

How to Read the Gospels

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- [0 : 0 0] A few other things related to the announcements. So this movie night I'm excited about. We watched a movie as a family about C.S. Lewis and his conversion. And so well done. I mean, as well done as any movie can be done. It's not just a documentary. It's a, what do we call it, a docudrama maybe, I think is the right word. So they actually have an actor who kind of plays his role.
- But there's like a narrator throughout. It's really well done. I love how they did it. But it's not just about his life, but about, it's called the reluctant convert because he was somewhat reluctant.
- You know, he was an academic, a reader of books. And, you know, religion was beyond him, right, as a young man. But the more he read both of the scriptures and other books, the more he realized that he was kind of drawn into Christianity and faith in Christ.
- And somewhat kicking and screaming, if you will. So it's a really neat story, not only about his life, but about really the evidence and why everyone should become a Christian because of the evidence for Christ and his resurrection and God himself and his existence and all of those things.
- [1 : 1 8] Let's see. Let's see. Another thing. Is Bill here? Do we have the signs? Oh, yeah. Do we have the signs? Okay. Okay. The steaks or whatever that you put in the ground. Yeah. So John 3.16 day is this week, right?
- Sometimes. Wednesday? Wednesday or Thursday? Wednesday? So a few things felt, well, one of the things that fell through was the whole cookie thing. So no cookies. Weren't able to get that done.
- But the signs we have ready, if you signed up for a sign, and I've got the list here. If you signed up for a sign, then make sure you grab one. And there are some extras, but I guess we'll make sure, I'm not sure how to do this.
- We'll kind of leave this out maybe next to the signs and maybe check it off or something once you pick up your sign so that people know. And then if there's any left, take one home.
- [2 : 2 7] We asked people to sign up, but I think we did buy some extra ones. Let me see if there's anything else. Oh, one more thing.
- I think there's one more thing. We just got some new copies of this. We'll call it a devotional from C.R. Stamm called Two Minutes with the Bible.
- If you remember, we basically had a new page from this every week in the bulletin. And Pastor Marv would photocopy it and put a page in the bulletin.
- Really neat devotional. You can go through it through a year or you can just kind of use it however you want. But there was actually a specific request for more copies.
- And so I think we've got maybe five or six copies. They're out on the table. So if you're interested in that, I don't know if we put a price on them, but put a few dollars in the envelopes or whatever.

[3 : 26] And I guess we also have the whole birthday thing. So if it's your birthday this month, make sure that you go to the book table. And if you see anything interesting, grab a book there. Let me see before we jump in if there's anything else as far as announcements.

Oh, so fair sign-ups. I think that's the last thing. Fair sign-ups. We're good to go. We're going to go ahead and submit.

We still have to get accepted. But we'll submit our application. And if we get accepted, we'll let everybody know. And we'll kind of set up some times to get together and talk about what we're going to do and all that.

So how's that sound? Everybody excited to see the snow today? Okay. I'm not paying attention to the weather, so I wake up this morning and we have a nice winter and wintertime. We haven't really had much snow.

You know, if it's going to be cold, it might as well snow, right? I like this because it didn't get on the roads. You get the benefit of seeing the nice, pretty snow in the grass, but you don't have to deal with it too much on the roads.

[4 : 36] Started singing Christmas songs this morning. Walking in a winter wonderland. We are going to start.

Oh, yeah. Children can be dismissed. You've got to remember to do that each week. We're going to start today with a new, I don't know, series, I guess.

We're going to start in the book of Mark. And it took me a little while to figure out what it is we would do next.

But I really wanted to get into the Gospels and look at the life of Christ.

But before we jump into Mark, I wanted to talk about, you know, why, you know, a little bit about how to study the Bible.

[5 : 35] You know, as grace believers, and we talk about this a lot, we have specific instructions to us. The Bible is written for our benefit.

All the Bible, the whole Bible is written for our benefit. But as grace believers in the body of Christ, there are specific instructions written to us. And we identify those as the epistles of Paul.

Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. He preached what he called the gospel of the uncircumcision. And had a special message, not for the Jews, but for the Jew and Gentile.

