

# What Gospel did Paul Preach?

*Romans 15:15-16*

By Sean Harris

Paul writes to us, “Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind [or in remembrance], because of the grace that is given to me of God, That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God.”<sup>1</sup>

Notice that please. He is ministering the gospel of God to Gentiles.

“...that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.”<sup>2</sup>

Look at this verse. Paul says, “That I am ministering the gospel of God.” So I want to know what is that gospel that he ministers? **What is that Gospel?** You are ministering that gospel. Your Bible refers to the gospel of the kingdom, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the gospel of God, the gospel of peace, the gospel of salvation, the gospel of Christ, the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, the gospel of your salvation, the gospel of the glory of God. Jesus preaches the gospel. Matthew preaches the gospel. Paul preaches the gospel. Peter preaches the gospel. And I want to let you know this morning—there is only one gospel. And it doesn’t matter whether it is the gospel of the kingdom or the gospel of Jesus Christ or the gospel of Christ, the gospel of salvation. There is only one gospel in the Bible and it doesn’t matter whether Jesus is preaching that gospel or Paul is preaching that gospel or Peter is preaching that gospel. It doesn’t matter who is preaching that gospel. There is only one gospel and I am going to do my very best for the next 50 minutes to arrest your attention so that you can know what that gospel is.

I want to challenge you with as much pointedness as I can that if you individually cannot explain the gospel in your own words without very many notes, something is broke in your life. Every single person who calls themselves a Christian should be able to explain the gospel and should be able to explain it well. You should be able to explain it off the top of your head.

“How do you know that there is only one gospel, preacher?” Because Jesus promises that there would only be one gospel that would be preached.

Now, let me clarify this. There are other gospels preached and they are false gospels,<sup>3</sup> but he promised that the gospel would always be preached.

This is what he says here. He says, “Verily [or truly] I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world...”<sup>4</sup>

So we have a sovereign promise--a promise from the sovereign God that there would always be on the planet people who would be preaching the one true gospel, always, the very gospel that Jesus preached would be preached throughout all the generations throughout all the world and that there would never be a time in which there would be no gospel preachers on the planet.

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 15:15-16.

<sup>2</sup> Romans 15:16.

<sup>3</sup> Galatians 1:6-9

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 26:13.

The gospel is a narrative. “What do you mean by that?” That means it tells a story. It involves people. It involves places. It involves events. The gospel is a message. It is a message from God to humanity. The gospel is a good news proclamation from the king to his people. The gospel is a promise. It is a promise secured by the Word of God. God who cannot lie has promised the gospel to us. And finally, number five: The gospel is truth. The gospel is absolute truth.

By “absolute truth” I mean that it is applicable to all people, all cultures in all times. It doesn’t matter what continent you come from. It doesn’t matter what hemisphere you come from. It doesn’t matter what culture you come from. It doesn’t matter what kind of home you grew up in. It doesn’t matter. There is only one gospel and that gospel is for you.

I am going to ask that you would write G O S P E L on that blank page and I am going to give you thoughts about the gospel to hang on.

Can you imagine calling yourself a Christian for five, six, 10, or 15 years and someone comes up to you and says, “You know, I have really been trying to understand what is the difference between Mormonism, Christianity and Baptist or Catholicism and they all talk about the gospel and I am really not sure I understand what the difference is.”

And then you are sitting there going, “I am not sure I can explain that to you either.”

Can you imagine being an American male in America, a male in America and having spent 20 or 25 years here and somebody comes up to you and says, “Could you explain that sport called football?”

And you say, “I have no clue.”

That would be ridiculous, right? That would be... we couldn’t even fathom that. We couldn’t even fathom the idea of a male growing up in America from birth for 10 or 15 or 20 years and you walk up to them and said, “I need to know about that game. It is called football. Would you please explain to me what that game is all about?”

And you say, “I have no clue.” We would wonder what planet are you from.

However, I am amazed at the number of Christians who when asked tell me about the gospel have no idea that there is an offense and a defense. There is a round brown ball that there are players on the field and that they are seeking to score a touchdown and they run up and down blocking and tackling and throwing and... do you see where I am going with this? Something is entirely broke in the church. It is broke. Our inability to explain that Jesus meant when he said:

Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.<sup>5</sup>

So somebody comes up to you and says, “I was reading my Bible in the first chapter of the book of Mark and I read where Jesus expected me to repent and believe the gospel. Could you please explain to me what that means?”

