

Christianity Clarified Volume 13

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Date: 01 April 2019

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[0 : 00] What is Christianity really all about? The issue remains very confusing to a large segment of our society.

At times, it even extends to many who consider themselves Christian. Here, in an ongoing effort to try and dispel some of the confusion, is Marv Wiseman with another session of Christianity Clarified.

The Gospel provides a new light. The incarnation and earthly appearing of Jesus Christ fulfilled more purposes and produced more consequences than we can identify.

But among some of those we can identify, two are referred to here in the second letter to Timothy, chapter 1. These two things in particular that are mentioned here are, first, he abolished death. Secondly, he brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. We know what abolished death means. He did that through his resurrection.

[1 : 01] But what about his bringing life and immortality to light through the Gospel? Precisely, what does that mean? If life and immortality were brought to light, where were they previously?

Neither were unknown. They had to have had some light, some understanding. As far back as the ancient Egyptians, man was very concerned about life and immortality.

The regard they had for the afterlife, their views regarding the pyramids, all gave evidence they had a great interest in life and immortality. Indeed, they did.

And their pursuit of those matters was largely born out of ignorance and superstition, not any clear knowledge. Even in the Old Testament, light and immortality are mentioned throughout.

Although Old Testament Israel was not caught up in the erroneous beliefs of the Egyptians, no one can say there was great understanding set forth in the Old Testament.

[2 : 04] Rather, there is plenty of obscurity, and questions about death and immortality went largely unanswered. What changed that? The appearing of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Through abolishing death via his resurrection, through providing spiritual life to those who believed in him, along with the assurance that they who lived and believed in him would never die, as declared in John 11, he, Jesus, brought all those very important issues into an utterly new light, a new manifestation, a new perspective, with a much more enlightened understanding.

And how did he do that? He did it through the gospel, the good news. And what was the good news all about? It was about his gaining the victory over death and his promise of eternal or immortal life to those who believed the gospel.

He put these issues on the front burner, if you will, instead of having them submerged in obscurity. Bringing these issues into new light, by which they had never before been seen, he opened them up, displayed them, revealed them, highlighted them, drew attention to them.

And he did this through the very subject of the gospel, namely, death, burial, and resurrection. No one can hear the gospel, this good news, without these issues being presented front and center.

[3 : 37] These issues can be omitted if you were talking about some other good news, but not if you're talking about the good news concerning Christ. He brought these issues to light through the gospel, and we are so glad that he did.

Introducing the word gospel, part two. It has been well established historically that the term gospel, which means good news, was in place and used commonly in everyday language, before Christ arrived on the scene in Bethlehem.

Gospel was not a word coined for Jesus Christ, but it certainly began to be applied to him and for him, perhaps like no other word had been. In a sense, we may say that Christ took over the word. He became the absolute ultimate good news, or gospel, so that he came to own the term.

Succeeding ages from the first century to the present, uniquely assigned the word gospel to Christ

and the Christian faith of which he is the head.

Technically, one could say there have always been all kinds of gospels, or all kinds of good news, but there is only one good news, that is the good news, which possesses profound implications for all of time and eternity.

[5 : 01] This good news, this gospel, is that which God announced as his good news, his gospel, and it is that which is in regard to his son, Jesus Christ.

The world's inhabitants have experienced untold items of gospel or good news over the preceding millennia, but never has it heard good news like this good news.

So although gospel meant good news about so many different things, it has practically been reduced to its spiritual meaning and understanding that is recognized throughout the world.

It does deserve a special place in human vocabulary because it is long established itself by undisputed usage. A word is not only defined by its inherent lexical definition, but it also comes to be defined by its usage over time.

Gospel is such a word in that it is associated with a special kind of credibility or integrity not to be challenged. One might be relating an account of what he saw or experienced in person, and then to emphasize his testimony in accuracy, he might conclude by saying, and that's the gospel truth.

[6 : 21] What he said had nothing to do with Jesus Christ and the gospel about him, but he invoked the term gospel, because everyone understood it to connote the idea of truthfulness, veracity, and accuracy.

In reality, the man may even have been lying, but he used the word gospel to shore up his story and make people more likely to believe it.

That's the gospel truth. Again, words mean things, and their meaning is critical to an understanding. Words comprise sentences and thoughts that convey messages and meaning.

Historically, the word gospel conveys so very much in meaning, it is invariably and inseparably connected to the person of our Lord Jesus Christ and all that is involved with his person, his mission, and the eternal life he came to provide.

This weary old world has never heard any good news comparable to that of God's gospel concerning his Son. The gospel is clearly defined.

[7 : 36] The great resurrection chapter of 1 Corinthians 15 opens with a clear-cut definition of the gospel, the good news from God. The apostle Paul says, Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

For I delivered to you as first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures.

This is both as brief and as comprehensive a definition of the gospel ever given. Paul rightly said, It is of first importance. Whatever else one may associate with Christianity and the gospel, if it does not include and focus upon the substitutionary death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, it is not the real thing.

This gospel is the very core of biblical Christianity. Within the vast worldwide company of Christians, there are many doctrines, traditions, denominations, methodologies, over which sincere people differ.

But they must not differ over this gospel, without forfeiting their credentials for being truly Christian. Christianity is Christ, and this good news about him, or it is not Christianity at all.

[9 : 11] Paul said it was this gospel, which he had preached to the Corinthians, that was of first importance. He here makes it clear there was nothing that took precedence over this message.

He delivered it to them, and they received it. This is, of course, the opposite of rejecting it. He had also preached it in places where it was not received, but rejected, just as it is today.

Many, however, of those people in Corinth received it, that is, they took it to themselves. They embraced it and welcomed it. And their rationale for receiving it was because they believed it.

