

The Continued Centrality of the Gospel - Accept the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] We are dealing with the subject of the continued centrality of the gospel, and this morning we are going to engage part three of that message.

It's going to be somewhat different in that I guess you could say it's going to be an assortment of things having to do with the gospel. It's dynamic and the way it works in the lives of individuals.

And why, in the case of some people, it seems to have not worked at all. How is it that we explain or understand that?

You, as I am, are familiar with people who have come to faith in Christ and have undergone a very dramatic turnaround.

In their demeanor, in their language, in their attitude, in their agenda, in their priorities, in everything.

[1 : 02] And we are not surprised by that, because the scriptures tell us that if anyone be in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away, and behold, all things have become new. But, sometimes it doesn't seem to work that way in the lives of everybody.

There are those whom we know have made a profession of faith in Christ. They may have walked an aisle. They may have had someone tell them, Now you are a Christian. Go and live like it.

But they don't. And we scratch our heads and say, What's the problem here? What's going on here? Why is it that this person who has made a profession in Christ, in many respects, seems to continue living like the world?

What's going on? What's happened? I've struggled with this issue almost from the time I myself became a Christian, back in 1956.

And I certainly do not have all the satisfying answers that I would like, but I've given a great deal of thought to this as to what might be responsible or what might be behind such goings-on, trying as best I can to understand it, because I am totally persuaded that no human being can ever have an actual experience with Jesus Christ and ever be the same.

[2 : 39] The Christ who saves is the Christ who changes. And we are to be conformed to the image of Christ. That is the ultimate goal for every believer, to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So, I just have some bits and pieces regarding the gospel that I want to throw out and ask you to consider. And perhaps you'll have some questions or some insights of your own.

And if you do, we will certainly appreciate it and try to provide an opportunity for you to do that. This gospel that we are talking about, that the Bible refers to as good news, that we are quite excited about, by the way, how can information that has been around and noised abroad for 2,000 years still be regarded as news?

Every now and then, when we hear something on the tube or on the radio or somebody tells us something, we say, well, that's old news. That's old news. And we just kind of dismiss it.

Well, everybody knows that. And the news media makes quite a big deal out of something that they call breaking news.

[4 : 03] And the name of the game there, if you're engaged in news media, is to get that news that has just broke. That is, it is so fresh and new that it's just now going on.

Maybe it's even happening as the announcer speaks. And we call that breaking news. And that's the real up-to-date stuff. And whenever we hear that breaking news, we always kind of perk up our ears a little bit because we think, now here comes something new.

But there's nothing new about the gospel. Is it? Well, yes, there is. It is very old to those who have embraced it and adopted it.

But it is brand spanking new to those who have never really heard it or understood it. Isn't that interesting? How can the same item of information be brand spanking new to one person and living in the same culture and be as old as 2,000 years as somebody else?

And that's because each generation is a stranger to the gospel. And the gospel has to start all over again embedding itself in each new generation that comes along.

[5 : 23] Because that's just the way it is. The gospel, old as it is, remains a stranger to every new generation that comes along. And this, of course, is why it is incumbent on the present generation to make sure that they pass it on to the upcoming generation.

Do you know of any other information that is very old yet very new? And the gospel is that one thing that is. It is breaking news to every new generation even though it is 2,000 years old.

And I remember talking with people over the years and explaining the gospel to them. And I've had a number of people tell me, well, I've been to church and I've heard some preaching and I've seen some things on television, but I never put it together.

We call it connecting the dots. We call it getting it. And if you really get it, it gets you.

There is a mutuality there and it impacts you. There are numbers of people in our churches, sad to say, whom I know may be in church for a long time and all they have is churchianity.

[7 : 01] They don't have the real thing. They don't have Christianity. They don't have a personal relationship with Christ. They might have some religion.

They might be able to sing the hymns and talk the lingo, but they've never personally encountered a crucified, raised from the dead living Christ having put their faith and trust in Him and have the assurance of sins forgiven and a home of eternal life.

