

III. The Gospel of Jesus Christ in Biblical Perspective
The Majesty, Message and Ministry of the Gospel
“The Gospel is a Message About Sin”
Romans 3:10-23
Dr. Harry Reeder
September 23, 2012 – Morning Sermon

Romans 3:9-18 says [9] *What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, [10] as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; [11] no one understands; no one seeks for God. [12] All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” [13] “Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.” “The venom of asps is under their lips.” [14] “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.” [15] “Their feet are swift to shed blood; [16] in their paths are ruin and misery, [17] and the way of peace they have not known.” [18] “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”*

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

The first month I was here fourteen years ago I made a statement and I do not retract it or recant it and I will now repeat it. It’s my personal belief that all of humanity is divided into two groups. You are either dog people or cat people. Don’t bother to send me emails on this because it won’t change my mind. When we moved here we had this wonderful Sheltie and it was the best of all the dogs. My whole goal in life when I came home was to be as good as my dog thought I was. Have you ever seen a dog when you get home? It shakes everything. It wags its tail, pants, and wants to talk and play with you. If a cat could talk it wouldn’t but if you’re dog could talk you’d be surprised at what your dog would say to you. Halloween is coming and you won’t find a dog next to a witch but the greatest waste of time you have probably spent in your life is the time you took to think of a name for your cat. You could come home and call them and they don’t respond. You think you’re your cat’s master but actually you’re on your cat’s staff. So that is kind of the way this works.

When I come home, I take my dog out for a walk and wash him and he just kind of looks up at you. You can almost hear what they’re thinking – “Oh my master is so good to me. He must be god.” Whereas you can’t do anything with your cat other than what your cat wants to do with you but the cat looks at you and says “Oh my master is so good to me. I must be god.” We are all born cat people and that’s the whole sermon here. You have to get saved to become a dog people. So that you see the majesty and glory of God and say “He is God!” Until then, you take everything that God is and does and you think “Oh I must be god.” Let me try and get to that Biblically if I can this morning.

First of all I want to remind you of where we’ve been by just reviewing two essential Gospel truths. *EuAngellion* is a word that is born out of a history in which it was a proclamation of a king when the king had descended into battle and won the triumph. Isaiah delights in using that word that way. Isaiah talks about the king winning the victory and then we get up on the mountain and proclaim and publish glad tidings and

good news. So the first thing that we found out about the majesty, message and ministry of the Gospel in this series had to do with the majesty.

The first Gospel essential is the Gospel is a Royal Proclamation that the King has triumphed over all of His enemies and has saved His people from their sins. The King has won the victory over all His enemies – sin, Satan, death, hell and the grave – at the cross. The Gospel is not advice or sharing something we can debate. It is a pronouncement. That's not saying how you proclaim the Gospel but the Gospel is not advice. It's an announcement. It's not a proposal. It's a proclamation of this glorious message that Jesus Christ has won the victory and has come to save His people from their sins. He has gloriously accomplished that. He has won the victory. Included in that list of enemies that He conquered was you.

Romans 5:8 says *[8] but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners (enemies), Christ died for us.* We who were enemies have now been saved from our sins, the enemy of our soul, Satan, death, and the fear of death. Christ has won the victory. That means the Gospel is the most important thing in the world. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 1:18 it says *[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.* He is referring to the Gospel. Notice though he uses a definite article when he says “**the** word of the cross” so we have moved from the majesty of the Gospel to the message of the Gospel. We have to get this right.

There isn't a Gospel. Sincerity doesn't make the Gospel. You can sincerely believe what is wrong and what you are is sincerely wrong. We have to communicate the Gospel clearly. The Gospel is important and Satan attacks the Gospel. Paul had to reclaim the Gospel at the church of Galatia. He was astonished that they were quickly deserting Him for another gospel which is not a gospel.

The second thing we have learned is the Gospel is the foundation, the formation and the motivation of the Christian life. It is the foundation – you can't become a Christian without the Gospel. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation so the Gospel is what the Holy Spirit uses to bring you from sin's death to Christ's life. The Gospel is not only the foundation of every saved Christian but the Gospel is the foundation of every doctrine in the Bible. You don't go beyond the Gospel but you go deeper and higher. I love the intricacies of the Christian faith. I love to talk about the Christian faith in terms of worship, the sacraments, government and culture and all but we have to keep hold of the Gospel because that is the foundation for every Christian doctrine. Every single doctrine you teach is rooted in the Gospel. The Christian life is rooted in the Gospel. That's why we love to keep singing and hearing the old, old story.

