DEFINING THE GOSPEL

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." —Mark 16:15

If we do not know what the *Gospel* is, it will be impossible for us to truly fulfill the *Great Commission*. Therefore, it's important we understand what is meant by '*the Gospel*'. How might we define the *Gospel*? On the surface, this appears to be a rather simple question. However, it's a bit more complex and far more multi-layered than it might first seem. The '*Gospel*' is a term that is used for several things in *Christianity*. The word is used for one or more of the four books of the Bible, *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John*—these are the four '*Gospels'*. As we know, the term '*Gospel*' comes from the *Greek* word, '*eu-an-gelion*', which means *good message*, *good tidings*, or *good news.* Many have assumed this means the '*Gospel*' should always be perceived as *positive*. With this man-centered and shallow concept in mind, the *Biblically illiterate,* contrary to the *Scriptures*, have mindlessly assumed the *Gospel* must be popular and always well-received, like informing someone they've won the lottery. If something is *offensive* or *provokes anger*, it cannot be the *Gospel*, they reason. In their mind, without qualification, the *Gospel* will always, without exception, be *good news*, even to the most sinful; this is an unfortunate and erroneous understanding. I contend, the word *Gospel* literally meaning '*good news*' only tells us that the *Gospel of Jesus Christ* is *good*, *holy*, *virtuous*, and *right—to this we agree.* Hence, the *Bible's* defining the *Gospel* as '*good news*' is not wicked man's perception, but God's declaration. The *Gospel*, according to God, is '*good news'* whether men believe or not, or whether they hate it or not.

Let's explore what the *Bible* says. In this brief essay I propose to specifically address five *Gospel* categories...

I. First, the *Marrow* of the *Gospel*.
II. Second, the *Broader View* of the *Gospel*.
III. Third, the *Conditions* of the *Gospel.*
IV. Fourth, the *Conditions* to *Preach the Gospel.*
V. Finally, the *Practical Preaching* of the *Gospel.*

We will begin our discussion with...

THE *MARROW* OF THE *GOSPEL*

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if

ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 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..." —1 Corinthians 15:1-4

This passage is considered the most abridged *Biblical Definition* of the *Gospel.* Here, in *1 Corinthians 15*, the word '*Gospel*' is used very precisely by the *Apostle Paul* for the central doctrines of *Christianity*. Namely, concerning *Jesus*, his *death*, *burial,* and *resurrection*. This is what we'll refer to as the *marrow of the Gospel* and the following is an excellent encapsulating definition...

> "The *good news* concerning all that God has graciously done through the finished work of *Jesus Christ* that man may be justly restored to fellowship with Him and conformed to the image of His Son to the end that God would be eternally glorified in and through his Church." —Charlie Kennon[1]

Again, this narrow definition of the *Gospel* centers on the ministry of the *Lord Jesus Christ* and especially His *atoning work* at *Calvary*. Contained therein, are essential truths at the heart of the *atonement*—the *cross*, the *blood*, the *substitutionary death*, the *burial*, and *triumphant resurrection* of *Jesus.* Declaring *Jesus Christ* and *Him crucified* is to point *lost*, *humbled*, and *sinful* humanity to the *finished work of Christ* as the only remedy for sin. Admittedly, no one can be *born of God* without *believing, identifying with*, and focusing on *Jesus* and *His atoning work* as the absolute object of their *faith*. On no other ground can we be *justified, forgiven,* and *delivered* from sin. Indeed, the sole foundation for our *reconciliation to God* is the *atoning work of Jesus Christ*. As *Paul* declared, it's by this *Gospel preached* and *received,* men are both *born of God* and *stand in the spirit*. However, allow me to bring your attention again to *1 Corinthians 15:3-4*...

"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received…"
—1 Corinthians 15:3a

The *Apostle's* use of the word *first* clearly indicates there is an order of *presentation*. *Gospel preaching* doesn't begin with the *resurrection*, but with *how Christ died for our sins.*

"…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..."
—1 Corinthians 15:3b-4

[1] Charlie Kennon, *CFF Sunday School*.

The phrases '*according to the Scriptures*', allows a broad application of *Scriptural truth* regarding who *Jesus* is and why He had to die, that he did indeed die, and now lives. Notice, '*our sins*', according to *Biblical theology,* is one of the first issues that must be confronted in *Gospel preaching.* The following words of *Jesus, Luke's Gospel,* confirms and somewhat expands on the *marrow of the Gospel...*

> *"Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." —Luke 24:45-49*

According to *Strong's Greek Dictionary*, the word, '*repentance'*, translated from the *Greek* word, μετάνοια means, '*compunction, or guilt of sin leading to a reversal, a change of mind, including a moral reformation'*. While, '*remission of sin*', taken from the *Greek* word, ἄφεσις means, '*forgiveness, pardon for sin, as well as the release from its bondage, deliverance, and liberty*'.[2] Here, *Jesus* presents a similar summary of the *Gospel* as we read in *1 Corinthians 15. Repentance* and *remission of sin* is cited by the *Lord Jesus* which essentially covers the *Biblical truth* of '*our sins*', if you will. *Repentance* and *remission of sins* encompasses the need to address man's *sin*, its bondage, consequences, and divine remedy. Within these two *Gospel essentials* are the great *Bible doctrines* of the *fall of man*, *God's moral law*, *justification*, *entire sanctification*, etc.