And their rationale for believing it was because they perceived it to be true. In reality, the only logical reason for believing anything is because of its veracity, that is, its inherent truthfulness.

When we say something is true, we mean it corresponds to reality. The gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection is not true because Christians believe it.

[10:18] It is true whether anyone believes it or not. As the old saying goes, something isn't true because it's what you believe. If it's true, it's true even if you don't believe it.

And that's the way it is with the gospel. We ought to believe it because it is true and truth deserves to be embraced because it's where reality is.

The Corinthians believed the gospel Paul preached, received it, and stood upon it. This gospel actually imparted eternal life to them by way of regenerating or making them spiritually alive on the inside.

Nothing else is capable of doing this. Little wonder Paul called it of first importance. The gospel is the power of God. In Romans 1.16, the apostle Paul declares that he is not ashamed of the gospel. That is, he is not reluctant to declare it. He is not embarrassed to preach it. He is saying he makes no apologies for the gospel he is preaching. And why is that?

[11:29] Why can he say he boldly and unreservedly proclaims the gospel? It is because this gospel, this good news, is actually the very power of God unleashed.

How could anyone ever be ashamed of that? The Greek language in which the New Testament was written uses two different words that are both translated as power in our English Bibles.

The first is the word *exousia*, and it refers to authority or the power vested in someone by virtue of their office or position. Sometimes a president or a royal personage is referred to as a very powerful person.

Our word executor comes from this word, *exousia*. Someone who has authority to dispose of a deceased person's assets may be called the executor of the will or estate.

The other Greek word we translate as power is the word *dunamis*. In contrast to power that a person has by their authority, the power that is *dunamis* refers to raw energy, explosive power, so as to upset or radically change the very thing to which this power is applied.

[12:49] Our English word dynamite comes from the Greek word *dunamis*. You get the picture. While God actually possesses both kinds of power, *exousia*, by virtue of his position and authority, and an explosive kind of energy as well, it is this latter term that is used by Paul here in Romans 1.16.

The apostle is telling us that when the gospel is preached and penetrates the human heart, the very explosive energy of God is applied in that person's inner being.

This is spiritual TNT, if you will. No, there is no big bang, no one has ever heard an explosion, but morally, it is its equivalent.

This gospel is God's moral spiritual dynamite. It blows away the inborn sentence of spiritual death residing there and replaces it with spiritual life.

This divine energy regenerates or makes the believing person new on the inside so it can be manifested on the outside through the attitude and actions of this newly reborn person.

[14:08] Regeneration occurs in the heart, the core of one's being for each and every individual who comes to faith in Jesus Christ. Although every believer has experienced this power of God at the point of salvation, none of us have any idea how God does that.

We only know there is no human explanation for it. We also know it cannot be accomplished on a psychiatric couch. It is indeed, as the apostle declared, the very power and energy of God himself. Why the gospel is good news. The gospel is defined as good news. What is it that makes it good news?

The bad news. That's what makes the gospel good news. But the gospel is good news based only upon the reality of the bad news being bad.

The major reason many people have in rejecting the good news is that they are in denial about the bad news being bad. And just what is the bad news?

[15:16] The bad news is death. Dead in trespasses and sins, judgment, condemnation, hell, eternal separation from God, weakness, moral guilt, pangs of conscience, lack of purpose, confusion, uncertainty.

This is where all unsaved people dwell, whether they know it or not or believe it or not. We who now are saved know these things to have been our reality before we came to faith in Christ.

We may not have realized our true condition outside of Christ when we were there, but now, looking back on it, we know full well our lostness was every bit that bad.

It's a curious thing about the good news in that many people do not see the need for it because they do not know nor have ever come to grips with the bad news.

Their view, at least for many, is, I'm okay, I'm not so bad, perhaps even better than most. Well, don't expect this person to be in search of the good news or to welcome it if he should hear it.

[16:27] Perhaps this is why so many come to faith while they are in the midst of a crisis and they see no way out. A crisis is never a crisis of good news but of bad.

A crisis can truly bring home the bad news to whomever is experiencing it. It has been said that man's extremities are God's opportunities. We are all in need of the proverbial wake-up call that bad news can bring.

And who likes to be the bearer of bad news? This may be why many Christians find it so difficult to share the good news of the gospel. We have to have a reason for doing so.

Our reason is because people without a saving knowledge of Christ and His salvation are eternally lost. That's bad news but it's really hard to tell people that.

But unless we include that in our message the good news that counteracts that bad news has no reason for being. It also has no reason for our sharing it.

[17:28] We look for the kindest gentlest way possible to give people the bad news so we can tell them there is the good news that will displace the bad news. Please remember you can't be the bearer of good news only.

You have to include or set the table with the bad news or you'll not have a place at the table for the good news to set. Once people hear and understand the bad news of their condemnation then they are ready to hear the good news of their salvation.

Christ is indeed the Savior but in order to be that He has to save people from something. He saves us from all the realities and the implications of the bad news of our just condemnation and He then infuses us with the glorious reality of His salvation.

The Gospel Cause for Proclamation The Gospel has often been referred to as the best good news the world has ever heard and it is.

The Gospel has also been called the world's best kept secret. It is that also. How is that? It's because even though the Gospel is the world's best news its spreading its proclamation its sharing its preaching is dependent upon those of us who already know that secret and have benefited from it so immeasurably.

[18:53] Most believers are admittedly timid in telling others of the Gospel. Why this is will be discussed later but for now let's focus upon the dynamic God provided for the spreading of this good news.

Actually it's the same for the Gospel as it is for every other message to be communicated. People tell people and the Word gets around. Those who have come to faith in Christ upon hearing and believing the Gospel know firsthand what it has done for them.

