Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Saved by What?
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 80-377

I want you to think with me concerning the things of the Word of God for our message along the line of the necessity of the Christian gospel, the necessity of the Christian gospel and maybe even more specifically the necessity of faith in the Christian gospel.

Now if you're a part of Grace Church, this is probably not news to you that salvation depends upon believing the gospel of Jesus Christ. We have emphasized that through all the ministry in the history of this church. We understand that the ministry of Christianity, the message of Christianity has always been the same. It has always been that salvation comes by faith in the good news concerning Jesus Christ, His birth, life, death and resurrection. The content for the gospel is found solely and only in Scripture. So Christianity, true Christianity and those who truly represent Christianity has always affirmed the necessity of believing the gospel. True Christians have always believed that rescue from hell comes only to those who hear, understand, believe the gospel and embrace it fully. For centuries, Christians have believed that, have proclaimed that, have given their lives and their resources in order to manifest, demonstrate and proclaim that conviction.

Here we are two thousand years away from the New Testament. We've had two thousand years in which true Christians have always proclaimed that, and we're facing a time in the life of the church when some people have called that into doubt. I was, a few weeks ago, in Montreal, as most of you know, at the first ever theological conference for the first generation evangelical Christian church in Quebec, basically planted in the early eighties, a first-generation church having the first sort of convocation of theology in their history. And they asked me if I would address the subject of the necessity of faith in the gospel for salvation because there was a trend in this first-generation church among many who were espousing the idea that there will be people in heaven who never knew about the gospel, never knew about Jesus Christ, and maybe never even knew about the Bible. Is it essential, they said, for people to have faith in the gospel?

Another question that came up was this, isn't faith some kind of an antiquated thing? And isn't faith a very personal thing? And is faith really the means of salvation? The only other option you have is you earn it, and even that has found its way into the thinking of first-generation church. It doesn't take long. It's a sad irony that in our time with greater means to proclaim the true gospel than we've ever had, greater means to proclaim it to the ends of the earth than we have ever had with transportation the way it is, with the digital world the way it is, with media the way it is, we have a greater potential to cover the globe with the gospel of Jesus Christ than ever in the history of the church and now we're

confused about whether we need to do that, whether the content of the gospel is essential, whether faith in the truth of the gospel is even necessary. And besides, there are people who embarrassed by the reality of sin, they're embarrassed by the reality of hell, they don't want to talk about that. They're afraid to make people feel badly about themselves, they're afraid to offend them by pointing out that they're perishing on their way to eternal punishment and they must repent and they must confess Jesus as Lord or they will never escape hell. There are questions about the Lordship of Christ, there are questions about the doctrine of justification, and there are questions even about the necessity of faith and even about the gospel itself.

The question that came up in the conference that I was asked to answer, is the question: "Do people have to hear and believe the gospel to be saved?" That question comes because there are denials of that. Let me just give you a few insights into it. There has developed something called "natural theology." Natural theology says that man in his natural condition by natural means can reason his way to God without the Bible or without the gospel by sort of doing the best with the information that he has, and that's good enough for God. Man is able by natural powers to affirm the fact that there is God. He can know enough about God to satisfy a kind of divine minimum requirement, kind of an entry-level requirement without Scripture.

This is far-reaching. For example, the Pope himself interprets the II Vatican Council with these words, and this is a quote, the Pope said, "The gospel teaches us that those who live in accordance with the Beatitudes and who bear lovingly the sufferings of life will enter God's Kingdom." That's official word from the Pope. All you have to do is live in accordance with the Beatitudes, be meek and poor in spirit and merciful and bear lovingly the sufferings of life and you will enter God's Kingdom.

That Pope is buying into Thomas Aquinas who is an ancient Catholic historian…theologian, I should say, who got a lot of his theology from Aristotle, unfortunately. The biblical teaching that salvation only comes to those who respond in faith to the gospel of Jesus Christ is rejected as unreasonable and cruel and the heathen are saved if they live good lives and are sincere. So is the statement of none other than Peter Kreeft in a book called Ecumenical Jihad in which he says that Muslims will be in heaven, and Jews will be in heaven, and atheists will be in heaven who never knew the gospel. Surprisingly that book is commended by Charles Colson and J.I. Packer.

