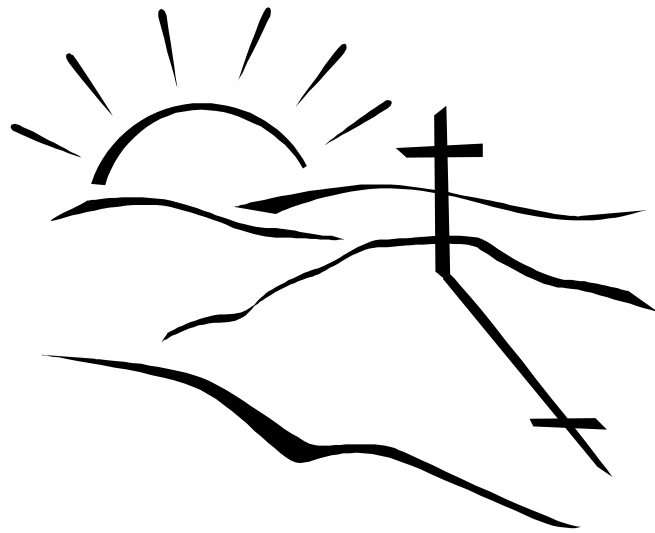


THE GOSPEL



by
Evangelist Norman R. Stevens

THE GOSPEL

Please open your Bibles to I Corinthians chapter one and verse seventeen. I would like to preach a message entitled "The Gospel."

In I Corinthians 1:17-25, the Bible says, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews required a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

To those of you who believe the gospel, may it become so much the more glorious to you today that it will cause you to rejoice in your salvation, that it will cause you to hunger to see others experience it as well. To those of you who have never personally accepted what Christ did for you on Calvary's cross, may you be astonished at the simplicity of the gospel, so much so that you change your mind about the gospel today and that you receive Jesus Christ as your own personal Saviour and Friend before it becomes eternally too late.

In Paul's day, the Greeks were very proud of their ability to arrive at truth, truth as they saw it through human reasoning. The basis of their belief rested upon what they could understand through philosophy. They loved what Paul called, in verse seventeen, the "wisdom of words." They loved to debate. They loved to argue. They loved to build one thought upon another and arrive at some conclusion. You see, the Greeks believed that all truth could be arrived at through human reasoning. There was no room for the revelation of God's Word for the Greeks.

On the other hand, there were some Jews who declared that their doctrine rested upon some sort of sign. They believed that some sort of sign could confirm all proof. Now that was not always true of the Jews. There was a time when they had a proper understanding of truth. But by the time Paul preached the gospel, the Jews had reduced truth to anything that could be proven by some sort of sign or religious miracle. They were impressed with religious signs. To them, truth was established when some miracle occurred that attested to it. If they could not see some spectacular event, they rejected something that was true. In that background, the Apostle Paul preached the gospel. He preached the death, burial,

and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He preached a message that was a stumblingblock to the Jews. He preached a message that was foolishness to the Greeks.

The Apostle Paul declared with great authority that Jesus Christ, in fact, was the one sent forth by God to save mankind. He declared that the death of Christ alone, upon the cross of Calvary, outside the city of Jerusalem, some 2,000 years ago, accomplished the salvation of all mankind if they would believe.

Don't you see? The Greeks tried to find salvation through human reasoning. The Jews tried to find salvation through religious signs. The Apostle Paul offered no human philosophy to define the gospel message that he preached. He simply declared that Jesus Christ did, in fact, die upon the cross for man's salvation. When he came with the gospel, he did not offer any kind of religious sign to confirm the gospel. He simply declared, Thus saith the Lord.

The Apostle Paul saw the gospel as a wonderful thing. Just think! God, all by Himself, without any involvement of mankind, without any effort on our part, has provided a wonderful plan of salvation by the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross.

We are going to notice three things about the gospel. Number one: it rests upon the revelation of God's Word; number two: it accomplishes the unbelievable; and number three: it magnifies Jesus Christ.

Please notice, number one: the gospel rests upon the revelation of God's Word. The gospel! The good news! The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is not a message arrived at through human reasoning or by religious signs. It comes to us by way of revelation. It comes to us by way of declaration. God simply, through the gospel, announces the truth of the gospel; and He requires us to believe it by faith. In I Corinthians 15:3-5, the Bible says, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."

Now when Paul preached the gospel, he did not come to debate the gospel. He did not come to argue the merits of the gospel. He came simply declaring the gospel.

