

## “What is the Gospel: Part 7”

Review: God made man and placed him in the Garden of Eden, the sanctuary of God, to guard it. He also placed him under the command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This was his probation in the Covenant of Works. But Adam failed to obey God and when he fell, the whole human race fell with him in his sin and under his condemnation. The same depravity of sin was also passed on to his descendants, so that now all men are totally depraved and totally unable to do anything to commend themselves to God. Their hearts are so evil that they will not even accept God's offer of salvation. But God did not leave man in that situation. He had determined in eternity to institute another covenant, called the Covenant of Grace. In this covenant, God gives to His elect another representative to take their place. That representative is the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who is both God and man. He needed to be a man, so that He could take our place, and He needed to be God, so that His work would be worth enough to provide for the elect in God's justice.

III. This now brings us to the third point: Man cannot save himself, but God can, and He did. He has provided everything we need in the Covenant of Grace.

- A. The Covenant of Grace is a covenant between God, as representing the Godhead, and the Lord Jesus Christ, as representing the elect.
- B. What did Christ do in the Covenant of grace?
  1. What His people failed to do, Christ did.
    - a. He stood as the representative of His people, just as Adam did for his. 1 Cor. 15:21-22 “For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.” All shall be made alive, but only all those “in Christ.” He did not die for the whole world.
    - b. What He did, He did for us. His obedience was counted for our obedience.
      - (i) Rom. 5:18-19 “So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.”
      - (ii) That one act of righteousness was His laying down His life for us and taking our place on the cross. 2 Cor. 5:21 “He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” That is not the only thing He did, but often in Scripture it is represented as the whole of the work by which He saved us.
    - c. You can see how the Bible parallels the work of Adam and the work of Christ.
      - (i) If Adam had obeyed, his obedience would have been imputed to his people, and they would have lived forever. But because Adam sinned, his sin was imputed to his people, and they all died.
      - (ii) In the same way, when Christ obeyed, His obedience was imputed to His

people, and when He was on the cross, our sin was imputed to Him, so that He might die in our place.

2. Because of His work, Christ is now the Surety, or Guarantee, that the conditions of the Covenant of Grace will be met for His people.
  - a. What are those conditions? The same as they were for Adam: perfect obedience. If a person wanted to earn his way into heaven, he would have to do everything perfectly right and do absolutely nothing wrong.
  - b. How did He ensure that these conditions would be met? He lived a perfect life.
  - c. Was this enough? No. Because His people had sinned, He had to die to atone for their sins. Now that He has, He has secured those blessings for His people.
  - d. What are the blessings of that covenant? Eternal life and an eternal inheritance in the kingdom of God.
  
3. In this covenant, Christ has been given three offices. What are they? Prophet, priest and king.
  - a. What does He do as our prophet? He declares to us the will of God for our salvation.
  - b. What does He do as our priest? He lays down His life for us and intercedes for us.
  - c. What does He do as our King? He rules over us, protects and defends us, and subdues all His and our enemies.
  - d. These three offices will be important when we talk about assurance of salvation, for no one can truly embrace Jesus in one of His offices and neglect the other two.

IV. But there is also something which man must do in this covenant. What is it? He must repent and believe.

- A. Everything that Christ has done will be no good to anyone unless they repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. What does it mean to repent and believe?
  1. To repent means to turn from all of your sins to all righteousness, from doing everything wrong to everything right. There are generally three elements to biblical repentance. Do you know what they are?
    - a. To repent, a person must know what sin is and acknowledge that they have sinned.
      - (i) Can a person do this and not be saved? Yes. Pharaoh confessed that he sinned, but he was not truly repentant. After the plague of the thunder and hail, "Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, 'I have sinned this time; the LORD is the righteous one, and I and my people are the wicked ones'" (Ex. 9:27). When the children of Israel sinned against God by not believing that He was able to bring them into the Promised Land, Moses then writes, "In the morning, however, they rose up early and went up to the ridge of the hill country, saying, 'Here we are; we have indeed

sinned, but we will go up to the place which the LORD has promised” (Num. 14:40). But the Lord was not with them, and many of them were killed.