And he referred to this group of people that he referred to specifically as the body of Christ. And so, when we grace believers study the scriptures, it's important, one, that we study the whole Bible.

But I think it's wise to spend a good deal of focus, if you will, on Paul's epistles. Because Paul's epistles are written, you know, they're direct marching orders, if you will, for us and the way we ought to live our lives today.

[6 : 50] That doesn't mean there aren't things in other parts of the Bible that are not instructional, that are not even directly applicable. There are. But not in the same way as what we read in the epistles of Paul.

So, I think it's wise to, as we're studying the Bible, to generally spend more time in reading Paul's epistles. Yet, at the same time, we shouldn't neglect the other parts of the Bible.

You know, this church, we're kind of part of a, I would call it a movement called the Grace Movement, where we make important distinctions between law and grace, between the kingdom of God and the gospel of grace.

And all that's very important. But one of the things that I've noticed is that, you know, churches can, in this kind of movement, can tend to only focus on just those things, just those doctrines, and not the whole of Scripture.

And I don't think that's healthy. One of the, as when we came to this church, almost about six years ago, was one of the things that I really appreciated about this church, and specifically Pastor Marv, was that he addressed the whole of Scripture.

[8 : 13] And even though he still provided that laser focus, and really that foundational context of what is, what is the Christian's life today supposed to look like?

And we get that from the epistles of Paul. But we're going to get into the book of Mark, one of the gospels, about the life of Jesus.

And I want to talk about, we actually may not even get to Mark chapter 1, verse 1 today, so don't be surprised if we don't. I'm going to kind of do a setup.

We're going to set our study up before we get in, to help us with the context of Mark, all the details about who authored it, and all that kind of thing.

But really, the thing that I wanted to start with was how we should read the gospels. The gospels, the four gospels, we have four gospels that are about the life of Jesus.

[9 : 15] How should we read them? Because I think a lot of people make the mistake as they read the gospels, and the gospels are important. In fact, they're the central part.

They're the story about Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the central figure in the whole history of the world. And so it makes sense, right, that people would put a lot of emphasis and weight on the gospels.

And we should. But we need to be careful as we read it to read it in the right context. So, let's jump in.

How do we read the gospels as grace believers? The first thing I think that we need to consider is that these four gospels are in the Old Testament.

Now, some of you might be thinking, now, wait a second. Let me look at my Bible here. I'm going to look, and I'm going to go to Matthew. And right there, see the book of Matthew.

[10 : 21] And if I turn back one page, aha, it says right there, it says the New Testament. Right? And so, obviously, everything to the right of that page is the New Testament.

Everything to the left of that page is the Old Testament. Right? So, what in the world am I talking about? These gospels are in the Old Testament. Well, are these pages inspired?

No, they're just helpful ways to divide things up. The chapter and verse references, even sometimes the names of the books, we added, people added, just for reference purposes.

And it's very useful, right, to be able to talk about the Old Testament and the New Testament. But it can cause confusion when we don't understand the whole story and flow of the Bible.

The life of Jesus is part of a fulfillment of the Old Covenant and prophecy. And Jesus actually said something interesting that I think makes it clear that the life that He lived, that we read about in the Gospels, was not part of the New Covenant, but part of the Old Covenant.

[11 : 46] When He was talking to His disciples, and really He established something that we call today the Lord's Supper. And He was passing around the bread and the wine.

And when He passed around the wine, He said this, and this is in Mark 14, verse 24. He said to them, this is my blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many.

This is my blood of the New Covenant. You see, the New Covenant was established in what? Was the New Covenant established in the birth of Christ? No.

The New Covenant was established in His blood. In His death. His blood was the foundation for the New Covenant that's talked about in Jeremiah and other places among the Old Testament prophets.

So despite this piece of paper that separates the pages between Malachi and Matthew, the New Covenant actually doesn't start at the very least until, what?

- [12 : 55] The cross. The death of Christ. So that's the first thing to kind of keep in mind. Another thing to keep in mind with Jesus' ministry in the Gospels was that Jesus' earthly ministry, and we need to make a distinction between His earthly ministry while He was on the earth and then His ministry today, but His earthly ministry was to a specific group of people.