There is a huge difference. So, what I would like to do is just throw out to you for your consideration some things to think about in connection with the gospel.

And some of this is going to be very, very superficial and very obvious and some of it might be deeper than what I myself am able to understand.

The gospel is a transferable concept and we can be so grateful for that. And all that means is that when one person has received the gospel, has taken to themselves the personal connection with Jesus Christ and has come to know Him in a real way, they are then in a position where they are able to communicate that experience and that truth to someone else.

[8 : 30] A transferable concept is an idea or a truth that is held in one person's mind that they are able to explain and communicate to another person so that it ends up in that person's mind with the same kind of understanding and appreciation that was in the mind of the sender.

when that happens, communication has occurred. When the receiver is able to think the same thing that the sender is, that's communication.

And the gospel is a transferable concept that is designed to be communicated from one person who has it to another person that doesn't.

that's one of the glories of this and really in essence that's the way all truth is communicated. It isn't just the gospel. It's truth about anything.

And this transferable concept reflects an immediate change in the individual because when one receives this truth Christ died for your sin and is able to appropriate it and personalize it what happens is the spirit of God who is of course immaterial comes into the life of the individual who also has a human spirit because we are made up of intangible property and tangible property.

[10:13] That means we are physical and we are non physical we have a spirit and we have a body and those two together comprise the human soul and in that human spirit of ours which by the way is your own personal place that nobody else can invade that's your private territory nobody else can see what is in your human spirit it is known only to you this is what the writer of first Corinthians the apostle Paul meant when he said for what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man that is in him nobody really knows you like you and yet I must inject this because it's a what shall I say it's a protective device you are able to con you the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked that means you can sell yourself a bill of goods you can rationalize and you do this in the thinking processes and we do that because we have an old

Adamic ego that is self serving and self seeking and that's just part of our fallenness we just have to realize that and make sure that we make every effort to walk in the spirit as opposed to walking in the flesh because as Paul said if you walk in the spirit you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh and I think it's obvious that if you do not walk in the spirit you will fulfill the pretty but it's characteristic of every human being at least in our potential so all true believers are provided the same spiritual dynamics to work with at the point of salvation when Jesus Christ saves you forgives you pardons you makes you accepted in his beloved person the spirit of God comes into your life and transforms you on the inside we cannot really explain this it is partly intellectual it is partly spiritual it is partly mysterious we don't know how it works we just know that it does and probably the most stunning example that any of us can point to is the apostle

Paul on the road to Damascus and so many times we use him as an example we say Damascus road experience very dramatic and we've got some right here in our own congregation who were known to you who had a kind of an apostle Paul experience especially when it came to things like alcoholism and stuff like that that they were in bondage to and they come to faith in Christ and the bondage is broken and the new person that they are in Christ begins to shine through and it is a glorious thing it's a glorious thing something happened on the inside of that person that enables them to reflect it outwardly because that's the only thing people can see they have no idea what's happening on the inside of you but they can see what you do with it on the outside in behavior and attitude and agenda and disposition and interest and everything else that becomes quite known to people who are familiar with you so this human volition thing is just marvelous why is it then that some people do not seem to manifest this and we are not able to look into the life into the human spirit of anyone and see if spiritual life is really there we don't have that ability all we can see is what they produce what they manifest outwardly

Christ likened this to the tree and its fruit and the good tree bears good fruit and that's what you would expect from it so we look for this and sometimes we don't see it and we wonder what's taking place here is it let me ask you this is it possible that someone has professed and I'm using that word very deliberately I say professed faith in Christ when in reality it didn't take I don't know what other word to use in connection with that it didn't take they didn't really get it it didn't really change them they weren't really saved but they are accounted as such and we may be puzzled over their behavior because it's not very consistent with the

