***The Doctrine of Hope

Colossians 1:3-8

COL-037***

We are studying Colossians 1:3-8. Our subject is, "Thanksgiving for the Colossians," segment number 15.

**Hope**

There's an old adage that says, "Hope springs eternal in the human breast." This hope of man in his own ability has no certainty of fulfillment, though it may persist with all sincerity. In contrast, when the Bible speaks about hope, which is provided by God, it is speaking about something which is always certain of fulfillment. So, hope, which is based upon the promises of God, is a source of comfort and of repose to the believer.

The apostle Paul, here at the opening of the book of Colossians, thanks God for the hope which is firmly held by the Colossian Christians of spending their eternity in heaven. They have believed the gospel of free grace salvation through Jesus Christ. So, they possess a favorable and a confident expectation of entering heaven after death. The unseen joy of an eternity in heaven with God is the object of their hope of which Paul speaks in Colossians 1:5: "Because of the hope laid up for you in heaven."

This hope of personal salvation from hell, and entrance into heaven, is a sure thing stored up for each believer in heaven. This future treasure is the primary blessing, I remind you, that God has for believers upon which our eyes should focus, and around which we should live. Each day brings us closer to experiencing the fullness of salvation which God has stored for us in heaven. The blessings, as multiplied as they may be, that God gives us here on this earth, should not be our primary focus and our primary occupation. Our attention and preoccupation should be with heaven. That is where it's at for us – not here.

So I stress to you that this subject of personal hope should guide you to look in terms of eternity. Heaven is where you are going to spend your time. This is a trivial moment in your existence that you are spending here on this earth. Hope focuses on our future in heaven, and that is then how we should live.

**The Doctrine of Hope**

1. **A Confident Expectation**

So, here are some points to bring all this together on the doctrine of hope. First, the Old Testament Hebrew and New Testament Greek words for "hope" uniformly connote a confident expectation which is, in time, realized. It's not a "hope-so" possibility. It is always a reality. This is illustrated in the Old Testament in Psalm 42:5, "Why are you in despair, O my soul, and why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God. For I shall again praise Him for the help of His presence." Whatever may come in life, our hope can be in God who is most certainly going to fulfill his promises to us."

In the New Testament this is illustrated in 2 Corinthians 1:10: "Who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us: He on Whom we have set our hope, and He will yet deliver us."

So, it is clear that, in the Old Testament, the word "hope" is a sure thing; and, in the New Testament, the word "hope" is a sure thing. "Hope" in the Bible does not ever connote some degree of uncertainty of fulfillment. Hope for a Christian is the waiting for a sure thing which has been promised to him by God.

1. **Not a Fearful Expectation**

The word and the idea of "hope" was not used in the ancient world in the Biblical sense of a confident expectation of good in the presence of God. When they used the word "hope," it was a fearful anticipation of something that they sought to evade. It wasn't a hope for something good.

1. **The Apostle Paul**

Hope is a favorite concept with the apostle Paul. . . . In the New Testament, all the writers used the noun "hope" 51 times. Of those 51 times, 36 of them are used by the apostle Paul. And mostly, interestingly enough, guess which book he uses it in mostly? Romans, because that is the book, interestingly enough, that is designed to talk about how to have eternal life.

1. **Enlightening the Believer's Soul**

The next point is that hope is the product of Bible doctrine enlightening the believer's soul. Hope doesn't come just out of no place. It springs from the enlightenment of the Word of God. Ephesians 1:18 teaches us this, when it says, "I pray that the eyes of your heart (your mind) may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." And how is the mind enlightened? With the Word of God.

1. **God is the One Who Gives Hope**

Then, God is characterized in the Bible as the one who gives hope (Romans 15:13). The gods of the pagans never gave them hope. But it is characteristic of our God to give us hope. Romans 15:13: "Now, may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace".

1. **Justification by Grace through Faith**

The gospel expresses the Christian's hope of justification by grace through faith. We have that shown us in our book of Colossians 1:23, "If indeed you continue in the faith, firmly established, and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister." So, the gospel expresses our hope of justification by an act of faith in Christ.

