

Pastor Marv discusses the difference between the Gospels and the Epistles and explains Salvation

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[0 : 00] My favorite movie heroes of years gone by, Gene Autry, used to sing, back in the saddle again, back where a friend is a friend.

Well, there's still one thing that I absolutely hate about this place, and I still do, and that's that darn clock back there on the wall.

Some things never change. Well, as was mentioned in Roger's prayer, we have had to say goodbye to some very special people.

Everybody that's ever been a part of this congregation is very special to me. But two dear ladies just passed on recently, Carolyn Jordan a couple of weeks ago, Betty Fox, and her funeral was this past Friday in Greenville, Ohio, and a number of Grace folks were there.

Those two women have come to mean a great deal to me and to Marie over the years. Their spirit, their demeanor, their class, their love for the Lord and for the Word.

[1 : 30] And in connection with that, I was kind of perplexed as to what kind of message to bring this morning. And that's always somewhat difficult when you have one message and you try to decide, out of a host of things that you could talk about, what is it that you're going to settle on?

So what I came to settle on is something that is not only very precious to me, but I know that it was to these dear ladies who passed on as well.

They both had a great and deep appreciation for the theme, the grace of God, and for the fact that when Jesus Christ died on that cross, it changed everything.

It changed absolutely everything. What happened on that cross was and remains the centerpiece for humanity for all times.

There's no way that it can be overemphasized. So in this hour, we're going to try as best we can to make that as clear as we can and the distinction that surrounds it as clear as we can.

[2 : 46] For some of you, this is going to be old hat. You've heard it before. But at the same time, repetition is the mother of learning, and I trust that it will solidify and confirm in your own hearts and minds the beauty and the joy that we have and the grace of God.

So first of all, we're going to have to look at the contrast, and to do that, we will go to the Gospels. And I appreciate the Gospels very much.

I know you do too. That is why we spent, I think it was three or four years in the Gospel of John as we went through it a number of years ago, and of course the other Gospels also during our tenure of 50-plus years here at Grace.

But you have to understand that the Gospels, for the most part, relate to the Lord Jesus Christ on the other side of the cross.

And that makes all the difference in the world, because we aren't there. We're on this side of the cross. And the difference is immeasurable.

[4 : 02] And I am sorry to say that there are a number of people in Christendom who have never come to appreciate the difference, and they try to mesh the Gospels with the epistles, and it can't be done.

And it isn't supposed to be done, because each in their legitimacy served a different clientele and a different purpose with a different message. And if you do not make a distinction between those, you will try, as I did the first few years that I was a believer in Christ, try to mesh those things and make them fit.

And when I would read some of the things in the Gospels that we're going to read shortly, I would scratch my head and say, this doesn't seem right. What's the problem here?

And I didn't understand what the answer was. I knew there had to be one, and I thought, well, maybe eventually somehow that will be explained. Maybe when I get to heaven, we'll explain it and understand it.

But right now, it's just perplexing. But I can assure you, God did not give us his word to perplex us. He gave it to us for understanding and appreciation and obedience and response.

[5 : 15] So with that in mind, I want you to turn, first of all, if you will, please, to Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 5, a very familiar portion that is referred to as the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew, Chapter 5, and I'm just going to, in fact, we're going to stay kind of close-knit in the verses so you won't over-exercise your fingers flipping through the pages too much.

Don't want to spend a lot of time doing that. But I do want you to see the contrast. And even though there are several other passages that we could appeal to that will teach the same thing, yet what we are going to deal with, and the passages we'll be pointing out, provide the bare necessities that will set forth the distinctions that we're trying to make.

So here in Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 5, and beginning with verse 20, I'm just going to read this one verse, Jesus said, addressing the audience, I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Now the first thing I want to make clear is when our Lord uses that expression here, the kingdom of heaven, he's not talking about heaven, the dwelling place of God where believers go when they die, absent from the body, present with the Lord, that heaven.

[6 : 37] That's not the heaven he's talking about. And that's very important to understand that. Because that is automatically the heaven that you think of. You think, well, there's just one heaven, and that's where saints go when they die, and that's where God dwells, and that's heaven.