That people was called the Jews. Jesus had a ministry to the Jews. Do we have anybody here who's a Jew? I didn't think so.

Some people might think, well, maybe, I don't know, you know, you might have like 1%, but some people, you know, they're 100% Jewish. So most, if not all of us here in this room are Gentiles.

And so if we lived during the time of Jesus, His ministry on the earth, His teachings, even the miracles that He did were not to us.

They were to Jewish people. So if we would have lived as Gentiles during that time, His ministry would not have been toward us. He would have not been talking to us, speaking to us.

- [14 : 20] He actually didn't even offer healing miracles to Gentiles. Now, there's a couple of exceptions. We'll look at one of them.

Let's actually go there now. Matthew chapter 15. And this one of only two exceptions, where a miracle was done for a Gentile, gets a little bit into why.

Matthew 15. We'll start with verse 21. Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon.

And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, son of David. My daughter is severely demon-possessed.

What does it say about this woman? She's a woman from Canaan. She was a Gentile. But He answered her, not a word.

- [15 : 32] Now, that is extremely rude. Right? Somebody's crying out to you, saying, I need help for my child, and you don't say anything?

I mean, that's the height of rudeness. This is Jesus who is, you know, the compassionate, loving, you know, one we hear about. He answered her, not a word.

He just ignored her. But His disciples came and urged Him, saying, Send her away, for she cries out after us. Not even the disciples were concerned or seemed to have compassion.

Like, ah, she keeps crying. We just need to, crying out, we just need to send her away. She's one of those Gentiles. But He answered, and He said, I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

And He was answering, not His disciples, but this woman. And He's saying, Listen, I was not sent to Gentiles. My ministry, my purpose, my mission on earth is to lost sheep of a specific tribe, of a specific group of people, the house of Israel.

- [16 : 47] That's who I was sent to. I wasn't sent to you. I'm not here for you. My teaching isn't for you. My miracle working power is not for you.

What's really interesting is that she didn't give up. Then she came and worshipped Him, excuse me, yeah, Then she came and she worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me.

But He answered and said, It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs. Now, this just keeps getting worse, doesn't it? First He ignores her, then He said, I wasn't sent to you.

And then He calls her a dog. Why would He do that? I mean, is He just name-calling? Well, a dog was a word, a derogatory term that the Jews would use for Gentiles, people who are not God's people.

If you were a Gentile and not a Jew, you were not part of the family of God. And this is what she said. And she said, Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table.

[18 : 00] And that just warmed Jesus' heart. You know, I don't know that it was easy for Jesus to respond in this way.

He did have a focus for His ministry that He needed to keep faithful to. But here's how Jesus responded to that. Then Jesus answered and said to her, O woman, great is your faith.

Let it be to you as you desire. And her daughter was healed from that very hour. So Jesus ended up healing her daughter and submitting to her request.

But it was after this kind of strange, you know, if you're not really familiar with the whole story of the Bible and not really understanding Jesus' ministry and its focus, it just seems rude and out of character.

But Jesus' earthly ministry was, as He said here, to the lost sheep of the tribe of Israel. That's who His ministry was to. It was not to Gentiles.

[19 : 01] Now this, and there's another exception with the centurion who also had a servant who needed to be healed. And their great faith, because of their persistence and their faith, Jesus went ahead and complied with their requests.

But He said, hey, this children's bread, this healing power that I've been given for my ministry, is not for you. It's not for the Gentiles. It was for, this children's bread is for the children of God, the children of Israel.

The other thing to keep in mind as we read through the Gospels is that there's a change that happened in regards to how one becomes righteous from the time of the Gospels and Jesus' ministry to what we have and what we know as the Gospel today.

If you turn to Romans chapter 3, there's this important phrase that we'll read in a couple different places.

Romans chapter 3. In the first part of Romans chapter 1, 2, and 3, Paul is establishing that everyone is under sin.

[20 : 29] Everyone has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, whether you're a Jew or whether you're a Gentile. And he mentions the law and the law for many people was a way to gain righteousness.

But how did that work out? It didn't. In verse 20, he says this. Well, we'll start with verse 19.

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore, by the deeds of the law, no flesh will be justified in his sight.

