

# The Gospel: What We Believe

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Preacher: Pastor Bart Leger

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, good morning again and welcome to Faith. We're so glad that you're here. We are together for the second time in our new series talking about the gospel and looking at the gospel as being our lifeblood. Because if we don't understand what Jesus did for us and we never really come to grips with our need for salvation, our sinfulness, and who God is and what God accomplished at the cross of Calvary with the resurrection of Jesus Christ, proving that God was satisfied with the penalty that had been paid, then really everything else we do is pretty worthless. And so what we're going to do today, we started last week, look at the objective content of the gospel. And I think one of the things that we tend to do, and I say we, it's a collective we in modern Christianity, is often not give people the benefit of helping them understand the full scope of what the gospel involves and running the risk of presenting a very shallow gospel. You know, God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. Pray this magic prayer and everything will be beautiful. And many people, and we never take it the next step, and disciple them to understand what they pray, to understand what the gospel really involves.

And there are many who pray that magic prayer and their life never changes. They never get involved in a local church. We never see the fruit of the righteousness of Christ in their life.

And they may be like the ones we heard of last week when Jesus was saying, when people appear before God, there are going to be some that will be surprised when God will say, depart from me, you workers of iniquity, I never knew you. And they will say, well, didn't we, Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name? Didn't we do great miracles? Didn't we cast out demons in your name? We thought we were hunkering with you. And God says, get away, I don't know you.

And so that's what we need to be careful about, that we don't run the risk of giving people a false hope that just because they sign a card and pray a prayer that they're right with God, and they may never understand what they just said and or not mean it in their heart and understand the full scope of the gospel. So what I want us to do today is look at a very rich passage of scripture in Romans chapter 3. In Romans chapter 3, one of the very, very, very important verses, very popular verses, some that probably everyone here has memorized at one time or another. A very rich portion of scripture. As a matter of fact, Martin Luther, who nailed his 95 theses to that door in Wittenberg, Germany, who really was a leader of the Reformation, said this about, he called this chapter, the chief point of the whole Bible. And I think it's one of the most important texts in the Word of God, if not the most important text. And I want to encourage you, if you don't have Romans 3.21 through 26 memorized, to consider memorizing it. Because it's not just Romans 3.23 that's important, it's the verses that go before, and it's the verses that go after. Very much like other portions of scripture. We memorize a verse, but sometimes we fail to see the full breadth of the context, what led up to that, and the verses following. This is a picture of the gospel. I want us, again, to see the objective content of the gospel and see it in these words. Let's begin by opening God's Word and looking in Romans chapter 3, beginning with verse number 21. And Paul writes, but now, the writer of the book of Romans writes, but now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed. Paul is talking about the gospel. The righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Christ Jesus, in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe, for there is no difference. For all have sinned. Here's a verse that I think we're all familiar with. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation or a proper atonement by his blood through faith to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed to demonstrate at the present time his righteousness, that he might be just and imply that he might be the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. As we look and complete this, when we look at the top of our notes, what we have is, I believe, is an objective explanation of the gospel. And I realize there is not one complete or perfect explanation of the gospel that any human being could put together. But in the top of your notes, under the gospel, we have what I believe, based on Romans 3, 21 to 26, is a comprehensive definition or explanation of what the gospel involves. And some of you might be thinking, well, kind of overcomplicating the gospel. Well, the gospel is simple. We're sinners, separated from God.

Jesus, fully God, fully man, died on the cross of Calvary in order that he might atone for our sin, rose again from the dead to prove that God was satisfied, God's wrath was satisfied against our sin.

[ 6 : 27 ] And by grace through faith, all who call upon the name of the Lord God, all upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. I mean, that's the gospel. But let's take a look at this gospel explanation.

The just and gracious God of the universe looked upon hopelessly sinful people and sent his Son, Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, to bear his wrath against sin on the cross and to show his power over sin in the resurrection so that all who have faith in him will be reconciled to God forever.