In a very interesting interview some years back between Billy Graham and Robert Schuller, the conversation went like this. Billy Graham said, "I think everybody that loves Christ or knows Christ, whether they're conscious of it or not, they're members of the body of Christ, whether they come from the Muslim world or the Buddhist world, or the Christian world, or the non-believing world, they're members of the body of Christ because they've been called by God. They may not even know the name of Jesus, but they know they need something, and I think they're saved and they're going to be in heaven with us." Surprised?

Then he went on to say, “I’ve met people in travel situations that have never seen a Bible, heard about a Bible, never heard of Jesus, but they believed in their hearts that there is a God and they’ve tried to live a life that is apart from the community in which they live.” Is that enough? You might not be surprised to hear the Pope say that. But you might be surprised to hear Billy Graham say that.

There’s another kind of trend called “The Wider Mercy Trend,” Robert Schuller states that there is wideness in God’s mercy. Some theologians have affirmed that, one Clark Kinnock said, “When we approach the man of faith, other than our own religion, in another religion, it will be with a spirit of expectancy to find out how God has been speaking to him and what new understanding of the grace and love of God we may discern in this encounter with a person in another religion.” Kinnock goes on to say, “Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion is to take off our shoes because the place we are approaching is holy. We may not forget that God was there before our arrival.” God is present, the true God is present in other religions? He adds this. “God has more going on by way of redemption than what happened in first-century Palestine.

Raimundo Panikkar who wrote a strange book called The Unknown Christ of Hinduism says this, “The good and bonafide Hindu is saved by Christ, not by Hinduism, but it is through the sacraments of Hinduism, through the message of morality and the good life, through the mysticism that comes down to him through Hinduism that Christ saves the Hindu.”

A well-known American pastor wrote a book called Totally Saved published by Moody Press and in that book he said, “People who never hear the gospel, don’t know about the Bible, will be saved by being transdispensationalized…coined that word.” In other words, they’ll be treated as if they lived in a past dispensation. And John Hagee, of course, who is on the television all the time says that the Jews don’t get saved through the gospel. They get saved another way.

Well what does the Scripture say about this? I mean, that’s the only thing that matters. You would think these people would look at what the Scripture says, that’s pretty basic. You could start actually in Genesis 3, we won’t do that, we could but it might get us a little bogged down, because even Adam and Eve in a state of sinless perfection, innocence, with the epitome of natural powers in their sinless condition with perfect minds, perfect reason and a pure morality only knew what God required if God revealed it to them. They couldn’t discern it on their own. That is why God walked and talked with them daily in the Garden. He was communicating. They were having a conversation. He was revealing His will. It was God who had to tell them what to eat and what not to eat. It was God who explained what to do when you woke up and a woman was there, marry her, she’s your wife. It was God who told them to name the animals. It was God who told them to tend the Garden. Everything came from God. All revelation came from God. They would have had by their human reason absolutely no idea of what they were to do, even in a perfected state. So much more of those in an imperfect state. Adam was not the origin of truth. He was not the origin of justice. He didn’t define it.

He didn't discover it. He didn't define and find duty. He didn't invent morality, meaning, beauty. God did it all and conveyed it to him in the early days, walking with him in the Garden by special revelation. No one, not even Adam in his perfected condition would know what God expected if God didn't reveal it. Much more our condition in fallenness we have to believe what God has revealed by our natural powers we cannot attain to the will of God in the midst of our ignorance. We need special revelation to know the will of God.

And we have that special revelation, of course, on the pages of holy Scripture. There is no other way to know it. There is a revelation of God in nature. Let's look at that. Romans chapter 1, we're going to look at some passages now that will be familiar to you and we'll start with Romans chapter 1 and we're just going to talk about these kind of briefly cause I have a handful of them I want you to look at with me, that is going to explain to us the futility of thinking that people can be converted without the gospel.

