***The Nature of the Gospel  
  
RV182-01***

Out subject is "The Angelic Pronouncement." This is segment number two in Revelation 14:6-7.

**Most of the Human Race is Doomed**

One of the primary attacks which is made by the people of the world against the Bible is that it teaches a way of salvation which dooms most of the human race to an eternity in the lake of fire. The human race, by and large, rejects the biblical plan of salvation, and they have followed instead a different plan. But people are quite right when they say that the Bible presents a way of salvation, a pathway into heaven, which dooms most of the human race to the lake of fire.

Notice, for example, 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." Here the Lord Jesus Christ makes it very clear that because He is the way, because He is the gate into eternal life, and He is the way to eternal life, that most of the human race will end up in the lake of fire, because "He is the gate, and He is the way" he will be rejected by the overwhelming number of people born from the time of Adam to the end.

Matthew 22:14 says, "For many are called, but few are chosen. Many are invited. We tell you the gospel. We invite you to consider it. We invite you to accept it, but only here and there does God reach down and flick the blinders off the eyes spiritually so that the person sees the truth of the gospel, and he accepts it. They are the chosen ones.

**Jesus is the Only Way**

John 14:6: "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Me." So, what about the Buddhists? What about the Shintoists? What about the Jews? What about the Muslims? What about the religions of the world where most of the human race resides? They're not going to make it. The path to salvation (to heaven) of the Bible is indeed very restrictive.

Acts 4:12: "And there is salvation in no one else. For there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." Those who reject Jesus Christ as the God-man Savior have no hope.

Romans 3:28: "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law." Well, what about the Roman Catholics, who teach that you must prove yourself worthy of the death of Christ by your own good works before it can be applied to you? What about the Mormons who say that unless you prove yourself worthy by the life you live, you cannot have the benefits of Christ's death apply to you? That's a works salvation.

However, the chilling verse is Romans 11:6: "But if it is by grace (that is, salvation), it is no longer on the basis of works. Otherwise, grace is no longer grace." Grace and works are mutually exclusive. You may say, "God, I believe in Jesus Christ as my personal Savior, and I am now taking water baptism to wash away my sins." Do you know where you are you going to be? You will spend eternity in the lake of fire, because you interjected a human work (water baptism), and you deny God the ground then to give you salvation without any effort on your part.

Galatians 2:16: "Nevertheless, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law, but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law, since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified." The Jews don't believe that. The Jews will tell you, "That that's wrong. Paul didn't know what he was talking about. The only way a person is justified is by his good works before God." Jews are very adamant on that subject. To them, keeping the rules is the way you make it into heaven.

Of course, Ephesians 2:8-9 makes it very clear that if you take away God's gift basis for giving you salvation, then there is no other way: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves (that is, that salvation is not of yourselves); it is the gift of God, not as a result of works that no one should boast."

In 1 Timothy 2:5-6, Paul says, "For there is one God and one Mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony born at the proper time." What about the Roman Catholics who say that the virgin Mary is the Mediatrix between God and man, and if you want to go to heaven, you must appeal to the mother-god?

Titus 3:5 clinches it: "He saved us not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing by the Holy Spirit."

Human beings, from time immemorial, have sensed within themselves a certain spiritual emptiness, which they have then sought to fill by creating their own religions and their own gods. If someone does not come to you with the gospel message from the Bible to deal with that gnawing concern within you about your future destiny after death, you'll make up your own religion. You will make up your own God. Throughout history, God has demonstrated the impotency and the errors, however, of all man made religion when it comes to securing salvation, because all man-made religions fail at one point: They never satisfy the soul. The individual is never at peace.

In Isaiah 57:20-21, the prophet Isaiah pointed this out when he said: "But the wicked are like the tossing sea, for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up refuse and mud." Have you ever stood on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico as those waves come rolling in, and all that debris gets piled up on the beach? All that dead stuff and all that trashy stuff gets pulled up on the beach. God says, "This is the nature of man: everything within him, out of his sense in nature is disgusting, despicable, and degrading. That's what bothers him. That's why he thinks he should do something before he faces God with all that trash.

In Verse 21, Isaiah says, "'There is no peace,' says my God, 'for the wicked.'" That's why man-made religions never satisfy.

Compare that to Romans 5:1, where Paul says, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah says, "The wicked (the unsaved), with all their religions and their self-made gods, are like the sea throwing trash up on the beach, and they know that something is wrong. But once you have taken God's way of salvation, you are at peace. You are no longer fearful in the face of death. Only those whom the Sovereign Creator has chosen to inform through the Bible have found the only true way of salvation through Jesus Christ as the gift of God. Many, indeed, who have received the gospel of salvation have rejected it, and they have done so to their eternal ruin, and to their eternal sorrow.

