

Prophecy and Mystery Contrasted - Mystery 24 - The Mystery of Christ's Absence

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Date: 02 May 2021

Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] What a beautiful spring morning, right? I'll tell you what, after the winter that we've had, looking out this morning with the nice clear sunshine and the flowers and things popping, it just really makes you think about just the song, she said, the love of God, the deep love that he had, and just a creative hand at work, and what a blessing that is.

So it kind of made me think as I looked around this morning that hope, you know, spring's new, right? And the source of that is our Lord. And such an important thing, good reminder and encouragement that through whatever's going on, the Lord is faithful, you know, and so I just want to think about that.

So announcements, and you'll have to work with us elders here as we kind of get used to coming up here and doing stuff. We're stepping up, try to help out Marv a little bit, let him relax down there for a minute, and when the idea came up, you know, I remember as a kid there was a church that we were at, and there was a different elder would get up and pray each Sunday.

And at the time, I didn't think much of it, but as I look back, I really appreciated just hearing each guy, you know, it didn't matter the skill level, but just hearing them pray and share their heart.

And so we're going to step up and do that, and we pray that that's a blessing and it's going to be good for us, and hopefully it's a blessing for you guys, but just so you know what's going on.

[1 : 25] But to the announcements, if you want to look at your bulletin, looks like on May the 3rd, the ladies' fellowship will resume, so that is tomorrow, 11 a.m. at the church, and come for games and food and great fellowship.

And May 4th, the men's Bible class study at Studebaker's at 7 a.m., no reservations needed. I've been able to go to that a couple times. It's been a good while ago, but that is really a blessing if you're able to get in there before work or if your schedule allows.

And let's see, Wednesday, May 5th, we've got prayer meetings resume here at the church, 7 p.m., and everyone's welcome to come for that for some fellowship and prayer.

Thursday, we've got the monthly Bible study will return with breakfast. Is that right? And I look down here. Is that here at the church?

Yes. Okay. So location would be here at the church. And if you're always remember, if your birthday is in May, the book table is back there. You can pick a book or a Bible of your choice.

[2 : 38] And it looks like there is a La Comedia Sound of Music on May 20th. Then there's, looks like the 24 seats have been reserved.

They have filled the 24 seats that are reserved. But if you still want to try to get in and get a hold of Chris Bellow, maybe something can be worked out, right? Okay. And then there's the men and boys retreat coming up in June, June 11 and 12.

That was quite a good memory when we did that the last time. So get a hold of Scott Cutlip if you have any questions about that. And we're definitely going to try to make it.

It's kind of in my haymaking season for my job, but we will see what we can do. And the boys want to go. So I think that's it on announcements that I know about. Is there any others that need called out?

No? All right. All right. Well, let's go to the Lord in prayer. And Father in heaven, Lord, I just want to come before you. And thank you for the opportunity, Lord, that we have to get together and to be, just have fellowship with one another, to worship you.

[3 : 52] And just as, you know, as I mentioned earlier, looking outside at the beginning of spring and remembering that you're the source, Lord, of all good things. And that you are the only one true

source of life, of hope, and truth.

And just pray that, Lord, you'll help us to keep our eyes focused on you and give us wisdom for the days that we're living in. And as we, you know, get ready for the message here from Pastor Marv, I just pray that you'll be with him in his delivering of the word and prepare our hearts and help us to be receptive and be blessed by that.

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Yes. Thank you, Nathan. Shiloh, thank you for that song. I'm amazed that these people who can play the piano and read and music and sing, I still have difficulty walking and chewing gum at the same time.

And somebody like that, it's just amazing. So, wonderful job. Thank you. Thank you so much. You know, it might not at all be that necessary to elaborate on the announcements, but the main reason that we do so is because as long as we are in this pandemic mode or semi-pandemic mode, we feel the responsibility to elaborate a little bit more on the announcements like Joe did for the benefit of those who are still at home listening and for those who have compromised physical or health conditions and do not feel comfortable in being out and about, but they are listening by way of electronic media, computer, et cetera.

[5 : 46] So, we want them to feel like they are here as much as possible, even though they can't be here. So, we're elaborating more on the announcements than perhaps we would ordinarily, but we've come to do that simply because of this new situation that has been thrust upon us.

And in connection with that, I want to say how encouraging it is to see so many of you return who have been absent for quite some time. We're really pleased to have maybe not things back to normal, but at least a lot closer to it than what we have been in the past.

And I know other churches are feeling the same way as we are this morning. So, thank you again for being with us. And thank you also for so many who were unable to be with us for remembering the needs of the church as they continue right on week by week, even though the crowds aren't as much as they usually are.

And you've been very faithful and very helpful in sending your contributions in by the mail. And we do appreciate that very much. So, thank you again for your generosity on that behalf.