In Romans chapter 1, you know this passage very well, verse 18, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men." That's a simple statement. Wherever there is ungodliness and unrighteousness, the wrath of God will be revealed from heaven. It will come on men who do not find godliness and find righteousness on their own, but suppress the truth in unrighteousness. That is human nature. Men don't rise to the truth, they suppress the truth. That which is known about God is evident within them, God made it evident to them. In chapter 2 he says, "It's evident in the Law of God written in their hearts, the moral nature of God to some degrees revealed to them by the morality that every human has and the conscience that is activated by that morality.

Also in verse 20, it's not only innate morality, but reason. Since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen being understood through what has been made so that they are without excuse. Man has enough knowledge of God through his reason. He looks at the world, he knows there's a cause, he reasons back to the ultimate cause. He knows rationally whoever the cause is has within his nature the ability to produce everything that exists in the created world. That would mean everything material, everything immaterial. That would mean everything that is a part of the tangible objective universe, and everything that is a part of the intangible subject of universe, things like love and beauty and all of those things, emotion and will. All of those elements are part of the Creator or they wouldn't exist in His creation. Human reason tells you that.

So, man can know something about God from human reason. He can know there is a great powerful, mighty Creator who is divine and that He has invisible attributes because even man has invisible attributes, even animals have invisible attributes. They have minds and thought patterns and things that animals do, instincts we call them, are all evidence of an immaterial reality.

So man can know about the creation and something about the God who creates. What does it do for him? Does it save him? No. It makes him inexcusable. It makes him inexcusable when he suppresses the truth in unrighteousness. Man's nature with natural revelation does not come to God, it rejects God. There's not enough revelation available to man in what we call natural revelation to save him, but there is enough to damn him. There is enough to make him inexcusable and man will suppress that truth, verse 21 says, they knew God, they knew the reality of God, the existence of God. They didn't honor him as God, or give thanks, they became empty in their speculations, their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools. They exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man, birds, four-footed animals and crawling creatures. They make idols.

I mean, this is human history. History would tell us that man, who has sufficient natural powers, to reason that there is a God who is moral and a Law-giver and who is powerful and divine and has invisible attributes, that is the starting point. But instead of thanking God for all of that, they reject God, they suppress the truth, they pursue ungodliness because it's all they can do in their fallen condition. They end up empty, evil, and condemned to wrath. That's where natural theology will get you. And that's all. Those tribal people over there that don't know anything about Jesus and the Bible, they're living Romans 1. They're worshiping sticks and stones and any kind of idol, any kind of demon, any kind of witch, any kind of concocted supernatural, satanic counterfeit, not the true God.

Turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and here's another illustration of this. And as I said, we're just kind of going over these in a cursory fashion. But verse 18 of 1 Corinthians 1, and we'll just go down to about verse 21. The key here as I read this is one word and I'll tell you what it is after I've read it. "For since in the wisdom of God, the world through its wisdom didn't come to know God." All right, now that is a critically important statement. In the wisdom of God, this is God's plan, the world through its wisdom did not come to know God. Verse 21, you can't come to know God through human wisdom.

Backing up now to verse 19…verse 18, I'm sorry. "For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing." There's the problem. That's a categorical expression. That's a condition, present-tense, that is a condition. The category of people who are perishing can't know God. They can't come to know God. It doesn't matter who they are. Verse 21, "Bring on the wise man, bring on the scribe, bring on the debater of this age, and all you're going to get is foolishness. The wisdom of the world is foolishness because in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom didn't come to know God. These perishing people in the category of perishing cannot come to know God, even the most intelligent of them, the most erudite, the most educated, the most elite, the wisest of the wise individually and collectively can't come to know God. It is impossible. They have to be in another category and that category is indicated at the end of verse 18, they have to belong to those who are being saved. That is a parallel verb structure to those who are perishing. Everybody on the planet is in one of those categories. You're either in the group that are perishing, or the group that are being

saved. If you're in the group that are being saved, then when the word of the cross comes to you, it is the power of God. And the word of the cross meaning the gospel.