1. **The Gospel Gives a Double-Hope**

Then, the gospel presents the believer with a double hope. We have this in Colossians 1:4-5 that we're studying right now. There is hope for today in relief from the miseries that are imposed by the old sin nature; and, there is hope for a stability in our souls in the form of a spiritual maturity structure. That is the hope for today. There's a double hope though: a hope for the future. And that is the return of Christ for our personal resurrection, for an existence where there is no more pain; no more tears; no more sorrow; and, a status of complete sinless perfection. That is what we are hoping for. And the Bible tells us that you should hope for relief from the miseries of your sin nature now. If you live by doctrine, and you're in temporal fellowship, that's exactly what will happen. And you should have hope for stability in your spiritual life. If you are attending church and being taught, and learning the Word, that's exactly what will happen. And then the hope for the future: you'll most certainly someday be raised to a perfect fellowship with God, and with a perfect body.

1. **Jesus Alone is the Believer's Hope**

The next point is that Jesus alone is the believer's hope. 1 Timothy 1:1: "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, according to the commandments of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, Who is our hope." That is no simple statement. Jesus Christ alone is a believer's hope. He is any human being's hope. Any human being who does not center his hope for escape from hell and eternity in heaven on Jesus Christ is doomed. Only those who hope in Christ are going to make it into heaven.

1. **No Hope Apart from Jesus Christ**

Then, apart from a personal relationship to Jesus Christ in salvation, a person stands with no hope in life. Ephesians 2:12: "~Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Here the apostle is describing the status of we gentiles. We were without hope – absolutely without hope, until Christ came, and the gospel was made known to us. Apart from a personal relationship to Jesus Christ in salvation, a person stands with no hope in life.

We saw the sad spectacle of Yitzhak Rabin's granddaughter standing up and talking about her grandfather, and wishing him that the angels would now guide him. Well, it was a moment of great sadness, for the granddaughter has not grasped the horrendous thing that has happened to her grandfather, who has rejected Jesus Christ, and thus has no hope. She was quite correct biblically that when a Christian dies, the believer comes to consciousness, the moment after death, of the fluttering and the happy sounds of angels about him – his escort detail that brings him into heaven. Every believer is carried into heaven in the arms of those angels, and brought into the Lord's presence. The only angels Yitzhak Rabin is dealing with now are the demonic angels in the area of Hades held with him in the common suffering, awaiting the opening of the gates of Hades, and their escort into the lake of fire. Apart from a personal relationship to Jesus Christ in salvation, a personal stands with no hope in life. And if he thinks he's got it, he's kidding himself.

1. **Eternal Life in Heaven is a Certainty for Believers**

The next point is that hope anticipates eternal life in heaven as a certainty – a sure thing. Titus 3:7 says, "That being justified by His grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." We have been justified by His grace. You know what justified means, don't you? It means that you have been declared absolutely perfect. You have absolute righteousness imputed to your credit. Therefore, you have a hope that is going to be fulfilled of eternal life.

1. **The Believer will Experience Absolute Righteousness**

Hope causes the believer to anticipate absolute righteousness in his experience some day. You and I all positionally possess absolute righteousness, but won't it be nice when we have that righteousness in our conduct? Galatians 5:5 says, "For we, through the Spirit by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness." And he is referring to absolute righteousness in our experience. And we have that hope, and it is a true hope.

1. **God Takes Pleasure in those who Hope**

God takes pleasure in those who hope, or wait for his mercy. We have that indicated to us in Psalm 33. In the Old Testament, the word "mercy" is the word "lovingkindness." Psalm 33:18: "Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him (who respect Him); on those who hope for his lovingkindness." It is our hope that gives us the anticipation of God's mercy. And in Psalm 119:11, the psalmist says, "The Lord favors those who fear Him; those who wait for His lovingkindness." God takes pleasure in those who hope and wait for His mercy.

1. **Eternal Life**

The grace of God has provided the believer with a good hope of eternal life in glory. This is referred to in the book of 2 Thessalonians 2:16: "Now, may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God our Father, Who has loved us and given us eternal comfort, and a good hope by grace." God's grace has provided us with a good hope of eternal life.

**The Blessed Hope**

We have also been presented with a blessed hope. The return of Jesus Christ in the rapture for His saints is called "the blessed hope." We have that in Titus 2:13, "Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ."

1. **The Living Hope**

The believer also has the living hope. What is the living hope? Physical resurrection. We have this in 1 Peter 1:3. Peter says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, according to His great mercy, has caused us to be born again, to a living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." You and I have a hope that is absolutely true in terms of resurrection. So, it doesn't matter what the physical problems are that we may now struggle with. And at some point in time, those physical problems become very serious. They come to the degree where the body is simply shut down, and the person is taken to heaven. But we have an absolute hope that, at the rapture of the church, we will all receive a resurrected body that will be just as glorified and perfect as is the body of Jesus Christ.