And as regards our message this morning, it's going to be a little different because, well, this part of it I guess won't be, but at the 9 o'clock hour this morning, we did something entirely different in that I had originally scheduled a membership information class for folks who were interested in membership at Grace and wanted to know what that would entail.

[7 : 22] My original plans was for just maybe two or three or four of those folks who had expressed an interest to meet in my office at the 9 o'clock hour, and we would discuss things there that are pertinent to membership.

And then I got to thinking about it. You know, for a church that's been in existence now for 50 years, maybe it would be good if we had a kind of refresher for what membership involves.

And I decided to do that. It was just one of my brilliant ideas, and I don't have too many of them. So when one comes along, I try to take advantage of it, and I thought, it'd be great after 50 years.

And we have some folks here this morning who have been with us for those 50 years, although most of you came along later. And we thought, it'd be a good idea to just let people be reminded of what is involved.

So we took the 9 o'clock hour and pretty much went over our Constitution, item by item, our doctrinal position, why we believe what we believe and the things that we hold dear.

[8 : 31] And it was refreshing to me as a pastor, and I trust it was to you as well. So next Sunday morning at the 9 o'clock hour, we're going to do the same thing, only this time it will be with the church bylaws, because the church bylaws explain how the Constitution is put into practice.

So the Constitution is more or less the principles and the theory, and the bylaws deal with how we live it out and act it out as individuals in this church setting.

So we'll be doing that next Sunday for anyone interested, and you'll be provided with a copy of that so you can follow along. And then following that, things I trust will get back to a normal kind of routine as far as normal is concerned.

And what we are calling normal at the present time has to do with the more basic distinctions that have come to be recognized in the Scriptures that separate the prophecy from mystery.

And much of that whole concept remains a mystery to all too many people. And we are doing what we can to clarify it. In this little pamphlet that Mr. Stamm left behind as one of his many written items

of legacy is this brief thing called Basic Distinctions Between Prophecy and Mystery.

[9 : 56] I have never found anything that so succinctly, simply, briefly, explains these differences with their attendant verses than this little pamphlet.

And we've put out hundreds of them, made them available in the past, and if you have one, great, and if you don't, why more will be available if they aren't this morning. And all we are trying to do is make the distinction as clear as we can because it, more than anything else, has to do with arriving at an understandable, workable appreciation of the Word of God.

It is all too sad to realize that for so many people, the Bible is just a book of complex mystery containing a bunch of names that they find difficult, if not impossible, to understand.

And it is such a thick book, it's kind of intimidating to even think about getting in it. My, oh my, look at all of those pages. These people lived so long ago. And this, this is, this is the Word of God.

This is what God wants us to know. What's the point of all this? I don't get it. And many people, even some who have made a personal discovery of salvation in Jesus Christ and have come to faith in Him, still find the Bible, by and large, a respected book, yes.

[11 : 29] Actually, a loved book, oh yes. But, don't really get it. I mean, I know John 3.16 is in there, and I believed that when I became a believer, but so far as the rest of this book is concerned, I guess, I guess it's just for pastors and teachers and theologians.

But it's not really for me. Oh, yes, it is. It is really, really for you. The vast majority of the Bible is readily understood when approached from a common, ordinary, everyday way that you take words and phrases and put them together and understand them.

That's the, the Bible was never a book of riddles. God didn't drop this book down here. Well, here's my word for it. Now you just try to figure it out.

No, no, no, nothing like that at all. It is intended to be understood. And the reason that is so important, you cannot respond to what you don't understand.

If you don't get the message, you don't know what kind of a response to make. It's just a big question mark. Well, here's this book. Now, what am I supposed to do?

[12 : 55] And, and you just, you start in with Genesis, and after a while you get kind of bogged down and, and you realize how old this is. And is this stuff really true? Why is it necessary to know this anyway?

Is what, what is there, is there some kind of, is there some kind of a magical process that takes place whereby the words of this book kind of jump off the page and get in my heart and mind and make me a different person?

Well, it doesn't exactly work that way. But when you get into it and face it as it is written, understanding that God intended you to understand it, you'd be surprised what you'll get, just approaching it with the right attitude.

But all too many, it's just a dust collector on the family coffee table, and that's, that's about the end of it. And it's sad. I think it was, I think it was William Tyndale who gave us English translations from the original Hebrew and Greek, and he was quite a scholar.

And Tyndale lived in the 1500s, and he received a lot of rebuke, a lot of grief, actually, to show you, to show you the attitude that people had toward the Bible in William Tyndale's life.

[14 : 16] He was executed by the church. By the church. It was the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church in the 1500s, 1400s, that put William Tyndale to death for smuggling Bibles translated into English into England in barrels of flour.

And it cost him his life. The attitude that was given of the Word of God, or toward the Word of God, by the established hierarchy at the time, and by the established hierarchy, I am talking about the Roman Catholic Church.

And this is not an opinion thing. This is just a history thing. You can look it up in any encyclopedia. What we know as the Protestant Church hadn't even come into existence yet, and wouldn't until the 1500s.