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<sup>5</sup> Mark 1:14-15.

And you would have to refer to them to your Sunday school teacher or a deacon or the pastor. That is criminal. It is criminal!

So I am going to ask you this morning to take close notes, to watch the sermon again on SermonAudio and when we get the transcript posted, download the transcript and read it. Because I need you to understand this message inside and out. I need you to know the gospel so well that you could be running down the road jogging with your buddy on Fort Bragg and have a conversation about the gospel at the same time.

I need you to know the gospel so well that if you don't have your Bible with you for whatever particular reason you don't need to start on this page and have little notes that guide you through five or six verses. You need to understand the gospel so well that you could wake up in the middle of the night and tell somebody about the gospel with very little sleep.

That is how we need to know the gospel. We need to know the gospel so well that we can recognize when someone is preaching a false gospel because we know the real gospel so well.

All you jump masters out there, you Fort Bragg jump masters out there. You will understand this concept so well. You JMPI good jumpers, properly equipped with equipment day after day after day after day. Why? So that when a deficiency comes, it jumps out at you immediately because have looked at the right so much that you can immediately identify what wrong looks like.

It is like the counterfeiters that people teach them. They look at good 100 dollars bills over and over and over and over and over again. And they know good 100 dollar bills so well that as soon as they see something that doesn't look right, they can immediately pick it up.

So let's gets started.

### **G is for God.**

And you say, "Preacher, that is a no brainer. Everybody believes in God."

That is simply not true. That is simply not true. You don't have good news for anyone if they don't acknowledge the one true living God who created all things. This is no something that you can gloss over. This is not something that you assume. In fact, I would submit to you that in the Postmodern world, that you and I are called to minister the gospel unto, we must assume just the opposite. I will assume that you have no clue who God is, that you have been taught from birth that you came from a monkey and you have no idea what Creationism is all about. I will assume that from your very kindergarten education in a public school you have been taught the wrong thing day after day after day. And so I am going to start with G is for God. Let me tell you about the one, true, living God.

Where do you get this idea from? I get it from Paul's preaching. I get it from Paul's example. In Acts chapter number 14, Paul went into a city and he noticed that the entire city was consumed with paganism. They were worshipping all kinds of idols. They were worshipping corvettes. They were worshipping 401k plans. They were worshipping all kinds of things.

So would you take your Bible and turn to Acts 14, please, and let me show you exactly what I mean at verse number 15?

Please notice what Paul does, the first thing Paul says to them, what he does, how he does it. We need to follow his example.

He confronts them, “Sirs...” He is polite. He is respectful, but he cuts right to the chase and he says in verse number 15 of chapter 14 of the book of Acts—you might underline this in your Bible. You might put a star next to it. You might put a note next to it.

And under the G for God you are going to write down Acts 14:15.

“Sirs, why do ye these things?”<sup>6</sup>

That is, they are bowing before him. They are acting ridiculous. And you can read the context at home. I want to draw your attention to the last part of the verse.

“We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should...”<sup>7</sup>

Please notice this very closely. “...turn from these vanities unto the living God.”<sup>8</sup>

That is the beginning of the gospel. The beginning of the gospel is you have to stop serving yourself and turn to the one true and living God.

Let’s finish it. Notice the rest of it. What God? What God are we talking about? What God? How do we know we are talking about the right God? Notice what it says very closely there.

“...which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein.”<sup>9</sup>

The beginning of the gospel is the idea that God made you. God made you. You didn’t make yourself. You are not a product of an accident. You are not a product of evolution. God made you. God made you just the way you are. God chose whether you are male or female. God chose whether you are white or black. God chose what family you are going to grow up. God made you.

And if a person does not acknowledge that God made them, then you really are not going to go anywhere with this gospel presentation. You really don’t have much for them when you get into the law, when you get into the solution, when you get into faith. You really don’t have much for them, because the beginning of the gospel is the idea that there is a God who made you. Therefore, because he made you, he has the right to establish rules whereby you must live up to them.

