

Mark 1:12-15: The Temptation of Christ and the Gospel of the Kingdom

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[0 : 00] Thanks to everyone who provides that Sunday school class or children's church for the kids. I hear great things. Kids are learning the scriptures.

By the way, thanks to Roger for filling in last week. If you weren't here last week, I wasn't here either. I was playing hooky from church. Wasn't feeling that great, so decided to stay home. I appreciate Roger filling in for me. I heard great things about the message when the family came home. Glad to hear that. We've been in the book of Mark, looking at the life of Jesus.

We're still in the first chapter, but if you'll open up to the book of Mark, we're going to jump back in and pick up where we left off.

Mark, as we've talked about, is the shortest of the Gospels. There's four Gospels in the New Testament that all describe the life and death of Jesus.

[1 : 13] Of course, we don't want to forget his resurrection as well. But Mark, of the four Gospels, is the most brief. It's the shortest.

It kind of gets to the point. And so, as we go through, we're going to kind of go more quickly through the book of Mark than we would maybe some of the other books.

It's been two weeks now, I guess, since we looked at the baptism of Jesus and his baptism by John the Baptist.

And that was Jesus' initiation into his ministry. He was around 30 years old, we know, from different parts of where the Bible tells us how old he was.

And up to that time, he had just been a regular guy. As far as regular guys go, there's some accounts. Of course, his birth was somewhat tremendous.

[2 : 15] And there was an account of when he was, I think it was 12 years old, and his parents lost him for a few days as they traveled to Jerusalem. And he was getting into, quote, trouble by having discussions with the teachers of the law.

And so, we don't know much about the life of Jesus, except for those few things, until this time. And so, John the Baptist comes on the scene, and he's proclaiming this idea of Israel.

We need to turn back to God. And so, people came out from everywhere. He was doing this ritual of baptism as a sign of their repentance and turning to God. And so, the Bible says, all of Israel came out.

And that's, of course, a figure of speech, but it means a lot of the people came out from Israel to be baptized by John. He says elsewhere, though, there's someone coming after me, whose sandals I'm not even worthy to untie.

And he's the one that you need to be looking out for. And so, Jesus finally came on the scene. John baptized him. And it was quite the scene with the heavens parting and God saying, this is my son.

[3 : 39] Or he said to Jesus directly, you are my son, and in you I'm well pleased. So, that's where we pick up. And we'll pick up here in verse 12 of Mark chapter 1.

It says this, Immediately the Spirit drove him into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness for 40 days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts. And the angels ministered unto him. And so, that's it. That's kind of just in these two sentences or these two verses describes the next part of Jesus' ministry. There's this kind of announcement, this coronation, this introduction of Jesus to Israel.

And the next thing you know, it says here, Immediately the Spirit drove him into the wilderness. Now, that word drove sounds somewhat violent, right? You drive an animal, you know, through the gate.

That's not necessarily the meaning here, but it just means he was compelled. The Holy Spirit compelled him. This is the next step. This is what you're going to do next.

[4 : 52] And so, he went into the wilderness. And there it says that he was there for 40 days, tempted by Satan among the wild beasts.

And then it says at the end there, the angels ministered unto him. There's a few things to note here. Jesus went. Did he go into the city? Did he go to a country club?

No, he went out into the wilderness. And what does that mean, the wilderness? The wilderness is where there is no civilization. In fact, it mentions that this is where the wild beasts are.

It's not the puppy dogs and the kitty cats. This is the wild animals. There was no comforts, the regular comforts, that you might experience of having a bed to sleep in.

It says that while he was there, and it doesn't say that here, but in another account, in the book of Matthew, it mentions that Jesus, this whole time, for all these 40 days, he fasted.

[6 : 00] It means he ate no food. Now, I'm certain that he drank water. Sometimes people will fast from water.

In fact, if you read the account of Moses, Moses actually, it says, fasted for 40 days as well when he went up onto the mountain where he was given the Ten Commandments.

But it says of him that he ate no food and had no water for 40 days. Now, is that possible? It's just not possible.

If you talk to any doctor, they'll tell you that the max anyone can go without water is about three days. And after three days, you're pretty well dehydrated, and that's it.

But when it comes to food, you can actually go quite a bit longer with food. So some people might ask, well, is this even possible? Is it possible to fast for 40 days?

[7 : 03] And it certainly is, and there's been plenty of examples throughout history of people doing it. Does anybody remember Mahatma Gandhi? Anybody learn about him in school?

I remember watching a movie about his life. And he was, one of the things he was famous for was he went on these hunger strikes. And so he would not eat in order to try to make a point about what to, whatever it was that he wanted to do.