We say in our vision statement ‘for coming generations.’ I'm grateful for the legacy of Briarwood but if we don't hand off the Gospel to those college kids, high school kids, to everyone we have handed off nothing to them. It is the Gospel that is the foundation and the formation – the channel markers for the Christian life. It keeps you on track.

It is also the motivation. There are multiple motivations in the Christian life but they are secondary, penetrated and permeated by the singular motivation that we keep His commandments because we love Him and we love Him because He first loved us. That is the Gospel. So the Gospel is the foundation, formation and motivation of the Christian

life. That means we have to get the message clear and it's through the foolishness of the message.

I reached back to a series of sermons I was challenged with at a Banner of Truth conferences decades ago to be reminded of this. That series of sermons came from Dr. Al Martin who was a mentor of mine in those days. He put me onto a book that I put onto you which is the book by J. I. Packard titled Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God. I hope you will read it. He says the Gospel message can be summed up with five elements. Those five elements are God, sin, Jesus Christ, grace and faith and repentance. When Dr. Packard wrote his book it was merely sanctified plagiarism of the Apostle Paul. This is what Paul does in the book of Romans. In Romans 1:16 Paul says "I'm not ashamed of the Gospel" and then Romans 1 is about the glory of God. Romans 1, 2, and 3 talk about man as a sinner and then Romans 4 and 5 are about Jesus Christ our Savior. Romans 6 through 8 are about the power of God's receiving and redeeming grace. Romans 12 through the end of the book are about the life of faith and repentance in and for Jesus Christ. So Packard just borrowed it from there.

In Acts 17 Paul went to pagan philosophers and wherever he went he would always begin with the doctrine of God. The only time Paul did not begin with the doctrine of God was when he went to a synagogue. When he went there he started with Jesus, went to grace and then faith and repentance. When he went to the Gentiles he started with God, sin and then Jesus Christ. He didn't have to start with God and sin in the synagogue, why? They had already been taught who God is and what sin is in the Old Testament and a prophecy of a Messiah. So he started with the fulfillment of the prophecy Jesus Christ and the work of grace to save us and faith and repentance.

I think there was a time 15 to 20 years ago when you and I could have done what I call synagogue evangelism in Birmingham, Alabama. We could assume people in the culture had somewhat of an accurate notion of who God was and is, what sin is and therefore we could talk about Jesus dying for our sin and they would know Jesus was the Son of God. Now I don't think that's here anymore. I know it's not here throughout most of this country, even in the buckle of the Bible belt. I think you have to find a way when you're sharing the Gospel and your testimony to get to the doctrine of God.

When Paul got to the doctrine of God he always brings out five things – God the Creator, God the Sovereign, God the Sustainer, God the Judge and then God the Savior. God made you. God sovereignly placed you where you are. God sustains you because in Him you live and move and have your being. God will judge sin. He must judge sin. Romans 2:16 says *[16] on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus*. God will judge but praise the Lord God has sent His Son to save us. God is Savior.

When God made us, why did He make us? He made us for His glory and that's the safe answer. If you give that answer to any question I ever ask then you'll always get it right. Why did God sovereignly put you where you are in your family in your place? He did it for His glory. Why does God sustain you every day? He does it for His glory. Why does God judge sinners? It is for His glory. When Satan goes into hell, on his feet you'll see written, 'to God be the glory, great things He has done.' Why did God send His Son? It was to save us.

The message about God is the Gospel is first and foremost a royal message that the triune God of glory saves sinners by and for the praise of His glorious grace. This

God who made you, sovereignly placed you, sustain you, who will judge all have not repented and put their trust in Christ who by no means will leave the guilty unpunished, has sent His Son to save you. It's the glory of the triune God. The Father authored your salvation. The Son accomplished your salvation. The Holy Spirit applied your salvation. The Father is sending grace when He gave His Son. The Son is saving grace when He died on the cross and rose again. The Holy Spirit is sealing and securing grace as He brings you from death to Christ who brings you back to the Father.

All of that is done for the praise of His glorious grace but why is it that we will not glorify God as Creator but we glorify the creation? Why is it that we won't put our trust in God who sustains us in whom we live and move and have our being? We put our trust in money, entertainment and in everything but not in God alone will we trust. Why is it that we will not honor God as Sovereign? We'll attack any and every doctrine that declares the sovereignty of God revealed in His Word. Why is it that we try to deny God as Judge and declare that He has no right to judge sinners who have rebelled against Him? Why do we reject the saving message that has come to us? Salvation is a gift. The pastor isn't up there preaching about a religion you have to do to get to heaven but a glorious God who have come from heaven to save you.