And the common expression, the common attitude that the church hierarchy had regarding the Bible was, this book, it's true, it is a sacred book, it is provided by God, but it is to be understood and appreciated only by those in position of power and blessing and authority, and that is the Roman Catholic Church.

It was a basic fallacy, if you will, a faulty assumption that they made, and I can understand how they made it. It isn't difficult to see how they arrived at this conclusion.

[15 : 53] So, as I work through this series and Christianity Clarified, I constantly remind my listeners and myself, before we are too critical and condemning of those people back then, you need to try and put yourself in their place, and when you do, even though it is embarrassing to admit this, I can see full well how they reached some of the conclusions they did, because I think we would have reached some of the same ones, given what they had to look at, given what was happening in the world at that time, and the basic faulty assumption was this, this book called the Bible is inspired of God, it is infallible, that means it comes to us without any failure, it is in every way authoritative, it is true throughout, and because the God who gave us this book is holy, and sinless, and infallible, and inerrant, the interpretation of it must also be from those who are inerrant, and infallible, and able to understand it, and arrive at what its meaning is, and then once we have done that, then we will pass that on to the commoner, to the laity, so an inspired, infallible Bible requires inspired, infallible interpreters of the Bible, and who would that be?

That would be the Roman Catholic Church, that would be the Pope, and his councils, as they meet, and consider the scriptures, and formulate doctrine, and then pass that on to the laity, as to what they are to believe, and what they are to receive, frankly, that sounds pretty logical, I mean, after all, does an inerrant Bible kind of require an inerrant interpretation?

Bottom line is this, the Bible means what the Roman Catholic Church says it means, and that pretty much held for hundreds and hundreds of years, and most of the laity most of the laity were unable to read, so they took what the priests passed on who did so in good faith, I'm sure they believed this stuff, because their heart was in it, I don't have any question about that at all, I think it was done and practiced in good faith, and they passed this on to the laity, and the idea was, anything you want to know about the Bible, you ask the priest, or you ask the bishop, or whoever's in charge, and they'll tell you what it means, but you are not to read it for yourself, well, that wasn't much of a problem, because most of them couldn't read anyway, but then, there came a time when the standard and the requirement was relaxed somewhat after a few hundred years, and it was reduced to this, alright, the laity, the people in the pews, you may read the Bible, but you may not interpret it, well, now, what in the, what in the world does that mean, you can read it, but you can't interpret it, that means you can read it, but you cannot even try to understand its meaning, well, why read it, because, the reading of the word has an end game, it has a desired effect, and what it is supposed to do, is make a difference in your life, it makes you a different person, when you take the truth of scripture, and inculcate it into your life, and heart, and mind, and you begin adopting life values, and principles, and attitudes, and standards, and norms, that are commensurate with what you were reading, that is, being impacted, by the Bible, the book was given to make a difference in people's lives, that's the intent behind it, and it provides us with a whole scope of history, so that we've got something solid to build on, and if you want to know the story of humanity, you won't find it anywhere else, it doesn't exist anywhere else, it's only in this book, provided by God, called, the word of God, and the Bible gives us God's perspective, it gives us God's take, on everything, it gives us God's standards, it gives us God's goal, and objectives, it gives us God's principles, it gives us God's attitude, and you know something, you can read this book from cover to cover, and you will not even begin to be able to say, well, now I've read the Bible through and through, and now I know all about God, who inspired, yeah, right, right, listen, the Bible represents everything God was pleased to reveal, that he knew we need, but it doesn't begin to explain and expound the whole nature and being of the character of God, because that is infinite, there's no bottom in that subject, so the Bible consists of what

God wants us to know, what we need to know for our benefit, and to enable us to respond in a right way to him and to our fellow human beings, in fact, it will even enable you to respond in the right way to your mate, and your children, and your community, authority, and it gives us God's directives, not that God wants to just throw down a bunch of laws and say, here, you better keep this for you, because if you don't, there's going to be a price, no, no, no, no, no, God provides us with all of the information he does out of a deep, loving, caring heart, these things in scripture are revealed for our blessing and for our benefit, and if we just ignore them, overlook them, we do so to our own detriment.

It is sad to realize how many Christians deprive themselves of a level of joy and fulfillment they could have in their lives if they only took this book more seriously and got into it.

[22 : 59] more carefully. You would be amazed at the treasures that are in this volume. They're lying there waiting to be discovered like precious gold situated away in a mine that's just waiting for

someone to come along and dig it out.

That's the way the Bible is. And it is so, it is so inundated with things that are good for you. And it just saddens me as a pastor to realize that so many people ignore them or overlook them, and I'm here to do everything I can to see that it's not true of Grace Bible Church.

So, we're looking at this little basic distinctions thing that helps us to understand. And at the nine o'clock hour, we've been dealing with the prophecy thing and then with the mystery for the counterpart, part, but we've kind of gotten out of kilter with that with some things both for the late service and the early service that did not come off right.