Does anybody remember? I can't remember. But anyway, I read that he, his longest fast, of all the fasts that he did, was for 21 days.

No food for 21 days, three whole weeks. But there have been other cases, maybe not so famous, of others who've done the same thing. And most of what we know about the length of fasting is from people who did it, usually through some kind of strike, some kind of protest.

And some of them, they didn't survive. But we know how long they did survive. And some did. So they say that the longest anyone has ever been able to fast, that we know of, just water, no food at all, is 74 days.

[8 : 23] It's a long, long time. So 40 days, even though that is a long, long time, is certainly within the realm of possibility. But you can imagine 40 days of no food, you're going to be in a pretty weakened state, right?

And so it was in this weakened state that Jesus was tempted. You know, temptation, I think, temptation and this whole concept of sin and our conscience, the conscience that we have.

And temptation is when our, really when our conscience is troubled. When there's some kind of desire or outward compelling, sometimes temptation comes from outside and sometimes it comes from inside, right?

But it's some kind of compelling to do something that we know in our heart or we might describe as our conscience is wrong. You know, I think that our conscience, this internal barometer, this internal compass that we have to know right and wrong is one of the strongest evidences that we have that we are more than just atoms and molecules.

We're more than just, you know, the animals that we see, you know, out in the fields or even, you know, the pets that we have at home. We're different from the rest of creation.

[9 : 58] God has created us to know right from wrong and to have a, this barometer, this compass internally that tells us when we're doing something wrong.

So Jesus went into the wilderness and there are a few things to point out. One, he didn't eat or drink anything so he was in a weakened state. The other thing to point out is did he go with his 12 disciples?

No, he was out there alone. He was by himself. And when it comes to temptation, I think about this. Is it easier to resist temptation when you're with a group of people or when you're by yourself? Well, I think maybe it depends on what kind of group of people you're with, right? Sometimes you can be with a rowdy bunch and they actually draw you away towards temptation. But when you're with your family, good friends, typically we're on our best behavior, right? We know that other people are watching. They're checking us out, seeing if we're going to lie, cheat, steal, do something hypocritical. But it's a lot of times when we're by ourselves and we think no one's watching where temptation strikes and we think, maybe we can get away with this. [11:26] Jesus, when he went to be tempted, didn't have the comfort of his friends. He was by himself. The other thing to point out is that in this weakened state, right, it's harder to, temptation is heightened.

Temptation is more difficult when you're in a weakened state or when, for example, you have those who, if you have lots of money, right, if you have plenty of money, you don't really, all of your needs are taken care of.

Is there much of a temptation to steal? Not really, right? You've got everything that you need. In fact, I was on a business trip once out in California, super nice office, a beautiful campus, and they had a cafeteria of sorts and it was really interesting to me that they didn't have any cash register checkout.

It was really high tech and all they had was these little signs and you scan it with your phone and you pick up your food and you scan it with your phone and you just pay it with your phone.

So there's no checkout line. There's nobody kind of stopping you. If you want, you can just grab the food and just walk right out the door and nobody would really know.

[12:58] They would just assume that you paid for it. So there's this opportunity here for people to take advantage of the system. But as I was kind of observing this and I've never really seen anything like this before, I thought, well, you know, most of these people that work here, this is kind of a high tech business, lots of well-paid programmers and engineers, there probably isn't much of a temptation for people to steal the food.

Now, if you have a different scenario where you have maybe, maybe I think a high school, right? Maybe kids who, some of them, they don't have lunch money.

Maybe things financially aren't well at home so they don't have a lot of money in their pocket and you do the same thing, you're going to have a lot more temptation and people falling to it. People who are brilliant and really, really smart aren't as tempted to cheat on the test, right?

People who are happy and fulfilled in life aren't tempted to drink away their sorrows on alcohol and getting drunk.

Those who have full bellies aren't tempted to use food, you know, be tempted through food and we have one example of that in the scriptures.

[14:24] Remember the story of Esau and his brother Jacob and Esau went out on a, I think it was on a hunt, right? And he came back and he was starving.

He was so hungry he hadn't eaten for a long time and his brother had made a bowl of soup of some kind and he said, give me some of that soup, I'm really hungry and his brother said, well, tell you what, if you give me your birthright or your inheritance of sorts, then I'll give you the food and what did Esau do?

He said, what is that to me? I'm about to die. You know, it's kind of dramatic but I need the food so I'll take the bowl, you can have my birthright. Of course, that was not something that he should have done but because of his hunger, he was willing to kind of fall to that temptation.

Would he have done that if his belly was full? Certainly not. There's a proverb, the book of Proverbs chapter 24, verse 10.