Now what I find amazing is how we understand this in our own families and yet we don’t want to apply it as adults. All of us, if you are a parent, have said something like, “I brought you into this world and I can take you out.” All of us have said things like that even though we didn’t really mean them. We weren’t going to actually kill our son or daughter. We did imply that I am in charge in this home. We says stuff like, “As long as you live in this home you are going to follow these rules.”

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<sup>6</sup> Acts 14:15.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

Can I submit to you that the home God owns is called the entire planet?

Do you recognize that being monotheistic is not enough? Being monotheistic is not enough. We can't just say, "Be monotheistic". You need to believe in one God and the person says, "I believe in one God."

No. I need to unpack that a little bit more. I need to know who I am talking to. I need to recognize the difference between sharing the gospel with a seven year old in AWANA who has spent the last seven years in a Christian church and all they have understood is one true living God who made them, or I am having a conversation at Fort Bragg with a 50 year old male who has been all over the world, has dabbled in the occult and all kinds of other things and his mind has been so filled with Liberalism and all other kinds of other garbage that when I say "God" he has no idea what I am talking about.

What I am saying to you this morning is that you need discernment when you are preaching the gospel. You need to know who you are talking to. You need to know what baggage they are bringing to the conversation. You cannot assume that the person you are talking to understands that there is only one God who exists in the form of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. I am going to dig into that. I am going to unpack that. I am going to get to know this person. I am going to inform myself as to who they are and make sure that I know what baggage they could be bringing into the conversation. Where did they grow up? What is their religious background that they have? What could they think of when I say God?

You say, "Preacher, is that biblical?"

Read the book of Acts and compare Paul's methodology in chapter 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 and notice the way he deals with different people in different ways.

### **O if for Offence**

O is for offence whether you spell it with a C or if you spell it with an S. It is the same thing. Here is the bottom line. My sin individually and personally offends the holy and righteous God. O is for offence.

God cannot turn a blind eye to sin. God cannot turn a blind eye to sin. God doesn't have big sins and little sins and he is ok with my sins. He is just not ok with Hitler's sins. "See, Hitler deserves to go to hell, but I don't deserve to go to hell because those are big sins and my sins are really... they are really just, you know, venial sins and God is kind of ok with my sins." He is not "ok" with any sins.

Come on, folks. O is for offense. O is for the reality that each one of us has a sin problem, that we were born in sin, we wake up in the morning with a desire to sin and we go to bed sinners, that apart from the Lord Jesus Christ and his grace in our life, we have no hope of overcoming this sin problem, that we are bent on sinning, that we love to sin. And our very nature, our flesh calls us to pride and arrogance and selfishness and carnality.

Given the opportunity to lie we often will lie. Given the opportunity to hide sin we will hide sin.

Paul said in verse 15. "I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort."<sup>10</sup>

Let me show you how bold Paul is. Turn back to chapter number two, please. Let me show you how bold Paul is for us this morning. Romans chapter two. I want you to see this. Romans two.

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<sup>10</sup> Romans 15:15.

Do you hear that Baptist air conditioning? Pages flipping. That is Baptist air conditioning, ok? That is because Baptists bring their Bibles to church. Because why? Because we want to know what does Scripture say.

Preacher, give us truth from the Word of God.

So let me show you what Paul says. You need some boldness. Paul says, “And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?”<sup>11</sup>

Let me stop. Let’s just talk about this, just this very second. Let me give you the best illustration I can of explaining this verse. The dude is out Thursday night stealing from somebody else and he comes home to find his own home has been broken into and the first thing he does is he calls the cops and he says, “You can’t believe what happened to me. Somebody broke into my home and stole something.”

Now the very person who was out stealing that night is doing that which he didn’t really care to have done to himself and when it happens to him he is outraged that someone had the nerve to steal from him.

Please look at your Bible so that you can understand Scripture. So he says, “These kind of people who understand by their own actions that stealing is wrong because when someone steals from them they can’t believe that someone had the nerve of stealing from them, how do these human beings expect to avoid judgment?”