1. **The Better Hope**

Then Christians also have a better hope than the Old Testament saints under the Mosaic Law, which made nothing perfect for them. We have this in Hebrews 7:19: "For the Law made nothing perfect. And on the other hand, there is a bringing in of a better hope through which we draw near to God."

It is sometimes hard for us to put ourselves in the place of an Old Testament saint who had no power, and no capacity to do right, and yet the whole message of the Old Testament was: "Do right, and I'll bless you." So, the poor believer tried to do right, from a great king like David on down, and he could not do right. And the result was what? He did wrong. He had to come to the priest with his sacrificial lamb; make his confession that way; and, go on. Now we Christians have a much better hope. We actually have the capacity to do right. We actually have the capacity to obey the ten commandments, which they never did. They struggled; they tried; and, they botched it every time. We can do it. We have the capacity of obeying the Word of God. That's why we have a better hope for a life of righteousness than the Jew ever did.

1. **Joy and Peace**

The joy and peace which comes from believing in Christ produces abundant hope in the soul through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. That's what the Jews never had. This Spirit of God never indwelt them on a permanent basis. Romans 15:13 says, "Now, may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." The Christian life is to be a life of joy and peace because you have the hope which is given to you by the indwelling Spirit, of all the things that God has promised. Christians should not be a dull grim group of people. They should be a happy lot. Christians should be fun people. And if you're not a fun person, then start being it. That is your proper role as a Christian.

1. **Experiencing the Glory of God**

Salvation provides the believer with the sure hope of experiencing the splendor and brilliance of the glory of God. As if it's not enough to be saved, and to escape the lake of fire, now God is going to dress us in His own glory? Romans 5:2, "Through whom we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we exalt in hope of the glory of God." We rejoice in the fact that we have the hope, which will be fulfilled, of being surrounded by the glory of God. The thing that Adam and Eve so carelessly, and in such a cavalier manner (such indifference) reached up like throwing a switch on the wall, when they sin, they flicked off the glory of God that surrounded them. And when we come into God's presence in heaven, the switch is going to be thrown the other way, and each one of you are going to be illuminated like a Christmas tree in brilliance beyond anything you can imagine now. That is our hope, and that is our promise from God, and that is a certainty of fulfillment.

1. **Glorification**

Then, Christ in the believer is the basis of the Christians hope of glorification. In Colossians 1:27 we read about that: "To whom God will, to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Because Christ is in us, our glorification is a sure thing.

1. **Israel's Hope was the Expectation of the Arrival of the Messiah**

Then Israel's hope was the expectation of the arrival of the Messiah. Acts 28:20: "For this reason, therefore, I requested to see you, and to speak with you, for I am wearing this chain for the sake of the hope of Israel". The apostle Paul was speaking to the Jews in Rome and saying, "I am in prison because I have been telling you about the Messiah, which is your hope that you have been looking forward to, and that you have been expecting, and which you don't realize has already come." All the poor Jewish people today still do not understand that their hope has arrived. The Messiah has come, and they, because of the blindness put upon them by their forefathers in rejecting Him, will someday find to their great sorrow, that what they had been hoping for was right under their noses all the time.

1. **Hope Stabilizes the Soul Like an Anchor**

The next point: hope stabilizes the believer soul like an anchor. Hebrews 6:17-19: "In the same way, God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, in order that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement – we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul: a hope, both sure and steadfast – the one which enters into the veil." Yes, it's very easy to get up and give some glowing testimonies at the Thanksgiving Day service when things have gone well for you. But it is when the tragedy strikes, when the things beyond human ability to deal with or to correct have come upon you and when you find yourself indeed with the kiss of death upon you – then you will demonstrate whether you have an anchor in your life or not. Then you will demonstrate that you have the manhood and the womanhood that only the anchor in Christ and the knowledge that doctrine gives you to meet that with stability. Hope stabilizes the believer's soul. That is his anchor.

1. **Confidence and Rejoicing**

Hope in the Bible is characterized by confidence and rejoicing in the believer who is oriented to doctrine. Hebrews 3:6 says, "But Christ was faithful as a son over his house, whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope until the end." The believer's hope is characterized by a confident rejoicing in everything that the Word of God tells us.