Hence, *1 Corinthians 15:1-4* is indeed the *marrow of the Gospel*, yet this *marrow* does not fully define the *Biblical Gospel.* In fact, many people falsely believe that to *preach the Gospel* demands an exclusive declaration of the *death*, *burial* and *resurrection* of *Jesus*. The *Bible* does not bear this out.

THE *BROADER VIEW* THE *GOSPEL*

> *"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: By whom we have received*

[2] *Strong's* Hebrew & Greek Dictionary.

grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ..." —Romans 1:1-6

Unfortunately, popular notions about the term '*Gospel'* tend to absolutely limit it to the *death*, *burial*, and *resurrection of Christ*, but this is not true. Notice, here in the introduction of *Romans*, *Paul's* use of the term '*Gospel*' is very broad. Including all the truths about Christ in the *Old Testament* and the *New Testament*. The *Gospel* concerned *Old Testament* revelation about *Christ* (*1:1*)...

- His *Kingly lineage* (*1:3*).
- The *Spirit of God's* role in the resurrection (*1:4*).
- And, *Paul's apostleship* to the *Gentiles* (*1:5*).

Consider *verses 16-17.*

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." —Romans 1:16-17

Again, by using the term '*Gospel*' here, it's clear the *Apostle* is not limiting his thoughts to *initial salvation*. For *Paul*, his *Gospel* included such matters as *justification by faith* (*3-5*), *sanctification through the Spirit* (*6-8*), and *God's future for Israel* (*9-11*). In fact, the *Gospel,* in a general sense, gathers together all the truths that are found in the *Book of Romans*. Again, consider *Romans 16:25*...

"Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began..." —Romans 16:25

Romans 16:25 demonstrates that *discipleship truth* was part of *Paul's Gospel*. In *Romans*, *Paul* is defending the *Gospel* he preached both to the heathen as well as in the churches he established. The word *Gospel* occurs 21 times in the *four Gospels* and the *Book of Acts* combined. In the vast balance of these usages, the word *Gospel* is associated with the narrow *message of salvation*. However, the word *Gospel* is also used *74 times* in the remainder of the *New Testament* and in many cases, the definition is left ambiguous. In other words, the context of the use of the word *Gospel* cannot be irrefutably established as exclusively the basic *salvation message*. On the other hand, there are more than twenty uses of the word *Gospel* that are clearly associated with something other than an evangelistic message. In many of these cases the word '*Gospel*' is used to represent the

New Covenant. Or, if you will, the *Gospel Covenant*, which signifies the full scope of Christian instruction and discipleship (*Rom 1:15, 15:29; 1 Cor 9:14, 15:1; 2 Cor 10:14, 11:4, 11:7; Gal 1:6, 1:7, 1:8, 1:9, 2:5; Eph 2:22; 1 Thes 1:5, 2:8-9; 1 Tim 1:8-11; 1 Pet 1:25; Rev 14:6*).

Another irrefutable proof-text for the *broader view of the Gospel* is found in *Revelation 14:6-11*...

> *"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the <u>everlasting gospel</u> to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, <u>Saying with a loud voice</u>, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name." —Revelation 14:6-11*

Note, our *Gospel-heralds* here are *angelic messengers* from heaven, not fallen, fallible men apt to err. Thus, we can be assured their declaration was accurate and appropriate. These angels are said to be proclaiming what the *Scriptures* refer to as the *Everlasting Gospel*. This clearly indicates their message as the eternal, immutable, unchanging *Gospel message*. The passage plainly tells, in detail, what was *said*. A careful examination reveals there is no mention of the *cross*, the *blood*, the *death*, *burial*, or *resurrection of Christ*. In fact, there is not even the mention of the name of *Jesus*. To assert these particulars were preached but not mentioned in the narrative is the grossest breach of interpretative integrity. If I can add to the *Scriptural* transcript of this sermon, then I can add to any recorded sermon or narrative in the *Bible* (*there is no concise summary like, 'they preached the Word', where speculative interpretation could be warranted, etc*.). Here is where our *Hermeneutics*, our principles of *Bible interpretation* are put to the test. We must approach the *Scriptures* with the presupposition that *God's Word* is infallible and without contradiction. We are to allow the *Scriptures* to define and interpret themselves...

"Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."
—1 Corinthians 2:13

Therefore, if our understanding of the *Gospel* is limited to only the *death*, *burial*, and *resurrection of Christ*—but *Revelation 14:6-11* tells us the *Everlasting Gospel* was preached without mentioning these particulars, we're faced with a theological conflict. How should this interpretive conflict be reconciled? Remember, in *Bible Hermeneutics* there are two basic interpretive principles. One tends to error, e*isegesis*, the other to a right understanding, *exegesis*. Everyone reading the *Bible* is using one of these two approaches to extract the meaning of the text. *Eisegesis* means to impose or insert from without. While *exegesis* is to draw out the meaning, relying on both the immediate and overall context of the biblical passage to determine that passage's meaning. So, back to our *interpretive dilemma*—if we believe the *Gospel* is limited to the *death*, *burial*, and *resurrection of Christ.* Yet, *Revelation 14:6-11,* which is clearly defined as declaring of the *Everlasting Gospel*, does not mention these fundamentals. We can practice *isogesis*—which would be to impose our understanding on the text. Claiming the absurd and irresponsible idea that though these things are not mentioned, they had to be preached because that's our *theological presupposition.* Or we can practice *exegesis*—which is to allow the *Scriptures* to clarify and interpret themselves, correcting our *theological presupposition* and expanding our *definition of the Gospel.*

Another consideration, the *Bible* clearly says the *Gospel* was preached to individuals under the old covenant, for example...