Now, what I want us to do is unpack that very rich statement. And I believe if we take out any one of these phrases, we've taken out an extremely important part of the gospel because all of these work together.

All of these are what God did, had to do, or who we are and our situation apart from Christ, and what is necessary to know Christ as our Savior. We're going to begin with the first phrase.

And what is interesting that we see here, Paul is making a transition from verse 20. Literally, he's making a transition from Romans chapter 1, verse 18, all the way to Romans chapter 3, verse 20. Because if you look in your Bibles at Romans chapter 3, verse 21, what are the first words, what are the first two words of verse 21 in your Bibles?

[ 8 : 18 ] If you have your Bibles open. If you don't, but now. So what Paul is doing is, he has taken the first three chapters of his letter, or the first portion of his letter.

He didn't write in chapters, obviously. So he's shown who man is, or man's condition. He's taught about God. And then, in verse 21 of chapter 3, he says, Probably the two greatest words in the Bible.

Here's where we were, but now. And he begins to explain what takes place. He's giving us a portrait of God. He's giving us a portrait of man.

So Paul is making this transition. But now, a righteousness from God is revealed. And he's giving us a portrait of God and man in relationship to one another.

So let's take that first phrase. The just and gracious God of the universe. Any of you have memorized Romans 1.16?

[ 9 : 23 ] I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation. For all who believe, for everyone who believes. So what Paul is saying, remember, in Romans chapter 1, verse 16, Paul says, I'm not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God.

And everybody that believes in it, God uses that power to save their souls. And then in verse 18 of Romans chapter 1, Paul starts out and talking about God, talking about the nature and some of the things that talks about God.

And oddly enough, Paul starts off with the wrath of God. Look at verse 18. We'll go back to chapter 1. So Paul says, remember, he just talked about the gospel.

He says, verse 18, For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

Verse 19, Because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.

[ 10 : 52 ] So Paul starts out by saying, God's wrath has been revealed. But what he talks about here in verse 20, he's talking about he created everything.

So as we look at these, we'll look at three attributes of God that are, I believe, very important and integral in the gospel. And that first attribute is that we see Paul bring out in Romans chapter 1, verses 18 through 20 is, is that God is creator.

This is important for the gospel. It's very important. Because do you realize we all belong to God? God created us. God's in control over us.

Excuse me. And so we're ultimately responsible to whom? We're ultimately responsible. That's right. We're ultimately responsible to God. He owns us.

This is key. He is the creator. The second thing that we see, spelled out here, is that God is just. How did it start?

[ 12 : 02 ] But the wrath of God is revealed. Why? Because mankind rebelled against him. And so God is a just judge.

One day, all of mankind will stand before God. For those of us who are in Christ, we'll stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Our sin will have already been judged at Calvary, so it will be a matter of rewards.

But those who don't know Christ in this life will stand before God. And everyone who stands before God at that, in the book of the Revelation, what we call the great white throne judgment, will be cast into the lake of fire.

Because they did not choose to trust, or they did not believe on and trust in Jesus Christ while they were alive on planet Earth. So God is just.

Now this is where he comes to Romans chapter 2. He talks about the judgment of God. Look at Romans 2. And we'll look at Romans 2, 1 through 9. Therefore.

[ 13 : 10 ] What's the therefore for? Therefore is therefore what he has said previously. The wrath of God is revealed. Therefore, he's talking to human beings. Therefore you are inexcusable.

O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another, you condemn yourself. For you who judge practice the same things.

But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?

Or do you despise the riches of his goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart, you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality.

But to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation, and wrath, tribulation and anguish on every soul of man who does evil to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

[ 14 : 36 ] What we see is God, excuse me, I'm sorry, God is impartial in his judgment. God is judge and God is just in his judgment.

Now when we get to verse 16, in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to what will be the measuring stick?

The gospel. What Jesus accomplished on the cross for us. What he is saying is very clear. Everyone will be judged by God on the merits of the gospel.