If you're in the category of those who are perishing, when the word of the cross comes to you it is foolishness…it is foolishness and it is rejected as such. Down in verse 21, in the wisdom of God, that is God determined by His own wisdom not to save men through their own intellects. However, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believed. Those who are being saved are those who are believers. Apart from that, there is no salvation. So those who are perishing cannot by their own wisdom come to know God.

Now, while you're there in 1 Corinthians, go to chapter 2 for a moment and verse 14. Even if you bring the truth of God to a man who is perishing, to a man who is in his natural condition, he's not going to be able to accept it. A natural man, verse 14, doesn't accept the things of the Spirit of God. They're foolishness to him. He cannot understand them because they are spiritually appraised and he is spiritually dead.

How can that be changed? Go back to verse 11. "Who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?" Nobody knows anybody's thoughts except the man in his own spirit. That's just an analogy. "Even so, the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, they don't know the things of God, but the Spirit who is from God so that we may know the things freely given to us by God."

In other words, the only way you can know the truth, the only way you can know God, know the truth of God is by the Spirit of God revealing it to you. And, of course, He's done that, verse 13 says, this is a reference to Scripture, we look at words not taught by human wisdom but in those taught by the Holy Spirit where we have combined spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. Essentially, that's the Scripture. Holy Scripture, the work of the Holy Spirit gives us the revelation of the gospel that saves. The natural man then by his own powers cannot attain to God, cannot attain to the knowledge of God. When the gospel comes to him, the gospel will be foolishness to him, it will be rejected by him, he cannot understand it, he is spiritually dead unless the Holy Spirit awakens him and gives him life through the gospel, begotten again by the Word of truth."

So what we're just trying to show you is in passage after passage, the evidence of Scripture is that men in their natural perishing condition do not attain to the knowledge of God on their own. They cannot. They cannot.

Turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 10…2 Corinthians chapter 10, verses 3 to 5, a favorite Scripture of mine. "Though we walk in the flesh," he means we're human, we're human beings, it's not talking about flesh in the sense of sin here, but just being human. We don't war according to the flesh. We don't engage in spiritual war with human weapons. That's what he's saying.

Why? Well the weapons of our warfare are not human, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. You've got to understand the condition of the unbelieving. They are unbelievers because they are in the category of those who are perishing, to borrow Paul from Ephesians, they're dead in trespasses and sin. The natural man cannot understand the things of God. That's their condition. They see the truth as foolish. They can't believe the truth. They can't comprehend the truth. That's their condition even when it's brought.

So they will not attain to the knowledge of God on their own by human reason and they will even reject the revelation of the gospel when they hear it, unless the Spirit of God moves them from the category of the perishing to the category of those who are being saved. This does not happen easily. This happens only by one means and that's what this passage points out.

Here's the problem. We're engaged in spiritual war and we have to have very powerful weapons. Why? Because verse 4 says we are endeavoring to destroy fortresses…fortresses. What are we talking about? Well the end of verse 4, destruction of fortresses, beginning of verse 4, we are destroying speculations in the NAS. So, destroying speculations explains the metaphor of destroying fortresses. The fortresses are the speculations. What are these fortresses? They are…the word is *logismos* it means ideas, thoughts, philosophies, psychologies, theories, religions, complexes of ideas and ideologies.

What do we do then to free people from their bondage? What do we do to free them from their fortresses? By the way, the word "fortress" here in the Greek is the same word for prison and the same word for tomb. And people are holed up in their fortified ideologies which become their prisons, and end up their tombs.

So how do we free them? This is spiritual warfare? Spiritual warfare is not chasing demons. Spiritual warfare is attacking ideologies, fortifications in which people are held captive and prisoner and one day they will become their tomb.