It says this, if you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small. Temptation is one of those things where we can feel good when everything's going right, when we don't have any problems in life, but when we're in some kind of state of weakness, difficulty, trial, adversity, temptations coming from every side, that's when it kind of really counts.

[16:10] That's when it matters most. And Jesus, he was tested, he was tempted in a state of maxed out weakness, maxed out adversity.

There's a quote here from C.S. Lewis that I found interesting about temptation.

C.S. Lewis, he wrote a famous book. If you've never read it, I recommend that you check it out. It's a book called Mere Christianity. C.S. Lewis was an atheist for a long time, eventually became a theist because he was convinced that his atheism did not have any foundation, did not have any, he did not have any ground to stand on as an atheist.

And eventually became a Christian because he became convinced of the claims of Jesus Christ. But here's a quote, he says this, no man knows how bad he is till he has tried very hard to be good. Does anybody relate to that? A silly idea is current that good people do not know what temptation means. Oh, you know, those goody two-shoes over there, they don't know what it's like to be tempted like me.

[17 : 28] This is an obvious lie. Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is. After all, you find out the strength of the German army by fighting against it, not by giving in.

You find out the strength of a wind by trying to walk against it, not by lying down. A man who gives into temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later. That is why bad people, in one sense, know very little about badness. They have lived a sheltered life by always giving in. We never find out the strength of the evil impulse inside us until we try to fight it.

And Christ, because he was the only man who never yielded to temptation, is also the only man who knows to the full what temptation means.

That leads to a verse in the book of Hebrews that mentions about Jesus' temptation. I guess there's a couple of verses.

[18 : 39] The first one I'm going to look at, Hebrews 12, verse 3, says this, For consider him who endured such hostility from sinners against himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

For you have not yet resisted to bloodshed in striving against sin. The Bible says that Jesus, though he was tempted at all points as we are, and we'll look at that verse in a second, he never sinned. And it seems to me based on what we know about what happened in the wilderness, that he must have experienced temptation even beyond what many of us have.

We don't know all the temptations. There were only three mentioned, and it's not mentioned here in the book of Mark, but in the book of Matthew, and I think Luke as well. It mentions three specific temptations by Satan, but that doesn't mean that those were the only temptations during those 40 days.

Hebrews 4, verse 15, says this, for we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weakness, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet he was without sin.

[19 : 55] Jesus, the one who died for us, the one who died for sinners, the one who died for those who couldn't or wouldn't overcome temptation, and I think that's a good distinction to make, right?

Sometimes we try to overcome temptation, and others, other times, we don't really try very hard, but regardless of how much we tried or didn't try, Jesus died for our sins.

One question I want to ask here based on this is, the Bible here says that Jesus was tempted by Satan, and you might ask the question, well, is that where all temptation comes from?

And I don't think that's the case at all. There was a famous comedian years and years ago, I think he was on the Johnny Carson show, anybody remember that? I remember, I was pretty little when Johnny Carson kind of moved on and was replaced on those late night shows.

But there was a guy named Flip Wilson, and he was famous for a comedy sketch that, where he would say, the devil made me do it, right? And so I think there's, I've seen that in different places where people think that, well, the reason I'm tempted to sin is because the devil is tempting me or the devil's making me do these things.

[21 : 38] And while it's true that there is what we call spiritual warfare, there is a very real spiritual realm that we do not see with our eyes.

As you read through the Bible, you see it over and over and over again. Here, Jesus is dealing directly with Satan, himself. Satan is the figurehead of the forces of evil.

So, certainly, satanic and demonic powers are real, but I think that most temptations, or at least some, come just from within.

You know, in the book of James, chapter 1, verse 14, it says this, but each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires, and he's enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death.

He's describing this process of a temptation and ultimately the path that it goes down, if it's not resisted, if it's not overcome, ultimately leading to death.

[22 : 51] And so, most temptations just start with natural desires. In fact, God-given desires. God's given us desires for good things, desires to have comfort, desires to be warm, desires to have full bellies, to enjoy good food, to enjoy good company, desires for a husband and wife, romantic-type desires.

But, temptation comes when there is this compelling, whether from the inside or from the outside, wherever it comes, this compelling to take those natural, godly, good desires and take them beyond a boundary that we know is wrong.

Because God created all of these things, all these natural desires, to be used in a healthy way, in a way that does not hurt other people. And that's what sin is.

Sin is when we take these natural desires, almost all the time, it's just a natural, godly, good desire, and we fulfill that desire in a way that hurts someone else.