It's only logical then to want others to experience the same peace joy and forgiveness you have come to know yourself and especially for those who are dearest to you.

God has made a wonderful provision for that. The Gospel is what is known as a transferable concept. That means you have in your mind an understandable concept or idea in the Gospel.

You have a mental perception of sin and unrighteousness. You know what those are. You have a picture of substitution and can understand someone substituting himself in the place of another.

[20:03] You understand forgiveness rescue from danger and several other realities common to man. You are also able through your speech to communicate or transfer these concepts to another person who can speak your language.

You pull these concepts from your mind and verbally vocally transfer them as the sender to another person who is a receiver. And when a receiver understands your words to mean the same thing in his mind that they mean in your mind you have communicated.

The Gospel is made up of such concepts that they can be easily transferred to other minds of the same language. But it goes without saying if the concepts are not transferred the message is not communicated.

Have you ever considered how it is that this message we call the best news the world has ever heard has been around over 2,000 years and is still largely not known or understood by the majority of the world's population?

Why do you suppose that is? If the message of the Gospel is the good news the Bible says it is and if those who have believed it and have found it to be so then surely the message is deserving of proclamation does the Gospel when appropriated deliver what it promises?

[21 : 26] Millions would answer affirmatively. So if the problem is not a lack of worthiness on the part of the message where else could it be but on the part of the messenger? That's us you and me.

Why are believers so reluctant to share a message we have found to be so vital? There are no doubt more reasons than one but one seems to be dominant. See if you agree.

Upcoming. Why proclaiming the Gospel is problematic. We have already identified the Gospel of Jesus Christ as undisputably the best news the world has ever heard.

We have clearly identified most of the world as never having heard this best news. We have already identified those who have believed this Gospel to be the principal proclaimers of it to others.

We have already admitted that we these principal proclaimers simply are not fulfilling the telling of this message either in the quality or the quantity that the message deserves.

[22 : 29] And we have already admitted that most of us grateful recipients of this life-giving life-changing Gospel can be very timid and reluctant to pass it on to others.

And we have also already given the clue as to why this is. We do not mean to say this is the only reason for our reluctance, but it does appear to be a major reason, perhaps the major reason.

Remember when we stated in an earlier session about the reality of the bad news and its need to be included along with the good news? Do you recall our conclusion that what makes the good news good news is the reality of the bad news being really bad?

Therein lies the rub, as Shakespeare put it. We have to proclaim the bad news of sin and condemnation in order for the good news to make any sense.

But who wants to do that? Who wants to run the risk of offending people or making them angry, especially if they are friends or relatives? Just how do we diplomatically go about telling someone, anyone, that because of their sin and lostness, they are under God's condemnation and are in desperate need of a Savior, and I just happen to have one?

[23 : 49] Firstly, they will probably call us judgmental, and who wants to wear that label? They will think we believe that we are better than they. They will think we are telling them they are wrong in whatever they believe and that we are right, and who wants to wear that mantle?

We really don't want to put ourselves in a terribly uncomfortable position that will likely result from simply telling people the truth. That's natural.

So what do we do? We don't tell them. But what about the worthiness of the gospel and the desperate situation of the unbeliever? Desperate even if he denies it.

How do these realities stack up against our being uncomfortable? Do we place this much importance on our loss of comfort? Each of us must answer that for ourselves.

But because of the worthiness of the gospel and the desperate plight of the unsaved, we can readily see why a brave boldness is needed in giving out this message we call the good news.

[24 : 59] The recipient's response can vary all the way from indifference to downright hostility, all of which spell rejection. Nobody wants to experience any rejection.

In fact, we may fear it so much we put the prevention of it above all other considerations. Let's honestly ask ourselves if this plays a major role in our silence.

The Utter Uniqueness of the Gospel As the word uniqueness suggests, the gospel or the good news is that which is unlike any other good news ever given or ever received.

There is no message in any other faith, religion, or belief system that can do what this one-of-a-kind gospel does. And its ability to do what it does is because it is the power of God as stated in Romans 1.

This gospel, this message of good news is available for appropriation by those who have heard it. So, what does it do and how is it appropriated?

[26 : 11] Let's address the second part first. How is it appropriated? How does one make the gospel his own? The answer is by faith. But what exactly does that mean?

By faith means it is appropriated through the mental volitional act of the will that chooses to believe it upon having heard it. The message of the gospel is, Christ died for your sin according to the scriptures.

He was buried and rose again from the dead according to the scriptures. One may believe that as a fact of history like any other established fact of history and it does nothing but adds to one's list of historical facts.

This is a mere mental ascent that logs the event as having happened 2,000 years ago. Believing about Christ and what he did 2,000 years ago doesn't really change anything.

The change comes when you personalize that message by believing that Christ did that not only for the whole world but that he did it for you as an individual.

[27 : 23] Christ died for your sin. Owning your sin, admitting it and confessing it to God you then place your trust, your confidence in Christ alone for your salvation and eternal life.

This is called saving faith. Faith and belief are the same in many respects. To be justified by faith means to be declared by God to be righteous solely on the basis of believing in Jesus Christ as your substitute.

You may look the world over, examine the teaching and doctrines of all the world's great and lesser religions and you will find nothing that even approximates this. This is unique, one of a kind.

And why wouldn't it be? It's God's doing, not man's, and it's God's power, not man's. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only faith based upon what its founder did for his followers rather than what the followers do for the founder.

One can see the opposite nature of God's gospel compared to all religious systems, whether large or small throughout the world. This is what is meant by the uniqueness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[28 : 41] It alone is the power of God, and it alone is able to do what it does in the life of a believer. And what does it actually do when one believes in the person of Christ and his good news?

