

What Distinguishes the True Gospel?

CHRIST IS OUR GOSPEL

The doctrines we preach and love are not the mere teachings of some particular method or plan, but the doctrines of Christ who is our gospel--Christ, Who is sovereign over all flesh, Whose grace is both sovereign and free. To preach another gospel is to preach another Christ. To hear another gospel is to hear another Christ. It is just that simple. Mark it down: you cannot separate Christ from the gospel nor the gospel from Christ; for they are one and the same. The message of life for poor, guilty sinners is the message of Christ who is our life.

Pastor Maurice Montgomery

A God You Cannot Satisfy, A Law You Cannot Keep . . .

I have tried diligently to preach God as He really is, to sinners as they really are, and to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Mediator between the holy God and sinful men, the all-glorious Redeemer who accomplished, by Himself, the reconciliation of His people (II Cor. 5:18-21). I have tried, and shall continue to do so, to preach to you:

1. A God you cannot satisfy,
2. A law you cannot keep,
3. An obedience you cannot produce,
4. A righteousness you cannot produce,
5. A love you cannot give,
6. Sin you cannot get rid of,
7. A judgment you cannot endure,
8. A repentance you cannot produce,
9. A faith which God alone can give,
10. But ... a Christ who fully satisfied God for sinners and who freely saves the vilest of sinners. I urge you to look to Him, believe Him, trust Him, and confidently commit your guilty soul unto Him. Simply hug up to Him in childlike faith and trust, and all will be well with your soul. In Him there is no condemnation.

Pastor Maurice Montgomery

THE SIMPLICITY OF THE GOSPEL

God be thanked for the simplicity of the gospel. The longer I live, the more I bless God that we have not received a classical gospel, nor a mathematical gospel, nor a metaphysical gospel (*highly abstract or abstruse*); it is not a gospel confined to scholars and men of genius, but a poor man's gospel, a ploughman's gospel; for that is the kind of gospel which we can live upon and die upon. It is to us not the luxury of refinement, but the staple food of life. We want no fine words when the heart is heavy, neither do we need deep problems when we are lying upon the verge of eternity, weak in body and tempted in mind. At such times, we magnify the blessed simplicity of the gospel. Jesus in the flesh made manifest becomes our soul's bread. Jesus bleeding on the cross, a substitute for sinners, is our soul's drink. This is the gospel for babes, and strong men want no more.

Charles H. Spurgeon

THE DIFFERENCE IN MINISTERS

Most people see no difference in sermons by religious ministers or theologians versus preachers of the gospel of grace, particularly when the text of the scriptures is the same. Is there a difference? Yes, and there are three primary reasons.

First, the commission, which is performed by the anointment of the Holy Spirit on those preordained by God to deliver His Word, that is, preachers of the gospel of grace. The commission to religious ministers and theologians is conferred through self-development by the acquisition of human knowledge and is recognized by the titles of Reverend, Father, Rabbi, etc., accompanied by prescribed acts of behavior (ethics) and worship (liturgy) deemed appropriate by the religion of choice.

Second, the subject of the sermon. For the grace preacher this will always be exclusively Christ crucified, no matter what scripture is selected. But for the religious minister the subject is likely to be the works or acts necessary for man to perform in order to receive salvation.

Third, the response expected of the audience. The grace preacher knows that only those who have been preconditioned by a spiritual life can hear and truly understand the gospel. Christ said, "My sheep hear my voice," the voice of the anointed preacher delivering God's revealed word from the Scriptures. Being able to hear, they believe through faith and will in due time seek baptism as a public affirmation of faith. The religious minister expects that all may respond with equal chance for salvation, based on individual self-will, commitment, and adherence to the particular religion's code of conduct.

The most obvious difference, then, is in the subject matter, Christ crucified. Spurgeon issued a warning about preachers when he advised, "When a preacher becomes heretical, it is always about Christ. If he is not clear about Christ crucified and you hear one sermon from him, that is your misfortune. But if you go and hear him again and hear another sermon like the first, it will be your fault. If you go a third a third time, it will be your crime.