Listen! The gospel is not believed because of human reasoning. The gospel is not believed because of religious signs. The gospel is believed because God declared it to be true. I believe that Jesus Christ died on Calvary's cross for me because the Bible says that He died on the cross for my sins. I believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead because the Bible says that He rose from the dead. I believe that I am saved today because the Bible declares salvation by faith in Christ alone.

So the gospel does not come to us by way of reason. The gospel comes to us by way of revelation. Man tries to determine if abortion is right or wrong based on human reasoning. Man tries to determine if certain issues are moral or immoral,

right or wrong, based on human evidence. The gospel does not stand because of human reasoning. The gospel stands because it is biblically declared.

Paul did not come as a debater. He did not come as a philosopher. He did not come as a miracle worker. He came as a preacher. He came as a preacher of the Word of God.

He said, "I came not with the wisdom of words. I came to preach. I came to declare. I came to announce the gospel of Jesus Christ, not with the wisdom of words, but with the preaching of the cross."

We live in a day, an age, when religious groups are looking for signs, miracles, and spectacular events. They say, you can believe our message because of these wonderful events. That is not right. The Apostle Paul said the gospel does not stand on the basis of religious signs. The gospel stands on the basis of an open declaration.

The Bible says that the Jews required a sign. (See verse twenty-two.) The Jewish concept was, "Let us see and then we will believe. Show us a sign. Give us a miracle."

The gospel does not stand on the basis of religious signs. The gospel stands on the basis of the Word of God.

The Bible says that the Jews required a sign. They wanted some spectacular event. The Bible says that the Greeks seek after wisdom. They wanted some intellectual proofs; but, in contrast to all of that, Paul says, we preach Christ, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness.

The gospel does not rest upon human reasoning. The gospel does not rest upon religious signs and miracles. The gospel, the product of God's mind, is a brilliant plan. God conceived of a brilliant plan whereby He could satisfy His anger against sin and, at the same time, save the sinner. God Almighty made a plan whereby He became man in the Person of Jesus Christ; and He that knew no sin went to the cross of Calvary and became the substitute for man's sin. In other words, He paid the price of man's sin. In II Corinthians 5:21, the Bible says, "For he hath made Christ to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

And if man would simply believe on Christ, he could be saved. In Acts 16:31, the Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." In John 6:47, the Bible says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." In John 1:12, the Bible says, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Simply believe on Christ as the one who bore your sin, who died in your place, who was buried, and whom God resurrected from the dead.

In Romans 10:9-10, the Bible says, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." In Romans 10:13, the Bible says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." This is a brilliant plan. But it does not rest upon human reasoning. It does not rest upon religious signs and miracles. It rests upon the revelation of God's Word and it does not deny proof.

In fact, the Apostle Paul called the gospel "the power of God unto salvation." The gospel is a powerful force. In Romans 1:16, the Apostle Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." What was Paul saying? Paul was simply saying this: I am not afraid that the gospel will not work.

What a wonderful gospel! If it is believed, it will transform hell-bound sinners, who are lost and without hope, into the children of Almighty God; and if you are going to be saved today, you will be saved by simply believing what the Bible says about the death of Jesus Christ. You will be saved by simply believing what the Bible says about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Faith is not some sort of experience that you have first and then you believe. Faith is simply believing God's Word. Faith is simply taking God at His word, simply trusting God.

We have noticed, number one: that the gospel rests upon the revelation of God's Word. But notice, number two: the Gospel accomplishes the unbelievable.

The Greeks tried to find salvation through human reasoning. The Jews tried to find salvation through religious signs. The Apostle Paul declared that salvation was to be found in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and in the preaching of the cross.

In verse seventeen, Paul said, "for Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." What did the gospel involve? The gospel involved the coming of Jesus Christ into the world. In John 1:1-14, the Bible says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

The gospel says... That Jesus Christ, God Almighty, became flesh!

The gospel says... That Jesus Christ, the God-Man, died in the place of sinners!

The gospel says that God became a man; and, as a man, He paid the price of our sins on the cross. In I Peter 2:24, the Bible says, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree."

The gospel says that Christ died for us. In Romans 5:8, the Bible says, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

In Isaiah 53:11, the Bible says, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." What is the Bible saying? The Bible is simply saying this: He! (That is the Father.) He shall see His travail (that is the travail of the Son), and shall be satisfied.

In I John 2:2, the Bible says, "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for he sins of the whole world." The word "propitiation" simply means satisfaction. That simply means that when Jesus Christ died on the cross, God was satisfied. You don't come to grasp that through human reasoning. You don't come to grasp that through religious signs and miracles. You come to grasp that because God declared it to be so.