We can only scratch the surface on that, but it is well worth the scratching. Upcoming. Believing the gospel provides forgiveness.

It has been described as the greatest single need of anyone in the world, and we are not prepared to dispute that. This spiritual commodity called forgiveness is the most breathtaking, liberating cause for rejoicing one could ever imagine.

But it isn't left to imagining. It's a reality. An honest-to-goodness experience true of all who embrace this power-of-God truth called the gospel.

All. Competent psychiatrists have told us they could see deeply troubled people set free and mental hospitals reduce their occupancy if they could only rid people of two great items of emotional pain.

[29 : 52] One is guilt, the other is fear. No doubt these twin plagues are great anxiety producers. People spend fortunes on therapy, legal and illegal drugs, trying to rid themselves of guilt and fear.

They could save their money and their sleepless nights by looking to the very source of true forgiveness and guilt removal. It's this gospel of which we speak. It is God's panacea for guilt and fear.

To be sure, no one is saying one should come to the Christ of the gospel to save money on their medication and therapy. Rather, one should believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and his substitutionary death for our sin because reality requires it.

Aside from all else, one should believe the gospel because it's the right thing to do, regardless of any other motives. Yet, one cannot deny that coming to Christ for his forgiveness and salvation does also result in innumerable other benefits, including the grant of forgiveness and the removal of our guilt.

Nothing else, nothing else can do that. We don't know of anything else that even promises to do that, unless it's some phony charlatan who always manages to put a price on what he says he can deliver, and then when the delivery is not fulfilled, the promiser is never around for a refund.

[31 : 22] Not so with our Lord Jesus Christ. He isn't going anywhere. Listen to how the Apostle Peter put it in Acts 10. He said, God ordered us to preach to the people and solemnly to testify that this is the one who has been appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead.

Of him all the prophets bear witness that through his name everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins. Add to that what Paul the Apostle stated in the 13th of Acts when he preached to his Jewish countrymen by saying, Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through him forgiveness is proclaimed to you, and through him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the law of Moses.

This says Peter and Paul and countless millions who have been forgiven. This is what the gospel provides. And not only does the gospel provide forgiveness, it does so exclusively.

God has a corner on forgiveness, but he generously bestows it on all who believe the gospel.

Believing the gospel removes guilt.

Guilt and forgiveness are inseparably connected because the receiving of one is the basis for the removal of the other. Once forgiveness is received, guilt has no reason to hang around.

[32 : 55] Guilt can no longer plague us because the basis for our guilt has been canceled through God's gracious forgiveness. Guilt is a real troubler. It is emotional pain and anxiety we experience when we know we have violated a moral standard.

Guilt produces a wretchedness of the human spirit that no amount of silver or gold can placate. You can't buy off guilt. The only true remedy is forgiveness.

Forgiveness is the canceling of a moral debt called sin. And while no amount of money could assuage our guilt, the payment Christ made with his own blood and sacrifice was more than sufficient.

In fact, it's the only thing that was or is sufficient. Why is this? Because the substitutionary death of Christ was the coin of the realm, and God used it to purchase our redemption.

Christ, God's own beloved son, balanced the moral scales of the universe when he died on that cross and uttered, it is finished. Isaac Watts, that great hymnist over three centuries ago, said, he breaks the power of canceled sin.

[34 : 11] He sets the prisoner free. His blood availed for all mankind. His blood availed for me. And John wonderfully said it thusly in his eighth chapter.

If therefore the son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. Free from what? The whole context is talking about sin and its consequences of guilt.

Forgiveness addresses that, and it alone can do so. It comes as part of the package of salvation. Free from all that would justly condemn you.

Free because even though sin exacts a terrible price, the price of death, you are not called upon to pay it, because that's precisely what Christ did. In fact, that's the very reason he came.

To set free from sin and guilt all who will put their faith, trust, confidence in him. Is this not the very most extraordinary thing you have ever heard? And is this not just like God to do the very extraordinary thing?

[35 : 13] After all, we shouldn't expect the creator and redeemer of the universe to do anything ordinary. He is extraordinary in every way. It's part of his job description, and he fulfills it in an extraordinary way.

Forgiveness of the undeserving sinner that we all are is merely one more example of God being extraordinary. Forgiveness is an undeserved gift paid for by the only truly innocent one who ever lived.

This is completely contrary to the thinking and wisdom of man, as well as contrary to every religion found throughout the world. God alone is the judge, and the only one in position and authority to dismiss the charges of sin against us.

And with his forgiveness and dismissal, guilt is gone because there is no longer a basis for it. We are free. If the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed.

Believing the gospel removes guilt. Believing the gospel provides peace. It's a wonderful expression penned by the God-inspired Apostle Paul when he wrote the words that begin the fifth chapter of Romans.

[36 : 27] It's an item the whole world would say it wants, but seems to do everything to prevent it from happening. What is that elusive thing the nations of the world all say they want?

It's peace, cessation of hostilities, tranquility, absence of conflict. We always seem concerned about global hotspots breaking out into war.

No one ever worries about adversarial nations breaking out into peace. We have presidential cabinet posts designated as Secretary of Defense. Used to be called the Secretary of War till it was changed to Secretary of Defense.

But we never have had a cabinet position called Secretary of Peace. Is there something wrong with this picture? It sure is. And what's wrong is peace is not the norm, the routine.

Conflict is the norm. Go back over history, modern and ancient, and you will find conflict and barbarism rearing their ugly heads and taking on insurmountable tolls on human life.

[37 : 34] The reason nations find peace so elusive is because nations are made up of individual people. And so many individuals without an inner peace tend to transfer that to their national entity in which they live.