George Barker

TRUE PREACHERS

The difference between a God-called and anointed preacher and one who is not is very plain for those who have ears to hear and eyes to see. The man who is sent from God preaches Christ. If a man preaches anything else he has not proven his calling. In preaching Christ and the resurrection he shows that he is in the apostolic succession. Christ crucified is the delight of his heart and soul. It is the sum and substance of his ministry. He loves to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. His message is this:

- Christ high and holy, lifted up
- Man low and in a state of sin and rebellion
- Christ free and omnipotent to save
- Man chained by the bondage of his will and lusts

Can you see what distinguishes true preachers from the pretenders of our day?

Pastor Donnie Bell

TEN IMPOSSIBILITIES

1. It is impossible for believer to be under the condemnation of God.
2. It is impossible for any unbeliever to please God.
3. It is impossible for a child of God to live under dominion of sin.
4. It is impossible for a redeemed sinner not to receive full inheritance of God's grace.
5. It is impossible for a believer's prayer not to be answered.
6. It is impossible for any evil to happen to any of God's elect.
7. It is impossible for the purpose of God's will to fail.
8. It is impossible for sin to be charged to the elect of God.
9. It is impossible for a ransomed sinner to suffer the wrath of God forever.
10. It is impossible for any believer ever to be separated from the love of God.

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? (Rom 8:31).

Pastor Don Fortner

TRUE RELIGION

True religion arises out of a true knowledge of God as He is revealed in the scriptures. True religion arises out of a true knowledge of man as he is described in the scriptures. True religion arises out of a sense and understanding of the great things God has done for sinners in the Lord Jesus Christ. True religion produces a well grounded hope in the soul, based upon the word of God. True religion produces a principle of love and surrender of one's self to Jesus Christ as Lord. True religion will make the goodness and grace of God to me to be the principle and model of my conduct to others. True religion presses upon men three goals not attainable in this life, but the seed of which is planted here and begins to grow: (1) total commitment to Jesus Christ, (2) total communion with Jesus Christ, and (3) total conformity to Jesus Christ.

John Newton

TRUE RELIGION -- WHAT IT IS NOT AND WHAT IT IS

1. It is not outward religious behavior. "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." For most people their religion is no more than an outward conformity to social standards of righteousness. Of this much you can be sure: true religion – whatever it is – it is not something that a lost, unregenerate man can produce.
2. It is not ceremonial and ritualistic. The burning of candles, reciting of prayer, kneeling, walking an aisle, wearing of religious jewelry, and dressing in religious garments might make you feel religious, but those things have nothing to do with true worship. In fact, the more ceremony and ritualism that is added the further away we are from worshiping God.
3. It is not merely doctrinal beliefs. Doctrine is important; it is essential to true religion, but you can be orthodox in many areas and still not know God. Just ask Saul of Tarsus; he had some correct doctrine before God saved him and he was very religious, but He was a stranger to true religion.
4. True religion is an inward, spiritual knowledge and reverence of the living God as he is revealed in Christ Jesus. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). Paul said, "We are the circumcision;" that is, we are the true people of God, we are those whose religion is true, "Which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Philippians 3:3).

Pastor Jim Byrd

MODERN PRIESTCRAFT

The preachers and priests of religion today are just like those of the past. They seek to make themselves necessary to us if we are to know God. They take to themselves titles such as "reverend" and distinguish themselves with their special clothing and symbols as well as exalting themselves with their degrees from religious institutions. They say or insinuate that one can only understand the Bible if they know the original languages of Hebrew and Greek, making these "learned ones" indispensable. What utter foolishness this is! The Bible was given by God through human instruments. Think about who they were: fishermen, farmers, and men from various other ordinary circumstances. Remember Paul's words to the Corinthians who sought to distinguish even between God-sent messengers? "*For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.*" I Corinthians 1:26-29