Well, that is heaven. And God is there. And Jesus came from there. But when the Bible talks so much, in the Gospels particularly, about the kingdom of heaven, it is in reference to the coming of the kingdom that is in heaven to earth.

So as confusing as it is, the kingdom of heaven, of which Jesus speaks so frequently, is not in heaven. It is on earth.

It is heaven's kingdom come to earth. So that, when that happens, then, the will of God that is done in heaven will be done on earth.

And some have attempted to spiritualize that and tell us that we are now living in that kingdom of heaven here on earth.

[7 : 50] You do realize, don't you, that this world is heaven on earth? Not by any stretch of imagination. This earth is a sin-cursed place.

It is filled with violence, with corruption, with disease, and with death. And it is all of that that Jesus came to reverse.

And wherever he went, he brought kingdom conditions with him by healing people, by controlling the elements, all kinds of things that are characteristic of a good earth.

of the kind of earth that the scriptures say that God was very pleased with at the end of creation. But we all know something terrible happened to upset all of that.

And that was the entrance of sin and the earth has never been the same since. Jesus came that he might reverse that and he came through a special medium that God had appointed to be the vehicle for that and that was the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

[9 : 07] That was the Jewish people, the nation of Israel. And when Jesus presented himself to the nation of Israel, their answer was, thank you, but no thanks.

We will not have this man to reign over us. And they rejected what Jesus came to provide for them and that whole scheme of the kingdom of heaven coming to earth where peace and righteousness reigns and where goodness dwells and where all of the sin and evil is put away and dealt with summarily, that all failed to materialize.

As a result, that kingdom of heaven, sometimes called the kingdom of God, has been postponed. We are now living in the postponement.

This is not heaven on earth as you well know. So what Jesus is talking about here in the Gospels is all that that took place prior to the cross and as I've told you before a number of times over the years, there are two things, just two things, that have to occur before the earth gets fixed.

Rehabilitate. It is going to be changed. It is going to be the way it ought to be. And the first thing that has to happen is that Jesus has to pick up the tab and pay the penalty for sin.

[10 : 45] And that's precisely what he did. And the second thing that has to occur is that the nation Israel has to be in agreement with that, understand that, and receive that Messiah who did that.

That they have not done. So as a result, this kingdom of heaven come to earth in postponement is awaiting for Israel to come on board.

And as Jesus said before he left, addressing the people of Israel, he said, you will not see me again until you say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

And during the tribulation period when Israel is isolated as a small remnant of people, after two-thirds, after two-thirds of the Jews living in the world at that time will have been eliminated by the Antichrist, that small segment that remains will be gathered together in Israel, below Israel, in the land of Edom that is referred to.

This is Basra and the area there where this remnant will gather in that last day, they will have a time of Bible study and prayer meeting and repentance the likes of which this world has never seen.

[12 : 12] And a lot of that will be due to the results of the influence of the 144,000 that will be preaching the gospel that time and they are all Jews. There is going to be a massive outpouring of repentance on the part of Israel and these people will cry out to God for Messiah to return.

And he will. He will. And he will deal summarily with the Antichrist and his minions. That will be the conflict of the great tribulation, the climax of it, and then he will establish that kingdom.

So, we're still waiting for that. The planet is still waiting for that. Everything has been placed on hold and we are the hold. We were never imagined, never prophesied, never thought of, never spoken of, never promised.

Christ, just right out of the blue. There is this new thing. What is this? This is called the spiritual body of Christ and it is comprised of Jews and Gentiles together.

Jews and Gentiles have never been together. But this is the dynamic of this new thing called the church, the body of Christ. And that's what we're going to be looking at briefly but the first reference I want you to take to heart is in chapter 5 and verse 20.

- [13 : 44] Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees and how righteous were they? Well, they were considered among the most fastidious, the most perfect, if you can use that term, the most complete, the most plugged in, the most with it and everything else spiritually.

They were head and shoulders above the average person who lived in Israel. And by the way, these are all Jews we're talking about. You realize that the whole Bible, the whole Bible, Old and New Testament is provided by the Jews?

It's important that you understand that. And here in the text he's talking about a quantity of righteousness. In other words, what Jesus is saying is righteousness here in the Gospels is quantified.