That's, in general terms, what sin is. And so, ultimately, when we cave in to giving, to fulfilling those desires outside of what is right, of what is good, it gives birth to sin and it becomes sin.

[24 : 19] And then sin, James says, ultimately leads to death. And that's a big theme throughout the scriptures, is that sin leads to death. Both physical death, and we've seen that, right?

You've seen people whose lives are just filled with misery, you see that with drug addiction. People who, you know, get involved in violence, and ultimately it leads to an early death.

death. But, the death that comes from sin isn't just the temporary death, but also the spiritual death, separation from God, which is another form of death.

Spiritual death is separation from God. So, what is the purpose, so what is the purpose of this 40 days in the wilderness of being tempted?

We read that verse that says that Jesus is our high priest, and I'll read it again, Hebrews 4, 15, for we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but he was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

[25 : 27] You know, Jesus is our Savior. He died for us, and the Bible says that he acts as a priest. Well, what is a priest? You know, we think about, well, Catholic priests, and maybe there are priests in other religions, but there was this whole priestly thing going on in the nation of Israel.

These people that wore funny clothes, they put on these garments that made them stand out from other people, but the job of the priest was to represent the people to God, to be the one who was what we call a mediator, someone who would stand between.

Today, in kind of more modern culture or society, you might think about somebody like a lawyer, somebody who is an advocate, somebody who takes a criminal, or at least an accused criminal, and advocates for them in front of the judge.

You have this criminal or the accused, and then you have a judge, and the lawyer stands between, as an advocate, to advocate for that person.

And that's what a priest is, and the Bible says here that he is the high priest. The high priest was the top one, the one who went into the holy of holies in the temple. And he is, but he's not a high priest, and this is the point of this verse, he's a high priest that knows what it's like to be tempted.

[27 : 00] Jesus was tempted in all points as we are. So he can advocate for us to the Father in a way that he couldn't really before.

You know, the Bible teaches that God the Son became a man. He was not always flesh, but he became flesh through that virgin birth. He became like one of us so that he could experience the same kind of weakness that we do.

And one of those weaknesses was being tempted. being tempted to take those natural desires that are part of the human experience, and being tempted to take those across that line.

But Jesus never did. Even though he experienced that temptation, he never allowed that temptation to compel him to cross that line into sin.

Another thing I want to point out with this 40 days is there's a comparison to the people of Israel. As you read the Bible, you find all these interesting types and shadows, we'll call them, these comparisons, these things that seem similar.

[28 : 14] And I think with this 40 days of Jesus in the wilderness, we find some interesting similarities with things that happened in the Old Testament. One of the interesting things, if you remember back with the nation of Israel, is that after the Exodus, after they were rescued from

Pharaoh in Egypt, they wandered in the wilderness for 40 days before they came into the promised land.

Not 40 days, 40 years before they came into the promised land. Right? So they were wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. You see any similarities there?

Jesus was tempted in where? The wilderness for 40 days. The Israelites, they wandered in the wilderness. One of the interesting things that it says about this time of wandering, was this a time where God was really pleased with Israel?

No, absolutely not. He was fed up with them. In fact, at the end of that period, he says, and I don't have the scripture, but he says, ten times during this whole wandering period, you tested me in the wilderness.

You tested me. And actually, that word test, if you look in the Bible, both in the New Testament and the Old Testament, if you look at the original languages, test and tempt are the same word.

[29 : 35] The same word. Because a temptation, right, is a test of your moral character, right? It's a test. Are you going to pass the test of this temptation? Are you going to sin or are you going to do what's right?

And so, God was tested by Israel in the wilderness. But this whole thing with Jesus going in the wilderness was flipped. Jesus, God himself, he was tested in the wilderness.

Did Israel pass the test in the wilderness? No, it says that all of those who were of certain age, those who were, what was it, 20 years and older, they all just died in the wilderness.

It was only the young people that were allowed to enter into the promised land. They didn't pass the test. But Jesus, he passed the test. Another point of comparison and contrast is looking at Adam and Eve in the garden.

If you go all the way back to the very beginning in the book of Genesis. And the Bible indicates in different places this comparison between Adam as the first man and Jesus, he's called in a couple of different places the last Adam.

[30 : 47] The Bible says that through Adam, sin came into the world. Sin entered the world through Adam. But then it compares Jesus Christ.

Through Jesus Christ, righteousness, salvation, forgiveness came into the world through Jesus. But were Adam and Eve tempted in the garden?

Yeah. In fact, that's a huge plot point in the Bible is that Adam and Eve were tempted and they fell. We use that word the fall. We call that whole period or that whole event, we call it the fall because they fell to temptation.