Saul of Tarsus, who became Paul the Apostle, had all the things these religious hucksters seek after and glory in. Yet, when Christ revealed Himself to and in him, he called it all garbage, confessed that as such he had been a blasphemer, and had to be taken to the backside of the desert to be "taught of God." This is what's necessary for anyone to know God. They must all be taught of God. (John 6) The knowledge of God is through the Holy Scriptures preached by those "sent" by God not a man-made religion and revealed by the Spirit of God. Again Paul says to the Corinthians, it is not by the "wisdom of this world" but through God the Spirit revealing these things through the plain preaching of the Gospel of God wherein the righteousness of God is revealed. No one speaks for God except those He sends. No one speaks for God except they speak according to this Word. No one speaks for God who draws attention to himself rather than God. No one speaks for God who does not preach Christ and Him crucified as the one way of justification for sinners. If we look at the prophets and apostles, we shall clearly see that God uses ordinary men to be the messengers of His gospel "that no flesh should glory in His presence." Furthermore, look at the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who is the "Truth" and "that

Prophet." What did they say of Him? "*How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?*" Hear Christ's response: "*Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. ¹⁷If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.*" (John 7:15-18) God saves ignorant sinners; but He does not save them with ignorance but truth and knowledge. He uses means but not the means that fallen man would think. That which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination to Him. I thank God as Christ did: "*At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.*" (Matt. 11:25-27)

Pastor Gary Shepard

HOW MAY WE KNOW IT'S THE GOSPEL?

Someone may ask, "How may we know that the message preached is the true gospel of God?" I would reply:

1. Does it exalt the sovereign mercy of God as the only and entire reason and cause of salvation?
2. Does it humble man in the dust of inability and reveal his total spiritual deadness?
3. Does it provide a perfect righteousness before God's holiness and a suitable atonement and sacrifice before God's justice, enabling God to be just and justifier?
4. Does it shut every door but Christ, bar every way but Christ, destroy every hope but Christ, and present Him, not His finished work, but CHRIST HIMSELF as our life, hope, salvation, and acceptance before the Father?

Yes, then, this is "the true gospel of God."

Pastor Henry Mahan

If you wish to know if the gospel you are hearing preached is the gospel of God, ask yourself this question, "Who gets the glory?" If you wish to know whether your religious experience is of the flesh or of the Lord, ask yourself the same thing, "Who gets the glory?" Also, examine all your gifts, works, and missionary efforts by the same rule, "Who gets the glory?" God will not share His glory! That which is of God, from God, and for God's glory will be blessed with His presence and power ... "that no flesh should glory in His presence ... that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. (1 Cor. 1:29, 31)

Henry Mahan

The gospel of God's grace in Christ Jesus is not a thing to be proved, but a truth to be believed. It is not submitted to our reasoning powers as a subject for critical examination; but the gospel is a message from God, addressed to our conscience, feelings, and affections. For this reason, men fond of argument and proving everything by strictly logical deduction generally make very poor preachers. In the scriptures, God does not argue; He proclaims!