But now, two greatest words we see in Romans 3, 21. But now, for us, there is the opportunity for us to know and understand that we can be freely justified by the grace of Jesus Christ.

Verse 24, are justified freely by his, what? by his grace. So, the next thing we see, the first thing we see is the just and gracious God of the universe is creator.

[ 15 : 46 ] He is the just judge, but thanks be to God, he is gracious. Not only do we see a God who is a judge, but we see a God who dispenses grace.

grace. Here is the third attribute of God that we see in these verses in Romans 3. He gives unmerited favor. He gives us what we could never earn for ourselves.

That is, being right with God, being in the family of God. As we continue, we will see this is a big deal, that God is creator, that God is just, and that God is gracious.

So, the first thing, the just and gracious God of the universe. He is creator, he is judge, he is just, and he is gracious. And the second part of that definition, we will take it, like I say, we will take it a phrase at a time, looked upon hopelessly sinful people.

That is what we are. We were hopelessly sinful. We could do nothing for ourselves to get right with God. So, all three of these attributes of God are coming together in the gospel.

[ 16 : 56 ] All of us have sinned, and then listen to what he says, and then he starts quoting from the Old Testament in verse number 10, Romans 3.10.

We are going to go back just a little bit. As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one. Did he leave anybody out?

Nope. All of us, no not one. There is none. There is none who understands. There is none who seeks after God. You know, sometimes we think, well, you know, I want to know God.

That didn't come naturally. It was the Holy Spirit that had to be at work in a person's life for us to really want to know God as he really is because the Bible says there is none that seeks after God.

They have all turned aside. They have together become unprofitable. There is none who does good. No, not one.

[ 17 : 53 ] Their throat is an open tomb. With their tongues they have practiced deceit. The poison of asps or snakes is under their lips, whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.

Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways. And the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

So, of whom is he speaking? Lost mankind. And lest we think that, well you know what, he's not talking about us.

What did he say in verse number 10? There is none righteous. No, not one. He goes on to say, there is none who has done anything good. No, not one.

And so, as we think about it, apart from Christ, we are, as I had a Bible college professor, he was, he would, he'd like to say this, he would say it often in doctrine class, he said, apart from Christ, we are, before we come to Christ, we are nothing but dirty, rotten, stinking sinners.

[ 19 : 03 ] He said, there's no way to sugar coat it. There's no way to make it any prettier. He says, we're just low down, dirty, rotten, stinking sinners apart from Jesus Christ.

So, here's the truth that we have to understand in order, I believe, for us to understand the objective content of the gospel.

And the first thing is this, that we have rebelled against God. The human race in the Garden of Eden rebelled against God, took what God had given them, said, we want more, and disobeyed him in the Garden.

We are hopelessly sinful. We have rebelled against God. Think about it this way. God says to the wind, blow here, and it blows there.

God says to the ocean and to the water, you stop here, go no further. The water stops there, goes no further. And he says to mankind, I want you to do this, and what does mankind say?

[ 20 : 13 ] Well, God, I don't think so. I think I want to do it my way. Do you realize that man, woman, mankind, is the only part of his creation that does not obey him?

Think about that. Mankind, the only part of God's creation that he loves and he wants to redeem, who rebelled against him.

Of course, we know Lucifer rebelled in heaven, took a third of the angels with him, and was very instrumental in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve there. But we are rebels.

We have to understand that. We have rebelled against God. And we are, the Bible calls us, before Christ, the what's of God? Enemies of God. The Bible's very clear. He calls us his enemy before we come to Christ.

Then, the next part of our plight or our predicament is we are separated from God.

[ 21 : 16 ] Very, very crucial for us to understand the gospel is, apart from Christ, before we trust Jesus as our Savior, our root problem is we are separated from God.

all have sinned and fall short of his glory. After the fall of the Garden of Eden, we are cut off from the presence of God. This is the problem that sin poses.