Verse number four. “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?”<sup>12</sup>

Paul says to us this morning in a most pointed way, “Don’t you realize, you unbeliever, that the only reason you are given another day to breathe air is so that you would repent and believe the gospel? Don’t you realize that the only reason you have had another birthday this year is because God is patient, God is kind, God is compassionate, God is longsuffering and God desires to draw you to himself? Don’t you understand that the way God is, that if he wasn’t kind, compassionate, loving, that he would wipe you off the face of the planet?”

Look at number five. “But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest [or storing] up unto thyself wrath against the day...”<sup>13</sup> Don’t miss this. This is part of the gospel presentation. You need to understand. Brother Mark, you need to understand that every single day a non believer puts off repenting that they are accumulating up to themselves gallons and gallons, hours and hours, days and days, weeks and weeks, quantities of wrath, quantities, quantities, measurable quantities of wrath. I don’t understand that. That scares me to death. That is mindboggling. I don’t have joy in telling you about wrath. And yet I cannot stand there and quietly tell you about wrath.

No one in this room as a parent says, “Now, I am getting ready to spank you.” That is now how we say it. When we are getting ready to spank somebody, we let him know. I am getting ready to spank you and it is not going to be fun.

Wrath. Wrath. Wrath. That is why there is urgency to this message. That is why there is a need to proclaim

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<sup>11</sup> Romans 2:3.

<sup>12</sup> Romans 2:4.

<sup>13</sup> Romans 2:5.

this message, because if you have not repented of your sin of unbelief and put your faith in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, God is measuring quantities of wrath that you will experience some day.

And I have a responsibility as a preacher of the gospel to communicate this truth to you. And if I don't communicate to you this truth, I am negligent in my duties.

Imagine a flight attendant that fails to tell you we are getting ready to crash. Brace yourself for the impact. You would say that flight attendant was negligent in her duty, yes or no. Likewise, fully knowing what I know about the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, fully knowing that there is a hell and all those who don't put their faith in Christ are going to spend eternity in a Godless hell... I cannot allow you to walk out those doors today thinking in and of yourself that because you are a pretty decent person you are going to be fine.

I need to let you know right now that you have offended God. And you continue to offend him every choice you make and every decision you make. Oh, you are not as bad as you could be. But you are certainly not as good as you could be, either.

Romans, chapter three (v. 10 and v. 23) says "there is none righteous, no not one." "We have all fallen short of the glory of God." Jesus said it like this. Under offense, Jesus said it like this. You want to fear somebody? You fear somebody? You fear the one who has the power to kill you and then after he kills you, send you to hell. You want to fear somebody? You fear a dude with a gun? You fear the one who has the power to kill you and then when he is done killing you, now determines your eternal destiny (Luke 12:5).

Now the reason this message does not resonate in America, the reason we have Atheists that have the nerve to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars plastering America with billboards is because there is no fear of God in America anymore. The fear of God is completely gone. And I am concerned that the fear of God is leaving the Church of God. Therefore I can sin any way I want, post what I want on Facebook, act the way I want and I am really not too concerned about the judgment of God.

Can I give you a little parable, a little bit of story to give you an illustration? A guy is sitting on the edge of the pier and he is minding his own business. He is enjoying a day of fishing down at Myrtle Beach and he has got his legs crossed and he is fishing and fishing, enjoying it. Catching and casting and chit chat.

Suddenly, a gentleman comes hauling down the pier. Jumps into the water, thrashing around, looking, looking, looking, going underneath, looking, looking. Up and down, looking, looking, looking. Suddenly he is exhausted and loses his breath and drowns.

The fisherman watches this entire thing in shock and disbelief. Sitting there, he can't believe what he just saw as a man drowned right in front of him.

The messenger comes up to the fisherman and says, "Aren't you so thankful for what that man just did for you? He gave his life for you."

And the fisherman says, "I wasn't drowning. I didn't need him to do that."

Here is where we are at in America. Most unbelievers don't see themselves in the water drowning. They see themselves as sitting on the edge of the pier secure and fishing and enjoying life.

So when you come to them with a message that Christ died for them, they are going, “why? Why? Why did Christ die for me? I didn’t need him to die for me. I was doing just fine.”