So, that's just a difficulty that we face. So, what we're looking at now actually is in verse item 11. In prophecy, salvation by grace through faith alone is not contemplated.

Now, think about that. In the New Testament, salvation by grace through faith is a principal subject, particularly in the letters of Paul.

[24 : 31] It's a principal subject. But you don't find that in the Old Testament. The closest that anything comes to that is that Abraham believed God and God counted that to him for righteousness, that is his faith, so that he was justified by faith.

But that's a very meager offering compared to what is going to become available in the New Testament. And in the Old, in the Old, this is quite remarkable to realize this.

Salvation by grace through faith alone is not contemplated. How many people were there when Abraham came on the scene?

Well, there were probably millions of people. Because when you take people, multiplying people, and then you get more people, and when those people become mature and reproduce, you get more people, which means you get more people, which means you got a lot of people in a couple of hundred years.

And there were a lot of people. And you know what all these people were before Abraham came along? They were all just people. They weren't Gentiles. They weren't Jews. They were just people.

[25 : 46] And they didn't even become Gentiles until Jews became Jews. And Jews didn't become Jews until the fact Abraham came on the scene a couple of thousand years before Christ was born.

And prior to that time, humanity was just at sea. And Abraham was one of them. There was no real revelation apart from general revelation.

Romans tells us that God's existence is demonstrated through the things that he has made, the things that are clearly seen, so that man can look at creation and know this had to come from someone, somewhere, somehow.

How did it get here? Why is there something rather than nothing? But what was provided for mankind then? By way of salvation. by way of coming into a relationship with God.

Nothing apart from creation. Special revelation was virtually unheard of until God presented himself to people like Adam early on.

[26 : 55] And then that is withdrawn. And as man begins to multiply, no one has a face-to-face relationship with God like Adam had until Abraham.

Abraham is one of the most key, significant individuals in all of Scripture. It is out of Abraham that not only Judaism will be realized, but Christianity will be realized.

And in fact, even Islam will be realized. All have Abraham to their father. And insofar as others were concerned, what we would just call civilization in general, they had nothing other than this created revelation that allowed them to reach the conclusion that this had to come from somewhere, someone, somebody had to make this.

And paganism was rampant. Matter of fact, there's every reason to believe that before God appeared to Abraham and called him out of Ur of the Chaldees, Abraham was a moon worshiper. People worshipped the moon, the stars, the sun, the zodiac, and all kinds of nonsense. And when Paul writes to the Ephesians in the first century A.D., he reminds the Gentiles, that is, the non-Jews who were going to be receiving this letter.

[28 : 25] He says, you Gentiles, well, let's go there. Ephesians chapter 2. In your Bible, Ephesians chapter 2, we're going to be looking at this marvelous thing that became available that was not even imagined or ever heard of prior to the time that this man, Paul the Apostle, came on the scene.

And in Ephesians chapter 2, beginning with verse 11, Paul is writing to people that he had earlier preached to and had won the faith in Christ.

And now he's writing a letter of information back to them to encourage them. And he says in verse 11, Therefore remember that formerly you, you, the people who are on the receiving end of this letter I'm writing, that you, the Gentiles in the flesh.

Now, a Gentile is anyone who is not a Jew. And that means 99 and 8 tenths percent of the people in the world are Gentiles.

two tenths of one percent are Jews. That's pretty slim. And Paul says, you Gentiles in the flesh, that means in your physical bodies, who are called uncircumcision by the so-called circumcision.

[29 : 58] Now, the circumcision, of course, are the Jews, the uncircumcision are the Gentiles. This is how the Gentiles or the Jews identified the Gentiles. And by the way, to call somebody an uncircumcised person was not a compliment.

That was not a compliment. Which is performed in the flesh by human hands. Remember, remember, that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. How depressing. I mean, what chance did these people have? That's pretty bad. That's really depressing, is it not?

This was the state of humanity. And that is all going to undergo a radical, radical change.

And it's found in the next two words. But, now, it is an adversity. It is a conjunction in the Greek and in English, it is a conjunction indicating that what was said before is going to be turned on its head, turned on its ear.

[31 : 30] going to be completely different. An opposite something is coming, but now, the now is opposed to then, but now, as opposed to then, when you were without God, without Christ, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, without God, but now, in Christ, Jesus.

This is a phrase, or some combination of it, that Paul uses in his brief epistles, 164 times.

Are you kidding me? You almost get the impression he's really trying to make an emphasis, and indeed he is, in Christ, is going to change everything, and everyone, everyone who is not in Christ, is outside of Christ.