Christian life and I want to make it clear I'm not interested in being judgmental or running around and like like one fellow said I don't want to judge whether anybody is saved or not I'm just a fruit inspector well I don't have the ability to judge anybody's salvation whether it is there or not and be very careful in assigning things to people we have no right to and have no knowledge of but you got to admit some people make you wonder because do you know in the main how Christians ought to behave they ought to behave Christianly that's not too much to expect from someone who professes to have a new nature in Christ and you've heard me say over the years that the greatest asset the greatest asset that God has going for him on this earth is a believer in Jesus Christ who is walking in the spirit they are a great advertisement for the gospel and the greatest liability that

[16 : 47] God has is a believer who is walking in the flesh and people look at him and say yeah well he goes to church every Sunday and he he is an officer in the church and blah blah blah and he does this and this I don't do any of those things but I'm better than he is because I don't do this and so and you know the world spots that and they call it hypocrisy someone said if you want to know how a Christian is supposed to live just ask somebody who isn't one now usually they have unrealistic expectations because a lot of people who are not Christians and do not profess to be a Christian they think that people who are Christians never say anything wrong and never do anything wrong they are goody goody two shoes if they are a true Christian they are a little Christ well those of us who have been around the block a couple of times know that even though we may be a believer in

Jesus Christ have eternal life and heaven is our home you still have I still have this thing called an old Adamic nature and it is capable of producing pure ugliness Christians yes Christians can do really sad disgusting things now a man that we probably wouldn't call Christian because he lived a thousand years before Christ was ever born but he had what we would call the equivalent of modern day Christianity he had a relationship he had a true relationship with God and his name was David and David was part skunk I mean he took another man's wife Bathsheba and then he lied to cover it up and had for all practical purposes had her husband murdered to cover up the thing you know people in positions of power have had problems with covering up things all the way back to

David haven't they so we're capable of doing really really ugly things and yet we've got this confusing situation of a relationship with Christ a profession of faith an inconsistency in our lifestyle and our attitude and sometimes it gets so bad that people are justified in calling us hypocrite someone said I'm not going to go to church nothing there but a bunch of hypocrites and one fellow says well yeah I guess you're right there's always room for one more yeah everybody everybody is is tainted with hypocrisy every believer is tainted with impurities with moral and spiritual impurities and if you don't engage in those things by doing you do by thinking don't tell me you don't we all do it's part of the human condition so all of these things go together in a mix and sometimes it really gets kind of confusing so let's look at this subject of redemption and salvation and what actually takes place and

I've got some questions to ask and some bones to pick with some people who take the subject of well there's a charge that's leveled about it's called easy believism and it's a term that has been given to the idea that in the gospel you tell somebody that all they need to do is believe and people respond with saying things like well yeah I believe I believe okay then if you believe then you are a Christian because you believe and yet nothing has changed about them no new nature seems to be evident and this is I think justifiably why it is called easy believism and it is a truncated gospel it is a gospel that contains only good news and the good news is as some have put it

God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life and all you need to do is believe in him and that sounds really good and some people say well yeah I do that so I am a believer I'm a Christian does it work that way you've heard me say before that the reason that the good news is good is what yeah the bad news is bad and if you try to omit the bad news because you don't want to offend people just go straight to the good news and say all you have to do is believe and you know what most people equate that with most people equate that with believing in God and I've heard a lot of people say when you talk to them about believing you need to be careful how you communicate these terms because they'll come back with something well

[22 : 38] I believe in God and I've always believed in God and you probe a little further and it soon becomes evident that's what they're counting on they just believe that there is a God and as James has pointed out you believe that there is one God the devil also believes so all you're doing is believing what the devil believes he believes there's a God also but there's no regeneration there's no salvation there it isn't simply believing that there is a God that puts somebody in line with him that's a starting point but where do you go from there and that's where the good news comes in but only after the bad news is explained and I don't know that there is a way to do this without making people feel bad and you know something you need to feel bad you know what that's called that's called contrition contrition the psalmist said thou will not despise a man with a contrite heart a contrite heart the word contrite means crushed broken shattered that's contrition can you be saved without a contrite heart now think about that nobody is saying you have to weep and cry and moan and groan and carry on and beg and plead no no but a contrite heart a smashed heart a crushed heart is one that has been smitten by the reality of one's sin and alienation from the holy god this is getting right down to business and if you are saying and

