Holy Spirit will give you a heart to respond to this.

A third thing I know is that I feel it so deeply in my soul that it cost me my sleep last night, my breakfast this morning and it will cost me this afternoon because I know the injustice that I will do to the subject. I know I am utterly incapable of the majesty of this message through these lips to display it to you. I cannot do it justice. My only hope is that the promise of God's Word is that in the foolishness of preaching Jesus Christ will choose to speak to your heart and you will hear His voice, even through the stammering of this tongue and you will follow Him. Romans 10:13-17 says [13] *For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* [14] *How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? [15] And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" [16] But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" [17] So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

My only hope is that the subject of our study will be the Speaker to your heart, the Word of Christ. The message is about Him and I pray the One of whom we speak will be the One who speaks to you. I'd like to remind you of where we are in this series. We have already looked at the majesty of the Gospel by reminding ourselves that the very word Gospel, *euangellion*, was actually a term announcing the reality of military victories. When kings won victories they would send out edicts or announcements called euangellion, meaning good news, good tidings and they would get up on a mountain or wall to announce it. That's the word Isaiah uses to anticipate the Gospel. It is the word that the New Testament uses – euangellion – the publishing, announcement, a royal proclamation that the King has triumphed over all of His enemies – sin, death, hell and the grave.

At the cross He has won the triumph and the resurrection announces that triumph. His ascension now sends us into all the world to announce on behalf of the King that He has won the victory and has fulfilled His mission. He came to save His people from their sins. He has won the victory. He has come and brought His people from death unto life. We who were His enemies have now been saved by His grace and mercy. He didn't come and make us savable. He came to save His people and He has won the victory. He will lose none of them. So that's the announcement that we make. This is not advice, not opinion but it is a publishing of Good News. It is a proclamation, an announcement into the world of the glorious saving truth that Jesus Christ the King of glory has humbled Himself and won the victory to set us free, emancipate us from sin's curse. Sin's power has been broken. Its penalty has been eradicated. Its very practice is diminishing and one day its presence will be unknown and unheard of when He returns and takes us to a new heavens and a new earth. That's the glorious truth of the Gospel that we announce.

Secondly, this Gospel is the foundation, the formation and the motivation of the Christian life. No one becomes a Christian without the power of the Gospel whereby you trust in Christ alone for your salvation. You repent of your sins, put your trust in Him who died on the cross, paid for you sins and who wraps you up with His perfect

righteousness. It's the foundation not only of every Christian but it's the foundation of every Christian doctrine. Then it's the formation because it keeps us on track. It doesn't matter if we're talking about government, church government, Christian life, marriages, parenting or whatever it is, it's foundation and formation is the Gospel. We don't go beyond the Gospel, you go higher, deeper, and wider with the Gospel into all the roles and responsibilities of life. It is also the motivation. While there are many motivations in the Christian life, the one that permeates and penetrates every single one of them is the Gospel truth that Jesus has loved me. I love Him because He first loved me and He set me free. He loves me and has loosed me from my sins.

Briarwood Presbyterian Church has been entrusted with the Gospel like any and every other evangelical church. With that Gospel comes two responsibilities. One is to preserve it with integrity for this generation and the next generation. Two is to proclaim it. We don't preserve it to enshrine it and become a museum. We preserve it to use it. It is to be preserved with integrity and intentionality. It is to be proclaimed with love, grace, confidence and compassion. So the responsibilities are its preservation and its proclamation. It is the foundation, formation and motivation of the Christian life and it has five elements to it.

I shamelessly borrowed the five elements from J.I. Packer so I recommend his book Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God where he talks about the Gospel under the five headings that we are using. I have no problem shamelessly borrowing from Packer because he shamelessly borrowed from the Apostle Paul in the book of Romans. The five elements are God, man is a sinner, Jesus Christ, grace, and faith and repentance. That is basically the outline of the Gospel in the book of Romans. There is God in Romans 1. The sinfulness of man is found in Romans 2 and 3 – all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The answer is Jesus Christ. Romans 6:23 says *[23] For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* The gift of grace is covered in Romans 6, 7 and 8 with the life of grace. Then there is the life of faith and repentance throughout the rest of the book of Romans.