This, the human heart of the individual, is where real peace needs to reside. So what then does Romans 5 say to address this individual longing for peace?

Just this. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Prior to hearing the gospel, believing it, and being declared just by God, we were alienated from God.

In fact, we were in a state of enmity with God. He was not our friend. He was our judge. Our sins separated us from Him and His holiness.

The war was on. In our conflict against God, nothing mattered more than having our own way. God's way really didn't figure in.

[38 : 40] The entirety of the human race had gone its own way in rebellion to the Creator. And it was for this very purpose Christ came. His mission was to reconcile man to God, to provide the bridge back to God.

And that bridge was the cross and the death Christ died upon it. When we, as believing sinners, embrace the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work on our behalf, the war is over.

Peace has broken out. Reconciliation is effected. This is why Paul joyfully exclaimed, Therefore, being justified by faith or by believing, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

It's obvious we did not have peace with God before we were justified, but peace came as a result of it. No longer are we at enmity with God. Reconciliation and justification has not only ended the war between us, but has made us staunch allies.

Only the gospel of Jesus Christ can bring this wonderful reality of peace with God and an inner peace and rest to the human spirit. Believing the gospel produces hope.

[39 : 54] The word hope, as used in the Bible, needs careful definition and explanation. This is because biblical hope is far different than our typical usage of the word. Their only commonality is that our hope and the Bible's hope both contain a future aspect.

Both are looking to the reality of something that is future. The difference is, and it's an important difference, is that our use of the word always comes with a question mark of uncertainty.

We hope that a certain thing will or will not happen, like not raining for tomorrow's parade and picnic, but we really don't know whether it will or not.

The whole issue is fraught with uncertainty. This is not the way the Bible uses the word hope. With the biblical hope, uncertainty is removed and replaced with a very definite guarantee.

No doubt about it. The reason there is no doubt about it is because the God who cannot lie is the guarantor of that hope. So when Colossians 1 speaks of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory, he does not mean since Christ is in you, there may or may not be the realization of future glory, but we hope so.

[41 : 12] None of that. His use of hope biblically means that since Christ is in you, there is the absolute confidence of future glory. And merely because it is future, there is no reason whatever to doubt its fulfillment because Christ himself is behind it.

Glory not being fully realized is unthinkable. Paul also uses the word hope in Titus. Titus 1 when he says, In the hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago.

Again, never assign uncertainty to what God has promised. This hope we have produces in us absolute confidence. This is not our present cultural hope of a maybe so, maybe not, a huge question mark.

This biblical hope is an exclamation mark, not a question mark. And it's all because of the character and integrity of the one who made the promise. This hope, this biblical meaning of hope, puts a ramrod in the backbone of the believer.

There is no doubt about it. Romans 15, 1 says, Whatsoever things were written beforehand were written for our learning that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.

[42 : 32] The absolute confidence is to be ours. Believers need confidence in their Christian life, not uncertainty. We are confident because faithful is he who has promised.

Our confidence is not cockiness. Cockiness is produced by the flesh. Confidence is generated by the faithfulness of God and in what he has promised.

This is why we say the believing of the gospel produces confidence. It buoys up our spirits just to be reminded that God always makes good on whatever he has promised.

In fact, it is as good as already fulfilled because faithful is he who called you who will also do it. This is why the Christian hope produces absolute confidence.

Believing the gospel brings salvation. If the Bible in Christianity means anything, a cardinal feature of it is the salvation of the individual human soul.

[43 : 37] salvation thereof means deliverance, rescue, rescue in the sense of saving from imminent danger or destruction. One can easily see salvation to have no real meaning or value unless that which is saved or delivered is in peril.

All who are not in Christ are indeed at great risk even if they do not know it or believe it. They are because God says they are, and he sees them from his perspective, not theirs.

Their perspective may very well tell them, I'm fine, thank you, no problem here. I don't see myself in any kind of jeopardy. I sense no threat to my well-being.

This salvation whereof you speak may appeal to others who think they need it, but it doesn't include me. They are as one who when asked of his need or interest in being saved flippantly and arrogantly replies, Saved?

Saved? Do I look like I'm drowning? He of course had no idea he was casting aspersions on the great loving, sacrificial death of Christ who gave himself for people like him so that he may be saved.

[44 : 56] He had a very inaccurate perspective regarding his own miserable condition before God. Just because you feel all right does not mean you are all right.

God says none of us are all right without the righteousness of his Son. In fact, Paul tells us the very reason Christ gave himself for us is so we might become the righteousness of God in him.

This means Christ possessed a righteousness, a holiness, that we do not. It was in his righteousness that he offered himself as a perfect sacrifice to satisfy the holiness of God and balance the moral scales of the universe.

In his own body on the cross, he bore the sins of the world, paying the full penalty due for sin. And God proved his acceptance of that penalty by raising Christ from the dead.

He thus secured the way to God through what he accomplished in his own death, burial, and resurrection. Christ purchased salvation, and he gives it to all who place their trust in him.

[46 : 08] This salvation becomes yours as a free gift when you receive Christ. He imputes this salvation he purchased to you, and you become saved whereas you previously were unsaved.

That was when you were in great jeopardy. Now, saved and in Christ, you have been rescued, delivered from the eternal lostness you were destined for before your salvation.

The book of Acts in chapter 4 speaks of this as well as many other references. Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Believing the gospel brings salvation. Believing the gospel regenerates.

To generate something means to begin it or start it. Part of the word relates to the word genesis as well as to genes, genetic, genealogy, generation, and so on.

[47 : 16] And to degenerate something means to break it down, to lessen or spoil it, to depreciate or debase it. And this is the picture the Bible presents of the entire human race as we were generated from Adam, genealogically and genetically.