"And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." —Galatians 3:8

Notice, the *Spirit of God* conveniently gives us the exact message the *Gospel* was said to be preached in, it's found in...

"And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be."
—Genesis 15:4-5

True, under the old covenant, the *marrow of the Gospel*, is certainly revealed via types and shadows. Yet, there is no direct mention of *Jesus* or His *atoning death*, *burial,* and *resurrection.* The inspired writer of *Hebrews* tells us in...

> *"For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." —Hebrews 4:2*

The record of *Moses' preaching*, though filled with *new covenant* implications and typology, has no direct citing of the *marrow of the Gospel.* The question may be raised, '*How much Gospel revelation did the Old Testament saints have and how much was necessary for them to be saved?*' Everyone who has been *saved*, whether under the *Old covenant* or *New*, were saved the same way—by faith in the *finished work of Christ.* The *Old Testament* saints*, looking forward* and *believing,* and we*, looking backward.* Granted we have better *promises*, but we dare not underestimate the power of God to reveal Himself. I believe there had to be a minimum threshold of saving truth, like the most fundamental truths found in the *marrow of the Gospel*. The *Book of Hebrews* tells us all the *Old Testament saints obtained a good report through faith* and furthermore...

> *"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." —Hebrews 11:13*

True, they saw them *afar off,* perhaps not seeing everything as clearly as they might, nevertheless, they saw, they knew, were persuaded, embracing, and confessing what they believed. *Jesus* testifying of the *Patriarch of Faith*, *Father Abraham...*

> *"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." —John 8:56*

So, make no mistake, by *faith*, they did *see*, and though I cannot say exactly what each one understood perfectly, we know they knew enough to be *justified by faith.*

Matthew's Gospel irrefutable establishes that *Jesus* Himself preached the *Gospel*...

> *"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom..." —Matthew 4:23*

Of course, *Jesus* did foretell of his *atoning death*, *burial,* and *resurrection* to his disciples. He did speak of these things publicly as well. However, for all *Jesus'* recorded public ministry, the vast balance of His interaction with common people, He did not mention his

death, *burial*, and *resurrection*—certainly not coherently and progressively together. Yet, who would accuse *Jesus* of not preaching the *Gospel*, for He is the *Gospel?*

Finally, we have the record of the *Apostles* preaching the *Gospel* throughout the *Book of Acts*. A careful examination reveals they did not always mention the basic elements of the salvation message. So, we conclude, in *defining the Gospel*, though we acknowledge the *marrow of the Gospel*—the *death*, *burial*, and *resurrection of Christ.* We also must concede there is a legitimate broader definition according to the *Scriptures*.

THE *CONDITIONS* OF THE *GOSPEL*

> *"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" —Acts 2:37*

This question is thoroughly answered throughout the *New Testament*. There are four essential conditions communicated for conversion—*repentance*, *faith*, *confession*, and *following/Lordship.* According to the *Scriptures*, it's typically in this progressive order that conversion takes place—*repentance, faith, confession, follow.* However, before we delve into these *four*, I want to address the *primary condition, faith.* In fact, this one condition might be referred to as the *marrow* of *Gospel conditions*. Of these *four*, *repentance*, *faith*, *confession*, and *following/Lordship*, there is only *one* that sometimes is used to summarize or represent all *four.* Namely, *faith* or *believing.* Incidentally, there are no occasions in the *New Testament* where the other three *conditions for regeneration*: *repentance*, *confession*, or *following Jesus* are mentioned exclusively, coupled with the *promise of eternal life*, representing all *four conditions.* Yet, there are many that singularly cite *faith* or *believing*—I could quote dozens of *Scriptures*, but for times-sake, I'll only offer a few...

> *"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." —John 3:16*

> *"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." —John 3:36*

> *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." —John 6:47*

> *"And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." —Acts 16:30-31*

How do we arrive at the understanding that *believing* in these verses encompasse the other three conditions? Again, this is based on *sound Bible Hermeneutics—allowing the Bible to interpret the Bible*. We have verses that plainly state that *believing on* the *Lord Jesus Christ* is the condition to receive *eternal life.* But we also have *Bible verses*, and therefore *Scriptural authority*, that clearly teach *conversion* demands *self-denial*/*repentance*, *confession*, and *following* as well. So, as we approach the *Scriptures* with the theological presupposition that our *King James Bibles* are *infallible*, *inerrant*, and *perfect*. Therefore, there can be no *internal conflicts* or *contradictions*. We seek to understand the distinctions by harmonizing the whole of *Scriptural testimony* and arriving at the only possible conclusion, as the *Bible* is without flaw. We often do this with the testimony of the *four Gospels.* Occasionally, the *Gospels* will vary in the details of their narratives. These differences are never contradictory, but rather, fuller testimonies. So, where the *Gospel's* differ, we harmonize the diverse accounts into one, full and complete teaching of *Scripture*. An example of this would be—in all four *Gospel* accounts of the resurrection, the stone having been rolled away is mentioned, but only in *Matthew's account* are we told how, citing a violent earthquake and an angel—we then harmonize this information with the other three to form the full Gospel testimony. Another example is found in one of the five *Solas* of the *Protestant Reformation,* the Latin term, *Sola Fide* or '*by faith alone*'. The *Bible* consistently teaches that *justification is by faith*, but also states in the *Book of James*, that *faith without works*, *being alone, is dead*. So, which is true? Is this a contradiction? Absolutely not. *James 2:17* simply offers a qualification and with it, a fuller definition of *saving faith*. The *Scriptures* also teach that the *faith that justifies* is *repentant*, *pure*, *works by love*, is *dead without good works*, and *follows Jesus.* So, we can safely conclude the terms *faith* or *believing* can sometimes communicate the overall conditions demanded for *Biblical conversion.* Let's move on to the other three. Again, the progressive order presented in the *Scriptures* are *repentance*, *faith*, *confession*, and *following*. However, we've already briefly covered *faith* and I'll wait and address *repentance* last. So, what about *confession*? As we know, *Jesus* declared in...