But were Adam and Eve living in the wilderness when they were tempted? Were they hungry? Were they lonely? No. You notice that if you read about what it was like in the garden, the Bible says that there was plenty of food, right?

They could eat from all these different plants. The Bible says that this mist came up out of the ground every morning that watered the plants just on their own. They didn't have to harvest and do all these things.

[32 : 03] All this food was just readily available. I'm sure that the temperature outside was just perfect. Not like here in Ohio where you get super hot in the summer and super cold in the winter.

I think one of the reasons we know that is because they didn't have any clothes on. So, you know, I imagine you have to have pretty good weather, right, to kind of bear the elements without any clothes.

But God had put them in this perfect situation, this perfect condition of what we call the Garden of Eden. And even in that scenario of being in really perfect conditions, we see Adam and Eve fell to the temptation, to the tempter, to the temptation of sin.

But by contrast, Jesus was put in a situation where he was in the wilderness by himself, alone. He didn't have a companion with him like Adam and Eve did.

He was fasting. He didn't have even access to the kind of food that they did. I'm sure he experienced frigid nights and really hot days.

[33 : 16] And then the other thing is that we see in the Garden is we know about the animals, right? Were the animals these wild beasts that were constantly putting Adam and Eve in fear?

It doesn't seem that way at all. In fact, when we read about the new heaven and the new earth, or really the future kingdom of God, the prophets say that the goat, the little goat, will lay down with the lion.

So you have these animals. And it also says that a baby will play in a cobra's nest, in a snake's nest. That's what it will be like in that future kingdom. And so I imagine that must have been what it was like during this initial period when God created Adam and Eve in the Garden.

And so they didn't have this danger. They had security. Jesus, when he was tempted in the wilderness, didn't have that same security. So there's this comparison and contrast that I think is interesting when it comes to temptation.

Adam and Eve were kind of in the best of circumstances, and yet they fell to temptation. And can it, can any of us really relate to that?

[34 : 34] I look back at my life, and there are definitely periods where I was under a lot of stress or adversity and felt a temptation, but there's also plenty of times when, man, I shouldn't have felt that easy.

Things were going pretty well. But Jesus, even though he was in the worst circumstances you could probably think of, he resisted temptation, and he maintained his righteousness, maintained his character.

One thing to point out, I think a lot of people make this mistake or kind of confuse these things, is temptation is different from sin. temptation is when there is a compelling, again, either from the inside or from the outside.

And sometimes we think, well, because there's this desire, there's this compelling to fulfill a desire, that that means I'm sinning. And that's not necessarily the case.

And sometimes it can be difficult to know where that line is. There's a famous quote from Martin Luther who tried to describe this. He said, temptation is like a bird flying in the air, flying over your head.

[35 : 55] And there's nothing that you can do to stop that bird from flying over your head, right? Is there anything you can do? Maybe if you get a BB gun. But you can't stop the bird from flying over your head.

But he said, you can stop the bird from building a nest in your hair. Right? That's a funny, but I think a very illustrative way to make that point.

And so temptation, when it comes, is not necessarily, it's not sinful. All of us experience temptation many times. You know, a lot of times it's many times a day, sometimes many times an hour.

We'll experience temptation. And sometimes I think people feel guilty because of the temptation. And I don't think that's appropriate.

But what can happen, right? And this temptation is always, usually grab hold. And the sin usually happens not with an action, but when we choose to take that temptation, that bird, and we let it land on our head.

[36 : 57] And we let it just stay there, right? And build its nest. And then it leads to other things, sometimes actions.

At the end here, it says that the angels ministered to Jesus. After this 40 days of being tempted, the angels ministered to him.

And this time, this period of testing, of temptation came to an end. And I think, and the Bible doesn't say this explicitly, but this is the time when Jesus was preparing for three years of ministry.

And this time of temptation, of difficulty, I think helped prepare him for these three years where he was going to be coming against religious leaders.

He was going to be attacked on various fronts. He's going to have to, he's sleeping outside still a lot. And this time of trial and temptation that he went through kind of helped set the pace, if you will, for this three years of ministry that he was going to engage in.

[38 : 07] We're going to go on to the next verse, or the next couple of verses. It says in Mark chapter 1, verse 14, Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent, and believe in the gospel. So the first thing he says is, well, it says John was put in prison. So John, he's kind of taken out of the way. I think really God allowed this to take him out of the view, because he became quite famous at that time.

But he was put in prison, and Jesus came to Galilee. That's actually where he was from. He was from a town called Nazareth, in the greater area called Galilee. And he was preaching what is called the gospel of the kingdom.