Now, that's not exactly rocket science, but it's a very, it's a very solid truth to be embraced. now, in Christ Jesus, you who formerly were far off, have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

What, pray tell me, does the physical blood of Christ have to do with anything? And why is this phrase used, the blood of Christ used so much? It's because the emphasis, the emphasis and the reality and the truth that is being gotten at here, is referred to as blood simply because it is visible it is not only real but it is symbolic and it is that life giving fluid without which life cannot survive and the expression that is used gives a color to it that the word death doesn't and that's why the blood of Christ is referred to so often.

[33 : 35] It actually refers to and it means more than just the blood of Christ, what is really getting at and what is key is the death of Christ.

How Christ died for our sins. The point has been made. It wasn't sufficient that Jesus just bleed. Jesus couldn't cut his finger and save anybody.

It isn't the dynamic is not in the blood but the word blood is used because it is that visible physical reminder that everyone can identify with and it is so often used in connection with the death of Christ.

It is a euphemism that is connected and it just gives another depth. It's actually a poetical word and it gives another measure of reality to it because everybody knows what blood is and probably you've seen your own or somebody else's.

You know how valuable it is and he's talking about through the blood of Christ and he's really getting at the death of Christ. That's what matters. Remember it wasn't sufficient that Jesus bleed.

[34 : 48] Jesus had to die and this loss of blood and the bloodletting of course was the principal way that it came about. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off.

Talking about these same people. These Gentiles without hope without God in the present world.

You have been brought near by the blood of Christ for he himself is our peace who made both groups into one that's Jew and Gentile and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall because from the time Judaism came into being it was known as the separate religion and they distinguished themselves with their customs with their traditions even with their diet and the day of the week that they worshipped and all the rest of it and their circumcision.

The Jew had multiple ways of distinguishing himself from the general population and now this bombshell is being dropped by the apostle Paul and in effect he's saying that no longer matters. That's passé. Something has happened to radically change the formula and what it is is the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ.

That has changed everything. That's the basis of the but now. And in the bulletin you've got an insert that was provided by Mr.

[36 : 21] Stamm and I just photocopied a couple of pages and inserted them in the bulletin for April 28 and 29. And again for the benefit of the people who are listening and unable to be with us.

April 29 I'm going to make these backwards I'm going to do the 29th first and for their benefit I'm just going to read this because it sets the stage for the grace that is to follow. This is April 29 and it is in the two minutes with the Bible book that's back there on the list if there's still any available.

The purpose of the law because this is what's going to set the stage. It is the law and its demands. How little most people know about the law the Ten Commandments.

First, most people have a hazy idea that the law was given to Adam that it existed as long as the history of man. This of course is wrong for in John 1 17 we read the law was given by Moses. Moses lived some 2,500 years after Adam and about 1,500 years before Christ.

[37 : 39] So for about 2,500 years mankind from the time of creation lived without the Ten Commandments. Think of that.

From the time of Adam and Eve for the next 2,500 years there were no Ten Commandments. Didn't exist. Had never been given. Yet there was humanity that numbered in the millions eventually and all of humanity in the flood will be destroyed with the exception of the eight souls and Noah.

Second, most people believe or suppose that the law was given to mankind in general. While the fact is that it was given to Israel alone.

now that is eye opening to most people because they think that that was given to humanity but it wasn't and the scriptures make it quite clear. It was a covenant made between God and Israel and Israel consisted of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Before giving it God said now therefore if you will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people.

[38 : 58] This is found in Exodus 19 and verse 5. This is not to say that the law does not affect all men for as a divine standard of righteousness it affects us all.

Third, most people think that the law was given to help us to be good. Well you know what? If that's why it was given it isn't working.

It isn't working but that's not why it was given. Even some clergymen teach this. Oh yes. Clergymen say it's only right and it's only just and it's only fair that you be kind and that you be nice to people. And the reason you should is because that's what pleases God and that's what he's commanded us to do. So the name of the game is be nice, be kind, and God will smile on you.

And well. Even some clergymen teach this though the Bible itself states again and again that the law was given to show us that we are guilty sinners and need a savior.

[40 : 09] Note the following scripture passages. Romans 3 19. Now we know that what things so ever the law says it says to them that are under the law that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may be brought in guilty before God.

And then the next verse says for by the law is the knowledge of sin. In other words, laws, our laws too, man's laws, state laws, federal laws, local laws, they are all provided to keep us within certain parameters for our own benefit and safety and well-being.

And Romans 13 makes it quite clear that the governments and the organization of law enforcement is provided by God so that we may live a peaceable life.

And then Galatians 3.19. Well, where then serveth the law? What's the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions. Thus, the law can only condemn the sinner.

All the law can do is reveal to you, hey, buddy, you're in big trouble. You don't measure up. And every which way we turn, there are laws that we all tend to violate.

[41 : 30] But thank God, Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. As it is written, cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.

And this curse, of course, means separated from God in a way that you can't imagine. And that's what Jesus experienced when he was on that cross. Now, if you just flip the page, we're going to look at the extreme opposite of that, and it is very, very telling.

It's grace, faith, and salvation. The largest segment of the organized church, and this, this, I don't mind telling you how depressing this is.