The issue is how much. And when you talk about how much, it's very difficult to pin it down because you don't know what kind of quantity you're talking about.

As we move on through the text and through some others that we will use to contrast, you're going to see a very dramatic switch occurs and the distinction of quantity passes off the scene and something entirely new arise and it's called quality.

- [15 : 30] Quality. There is a huge difference between a quantity of righteousness and a quality of righteousness because the quantity may be scattered all over the map but the quality is singular whereas the quantity may involve all kinds of different degrees, dimensions, etc.

and question marks. With the quantity you never know if you've got enough. With the quality you either have it or you don't.

And that's a beautiful thing because therein lies the only basis for peace, assurance, confidence, enjoyment, etc. So let's move on and check out a couple of others.

Chapter 6, just across the page and verse 14. Matthew chapter 6 and verse 14. For if there is a condition imposed, for if, this is right after what is commonly referred to as the Lord's Prayer, if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

But, if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions. just let me say that anybody who has unforgiven transgressions is in big, big trouble.

- [17 : 16] There will not be anyone going to heaven who doesn't go there with a clean slate. Think of that.

no one will enter heaven except those with a squeaky clean slate. You either are or you are not.

If you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions. And while we're in the neighborhood, still in the Sermon on the Mount, look at chapter 7 and verse 21.

Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. By the way, here is a perfect example of distinguishing between the two heavens.

You see the first heaven he's talking about, the same word, spelled the same way, but means two entirely different things. The kingdom of heaven that we're talking about, that most of the gospels are talking about, is the establishment of the rule and reign of God on earth, on planet earth.

[18 : 36] But heaven so far is the place where God dwells, is what he's talking about here in this particular verse. And if you will look at it, in verse 21, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, that's earthly, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name cast out demons, and in your name perform many miracles? Then I will declare to them, I never knew you.

depart from me, you who practice lawlessness. Now, in addition to this being what we would call quantitative, I want you to see another aspect of it, because it is very clear as you look at it, it is performance based.

You get that? It is performance based. That's what is meant in the text, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

That means you are performing in your deeds, in your attitudes, and actions in a way that is acceptable to God. And that is clearly performance based.

[20 : 04] Where is the grace in this? You will look in vain for it, but you won't find it, because there isn't any grace there. Nor is there supposed to be any grace there.

Nobody is saying that this is wrong. We're saying it's different. It is intentionally different. It goes all the way back. Chapter 19, let's go there, please.

Same gospel, Matthew chapter 19, very familiar passage, and one I think that sets forth the principle and the difference that I'm trying to make as well as anything, and it is found in Matthew's gospel.

We'll stay right close to home here. Matthew's gospel, chapter 19 and verse 16. And behold, one came to Jesus and said, Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?

Do you see the performance there? He's asking, what do I have to do? He's not even asking, what must I believe? He's saying, what do I have to do? This has got works, works, works, scattered all over it.

[21 : 19] And do you know what? It's supposed to have, because that was the *modus operandi*. That's what was required under this kingdom message. This is part and parcel of the law, the law of Moses.

And the law of Moses and the Ten Commandments and all of the rest of it that is given in the Old Testament beginning with Exodus chapter 20 is, do, do, do, and thou shalt live.

That's a complete contrast to grace, which says, live, and thou shalt do. Completely reverses it.

Now understand, nobody is saying that one of these is wrong. what we are saying is they are different, and they are supposed to be different, because, hear me well, the works, the performance, the doing, the requirement, is all on the other side of the cross.

This is before Jesus died for the sins of the world. God. And when he did, that changed everything.

[22 : 39] That opened the way of access to God in a way that was never opened before. The veil in the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom.

God is as much as saying, rip it, I'm done with this. and Jesus in his own body has become the veil that was torn.

And he was torn for you and for me and for all the rest of the world. Now, I'm going to suggest something that perhaps you may not have heard before, but I'm satisfied that we are on confident ground.

Before Christ died on that cross, grace was available. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

Grace has to do with favor that is bestowed unearned. Grace means you don't have it coming. You don't deserve it, but God does it for you anyway.