And being degenerates, all of us, we are broken, ruined, spoiled, debased. Not a pretty picture. is further reflected in the expression of Romans 3 insisting, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Only one thing can lift us from being the degenerates to which we are all fallen. We need, desperately need, re-generation.

And only this, re-generation, can remove us from our moral baseness and spiritual degradation to a place of regeneration, renewal, and acceptance before God.

God is the one who must find us acceptable, and He is also the one who makes us acceptable to Himself. Is this not rightly called the grace of God?

[48 : 32] He does this through providing for us an entire internal makeover called spiritual regeneration. It means He generates us anew.

This is not a slight modification or minor alteration. It is a complete new do-over. Nothing is salvaged from the old. It was thoroughly contaminated, and any leftover portion of that would seek to contaminate still.

None of that. This new man is described as a new creation, one in which old things, old degenerate things, have passed away and all things are become new.

This is divine regeneration on the inside where only God can reach. Titus 3 well describes it when he says, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by His mercy He has saved us by

the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.

Christ likewise labeled the experience of regeneration as the new birth, a renewal, a regeneration without which no one can be saved. This regeneration, salvation, justification are virtually inseparable and occur concurrently at the point of believing, along with a plethora of additional spiritual benefits, all procured through the finished work of Christ.

[50 : 01] It is, of course, the height of human folly to think that we, by any effort, could regenerate ourselves. We simply believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and then He and the Spirit of God do for us all we cannot do.

The salvation, justification, sanctification, regeneration, plus whatever else God deems suitable that we cannot even imagine. All this will be possible and justly so solely because of the incredible accomplishment of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel Justifies Believers Justification by Faith, referred to in the obscure minor prophet Habakkuk, chapter 2, is referenced by the Apostle Paul in Romans 3, 4, and 5.

It was the catalyst that so profoundly impacted Martin Luther and gave rise to the Reformation of the 1500s. It is in believing the Gospel that this being justified on the basis of faith becomes a reality in the spirit of man.

Essentially, here is what is involved. To be justified biblically and theologically means that one is officially declared to be righteous so there is no fault in him.

[51 : 22] No basis for condemnation, judgment, or punishment exists. This is a legal ruling and standard that is issued by the very God of Heaven.

Practically speaking, the person remains the flawed and imperfect sinner he has always been, far from what he needs to be for God's acceptance. But legally, judicially, his official position is one of moral perfection because he, upon believing the Gospel, was imputed with the very righteousness of Christ.

It was Christ who paid the penalty for the believing sinner and there remains no other payment to be made. Jesus paid it all. He, in his death, absorbed the full demands of the law regarding its penalty.

The law says that the soul that sins shall surely die. And even though Christ knew no sin, yet he was made to become sin and met the full penalty of it. When one believes the Gospel that Christ died for our sin in our place, we are then placed in Christ and his paid penalty becomes our paid penalty that is fully satisfied.

We are placed into Christ on the basis of our believing on Christ. We are declared to be righteous or just simply on the basis of our belief or faith in him.

[52 : 46] This is called justification by faith. Paul then reminds us in Romans 5 that having been justified or declared righteous by God on the basis of faith, we now have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ's death for us and the benefits thereof come to us through the response we give upon hearing the Gospel. Our response to what God did through Christ is our faith, our trust, our reliance, our dependence upon Christ and what he did on our behalf.

Believing in that as an act of our will constitutes our response to the Gospel and we then become believing, justified by faith Christians.

We are not just or righteous on the basis of our works or good deeds but solely on the basis of Christ's work he accomplished on our behalf by dying on that cross.

This is why he is called the Savior. Do you know of another? The Christian Gospel offers the assurance of connecting with God based on the work of the Son of God and then the merits of his work being given to those who believe in him as an unearned undeserved gift.

[54 : 03] Little wonder this Gospel is called good news. The Gospel Brings Sanctification Believing the Gospel of Jesus Christ results in a host of positive benefits.

We are considering only those most obvious enlisted in the Bible. You may be sure there is a myriad of others of which we are not even aware. All provided is a gracious act of God.

Be reminded that all of these spiritual realities are provided for every believer who embraces the Gospel and comes to Christ. No believer is excluded from any of these marvelous realities.

And here is another. The Gospel once appropriated brings sanctification. Now that's a big word but it's easily understood. Sanctification.

It's related to sanctuary or a bird sanctuary. There are areas set apart or specially designated as places of protection for wildlife.

[55 : 06] No one may hurt them there. It's a refuge or place of safety where the wildlife are protected from those who would harm them. And quite literally, the word sanctify or sanctification means to set apart or to separate something as special from among all of the ordinary.

And this is what Christians are. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are, upon their belief, set apart from all the rest of humanity. They are marked out by God as His special property.

They don't appear to be any different and they are not separated or set apart physically or geographically, but they are spiritually. While believers still remain in the world, they are no longer of the world.

They are sanctified, separated, and categorized as the special property of God Himself. And what makes them special is because they are in Christ.

They are not better than other people, but they are far better off and in a better position, with a better destiny and future, all because of Christ. These sanctified people are called throughout the Bible saints.

[56 : 22] Now, they have no halo over their head and they do not always act in a saintly manner. They are not saints because of their behavior, but because of who purchased and owns them.

They are they whom God sets aside as His because they belong to His Son, the Lord Jesus. Contrary to religious tradition, sainthood is not reserved for those whom men consider worthy of the title, but sainthood belongs to every single everyday believer from the moment his faith was placed in Christ.

He then becomes a member of a special category. Most believers would not consider themselves worthy of being called a saint, because we don't always behave in a saintly manner.

Yet, that which makes you saintly is not your behavior or your deservedness. You are a saint because you are a believer in Jesus Christ and God regards you saintly because you are inseparably connected to Him.