And this, it says, was the message in just one sentence. And I'm sure it was expounded upon, but in brief, the message was this. The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe the gospel. What does that mean, the time is fulfilled? How do you fulfill time? What that's a reference to is, this is what the prophets spoke of.

[39 : 23] The Jewish prophets had spoken of a day in which a Messiah would come to save Israel from their enemies, to bring a restoration of things, to restore the people back to God as well.

Most of the Jewish leaders were less interested in being restored back to God and more interested in kind of being rescued from the Romans, the people who ruled over them.

But that's what, that's what that phrase means, the time is fulfilled. This, that I'm telling you about, is what the prophets spoke of. Then he said this, the kingdom of God is at hand.

What is the kingdom of God? A lot of people think, you know, the kingdom of God is just, you know, God's, God's rule over the universe. And while I think there are some places in scripture where that is the case, that's not what Jesus is talking about here.

Jesus came as the Messiah, as the salvation for a particular nation, for the Jewish nation. And what was promised to that nation?

[40 : 35] It was promised to David, King David, is that he would eventually rule with someone from his loins, from his seed, one of his descendants would rule on his throne, the throne in Israel, forever.

And at that time was coming, the prophet said. And so this was the message of Jesus. That thing that the prophet spoke of, that time is now fulfilled. And the kingdom of God, that kingdom where someone, the Messiah, is going to come and sit on a throne, it's at hand.

It's right around the corner. And then his message was, so that's what you need to know. And then the second part of the message is, this is what you need to do, Israel.

You need to repent and you need to believe the gospel. Repent simply means to turn around or to change your mind. So you're walking far from God, I need you to turn towards God.

And I want you to believe the message. So here's the message, the kingdom of God is at hand, I'm the Messiah, I want you to believe that I'm the Messiah and that the kingdom's coming and I want you to turn to God, turn to me.

[41 : 59] That was the message, that was it. But this causes a little bit of confusion because this whole concept of the gospel, which just means good news, has, is a little different.

In Acts chapter 20, verse 24, Paul, who was a Jew, but ended up, Paul became called called to the Gentiles, to people who were not Jews.

He was called to preach a message, a different kind of message. Now there were similarities, but there were also differences. And so Paul preached another message of good news.

And it's important that we make sure that we don't mix these things up. Because we, as Christians, Christians are not Israel. We're not Jews.

And so this promise of a future kingdom is not necessarily made to us. But Paul says this in Acts chapter 20, verse 24. But none of these things move me, nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy in the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

[43 : 26] He's talking to one of the churches that he started and he's encouraging them before he leaves. And he's about to go get arrested and be taken to Rome as prisoner and ultimately he's going to be killed.

But he's giving an encouraging message to the church there at Ephesus. But he makes this point. He says, so that I may finish my race with joy and the ministry, ministry just means service, which I received from the Lord Jesus.

And he said, this is the ministry, this is the message that I received from the Lord Jesus to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Not the gospel of the kingdom, but the gospel of the grace of God. And those are two different things. And so as people read through the gospels, we call them the gospels because they're about the life of Jesus, but even that can be a little bit confusing.

Well, we think that, well, Jesus is, all the things that he's saying, that's, well, I should, these are to me. I need to get ready for the kingdom. I need to do all these things that Jesus is saying.

[44 : 41] And there are certain, certainly things that Jesus said, especially when it comes to teaching about ethics and doing what's right, that we should take heed of. But the message that

Paul preached, that God, that Jesus, who appeared to Paul in a vision and said, listen, I'm not calling you to go to my people Israel, which is, that's what Jesus did.

In fact, Jesus spoke and he said, I was not sent to the Gentiles. I was actually sent to the Jewish people. To the lost sheep of the house of Israel, he says.

But Paul, on the other hand, he was sent to the Gentiles to preach a little bit different message. And you know, in Romans 11, there's this, there's these few verses that indicate why God did that.

And because Israel rejected their Messiah, ultimately, if you read through the story of Jesus, he was rejected by his own people, rejected by the Jews as their Messiah.

And so God says, well, I'm going to do something a little bit different. I'm, instead of making the Jewish people my people, for a temporary time, I'm going to call the Gentiles to be my people.

[46 : 04] And I'm going to call them with some good news, which we call the gospel. And it's the good news of grace. Grace just means gift. I'm going to call these Gentile people with good news that they can receive my love, my acceptance, my forgiveness as a gift.

gift. As a gift. As a free gift, of which all gifts are, right? Sometimes I think we forget that. A gift isn't a gift, it's if it costs something, right?

And that's different from what was going on with Israel. Because Israel, both in the Old Testament and even during the time of Jesus, there was this requirement commitment to keep the law, to do all these rituals and also these good works.