When there are a few things that have been made as clear as they have, and they are adopted by so many in the community that calls itself Christian, it's really something.

Look at this. The largest segment of the organized church, who does that include?

[42 : 55] it includes Catholics, it includes Protestants, you could list them, it includes the Presbyterians, and the Methodists, and the Baptists, and the Episcopalians, and the Church of God, and on, and on, and on.

It includes the whole schmeer that calls itself Christian, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant. Protestant. And this is something that the vast majority has in common.

Largest segment of the organized church has long opposed the teaching that salvation is by grace through faith alone.

Now, as a grace believer, you may think, well, that's basically the only thing I ever hear, especially here at Grace. Do you have any idea what a tiny minority you are?

Well, everybody believes basically the same thing. No, no, no, they don't. Not even close. And the last thing I want to do, God is my witness, the last thing I want to do.

[44 : 20] The last thing that I mean to communicate is all of these other groups are wrong and they're out to lunch, but we, we are the cream of the crop.

We are the different ones. We are the only ones that have it and have it straight. God forbid that any grace person could enter into that kind of arrogance because we certainly have no cause to, that's for sure.

We do not have a corner on the truth and nor do we claim to. And as I said in the nine o'clock hour, if you ever encounter anyone who tells you that they have all the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth and that all their positions are absolutely the same as God's position, you escape from that scene as fast as you can.

You don't want anything to do with those people. people. But it is a situation that is sad. The organized church as a whole teaches that it is by grace, through faith, and good works.

You know something? Sure you do. You're going to look far and wide to find anything that is more logical than that. That's logical. logical. It is very logical.

[45 : 33] Humanly logical. It is so logical that people by the millions buy into it and live it and believe it and teach it. And the scriptures make it ever so clear.

In Ephesians 2, for by grace are you saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Could it be any plainer? And the text tells us in Ephesians 2 that we are not saved by our good works or because of our good works, we are saved unto good works.

What that means is there is no work that an unsaved person can provide. There is no deed of goodness that they can accomplish that will impress God to the extent that God says, all right, you've done enough, I will accept you.

There is no such thing that can be done. But when we are saved, we are for the first time put in a position where we are able to render good works to God that he will accept, that are pleasing to him, because they're not coming from the flesh.

[46 : 54] Up until that, all we can do is produce from human self-effort. God and all of our works, however good our intentions, however generous they may be, they are all flawed.

They are all contaminated with the flesh, and God cannot and will not accept them. But once someone is in Christ, they are then in a position to render works to God that are pleasing unto him. And this is the difference between being in the flesh and being in the spirit. And Paul goes on to say, one advocate, back to that first paragraph, protesting that we do not place, that we do not place the proper emphasis on good works, and that she does place as much emphasis upon grace and faith as we.

One advocate of this religious denomination, that he does not identify, but should be hard to figure out, agrees that men cannot be saved without Christ or faith or grace, but objects that the grace of God accepted by faith in Christ is not enough to save.

In other words, God has done his part to effect your salvation. Now, you must do your part to complete the circle.

[48 : 20] And that will result in your salvation. And you know what? Sounds pretty good. Sounds pretty logical. Sounds rather reasonable.

After all, this is a two-person venture. It isn't just God. It's you and God. God has done his part through Christ, and now it's up to do your part. And you believe on Christ, and you follow that with good works.

And your good works and good deeds begin in in the church, with receiving communion, receiving the sacraments, because we are saved by grace, that's true, but how does God's grace get to you? It is through the sacraments. Who has the sacraments? The church. Who else has the sacraments? Nobody.

body. What this boils down to is that salvation is available only through, exclusively through the church.

[49 : 28] And you know what? That has a reasonable ring to it also. After all, they are the depositors, or God has deposited his record and his word with the church, and they are the keepers and the custodians of it, and if you want to come to God, you have to come through the medium that God has made available, and that is the church.

So it is a truism as far as Catholicism is concerned, and as far as a lot of Protestantism is concerned, that there is no salvation outside the church.

And there is a sense in which that's true, because Paul talks about the church which is the body of Christ, in Ephesians 2, 3, and 4, and it is comprised of Roman Catholics, Protestants, and those who would be people of no faith at all, who have come to place their faith and trust in Jesus Christ as their substitute for sin, and have believed in him, they become members of the church which is the body of Christ, the spiritual body of Christ.

And it has nothing to do with joining something, it has nothing to do with receiving elements or sacraments or making promises or giving money or anything of the kind.

So there is a sense in which there is no salvation apart from the church, but the church is identified as the spiritual body of Christ, and everyone who has put their faith and trust in Christ makes no difference when they live, makes no difference where you live, makes no difference what your background is, makes no difference what your income is, makes no difference what the color of your skin is, you are in Christ, and in that sense you are in the church that is called his body.