> *"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." —Matthew 10:32-33*

Obviously, *confession* can mean both *verbally* and *behaviorally*, but we have a clear command found in...

> *"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." —Romans 10:9-10*

Indeed, *faith in the heart* will manifest in what we *say*...

> *"O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."* —Matthew ***12:34***

> *"We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak...*
> *—2 Corinthians 4:13*

This clearly means we should be prepared to *confess* to others that *Jesus* is our *Lord—to speak the Bible, boldly proclaim we are followers of Christ.* It's clear, without *confession* there is no *salvation*, because if we *deny Jesus*, he will also *deny us* before the *Father*. Again, considering the *thief on the cross* and what *revelation* he possessed, he had enough to both call *Jesus Lord* and defend him against the malefactor on the other *cross.* In other words, when given the opportunity, he had a good *confession* and if he had lived, I believe he would've have proven his *repentance* by *following Jesus*. If we *believe* and *confess*, is this, in and of itself, enough to obtain salvation? Absolutely not, the *demons* knew who *Jesus* was and even confessed who He was in public, but they're eternally lost. There are many who call *Jesus* '*Lord*' who will not be accepted by him...

> *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."*
> *—Matthew 7:21*

We must go on to *obey Christ* because the Scriptures tell us...

> *"They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."* —Titus 1:16

Which leads us to the next condition—*doing the will of God*, *following Jesus*, or *Lordship*. *Jesus* was very clear when he stated in...

> *"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great."* —Luke 6:46-49

Again, *following* is a clear condition for not losing one's life...

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels." —Luke 9:23-26

If we are truly born of God, we will do *the will of God*, which is synonymous with *following Jesus, obeying God, etc. and so forth...*

"And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." —Luke 14:27

"And the world passes away, and the lust of it: but he who does the will of God abides forever." —1 John 2:17

"And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him..." —Hebrews 5:9

"And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." —1 John 2:3-4

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." —2 John 1:9

"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." —Revelation 22:14-15

Finally, I want to address *Biblical repentance*, which is a clear condition for *regeneration*, remember *Jesus* said in...

"And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." —Luke 24:46-47

- Repentance of sin: (*Greek*) μετάνοια—Compunction, or guilt of sin leading to a *reversal*, a *change of mind*, including a *moral reformation*.[3]
- Remission of sin: (*Greek*) ἄφεσις—Forgiveness, pardon for sin, as well as the release from its bondage, deliverance, and liberty.[4]

> "When there is no fear, there is no change of conduct. Where there is no change, there is only a vain '*repentance'*. For it lacks the fruit for which God purposed it—the salvation of man." —Tertullian[5]

New Testament repentance demands men be willing to *forsake their sin*. *Sin* is what separates men from God—*no one can rightly preach the Gospel who is afraid to address the sin problem.* It is both unscriptural and absurd to suggest that men could *turn to God* while being unwilling to renounce that which *separates them from God.*

> *"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." —Proverbs 28:13*

> "*Repentance* is a change of mind, as regards God and towards sin. It is not only a change of views, but a change of the ultimate preference or choice of the soul. It is a voluntary change, and by consequence involves a change of feeling and of action toward God and toward sin." —Charles G. Finney[6]

Repentance is one of the most important *Gospel declarations* of *Scripture*. *John the Baptist* preached it...

> *"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." —Matthew 3:1-2*

Jesus preached it...

> *"From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." —Matthew 4:17*

The *disciples* preached it...

"And they went out, and preached that men should repent." —Mark 6:12

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[3] *Strong's* Hebrew & Greek Dictionary.
[4] *Strong's* Hebrew & Greek Dictionary.
[5] Tertullian, *The Pilgrim Road, by David Bercot*.
[6] Charles G. Finney, *Finney On Revival*.

The *disciples* continued to preach it after *Jesus'* death and resurrection...

> *"Repent ye therefore, and be converted..." —Acts 3:19*

The *Apostle Paul* preached it, at *Mars Hill*, to the men of *Athens* he declared...

> *"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent..." —Acts 17:30*

From *Jesus* and the *Apostles* to the *early fathers*, both among *Arminians* and *Calvinists*, *repentance* is part of the *doctrine of salvation*—it is the *Orthodox* view. Rest assured, no one is *born-again* without genuine *repentance.*