When a man believes the gospel, the unbelievable is accomplished. Through the gospel comes salvation. The Jews wanted salvation, but they could not find it through religious signs and miracles. The Greeks wanted salvation, but they could not find it through human reasoning. They were to find salvation the same way we find salvation today and that is through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In verse eighteen, the Bible says, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness." The unsaved look at the gospel and say, "That's crazy. Do you want me to believe that a Jew, dying on a cross some 2,000 years ago outside of the city of Jerusalem, made it possible for me to go to heaven? That He accomplished the salvation of all mankind if they would believe? That's ridiculous! That's the silliest thing I have ever heard. You mean to tell me that the gospel alone is enough? You mean to tell me that simple faith in Jesus Christ is enough? That's foolishness!"

The Bible says those that perish call it foolishness; "but unto us, which are saved, it is the power of God." Don't you see? The man who believes on Jesus Christ is saved through the gospel. His sins are forgiven. The Bible makes that very clear to us. In Ephesians 1:7, the Bible says, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins."

My dear friends, it is possible to know that your sins are forgiven. It is possible to know that your sins are dismissed, that God holds no crime against you,

that God holds no charge against you, that you are forgiven. Listen! That can only come through the gospel. The gospel gives you freedom. The gospel sets the captive free. It is possible to have your sins forgiven and be set free from the dominion of sin, that sin that has you in its grip today, that sin that has you in its power. You can, by means of the gospel, be forgiven and be set free.

Now, the gospel does not rest on experience. But when a man gets saved, there is a definite experience of salvation. The Bible tells us that the gospel makes life take on new meaning. In II Corinthians 5:17, the Bible says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

You become a new creature. When you get saved, God becomes your Father. When you get saved, Jesus Christ becomes your Friend. When you get saved, the Holy Spirit of God becomes your indwelling Comforter. When you get saved, you can pray and get your prayers answered. When you get saved, heaven is your home. You get all of these things through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Listen folks! God can do something in your life. God can bring about salvation. God can bring about the forgiveness of sin. God can bring about the deliverance from the power of sin. God can bring about the answers to prayer. God can bring about a home in heaven. All of these things come through the gospel of Jesus Christ, and it is all of grace.

Do you know what grace is? Grace is the unmerited favor of God. Salvation is something God does for the believing sinner, and there is absolutely nothing in that believing sinner that commends him unto the grace of God. Absolutely nothing! We all deserve to go to hell! However, God in His grace has chosen to save those that believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Listen to the Bible! In Romans 3:24, it says, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." In Ephesians 2:5, the Bible says, "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by grace ye are saved."

Jesus Christ, God's Son, died upon Calvary's cross some 2,000 years ago; and, if I will accept what He did for me, God will save me, and He will save me by His grace. It is a free gift to all, regardless of your color. It is a free gift to all, regardless of your religious background. It is a free gift to all, regardless of your intellectual ability. It is a free gift to all, regardless of your status in society. Salvation is available by God, to everyone, on the same basis.

You say, "Preacher! You mean to tell me I don't have to join something in order to be saved?" That's right! "You mean to tell me I don't have to do something in order to be saved?" That's right! That's the wonder of the gospel. The wonder of the gospel is that it is all of grace. In Ephesians 2:8-9, the Bible says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

What a wonderful thing! The gospel does not rest upon human reasoning. The gospel does not rest upon religious signs or miracles. But it produces the most amazing things in the life of a human being. It accomplishes the unbelievable.

We have noticed, number one: that the gospel rests upon the revelation of God's Word, and number two: that it accomplishes the unbelievable; but notice, number three: it magnifies Jesus Christ.

The gospel is all about Christ. Jesus Christ, God's Son, came into the world to save sinners. In John 3:16, the Bible says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The greatest wonder of the gospel is not its simplicity, although it is easy to understand. The greatest wonder of the gospel is not its power, although it is powerful. The greatest wonder of the gospel is that Jesus Christ himself is at its heart.

There is no one in all the world like the Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son. He is glorious. He is amazing. He is all together lovely. He is known as the Bright and Morning Star, the Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the Valley. In the book of Isaiah, He is called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace. In the book of Revelation He is called Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, Faithful and True, and the Word of God.

In John 1:29, John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

I submit to you folks that there is no one in all the world like Jesus Christ, God's Son. He is glorious. Before His birth, the angels said, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest."

In His origin, He came from God. He came forth from eternity. He came forth from the very presence of God the Father. Being in the form of God, He was and is God Almighty.