[51 : 24] So yeah, there is a truth to that, there's no salvation apart from the church, but you've got to define what church you're talking about. This is the church he's talking about. All men are born in original sin and all must be cleansed by baptism.

In baptism, and of course it's water baptism, in baptism grace is implanted in the soul by God and confers the right to heaven. All right, where is the chapter and verse for that?

Well there is no chapter and verse for that. But it is treated as if there were a chapter and verse, only there isn't. This is a conclusion that the church hierarchy has reached because to them, it seemed very logical, and they adopted it, and the faithful are required to abide by it.

Grace is implanted in the soul by God and confers the right to heaven. But what about the thief on the cross who looked to Christ in his dying moments and never had an opportunity to be baptized? Was he not saved?

And how can you say that someone was not saved when they were on the cross next to Jesus Christ, and Christ said to that person, verily I say unto you, today you will be with me in paradise.

[52 : 42] Oh, oh, except you were baptized, weren't you? You haven't been baptized? Well, I'm sorry, that doesn't apply to you then. You'll just go to Sheol like everybody else, but I'm going to heaven, and no.

And what are you going to do with that? Well, that's just an exception. According to Hebrews 10 4, it is not possible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins, even though required by God. Could this writer explain to us how any amount of water could possibly wash away one sin or right one moral wrong? Where do they get that?

Now, you may think that I'm just being critical, but listen, this is serious stuff. This is content that matters. When you take the position that a little baby is born like we were born, born in a state of what is called original sin, and if the right person applies water to that newborn baby, that infant baptism washes away the original sin with which that baby was born.

Now, where does that come from? Where does the Bible say anything like that about infants and infant baptism?

[54 : 20] And by the way, this is believed in good faith. We may be critical of it and say, well, it doesn't make sense, but listen, these dear folks embrace this and they believe it, and the reason they believe it is because this is what they are taught.

And when it comes from the source that you consider authoritative, you believe it too. How many times have I told you? The issue is authority.

Always has been, always will be. What is your authority for what you believe about these things? One might gather from the above quotation that the baptized soul at least is safe and secure since the grace implanted by God confers the right to heaven, but not so.

The church never gives her devotees true peace or assurance, never sets them free. The right to heaven conferred upon the baptized person is the right to strive for it.

So you strive for it. Can you make it? Depends on how hard you strived. Can you know when you've strived enough?

[55 : 37] No. Nobody knows. So what does that require? That requires you to keep on striving, to keep on praying, to keep on giving, and don't you dare let up because you might be oh so close and then you throw in the towel at the end and you miss it all.

So the name of the game is keep trying and try harder and try harder. And there is this inevitable huge question mark that hangs over your head.

I want to ask you a question. Is there any peace? Is there any security? In a question mark.

Sometimes I think that some pastors, and you kind of gather this from some TV programs that you see, some pastors don't want their people to have a sense of eternal security, rest, and peace in Christ because they might get lazy.

They might stop. They might stop giving. They might stop praying. They might stop attending. They might stop this. They might, well, since I'm secure and I know I'm going to heaven, they might kick over the traces and live a profligate lifestyle.

So you've got to keep them on edge so that you never know whether you've made it or not. To keep you trying. Keep you hanging in there. Keep you begging. Keep you pleading.

[57 : 21] Keep you wondering. That's a far cry from what our Lord said. Peace I give unto you. Not as the world gives, give I unto you.

Let not your heart be troubled. I'll tell you what. If I didn't know where I stood with God Almighty and why I stand there, you better believe I would be one worried individual and you'd have reason to be. And you know something? Having come to the assurance and the confidence that my eternal home is secure doesn't make me want to slack off and do less.

It makes me want to do more. Just out of a sense of gratitude. Not in an effort. I hope I've done enough. I called on a dear lady.

Her family invited me to, this was years ago when I was with WEC, the radio station. Asked if I would call on her because they knew she was dying. She knew she was dying. And I visited her at the old city hospital and introduced myself and she said, oh yes, I've heard you on the radio.

[58 : 36] And I said, well I just came to have a word of prayer with you and to read some scripture and see if you have the assurance of heaven. And she said, well pastor, I just hope I've done enough.

And this was a dear lady in a church that was famous for its activity and famous for the demands that it made upon this membership to do this and do that and be here and be there and attend this and attend that.

And it just ran these people ragged. And all this dear lady could say she had no peace, no comfort, no assurance. I just hope I've done enough. And I went to Ephesians 2 and I tried to explain to her about what grace is and how free it is and how Christ did it and we don't have to worry because he paid a full penalty for our sin.

And she shook her head and said, yes, yes, I believe that. I believe that. And I hope I've done enough.

And it left me feeling like this dear lady. I tried as best I could. I don't think I ever really got through to her.

[59 : 51] And you know something? If someone has really placed their faith and trust in Jesus Christ and they don't have the assurance and the joy of their salvation and sins forgiven, oh, absolutely, they're going to heaven.