J. C. Phipot

The Gospel is not merely the doctrine of salvation as it lies in the holy Scripture, but that public and authoritative dispensation of this doctrine, which the Lord Jesus Christ has committed to his true ministers; who having been themselves, by the power of his grace, brought out of darkness into marvelous light, are by his Holy Spirit qualified and sent forth to declare to their fellow-sinners what they have seen, and felt, and tasted, of the word of life. Their commission is, to exalt the Lord alone, to stain the pride of all human glory. They are to set forth the evil and demerit of sin, the strictness, spirituality, and sanction of the law of God, the total apostasy of mankind; and from these premises to demonstrate the utter impossibility of a sinner's escaping condemnation by any works or endeavours of his own; and then to proclaim a full and free salvation from sin wrath, by faith in the name, blood, obedience, and mediation of God manifest in the flesh; together with a denunciation of eternal misery to all who shall finally reject the testimony which God has given of his Son. Though these several branches of the will of God respecting sinners, and other truths in connection with them, are plainly revealed and repeatedly inculcated (driven in) in the Bible; and though the Bible is to be found in almost every house, yet we see, in fact, it is a sealed book, little read, little understood, and therefore but little regarded, except in those places which the Lord is pleased to favour with ministers who can confirm them from their own experience, and who, by a sense of his constraining love, and the worth of souls, are animated to make the faithful discharge of their ministry the one great business of their lives: who aim not to possess the wealth, but to promote the welfare of their hearers; are equally regardless of the frowns or smiles of the world; and count not their lives dear, so that they may be wise and successful in winning souls to Christ.

John Newton

GOD'S GLORIOUS GOSPEL

The gospel of the glory of God in the salvation of sinners is the most wonderful, the most amazing, the most marvelous, and the most glorious "Good News" which ever fell upon human ear. It is in every way characteristic of its Author (God-like!) and suitable to the desperate need of spiritually dead sinners (John 5:21-27; Eph. 2:1; Rom. 5:12). It manifests the holiness and righteousness of God in justifying the unrighteous, the infinite love of God in saving the altogether unloveable, and the infinite power of God in creating life in those who are "dead in trespasses and in sins."

This salvation is fully accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ for and in sinners. There is full! free! eternal! salvation for sinners in the Lord Jesus Christ. This salvation comes to sinners freely, by grace, through faith in Him. In the sovereign mercies and grace of God sinners hear the "Good News," believe the "Good News," and they have Christ and life. "He that hath the Son hath life."

When food and drink is set before the hungry and thirsty, they eat and drink with relish and thanksgiving. When the Lord Jesus Christ, the all-sufficient Saviour is set before lost, guilty, condemned, hell-deserving, dying sinners, they embrace Him and live upon Him with thanksgiving.

Maurice Montgomery

THE KIND OF PREACHING THAT WILL BRING REVIVAL

In general it may be said that every revival to date has been marked by the preaching of God's Sovereign Grace in Christ! Paul preached after this fashion and planted churches everywhere. Augustine came near to saving the Roman Church for the truth by such preaching. Calvin drove a wide wedge in Europe and the world with such preaching, and Spurgeon stood England on its head for two generations with the preaching of the Sovereign Grace of God.

This kind of preaching breaks up the fallow ground before sowing the seed of the gospel. Most preachers today ignore the condition of the ground and hasten to apply a mixture of law and grace, mercy and works, to ground that cannot bear fruit.

The urgent need is for preaching that will break up the ground and prepare the way for the preaching of the gospel. But I warn you, beware should you try this, my preacher brother. Truths that God uses to produce revival are truths least acceptable to the flesh. It is just here that the preacher must make his choice. Shall it be preaching that pleases the flesh or preaching that glorifies God? It cannot be both!

I mention four things in particular that must be preached if we are to have revival in our generation!

The Character of God. What kind of God is the God whom men shall meet at the judgment and with whom they have to do now? This generation does not know. For the most part it has not heard preaching on the character of God! God is holy! Men do not believe this today. Do we who preach believe God is holy?

We must preach the holiness of God until some spue out their hatred of such a Holy God and others flee for refuge to His Holy Son. God's Law was and is holy, just, and good. He did not make a mistake when He gave His law, nor has He ever apologized for it. It is still the expression of His holy character. God delights to show mercy, but He will save no one apart from the absolute satisfaction and vindication of His law and justice. He cannot be bribed nor coaxed. It is redemption through Christ who obeyed the perfect law and endured the righteous judgment of a Holy God for believers, or it is to experience the punishment of that God.