In His birth, He was born of a virgin, without a natural father. He was the fruit of the virgin Mary's womb.

In His life, He was without sin. He was incapable of sinning. He was the only sinless Person to ever walk the earth.

In His death, He died in the place of sinners. He died for you, and He died for me. The Bible says that God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, who knew no sin, to be sin for us. He was the perfect substitute for our sins.

In His resurrection, He rose from the dead to die no more. He conquered death and the grave for our justification. He saved us from the penalty of sin. He

saved us from the power of sin. And, praise the Lord, one of these days we'll be saved from the very presence of sin itself.

In His ascension, He ascended into heaven where He is now seated at the right hand of God the Father, where He reigns in glory as the Creator of the universe, where He is making intercession for me and for you if you are born again. Jesus Christ, God's Son, went back to His throne in heaven at the right hand of God the Father, exalted in glory, to pray for us.

In His present ministry, He is the perfect High Priest. He is pleading for us against our accuser.

In His future return, He shall be hailed as the King of kings and Lord of lords. There is no one in all the world like Jesus Christ, God's Son. He is glorious. What are you trying to say, Preacher? I am simply saying that the gospel magnifies Jesus Christ.

When the Apostle Paul came on the scene saying, "we preach Christ," He was saying to the Jews, "I am not preaching religious signs." He was saying to the Greeks, "I am not preaching human reasoning. I am preaching the gospel, and the gospel is based upon the revealed Word of God and it is manifested in the person of Jesus Christ."

Listen folks! I don't offer you religion today. Religion can be cold. Religion can be cruel. Religion can be empty. Religion can accept some and reject others. I don't preach religion. I preach the gospel. I preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, and it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. It is a plan that God reveals in His Word, and it is to be found in the person of Jesus Christ. In Acts 4:12, the Bible says, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

The gospel does not stand on my ability to articulate it. The gospel does not stand on my ability to prove it. The gospel does not stand on my ability to debate it. The gospel does not stand on my ability to argue it. The gospel stands because the Word of God declares it. The Bible declares that Jesus Christ died for sinners. The Bible declares that Jesus Christ was buried. The Bible declares that Jesus Christ rose from the dead for our justification.

My friend! If you will, by faith, believe that, you will discover that what God said was the power of God unto salvation will in fact be the power of God unto salvation in your life today.

We have noticed, number one: that the gospel rests upon the revelation of God's Word. It does not rest upon human reasoning. It does not rest upon religious signs and miracles.

We have noticed, number two: that the gospel accomplishes the unbelievable. It brings about salvation. It brings about the forgiveness of sin. It

brings about the deliverance from the power of sin. It brings about the answers to prayer. It brings about a home in heaven. And all these things through the gospel of Jesus Christ; and it is all of grace. Salvation is available, by God, to every one on the same basis.

We have noticed, number three: that the gospel magnifies Jesus Christ.

Do you realize what I preach to you today? The very same message the Apostle Paul preached some 2,000 year ago. I preach to you the cross. I preach to you the gospel. I preach to you Jesus Christ.

I hope that you know Him. If not! I hope that you will receive Him today before it becomes eternally too late.

How is a Person Saved?

Salvation is all of God. God does the saving. Just take God at His Word and claim His salvation by faith. You will never be able to work your way into heaven. God does not have a scale in heaven whereby He weighs your good and bad works. That is a lie of the Devil – Romans 3:24; Acts 4:12; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5; I Peter 1:18; Romans 5:8.

Salvation is as simple as believing on Christ as the one who bore your sin, who died in your place, who was buried, and whom God resurrected from the dead – John 1:12, 3:16, 6:47; Acts 16:31; II Corinthians 5:21; Romans 10:9-10; Romans 10:13.

Simply admit that you are a sinner and believe on Christ as your crucified, buried, and risen Saviour. You will receive forgiveness for all of your sins. You will receive His free gift of eternal life by faith – Romans 3:10, 23; I Corinthians 15:3-4.

Jesus did a wonderful thing for you some 2,000 years ago on Calvary's cross. He died for you. He was buried for you. He rose again the third day for you, and nothing would thrill Him more than to save you today.

Won't you go to Him right now in prayer and tell Him in your own words that you will trust Him as your Saviour? Or pray this simple prayer: Dear Lord, I know I am a sinner. I believe Jesus died for me and that He arose from the grave. Here and now I ask You to forgive me of my sin and save me. In Jesus's name. Amen.

If you prayed that simple prayer, I would like to hear from you. Please contact me by e-mail or phone (813) 760-4028.

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