They're going to heaven. Because it isn't believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and have the absolute confidence and assurance of it and thou shalt be saved. No, no. I think there's going to be a lot of people surprised when they wake up in heaven.

Because all the while they were thinking, they hadn't done enough. They hadn't given enough. They hadn't been faithful enough. They haven't done this enough. They haven't done that enough. They wouldn't have been surprised if they'd gone to hell.

But they wake up in heaven and, wow, how did I get here? Jesus, that's how you got here. That's the only way. Wow.

Oh. Some churches never give their devotees true peace or assurance, never sets them free.

[60 : 58] The right to heaven conferred upon the baptized person is the right to strive for it. Good grief. How about bad grief? We worship God by the practice of our religious duties in order to obtain our salvation.

That is blasphemy, pure and simple. How satisfying and reassuring is the word of God itself on this subject.

Now to him that worketh not. Well, he's giving the positive aspect of it first.

Then he says, to him that works, that is, he's working for his salvation, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. What's he saying there? What's he mean? What do you mean? Look, if you go to heaven because of your good deeds, because you were a nice person, because you treated people well, because you paid your taxes and you never beat the dog and you, all these good things, and then, and then you are saved, do you know what just took place?

God paid you off. You earned your salvation. You were good enough, sweet enough, kind enough, generous enough that God rewarded you because he owed you.

[62 : 29] You earned it with all of the do-goodism that you engaged in. And that's why he says, it's of debt. So you could go to God and you could say, I did this, and I did this, I did that, and I did that, and I did that.

God, you owe me. And God says, you're right, and here's your reward. Eternal heaven is your home. That's complete nonsense. The text goes on to say, but to him that worketh not, can I translate that worketh not into that doesn't do anything, but believes on him that justifies the ungodly.

Believes on him. What's that called? That's called justification by faith, by believing. His faith is counted for righteousness.

Listen, it doesn't say your faith is righteousness because it isn't. It says your faith is counted righteousness.

Abraham believed God and it, his belief, was counted to him for righteousness. In other words, Abraham did not have the righteousness that he needed that God would accept.

[64 : 10] So all he could do was believe in God and what God told him and God took Abraham's belief instead of the works that he didn't have and he counted his belief and his faith in him as righteous in the place of the righteousness that he didn't have.

That is, that is just pure unadulterated grace. That's all you can call it. And who gets all the credit? God gets every bit of the credit.

You get the benefit. God gets the credit. If you have a heart in your salvation, even if it's 1%, then you get some of the credit.

Then you can strut around heaven and you can say, yeah, well, Jesus did 99% of it, but it was my 1% that tipped the scale and got me in here.

You'd have bragging rights. That's unthinkable. You don't have bragging rights. You don't need bragging rights. You have Jesus. His faith is counted for righteousness.

[65 : 24] Other than that, there is no sense of security or peace. Now I want to ask you a question. I'm going to bring this to a conclusion. I want to ask you a question. What is the biggest objection, the largest objection, to the idea that there is something that you need to contribute and that you can contribute in order to affect your salvation?

Think about that. What is the largest objection to that? And frankly, it isn't just large. It's insulting. insulting. And it's insulting in the sense that you are actually taking a position where you are saying, Jesus didn't quite pay at all.

He paid most of it. But he left part of the tab for me to pick up. And if I don't do my part, then I'll perish.

perish. So, it's what Jesus did plus what I do that affects my salvation. That depreciates and demeans and defiles the finished work of Christ.

[66 : 55] When the hymn writer said, Jesus paid it all, he was right. All to him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain.

He washed it white as snow. It is either all Jesus or it's not Jesus at all. You've got to deal with that. And are you dealing with it right now? Or have you already? As we close, would you join me, please? Father, we recognize that for many who are hearing this, it's good news, but it's also old news.

but we suspect that there may be others, perhaps even here in our auditorium or listening by way of electronics, that maybe this is really new to them.

Maybe this is the peace and the rest and the assurance and the joy they've been looking for, but have been robbed from, perhaps for years and years. And our prayer is simply that the truth of these scriptures and of this concept will sink deep into their heart and mind, and they will understand that because of what Jesus Christ did and what he alone did, I am freed.

[68 : 14] I do have a secure position with him, not because of what I've done, but because of what Jesus has done. I just want to give him all the credit and thank him for the salvation, and I want you to reveal to me what you want me to do with this life that I now enjoy, secure in Christ.

I want to express my appreciation for this great grace gift in whatever way you deem necessary and reasonable, because with you it will be exactly what I need.

Thank you, Father, for this time to share together, for the simplicity of these truths, and thank you for the memory of Mr. Stamm, who left these writings behind that we can benefit from even years later.

Commit anyone here who is struggling with these issues and has not found the peace and rest, and we trust that they will not until they find it solely in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In his name, amen. Amen. All right. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[69 : 23] Amen.