So how do we get at this? Go back to verse 5 again. We're destroying ideologies. Further defined in this way, "And," which the word *chi* can mean even, which gives you a more complete explanation rather than an alternative. So we would read it that way. We are destroying speculations, even every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God. Any…anything that is not true, anything that is anti-God, anything that is not what God says is so, any ungodly idea, we smash ideas. That's what spiritual warfare is. And then we have the responsibility, end of verse 5, to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. As long as someone is fortified in a false religious system, no matter whether they do good things, or don't do good things, as long as someone is fortified in that kind of ideology, it is a prison that will become a tomb, they remain in the category of the perishing, the only way they can ever be brought out of that is to have the ideology smashed and they be brought into

obedience to Christ. That's spiritual warfare. It's a battle for the mind and how people think.

The wisest of the wise, we saw in Romans chapter 1, are fools. The best they can do is end up inexcusable when they are condemned to hell. They're incapable of finding God on their own. Man by his own wisdom cannot know God. He will perish in his ideology, unless his ideology is smashed and he is brought to be obedient to Christ.

Another illustration of this is in the seventeenth chapter of Acts. And you, again, would be familiar with Paul on Mars' Hill. This is quite a fascinating account of Paul on Mars Hill, the Areopagus in Athens where he was interacting with the philosophers of Greece. And he was reasoning there all the time in the synagogue with the Jews, and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be present. And verse 18 of Acts 17 says, "Some of the Epicureans and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him and some were saying what does this idol babbler have to say and so forth. So this just sets the stage for him interacting with these philosophers. Verse 22, "He stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you're very religious in all respects." Now we might expect the next line to be, "This is really good because this is all that's needed. You have good intentions and you're doing all right with the information you've got."

And then he says in verse 23, "However, while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'To an unknown god.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you, that God who made the world and all things in it, since He is the Lord of heaven and earth, doesn't dwell in temples made with hands, nor is He served by human hands as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things, and He made from every man every…from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times in the boundaries of their habitations, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him though He's not far from each of us, for in Him we live, and move, and exist as even some of your own poets have said, we are also His children, being then the children of God in that sense, we ought not to think that the divine nature is like gold or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man, therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent." You have to repent of your religion. You're not there. This is wicked. You have to repent of your religion because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a man whom He has appointed having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

And at the close of that speech, "Some men joined Him," verse 34, "and believed, including Dionysius, the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others." This is where you get when you have the elite philosophers, the brightest of the bright, the wisest of the wise at the highest level of human reason, you get a big blank. What do you get? You get the unknown God, the god that you don't know. Paul by divine revelation in the gospel fills in the blanks. He says you're gropers, you're

gropers, you end up groping your way around and you come to gold and silver and stone and you make idols. And he wants them to come to believe in the true God and the true way of salvation through Jesus Christ who died and rose again.

Where does natural revelation get you? It gets you to foolishness. It gets you to ignorance. It gets you to judgment. It gets you to idolatry. It gets you to hell.

I want you to go back to 1 Corinthians 10…1 Corinthians 10. You will not find on the pages of Holy Scripture from the beginning to the end, anywhere where there's a commendation given to someone who has found God through anything other than biblical revelation. Listen to 1 Corinthians 10, this is a very important portion of Scripture and we can go down say to verse 19.

Verse 19 says of 1 Corinthians 10, "The things sacrificed to idols is really not anything because an idol is not anything." In other words, that's not a God. That's nothing. That's wood, stone, whatever. However, verse 20, "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God." Let's get it right.

If you go to a tribe somewhere and they're worshiping the God that they have created, that is not a sort of primitive representation of the true God, they are worshiping a demon. They are worshiping a demon.

By the way, this is borrowed, this truth, from the thirty-second chapter of the great book of Deuteronomy and I just read a couple of verses, starting in Deuteronomy 32, maybe verse 15. "Jeshurun," which is another term for Israel, "grew fat," and this is an indictment, and kicked. You are fat and thick and sleek and he forsook God who made him." This is the apostasy of Israel. "Scorned the rock of his salvation. They made Him jealous…the true God…with strange gods with abominations they provoked Him to anger." Then verse 17, "They sacrificed to demons who were not god…they sacrificed to demons who were not god."