You know, sometimes we, when we're trying to explain the gospel to someone and we say, you know, have you ever lied? Well, yeah. Have you ever disobeyed your parents? Well, yeah. Have you ever done wrong?

Well, yeah. Well, you're a sinner and because you've sinned and because of that, no, the issue is our sins are not what sends us to hell.

It's the fact that we're separated from God. We don't go, God won't send us to the lake of fire because we lied. We lied because of the root problem. We lied because we are separated from Him.

[ 22 : 27 ] We sin because we are what? Sinners. And so the problem is we're sinners and it's our separation from God, it's our being dead in our trespasses and sin that is the real problem.

And so our problem is we're cut off from God. And so that, you know, when somebody says, I think I'm going to turn over a new leaf and I'm going to go to church and I'm going to clean up my life, do they have any hope?

Any more hope than trying to revive a dead person? Because there is no hope. They're dead. A miracle has to take place. And that's literally, you know, we talk about the miracle of birth.

I think we could look at the miracle of the new birth because what God accomplishes is something far beyond what mankind can accomplish when a sinner trusts Christ as their Savior and they're redeemed and the Holy Spirit comes to reside within and we become a part of the family of God.

So we have to understand as being part of the gospel is that our plight is we are separated from God. And then secondly, we need to understand that we are dead without God.

[ 23 : 44 ] We are dead in our trespasses and sins apart from Christ. We are dead. Listen to what Paul says in verses 19 and 20. Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who were under the law that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God.

Therefore, by the deeds of the law, no flesh will be justified in his sight for by the law is the knowledge of sin. So, how can a God who, a God of justice and hate sin be so gracious toward sinners?

And, how can God himself, who sees acquitting the guilty as being an abomination, provide grace to us?

And that's one of the parts of the beautiful picture of the gospel is how God can do that. Look at Proverbs 17, 15.

And here's, we have to understand the tension of the gospel. We know that God loves us. We know that God wants a relationship with us.

[ 24 : 59 ] But the Bible says, apart from Jesus, we are rebels, we are separated from him, and we are his enemies.

we are guilty. Listen to what Proverbs 17 says, he who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, how does God see them?

Both alike, or an abomination to the Lord. So that would be like someone saying, this person murdered somebody, and we're just going to, you know what, we'll just let him go.

we'll just kind of sweep it under the rug and let him go. What does God say that is? That's an abomination, because he's a just God. He can't ignore sin, but also unjustly blaming someone for something that they didn't do, and condemning a just person, God said, is just as much an abomination.

But what happens in the gospel? gospel. God justifies the wicked, and Jesus laid our sin upon one who was not a sinner, and who didn't deserve it.

[ 26 : 20 ] So you see the tension? How could God provide, how could God forgive and provide eternal life to the wicked by putting sinfulness sinfulness and condemning a Savior who had never sinned?

So here's the tension that we see. We don't think about it. What is the question people often say? How could a loving God send good people to hell?

You ever heard somebody say that? How could a loving God send someone to hell? They typically take someone that they knew that was a very good moral person.

And you say if they don't trust Christ, that he's going to send them to hell? How can that be? That's what inflames us. That's what gets us bent out of shape. You know what the reason for that is?

We have such a man-centered worldview. We've made it all about us. But the Bible, on the other hand, is concerned about the glory of God.

[ 27 : 27 ] And the question of the Bible really is, how can God, in his justice, show kindness to sinners? That's the more accurate question. That's the question that really reveals attention.

How can God, not how can God let good people go to hell. I think the more accurate question is, how can a just God allow rebels to go to heaven?

But he takes care of it in the gospel. And this is the tension of the gospel. Here's where we get into our next portion of the phrase. And I thank God for this.

He sent his son, Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, to bear his wrath against sin on the cross and to show his power over sin in the resurrection.

This is the dilemma posed by the gospel. How can God be just and gracious at the same time? How can he have a hatred toward sin and then be able to save the sinner?