Of these, John 3:36 speaks when it says, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life." We Christians do not have a religion. We Christians have a relationship. We who believe in the Son have a relationship with Jesus Christ has eternal life: "But he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides upon him.

It is important as we have come here to the book of Revelation, where we see this angel, near the end of the tribulation, flying high in the atmosphere heavens, visible to all mankind on the earth, and audible so all mankind as he proclaims what is called by John "the eternal gospel." It is fitting and proper that we should remind ourselves what constitutes the gospel. Have you ever been associated with someone for a long time, and been in association with them in church things? And they've been in church, and they've sat in church, and church activities, and all of a sudden, one day they become saved. If that's never happened to you, you're in for a sobering experience.

Just look around this room – these people you know, and imagine that one of them suddenly stood up at the next Lord's Supper meeting and aid, "For the first time in my life, I've understood what it is to be saved as a gift from God. My religious background and experiences clouded that issue. I was given wrong information. I accepted what people taught. I was sidetracked by the failures and the shortcomings of Christians. Instead of having my eyes on God, and my ears, attuned to what he says, I've been watching people and listening to them, and I've been playing Christian. Now I am a Christian.

Boy, that's a sobering experience. It makes you stop and say, "How many other people are sitting in churches, by the thousands, who are going to open their eyes in the lake of fire because they didn't get the gospel straight? The devil never tells you that the gospel is false. The devil never tells you that there is no heaven or hell. The devil never tries to tell you that there isn't a judgment to face. What he does is that he takes what the Bible has to say about how to escape that judgment, and distorts, at some critical point, the gospel message. The devil is the greatest preacher of the gospel on the face of the earth, but he preaches it with a twist. And at the point of the twist, you go completely astray from heaven to hell. He knows exactly how to do it.

**The Good News**

The TV airwaves are full of preachers who are preaching the gospel with a satanic twist that is going to take people who listen to them, and follow their lead into the lake of fire. It is no small thing to understand what the Bible means by the good news of salvation. The target of the angels' message here in the book of the Revelation is all mankind on the earth. The gospel of salvation is presented here with an emphasis on its eternal aspect, which is why it's called the eternal gospel. Not that it's a different gospel than we preach today, the gospel of the grace of God, or a different gospel than what will be preached during the tribulation, the gospel of the Kingdom, which Jesus and the apostles preached which emphasized the good news of salvation, and being part of the Kingdom of God upon this earth. This gospel is eternal because it existed from eternity past to the present as the only way that God can righteously forgive sins and take a person into heaven.

You notice I said that it's the only way from eternity past to the present by which God can righteously forgive sins. God can't just slough off sin. God can't say, "Well, you do deserve to go to hell, but I'm not going to send you there." God's own character demands that the penalty of death be paid for moral guilt. The wages of moral guilt has always been death, and the basis of eternal life has also has always been the payment of that death by Christ for all mankind.

Salvation, therefore, can only be a gift from God to those who believe the gospel. There's no other way that God could offer salvation except as a gift. Once you interject human works or rituals, then you have removed the only ground upon which God can save, which is grace.

So, this angelic pronouncement of the gospel is in fact the last chance that those unbelievers living near the end of the tribulation will have to accept Jesus Christ as personal Savior. It is important to them, as it is to us, that they understand the gospel itself. When we speak about the gospel, we don't mean the whole Bible. When we speak about the gospel, we mean a specific doctrinal truth within the Bible. The word "gospel," as you know, means "good news" – the good news that sinful men now have a way by which they can go to heaven. The gospel tells us of God's perfect remedy for that sin problem through Jesus Christ. The Bible is very explicit on the problem.

**The Sin Nature**

First of all, man is born with the disease of the sin nature. Romans 3:23 tells us that: "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God."

**What is the Glory of God?**

What is the glory of God? You should be able to tell me. The glory of God is absolute righteousness. The glory of God is what Jesus Christ had.

***You have to be as Good as Jesus Christ to go to Heaven***

Every time I have occasion to speak before a group of people, and where I suspect that there may be some who are not believers, I like to slip in the phrase, when talking about the issue of heaven, that: "You have to be as good as Jesus Christ to go to heaven." It's a lot of fun, because the eyes open; the pupils dilate; and, some people's eyes go in opposite directions at the same time. It is a shock. I mean, it is a blow to the solar plexus. And they gasp to try to catch their breath, because their immediate reaction is, "That's crazy. Nobody could be as good as Jesus Christ."

Then I take them off the hook by admitting that, but that God has made it possible for you to be in that position by imputing to you the absolute righteousness of Christ, if you'll accept His death in your behalf. How simple could it be? How much easier could it be? And some people finally get saved when they realize, "Yes, you do have to be terribly good to go to heaven – as good as God Himself. But the only way you can be that good is for God to impute His righteousness, and put you into that position."