1. **Christians Meet Suffering with Hope**

Christians are to meet suffering in the hope of the grace of God, to be showered upon them at the return of Christ for them. 1 Peter 1:13: "Therefore, gird your minds for action. Keep sober in spirit. Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." This is why I have stressed to you, as this verse does: do not become preoccupied that what God has done for you in salvation is what you are fully enjoying here now. This is nothing. This is not where it's at for us. This is not where salvation is. We have peace. We have relief. We are not eating our hearts out with agony over what's going to happen if we pass on. But what God has done for us in salvation is all going to be realized in heaven. Therefore, that should be the focus of our living.

1. **Hope of Resurrection**

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the basis of the believers' hope of resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15:16-23, "For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless, and you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished, and we, who have hoped in Christ in this life only – we are of all men most miserable." And then he goes on and says, "But Christ has been raised from the dead. In Adam all died, but in Christ have all been made alive." And in verse 23: "Each in his own order: the firstfruits; after that, those who are Christ at His coming." There are various orders of resurrection, all part of the first resurrection, but all of us who are believers have that as our hope.

1. **Faith and Hope are Closely Connected**

Then faith and hope are closely connected. We're told in Hebrews 11:1 that: "Faith gives assurance to our hopes." We're told in Hebrews 11:1, also that: "Faith is the evidence of the things that we hope for." We're told in Romans 4:18 that: "Faith in God's promise gave Abraham hope for what was deemed impossible – to have a child in his old age." And Hebrews 6:18-19 tells us that: "Faith gives a believer hope in a salvation which he cannot now see. So, faith and hope are closely connected. If you know what God promises, and you believe the promises, then you have hope. If you do not know the promises you cannot have hope. If you know the promises but won't believe them, you cannot have hope. But all these great things make what we cannot see real. It is faith in what God says that gives us assurance, and that's the evidence of the things we're going to have.

1. **Love Produces Hope**

Mental attitude love produces unlimited hope in the believer. 1 Corinthians 13:7 says, "Love bears all things; believes all things; it hopes all things; and, it endures all things." This is mental attitude love that produces unlimited hope in the believer. The believer who is moving with mental attitude good love is always an optimist. His chin is never dragging, no matter how tough the times. His love for God and love for man keep him at that highest level of operation.

1. **Hope of Being Conformed**

Then, hope of being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ is the motive for personal purity. That's another stress upon thinking about heaven in terms of the now. 1 John 3:3 says, "And everyone who has this hope – being in heaven, and being like Christ (verse two, before it, says), fixed on Him, purifies Himself just as He is pure." This world is a really filthy place today. This world is a horrendous place. . . . This is a gross environment which our children must be reared in. And it takes some strong young people, who have anchored their souls with the hope that God's promises will be fulfilled for them, who will seek to live in the image of Christ. And when they know that someday they will be like Him, then they begin living like Him now. They begin pursuing personal purity. It's a great motivation to teach your children that someday they will be like Jesus, and that now is the time to start acting like that.

1. **Freedom from the Fear of Death**

The Christian hope provides freedom from the fear of death. That's obviously self-evident. 1 Thessalonians 4:13 spells it out, "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep (Christians who have died); that you may not grieve as do the rest who have no hope." And if you've ever been to a funeral service where the person who has died is not a Christian, and the people of the family are not Christians, they're all no-hope people. Boy, that is a terrible scene. I don't perform funeral services anymore as I did. I don't perform marriages; and, I don't perform funerals – both sides of the coin, for anybody except my church members. It has to be a really an exceptional thing. But funerals and marriages that I have to deal with are only within this congregation. So, I don't have that experience that I used to have of seeing the blowups right there in the funeral parlor, when it came down to finally putting that lid down for the last time. And these people are out of their gourds with terror and agony, because they have no hope.

The Christian has freedom in the face of death. This is why I believe that, in military combat, a soldier who is well-versed, and who is filled with the knowledge of the Word of God, and who is in temporal fellowship, is nearly invincible in the field of battle. And there are Scriptures which indicate that to us as David did: "It is Your Word that has protected me in the hands of my enemies in the midst of battle." Psalms 144:1: "And you have taught my hands," David said, "to do war." That means that you taught me to take the right action at the right time in the heat of battle. And the Christian has a stability in combat because he has no fear of death. That's the other part. Anybody who's been in the military service, especially in a wartime situation, and in a hazard zone, you know that it is standard operating procedure that you must expect to be killed. You must expect that your life might be taken by the enemy. And you should have stability from the time you wake up in the morning, and you go through the day, and especially when you are in close contact with people who would like to do you in, and all they have to do is find a moment to do it, even if they're your prisoners. It is the Christian who has freedom from death, who has the stability to be able to do that job and keep thinking.