[ 28 : 33 ] He did it through Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only answer to that tension. Here's where we see our next point. Jesus' life displayed the righteousness of God.

The problem in Romans 3 and previous chapters is we've all broken the law. It's important that we understand that Jesus was fully human.

Often that's kind of glossed over by people. He was fully man. That was the only way he could take our sinfulness upon himself and serve as a substitute for mankind.

He was also fully God. He had to be fully God, otherwise he couldn't take any eternal punishment for us. And on the third day be raised again and God be satisfied. So the doctrine of the humanity and the doctrine of the deity of Jesus Christ are just as important.

And you realize that the doctrine of the humanity of Jesus and the doctrine of the deity of Jesus is what separates Christianity from all the cultic religions. It's what separates Christianity from Islam.

[ 29 : 43 ] It's even what separates Christianity from Judaism. Because Jews today don't believe that Jesus was God. And so for us to understand that Jesus is God, fully man, fully God, who was able to take our sin upon himself, be God, so he could take that sin, rise again on the third day, that's what separates us.

So Jesus' life as a human being displayed the righteousness of God. He never sinned. Second main point is, and we thank God for this, Jesus' death satisfied the wrath of God.

That would have been poured out on you and me. Had it not been for Jesus. If not for Jesus, one day we would be standing before God and he would say, depart from me, I never knew you, you who work in iniquity, and then for the rest of eternity, we would be paying that penalty for our sin.

But Jesus Christ comes on the scene and he satisfies God's wrath. How does he solve this tension? Paul says in verse 25 of Romans 3, whom God set forth as a propitiation, an atonement.

Jesus gave his life, his lifeblood, as an atonement for us. Just like the Old Testament lambs and rams that were given, Jesus was, or is, the perfect, spotless, sinless Lamb of God.

[ 31 : 14 ] through faith, verse 25 says, to demonstrate his righteousness because in his forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed.

Jesus' death on the cross took care of our death penalty. And the reality is that the gospel is not about the nails that were driven through his hands and feet.

The gospel is not about Jesus was wrongly accused and he was killed. The reality is Jesus came for the purpose, the express purpose of dying for our sin.

And he took all that wrath of God that was destined for us. The preacher many years ago put it this way. He said, if you took a wall of water 10,000 feet high and 10,000 feet wide and took away the wall that was holding it back and it was rushing toward you.

And right before it got to you the ground opened up and swallowed every drop of that water before it got to you. That's what Jesus did on the cross for us.

[ 32 : 31 ] Because you remember the night in the Garden of Gethsemane before Jesus went to the cross? He said, God, if it be your will let this cup pass from me. What was the cup? The cup of God's wrath. Knowing that he was going to have to drink every drop of God's wrath against sin in order to be the propitiation and pay the penalty for us.

And so literally Jesus drank, so to speak, every drop of God's wrath towards sin for us. And it's just like that wall of water that was going to utterly destroy us.

The ground opened up, drank every drop of that water and it saved us. It's what Jesus did on the cross of Calvary for us. That's good news. That is really good news.

Jesus' death on the cross satisfied God's wrath. But it doesn't stop there. Because if Jesus had just died and we could go and point to his body today in the grave somewhere, we would still be lost and dead in our sin.

The next portion of what the gospel is, is Jesus' resurrection demonstrated the power of God. God poured out his wrath against Jesus and his resurrection proved that his death conquered sin, conquered the grave, and conquered death.

[ 33 : 53 ] So this is the gospel. The life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ in response to that tension that we saw. How could a just God forgive sin?

Because a just and righteous Savior took that wrath, took that judgment upon himself, and paid the penalty. And that is how a just God can be gracious towards sin.

Because he took it all upon himself. And then we get to the next phrase. So that, in your notes, so that all who have faith in him will be reconciled to him.

Okay, now here we're getting into the subjective portion of the gospel. The objective portion of the gospel is what God did. Now, how do we appropriate that? How do we receive salvation?