[23 : 49] That's grace. And that has become available in abundant supply because of what Jesus Christ accomplished on that cross. But prior to his doing that, grace was rather scanty in its exposure.

Because you've got enormous numbers of heathen people, the Philistines and the Perizzites and the Amorites and the Gerizites and all the rest of those ites, all of whom were locked into false deities and false worship and there was no grace there among them.

I know that Paul said when he addressed the Athenians in Acts chapter 7, he said the times of ignorance God winked at.

I still don't know what to make of that. I can only guess that God gave those some kind of a pass and I don't understand what it was or to what degree or how it worked.

but I do know that everything was different on the other side of the cross. And this is why Paul goes on to say, but now, the times of ignorance God winked at, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent because he has fixed a day wherein he will judge the earth and those in it.

[25 : 07] So everything happened in a changing way as a result of the cross. So here with this rich young ruler, very familiar passage, Jesus said, why are you asking me about what is good?

There is only one who is good, but if you wish to enter in, keep the commandments. Folks, don't you see performance sprinkled all over that?

The message back here isn't, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. That message wasn't available then because the basis for it hadn't even occurred by that time.

So they're still operating under the Mosaic law. It's very important to understand this. If you wish to enter in, keep the commandments. And he said, which ones?

And Jesus said, well, you shall not commit murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, honor your father and your mother, you shall live your neighbors yourselves.

[26 : 10] And Jesus did not add, but of course all of those things will be passe when I die on the cross for the sins of the world and those things will be taken care of. He didn't say that, but it's amazing.

Some people seem to read that into it, but we cannot do that. This young man said, all these things I've kept, what am I still lacking? Do you see, what am I lacking?

What is that? It's not only performance, it is quantity. Quantity. What else do I have to do to add to that?

He's trying to build up a list that will make him acceptable to God. Jesus said, well, if you wish to be complete, all you have to do is have faith that the time is going to come when I'm going to die on the cross for your sins.

Folks, don't try to read that into that. It isn't there. It isn't supposed to be there. Jesus is functioning, operating, and giving this young man instructions under the law of Moses that existed at that time, and the grace of God as we know it, as expressed by the apostle Paul in his epistles, didn't even come into being yet.

[27 : 27] It's completely foreign to them. Nobody's thinking of that. Jesus said, well, if you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions. I remember struggling with this as a young student.

I think I was probably my freshman year at Cedarville. This was back before the earth crossed hardened, 1956 and 57.

And I remember reading these passages, and I would scratch my head, and I'd go to some of the profs and ask them about that, and they would try to explain to me, but I just never got it. It didn't make any sense.

And all I could say is, I don't know how, we don't tell people that today. When somebody asks, what do I have to do to go to heaven, we don't say, well, go and sell all your possessions and give your money to the poor.

But listen, isn't that what the text says? Don't you want to do what the Bible says? Now, all of you who want to take this seriously, you can leave the titles to your car in the office there.

[28 : 35] I appreciate your contribution very much, and I will sell all your vehicles, and by the way, if you happen to have a deed to your home there with you, you can leave that too, and I'll sell all of those, and then I'll distribute to the poor in accordance with what they have need.

Now, my question is, for people who insist on using the Gospels because they want to say, well, I want to be obedient to the whole Bible, not just part of it.

This is a criticism that we sometimes receive. I believe the whole Bible. Folks, it isn't a question of believing it. Of course we believe it, every jot and every tittle.

But implementing it, that's a whole different ballgame. And if you're going to be serious, and if you're going to adopt this as our marching orders, then why don't you do that?

And you know what the typical answer is? Well, Jesus didn't mean that this young man really had to do that. What he meant was, he's trying to teach him the spirit of generosity.

[29 : 47] Baloney. He meant it literally. And the young man took it literally. Because the text says that he went away sad because he had many possessions.

Why didn't he go away elated and say, well, I'm going to still keep all of my possessions, but I've got the right spirit of generosity. I'm giving in spirit.

Nonsense. Matter of fact, if you come over to Acts chapter 2, let's go there for a moment, please. Acts chapter 2, these people took that very seriously, and it is going to become apparent.

And this, too, is a passage that I never understood as a young Christian, and I kind of thought, well, are we supposed to be doing that? And if we aren't supposed to be doing that, why does the text say that?