I'm sure there are people of the grace persuasion who would say no what you're doing now is you are adding to the grace of God it is believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and now shall be saved nothing else but there are things involved in getting to that kind of belief it isn't just an acknowledgement that there is a God it isn't just an acknowledgement that there was a Christ it isn't just an acknowledgement that yes he died on the cross and three days later came back from the dead a lot of people believe that remember notitia and essentia they've heard the message and they agree with it but there's no fiducia there's no commitment there's no acting on it with the will and the contrition comes in with the essentia with the agreement you know when you agree with

God the word that is used in the original Greek is the word I know this doesn't mean a thing to you but I'm going to give it to you anyway it means homo leggo h-o-m-o-l-o-g-e-o h-o-m-o-l-o-g-e-o homo homo leggo and the word homo we are familiar with from the term homogenized where you mix all the milk together the cream and the milk together and you homogenize it and it's all the same and the homosexual is a sexual preference for the same sex and homo leggo means to speak or to say the same thing and many times that word in the English Bible is translated confess confess when you confess your sin you are agreeing with

God that your sin is your sin and it separates you and alienates you from God and that Jesus Christ because of his love for you despite your sin died for your sin to pay the penalty for your sin so that you could be freed from sin and when you hear that and understand it how do you feel about that now I'm not saying that you have to believe on Christ and that you have to feel certain things because emotions are fickle and they differ with different people because some people the way they are wired and put together they're very emotional and very demonstrative and they feel everything deeply and it shows and they cry at the drop of a hat other people are more stoic and unfeeling seemingly and it takes a great deal to rile them up emotionally that's just the difference in people but let me ask you this when you hear the information that

Christ died for your sin and that it was your sin and my sin and the sin of humanity that put him on that cross what then do you think about your sin and here's where the contrition comes in the crushing there are those who would tell us that you don't have to feel anything about your sin all you have to do is believe okay let me pose this question then what if you're proud of your sin what if you say well I appreciate the fact that Christ died to pay for my sin but frankly

[29 : 40] I'm kind of proud of my sin I mean you have any idea how many women I have successfully laid in the last five years and if you think I'm going to quit having fun like that you're crazy but this salvation you're talking about believing on Christ and being saved going to heaven yeah I'll buy that give me that I believe what's taking place there I remember years ago I can't even think of the man's name if I could think of it I would use it because I know he's deceased but it wouldn't make any difference anyway it was a Chicago gangster what was was it was it Meyer Lansky the name jumps in my mind or something he was in the Chicago crime boss and big time criminal and into everything and someone was talking to him about the gospel and it sounded really good and it was quite interesting because the man was

Jewish on top of it and he says yeah well I believe that stuff yeah I believe that stuff and this fellow says well then this is going to make a huge change in your life it's wonderful that you believe he said what do you mean a change well you know you're going to have to now that you are a believer in Christ God expects you to live like that and that means that you're going to have to give up certain things like what well I don't think there is any scriptural way that you can be a Christian and be a crime boss well what's wrong with Christian crooks I mean everybody's got to have something to do and I'm not being facetious and I'm not trying to be humorous this guy was serious Paul wrote to the Ephesians and said let him that steals steal no more but rather let him labor with his hands that he may have something to give to those who have need is there something wrong with being a