For by the law is the knowledge of sin. Saying, we've had this whole, really thousands of years of the law of Moses and the law is good and it's holy.

but he said, by the law, you can know what sin is but the law can't make you righteous. You have to actually do the law to be righteous.

[21 : 44] And so many or all really have failed to keep the law as they should. Then he says this and this is the important phrase I want to focus on in verse 21.

But now, but now, that's the way things were. You had the law.

But now, things have changed. But now, the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed. Being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe.

For there is no difference. Before, all you had was the law and you could attempt to be righteous by keeping the law. But now, something has changed.

Now, there's a righteousness of God that is apart from the law. It's a righteousness of God that is through faith in Jesus Christ. Not just for the Jew but on all who believe.

[22 : 49] For he doesn't make any difference. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Whom God set forth as a propitiation by his blood.

There's that reference to his blood again. Through faith to demonstrate his righteousness because in his forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed. In the past, God passed over people's sins.

Today, God has addressed them. He's taken care of them. He's atoned or propitiated the sins of the world. He's addressed those sins.

In the past, he just kind of overlooked them. If you followed the law, he would overlook them. It didn't make you righteous but he just kind of passed over. But now, the sins of the world have been addressed through his atoning sacrifice.

And then in verse 26, he did all this to demonstrate at the present time his righteousness that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

[24 : 05] Christ's blood was not available to the people that he taught and ministered to during the Gospels. But at this present time, and Paul is speaking at his present time, and it continues, our present time, we have the blood of Christ available to us.

It's a different way of life from what was available when Jesus taught during his earthly ministry and life. Another point, after the cross, salvation is by grace through faith alone.

Ephesians 2, 8, and 9. Ephesians 2, 8, and 9 says this, For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

And some people might think, well, you know, it's always been that way. We've all always been, man has always been saved by grace through faith, not of works.

But if you look back at the time of the period of the Mosaic Law, most of the Old Testament, people were under what? The law of Moses. Not under grace, but under works.

[25 : 37] They had to do things in order to be the children of God, in order to be part of the family of God. We'll skip to verse 11 to kind of look a little bit more.

Therefore, remember that you once Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision made in the flesh by hands, that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

He's saying under that old system, under that past system, you Gentiles didn't have access to God. If you wanted access to God, what did you have to do? You had to become a Jew.

And you could do that. You could convert. You had to circumcise your whole household and follow and keep the law. And you could become a Jew.

But you had to become a Jew. If you were a Gentile, you had no access to God. You were not part of the family of God. You were alienated. From him and the whole family of God, the whole commonwealth of Israel.

[26 : 55] Notice in verse 13, what does it say? But now, now things have changed. There's a difference. Something new is at play.

But now, in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. Christ. Again, that reference to the blood.

The blood of Christ changed everything. For he himself is our peace who has made both one. He's talking about Jew and Gentile. And has broken down that middle wall of separation.

That separation specifically. Well, he says here, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in himself one new man from the two, thus making peace.

So that law was separating Jew and Gentile. Verse 16, and that he might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

[28 : 03] So this whole distinction between Jew and Gentile is no more. It was very important in the Old Testament and it was very important as we just saw in the life of Christ and his earthly ministry on the earth.

That distinction was very important. But today, as members of the body of Christ, which he's talking about now, as grace believers, that distinction matters nothing.

Verse 17, and he came and he preached peace to you who are afar off and to those who are near. For through him we both, both Jew and Gentile, have access by one spirit to the Father.

Now therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building being fitted together grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

And what is that building? Is it brick and mortar? No, it's this body of believers, all these individual believers, both Jew and Gentile, we make up this temple, this house of God.

[29 : 19] In verse 22, in whom you also are being built for a dwelling place of God in the spirit. Not in the flesh, but in the spirit.

And we'll talk about that more in this next passage. The next thing to know, and we'll go ahead and turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 5.

And this is key and this is so important, is that the way that we live and the position that we have with God and how we relate to God is completely different.

You look at the Old Testament, which includes those Gospels, which includes the teachings of Jesus, the teachings of how you ought to relate to God under the law, very, very different from how God wants us to relate and live today.