**Sin Brings Death**

So, we're born with the disease of sin, but God Himself has made a provision for the solution. Romans 6:23 reminds us that: "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ, Jesus, our Lord."

**A Free Gift which is Secured on the Basis of Faith**

As we've already read, Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us that this salvation is secured on the basis of faith. It's a grace gift. So, the chasm between a Holy God on the one side, and a sinner on the other side, is bridged by the cross of Jesus Christ.

**The Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ**

1 Corinthians 15:3-4, which we have previously looked at, gives us the specific content of the gospel. That verse you should have well in mind. Those two verses tell you that Christ died while bearing your sins, and that the genuineness of His death was demonstrated by the fact that they buried Him as a dead person, and that the reality of payment for your sin was demonstrated by His being raised again to life, which He would not have been had His death not covered your sins, and had His mission not been accomplished.

Consequently, that's the good news. He bore our sins. He died, having paid for those sins. He was buried as proof of death, and He was raised to life as proof of our salvation. The specific content of the gospel you will find in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. That's it.

**Believe**

Now, what do you do with the gospel? Acts 16:31 says, "You believe it: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Now, do you see how confusing it is to people to be given some physical act to perform in order to be saved? Do you see how confusing it is to people to ask you to raise your hand in a service; to ask you to come forward in a service to be saved; to ask you to turn to the person next to and ask their forgiveness for all the terrible things you've always thought of them; to ask you to tell your mother that you're sorry you did love her as much as you should have; to ask you to tell your father that you're sorry that you thought he was as dumb as he is; and, and to ask you all the other things that they can come up with to do in order to get yourself in a position where God will accept you? Those are just variations of Satan's old trick that he did to the Catholics and to the Mormons: "Get yourself worthy, then God will accept you." But you never can get yourself worthy.

You accept it (you believe it), and you do not try to add anything to it. How terrible it is to put people in a position where they try to prove themselves worthy, and where they try to earn what can only come as a gift.

**Simplicity**

Well, some people say, "That's too simple." The Mormons have an interesting analogy. The Mormon says, "Nothing in life is free. Everything of value in life you pay for (you buy)." Well, that's true. That makes good sense. Therefore, they say, "You are mistaken to think that a valuable thing like eternal life and salvation is free without your earning it." So, where do you think Mormons are going to be, who are all trying hard to earn it?

Here is the subtlety of it. If you want to deal with somebody that has a high level of integrity, deal with a Mormon. He'll generally be honest. He's generally fair. He has a great sense of personal integrity, because to him, that's the way that he makes it with God. You can't say that with a lot of Christians. God wants you to accept the fact that He says, "I've done the work for you, and I want you to trust My Son now – that His job was well-done, and I want you to trust Him to take you into heaven." You may say, "That's too easy. That's easy believe-ism." Have you ever heard that? I read that again this week. Some of these Christians teach easy believe-ism. Billy Graham likes to talk about easy believe-ism, and he knows better. He knows that that's how easy it is. It is believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Billy Graham likes to quote John 1:12: "For as many as received Him, to them He gave the power to become the Sons of God." He stops, and I've watched him on TV. I've seen him speaking in a big city to thousands of people in the stadium. And he said, "You see, you must receive Christ to be saved, not just believe." I go to my Bible, and sure enough, the last line is still there: "And to them He gave the power to become the children of God, even to them who believe on His name." Why would Billy Graham leave that out? Why would he suggest that there's something you must do? It is so hard for preachers not to contaminate the Bible, even when people by the thousands are saved under their ministry somehow (because the grace of God gets them in), even though the preacher throws in misconceptions along the way.

If you don't think that it is God's grace way as a gift from God by simply believing, then here's a sobering verse for you in 1 John 5:10, which describes your attitude toward God: "The one who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself." I believe in Christ as Savior. I believe that He has made the provision, and I have the witness of the Holy Spirit within me putting me at ease and at peace: "The one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the witness that God has borne concerning His Son." Now, you count the number of times the word "believe" occurs in just that one verse, as the basis upon which you are saved, and to deny that believing is it is to point your finger at God and say, "You're conning me. Come on. What do you mean? You can't be serious, God, that's just believing that Christ did it for me is all I need to be saved. I don't have to prove myself? I don't have to keep behaving myself after salvation?" None of that is true. Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ: "Believe in Him, and you shall be saved."

**The Nature of the Gospel**

There are some things we need to remember about the nature of the gospel.