Christian thief you mean I have to change that well now listen no one is saying that if you are a Christian that means you've never stolen anything you'd be in big trouble right there wouldn't we but you see the way this dynamic works and I wish I could explain it better there has to be this element of confession which is agreeing with God that your sin is sin and you're not proud of it you are ashamed of it and you are embarrassed of it this is the crushing that comes and if you are proud of it or you justify it or you rationalize it and say okay so I'm a sinner but there are a lot of people worse than I am just give me this salvation you're talking about and I'll be on my way just doesn't work that way there are certain things certain elements involved as I said I wish I could explain them better but I do suspect that what we are talking about are those things that may well be missing in the life of someone who made some kind of a profession but there's nothing to show for it there is no consistency there is no interest in spiritual things there is no desire to be with other believers and yet some would say they have believed and they are

Christians I really have a problem with that and again I'm not the judge but I cannot help but wonder those whom Christ saves he changes he makes them a new person in him and if you have not been changed draw your own conclusion and again far be it from me to say who is and who isn't and I do know this and this is one thing that gives me great comfort and assurance in this and it is this God reads the human heart God knows the desire and intent of the individual and if honesty and truth and desire to know him is really there God knows that there is no special formula that needs to be repeated there is no mantra for Christians but there is something that is expressed by the volition of the individual by the will of the individual that deliberately causes them to want to know and to put their faith and trust in this

Christ who loved them so much that he gave himself for them that has to be there and if it isn't I just cannot understand how it can be genuine so these are just some of the dynamics that are involved and I've been struggling with these things now for over 40 years starts with notitia that's information received and as a result of getting that information what often happens is a discomfort begins in the life of the individual and we call that guilt guilt it is a capacity for knowing and understanding that you have offended a standard and it is God's standard and guilt sets in boy we are we are essentially a guilt free society today and you know why because morality is relative nobody needs to be guilty of anything you are okay and

[35 : 52] I am okay and that kind of attitude is reflected in the kind of licentiousness that we see in our culture today because people act out of their belief system they behave in accordance with their belief this is the world view thing they are acting out their world view and when you see people make statements like like they make on television and there's a big big brouhaha about what some Christian comedian said about the wife of the president of the United States and some say well now can you imagine what the uproar would be like if someone on the other side said that about someone on the other side can you imagine what the media would do with that and how they would be all over that this double standard thing we see it every day and why and how do you think it is that that exists why is it that there is no real moral outrage when one side makes those statements but there is if the other side makes them why is that stop and think about it your answer is obvious it is because from side a the reason there is not the tremendous moral outrage is because they are doing what we are used to them doing that's who and what they are but if our side does it all hell breaks loose because that is not in keeping with our position it's different you see that double standard thing that's the way it works that's the dynamic that's taking place now they are simply what they are and they are acting out of their world view and as

I pointed out before they are not the enemy they are captives of the enemy and they don't even know it all of this plays into this thing of guilt and truth and contrition how much contrition do you see on the sides of these people there are bold brash presentations you see no crushing of spirit you see no remorse you see no apology and when apologies are offered very often they are offered only to satisfy the media just by using the word I apologize that is worthless and I'll tell you why it's worthless because an apology that is not preceded by repentance which means a change of mind is worthless and yet if you use the magic words

I apologize then all is forgiven and yet the individual who is apologizing still feels the very same way and hasn't changed anything on the inside they just apologize and it's a tool of manipulation that satisfies the media so they've apologized okay everything is back to normal that's where we are in this culture and it all ties in with this thing about the gospel and the truth because truth is all interrelated and in the gospel it is centralized in a way so information received guilt and conviction regarding the information conviction and if there is no conviction then there's nothing to act upon this word conviction has to do with well we're all familiar with the word convict our prisons are full of them these are people who have been convicted of something legally but you know what they may not have any personal conviction at all they're just serving time in prison because they got caught and they're sentenced to prison and it can be a convict without any conviction and then there is confession the agreeing the homo legato and then repentance the change of mind and then the belief the commitment the fiducia so to say requiring repentance or contrition adds to the gospel is nonsense because you cannot you cannot believe the gospel do not change your mind that means you have to change your position regarding what you thought about salvation and eternal life and if you do not change your mind you cannot believe the gospel it comes as a result of repenting you reject what you formerly believed because you have discovered it to be wrong how did you discover it to be wrong you heard the gospel preached and how many times have