So 2 Corinthians chapter 5. We'll start in verse 14. For the love of Christ compels us because we judge thus that if one died for all, then all died.

[30 : 39] Paul speaks in language that sometimes seems very abstract. It's not, it seems ethereal, out there, spiritual, not solid.

And that can be difficult for some people. So he's saying this kind of strange thing that if one died, he's talking about Christ, one died for all, if Jesus died for all, then all died.

Well, that sounds weird. All didn't die. Verse 15, and he died for all that those who live should live no longer for themselves but for him who died for them and rose again.

So he's talking about this kind of death that we all die when we receive Christ. Then he says this really interesting phrase that causes, I've noticed reading through commentaries, there's all kinds of different ideas on what this means, but this is the passage that I want to focus on, especially today.

Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. We regard no one according to the flesh. What does that mean? Some people think, well, you know, the flesh is, you know, you read Galatians, right?

[31 : 57] Galatians talks about the works of the flesh, and so those are all kinds, just a laundry list of sins, right? And so some people think, well, we don't regard people when it comes to their sinful lifestyle, something like that.

that. But then it says this, even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him thus no longer. So we have known Christ according to the flesh.

We've known men according to the flesh, but we don't regard them that way anymore, and we have known Christ according to the flesh, but we also don't know him that way any longer either.

I'll continue reading. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new.

So there's a way of dealing with people, there's classifications of Jew and Gentile, of slave and free, of rich and poor, people who are pretty good at keeping the law and people who really stink at it.

[33 : 18] And all those distinctions, those regards for the flesh, are done away with. They don't have any meaning anymore. We'll continue on.

Now all things are of God, this is verse 18, who has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ as though God were pleading through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God, for he made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

This is a very different way of relating to Jesus, of relating to our Christian brother or sister, fellow believers. We don't regard people according to the flesh, according to their status, according to their religious background, according to how much they do or don't have, even according to how well they live the Christian life.

What matters is a new creation. We have been made part of a new creation, this body that he talked about earlier, this body of Christ that we are a part of.

[34 : 52] We belong to him, he belongs to us. You see, the Bible says over and over, Paul says specifically, that you are not in the flesh. What does that mean?

Well, your life, your life with God specifically, our life with God is not according to matters that deal with fleshly things, regulations, rituals, laws, ordinances.

Instead, we have a life that is described as in the spirit. We are not in the flesh, but we are in the spirit. We're united with God because we are in Christ.

You live in him and also he lives in you. That's not something that they had under the old covenant. That's not something that was available.

Our identity, the whole of our identity is not in the ordinances that we keep, the rites and rituals that we do. Our identity, our position, it's not in how well we can keep a list of commandments or even moral teachings.

[36 : 13] Our identity, if our trust is in Christ, if we are in him, our identity is in him. We are in Christ. So again, there's neither Jew nor Gentile, there's neither slave nor free.

Paul talks about that elsewhere. The life that we live is a life of faith, not of sight. If you're under the law, you know there's a lot of sight, there's a lot of blood being spilt, right?

During those sacrifices, all those different things that you do, it's very tangible. You're touching things. You have the show bread and all these different things, all these rituals.

You have the ritual washings with water, but the life that we live in Christ has nothing to do with those fleshly things. So we don't know each other anymore according to the flesh, but according to the spirit.

Turn to Romans chapter 8. We'll look at this a little bit more, this whole idea of according to the flesh.

[37 : 22] It's interesting, if you look up the phrase, I have Bible software that I'll use and you can do searches for phrases. Sometimes it depends on which translation you're using, they're all a little bit different.

You look at this phrase, according to the flesh, four words, and there's a ton of verses. Romans 8 chapter 1, chapter 7 talks about all about the sin problem and even for those who want to keep the law, they find themselves failing to do it.

So what do we do? Romans chapter 8 is the solution. He says this, for there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk, what?

According to the flesh. We don't know each other according to the flesh anymore. Our walk in the flesh is not what matters. Who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the spirit.

For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. I used to be part of a different system, a system that said that based on my works, if I sin, then I must die.

[38 : 39] And that's a system that's familiar to all of us, right? And it makes perfect sense to all of us. If you sin, if you commit a crime, if you do wrong, then you must be punished.