Why do we reject that and mock it? It is because the Gospel is a message about sin. We are born with hearts that will assassinate the glory of God and institute our own glory and the praise and the glory of men in its place. We will glorify the creation and not the Creator. We will glorify the idols of the world and not the God who sustains us. We will glorify ourselves as sovereign by singing our songs like "I am woman hear me roar" or "I did it my way." That's poppycock. We'll do all of these things and beat our breast against God's glory.

The reason we do this is because of the message of sin. The Gospel is a glorious message but we will not be amazed at it. The reason we're not drawn to worship as a priority of our life or why we're not drawn to rejoicing and reveling in the glory of God is because I don't think we appreciate the Good News. The reason we don't appreciate the Good News is because most of us don't really grasp the bad news. We were saved to miss hell, praise the Lord! We were saved to get out of chaos. We were saved to get our life together. We were saved for all the consequences of sin but we don't understand what it means that Jesus saves us from the dominion of sin, the bondage of sin and that affects the way we then live.

Let's say I had the Hope Diamond, the most famous diamond in the world. If I put the Hope Diamond in my pocket would it still be glorious? Yes. If I put the diamond under dirt would it still be glorious? Yes. If I hid it in my sock drawer would it still be glorious? Yes. So many times in our preaching we have hid the glory of the Gospel. We have put it in drawers, under dirt and everything else but it's still glorious. If you want people to see the glory of it what do you have to do? The first thing you have to do is shine the Light on it. If you've ever seen someone trying to sell a diamond I'm sure you will see above it a light shining on it. That's why the Gospel is first a message about God. We are shining the Light of God's glory on the Gospel. What's another thing you do when you sell a diamond and you want to see it? You will display it on a black velvet backdrop. That's what we're looking at in this study. It is the glory of the Gospel on a black velvet backdrop of *our sin*.

So now I'd like to give you three thoughts on a Biblical understanding of sin. The first one is the comprehensive universality of sin. Paul quotes much from the Psalms. He says there is none who is righteous, no not one. All have sinned which is the universality of sin. Paul would have divided the world in two parts, not dog and cat people, but it would have been Jew and Gentile. So he says that all have sinned. Let me tell you about our sin. We sin in thought, word and deed. The thoughts of our heart are sinful. The words of our mouth are poison. Our throat issues forth in cursing. From the heart we are speaking forth that which is evil and ungodly. Our sinfulness is not only in thought but it is also in word and deed. Our feet are swift to run to destruction as we would assassinate God's glory and run over and use anyone we can in order to promote our own glory and to exalt our self in our self-absorption.

That's what Paul is describing for us in Romans 3:9-10 where he brings this universality before us. After declaring we are all sinners and giving us the profile of sin he sums it up in Romans 3:23 which says [23] *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*. Sin is falling short of God's glory. Instead of exalting God's glory we have fallen short of God's glory because we have assassinated God's glory to institute our own glory. Every one of us do that. Now why can Paul say that every one of us are sinners and are under the dominion of sin? It is because of when we sin. When did we sin?

Romans 5:12 says [12] *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man (Adam), and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—* Have you ever heard people talk about the age of accountability? Your age of accountability was eons ago in a garden. When Adam sinned you and I sinned. It was right there. When he listened to the voice of his wife and not to the Word of the Lord, that was you and I who had turned from the Word of the Lord. God made Adam and piggybacked all of humanity onto Adam. This wasn't just a legal thing. Adam sinned and we get the liabilities. No, when he sinned we were in Adam, we sinned. We sinned in Adam and there all have sinned. So when Adam sinned now all the ordinary generations of Adam are born sinners. So why is it that you and I sin? It is the comprehensive universality of sin and that sin is utterly polluting us. It is not because we sin and become sinners but it is that we are born sinners so we will sin.

That leads me to the second point which is the incessant reality of sin. Here is sin in thought, word and deed, right? We think sin, then it comes into words and then it comes into deeds. Granted I am guilty of adultery when I think it in my heart but praise the Lord it's not as heinous as breaking up someone's family and bringing it into reality. There is that desire to exalt myself so as I am on a date I manipulate that woman to give her body to me outside of the covenant of marriage because my glory is more important than her virtue or I manipulate that man sexually because his affection and adoration is more important to me than the glory of God lived out in my body.

Why is it that we make those decisions? It is because when we're born in this world we are born with a sinful heart. The heart of the problem is the problem with the heart and it pollutes everything in our life. The problem is not out there like saying 'if they had just had more street lights I wouldn't have stolen that.' That is not the problem. If there had been lights we would have shot the lights out and then stolen it. The problem is inside of our heart. I don't need a patch up job or Jesus as a coach. I need Jesus as a

heart transplant Surgeon. I need a new heart. I need Him to go after my heart. The incessant reality is that my heart spews forth sin in thought, word and deed continually.