And why is it that none of the Christians I know are doing this? And yet, everybody says they want to be obedient to the Bible and whatever it says, every line, every jot and tittle.

[30 : 57] So, in Acts chapter 2, and we'll just jump in with verse 37, after they've heard the gospel, after they've heard about Christ and his resurrection, and the text says in verse 37, when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart.

That means it really got to them. It means the truth that Peter preached connected, and it really penetrated.

And the text says, they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, brethren, what shall we do? They're in a dilemma.

This man's right. We crucified the Messiah. But we can't uncrucify him. What's done is done. What can we do now?

And Peter says, you can change your mind about who Jesus is, and what he had done, and why he did it.

[31 : 57] You can change your mind. You can repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

You know what that sounds like? That sounds like just like what John the Baptist said. That's just what the twelve apostles said. This is still kingdom stuff.

The kingdom and the whole concept of the kingdom didn't come to an end with the death of Christ. It continues on. The kingdom is still on the table, and Peter's going to make that clear in the next chapter when he says, if Israel will repent nationally, God will send him back.

What do you mean send him back? He's only been gone six weeks. Yes, but God will send him back, and with that second prong continued, the second prong that is required being in place, the first is Christ died for the sins of the world, the second is Israel comes in line and gets on board with the program, Christ will establish the kingdom.

The first has been completed, the second is still in obedience, still in postponement, it's never happened. Israel as a nation is still saying no to their Messiah.

[33 : 16] So, they are pierced to the heart, and they say, what can we do? And Peter tells them, but again, that's all under the kingdom dispensation, and then he says in verse 39, for the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to himself, and with many other words, he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them saying, be saved from this perverse generation.

And of course he was talking about the Jewish nation that had rejected Christ. So then those who had received his word were baptized, and it is amazing, but I suppose it's just a natural thing to say, well this is Christian baptism.

No, it isn't Christian baptism. This is John's baptism. This is the only baptism they knew. This was the logical thing for them to do. Because when Jesus sent the 12 fourth, and later he sent the 74th, he gave them the commission that they were to preach the gospel of the kingdom, and that they were to baptize, and that's all a Jewish thing.

And there were added that day about 3,000 souls. All right? Now there's 3,000 people who have gotten on board with this message. They have embraced it.

We don't know how many were there. My suspicion is there were a lot more than 3,000 there, but the 3,000 that were responding came to this new conclusion.

[34 : 42] And verse 42 says they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. And I want you to look at these next verses.

And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common. What? What's that mean?

It means exactly what it says. It means that they pooled their resources, that nobody had anything that they considered to be exclusively theirs, but it belonged to the whole group.

Okay. And they began selling their property and possessions.

Listen, these people are serious. You talk about put your money where your mouth is. That's what they were doing. These people were serious. They began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all as anyone might have need.

[35 : 48] God, why don't we do that? Why don't we do that? Do you know what the cop-out answer is? Well, again, it's just a spiritual thing.

What it means is you're supposed to be willing to help out others. You're supposed to be generous. You're supposed to have a spirit of generosity.

That's what this means. Nonsense. These people were taking it at face value. What are they doing? They're doing the very same thing that Jesus told the rich young ruler to do.

Because it's all in the same context. It's all in the same time frame. It's all in the same dispensation. It's all kingdom oriented. It is all performance based. The cross of Christ and the death that he died upon that cross put an end to the need for performance.

But these people, they didn't know that. They were not aware of that. When Jesus died on that cross, do you think for a moment that his mother, Mary, stood there beneath the cross, and consoled herself with the fact that it's a terrible, terrible thing that my son is being subjected to this pain and shame and ignominy and ill treatment.

[37 : 20] But after all, in three days, he'll come back to life again and he will have paid for the sins of the world and everything's going to be great. You think for a moment Mary thought that?

Of course not. These people were beside themselves. They were overwrought with grief and sorrow that wouldn't quit. And even when Jesus was reported among the disciples by the women who found first that he was gone, and they told the disciples, he's not there, he's risen, he's risen.

And the text says, and it seemed to them as empty tails. I can just hear Peter and James and John now looking at each other and rolling their eyes.