We're all familiar with that. The whole world is familiar with that, religious or not. If you do wrong, you have to be punished. That is the way of the flesh, the way of the pattern of this world.

And it's not like it's not the way that God intended it to be. It is the way that God created the world for there to be laws and punishments, consequences.

But going back to verse 1, it's that word again. There is therefore now no condemnation. Something happened. God did something new. He did something different to change things, to give us a different way.

That whole system under a law, where there's laws and there's consequences, perfectly legitimate, perfectly legitimate for God to establish that for God to create a world order in which that exists.

[39 : 53] And we all know that. We all see the justice in it. But God offered something different and wants us to walk in a different way. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

For those of us in Christ, we have a new life in Christ that frees us from that other system, from that old system. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh on account of sin.

He condemned sin in the flesh. Our flesh, our flesh was weak and we couldn't do it. We couldn't keep the law as we ought.

It was reasonable, but we just, we didn't do it. So God provided another way. verse 4, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh.

There's that phrase again. We don't walk according to the flesh, but according to the spirit. For those who live according to the flesh, they set their minds on the things of the flesh.

[41 : 06] But those who live according to the spirit, they set their mind on the things of the spirit. So if we want any chance of being able to live the kind of life of love that God lives, that we ought to live, then we need to live a different way, not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit.

What does that mean? What does it mean to live according to the spirit? Well, who is the spirit? It's God. We have our life in him.

We have our life in him. Our position, our identity is in him. Our righteousness is in him. It's a life of faith. You look in the mirror, we don't see righteousness, but we believe he made us righteous.

We look to heavenly things. And when we do that, then we can actually meet those righteous requirements of the law. Verse six, for to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Because the carnal mind, or carnal is just fleshly, is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal or fleshly mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

[42 : 33] So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. God, if you are in the flesh, if your whole spiritual life, if your relationship with God is simply fleshly, you can't really succeed in the Christian life as a child of God.

So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Here is the kicker. Here is the key verse of this whole chapter. But you are not in the flesh. You know, some people read all these things and say, well, if you live in the flesh, this will happen, and if you live in the spirit, they see it as all these conditions.

Well, you have to work really hard to walk in the spirit. No, that's not the message. That's the opposite of the message, is that you have to work and do all these things in order to get this status of being in the spirit.

That's not the message. The message is you don't do anything. You just trust in Christ, and you are in the spirit. Verse 9 here, but you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit.

If indeed the spirit of God dwells in you, does the spirit of God dwell in you? See, it doesn't matter all these deeds that you do, all these, whether it's just trying to keep the basic standard morality or trying to keep the Jewish law, circumcision, and all these baptisms and dietary commandments, what matters is does God live in you?

[44 : 10] That's what matters. Not all these other things. Does God live in you? And how does God live in you? Do you have to do all these things? Of course not.

That would turn the whole thing upside down and make it completely meaningless. God lives in you because we trust in what he did for us. He bled and died on that cross and we trust in him and he lives in us.

And our whole life has changed. And our life, our life with him, our spiritual life is not lived, it's not all about doing things, even though we ought to live a good life, but everything that matters, everything that's the most important is about our life in him.

You are not in the flesh. He continues on, and if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his spirit who dwells in you.

You have life now because his spirit lives in you. You have eternal life. We talked about this the other day. You have eternal life forever. But our bodies are still dead.

[45 : 29] But that same spirit that lives in us, that gives us eternal life, that spiritual life, will also give us that fleshly life, that mortal life, will put on immortality.

Verse 12, therefore, therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Again, this isn't, oh, this is how you should live so that you won't die. No, you're alive right now. You're alive to Christ right now. And so he's saying, hey, listen, we need to walk this way because this is how we live.

This is where we live today. Our lives are not in the flesh. they are in Christ. It's not a warning. Well, make sure you don't live according to the flesh.

It's a statement of victory. A few other passages, and we'll go through them quickly because they're fairly short.

[46 : 44] But 1 Corinthians 1, 26, Paul says this. He says, for you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise, according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.

God's not calling just the wise people, just the rich people, just the Jewish people. The call goes out to everyone. It doesn't matter the fleshly things.