When you finish reading this say "I'm going to love the Lord with all my heart, soul and mind and my neighbor as myself. I'm just not going to sin." Tell me how long that will last. You probably won't get out of your house before that happens. It just takes one thing for something to happen to cause you to not act or think right. We not only have a sin record that has to be removed but we have a sin heart that needs to be removed. That's why the Bible doesn't say give your heart to Jesus. The Bible says to come to Jesus and He'll give you a new heart. You are a new creation, born again. There is where the issue lies. I want to show you this in two other passages.

In Mark 7 Jesus' people are being criticized. Mark 7:1-5 says *[1] Now when the Pharisees gathered to him, with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, [2] they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. [3] (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders, [4] and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.) [5] And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?"*

Now He goes to Isaiah to answer their question but I want to go down a little further in Mark 7:14-23 which says *[14] And he called the people to him again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand: [15] There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him." [17] And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. [18] And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, [19] since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) [20] And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. [21] For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, [22] coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. [23] All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."*

They have perverted the Old Testament teaching on baptism and they think the key to holiness is not to get the aroma or germ of a Gentile. If they shake hands with a Gentile they think they have to wash their hands. What is outside that you take inside like when you eat something it doesn't go to your heart but your stomach and then it goes out. Fill in the blanks. He says our problem is not what is going into our mouth and into our stomach that then leaves but our problem is what is coming out of our heart. It's out of my heart that I manipulate that woman or that man or that I steal from my employer or that I don't do the job I contracted to do in order to make more money even though my words said otherwise. It was out of my heart where my glory and my idols were more important than God's honor and praise. That's my heart problem that I have.

I'd like to look at Genesis 6. Some may be thinking that is everyone else but not me. I want to give you proof of this. When you all picked up your church pictorial directories what was the first page you turned to? Inside of us it's all about us. In fact our ultimate judgment of that church directory is what our picture looked like. That's our

final judgment on the whole deal. We are born with that self-absorbed, self-exaltation and then from thought, word, to deed. Let's look at Genesis 6.

There are the sons of God which is the line of Seth and there the daughters of man which is the line of Esau. They married and produced tyrants called Nephilim and the Lord pours forth a judgment of water upon the whole earth. Then it says in Genesis 6:5 [5] *The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.* You can't get much more descriptive than that. Where does the problem come from? It comes from the heart. Why? It is because the thoughts, imaginations and deeds that come from the heart are polluted by my sin. Now I'm not as evil as I could be. Why? Either God's redeeming grace has a hold of you and is changing you or God's common grace is restraining you from being as evil as you would be.

When I was on a radio program I was asked this question. Can you explain Aurora? This was where a guy walks in with a machine gun and shoots at everyone in a theater in Aurora, Colorado. If I didn't understand what I'm sharing with you in this study I wouldn't have been able to explain it but I can explain it. Every time something like this happens two things will inevitably happen. The question how could God allow this will be asked and people will blame God. The second thing that happens is that they will claim it horrendous and then go seek to blame everybody else but the person that did it. It's the psychologist's fault or the police should have been camping out at his door or it's the educational system. We are always trying to escape accountability for sin. Sin does not come from the outside in. The environment certainly influences us but the choices of sin come from the inside out. The profile is evil thought, evil words and then evil deeds.

Here is a man who has the intelligence and commitment to go to an online, order the items, lock and load it, know where to go and know how to do it and the last thing we want to say is that, that person is responsible, because once we do then we are responsible for our sin. So we'd like to go back to the garden and blame God. God, how could You allow this? It wasn't me God, it was the woman and You gave me the woman. It wasn't me God it was the serpent. We are always looking to place responsibility outside of us and the Bible keeps saying it's inside of us. There is where evil thoughts, deeds and words come from. It is from inside out that it's occurring.

So how is it that we can possibly be redeemed and do we need to? This leads me to the third thing which is the inevitable consequence of sin and what is it? Sin will pollute everything you do. By God's grace we are not as evil as we could be and that's because God's common grace restrains us or God's redeeming grace has laid hold of us. The answer to what happened in Aurora was not why did that one happen but the question is why isn't it happening everyday by everybody because if you haven't come to this place yet, I'm not sure you have come to Jesus. When I see what that man did I know I was born with the same heart. I was born with the same heart of those who put Jesus on the cross. I was born with a heart that would assassinate the glory of God and even the Son of God, much less other people. God's common grace restrained me in His patience.