> *"I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." —Luke 13:3*

Now, there is a popular controversy, generally among those of *Calvinistic* and *Antinomian* leanings, that asserts urging men to *stop sinning* is dangerous. People have said this is wrong because '*sinners can't stop sinning*'. Granted, it's true sinners cannot produce absolute holiness, but they can refrain from specific, individual sins—no one must be a *thief*, or *liar*, or *drunkard*, etc. Besides, the idea is to promote futility, to stir up and provoke rebellion, so the sinner can see his terrible heart condition. Remember, today many, even most we preach to, both rank heathen and professing Christians, use *inability* as an excuse to continue in sin. One argument they use is this, '*If repentance means ceasing from sin, then no one has repented that ever sins again and therefore, if they haven't repented, no one is saved*'. This is not true. Much like *New Testament holiness* or *sanctification*, *Biblical repentance* does not eliminate our free-will, there is always the possibility we can fall. *True repentance* is essentially to covenant with God, via grace, to refrain from all *known sin*. It is the declaration of *moral law* that men are informed regarding their sin—*no other way for them to see sin rightly.* Granted, if we were telling men that refraining from their sins was enough for them to be justified or to earn their salvation, that would be heresy. Nonetheless, the declaring of *God's moral law*, with its intrinsic demands and penalty, that illuminates sinners to their culpability. It's from this *platform of legal obligation,* established by the application of the *law,* which lends *moral leverage* in calling men to *repentance.* How can we logically tell someone to *repent* if they don't know what they're to *repent* for? Imagine, stopping people on a road and urging them to turn around, when they ask, '*why?*', you shrug your shoulders. Furthermore, I assert to preach, '*repent*', or '*stop sinning*', or '*stop breaking God's law*' are all synonymous. Telling men they must '*turn from their sin*' or '*cease sinning*' is to merely elaborate on the word '*repent'*. Moreover, the *law,* which we often declare as a *schoolmaster to lead men to Christ,* clearly demands a change of conduct. If telling men to '*stop sinning*' is dangerous, so also is the

declaration of the *law.* This is absurd. It's nonsensical in the extreme to suggest a *command* insufficiently communicates the idea of *discontinuing the violation of its injunction*. When we pass a speed-limit sign that simply reads *45mph* and we are traveling *60mph*, we immediately know we must slow down. Thus, it's an irrefutable fact, via *God's moral law* and the explicit communication of *Scripture*, that God commands all humanity to stop breaking His law. No one can deny this without doing violence to the *Scripture*. All men, at the very least, have the *moral law* written on their conscience. This innate testimony of God provides every man with the understanding that *sin is wrong*, and henceforth, *because sin is wrong*, it must be forsaken. Conformity to moral standard is intrinsic to law; all commands imply both an unyielding demand for conformity and repercussions for disobedience. Dictates without the demand for conformity and consequence for disobedience are not *laws*, but *suggestions*. Thus, it's impossible for sinners to be exposed to God's *moral law* without comprehending that God expects them to cease from sin. The moral law's '*thou shalts*' and '*thou shalt nots*' invariably imply '*stop sinning and obey God'*. To suggest otherwise, is to wax irrational. Can the *adulterer* who reads God's *law*, '*Thou shalt not commit adultery*', which provides both the *knowledge of sin* and is the *schoolmaster that leads to Christ*, be justified in saying, '*By this command, I am unsure whether I will be condemned by continuing to choose to commit adultery*' or legitimately say, '*This command does not mean I must stop committing adultery*'. I would think not. In conclusion, I would assert exactly the opposite of those who condemn our *Gospel preaching* as *legal*. If any preacher fails to communicate that sinners, must '*stop sinning*', they're not preaching repentance—*and that's very dangerous indeed.* Thus, it's impossible for sinners to be exposed to God's *moral law* without comprehending that God expects them to cease from sin.

THE *CONDITIONS* TO PREACH THE *GOSPEL*

> *"Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."*
> *—Luke 24:45-49*

Jesus' words in *Luke 24:45-49* profiles both the *Gospel* and *Pentecost.* He here foretells of the *Gospel* being preached all over the *world* as well as the *out-pouring of the Holy Ghost* on the *church* who would then be the chosen vessel to carry to the *Gospel* to the ends of the earth. Thus, *Jesus* forever links these two landmark commands—the *Great Commission*

or the *preaching of the Gospel* and *Pentecost,* or the *Baptism of the Holy Ghost.* And so it is, in the very words of the *Lord Jesus Christ* we have two basic conditions for *preaching the Gospel*. Of course, when we say '*preach*' we mean in a general sense, as the entire body is under the obligation to fulfill the *Great Commission*. So, we're not speaking about the specific *five-fold*, *office calling* of the *Evangelist* as mentioned in *Ephesians 4.*

Obviously, we cannot demand men submit to a *Gospel* we ourselves have yet to believe. We'll never accurately represent *Christ* if we, ourselves, have not been *born-again*. We cannot urge *repentance* and *remission of sins* if we ourselves are still *bound by sin. Slaves* can never deliver *slaves*—when God raised up a deliverer to liberate *Israel* under Egyptian bondage, He didn't send them a slave, but *Moses,* a God-called man with a message of deliverance. Today, people say, '*What can we do to change our culture?'* Vote? No, spiritual and moral darkness can only be addressed by spiritual and moral light. So, the first condition to *preach the Gospel* is a man must be right with God himself—this is self-evident. I cannot lead people where I, myself, have not gone. However, as our text in *Luke 24:49* indicates, the next condition requires the *Baptism of the Holy Ghost.* This is again confirmed by the words of the *Lord Jesus* in...