You also see this in Acts 17 when the Apostle Paul preaches at the Areopagus. He starts with God then goes to man as a sinner. Then he goes to the answer found in Jesus Christ. Then he goes to the proclamation of salvation by grace through Jesus Christ and the receiving of it by faith and repentance. We have covered the first two of these elements – God and man. The Gospel is a message about God. In fact Paul says in Romans 1, "I am an apostle chosen by God and set apart for the Gospel of God." If we lose Biblical Theism we lose the Gospel. Basically if you don't get what the Bible teaches about God right, then you don't have a Gospel. It's the Gospel of God. You have no reason to define sin without God. Sin is the transgression of the law of God, requiring God's judgment. God's answer is Jesus who is God, Son of God. Then we are saved by the grace of God.

Your grace isn't going to save me. You need grace like I need grace. I need the grace of God. Faith and repentance are gifts from God. So if you lose God you have no Gospel. That's why we said that the Gospel, first and foremost, is a message that the Triune God of glory saves sinners by and for the praise of His glorious grace. It is a message about God.

Secondly, it's a message about sin. Because we are born sinners we all sin and are inescapably under God's righteous judgment with no hope apart from God's grace

and mercy. In other words, you're not born a blank slate in sin. You are born a sinner. Why? It is because we sinned in Adam. When Adam sinned I sinned. Harry when is your age of accountability? It was eons ago. When Adam sinned I participated in his sin. I was in Adam. God piggybacked humanity into Adam. When he sinned we sinned. So we are born with a sin nature and a sin record which is why we then engage in sins in life. We have a bad heart, a bad record and that's why we choose a rebellious life where we assassinate God's glory to insert our glory in the place of God's glory. That's the choice we make and it happens from the heart. It is out of the heart that evil and sin flows. We are not victims of our environment. We are not victims of biological mutations. We have a sinful heart and we choose to sin. We have a sin record.

We are like the prisoner in jail who is bound. He can move around his jail. He had freedom of movement but he always moves within the confines of his bondage. Our wills are in the bondage of our sin. Why? It is because we have two problems. We have a legal problem, sin record, and a personal problem, a sinful heart. So here is this man in jail in bondage under a death sentence. In fact he will die in six months because they have his death sentence but he gets sick one afternoon so he calls the prison doctor. The doctor comes to examine him and says "I have bad news. You have a terminal illness and you'll be dead from this illness in one year." Then he realizes he won't be in jail to die from this illness in a year because he'll be put to death in six months. His legal problem will take him out of here, so who cares if I'm sick. Then the doctor says "I have a pill that will cure your illness." He says "That's wonderful" so he takes the pill to cure his illness. He then realizes that his personal problem is solved but his legal problem is still there because he'll be killed in six months.

Let's reverse this. They come to him and say "The governor has just pardoned you. You're free." So he is free and he walks out of the jail but remembers he'll be dead in a year because of his illness. He has a personal problem and a legal problem. You and I are born with a personal problem because we have a sin nature and we have a legal problem because we have a sin record. It is fleshed out in our sin life and we cannot save ourselves. We are under God's judgment and our only hope is that God would be gracious and merciful, but how can He save us because He is Judge and will by no means leave the guilty unpunished? There doesn't seem to be a way. I can't save you and you can't save me. My religion can't save me. We all need salvation. God must judge sin. So is there possibly a way?

That's why I get the great privilege to tell you this. When there was no way, God made a way. He created a way and that way is His Son, Jesus who is The Way, The Truth and The Life. He made the way for you. So thirdly the Gospel is a message about Jesus Christ. Why do we take time for this God and sin thing? It is because you don't appreciate the remedy if you don't know the malady. If you know the malady then you'll appreciate the remedy. Do you know why many are not singing Amazing Grace or singing the songs like we used to when we were first converted? We have lost our malady. We actually think Jesus is our life coach and we're just doing a lot better now. We kind of see Him as the good doctor who got us out of the ICU of sin. No, He got you out of the morgue. You were dead and He set you free. He emancipated you from sin's curse. That's what He did for you and me. When you don't see the malady you don't love the remedy and you'll ignore the remedy or you'll dilute the remedy.

The other day one of my crowns went bad. So I went to the dentist and I told him I believe in painless oral surgery. He said “I do too. This isn’t going to hurt me a bit.” He explained to me what he was going to have to do. Then I said “What are you going to give me?” When he told me I said “Is that full strength? I don’t want any dilution. I want this to feel so good that I want to buy some before I go home.” When we see the malady then we want the remedy. Here is God. Here is me under His judgment. I can’t save myself. He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. I have no right to salvation and no expectation of salvation. I need God but He does not need me. I didn’t want God but He wanted me even though He didn’t need me. So what did He do? He sent His Son.