I told you every time the gospel is preached you are giving an individual a reason and an opportunity to change their mind they may sit there and say well I never heard that before I didn't know that I didn't understand that I have to rethink that and it sets up a thinking process in their mind and they reach a different conclusion than the one they held previously that is repentance and we are called to repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and that's the gospel I wish I understood it better I've been preaching this message now for 60 years and you know something I have discovered the simple gospel message and I guess I would put quotes around simple this is the most profound thing that has ever come upon the globe is the gospel of Jesus

Christ it has a simplicity to it that a child can understand it has a depth to it that the greatest theologian and philosophers have never plumbed amazing absolutely amazing grace well these are some things to think about I tell you what I wish you would do if you would do this for me give this some thought put together some questions or some observations of your own if you want to drop them in the offering box that's fine I would appreciate looking at them next week you're going to have an opportunity to ask any questions that you may have I would prefer that they be in this ballpark dealing with these issues and we'll just kind of have an open forum regarding this and if you're not very talkative and you don't have the kind of questions that I think you probably are entertaining I'll have a backup message for you but I would prefer to hear from you this is a very critical issue and we've got a lot of people today who are exposed to the gospel and seemingly aren't getting it and I'm just perplexed about some of the things that are going on and any light that you can shed on this will be appreciated by everyone so give that some thought and if you come up with a thought or a question do yourself a favor and write it down because if you don't write it down you likely will not remember it so thank you for your presence here today and I want to close with extending an invitation so would you bow with me please father we recognize that what we've been talking about is very simple it's not complex there are not a number of hoops that people have to jump through in order to come to

[44 : 09] Christ we simply have to hear the gospel Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures we need to understand and recognize that just as a member of the human race we're like everybody else we are a sinner in need of salvation and it is our sin and the sins of corporate humanity that put the only innocent person who ever walked on the earth on the cross to die for the sins of all the guilty we can't begin to comprehend that kind of love or that kind of sacrifice but we believe it to be true because it's the record that you've given of your son and our prayer right now is for anyone here who has perhaps heard and understood something of the gospel maybe even for the first time or maybe they've heard it dozens of times and never really put it together or understood what precisely is required we pray that you will weigh heavily upon their heart make them see that their sin is something that we all need to repent of and acknowledge and be ashamed of certainly not proud of and yet because of that incredible love for us he who knew new sin was willing to be made sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of

God in him such an amazing amazing truth simple as it is we've never fully grasped it and our prayer for anybody who may be here this morning they may say Lord Jesus Christ I'm in the same boat as everybody else I need you my own righteousness will not suffice a holy God and as best as I know how with my will I right here and now want to put my case in the hands of Jesus Christ who loved me and gave himself for me I want to trust him as my savior with all my questions and doubts I want to believe on him with my heart and with my will want to take him into my life and I want him to make my life what he wants it to be surrender everything to him dear friend if you make that your prayer God will hear you God will save you God will regenerate you in a way that you don't even understand but he will make you a new creature in

Christ and if that's your decision please tell somebody about it anybody so that they can be of encouragement to you and if you want to talk to me I'm at your disposal and I have literature that would be very helpful and encouraging to you loving father we are so grateful for this gospel that we just barely understand we just understand it enough to be able to believe it thank you for it having depths that no one has ever plumbed thank you for it being a product of a great incredible mind without limitations we are so thankful that you looked upon us with compassion and with mercy and that you sent Jesus to do for us what we couldn't do for ourselves thank you again in Christ's name amen bring your questions or comments that you have next week and then the following week will be Father's Day and George Craig and I both have something that we think will be of interest to you and encouraging for

Father's Day God bless you you are dismissed