Let me describe it to you in another way. If my first passion in life outside of preaching and eternal things is skiing, I think my second passion is enjoying the lake and I like Lake Waccamaw and I like tubing and I like everything about water sports. How many of you enjoy being on a lake like me? Yeah, lots of us.

We... every time we go to Lake Waccamaw, I tube. I tube with as many teenagers as I can. I tube a lot. Part of tubing is getting thrown off the tube. It is really a matter of how long can you tube until he chooses to throw you off.

When I get thrown off David, the boat driver, does not immediately throw me a life preserver. He doesn’t immediately do that. Do you know why he doesn’t do that? I can swim. There isn’t a need to do that. Quite frankly, if after I fell off he immediately threw that to me, I would be insulted. Why would I be insulted? Because I can swim.

In fact, my very human pride would say, “You got a lot of nerve throwing that to me. I don’t need that. Non swimmers need that. Candies need that. Sissies need that. But I don’t need that, right?”

Are you following where I am going with this? Only until you understand that there is a problem do you need a solution. Only until you understand that there is a problem do you need a solution. The answer is meaningless without a problem.

So our next slide, Art, is the big stop sign.

If in your discourse or your gospel presentation the person you are corresponding with or engaging doesn’t see themselves as a problem, there is no point in proceeding forward with the solution. You have got to go back to the law, and you have got to use the law as a school master (Gal 3:24) to show them that what Jesus said is that if you have broken the least of these commandments, you have broken them all (Matt 5:19). You have got to show them that they are sinners and that apart from any, any help from God they have no hope. And if they don’t see that, there is really no need to go to the S which is solution.

### **S is for solution.**

Would you please turn to Isaiah chapter number 53? Let me tell you what the solution is. The solution to man’s sin problem is found only in the person of Jesus Christ and only in what he experienced. It is found only in the person of Christ and it is found only in what he experienced. Let’s take a look at Isaiah 53, chapter number four. And verse number four, five and six.

Now there are numerous verses that you could use. This is just one example I wanted to show you and I love this chapter. If you have been born again, you love this chapter also.

Quite frankly, if you don’t love this chapter you are probably not born again. Now, I know that sounds harsh, but really. What these words say, they resonate to people who have been born again. They are words of comfort. They are words of encouragement. They are devotional words. They are encouraging words. They become words of worship to people who have been born again.

So let’s look at them together. Verse number four.

“Surely he hath borne our griefs.”<sup>14</sup> There is a solution.

“Surely he hath... carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”<sup>15</sup>

There is the solution. There is the solution right there. There is the solution to my sin problem. It is found in the person and experience of Jesus Christ.

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him...”<sup>16</sup> my iniquity, my selfishness, my carnality, my flesh, my pride, my worry, my anxiety. That is the gospel.

Here is God’s solution in one single verse. If you don’t know this verse I want to encourage you to mark it down. Write it down under S for solution. 2 Corinthians 5:21.

And what you want to be able to take someone and show them that this is God’s solution. God’s solution is for “He,” that is God, “made him to be sin for us.” Who is the “him?” He who knew no sin. That is only Jesus. Jesus is the only one that knew no sin. He is the only one that can fit that category.

God made him who knew no sin, perfect, sinless, righteous, what did he make him? He made him sin. Why? Why did he do that? That we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

That is the gospel right there, folks. That single verse right there is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Every single person in this auditorium should commit this verse to memory. Every single person in this auditorium should write this verse down. Everyone should underline this verse in your Bible. You should circle verse 21. Every single person should do that.

In fact, I am telling you right now if you are rebelling against doing that something is wrong. Something is wrong. I have no idea how in the world how you could sit there and be a born again Christian and have your pastor who loves you to death spend all week working on this message and encouraging you to understand this and you sit there and ignore it thinking more about the casserole in the oven.

S is for solution and the solution began Genesis 3:15 when God made a promise to that serpent that although you may crush a heel, you need to know that the seed, a seed is coming and that seed is going to crush your head. That head was crushed on the cross of Calvary. This is a promise from God. And this promise was fulfilled about 4000 years later in Jerusalem by the Son of God.

### **The P is for the Person.**

We have got to get the person right. So I am going to give you four statements about the person.

- Number one, Christ is fully and completely divine.

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<sup>14</sup> Isaiah 53:4.