How are we saved? What do we do? The answer is faith. It is not of works, lest any man should boast.

[ 34 : 53 ] We are saved by grace through faith, and faith alone. Not works, not doing anything, and not only faith in who Jesus is and understanding what he has done for us.

Now, what happens when we put our faith in Christ? Suffice it to say that as we look through these next three truths, we've got to realize about faith and how it relates to the gospel.



The next thing that we see is God is the giver of the gospel. God is the giver of the gospel. Now, here's what I mean by that. If you back up to verse number 24, if we look at that, we see he gives it to us freely.

Being justified how? Freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. It's important to note that the verb being justified is in the passive voice.

[ 36 : 00 ] What that means is we don't justify ourselves. We don't do it through any work of our own. God is the one who justifies us. We are justified by him.

We can't do it for ourselves because he is the giver of the gospel. He is the giver of life. God is the giver of justification. He declares us righteous which leads to the second truth and that is God is the gift of the gospel.

We have to really understand that. What does he give us in salvation? He gives us himself. Remember we were separated from God? What does salvation provide?

An eternal relationship with the God of the universe, with the creator God of the universe. So what he's saying is a righteousness which the just and gracious God of the universe looked upon hopelessly sinful people, sent his son, Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, to bear his wrath against sin on the cross and to show his power over sin and the resurrection so that all who have faith in him will be reconciled to God forever.

He says a righteousness has been made known. 2 Corinthians 5.21 God made Jesus who knew no sin to become sin for us.

[ 37 : 31 ] All who have faith in him will be reconciled to him. But often we make salvation about forgiveness, don't we?

Trust Christ so you can get forgiveness of your sin. Isn't that so man centered? No. We should not want to trust Christ just so we get our sins forgiven.

That's only part of it. It's like at your birthday or Christmas, you come to your parents only for the gifts. Oh, forget about it.

I just want the gift. No, I don't want a hug. I don't want a kiss. I don't want to spend time with you. I just want the gift. And sometimes we do that as human beings. I just want forgiveness.

And I just want salvation. I just want some fire insurance. But the reality of the gospel is the real gift of the gospel is God. Forgiveness is how we are made right with God.

[ 38 : 33 ] So it's like the gift is a token of the relationship that we give. We don't give a gift just to give a gift. We give a gift because we love someone and we want to share something with them.

And the point is we want the relationship with the individual. So all too often we who are so man-centered look at a portion of the gospel and say, wow, this is what I really want when God is the true gift of the gospel, a relationship with him.

And that's what is important. The gospel fundamentally shows us that God gives us himself. God is the goal of the gospel.

God is the goal of the gospel. Why did Jesus go to the cross? The meaning answer is to save us from our sins. That's not the ultimate answer that Romans 3 21-26 gives us.

He tells us here, listen to what it says, whom God set forth as a propitiation, talking about what Jesus did on the cross of Calvary through faith to do what?

[ 39 : 43 ] To demonstrate his righteousness. The reason why God sent Jesus to the cross was so God could get the glory to demonstrate his righteousness in saving us.

And because in his forbearance, God passed over the sins that were previously committed, and God shows the full range of all his attributes when he does this.

And the risk is, as we see, to demonstrate at the present time his righteousness, I didn't finish this next verse, that he might be the just and justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

And here's the last thing as we get ready to close. Here's the risk, as you see in your notes. Here's the risk. we can know all of these truths and still not be saved.

Do you realize that? That's why we saw last week, examine yourselves. That's why Jesus was saying in Matthew, the end of his sermon on the mount, be careful because there are some of you that are going to stand in judgment thinking you're right with God and he's going to cast you into the lake of fire and you thought you were right with him.

[ 41 : 05 ] We can know all these truths in our head but never really appropriate them in our heart because the reality is the Bible says the demons believe. The demons know everything that you and I know today about the gospel and about Jesus but yet they're not saved.