I'm going to say something very bold. The worship of Mary is not the worship of Mary; it's the worship of a demon, a demon who impersonates Mary enough to capture the souls of millions. The worship of any other than the true and living God is to worship a demon. You don't get to God by making an idol and doing the best you can. That's not what Scripture says. Satan is the father of lies and his messengers are disguised as angels of light. He works in the realm of religion. Even something seemingly, it must be minor to the people who espouse these kinds of things, something minor. Maybe you might consider this minor, they worship Jesus but they just see Him a little differently, isn't that okay? Isn't that kind of…doesn't that kind of solve the problem?

Well, in 2 John 9 it says, "If anybody doesn't abide in the teaching of Christ, the true teaching of Christ, he does not have God." If you've got any other than the true Christ, you don't have God. The

Mormons? Their Jesus…can I say this?...is a demon. They worship a demon. They worship a Jesus who is created, who is the spirit brother of Lucifer. They worship a demon. If anybody comes to you, Galatians 1 says, with any other gospel, including any other Jesus, let him be damned. You don't get there by alternative means.

In Romans chapter 3, would be another passage that we should think about. You say, "What about the Jews? What about the Jews? They worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of the Old Testament; they believe Him to be the Creator, their monotheists, only one God, what about them? Aren't they okay?"

Listen to Romans 3:9. "We have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin. Wow! They're no better off than the Greeks, they're no better off than the non-Jews, they're no better off than the pagans." Put them all in the same category. "There is none righteous, not even one. There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God. There is none who does good, not even one." That's the truth of Romans 3. They're not seeking God. They're not coming to know the true God. There is no salvation for them.

That is why you have the Great Commission. That is why we are told repeatedly to go into all the world and preach the gospel to everybody, because apart from that people cannot be saved. That's why we're so passionate here at Grace Church about taking the gospel to the ends of the earth and using every power we have to do that, right? You're going to receive a letter this week, or next week, the Christmas letter, it's going to be different than anything you've ever seen. I want you to read it carefully, thoughtfully and prayerfully. It's going to give you a picture of how God has blessed this church and enabled us to cover the globe with the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ and how much a part of that you are. You're going to be thrilled when you see it.

As I said, we're living in a time when we can reach the ends of the earth like never in human history before. And we want to be faithful to the reality that apart from us reaching people with the gospel, they have no hope of being saved.

Now to kind of bring this to its culmination…that was the introduction…I want you to go to Romans 10 and this is the sermon. You can start timing me right now, okay? All right, I want you to go to Romans 10. That was just a kind of introduction. Romans 10 verse 1, Paul says, "My heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.

Who's he talking about? Israel, back in verse 31, Israel. "My heart's desire, my prayer to God for them is for their salvation." Back in chapter 9, verse 1, "I'm telling the truth in Christ, I'm not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh who are Israelites."

What's he saying? Jews aren't saved. They're not saved. They're not saved. They weren't saved in the first century; they're not saved now by their Judaism. That's what he's saying.

And then he begins to unpack the problem. Here's their problem. Verse 2, "They have a zeal for God but not in accordance with…what?...knowledge." You just can't get there by wishing it, willing it. There is no salvation. They have a zeal for God and it's a serious thing, especially if you consider the background of the apostle Paul as one of the Pharisees. Zeal doesn't do it. There's no salvation. Paul even says about himself, "Before my conversion, I was a blasphemer of God…a blasphemer of God." What knowledge do they lack? Verse 3. Here's kind of a bit of an insight into what it is that they lack. They don't have *epignosis*, that's deep knowledge, preposition added to *gnosis.* Zeal for God, misinformed, a zeal for God misdirected is an eternal death sentence. This hits the nail on the head. The universal result of all religion and faith in God that does not include the true gospel of Jesus Christ is simply an eternal death sentence. The Jews today are as lost as the Muslims. They do not believe the truth necessary to be saved. What is the truth necessary to be saved? First, verse 3, they're ignorant of the righteousness of God. They're ignorant of God's righteousness.