I want to look at I Corinthians 2. Paul sums up 18 months of ministry in one paragraph. I Corinthians 2:1-5 says [1] *And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom.* (Here is the trap for every preacher. They are under pressure to become a philosopher or an orator and Paul says he avoided both of those traps here.) [2] *For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.* (Here is the synopsis of the Gospel) [3] *And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling,* [4] *and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,* [5] *so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.*

Paul avoided the trap of becoming a philosopher and an orator. He had two realities. He had confidence in the Spirit but no confidence in the flesh. He had two themes. He preached Christ and he preached Christ crucified. Did he deal with the manger? Yes, but he always got to the cross. Did he deal with the empty tomb? Yes, after he told about the cross. Did he talk about the ascension? Yes. Did he talk about family and reconciliation? He covered all of those things but his starting point was Christ and Him crucified – Jesus who He is and Jesus what He did. What does he mean by Christ the Anointed One? He was the Prophet, the Priest and the King. He was the last final Word of God – the Prophet. He is The Priest who is also the sacrifice, who intercedes for you. He is the King who shepherds you into salvation with His rod and His staff.

Who is the Christ? It is Jesus. Who is Jesus? He is two things. He is Son of God and Son of Man, both must be declared. How much is He the Son of God? He is one hundred percent. How much is He the Son of Man? He is one hundred percent. Is He two persons? No He is one Person. So here is some Bible math. He is one hundred percent God, one hundred percent Man and it equals one hundred percent Person. Jesus has two natures unconfused. He is not schizophrenic. He is not at war with Himself but He has these two natures. In other words, God came in the flesh and He didn’t give up His deity. We didn’t have 33 years without a Trinity. He gave up privileges. Instead of coming to bring judgment He humbled Himself to come and bear judgment but He didn’t quit being the Son of God. He is fully God.

Let me put it this way. Our problem was so great it took the infleshment of God to save us because there was nobody else to save us. Nobody else was worthy. We are all sinners. If Jesus is not the Son of God come in the flesh then that means He came from Adam and that means He is born with His own sin nature and sin record. He can’t give me a new record or give me a new nature. This is God. This is not One who sinned in

Adam, this is a New Adam but He is not only God, He is also Man. When He would run He would get sweaty. If He didn't take a bath He would smell. I'm not being irreverent. I'm trying to get the point across to you. If He missed a nail and hit His finger it would hurt Him. He is fully man and that's absolutely crucial because this isn't God appearing like a man. This is God, not diminishing deity, but taking upon Himself humanity and He is fully Man. If He is not you can't be saved. If this isn't God who has come in the flesh you can't be saved because He needs His own Savior if He is just a man.

If He's not a man He can't save you. Why? It is because you can't get to heaven without righteousness and you can't get to heaven with your sin. If He's not a man He couldn't die for you. By a Man came death, by a Man comes a resurrection. There is One Mediator between God and man. It is the Man Christ Jesus. By the way, if He's not a man then the promise that you have One right now interceding for you who feels your weaknesses, is not true, but it is. He has been tempted at every point like you yet without sin. He is one hundred percent God and one hundred percent Man, joined in One Person. Is He God or is He Man? Yes. He was hungry but He fed five thousand with five loaves. He was thirsty but He could turn water into wine. He rode in a ship but He could walk on water. He was fully God and fully Man. He died and was buried but He rose again. He was a hundred percent God and a hundred percent Man.

Now what did Jesus come to do? We preach Christ and Him crucified. He came to die on the cross for your sins. The manger is important because we have to have the virgin birth. The resurrection is glorious because it announces victory. The ascension tells us He is coming again but between heaven and earth is the Son of God, having become Man, suspended between heaven and earth and there at the cross the holiness of God met the love of God. The love of God met the holiness of God to save sinners against God for the glory of God. Right there at that point in history Jesus Christ died for our sins.

I'd like to look at Romans 5. We have already learned that all men are dead in their sins. All men are sinners and all need a Savior. Romans 5 introduces Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1-11 says *[1] Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. [2] Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. [3] Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, [4] and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, [5] and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

*[6] For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died **for** the ungodly. [7] For one will scarcely die **for** a righteous person—though perhaps **for** a good person one would dare even to die—[8] but God shows his love **for** us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died **for** us. [9] Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. [10] For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. [11] More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.*

Jesus goes to the cross, why? It is to take our place. He is not dying a martyr's death or a model death but He died intentionally an atoning death. Who killed Jesus? The Father crushed His Son, poured the unmixed wrath of hell for all the sins of all of

His people for all of eternity upon Him. It's what Jesus just hours before said "Father, if there be any way let this cup pass from Me but not My will be done but Thy will be done." He goes to the cross and it's the Father's will to pour the cup of His wrath that was due to us upon Him and He drank it until He said "It is finished!" He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God. He came and lived the life we were supposed to live for us. He died the death we ought to have died instead of us, vicariously.