God is Sovereign. He reigns in grace. He blesses those in Christ and damns all outside of Christ. He raises up vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath. He shows mercy on whom He will, and whom He will He hardeneth (Rom. 9:18). He loves Jacob and hates Esau (Rom. 9:13). He saved Israel and hardened the heart of Pharaoh (Exo. 7:13). He gives salvation to whom He will (John 5:21). He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will (Eph. 1: 11).

This generation of church goers has yet to hear for the most part the truths that are basic in God's way of grace. Depravity, election, predestination, salvation as a free-gift (not a timid offer), and the effectual sacrifice of Christ has not been preached. As a result, sinners have a mighty poor conception of God and a mighty high opinion of themselves. To the average person God is a person or a principle who is trying to catch them and is failing. To them God is one to whom they propose someday to give some attention. How the truth of God's absolute sovereignty would strike fear in their hearts if preached today!

The True Condition of Men. This generation does not know the truth about itself. Consider the condition of man morally and spiritually. He is not as God made him! He is a fallen creature, morally depraved. He is dead spiritually and hates the Living, Holy, and just God. Original sin is explained away, if dealt with at all; yet it is basic! The fact of man's enmity of God is not flattering to so-called enlightened men, so we soft-pedal its preaching. Man's helpless condition as spiritually dead is denied by many, debated by some, and preached by few. A man can improve his moral condition somewhat, but a dead sinner cannot give himself life! Christ did not die that men might not die, but that dead men might live! We must shut men up to God's intervention and

mercy. We must strip sinners of their high estimation of themselves and of all hope in themselves if we would see revival.

The Destiny of Men. We must preach Christ Jesus as the only Redeemer – just and justifier! To be in Christ is to be eternally saved. To be out of Christ is to be as certain for Hell as God is true. Not a hell of reformation, but of retribution and punishment. God will punish sin! Preachers who dare to shut men up to the mercy of God in Christ and who dare to leave the rest to bear their sins in Hell are the need of the hour!

Rolfe Barnard

THE GOSPEL

The Gospel, in the power of the Holy Spirit, uncovers unto a sinner the way of salvation contrived in the covenant of grace, and manifests to him what the ever blessed Trinity had therein purposed, and what in the fullness of time was accomplished. That all the perfections of the Godhead might be infinitely and everlastingly glorified, the Father covenanted to gain honour and dignity, to His law and justice, to His faithfulness and holiness, by insisting upon man's appearing at His bar in the perfect righteousness of the law. But man having no such righteousness of his own, all having sinned, and there being none righteous, no, not one; how can he be saved? The Lord Christ, a Person in the Godhead co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, undertook to be his Saviour. He covenanted to stand up as the Head and Surety of His people in their nature and in their stead, to obey for them, that by His everlastingly meritorious stripes they might be healed. Accordingly, in the fullness of time He came into the world, and was made flesh, and God and man being as truly united in one Person lived, and suffered, and died, as the representative of His people. The righteousness of His life was to be their right and title to life, and the righteousness of His sufferings and death was to save them from all the sufferings due to their sins. And thus the law and justice of the Father would be glorified in pardoning them, and his faithfulness and holiness made honourable in saving them. He might be strictly just, and yet the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.

William Romaine

THE MESSAGE OF OLD

Many religious organizations proudly advertise their services as "contemporary". Their true message is, "we deal with topics that are relevant for today's world." These religious organizations unashamedly proclaim, "Tell us what you want, and that's what you'll get. We will meet your needs". This tactic is nothing more than an attempt to be all things to all men in order that the masses might be drawn in. These congregations major on issues that are actually nothing more than current events. They sing songs that are designed to glorify the flesh with words that exalt man. Preaching the Gospel has been replaced with "share time" to fill the need for so-called "spiritual growth." After all the necessary programs have been strategically laid out to meet the criteria of their supposed spiritual needs, these organizations then provide every sort of entertainment and bodily exercise humanly possible. With million dollar budgets, these religious "works-shops" do whatever is necessary to meet the bottom line. That Christ's honor and truth are being disregarded; that men's souls are being merchandised means nothing to them! Obviously, men have been left to their own fleshly desires and the blindness of their unregenerate heart.