What does that mean? They do not understand how righteous God really is. This, dear friends, is the first damning darkness. They don't know how holy God is. They don't know how righteous God is. To put it another way, they think God is less righteous than He is.

Secondly, they don't know how sinful they are, seeking to establish their own righteousness, they didn't subject themselves to the righteousness of God. In other words, they thought God was less righteous than He is, they think they're more righteous than they are, and so they can please God on their own. That's a work system. They don't know how holy God is, absolutely holy, how righteous God is, how absolutely intolerant He is of every sin. You can't give yourself any concessions to sin before an absolutely holy God. You can only be saved if you have a perfect righteousness, THE righteousness of God. They didn't subject themselves to the fact that they had to have a righteousness given to them by God, they thought God was less holy than He was and they were more holy than they were. And so, they could please God by their works.

You see, all effective evangelism begins with the absolute righteousness and holiness of God and the utter wretchedness and sinfulness of man and it's a gulf that's too vast to ever be crossed by man. God's perfect virtue, His perfect hatred of every sin, this is so serious that one sin is enough to cause a sinner to spend an eternity of punishment in hell. So, you see, they don't understand God, they think He's less holy than He is. They don't understand their own wretchedness; they think they're more holy than they are. And so they can please God on their own. You don't get there that way. They do not therefore subject themselves to the righteousness of God which is the only way to be saved, to receive the righteousness of God imputed to you.

Verse 4 then tells us, they don't understand this great truth that Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes. What does it mean Christ is the end of the Law? *Telos* is the Greek term. Some people say Christ is the end of the Law's threat. Some people say Christ is the end of the Law's reign. Others say Christ is the perfect fulfillment of the Law. Some say Christ satisfies the Law's required penalty. Some say Christ is the end of the Old Covenant Law and inaugurates the New Covenant.

All of that is true. But all of that looks at this phrase as speaking of Christ when it isn't speaking of Christ, it's speaking…go back to verse 4…of everyone who believes. Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes. This shows that the intent of Paul is to say Christ is the termination of the quest for righteousness by the Law. The Jews were trying to gain righteousness by the Law. Christ when you receive Him, ends that fruitless quest. Philippians 3 Paul says, "I tried to go about establishing my own righteousness, then I saw Christ and the righteousness of God was imputed to me through faith in Christ. And that was the end of the Law…the Law, the race to qualify before God by keeping the Law.

They don't understand that. They don't understand how holy God is, how sinful they are, and they don't understand that believing in Jesus Christ brings salvation and ends the futility of trying to earn it by keeping the Law.

Now having said the word "believe" in verse 4, the Apostle Paul launches a section from that verse on down through verse 10, talking about faith. And it's a wonderful section. We won't go into it in detail. The sinner is pointed to believing in Christ in verse 4, and then this is illustrated, Moses writes, that the man who practices the righteousness based on Law shall live by that righteousness. That's an impossible way to go, as Galatians 3 said, "Cursed is everyone who violates the Law." You violate it once and you've shattered any hope for that.

But, verse 6, "The righteousness based on faith, that's a different thing." And we'll skip that, go down the section in between where he quotes some Old Testament passage, go down to verse 9, here's how to receive the righteousness that comes by faith. "Confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead, you'll be saved."

Folks, that's the message, right? And apart from that, there's no salvation. We've shown you that numerous passages, it comes down to with the heart a person believes, verse 10, resulting in righteousness, the righteousness of God imputed to that person, and with the mouth he confesses resulting in salvation. There's reference back to Moses, Leviticus 18:5, there's reference back to Deuteronomy chapter 30, this is not new. The righteousness of faith is age-old. God has always saved people that same way. It's a matter of faith.

How you were saved? Verses 9 and 10, “Confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved,” because that’s how it happens, verse 10 says.