Merely a glance at the opening verses of Romans, Corinthians, Ephesians, and other books of the New Testament will show the Christian recipients of each of those letters were all classified and identified as saints.

[57 : 35] Not always behaving saintly, but saints nonetheless, possessionally, because of Christ. The Gospel Provides for Our Adoption In our present Western culture, the subject of adoption is applied exclusively to minor children.

They may be bereft of parents because of their parents' death, or they may have been, we say, given up for adoption. Adults unrelated to that child can apply to legally adopt the child into their own home and family and give him the legal status of one born of their own flesh.

We do not think, however, in terms of adopting an adult. This is where ancient biblical custom differs from ours. In the Roman world of the New Testament, a man may father several children, yet the prevailing law did not recognize any of them as the legal heir to the father's estate unless he was adopted, never mind the fact that he was his biological child.

The father may wait until his son was in his teens until he adopted him. He would then provide for a public legal ceremony whereby he, the father, would designate the son as his official heir, entitled to all the rights and privileges the family had to offer.

This public ceremony they called the adoption. It was against this familiar backdrop that the apostle Paul was thinking of when he referred to all believers in Christ as having received the adoption.

[59 : 18] He knew all the readers of his letters would very well understand exactly what he was saying because they had a familiarization with the concept. We, however, two thousand years removed historically, and in a different culture with different practices, find Paul's speaking of adoption for adults to be puzzling.

Nevertheless, from God's viewpoint and the standpoint of the then-current practices, all believers in Christ are adopted children of God. Romans states that we are all heirs of God and joint heirs of Jesus Christ by virtue of our having been spiritually adopted into the family of God upon believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 8 informs us in writing to believers, For you have not received a spirit of slavery, leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons, by which we cry out, Abba, Father.

Abba is an Aramaic transliteration, meaning Papa, as in French, or Dada or Daddy. It is a term of filial relationship and closeness.

Additionally, Galatians 4 assures those saints receiving this epistle of their true legal status with God. Didn't Paul the apostle say the same thing to the Romans?

[60 : 47] Why did he repeat himself to the Galatians? Well, because it was equally true of both of them, and both needed to know it. It is equally true of you and of all others who are in Christ.

Adoption is one more comforting and assuring reality of what God has done for all who have received the glorious gospel of his Son.

We are adopted into his favor. The Gospel Guarantees Glorification In the 1970s and 80s, a popular seminar conducted teaching sessions throughout the country.

Small buttons about an inch in diameter were distributed to be worn on the lapels of those attending. The message on the button consisted only of several letters, P-B-P-G-I-N-F-W-M-Y, and it stood for Please be patient.

God is not finished with me yet. This was an admission that the wearer of the button is still a work in progress. Aren't we all? All who are Christians are not what they used to be, and we are not yet what we shall be.

[62 : 04] And when we are, this work in progress will have reached completion. That the Bible calls glorification. It is simply one more of the amazing provisions God has made for all who have embraced the gospel of Christ and trusted in Him.

We are all on the path to completion, but until then, we are flawed, we fail, we are inconsistent, sometimes we are embarrassed by our own behavior.

That is less than what it ought to be when we call ourselves Christians. These deficiencies and inconsistencies will be a thing of the past when we are glorified.

What will that be like? Well, listen to how it is defined in Romans 8, and as we might expect, conformity to Christ is the ultimate goal. So, believers are foreknown and predestined to be what?

To be conformed to the image of His Son. We are called and justified to be what? Conformed to the image of His Son. And lastly, we are glorified to be what?

[63 : 14] Conformed to the image of His Son. You do see where this is going, don't you? Conformed to the one who is the ultimate ideal. We will then be a finished product.

It has been said that God loves His Son so much, He is going to fill heaven with people conformed to His image. Our glorification is what Colossians 1 is referring to when it talks about our absolute confidence of future glory, because Christ is in us, Christ in you, the iron-clad guarantee of glory. These present bodies, all of which are destined for the grave because they are corruptible vessels, yet in their glorification they will be raised incorruptible and this mortality will be changed to immortality via this amazing promised process of glorification.

Christ Himself came forth from the tomb with a different kind of body than was placed there. He was the same person, yet His physical body underwent a process of glorification or transformation we can't really comprehend.

His post-resurrection body mysteriously appeared and disappeared, despite closed, locked doors that would have barred His pre-glorification body. It is nothing less than breathtaking to contemplate what these bodies of weakness will be like when glorified and transferred into bodies of power like unto the physical body of our Lord.

[64 : 43] All of this stems from our appropriation of the gospel of God's grace. Amazing. The best is yet to come. The gospel produces a fellowship of saints.

Christian fellowship is one of the most blessed realities of those who have embraced the gospel. Upon doing so, each believer is admitted to a very exclusive body or group of believers called the church.

This is not a building on the corner where believers gather weekly. This is a spiritual organism, not an organization. It is exclusive in that only those who belong to Christ through faith are admitted. Any others would be entirely out of place, out of their element, if you will, and they no doubt would feel very out of place. So, what is the commonality of those who belong to the body and are not out of place?

They are those who, upon hearing the gospel of Christ, believed it and were transformed by it. Having done so, they now have an affinity with all others who have also believed.

[65 : 58] There are large differences that distinguish those believers in Christ. They represent a multitude of languages, cultures, colors, and ethnicity.

But no matter, the great commonality is that which joins them together. They all love the Lord Jesus Christ and have all partaken of his life-changing gospel.

Bonds and relationships can, and often are, established between brothers and sisters in Christ that even transcends those of brothers and sisters who are blood relatives.