> *"And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." —Acts 1:4-5*

We also know before *Jesus* uttered these words, after His resurrection just a few weeks prior, He uttered the commanded…

> *"...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."*
> *—Mark 16:15*

In the *Great Commission*, *Jesus* is commanding the *church* to *go* and *go into all the world.* Yet, here in *Acts 1:8,* He offers a qualification, '*First, before you go anywhere, before you leave Jerusalem and go into all the world, before you preach the Gospel as I commanded you, wait until you're baptized in the Holy Ghost'.* Thus, *Jesus* is clearly establishing an absolute condition for *preaching the Gospel.* Notice, in both *Luke 24* and *Acts 1*, the *Baptism of the Holy Ghost* is mentioned in context with the *preaching of the Gospel*. Indeed, according to *Jesus*, it's the *Baptism of the Holy Ghost*, that fully equips us to be a sound *Gospel witness*.

> *"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you…"*
> *—Acts 1:8a*

- Power: (*Greek*) δύναμις—Other-worldly, miraculous power, authority, strength and virtue.

The Greek word translated '*power'* here means *divine power*, *ability*, and *authority* from without, whereby we can accomplish what would be impossible apart from God. This *power* is not something we can fabricate or manufacture. It only comes from God by virtue of the *Baptism of God's Spirit.* There is nothing so absolutely needed to declare *God's Word* as *divine authority*, *heavenly unction*, and *Holy Ghost anointing—nothing*. *Human effort*, even sincere, *biblically informed human effort*, can never further the *Kingdom* in any way. It doesn't matter what valid *Scriptural metaphor* you may cite—all teach *human wisdom*, *ingenuity*, and *strength* are absolutely of no use in spiritual matters. If we're planting a *spiritual vineyard*, the branches bear no fruit except they *abide in the vine.* If we're building a *spiritual house*, *except the Lord build, we labor in vain*, and if we foolishly *build in vain*, great shall the fall be. If we attempt to guard those under our *spiritual care*, the *watchman waketh in vain except the Lord keep the city.* If we're fighting a *spiritual battle*, the *weapons of our warfare are never carnal*, but only mighty thru God, etc. and so forth. So it is, when endeavoring to further the *Kingdom,* this principle always holds true...

> *"...not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts."*
> *—Zechariah 4:6*

No one then, apart from the *Baptism of the Holy Ghost* and the *heavenly unction* it provides, can rightly preach the Gospel—*no one.* You could repeat the words of the *Bible verbatim,* and yet, it couldn't rightly be referred to as true *Bible preaching* without the leading and empowering of *God's Spirit*...

> *"For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost..." —1 Thessalonians 1:5a*

This is an absolute—we can accomplish nothing, especially *preaching the Gospel*, if we are *carnal*. We must be *spiritual*, which demands we be thoroughly *born of the Spirit*, *filled with the Spirit*, and *led by the Spirit*. Thus, the *depth of our conversion*, the *surety of our Spirit-infilling*, the accuracy of our *revelation of God,* and the *sincerity our consecration to the Lord Jesus*, are paramount. A thorough exposure to *God's law* sets the tone for a *deep repentance*. A *deep repentance* in turn facilitates a *sound conversion,* which fully embraces the *cross*. Consider the *Apostle Paul*, who had what arguably is the most dramatic conversion in the *New Testament* and was *filled with the Holy Ghost* immediately. As a

Jew and a *Pharisee*, his familiarity with the *law* is without question. His conviction experience, under the *schoolmaster of the law,* is represented in *Romans 7*. The results was a life fully spent for God and mightily used. The greatest hinderance to you and I being a *witness for Jesus* is not so much a lack of Bible understanding, or the need to perfect apologetic arguments. No, the greatest hinderance to our being a *witness for Jesus* is if we have *anything to do with it at all*. We must be empty vessels, sensitive to *God's Spirit,* understanding we have nothing to contribute in and of ourselves. Suffice it to say, we cannot develop a sensitivity to *Jesus* watching hours of *YouTube* every day—only in prayer, having his burden, truly being moved with a burden, will we be found useful.

> *"The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." —Isaiah 50:4*

In ministry of every sort, *any* and *every* part of *Scripture* is a possible applied topic. Understand, no one is a naturally inclined to be a *witness* for *Jesus*. We are called to do the impossible, to represent a God so above, beyond, and other. Who is sufficient? Notice, what *Jesus* said the results of the *Baptism of the Holy Ghost* would be...

> *"...and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." —Acts 1:8b*

- Witnesses: (*Greek*) μάρτυς—Eye-witness spectators, those with a legal testimony, or a *martyr*.

The infilling of *God's Spirit* provides *power* to live holy, power to die, grace to embrace the cross and thereby be removed from the evangelistic equation. Holy Ghost preaching is God speaking thru empty vessels. Hence, the absolute is established: a man who is not *Baptized in the Holy Ghost* is ill-equipped to be a sound witness for *Jesus*.

FINALLY, THE PRACTICAL *PREACHING* OF THE *GOSPEL*

> *"But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." —1 Peter 1:25*

Notice, the *Apostle Peter*, under divine inspiration, tells us the *Gospel* is preached via the *Word of the Lord.* Certainly, the term the *Word of the Lord* can refer to the whole of the *Scripture*. However, throughout *Bible*, the *Word of the Lord* usually represents a more specific application of *Scripture*. Generally, a timely, relevant word—an applicable

portion, taken from the *whole of the Bible,* and appropriately delivered under *divine anointing.*

> *"...but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." —1 Peter 1:12b*

Such declaration is *Spirt-led*, *Spirit empowered* preaching rich with *Scriptural* content and authority. We must remember, a distinction should be made between the entire *Bible* and the *specific Bible truth* someone needs at any given moment. *Scriptural truths* are always *'Biblical facts'*, but '*Biblical facts'* are not always *'the Word of the Lord'*.