In the church of the Lord Jesus, oh how different is the case. The issue is not some current event. The believer must hear the truth of Him who changes not. He is not satisfied unless he hears the message of the sovereign, ruling, reigning God who has everlastingly loved a particular people in Christ. The saint of God thrives on the message, the "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" exalting their heavenly Father, the very God who has chosen a people in Christ "before the foundation of the world," that they should be holy and without blame before Him in love. The believer subsists on the declaration of the beloved Son who, as the Surety of the sheep, has lived in righteousness before God's law on behalf of all that the Father has given Him. Herald again the glorious message, which is without controversy -- the message of God, manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. The regenerate sinner needs to be told again and again how Christ put away his guilt by divinely being made to be sin for him. To the one who has been made to know something of his true need, the message of how the Lord Jesus Christ died under the wrath and judgment of God's holy law for His sheep, that they might be made the righteousness of God in Him, never grows old. Rehearse again in the saint's ears these eternal truths, truths that when received are rejoiced in as if they had never been heard before. Justification by Christ's imputed righteousness, propitiation by His blood, and freedom from condemnation for those blessed ones found in Christ, that is the message that changes not, the message that is the life-sustenance of the renewed man.

Marvin Stalnaker

What's the Difference? 1 Cor. 4:7

A gospel preacher friend of mine was asked a few years ago, "What's the difference between what you preach and what is being preached in churches that preach another message? -- and, if what you're preaching is true, how do I know that it's true?" My friend's response was a good one because he said, "but for the grace of God, you won't know the difference. You will find some churches preaching a message that sounds good to you, and you may settle down there, but unless God Almighty by His Holy Spirit delivers you from going down into the pit, you'll die in that church." This was not a man's haughty statement trying to bring some attention to himself, but one based solely upon the revealed word of God. God has clearly set forth the Gospel in His word, and we must preach that gospel. We are bound to declare the truth. Woe unto us if we preach not the gospel. This message is the message of hope (Rom. 1:16). Men must hear this message for this is the message that will be blessed by God's Spirit to the calling out of His elect (John 10:4-5).

It is an amazing fact that *all* denominations think they are preaching the truth, so we must look to the holy scriptures for a foundation for any hope of salvation. These things are set forth in the scripture and must be proclaimed in true Gospel preaching:

1. **Who God is.** God is the eternal Sovereign of the universe. The first verse in the Bible sets the foundation of His existence: "*In the beginning, God ...*". He is revealed as the great "*I AM*" (Exo. 3:14), the God of all creation. Scripture declares God to be One Who has mercy upon whom He will have mercy, and Who is gracious to whom He will be gracious (Exo. 33:19). If He shows love, kindness, and compassion to any fallen child of Adam, it is because He is a merciful God, and has the power and the right to do so. If He passes by, or leaves a man to himself, it is because He is a just God Who will not clear the guilty. God Almighty does save sinners, but never at the expense of His holy justice. The death of our Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary clearly shows God to be one who will punish sin, for He sacrificed His own Son because of *our* sin laid on Him. God is holy in all that He does.
2. **Who man is.** The second thing clearly revealed when the Gospel is preached is who man is. Scripture establishes a man's position before God: "*... the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and*

putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." (Isaiah 1:5-6) While man thinks that he can somehow reconcile himself to God, scripture says that he cannot. Since man is dead spiritually, he cannot accomplish anything that can stand up under the judgment of God's Law. When Adam sinned against God in the garden, judgment passed upon all mankind, that is, spiritual death. Spiritual death renders Man unable to love God, to lift himself out of his fallen nature, or to even realize the plight (that is, his lost condition). Man is conceived in sin, comes forth from his mother's womb speaking lies, and has but one end if left in that condition -- eternal death. The Word proclaims, *"there is none righteous, no not one; there is none that understandeth; there is none that seek after God."* (Isaiah 1:5-6)