1. **Be Prepared to Give a Reason for your Hope**

Next, the Christian is to be prepared to give a reason for his hope of eternal life in heaven. 1 Peter 3:15: "But sanctify Christ as Lord in your heart (set Him apart), always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence." Give the gospel to people. Be prepared to explain why you have this hope of eternal life, and you're so certain of it. And they may reject it, and say, "Well that's too simple. I don't believe that. No, that's not how I've been taught." If they say that, don't end your conversation, "Well, okay, just go to hell then." Do it with gentleness and kind courtesy.

If you want to say something like that, say, "Well, let me give you some sincere advice, in view of what you think and what you believe, over against what the Bible says, just don't die." And I have said that to people. I just say, "Well, just don't die." And it's a little gentler way of saying the same thing, because the consequences are going to be horrendous. And for some, it might be a sobering thought. But it is our job to be prepared to give an answer for that. Before we're through with this little segment, we're going to go over the gospel just to be sure that you know how to give the bad news (bing bing); the good news (bing bing); and, the conclusion to be taken (bing). You must know that. You must know it concisely and precisely. When we're through with our Christmas program, this is going to be drilled in Chapel in all of our students, and they're going to practice leading each other into salvation, until they know have this down cold. So, if they ever come across an accident, and a person is dying, they're going to know exactly what to say: 1, 2, 3, in line.

1. **Personal Happiness**

Next, hope is the ground of the believers' personal happiness. Romans 12:12 points this out, "Rejoicing in hope." All your personal happiness is based upon hope. If you do not have a hope of eternal life, no matter what you have; no matter what you do; and, no matter what you become, you will never be happy. Hope in Christ is the basis of all personal happiness.

1. **Protection from Human Viewpoint Ideas**

Furthermore, hope is a helmet that protects the believer's thinking from human viewpoint ideas. 1 Thessalonians 5:8: "But since we are of the day (we Christians) let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation." And there you have all three again, don't you? We have the breastplate of faith. That is the sum of doctrine. That protects the most vital part of the body, the breastplate area. And we have metal attitude goodwill love, which also protects the believer. And then to protect his thinking, he has the hope of salvation. It is that hope of eternal life that keeps you from being dissuaded by false religions and human viewpoint.

1. **Hope is One of the Three Greatest Christian Virtues**

Hope is one of the three greatest Christian virtues in the Christian life. The famous passage for that is 1 Corinthians 13:13, "But now abides faith, hope, and love: these three. But the greatest of these is love, for out of love flows everything else."

1. **We will never be Ashamed of our Hope**

Then, the next point is that God's love for the believer will ensure that the Christians will never be ashamed of his hope of experiencing the glory of God. It would be a terrible thing to be humiliated, as Yitzhak Rabin now stands in personal humiliation because he's got all of his emotions. He's personally humiliated. Here was a man who, all of his life, has been a soldier, and a splendid soldier, and has led the nation well down the road to a peace that is a false peace, but nevertheless, in a direction that all the nation wants to go, and now he's embarrassed. He's humiliated because he gave the nation the wrong direction on Jesus Christ; and, kept talking about the fact that Israel needs the Messiah now. Yitzhak: he's already there, general. And now it is hope for experiencing the glory of God that is a true hope in the Bible that keeps us from ever being ashamed when we go on the other side.

In Romans 5:5, we read, "And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." That capacity to have mental attitude love is the fulfillment of the hope. It's a down payment on that hope of eternal life.

1. **Hopelessness is Alien**

Then, the attitude of hopelessness is completely alien to the Christian life. Something is wrong if you have a spirit of hopelessness. 1 Thessalonians 4:13: "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep (Christians who have died), that you do not grieve as the rest who have no hope." That is our passage again that hopelessness is alien to the Christian life. It's not our way.

So, there in brief is a quick summary from one end of the Bible to the other of the basic points of what the Bible teaches about the doctrine of hope – our sure and firm expectations that God will keep His Word.