After all, having God as your common father is more important than having an earthly father in common. Earthly relationships are temporal and designed to be lived out in a temporal world, as is marriage.

But a spiritual relationship to God as our father, through faith in his Son, is designed to be lived out on into eternity. Which do you think is the more important?

[66 : 59] important? This union with those who are our spiritual brothers and sisters constitute the fellowship of the saints. And fellowship is not tea and cookies in a believer's dining room.

This fellowship of the saints is our appreciation and support of other believers in all their spiritual endeavors. Paul the Apostle expressed such appreciation for the Philippians in chapter 1 when he said, I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayers with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.

Paul is grateful for the Philippians aiding him in every way they could as he labored to preach the same gospel they had all believed. Fellowship has been described as two fellows in the same ship. It means, insofar as the gospel is concerned, all of us believers are in this together. We aid one another, encourage one another, exhort one another, and have a supernatural love for one another all because of this gospel, this good news, and the one whom it identifies as its subject.

There is no club, no organization, no gathering of any kind to compare with the fellowship of believers in Christ. It's the fellowship of the saints.

[68 : 31] The gospel produces a fellowship of saints. The incarnation and earthly appearing of Jesus Christ fulfilled more purposes and produced more consequences than we can identify.

But among some of those we can identify, two are referred to here in the second letter to Timothy, chapter 1. These two things in particular that are mentioned here are, first, he abolished death.

Secondly, he brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. We know what abolish death means. He did that through his resurrection.

But what about his bringing life and immortality to light through the gospel? precisely what does that mean? If life and immortality were brought to light, where were they previously?

Neither were unknown. They had to have had some light, some understanding. As far back as the ancient Egyptians, man was very concerned about life and immortality.

[69 : 37] The regard they had for the afterlife, their views regarding the pyramids, all gave evidence they had a great interest in life and immortality. Indeed, they did.

And their pursuit of those matters was largely born out of ignorance and superstition, not any clear knowledge. Even in the Old Testament, light and immortality are mentioned throughout.

Although Old Testament Israel was not caught up in the erroneous beliefs of the Egyptians, no one can say there was great understanding set forth in the Old Testament.

Rather, there is plenty of obscurity and questions about death and immortality went largely unanswered. What changed that? The appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Through abolishing death via his resurrection, through providing spiritual life to those who believed in him, along with the assurance that they who lived and believed in him would never die, as declared in John 11, he, Jesus, brought all those very important issues into an utterly new light, a new manifestation, a new perspective, with a much more enlightened understanding.

[70 : 54] And how did he do that? He did it through the gospel, the good news. And what was the good news all about? It was about his gaining the victory over death and his promise of eternal or immortal life to those who believe the gospel.

He put these issues on the front burner, if you will, instead of having them submerged in obscurity. Bringing these issues into new light by which they had never before been seen, he opened them up, displayed them, revealed them, highlighted them, drew attention to them.

And he did this through the very subject of the gospel, namely, death, burial, and resurrection. No one can hear the gospel, this good news, without these issues being presented front and center.

These issues can be omitted if you are talking about some other good news, but not if you are talking about the good news concerning Christ. He brought these issues to light through the gospel, and we are so glad that he did.

You've just heard another session of Christianity Clarified with Marv Wiseman. As we have explored the word gospel and its implications on this CD number 13, so too will we provide a similar treatment of the word grace.

[72 : 25] Of all the terms in Christianity, grace is perhaps the most misunderstood. And what is believed about it by the masses is so far off the mark, God himself would scarcely recognize it.

No term in our vocabulary has suffered so much as grace and the grace of God, and this is no doubt due to the fact that no biblical term is so completely contradictory to human thinking and opinion.

Despite the fact the Bible makes the meanings of grace so clear in all of its context, most, and especially unbelievers, just cannot bring themselves to accept the Bible's use and implication of grace.

If ever there were an English word that truly escapes the masses of the English-speaking world, grace is that word. And this is tragic, because to misunderstand such a vital term and its use does not bode well for whoever that may be.

It is hard to believe one has been a recipient of God's grace if they fail so greatly to comprehend the very meaning of the word. In addition, even many who have actually been saved by grace and enjoy the status of possessing the righteousness of Christ, all too often think grace begins and ends with their salvation.

[73 : 51] But grace, thankfully, extends far beyond our personal salvation into areas of our life and well-being long after our salvation. Not only is grace the basis for our salvation, but grace is operative for our daily living as well.

Consequently, we are not only saved by God's grace, but we are kept and called upon to live by grace. Precisely what that means will be explored as well.

Lastly, consideration will be given to the interworking of God's grace and God's love. These work in tandem, and we can scarcely see either functioning without the other.

Yet, they are not synonymous. This doctrine of grace will be explored in another effort to cover the great theological truths of the Bible in a systematic way.

That is, we extract from the Bible what it says about these various themes and attempt to organize and correlate them into a systematic way to gain the whole Bible's perspective on each doctrine.

[75 : 02] And this gives rise to the term systematic theology. The approximate three-minute segments allow one to capture the core of all the great Bible doctrines in an easily understood manner.

These are the same doctrinal subjects covered in all standard theological seminaries, only we are treating them in an abbreviated fashion, unlike the more expansive treatment offered in a seminary setting.

So, truly, this is theology for laypeople. It is for those who have the interest and desire to understand the great biblical themes, but perhaps do not have the time or opportunity necessary for an in-depth study.

As regards the subject of the grace of God, we can safely say it is a must doctrine for every believer. God's grace is behind virtually every act of His benevolence toward all He has created, particularly humankind.

It will be dealt with in upcoming Compact Disc number 14. Hope you'll plan to join us along with a host of others. Yes, please.

[76 : 30] Thank you.