And there was, there was, it was understood that they would not be able to keep that law completely. And so there was this sacrificial system put into place as a way for them to know that they were still sinful.

that their sins were being covered through these animal sacrifices. But one of the differences between the gospel of the kingdom, which is focused on this kingdom to give to Israel, and the gospel of the grace of God, is that the kingdom was something that was coming in the future for Israel.

[47 : 42] Today, the gospel of the grace of God is about something that was already accomplished. The gospel of the grace of God is the message that Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world.

And that all who come to him will not be cast out, it says. They won't be turned away. They won't be cast aside. But that anyone that comes to God on the basis of what Jesus Christ did on that cross will be accepted.

No questions asked. Isn't that amazing? And that's the difference between, that's a big difference, isn't it, between, you know, what was under the law of Moses?

You have to do all these things. Under the gospel of grace, there is nothing to do. There's only a gift to receive. That's pretty amazing.

Now, for both, there's faith involved. You need to believe in Jesus as the Messiah under the gospel of the kingdom. For us, in this day, we should believe that Jesus was the Messiah because he is.

[49 : 01] But the most important thing for us to believe and to know is that he is the Savior. He's the one who was crucified, the one that was killed, the one whose blood was shed for our sins.

That is the most important thing for us to believe. And not just to believe, but to put our trust in. Because if we don't put our trust in him, where are we going to put our trust?

We're going to put our trust, a lot of times, in ourselves, in our own goodness, in our own righteousness. I think many people are going to make the mistake they're going to stand before God one day, like the Bible says that we all will.

And God might ask a question like this. The Bible doesn't say this, but he might ask a question like this. Why should I let you into heaven? And I look back and see all these things, all these temptations that I fell to, sometimes headlong, sometimes temptations that we ran towards.

Why should I let you in? And some might say, well, I tried my best. And for, I think, most of us, maybe even, dare I say, all of us, that would be a lie, wouldn't it?

[50 : 24] I tried my best. How many of us have tried our best? Some people might think that they can, you know, fast talk God or talk, you know, talk him out of their guilt.

But ultimately, the right answer is, I don't deserve to get into heaven.

I don't deserve it. I look back on my life, and it's just trailed with pain and misery, not just that I experienced, but that I fostered, that I put on other people.

Pain and misery that I was a part of, that I contributed to. And so, what I think, if that question was asked, the right answer is, I don't deserve heaven, but Jesus Christ died for me, and I'm putting everything on the line, and I'm trusting in what he did.

I don't have anything, I don't have any ground to stand on on my own. But I'm just putting all of my faith and all of my trust in what Jesus Christ did. And that's the gospel of grace that we are to believe right now.

[51 : 57] We are to trust in him. And the Bible says that when we put our trust in him and believe that gospel of grace, receive that free gift, that he actually makes us righteous.

And not that he makes sure that we don't ever sin, but he positions us as right before him. So that we are declared righteous.

Or in another place, it uses like a financial term, thinking of a ledger. We are accounted as righteous. Even though we have all these sin debts built up against us, we have this huge debt that we can never pay.

And the Bible uses that kind of visual over and over. Our sin is like a debt that we can never pay, we can never dig out of. But when we trust in him, all of those sins, all that accounting is moved over from one side of the ledger to the other side.

The debt is moved from our account, and it's moved to his account. Isn't that amazing? Because of time, I'm going to end there.

[53 : 11] You know, I came across, Abby was reading a book, and she shared with me a passage.

I can't remember what the book was about, but it was about D.L. Moody, or the quote, anyway, was about D.L. Moody. The book wasn't about D.L. Moody. D.L. Moody was a famous Christian evangelist.

He was a pastor, and he helped young, poor kids in the inner city of Chicago back 100 years ago.

And there's a story that, there's an account, and D.L. Moody was, he had met some young preacher, and the preacher, this young kid, I think he was like 17 years old, and he said, hey, can I go preach at your church?

And D.L. Moody's like, no. So, but this kid pestered and pestered and pestered him, and he actually showed up in Chicago. He's like, hey, I'm here.

Can I preach at your church? And D.L. Moody was actually going to be traveling the next few days, and so he told the leaders at his church, the elders at his church, he said, all right, this kid wants to preach at the church.

[54 : 34] Go ahead and let him preach one night, and, you know, see how he does. If he does okay, maybe he can preach a few more nights. And so, he went out of town for a few days, and this young man preached.

I'll read a quote here. He says, he told his elders, there's a man coming here Thursday and Friday who wants to preach. I don't know whether he can or not. You had better let him try, and I'll be back on Saturday. And he said this, when I got back Saturday morning, I was anxious to know how he got on.