The Jews didn’t understand how holy God was, how unholy they were. They didn’t understand the provision of Christ, and they didn’t understand the place of faith. There’s something else they didn’t understand. They didn’t understand the extent of salvation. Verse 11, Scripture says, “Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed. Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed,” Isaiah 28:16. Even in the Old Testament it was clear that this was going to be beyond Israel. And verse 12, Paul says, “There’s no distinction between Jew and Greek. The same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him. Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.” It’s not a matter of being Jewish. It’s not a matter of keeping Jewish tradition, Jewish ceremony, Jewish Law, or trying to live up to the Mosaic Law. There’s…there’s no contribution to your salvation in any of that, and therefore Gentiles are in the same situation that Jews are. Jews are no better off, in fact their judgment may be greater because they have greater knowledge. Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved. The same Lord is Lord of all, and abounds in riches for all who call upon Him.

This is for everyone. That means everyone to be saved must call on the name of the Lord in believing faith. Then we come down to the practicality of it, okay? And this is where we’re going, verse 14, “How they going to call on Him in whom they haven’t believed?” Do you understand that? If you call on the name of the Lord, you can be saved. And the name of the Lord means all that is true about Christ all that is embodied in the essence of who He is. If you call on the name of the Lord, you’ll be saved, meaning you confess Him as Lord, believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead. “How will they call on Him in whom they haven’t believed?” You can’t call on Him if you don’t believe in Him. How will they believe in Him whom they haven’t heard? How will they hear without a preacher?”

Do you understand this? That’s why there’s a Great Commission. They can’t call if they don’t believe. They can’t believe if they don’t know. They can’t know if they’re not told. They can’t be told if you don’t go. That is why we send people, how do they preach unless they’re sent. Because it’s written, verse 15 says, borrowing from Isaiah again, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things.” Of course. How beautiful is the person who brought you the gospel? I mean, that’s sort of personifying the feet of someone because they were the instrument God used to bring the message of salvation to you.

Of course, the most wonderful person in your life history is the one who brought you the gospel. Maybe it’s your mother, maybe your dad, maybe your pastor, maybe a friend, maybe a sibling, spouse. The messenger will be beloved to you, who brings you the good news of salvation. That wonderful truth is borrowed from Isaiah where it spoke of the messengers who will bring the good news to God’s people Israel just prior to the Millennial Kingdom. The gospel is absolutely essential.

They have to know. They have to hear. They have to be told. People have to be sent.

Sadly, there's a negative in verse 16. They didn't all heed the good news, right? But Isaiah said that, "Lord, who has believed our report." That's how Isaiah 53 starts, isn't it? Who has believed our report and to whom is the arm of the Lord been revealed? And it goes on to talk about the ugliness of the Savior and how He was rejected.

The negative is, not everybody's going to believe. But the positive is in verse 17, "Faith comes from…what?...hearing and hearing by the Word concerning Christ." The message about Christ.

All four gospels are summed up in this, all four gospels are summed up. At the end of the gospel of John, he speaks for all four gospels when he says, "These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing you may have life in His name."

Why are we so passionate about sending missionaries all over the world? Why are we so passionate about sending pastors all across our country and other nations? Because there isn't any other way. This is how you fulfill the Great Commission, you go and we send. This church has been through the years an amazingly faithful as a sending church. And as I said, when you get the Christmas letter you're going to be astounded, see how far and wide the glorious message of Jesus Christ has gone from this little tiny spot here in Southern California. This is the Great Commission to go, make disciples of all the nations. Repentance…end of Luke…for forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in His name to all the nations.

It is a joy for us, it always is a joy for us to take this responsibility in our own nation and our own little community and our own town, in our own association at work and school and family, to take every opportunity to evangelize and to give the glorious gospel of Christ. Don't hold back that gospel, don't be afraid to tell people that hell is a reality and people are headed there if they're among those who are perishing. But there is a rescue provided by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, be clear about the wonderful gospel of Christ. That's why we're here, otherwise we might as well go to heaven if we're not engaged and involved in that. You be faithful in your own personal life to be a gospel witness and a gospel testimony.

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