- (ii) A man might acknowledge his sins and not be truly repentant, but you cannot be truly repentant without acknowledging your sin. David wrote in Psalm 51:4, “Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned, and done what is evil in Thy sight, so that Thou art justified when Thou dost speak, and blameless when Thou dost judge.” We must acknowledge the justice of God in condemning us for our sin.
- b. A person must also be sorry for his sin.
- (i) Can he be sorry for his sin and not truly repentant? Yes. Judas was sorry when he saw that Jesus had been betrayed. Matt. 27:3-5, “Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, ‘I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.’ But they said, ‘What is that to us? See *to that* yourself!’ And he threw the pieces of silver into the sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself.” King Saul was sorry both times when David spared his life, but he was not truly repentant (1 Sam. 24:17; 26:21).
  - (ii) A person can be sorry without saving repentance, but he can’t savingly repent without being sorry. God will work sorrow in their hearts. David wrote, “Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eye is wasted away from grief, my soul and my body *also*. For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength has failed because of my iniquity, and my body has wasted away” (Psalm 31:9-10). And he writes, “For I am ready to fall, and my sorrow is continually before me. For I confess my iniquity; I am full of anxiety because of my sin” (38:17-18).
- c. But there is one more thing. They must so hate it and grieve over it, because it is an affront to God, that they turn from all of it to righteousness.
- (i) Can the unconverted person do this? No. They might turn away outwardly from their sin, but not inwardly. They might hate it and grieve about it because of what it cost them -- their reputation or their peace -- but they will not hate it or grieve over it because it is an affront to God.
  - (ii) But the truly repentant will hate all of their sins and turn away from all of them to righteousness. God told His people in Ezekiel 36:31 that He was intending to turn to them again and to give them new hearts and new spirits. And when that happened, He said, “Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations.” He said in Isaiah 30:22, “And you will defile your graven images, overlaid with silver, and your molten images plated with gold. You will scatter them as an impure thing; *and* say to them, ‘Be gone!’” The psalmist wrote, “It is time for the LORD to act, *for* they have broken Thy law. Therefore I love Thy commandments above gold, yes, above fine gold. Therefore I esteem right

all *Thy* precepts concerning everything, I hate every false way” (119:126-128). And Paul writes, “For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter” (2 Cor. 7:11).

- d. Can a person be truly repentant, if he is only repentant over a few things in his life? No, his repentance must be universal. He must turn from all sin to all righteousness, even if that thing he thinks is sin really isn't sin; if he believes that it is, he must turn from it.
- (i) James 4:17 “Therefore, to one who knows *the* right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin.”
  - (ii) Rom. 14:23 “But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because *his eating* is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.”
  - (iii) If we do not turn from all sin, then we really don't hate it, for if we did, we would turn from all of it.
  - (iv) If we really loved righteousness, we would not do only some, but all of it, or else we really don't love it.

2. What is saving faith? It also has three elements. What are they?
- a. First, a person must know the truth: what it is that is to be believed.
    - (i) Paul writes, “For whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?” (Rom. 10:13-15).
    - (ii) You cannot believe what you do not know.
  - b. But is knowing the facts enough? What else is needed? A person must believe that the facts are true.
    - (i) Can a person know the facts and even believe them, but still be unconverted? Yes.
    - (ii) James writes, “You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder” (2:19). The devil and the demons know more than we do and even believe it, for they are afraid of what they know. But are they saved? No. Do the damned souls in hell know and believe the truth? Yes.
    - (iii) What is the name that theologians use to refer to this kind of faith? Historical faith: The belief in the facts of history. But that is as far as they go.
    - (iv) A person can know and believe the facts without being saved, but he cannot savingly believe without knowing and believing the facts.
  - c. There is one more thing that a saving faith will do. What is it? It will embrace that truth. What does this mean?

- (i) A person must not only know and believe the facts, he must also embrace Jesus. He must trust in Him alone to be saved. He must look outside of himself and his own works to Christ and His works alone.
- (ii) This is what the word faith means. It can mean merely to believe the facts, but as we've seen, that isn't enough. It also means to trust in the object of that faith. Friberg's Lexicon puts it this way, "As primarily a religious commitment, especially with God or Christ as the object of faith *believe (in), trust*; . . . as denoting relying on God for help *have confidence, believe* (MT 21.22); (3) as committing something to someone *entrust, trust* (LU 16.11) . . ."
- (iii) It is a trusting in Christ, but it is also a receiving of Him. John writes, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12).
- (iv) It is a union with Christ in His death and life. Paul writes, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20).
- (v) Faith also implies obedience. John writes, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36).
- (vi) Our *Confession* summarizes it this way, "By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God Himself speaking therein; and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace" (14.2).

B. But how can a person who is spiritually dead, as we have seen, savingly trust and believe in One whom he hates? This is what we will look at next time.