I can't believe I get the chance to talk about the glory of the Gospel that I stood so in opposition with, in word and deed in my life. Then God gave me a new heart and eyes to see and ears to hear just like He will you. I'd like for you to look at this last passage in

Psalm 32. When the Bible talks about sin it uses three Greek words. I'll not burden you with the Greek words but I'll just burden you and hopefully help you by the translation of these words.

Was David a sinner? Yes he was. Are you a sinner? Yes you are. Did David turn from his sin and learn about his sin through God's Word and implore God for grace? Yes. Where in the Bible do you find his repentance and turning to God for grace? He didn't say "God patch up my heart." He said "Create in me a clean heart O God. Forgive my iniquities and then give me a new heart and a new record." Where did he write that? It was in Psalm 51. What did he write next and it wasn't Psalm 52? It was Psalm 32.

This is what he wrote next. Psalm 32:1-2 says [1] *Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.* [2] *Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.* The three words for sin are translated in your Bible transgress or trespass, iniquity and sin. Sin in the original means missed the mark. All have sinned and missed the mark, come short of the glory of God. When I come short of the glory of God and exalt my glory what will I do? I will step over (transgress) God's law which teaches me to love the Lord my God with all my heart, soul and mind. I will transgress God's law by sins of omission or commission – things that I do or things that I leave undone. What is the result? It is iniquity, a crooked life. It is a life that is crooked. That is what is described.

The ultimate consequences of sin is a despairing, chaotic life of iniquity that is hell filling from transgressing God's Word and denies the glory of God and misses the mark and that's what is in my heart. What is all that doing in thought, word and deed? It is sending up to the storehouse of God's patient judgment all of His wrath that will one day break upon all who are apart from Christ.

So what's the takeaway? Here is the Gospel message about sin. Because we are all born sinners, we all sin and are inescapably under God's righteous judgment with no hope apart from God's grace and mercy. We can't save ourselves. I can't save you and you can't save me. We are born sinners. We sin. We are rightly under God's judgment and He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. He has to judge sin and sinners.

Here is what He didn't have to do. I have great news, wonderful news. We are sinners rightly under God's judgment and that's the bad news. You can't save yourself or a church or a religion can't save you. Then God did what He didn't have to do. He has to judge sinners but He doesn't have to save them. But He did. He sent His Son.

You shall call His Name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins. Joseph every time you sit in bewilderment how do I legally and nurturally raise the Son of God? Remember Joseph you are raising the King of Glory who will go to the cross and He will save His people *from* their sins, not in their sins, from their sins to Himself. That's what I want you to know. Mary, when you feel those pains of child birth and you're standing in front of that cross and a sword pierces your soul, remember there is the King of Glory. Jesus has come to save His people from their sins.

God's judgment is coming. So great is that judgment as it pours forth upon sinners in that day and even before that day will at times cry out to the mountains to cover us. Those who have no time and no care to pray to God will pray to mountains to save them but mountains cannot save them but there is wonderful, glorious, Good News. There is a Savior who went to a Mountain. It is Jesus Christ. He went to that cross and He died for your sins to save you from your sins. It is that Savior who brings you from

the bondage of sin and sets you free. It is that Savior who pays for the penalty of your sin, gives you a new record, releases you from the dominion of sin and gives you a new heart. He gives you a new life and you're a new creation. The old is passed away. Behold the new has come.

Here is the backdrop. Do you see sin in all of its sinfulness because if you don't when you come to Christ you don't to a life coach, you're coming to a Savior. What does He save you from? He saves you from your sins and when you see your sins, your sinfulness and you're undone and you flee to Calvary, there is my Savior. Praise His Name forever! See the Light of God's glory in the message of the Gospel shining upon it? See the backdrop of our awful, heinous rebellion and we're undone. We're not in an IC unit ward. We are in a morgue and we're dead in our sins but God being rich in mercy caused us to be born again to a Living Hope, Christ our Savior. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for the glorious truth of the Gospel. If you are reading this today and God has moved you from turning aside to seeking you and that means He is seeking you. Now you can come to Him and if you understand what was said in this study you don't go get better to come to Him because you can't get better, you come just as you are, without one plea but that Thy blood was shed for you. Jesus I come. Dear friend in Christ, my hope and joy and the desire of my heart, is today to some degree you see afresh and anew the majesty of your Savior, in His humiliation on the cross to exalt you by His glory and for His praise. See where you were, now see your Savior. Give Him praise and go proclaim Him to the world. Jesus, thank You for being our Savior, we surrender for You're our Lord, I pray in Your Name, Amen.