

“What is the Gospel: Part 9”

Review: We have been looking at the Covenant of Grace and saw how it paralleled the Covenant of Works. In both covenants, we were given a representative. In both covenants, what that representative did directly affected each of us. Adam’s sin became our sin, his death and condemnation in sin, became our death and condemnation. In the same way, what Christ did has also become ours. His righteousness became our righteousness and our sin became His sin, when He died on the cross for us. But unlike the first covenant which had no conditions to receive its blessing or curse, in the second covenant, the Covenant of Grace, there are conditions: faith and repentance. We saw that to savingly repent, a person must admit that he has sinned, be sorry for it, and so grieve and hate it -- not only for what it does to them, but for what an affront it is to God --, that he turns from all of his sin unto God. This repentance must also be universal, not just in some areas. It must include sins of omission, as well as sins of commission. And to savingly believe, a person must know the truth, believe the truth, and trust in and receive the One who is the truth.

IV. If a person is to be saved, he must have both faith and repentance. You can’t have one without the other. And they must have this character.

B. But the question we need to ask again is, since because of Adam’s sin, all are born dead to the things of the Lord and have no desire to turn to the Lord, but only to sin, how can a person savingly trust and believe in Christ?

1. He can’t.
 - a. Remember Paul writes in Romans 8:5-8, “For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”
 - b. So what can he do? There is nothing he can do to change his heart. God must change it, or he is forever lost.
2. How does God change the heart? He does so through His Holy Spirit.
 - a. Jesus said, “No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:44).
 - b. He said later in that same chapter, “For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father” (v. 65).
 - c. How does the Father grant this blessing of drawing to Himself? He does so through the Spirit of God.
 - d. Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus *said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?’ Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of

God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, “You must be born again.” The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:3-8).

- e. Paul writes in Ephesians 2:1-10, “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places*, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”
 - f. A person must be born again by the Spirit of God before he can see the kingdom of God, before he can enter the kingdom, before he can turn from his sinful ways.
3. But under what circumstances does the Spirit of God normally do this? He does so when the Gospel is preached or witnessed. There are exceptions to this, such as in the case of elect infants dying in infancy and other elect persons who never actually gain the ability to hear and understand the Gospel. But for those who can hear, they must be saved in this way.
 - a. When was the Ethiopian Eunuch converted? When Philip was preaching Christ to him out of Isaiah 53 (Acts 8:35).
 - b. When was Lydia converted? When Paul was explaining to her the Gospel. Luke writes, “And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled. And a certain woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul” (Acts 16:13-14).
 - c. When were the three thousand converted on the Day of Pentecost? When Peter preached the Gospel to them (Acts 3). When were the five thousand after them converted? Again, when Peter preached the Gospel. Luke writes, in Acts 4:4, “But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.”
 - d. Paul writes in Romans 1:16-17, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to

- faith; as it is written, ‘But the righteous man shall live by faith.’”
- e. A person must know the truth before he can believe the truth, as we saw in Romans 10:14-15, “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?” If we are to see anyone come to Christ, we must know the truth of the Gospel, what has done for sinners, and we must be able to clearly communicate that truth to others.
 - f. It doesn’t have to come from a preacher or in the form of preaching. People are also saved through witnessing. This is something we can all do, and something that the Lord tells us that we must do. Peter, writing to the Christians scattered throughout the Roman empire, said, “But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, *you are* blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence” (1 Pet. 3:14-15).
 - g. Remember what we saw earlier, we are to be witnesses of what we have seen and heard. One of the things we have seen is Christ, not literally or bodily, but we have seen His glory spiritually in His Word and ordinances. That is what we are to bear witness to others.
 - h. I should also add that we must never be ashamed of the Gospel. It certainly has the potential to sound irrational and superstitious to those who are a part of this modern society, but it is true, and the Lord will use it to bring His elect to Christ. So we should not be afraid to use it, but bold in our witnessing.
4. Now I would like for us to consider one other subject in connection with faith and repentance, and it has to do with a question that I asked earlier.
 - a. The question was, Can a person believe the facts of the Gospel and not be saved? Yes. What are some examples? The devils believe and aren’t saved (James 2:19). The damned souls in hell believe (Luke 16). There were those who believe for a while and then fell away (Heb. 6:4-9; 1 John 2:19). There are people in churches who believe the facts, who either tremble at them or believe that they have embraced them, who are still unconverted.
 - b. Then can a person believe in the reality of heaven, know that they are in danger of hell if they do not turn to Christ in faith, and still be unconverted? Yes, otherwise it wouldn’t be possible to believe the facts and not be saved.
 - c. Now here is the important question: Can a person know and believe these things and still have no power from God to repent and believe? Yes. If he had the power to do so, he would already be saved. But as we saw, he can believe these things and not be saved.
 - d. Then does the fact that a person believes these things -- believes there is a heaven, is frightened by hell, knows that there is no other way of salvation except through Christ -- give him the ability to savingly believe? No.
 - e. Now if a person in this situation is to be saved, what must he do? He must repent and believe. Should you tell him that he must do so? Yes. Does

- telling him give him the power to do so? No.
- f. If he still can't, then what should you tell him to do? To put himself in the way of salvation. Where and when does the Spirit of God work His saving work? Under the preaching and witnessing of the Gospel. So what should that person do? He should come to church, sit under the preaching of the Word, read the Word, and pray and ask God to change his heart.
 - g. If a person does these things, will he be saved? Not necessarily. If we said yes, then we would believe in a work a person can do to have God save him. The Bible says that salvation doesn't "depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy" (Rom. 9:16). He is not certain to find salvation in this way, but if he turns away and goes back to his old way of living and doesn't seek the Lord for His mercy, he will certainly perish.
 - h. We need to bear in mind as we go about the work of evangelism that not everyone who says he believes the facts of Christianity is necessarily saved. There are many who believe them, but who are not saved, and who need still to pray for God's mercy.
 - i. Isaiah writes, "Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the LORD, and He will have compassion on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:6-7).
 - j. Jesus said that John's ministry had this effect on men. In Matthew 11:12, He says, "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force." This applies not only to those who would enter the kingdom of heaven, but also to those who already have. We must continue to strive forward against Satan, against our sin, against the world, if we are to enter into the eternal kingdom.
 - k. Next week, we will consider how a person can know that he is truly born again, and delivered from death to life.