None of that matters. Also, he talks about our spiritual warfare. 2 Corinthians 10, verse 3 says this. For though we walk in the flesh, and we still have a fleshly life, right, that we live, but we do not war according to the flesh.

Our life with God is not, our warfare, our spiritual warfare is not about fighting in the flesh. It's a spiritual warfare.

Also, Ephesians chapter 6, verse 5, our identity is not according to the flesh either. In both of these passages, Ephesians 6, 5 and Colossians 3, 22, he's talking about servants or slaves.

[48 : 01] And in both times, he says this. Well, we'll read each one. Ephesians 6, 5, bond servants or slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters, according to the flesh. With fear and trembling and sincerity of heart as to Christ.

So, they need to obey according to the flesh, but that distinction in Christ is meaningless. Colossians 3, 22, bond servants, obey in all things your masters, quote, according to the flesh, not with eye service as men pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.

That distinction, slave versus free, is only according to the flesh. In Colossians 2, 20, Paul says this.

Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, and that again, he doesn't use that same phrase, but that's the same idea.

The basic principles of the world are the basic principles of the flesh. And Paul says that as believers, we have died to that life. So, he's pointing them away from regulations and rituals, religious regulations and rituals.

[49 : 24] Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why is though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations? Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle, which all concern things which perish with the using according to the commandments and the doctrines of men.

These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom and self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh. But it's easy, right?

There's so much abstraction, it seems, with this spiritual life. We're dead to sin, dead to the law, we've been crucified with Christ. For so many, right, it's just easier.

You can follow a religion where you just kind of jump through some hoops, you know, get some holy water and sprinkle it every once in a while, rub some beads, say some rote prayers.

In a lot of ways, that's easier, right? You know what you're doing. And all of those things are what? According to the flesh. But we know no man according to the flesh.

[50 : 34] Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 11 is also speaking to these people who want to live in the flesh or want to boast in the flesh and, you know, how mighty or how wise they are.

2 Corinthians 11, 18, he says, seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast. And this is an interesting passage because this is what we might call tongue in cheek.

He's being ironic or facetious maybe. For you put up with fools gladly, since you yourselves are wise. For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, if one devours you, if one takes from you, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face.

To our shame, I say that we were too weak for that. But in whatever anyone is bold, and I speak foolishly, I am bold also.

Are these people Hebrews, he asks? Well, so am I. Are they Israelites? Well, so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? Well, so am I.

[51 : 45] He's saying, if they can boast in the flesh, hey, I can boast in the flesh too, like a fool. Are they ministers of Christ? And then he says this, I speak as a fool.

He's saying, right now I'm being a blubbering idiot. Are they ministers of Christ? Well, I am even more so. I've done more than them. In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.

And then he lists all these things and we won't get into them, but I was received many stripes and beaten with rods and gone high. Hungry and shipwrecked and he goes into all these things. He says, I can brag about all these things and you know what it matters?

Nothing. All these labors that I've done for the Lord, it means nothing. You know what matters? It's that I am in Christ.

And you know what I did to do that? I just trusted. I just trusted him. Going back to that verse in 1 Corinthians.

[52 : 52] For I have determined... Oh, sorry, where is it? No, last verse, or last new verse.

In 1 Corinthians 2, verse 2, Paul says this really interesting thing. He says, for I have determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

I have determined that in my ministry, the only thing that I know is Jesus Christ and that he was crucified for our sins. That's it. Now, again, that's another kind of hyperbole, right?

Because when you read Paul's letters, is that the only thing he focuses on? No, he focuses on... He talks about how we ought to live the Christian life and the kind of life that we ought to live. But what he's...

He's making an emphasis here. And he says, none of that matters if we are not in Christ. And that is the fundamental, the focus, the foundation on our whole Christian life, that our life is in him.

[53 : 55] So, as we read through the Gospels, we're going to go through the Gospel of Mark. Jesus came as the Messiah, the Son of David, as it speaks of in...

I think Peter talks about in Acts. Jesus came according to the flesh. Messiah of the seed of David, according to the flesh. His ministry was according to the flesh.

In Galatians chapter 4, verse 4 and 5, it says this. Paul says this. But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of the Spirit?