The first thing I said to my wife when I got on the house, when I got in the house, was, how is that young Irishman coming along? How do people like him? And his wife told him, well, they like him very much.

And he asked, did you hear him? She said, yes. Well, did you like him? She said, yes, very much. He has preached two sermons from John 3.16.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. And I think you'll like him, although he preaches a little differently from you.

[55 : 44] Well, how is that? Well, he tells sinners that God loves them. Well, D.L. Moody said, he's wrong.

She said, I think you will agree with him when you hear him because he backs up everything he says with the word of God. You think if a man doesn't preach as you that he is wrong? And it goes on to describe how this whole scenario, where he eventually goes and he listens to this young preacher.

And his heart has changed. He realizes something that he never knew, even though he was a preacher himself. He's quoted as saying this. He said, I used to preach that God was behind the sinner with a double-edged sword ready to hew him down.

And I have got done with that. I preach now that God is behind the sinner with love. He's running away from the God of love.

God's not chasing after sinners, trying to get at him, even though in some ways it seems like that's what he should do, right? But God is a God of love who loves us.

[57 : 06] He doesn't just love the good people. The Bible says that when we were yet without strength, Christ died for the ungodly, those who were not like him, those who were unrighteous.

Jesus says in another place, I didn't come to heal the healthy. I came to call the sick to repentance, those who are sick.

And that's the gospel. God's come to save sinners, those who've messed up, those who've screwed up their lives, those who haven't tried very hard at keeping from temptation.

And if there's anyone here today who's never taken advantage of that gift, all it takes, all it takes is, what, do you have to do a bunch of water rituals?

Or do you have to, you know, do some Hail Marys or all these different things? No, none of that.

Some people think, oh, well, I should at least try to reform my life first.

[58 : 29] Show God that, you know, I'm at least trying. And you know what? God is not interested in that. Now, we ought to live lives that are righteous and good.

But God wants you. God wants each and every one of us. And he'll work on cleaning us up later.

And he has. But anyone can just call out to God at any time. There's no rote prayer. There's no specific prayer you have to pray. All you do is say, God, you know that gift that you provided for through Jesus Christ?

I want that. And the Bible says, he won't turn you away. He'll say yes every time. Amen? I wanted to share with you this. I got this CD.

And I've been working on this the last few weeks. This is the testimony of P.A. Rummel. And so, P.A. came out to the office, I don't know, it was a month ago, and shared his testimony.

[59 : 33] The title of this is, How This Alcoholic Met Christ. It's about his years as an alcoholic. Many years. How many years was it? 46 years of sobriety.

Right? Amen. Of sobriety. So, many years as an alcoholic. And finally found sobriety. But one of the things that he points out in his testimony is that growing up as a young child, and even older, right?

The message that he got about God was, well, God's watching you. You know, whenever he did something wrong, God's, well, I think the message that came out was, God's going to get you.

Right? Right? And, it wasn't clear to him that God loved him. In spite of him being an alcoholic. But ultimately, years later, was this in the 1980s or 90s?

after some success in sobriety, he went to a Emmaus walk. And, and somebody challenged him.

[60 : 53] And he says, because they were talking about the love of God. And he says, well, I realize that God loves other people, but, I mean, I screwed up my life really bad.

And that guy told him, Dwight, he says, oh, so you're saying that God's a liar, huh? Because the Bible says that God loves sinners.

You qualify. And it was on that day that PA trusted in Christ. Because he found out that day that God loved him.

It's 30 minutes. We put out a bunch on the table. Anybody, if you want to grab a CD. And then, I know this is kind of old school. CDs are kind of old school. Some of us still have CD players. Some of them are only in the car.

We have one in our car. But we'll try to get this up online as well for us who are kind of in the 20th century, 21st century, or whatever this is.

[61 : 56] So, yeah, I don't know. I'm kind of in the line. I do like CDs, but I like the newer tech too. Let's end in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you so much for your love. It's just so amazing. There's that hymn that I'm reminded of that says, why should he love me so?

And it's a question that I think we'll be asking for all of eternity. Why would you go through all that you did to die for our sins? Why would you love us so much?

But regardless of how much we can answer that question, we know from the scriptures that you did and you do. I want to thank you so much for that love. I ask that for those of us who trust in you that we would grow in that love, that understanding of your love for us each and every day.

That we might become more like you by knowing you more. And for those, anyone who might be here who hasn't trusted in you yet, that you would work in their hearts to put their trust in you.

[63 : 08] In Jesus' name. Amen. All right. Thanks everyone.