You know how women are, they get real excited. They imagine some things that they think that some things that they want to come true, they just imagine that they come true, you know, but dead is dead.

He's dead. Boy, what an awakening they were in for. He really was risen. My, oh, my.

[38 : 34] So, all those who believed were together and had all things in common, and they began selling their property and possessions, were sharing them with all as anyone might have need.

Day by day, continuing with one mind in the temple, breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together, gladness and sincerity of heart. These people were elated.

They were on cloud nine. They were doing what they were supposed to be doing, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

I know the King James says church, but the word church is not there in the original Greek. It's just the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. God now for a contrast that is just absolutely stunning and I can't tell you how exciting I am even though I've seen this for a long time.

Every time I get into it, it just thrills my soul to no end. Let's go to Romans chapter three and we'll see the capstone. Romans chapter three.

[39 : 39] this is on the other side of the cross. Everything we've been talking about up till now has been pre-cross prior to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

Now this is after, sometime after. And by the way, the one who is going to deliver this message that God selected to deliver this message was probably among the most fastidious straight-laced Jews that you would find as regards the law of Moses.

This man, Saul of Tarsus, was so completely sold out that he was willing to take upon himself the responsibility for which he knew God would be grateful, and he is going to take charge and stamp out this cancer that is growing on Judaism.

And what was the cancer? It was the ridiculous belief that Jesus was the Messiah of Israel, and that Israel crucified him, and that three days later he rose from the dead.

Have you ever heard such hogwash in all your life? life? And that's where Saul of Tarsus was coming from. And on that road to Damascus, wow, what an awakening.

[41 : 17] And you know, this man is going to be blinded by this brilliant light and hear the voice from heaven, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

And he's stunned. This bright light blinds him, and he's looking for vision, and he's casting about, and the people who are with him, they hear noise, they hear a voice from heaven, but they can't make out what's being said.

And only Saul gets the message, and somebody has to lead him by the hand, blind as a bat, into the city of Damascus.

And they go to this house on the street called Straight, and they plop him down in a chair, the tables in front of him, blind as he can be, and he sits there like this, and he's reliving that whole event.

The sun, the light, the voice. Was I dreaming? Was that real? And those who were with him, he asked him, did you see the light?

[42 : 36] Yeah, we saw the light. We weren't blinded by it, but we saw the light. Well, did you hear the voice? We heard something, some noise from heaven, but we couldn't make out what was being said.

But Saul got the message, because it was meant just for him. And for three days and three nights, he sits at this table like this, and he didn't eat, and he didn't drink.

The man is traumatized. He plays it, and he replays it, and he replays it, and he goes over the words again. Can that be?

Can that be? Listen, in my humble opinion, Saul of Tarsus wasn't converted on that Damascus road at all. He was arrested there, no doubt about that.

But when they let him into town, and he went to that house, and he sat there for three days and three nights, do you know what he was doing? What would you be doing under those circumstances? What would you be doing?

[43 : 39] What would you be thinking? You'd be replaying it, and replaying it, and replaying it in your mind, and you would try to convince yourself that it wasn't true. It didn't really happen, but it did, and he would relive it again, and he'd go over the words again.

And after three days and three nights, God called a man called Ananias, and he says, Saul of Tarsus has had a breakthrough.

You know what the text says? He says, behold, he is praying, and I'll tell you, his prayer would have been radically different from anything that he prayed before, and he's praying, and this is just a Wiseman opinion, and I'm writing in the white spaces, and you can take it or leave it, but I'll tell you what I think happened.

He wrestled with God three days, three nights, couldn't eat, couldn't drink, didn't want to, didn't miss the food at all. He's in shock, and finally, finally, a breakthrough, and Saul says to God, okay, I'm your man.

Wow. I'm your man. What's that mean? It means he's changed sides. he's on Christ's side now.

[45 : 16] As you read that text on in Acts chapter 9, it's a beautiful thing. It says, and straightway, he went to the synagogue, and he preached Christ as the Messiah at the synagogue.

synagogue. This was a synagogue that had people in it that he had come to Damascus to arrest and bring back in chains to Jerusalem. And now he's standing up there in front of these people, and I can just see those Jews who fled from Jerusalem to get away from the persecution, and they're 120 miles to the north in a strange country.