> *"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God..." —1 Peter 4:11a*

- Oracle: (*Greek*) λόγιον—A brief divine utterance taken from the whole—or what God wants to say to someone right now, in time.

To *speak as the oracles of God* demands we speak *according to the Scriptures*, but obviously, not necessarily to recite all of *Scripture* at once. As we evangelize, we may give sinners, *'Biblical facts'* but unless we've given them, *'the Word of the Lord'* we've failed. The God-called preacher is obligated to give people not just *facts* from the *Scriptures*, but the *Living Word.* By the *Living Word*, we mean, the Scriptural truth God desires to apply to that particular person at that given moment...

> *"...and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!" —Proverbs 15:23b*

Biblical facts are general, while the *Word of the Lord* is specific and often offensive.

> *"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear." —Proverbs 25:11-12*

As an *illustration*, consider the following analogy:

> Suppose as I am traveling along the highway, I see a gentleman who is pulled over on the curb-side with his car's hood up, with a busted radiator hose. As I pull up behind him and approach his vehicle to offer assistance, I reach in the back of my pick-up truck and pull out a prized shovel. After greeting the man, I began to thoroughly expound on the virtues and multiple uses of my shovel, all while his immediate problem is ignored. Now, no matter how thorough and how accurate my

> discourse on the shovel has been, *I have not addressed the problem at hand*. Indeed, I have given the man *truth* but I did not give him the *truth he needed right now*. You may say, *'But, you did not lie.'* No, of course not. Again, you may ask, *'Isn't what you said factual?'* Yes, but the help I offered did not confront the very issue that has side-lined this stranded traveler. I have given this unfortunate man *some facts* but refused to give him *the truth* that will address and remedy his current condition.

Likewise, men claiming to preach the '*Gospel*' often spew *"Biblical facts"* but refuse to give the sinners what they need, which is the *"Word of the Lord"*. So often this is the case with false evangelists. It is not so much *what they say*, but *what they refuse to say* that defines their error. True, they may not be propagating flagrant and outright lies, but they are not allowing God, for various reasons, to speak directly to the issues at hand.

So, when discussing *evangelism*, or the practical application of the *Gospel*, we must be careful to recognize the dynamics true *Gospel preaching. Gospel preaching* is never *static* but *dynamic*. It's animated, blunt, and directed by the agency of *God's Spirit* who intimately knows the heart of the *Gospel audience*. In other words, *Gospel preaching* is *God* using His ordained vessel of the *Church* to communicate, while responding appropriately to the heart and response of the hearers.

We understand, the pattern of *divine revelation* is the *Scriptures,* and the nature of that *revelation* is both *incremental* and *progressive*. Remember, God didn't just throw a complete *Bible* out of heaven. No, there was a divine order in which it was given. This is also reflected in the way *Canon* is arranged. The Bible opens with *Creation*, the *fall of man*, *judgment for sin*, the *law,* the *Prophets*, the *Gospels*, then the *Epistles* with Christian instruction, etc. and so forth. In this pattern, there is an application in Gospel presentation. In a very general sense—first *law*, then *grace*. As the *Bible* teaches, by the law, the *moral law*, is the *knowledge of sin* and the same is a *schoolmaster to bring us to Christ*. Thus, the *law*, as demonstrated by *God's* order of revelation, is a necessary preface to preparing the sinner's heart for the *marrow of the Gospel.*

> *"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul..." —Psalms 19:7*

The *law* is clearly a spiritual catalyst for conviction that leads to conversion. No one, apart from a thorough preparation by *moral law* can or will submit to the *Gospel.*

> "They will never accept *grace* until they tremble before a just and *holy law*."
> —Charles Haddon Spurgeon[7]

[7] Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

The *Apostle Paul* said in...

> "*But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; <u>According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust</u>."*
> *—1 Timothy 1:8-10*

Here, the *Apostle Paul* teaches the use of the *moral law* was something that's clearly a lawful part of *Gospel declaration*. Again, it would be error to tell someone, '*All you have to do to be saved is to keep the law*', but there is absolutely nothing wrong with urging men to '*Keep the law*'. Someone says, '*The law is not the Gospel!*' In one sense that's true, it cannot *save*, it cannot bring *justification*. However, in a larger sense, it's a needed and necessary part of the fuller *Gospel repertoire*. This has been understood by *godly men* throughout church history...

> "Undoubtedly both, *law* and *gospel*, should be preached in their turn; yea, both at once, or both in one. All the conditional promises are instances of this. They are *law* and *gospel* mixed together. According to this model, I should advise every preacher continually to preach the *law*—the *law* grafted upon, tempered by, and animated with the *spirit of the gospel*. There is nothing contrary at all between the *law* and the *gospel*; there is no need for the *law* to pass away in order to the *establishing of the gospel*. Indeed, neither of them supersedes the other, but they agree perfectly well together. Yea, the very same words, considered in different respects, are parts both of the *law* and the *gospel*. If they are considered as commandments, they are parts of the *law*: if as promises, of the *gospel*. Thus, *'Thou shalt love the Lord the God with all thy heart*,' when considered as a commandment, is a branch of the *law*; when regarded as a promise, is an essential part of the *gospel*-the *gospel* being no other than the commands of the *law* proposed by way of promises. Accordingly, poverty of spirit, purity of heart, and whatever else is enjoined in the holy law of God, are no other, when viewed in a gospel light, than so many great and precious promises. There is therefore the closest connection that can be conceived between the *law* and the *gospel*. On the one hand the *law* continually makes way for and points us to the *gospel*; on the other the *gospel* continually leads us to a more exact fulfilling of the

law. We may yet further observe that every command in Holy Writ is only a covered promise." —John Wesley[8]