<sup>15</sup> Isaiah 53:4-5.

<sup>16</sup> Isaiah 53:6.

- Number two, Christ is fully and completely human.
- Number three, the divine and the human natures are distinct.
- And, number four, the divine and human natures of Christ are completely united in one person.

If you deny any of those four statements you are not talking about the same Jesus. You are not talking about the same Jesus. If you remove his divinity you are not talking about the same Jesus. If you remove his humanity you are not talking about the same Jesus. If you subordinate one to the other you are not talking about the same Jesus. If you exalt one above the other you are not talking about the same Jesus. If you remove the flesh or you remove the divine it doesn't matter. You are not talking about the same Jesus.

You can say, "Preacher, why is there such a need for you to emphasize this?"

I am emphasizing this so that you, my people, who I am responsible to teach and disciple and shepherd, because of men like Glenn Beck who are doing their very best to get you to believe that the gospel of the Lord Jesus is the same gospel that Mormons believe.

I want you to understand that it is not the same gospel and the reason that it is not the same gospel is because it is not the same person. Person matters. Person matters.

Only one person died on that cross and that person is God who died on that cross and that person is the Son of God who died on that cross. That person is God incarnate. That person was born of a virgin and lived a sinless life. Those are attributes that that person has and if you remove any of those attributes you are no longer talking about the same person.

And lots of verses can be shown to prove this and I could spend the entire message proving this point. I will give you just a couple of examples.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."<sup>17</sup>

And that Word became flesh and dwelt among us. (John 1:1,14).

John said it like this. If you deny the fact that he is of the flesh you are, in fact, a spirit other than God. It says right here, "not of God." (1 John 4:19).

So the person who died for our sins is Jesus of Nazareth sent by the Father. He is the Son of God. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is God incarnate. He is not a created being.

Bob, I am not going to assume that when I say Jesus you understand what I mean by Jesus. I am going to unpack that. I am going to spend some time with it.

You say, "Preacher, sounds like your gospel presentation is going to go on forever and ever."

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<sup>17</sup> John 1:1.

I have got to be discerning, brother Mike Martin. I have got to know who I am talking to to determine how long my gospel presentation is going to be. It may be that I need to spend weeks getting to know this person. It may be that I have got to build a relationship with them and really find myself teaching more than anything else and getting to teach and teach and teach before I ask them to put their faith in Christ who they really don't even know.

### **E is for Experience.**

I have got to be able to tell somebody what Christ experienced off the top of my head. I have got to know the life of Christ so well that I can begin with his virgin birth and go into his life. I want to tell you right now that if you don't know Christ like that, what I... can I encourage you to reading the gospel of John? And when you get done with the gospel of John move, maybe to the gospel of Mark. You have got to know the life of Christ.

I would like to ask you: Have you read your entire Bible through? But right now that seems like an obstacle that is just beyond comprehension for you. So how about this? Why don't you make a commitment that you are going to read the four gospels this year, that you are going to read every single word, every single sentence, every single verse? And you are going to read the gospels until you understand the life of Christ well.

You see, it is incredible to say that he is my Savior. He is my Lord. He is my King and I have no idea what his life was all about.

This is the one that I worship and adore? This is the one that I am crazy about and I have no ability to tell you what he experienced? So E is for experience. It begins with a human birth in which he leaves the glories of heaven and all the angelic worship and all that he enjoyed to be born of a virgin in a dirty, nasty kind of a stable environment amongst animals in a poor home and he grows up to get a preaching ministry in which he is mocked, made fun of, ignored, only to go to a cross.

We need to understand that we have a Savior who, according to the author of Hebrews, we have not a high priest which cannot be... this is not the kind of high priest that ... we don't have a high priest that has no idea what it is like to be a human. Just the opposite. We have one that was in all points tempted like we are, yet without sin.

Let me unpack that for just a minute. That means that when Jesus Christ got a mosquito bite, it itched. That means after he went out to the multitudes and he preached his heart out, his throat hurt. Let's make sure we understand that when he stepped on a rock it hurt.

We should not have this idea that he doesn't know what our life is like. It is just the opposite.

I have alphabetized with I think he experienced just to help you get a better understanding.