I have three children. I lived during a span of time where we went through the boomer generation who likes to reinvent everything. We reinvented having babies. My first child we did the Biblical way. My wife says "Honey it's time." I get the suitcase, her, put her in the car, I put my arm around her and drive like I'm going to kill us all the way to the hospital. I help her out of the car, bring her to the nurse and doctor, give them the suitcase and then I go to the waiting room where I belong. Later they call me in and I say "What a beautiful baby! You did absolutely wonderful. Praise the Lord!" Therefore I'm not tempted to say what some of us men stupidly say "We had a baby." I am fully aware you didn't have that baby.

Then Lamaze came, so my next move was to be in the delivery room. I had the pillow but I didn't have the credential so I showed up and they ran me out when the moment came for the baby to come. Then on our third child which was our last one, I got to stay in the delivery room and there maybe something associated with that being our last. They had this monitor attached to my wife where when the birth pangs would come this scroll thing started happening on the monitor. Every time the pangs would start to come this little needle on this machine would do a little jump and then it started graphing the pangs. When that needle would do its first jump I knew what was coming next and after about 30 minutes of that my stomach started hurting. I said to the doctor "I think I'm getting sick." He said "No, you're just trying to take the pain from them. It's vicarious suffering. You're not sick."

Jesus went to the cross and took the power, the pain, the penalty of your sin from you to Himself and He paid for it. He set you free to run to Him. Jesus went to the cross to save you *from* your sins, not in your sins, to bring you to Himself. Didn't He save me to take me to heaven? I can't wait to get to heaven because He is there. He said "I go to prepare a place for you so that where I am there you may be also." He set you free from your sins. Yes you get to go to heaven. You miss hell, praise the Lord but He set you free to come to Him. Beating within you now is the desire to flee from sin to Him who set you free at the cross.

Here is the takeaway. The Gospel is the glorious message that Jesus Christ saves His people from their sins to Himself by His perfect life, atoning death and triumphant resurrection. Christ had a perfect life. II Corinthians 5:21 says [21] *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* Here is my life. What is the record of my life? We are sinners. Here is Jesus' life. What is He? He is righteous with no sin. *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin...but wait that doesn't get me to heaven because He's not through.* The record of Jesus' life is perfect and righteous. *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

So every time God sees me, my old record is gone. I have a new record and a new heart. When He sees me He sees the righteousness of His Son. His blood cleanses

you. His righteousness clothes you. From the cross I'm saved. From the cross where His glorious work on my behalf set me free and if you know Christ so you are free today. He set you free from your sins to Him.

Let's go back to the man in jail illustration. In the jail cell is the man who is under a death penalty by the king because he lived to assassinate the king. A man comes to the door and he unfolds a writ and says "Harry Reeder, assassin of the King, you are pardoned and now declared innocent. Here are your new clothes. Here is your new life." He slips the key into the jail cell, unlocks it and I walk out. He gives me my certificate declaring not only my forgiveness but my innocence. He places upon me a glorious regal robe and puts on my hand a signet royal ring. I walk out free but I stop and ask the man who told me "How did this happen? The King has inflexible law – assassins must die." He replies "The reason you're free is the King's Son died for you. You are now wearing His robe and His ring. The King is now waiting for you to join Him in the royal Family." The King of Glory came from the Father and He humbled Himself to death on a cross that you might be exalted to the praise of His glorious grace. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be in Your Word. Thank You for this Lord's Day and thank You for the Lord's message. I pray O Jesus that You would call anyone reading this, not to a religion but to a royal Message to the King, who died and rose again that they might have life. O God I know I've failed but I would simply say to anyone reading this go beyond this study and hear Jesus declare "God so loved the world He gave His Son that whoever (that's you) shall have eternal life." Dear Jesus for those of us who have heard that proclamation and have fled to that Savior that King of Glory, may we go into our world which is Yours and announce Good News. Jesus forgives sinners. He will slip the key into the lock and set you free from your sin that you might come to Him. God, prepare the people we will talk to and may Christ be exalted, I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.