Now back to Colossians 1:5: "Because of the hope that we have, and now this hope is laid up for you in heaven." Now we come to a point of a preview of a message. Paul says, in reference to this hope, "which you previously heard about" – this concept of going to heaven. Paul says, "I know you've heard about this. You have previously heard about this. And the Greek word here means that you received information about this. You received news of: information, in the sense of hearing a message. And previous to the apostle Paul writing this book, they had heard the message about grace salvation, and the hope of eternal life. And they heard that, he says, in the Word. The Greek word here is "logos" (log'-os), L O G O S. The word "logos" refers to an idea, and thus to a message. And this is the message of truth. This is the truth which refers to something which is compatible with reality. And it is applied to the word "word." "Word" and "truth" go together in the grammar here. So, it is the word which is the truth; or, the message of truth is what he's referring to.

**The Gospel**

Now, what is the message of truth out of which all of this hope, that we have just summarized for you, that the Bible speaks of, will flow from? It is the gospel. In the Greek Bible, the word "gospel" is "euaggelion" (yoo-ang-ghel'-ee-on) It is spelled E U A G G E L I O N. This word means "good news" or "good message." From it we get the English word the "evangel." The "evangel" refers to the gospel. This word is applied in the New Testament to the divine provision of free grace. Whenever the Bible speaks about the "euaggelion" (the good news), it is referring to free grace salvation – salvation through Jesus Christ as a gift from God on the basis of faith in Christ. This gospel is based on the death of Jesus Christ in payment for the sins of the whole world. This is taught us in 1 John 2:2: "And He (Jesus Christ Himself) is the propitiation (the satisfaction) to God the Father for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world."

This is the verse, among many others, that enables us to understand that when Jesus Christ died, He died for the sins of all mankind, including those who are now in Hades, who eventually will be in the lake of fire. That is the great tragedy of their future. They're not going to be in there because of their sins. Their sins are all paid for. Sin is no longer an issue before God. And that's why we do not preach to people who are lost about their sins. They may clean up their sins, as many moral people do today, especially if they're like Mormons – they're very moral. They still have their moral guilt upon them, which has not been forgiven because they have not accepted Christ as personal savior. They have a works salvation where they must deserve the merit of Christ. This verse tells us that you can clean up your sin and be perfect, but you're still going to go to the lake of fire. But Christ has died for those sins. The thing that keeps you out of heaven is focusing upon your goodness instead of the goodness of Christ, and accepting His payment.

**Believe**

This gospel message is to be received by believing in Jesus Christ as one's personal savior. Act 16:31: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Dr. Chafer at Dallas Seminary, in class when we would talk about evangelism, would repeatedly stress to us that it is our duty as Christians to give people the gospel. You should know how to give a gospel that isn't all botched up, and all confused with pop Christianity modern terms that don't mean anything. But he said, after you have presented the gospel, you can't stop there. You now must tell a person what to do with the information. Once you have given him the gospel, you must now tell them what to do with it. And that is that they must believe it. Once they know it, they must either accept this as God's truth, or God's deceit; and, they make the choice.

This gospel message is summarized for us in 1 Corinthians 15:1-5. Paul says, "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel (the evangel – the euaggelion) which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain." Paul says, "If you believe the gospel I gave you, then you're saved. If you believe something else, then you have believed in vain."

Verse three: "For I delivered to you, as of the first importance that I also received, that Christ died for our sin according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, proving that salvation was accepted to the Father, and that He appeared to Cephas, and again to the 12." This is a summary of the gospel. Christ bore your sins. He died in payment for those sins. The proof that He had paid for your sins was His resurrection from the dead, and His resurrection was confirmed by eyewitnesses – hundreds of them.

Colossians 1:5 speaks of the Word of Truth previously heard. The word of truth is an apposition to the gospel; that is, it is the same thing. So, we may translate it as "the Word of Truth," which is the gospel. The gospel is the Word of Truth. Ephesians 1:13 puts it this way: "In Him you also, after listening to the message of truth (the gospel) of your salvation, having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise." So, in the Bible the terms, "the truth" and "the gospel" are interchangeable. So, “obeying the truth" and "obeying the gospel" are identical meanings – "the truth of the gospel."

Galatians 2:5 refers to that when Paul says, "But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you." Here, Paul is stressing the fact that he did not yield to the Jews: to their trying to impose Judaism upon Christianity – to impose rituals like circumcision. He said, "I didn't yield to them for a moment, so the truth of the gospel might remain with you. I would not let them dilute the truth of the gospel.