3. **How God saves sinners.** The third thing that is declared when the Gospel is preached is how God saves sinners. Job asked the question, *"how should man be just with God?"* (Job 9:2) How does man find himself justified before a holy God Who will in no wise clear the guilty? In most churches today, men are declaring that a man can be saved by giving his heart to Jesus. Men are told to exercise their free will, but the scriptures do not support this kind of talk. The Word reveals that men are born *"not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."* (John 1:6) The word of God says that salvation is *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."* (Titus 3:5) Men are saved on purpose, but not by their purpose. It is by the purpose of God Almighty that men are called out of spiritual darkness into His marvelous light. Salvation is totally of the Lord. God the Father chose a people that He everlastingly loved unto salvation. These elect were chosen in Christ that they should be holy and without blame before Him in love. This election of grace was not according to any good found within the sinner, for there would be none (Psalm 14:2-3), but God chose a people unto salvation based totally upon the good pleasure of His will, and did this to the praise of the glory of His grace. All that the Father chose unto salvation, Christ redeemed. He redeemed this chosen people because they are His (Isaiah. 43:1). As the Surety of His sheep, the Lord Jesus Christ *"made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men"* (Phil. 2:7). *"He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"* (Phil. 2:8) for His elect. The Lord Jesus, as a man, obeyed God's law as the representative for His elect. He was made to be sin (by divine imputation, for He knew no sin) for His people that His people might be made the righteous in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). All that the Father chose, the Lord Jesus Christ redeems, and the Holy Ghost shall surely call unto salvation (John 6:37). God's Spirit quickens unto life by irresistible sovereign power. The sheep are willing in the day of God's power -- willing to come, willing to bow, willing to seek, willing to love, and willing to believe (which is the mark of salvation) the report given from above.

Yes, there is a difference in what we preach. The difference is that we preach God to be God Almighty, Sovereign in all things. We preach that man is totally depraved and without strength to reconcile himself to God, a hopeless and helpless sinner against the God of all creation, and we preach that salvation is of the Lord from beginning to end.

Marvin Stanaker

THE GREAT REVEALER

The gospel of the free and sovereign grace of God in Christ is perfect in every sense. It is truly the wisdom of God and shall accomplish that purpose to which He has sent it. It does truly prove to be a "savor of life unto life" to some and a "savor of death unto death" to others. I have watched as men hear the gospel of free justification through the blood and righteousness of Christ alone. This one message reveals what is really in the hearts of men in three ways.

First, it reveals the people of God. His sheep "hear His voice" in this gospel and "they follow Him." Those born of God's Spirit and given faith to believe on Him find in this message all hope for their soul, all pardon for their sin, all acceptance before God through the imputed righteousness of Christ and all spiritual blessings. It moves them in gratitude of heart for God's grace to them to follow Him, obey Him, honor Him, love Him and seek to glorify Him in their lives.

Secondly, it finds out the legalist. Those who would seek to stand before God at least in part by their own works and merit are manifested as they deny it, try to modify it or add to it. They are indignant at the thought that their works have no part in their justification before God. They must make more of what they do or don't do rather than what Christ has done. They claim to believe in salvation by grace but always follow the plain statements of free grace with a "but." Their claim is that such free salvation and its declaration will lead and encourage men to sin. This message of grace reveals that they are not resting in Christ and His finished work but in themselves.

Thirdly, it exposes the lawless one. The preaching of free justification does not make antinomians but it will reveal them. These who would go on in their sin, in disregard to God's plain commands, sometimes make appeal to the freeness of God's grace. They use grace to excuse their course of sin and disobedience. But had they not heard the gospel of grace, these individuals would have used something else to excuse their Godless conduct. Believers in grace do not continue in sin that grace might abound. It is not grace but sin which is the cause. What will this gospel reveal of you?

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