They want to clear out of the country of Israel. They're in a foreign land now. They're in Syria, capital of Damascus. And these people are sitting there looking at each other and saying, this is, this is Saul of Tarsus?

This is, what? What is this? Is this a trap? Is this an entrapment? Does he want us to just get us all together so he can arrest us all at once? What's going on?

And you know, nobody trusted him. They couldn't believe it. And there was one guy, just one guy, his name was Barnabas.

[46 : 37] Barnabas came alongside Saul, put his arm around him and said, welcome to the family, brother. I believe you. Oh, my.

So what's he going to do? He's got a whole new message. But you know what? It isn't quantitative anymore.

It isn't quantitative anymore. Now it is qualitative. It isn't how much. It's what kind.

And do you know, Satan, I am satisfied, has succeeded in confounding the message in that he has convinced people that, oh, yes, faith is necessary.

Oh, yes, faith is necessary. But so are works. And do you know this is the way the world thinks?

[47 : 50] This is the way the world operates. There's no free lunch. you cannot preach a gospel of pure, unadulterated grace whereby you expect nothing and you demand nothing except faith called justification by faith.

No, no, no, no, no. You've got to have work. You've got to be baptized. You've got to be in the church. You've got to take communion. You've got to do this.

You've got to do. There are all these hoops that you've got to jump through. That's putting people right back under quantitative again.

How much do you have to do? Listen, if it is quantitative, you have no basis for peace or rest.

How do you know you've done enough? How do you know you've given enough? How do you know you've believed enough? How do you know that you've prayed enough? So you've got all these hoops to jump through and you just keep jumping through them.

[48 : 56] There's all this religious exercise. Where is the peace? There isn't any peace in that. There isn't any joy in that. There's just a big grand question mark. And you don't know.

You don't know. So what do you do? You try harder. You do more. You join this. You join that. You participate in this. You're scoring points. God's supposed to be impressed.

And you know what all that does? Do you know what all that does? Stop and think about it. All of these add-ons that are supposedly required from you, all they do is elevate your contribution and depreciate what Jesus did on the cross.

What he did on the cross, we are told, was fine. It was wonderful. But it's not enough. You need to do this and so and thus and so and add to it on.

What do you think Jesus meant when he said, tetelestai? It is finished. It's finished. He didn't say it has started and you've got to finish it.

[50 : 09] It is finished. He, Jesus, paid it all. All to him I freely owe. Jesus paid it all.

He didn't make a down payment. He paid it all. And do you know why he did that? He did that so you wouldn't have to do anything other than just believe.

And someone comes back with, well, anybody can do that. That's the whole point. Anybody can do that. Doesn't cost you a dime.

Anybody can do that. That's why Jesus died and made it the way he did. So anybody can, listen, Jesus did the very most that he could do.

So all you would have to do is the very least that you could do. can you do that? Well, yeah, anybody could do that.

[51 : 27] But I'll tell you, before you will even want to do that, before you will even consider doing that, you have to deal with, why would you?

What's the need? Why do you have to even do that? and I call this, you grace people, you know, you've heard this all before, I call this the hard part of the gospel.

And it is. The hard part of the gospel is coming to grips with the reality that you are hopelessly lost in your sin that will justly condemn you and there is nothing you can do to change it by any activities, joining anything, or doing anything.

You have to come to that conviction. You are lost and you cannot save yourself. and do you know that is humbling to the ego?

Most of us like to think, well, I'm not that bad. Yes, you are. And the reason I know you are is because, like me, you are a member of the human race and you are as lost as is all the rest.

[53 : 03] That's a bitter pill to swallow. But it is the hard part of the gospels. Come into grips with that. Let's face it, we all like to think we're better than that. We all like to think, well, there are some people who are real scoundrels, but I'm not one of them.

I don't push drugs and I don't do this and I'm, and we pat ourselves on the back for how good we are. And you know what we're talking about? We're talking quantitatively again, quantitatively.

quality. But it's all about quality. Romans chapter 3 verse 19, now we know, we don't think or suspect, we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, talking primarily to the Jewish people, the Mosaic law, that every mouth may be closed and all the world may be accountable to God.