He experienced affliction. He experienced agony. He experienced alienation, chastisement, dehydration, death, flesh, grief, humiliation, oppression, pain, rejection, sorrow, suffering, thirst, travail and wrath.

You say, "Preacher, do I have to go over all that every single time?"

No. That is not what I am saying. But if you have no ability to articulate what Christ experienced on the cross, your gospel presentation will be woefully inadequate to communicate God's love. You have to be able to communicate what Christ experienced. You have to help that person understand that he died for you.

We are not talking about lethal injection. We are not talking about a death which preserves the dignity of humanity. It is just the opposite. “How painful can we make it? How miserable can we make it? How humiliating can we make it? Let’s rip hair out. Let’s beat him. Let’s whip him. Let’s mar him. Let’s spit on him. Let’s make sure that every nail hurts.” He experienced the wrath of God when he cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”<sup>18</sup>

And you say to me this morning, “Why are you communicating like this?”

And I say to you, “Check your salvation. Check your salvation, because if these very words don’t resonate with you, something is wrong. Something is wrong. If you can’t imagine why in the world we are talking like this this morning, you are going to die and spend eternity in hell if you don’t repent this morning.”

You are going to. Every single Christian who has been radically changed by the gospel understands what Christ did for them. And when they see him on a cross, it brings them within them tears. It brings within them emotions. It brings within them grief. They cannot fathom that their sin put Christ on the cross. They cannot fathom that God demonstrated his love to us while we were yet sinners Christ died for them (Romans 5:8). They can’t fathom that for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son (John 3:16). They are overwhelmed with that truth.

So G is for God. O is for offense. S is for solution. P is for the person of God. E is for experience, all that he experienced, all that the death of Christ experienced. Everything before the death, everything up to the death and the very death including the burial. E is for experience. And then, finally, to the glory of God L is for live.

### **L is for Live**

This is the good news. This is what I want to tell you about. Christ lives so that we can live in him. That is the good news. You don’t have to die and go to hell. There is hope. Death is not the end. There is life beyond this world. L is for live. L is for live. God didn’t leave him in the grave. He didn’t stay in the grave. Death did not have the victory. Instead, just the opposite. In an effort to demonstrate and to prove to all that he is God, that he was sinless, that he is sinless, that he is the Son of God, he rose from the grave.

L is for live.

Jesus said it like this. “[Truly, truly], I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.”<sup>19</sup>

They are going to live. Dead bodies will walk. Molecular structures will be bound back together and be reunited.

You really believe that? Yes. Yes. I wouldn’t be up here if I didn’t really believe it. I believe this with all my heart, soul and body. I believe this with every fiber in my being.

Jesus said it like this and this is why I know it is the same gospel.

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<sup>18</sup> Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34.

<sup>19</sup> John 5:25.

“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.”<sup>20</sup>

L is for live. You don't have to die in your sin. You don't have to go to hell. There is an alternative. There is a cure for your sin problem. There is no cure for HIV. But there is a cure for S I N. And that cure for S I N is found in the cross of Jesus Christ.

L is for live. Jesus said it like this in John 14:9.

“Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.”<sup>21</sup>

“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world.”<sup>22</sup> Why did you send your Son, God? “That we might live through him.”<sup>23</sup>

God desire is not that you die and go to hell. God's desire is that you repent, turn to him, put your faith in Christ. Be eternally secure.

This is the verse that turned Martin Luther around. This is the verse that we could say almost sparked the entire Protestant Reformation. This is the very verse that God used to draw with Martin Luther's saving faith.

The Bible says, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”<sup>24</sup>

This was the very verse that God used to draw Martin Luther to himself.

“The just shall live by faith.”<sup>25</sup>

By faith--not by works, not by water baptism, not by church membership, by faith.

The writer of Hebrews said it like this. Hebrews 7:25.

“Wherefore he is able [God is able] also to save them to the uttermost [who? those] that come unto God by him.”<sup>26</sup>

So I am immediately reminded of Acts 20:21. “Repentance toward God.” Come unto him. Come unto him. I was going this way in my life. I was worshipping myself. And God called me to himself and when he called me to myself I turned around. That is repentance. I turned around. I am not going the same direction. My life is not the same.