No. No. Born of a woman. A fleshly woman. And then he says this. Born under the law. That's as fleshly as you can get. To redeem those who also were under the law.

That we might receive the adoption as sons. Jesus was born in the flesh. He was born under the law. He ministered under the law.

[54 : 57] He ministered in the flesh. But as Paul says, again, in 2 Corinthians 5.16, we know him thus no longer. Our relationship to Christ is not looking, as so many do, at the teachings of Christ and the words in red.

And we need to try to do our best to try to do all those things that Jesus taught in all of his parables and moral teachings. And so many out there, that's what they think Christianity is.

To just try to do all these things that Jesus said. And that is not the Christian life. Though it was for the people who were living at the time.

We know him thus no longer. We knew in that way before. And what we will do as we study through the book of Mark is we will get to know Jesus Christ according to the flesh.

We need to keep in mind the whole time that we know him thus no longer. Our life with Christ is not trying to, you know, get a miracle or try to follow as best we can to have a life with God through moral teachings and abiding by those things.

[56 : 19] But we look to the cross and what he did for us. And our life with him is trusting in him, having all of our faith and confidence in that and not in how well we can, you know, keep the commandments of Christ or the law or anything else.

Amen. I'm going to stop there. Notice we didn't hit Mark chapter 1. I wasn't expecting to. We will get into that next week.

But do we have a microphone that we can pass around? I'll try to leave some, or take an opportunity for any questions or comments.

All right, one up here, right up front. We talk about Christ is the center of it all, right?

And so what a mistake it is to only look at Christ through the lens, per se, of his earthly ministry. You know, if we value Christ, we look at the whole work, right?

[57 : 52] And it just seems like that's one of the, I liked how you kind of had said that, but it just occurred to me that that's, it's kind of what happens if you only look at Christ through his earthly ministry. You're only looking at part of his work.

You know, you're not looking at the whole thing. You're not even looking at his greatest work. And so just how significant that is. And it might be something to challenge maybe someone who said, well, I like to read the red letters. Yeah.

And they're more significant. Well, they're not. They're not any different. You know, it's that time. But what Paul preaches was from Christ. And so that was the first thing. And then just towards the end, as you're talking about living according to the spirit, the verse, I guess it's Proverbs 23, 7.

I looked it up quick on my phone, but so a man thinks, so he is. Right? As a man thinks in his heart, so is he. Yes. And the power of thinking about our identity in Christ.

Yes. As you said, that we already are. And that transforms our living more so than, you know, looking at the law. Absolutely.

[58 : 54] Yeah. Thanks for sharing that. Anyone else? You know, I just, as you were saying that, the red letters, you know, I went to Bible school for two years, and one of the most, I don't even know how common this is or uncommon, but we were talking about, I can't remember, some theological topic, and the teacher, the teacher said, well, Paul says this, but Jesus said the opposite.

And so, you know, well, Jesus is, you know, they're red letters. He's, so we need to go with Jesus, and I don't know what Paul was thinking, but we need to go with what Jesus said, because his words are more weight.

And I thought to myself at the time, well, that doesn't make any sense. You know, is Paul's words inspired or are they not? But that's where some people think, you know, we need to give more weight to the words of Jesus, but what we really need to do is make wise judgments, and as we use the phrase, and Paul uses the phrase, rightly divide, make a distinction between what is for us today and what was for people of the past, and the Jews specifically of the past, and make that distinction, not mix them up.

Anything else? All right, let's close with a word of prayer. Father, we're grateful to you for what you have accomplished for us.

You didn't have to, and I'm always reminded of that. You didn't have to die for us. We could have just continued on living according to the rudimentary principles of the way things work in the world.

[60 : 38] It totally makes sense. It's totally fair. It's totally just and righteous, but you made a new way. I ask that you would work in each one of us here today to commit ourselves to living our Christian lives according to that new way that you've given us, and not to merge or add mixture with the old way, but they would stick with the new.

We wouldn't set aside the grace of God, but we would embrace it wholeheartedly and live according to that new way of the cross that you gave us. Amen. Thanks, everybody.

Again, don't forget the signs. If you ordered one, and put it up in your yard. Amen.