That's why Jesus said that in his sermon on the mount. And our destiny, here it is, our eternal destiny hinges on a biblical response to the gospel.

We need to understand that God is involved in this. A number of years ago, a professor teaching some seminary students, we talked about preaching.

Every semester he would take his new preaching class of preacher boys and he would bring them to a cemetery. he would set them around the graves and he would tell them, now, I want you to preach to these graves.

And he said, I want you to preach to them with all you got. And he said, I want you to command them to rise again. And they looked at him like he was crazy and he said, no, I mean it.

[ 42 : 22 ] Do it. And so he would have them preach to the graves and try to get them by commanding them to come out of the grave. And after they would do that and probably feel really stupid, he said, boys understand this.

He said, men, understand this. He said, when you go into your churches and in your pulpit and you are preaching, you will no more be able to save someone out of their deadness and sin than you were able to raise these bodies from the grave apart from the Holy Spirit.

It's the Holy Spirit's job to help us to understand the gospel. It's the Holy Spirit's job to give us life, the power of God.

And do you realize that we're not the only ones that wrestle with this? Now, I believe, don't get me wrong, I believe that once we trust Christ as our Savior, we are secured until the day of redemption.

We don't ever have to worry about losing our salvation because once we trust Christ, we are secure. But there have been many powerful preachers of many, many years past who wrestled with this.

[ 43 : 40 ] There were Whitefield and many others who worked and worked and worked. It wasn't until later in their life where they realized what was involved in salvation.

I want to close with this story. William Cowper in 1759 when he was 28 years old. He had struggled with depression for many years.

He had attempted suicide on three separate occasions. He was actually committed to, in those days, they called them insane asylums. And he had been trying to work his way to be good enough to be part of God's family.

Well, sitting there, what he found was a Bible. And he read these words that we just read this morning. God presented Jesus Christ as a sacrifice, a propitiation for our sins through faith in his blood.

Listen to what he wrote. He says, immediately I received the strength to believe it, and the full beams of the Son of Righteousness shone upon me. I saw the sufficiency of the atonement he had made for me.

[ 44 : 53 ] I saw my pardon sealed in his blood, and the fullness and completeness of his justification. In a moment I believed and received the gospel.

Cowper lived for 35 more years, and he penned a great hymn. Listen to this. There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day, and there may I, though vile as he, wash all my sins away.

Dear dying lamb, thy precious blood will never lose its power. Till all the ransomed church of God be saved to sin no more.

Ere since by faith I saw the stream, thy flowing wound supply, redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be till I die.

[ 45 : 56 ] William Cowper got it. William Cowper got it. Just like Martin Luther got it when he saw that the just shall live love by faith.

Someone who would walk on his knees up steps praying as he went try to gain righteousness with God realized one day that righteousness only comes through faith.

Totally revolutionized Luther's life and totally revolutionized William Cowper's life. He got it, the full scope of the gospel, realized how vile a sinner he was, realized what Jesus did on the cross of Calvary.

His blood washed away our sins once and for all. And it's that cleansing flow, the blood of Jesus Christ, that can make us right with him.

Let's pray. Lord God, this morning, we thank you so very much that your gospel is so rich in meaning. It's so simple. It is the life, the death, and the resurrection.

[ 47 : 02 ] of our Savior Jesus Christ. But we must understand our predicament, understand our sinfulness, understand our lost and rebellious condition, realize who Jesus is, what he accomplished on the cross for us, and that it is by faith and trust in what he did on the cross of Calvary that will allow you to forgive our sin and allow you to restore the relationship that has been lost, that we might receive you heavenly father as the true gift of the gospel, a relationship with you restored.

I thank you for each one here this morning. May we go out from these walls, this building, these four walls, and live a life that is worthy of the gospel.

Live a life that shows that we have been redeemed and we have the Holy Spirit living within us. Father, I thank you for each one here. I thank you for your gospel.

And I thank you for the salvation that Jesus provides. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.