Seeing, seeing he, Christ, liveth. Why does he live? To do what? To make intercession for them.

So here is the question right now and I wish I could go case by case and I would ask you individually. And I would ask you in the most pointed way, to the point of almost embarrassing you. I would ask you. Are you part

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<sup>20</sup> John 11:25.

<sup>21</sup> John 14:19.

<sup>22</sup> 1 John 4:9.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Romans 10:17.

<sup>25</sup> Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38.

<sup>26</sup> Hebrews 7:25.

of the “them” right there? See, that is the plural pronoun right there “them.” Everyone is not included in that them right there. Just because you have a pulse doesn’t mean you are included in that them. Just because you were born doesn’t mean that you are included in the “them.” “Them” is a unique group of people who have been born again. I did not say baptized. I did not say do good deeds. I did not say was a member of a church. These are people who have been born again.

Paul said it like this. “You people, you need to turn from these vanities unto the living God. The emptiness, vanities, emptiness, secular progressiveness is emptiness” (Acts 15:14).

So I will end right now with these and I am just going to answer this question and then we are done. I will be very brief. Give me one more minute of your attention, please.

### **Conclusion**

“Preacher, how do I know if my faith in Christ is real? How do I know? How can I know if my faith this morning is real? I mean, I believe in him, but the Bible says that even the demons believe in him. So how do I know if my faith is saving faith?”

Jesus said it like this.

“I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever.”<sup>27</sup>

Eat this bread? Preacher, how do I eat Christ? How do I eat Christ? This doesn’t make sense to me.

“If any man eat this bread...”<sup>28</sup>

I mean, surely he is not talking about the communion wafer. That... just consuming the wafer, that doesn’t mean you are saved. What does he mean, “Eat this bread”?

I am going to use this word (consume) and it means almost the same thing. Bob, if I said to you I am consumed with NASCAR, I am consumed with NASCAR, what kind of things would you expect to see in my life if I was consumed in NASCAR? Help me out, please, folks. Say something, please.

“You would see a ball cap,” good.

What? “A NASCAR t-shirt.”

What else? “Tickets from races.”

What else? Come on. Help me, folks? What is that? Commemorative plates, collectibles? I would have a favorite driver.

If you could look at my DVR recordings what kind of DVR recordings would you see? You would see races, right? Because I am consumed with NASCAR.

Let me say it like this. If any man is consumed with Christ he shall live forever.

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<sup>27</sup> John 6:51.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

Are you consumed with Christ? Do you enjoy Christ-centered songs? Do you enjoy Christ-centered preaching? Do you enjoy Christ-centered Sunday school lessons? Do you enjoy the gospels of Christ?

“Well, preacher, I am kind of bored with it all.”

I don't know that you can be assured of your salvation. I don't know that. You see, if I told you that I was consumed with skiing, but I had no equipment and I never went skiing... and when I talked about skiing you really couldn't tell that I enjoyed it. And when I showed up on the slopes I looked like I had never been on a slope before, you would say, “Preacher, either you are lying or you are very confused on what it means to be consumed with something.”

I want you to check your salvation this morning. And I want to ask you. I want you to ask this question. If someone examined my life, could they get any sense that I am consumed with Christ?

Paul said it like this in Galatians 2:20. Please don't depart. Stay with me.

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”<sup>29</sup>

Can I ask you this morning? Is there any evidence that the Spirit of Christ lives inside you? Is there any evidence in your parenting? Is there any evidence in your marriage? Is there any evidenced in your worship? Is there any evidence in the way you run your small business? Is there any evidence in the way that you are a college student? Is there any evidence in the way that you teach your class at a Monday through Friday? Is there any evidence in the way you run your business out at Fort Bragg? Is there any way evidence in the way that you run your battalion? Is there any evidence in the way that you run your staff or your squadron or your team? Is there any evidence that Christ is living inside you? Does the Spirit of Christ live in you? Could anybody accuse you of being a follower of Christ by the decisions you make, the choices you make, the way you vote? If we opened up your checkbook would there be an indication that the Spirit of Christ lives within you? Or would your spending habits be exactly the same as the world's spending habits?

Let's pray.

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<sup>29</sup> Galatians 2:20.