Notice Galatians 2:14: "But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, 'If you, being a Jew, live like the gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the gentiles to live like Jews?" This was the occasion when Peter was intimidated by the Jews at Antioch, and the leaders there. So, he compromised on going along with the rituals of Judaism. It is unbelievable that Peter would do this – compromise the gospel with the rituals of Judaism. Paul came along, and he faced Peter face-to-face, and he said, "You know that you're wrong, Peter. How dare you let these clowns who are ignorant; these men who are Jews; and, these men who are leaders of religion but who are going spend eternity in the lake of fire – and you allow them to contaminate the truth of the gospel. The gospel is the truth. And any twisting of it is no longer the truth.

You and I must remember that the people whose voices you hear on the public media, who are the prominent people that the news reports on (the significant thinkers) – these are all people who are going to end up in the lake of fire. And when I listen to those people, I look upon them, and I see the flames about them, and I'm not impressed with them. I'm not impressed with their supposed wisdom because I know that they're spewing out human viewpoint nonsense. Why? Because they have not begun with the basic truth, which is the gospel. If you're not saved, you know nothing about the truth. Or you may be saved, and you're a Carnal Christian out of fellowship, fighting the Word of God. And don't think that there aren't Christians like that. You'd be amazed how Christians will fight the Word of God to maintain something that is not true that is desirable for them, and that they have a sympathy for. If you do not have the gospel, or if you are not true to it, you do not have the truth.

So, the gospel of the grace of God is nothing less than the truth; the whole truth; and, nothing but the truth. It is a message beyond all human imagination and invention. If man, on his own, were told to create a way to get to heaven, he never comes up with the gospel of grace salvation – never. When the religions of the world create their own plans of salvation, they're always making themselves worthy of salvation. They always use their good works to carry them through. The imagination of man and the invention of man does not come up with a Bible gospel. Nothing can be added to the gospel of God nor subtracted from it if it is to remain the truth. No compromise is possible.

Also, there is no such thing, folks, as "another gospel." A false gospel is not another gospel. I want you to notice Galatians 1:6-7. The apostle Paul was fighting the Galatians who were overwhelmed with Judaism and false gospel truth said, "I'm amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel, which is really not another. Only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ." Paul left the churches in Galatia in fine fashion. Here they were at the peak of their faith in Christ, going great guns under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And in came the Judaizers with their religious imposition of the Mosaic Law upon them. And pretty soon, they were a bunch of legalists, trying to please God by how they acted and what they did. And Paul said, "I cannot believe that you have allowed the gospel to be distorted so quickly after my departure – that you have fallen from the freedoms of grace to the enslavement of legalism." And he points out here that they have a different gospel which is not really another. There is no such thing as another gospel. There is not another form of good news about a salvation from the lake of fire. There is no such thing as different roads to heaven. There's no such thing as different roads to heaven.

Now, this is what all the world believes: that there are different roads to God. Each society; each nation; and, each group of people have found their own way to reach God. So the Shintoists have their way. The Confucians have their way. The Islam's have their way. The Jews have their way. The Roman Catholics have their way. And all these people think that they are all going to the same God. There is no need for us to seek another true way of salvation than what is revealed in the Bible, because there is none. All other plans are false and deadly, because there's only one way. The gospel of the grace of God is God's way of saving the lost from hell, and there is no other way. So, it is a false hope from all these religions of the world.

I close with these sobering reminders to you, beginning with Matthew 7:13-14. Jesus says, "Enter by the narrow gate, for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction. And many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life. And few are those who find it. The gate to the sheep fold, the gospel of John 17:2 tells us, is Jesus Christ. The way to eternal life, the gospel of John tells us, is Jesus Christ.

Drop down to Matthew 7:21-23. Jesus says, "Not everyone who says to Me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name was cast out demons, and in Your name performed many miracles.' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness." And who is the great lawless one? Satan, the scriptures tell us. And who are those who practice lawlessness? The unbelievers who are Satan's people.

So, to reject the truthfulness of the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ alone is to impugn the integrity of God. 1 John 5:9-12 tell us that if we don't believe the gospel, we're calling God a liar. Beware of teaching a confusing gospel which detracts from the way of being saved. You yourself must understand the gospel, and not confuse it, as many prominent preachers do, and many large para-church groups are commonly known to do. Get the gospel straight, or you are deceiving people, and you are setting them on the wrong road. There's one way and only one. And that is the gospel of free grace salvation – a gift from God. The gospel and the gospel of God alone is the truth. Get it straight. Father, we want to thank You for the hope that we have of a gospel that's going to take us to heaven.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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