"Evermore the *Law* must prepare the way for the *Gospel*; to overlook this in instructing souls is almost certain to result in false hope, the introduction of a false standard of Christian experience, and to fill churches with false converts."
—Charles Finney[9]

"The man who does not know the nature of the *Law* cannot know the *nature of sin*, and he who does not know the *nature of sin* cannot know the *nature of the Savior*."
—John Bunyan[10]

Let the *religious hypocrites* rage, the declaration of the *law* still works. Furthermore, with the *Great Commission*, we've also been given *Gospel principles.* These principles temper and qualify the administration and application of *Gospel preaching*, for example...

"Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." —Matthew 10:16

Teaching us simply that we are to define sinners rightly, according to the Bible, and consequently walk circumspectly, protecting our testimony before the ungodly. Furthermore, here are two more kindred, *Gospel principles* for *Evangelistic preaching*, first from...

—James 4:6b ...God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

From this we understand, *law* to the *proud*, *grace* to the *humble. Grace* and *truth* came by *Jesus*. God only gives grace to the *humble*. Secondly, *Jesus* offered words closely related saying...

"Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."
—Matthew 7:6

From these two, we understand—the *Spirit of God* will rarely, if ever, lead us to give the precious *marrow of the Gospel* to someone who refuses to humble themselves, acquiescing

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[8] John Wesley, Sermon 25, '*Sermon on the Mount*, V,' II, 2, 3.

[9] Charles Finney.

[10] John Bunyan.

to and *agreeing with* the *law.* Remember, when *John the Baptist,* from prison sent messengers to *Jesus* asking to confirm He was the promised *Messiah*, *Jesus* responded with...

> *"...go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them."*
> *—Matthew 11:5-6b*

The *Greek* word πτωχός, translated '*poor*' can mean both *destitute of wealth* but also *lowly*, *humble*, *helpless in spirit*, *powerless*, and *needy*. The context generally gives us the usage.[11] Moreover, *Jesus* uttered the following words recorded in...

> *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor..." —Luke 4:18*

Here, He was quoting the prophesy found in *Isaiah 61:1*, which gives us the irrefutable context of His use of the word '*poor'* in both *Matthew 11:6* and *Luke 4:18*...

> *"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek..." —Isaiah 61:1*

- Meek: (*Hebrew*) עָנָו—Humble, lowly, poor, and weak.[12]

Clearly, in accordance with the *principle* of never *casting our pearl before swine*, God has ordained the *marrow of the Gospel* to be *only preached* to the *humble* and *lowly*.

> "*The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." —Psalm 34:18*

> *"For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." —Isaiah 66:2*

> *"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*
> *—Matthew 5:3*

[11] *Strong's* Hebrew & Greek Dictionary.
[12] *Strong's* Hebrew & Greek Dictionary.

Until men have been rendered utterly *meek* by the revelation of *God the Lawgiver* and *Judge*, they're ill-prepared for the revelation of the *Lamb of God.* That brings me to another closely related *Gospel principle...*

"And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind." —John 9:39

Jesus, accompanied by the *Holy Ghost*, the final revelation of God, has *divine judgment* intrinsically attached. Yes, He was sent first to *save*, to *deliver*, and not to *condemn*. Yet, *condemnation* is sure for those who confronted by the light, shun *God's Son*. Thus, the attitude of *men's hearts* and their respective responses to divine revelation, always reap God-ordained consequences. To the *obstinately proud—deception*, to the *humble* and *contrite—mercy*. Contrary to what many assume, *God* will often deceive the hard of heart...

"*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." —Matthew 11:25-26*

The following is a practical example, taken from *Scripture*, of this *Gospel principle* being applied by the *Apostle Paul* and *Barnabas*...

"But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." —Acts 13:45-46

Thus, *Gospel preaching* is not so much about having to mention the *death*, *burial*, and resurrection of *Christ*, as it is about *appropriately* preparing people's heart, so they'll appreciate the *death*, *burial*, and *resurrection of Christ.* Again, *incremental revelation* has always been God's standard. Remember, the *Jews* were a people well acquainted with and informed by the *law* before God sent them *Jesus*...

"*But when the fulness of the time was come (appropriate time in God's time), God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." —Galatians 4:4*

We've got to first *preach them under the law* before *God's Spirit* has them ready to be *redeemed from under the law.* This pattern is all God's doing...

"But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster." —Galatians 3:23-25

Consider *Jesus'* ministry to the *rich young ruler...*

"*And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions."*
—Mark 17:22

Here's a man asking *Jesus* how to obtain eternal life. Did *Jesus* preach His looming *death*, *burial*, and *resurrection*? No, He preach the *law*? Who would be so bold as to suggest the *Master Evangelist* handled this man inappropriately?

So, in conclusion, the *Scriptural* definition of the '*preaching the Gospel*' is not necessarily concentrating on the *death*, *burial*, and *resurrection of Christ.* But rather, as it says in…

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." —2 Timothy 4:2

To be equipped with the *full counsel of God*, filled and led by the *Holy Ghost,* giving every man, the *Word of the Lord.* With a willingness to always lead *prepared* and *humbled hearts* to the Lord *Jesus Christ* and the saving *Gospel.*

—B.W.

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