That's a beautiful thing. Every mouth is closed. Do you know, when we get called on the carpet, we want to explain. We want to explain why we did what we did and just like, you know, just like a little child to mom and dad.

Well, I didn't mean to do lessons on that. Well, let me explain, you know, before you know, they're going to apply the Board of Education to the seat of knowledge, you're going to try to talk yourself out of it. And the text says that every mouth will be closed.

[54 : 25] Nobody is going, God isn't going to ask you for an explanation of anything because he already knows and you can't deny it. Every mouth may be closed and all the world, no exceptions may become accountable to God because by the works of the flesh, these are deeds that we as humans can accomplish.

No flesh will be justified or declared righteous in God's sight, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin. But now, now, I've got that broadly underlined in my Bible, those two words, but now.

What's that mean? It's been a big change. But now, as opposed to before, but now, things are different. What's different?

Now, we're on this side of the cross. But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe, for there is no distinction.

Listen, Jesus Christ was on that cross because God is righteous. Think of that. He was on the cross because God is righteous. God is holy.

[55 : 53] Sin has a debt attached to it, and it has to be paid, and Jesus paid it. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Being justified, that means being declared righteous as a gift by his grace. Listen, you don't read this in Matthew.

It isn't supposed to be in Matthew. That's the other side of the cross. Don't, I pray you brethren, don't take what was on the other side of the cross and try to drag it over to this side of the cross and make it fit.

It won't fit. It isn't supposed to fit. The cross changes everything. Nobody is saying what was in the gospels was wrong.

No, it wasn't wrong at all. It was 100% right. But it was for a different time, a different place, a different people, a different dynamic. It was all before the cross.

[56 : 54] The cross, the cross, the cross changed everything. We're on this side of the cross. justified as a gift.

You don't have it coming. You don't deserve it and you didn't earn it. Think of this, dear friend. There will not be one person in heaven who deserves to be there.

Not one. not one. And we will all collectively have to point to him on the throne and say, the only reason I'm here is because of him.

He paid my sin debt. All to him I owe. Jesus paid it all.

Other references we'll not take time to look at, but they are in chapter four and the first eight verses. Chapter five and verse one, therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[58 : 13] All of these things become a reality because of this side of the cross that changes absolutely everything. As I think of those two dear ladies who are no longer with us but we expect to see again how they relish the truths of this message and lived it out and had opportunity on different occasions to teach it.

Carolyn often taught in the rest homes and facilities where she could communicate the gospel to the residents there. Betty Fox had many opportunities to address Christian women's clubs all over the state of Ohio where she was able to share the gospel with those dear ladies who were there in attendance and I'm sure that both of them were instrumental in leading a number of people to Christ.

So we have fond and cherished memories of both ladies and in a certain way I guess a certain sense this message is not only for you but it's dedicated to their memory as well and how much they meant to us.

So let us pray shall we? Father there is still so very much about this message that escapes us as we are finite in every way and we cannot absorb all of the wonderful truths that you've provided for us.

But we pray that for the simplicity and the division in these messages the content and the difference before the cross and after the cross that everything makes.

[59 : 45] We just pray that someone here may have gained an additional dimension of understanding and appreciation for the great distinction.

We shall never be able to fathom or to plumb the depths of your love how it could extend to this extremity of God being made flesh and dwelling among us and paying a price for our sin.

Such love simply escapes us. But to the degree that we can understand it we are so grateful.

For anyone who may not have made that decision listening here in this audience or listening electronically or however, our prayer is that they may understand the righteousness that you will accept is not quantified at all.

It's qualified. And to understand that Christ was made to be sin for us so that we could become the righteousness of God in him.

[61 : 16] We don't understand that. We don't understand how Christ's righteousness is imputed to us simply on the basis of believing on him. But we know it is and we know it satisfies you and that's all that matters.

trust that you will take this truth and seal it to our hearts perhaps in a way that it has not been there before in the hearts of some. We thank you for the pleasure and the privilege of being together and sharing this incredible thing called the good news.

We bless you for it in Christ's name. Amen.