1. **The Gospel is Powerful**

One is that we have to be aware that the gospel message is more than words. It is something that has an enormous power. When you utter the words of the gospel to somebody whom God the Holy Spirit has prepared to receive it and to understand it, it is like a blow to them. The words of the gospel are powerful words because the message is the message that God uses to change direction from hell to heaven.

In Romans 1:16, Paul says, "For I'm not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." To whom is it the power? To the one who believes it. The message is a powerful blow to those who can believe it. It is God's power against sin.

1 Corinthians 1:18 says to us, "For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God." So, remember that. When you give the word of the gospel (free grace salvation) to somebody, they may say, "That doesn't make sense. That's dumb. It's foolish." You need to understand why they're saying that. But to those whose eyes are open to the message of salvation, to those that God wants in the family of God, they're going to understand that it is the power of God for salvation. When the power of God through salvation works, a wonderful change takes place in the life of that individual. That's when you realize the impact of the gospel.

2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore, if any man is in Christ." And remember – that's what happens. You believe the gospel; you trust in Christ as your Savior; and, immediately God the Holy Spirit baptizes you into the body of Christ, and he places you in Christ. That's why you're forever secure, because you can't ever reverse that placement. Immediately, you are born again spiritually. You can never reverse a birth: "Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature. The old things are passed away. Behold, all things have become new." He is a new creation. The old things have passed away.

The old things are not talking about your sinful life. You know better than that. Don't use this verse to tell people that if they were really Christians, they wouldn't do some of the bad, sinful things they're doing. This has nothing to do with conduct. A new creature in the Greek is a new creation. This has to do with the fact that you have become a new creation in Christ. Therefore, old things have passed away. What has passed away? The penalty of death upon you has passed away. The destiny of hell has passed away. All of the things that associate being in Adam – that's what passes away. Behold, new things have come that are associated with being in Christ. Your destiny is different. Your outlook is different. Your capacities are different. Not the least thing is that your physical structure is different. The best health in the world, and the best therapy in the world, for any human being is to get born-again and to become a Christian. That has direct effect upon your physical structure. The people who are not in the family of God have several points against them in their physical well-being.

It is the nature of the gospel, first of all, and that it is powerful.

1. **The Gospel is God's Plan**

Secondly, it is important for us to remember, so that we are not intimidated by those who would put us down with our simplistic view of the gospel and how to get to heaven, that the gospel is not a man-made plan. In Galatians 1:11-12, Paul says, "For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man." The gospel which was preached by Paul is described as the gospel of the grace of God. Paul says that this was not an invention of some human being: "For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ."

That's interesting. For three years, Paul was out there alone being taught the doctrines of grace salvation, and the doctrines of the age of the church, none of which were found in the Old Testament. Nobody knew them. The other apostles had basic inklings upon them. It was to the apostle Paul that the full blown doctrines of the grace of God were revealed, and that's why he wrote so many books of the Bible recording those things. That's when he had a greater perspective on what the gospel of the grace of God means. It is not clearly something that somebody has put together. As a matter of fact, any time human beings put together a way of salvation, it is always inevitably based upon human effort – proving yourself worthy. Paul says that that's the first sign you have that you have a gospel that is "another gospel." It's a gospel from Satan.

The gospel that we preach is the gospel of Jesus Christ. 1 Thessalonians 2:9 says this about it: "For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship; how working night and day, so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God." It is God who is the author.

In 1 Thessalonians 3:2, Paul says, "We send Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith." So, clearly the gospel is designed by God the Father, transmitted by God the Son.

Any time human beings get into the act of providing a way of salvation, it always ends up under the description of Proverbs 14:12: There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."

Let me tell you one of the ways that seems right to men. Some of you have told me that you speak to relatives who are in a religious system that tells them that their salvation is only temporary as long as they prove themselves worthy and behave themselves, but it can be lost again. And when you tell them that it's a work of God, and that it requires nothing more on the part of men, they say, "Well, if you're really right about that, just think how much more certain my salvation will be by all my good works." And immediately they have tied the two together in their mind. And you're looking at someone that you better be nice to while they're alive, because when they go over to the other side, they're not going to be around you for you to be nice to again. That is a very dangerous outlook.

1. **The Basis of the Gospel is the Grace of God**

The gospel is powerful. The author of the gospel is God Himself. Therefore, we cannot change it.

The basis of the gospel is the grace of God. Acts 20:24 points this out. Paul says: "But I do not consider my life of any account, as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God." And there's the term, "The gospel of the grace of God." What is that gospel? Well, it is good news that God gives us the opposite of what we deserve. That's why it's good news.

Romans 5:20-21: "The Law came in that the transgression might increase." God made specific laws to show us how bad we are morally: "But where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, that as sin reigned in death, even so, grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." God set forth the rules, and when the rules of what was right and wrong were set forth by God, man was seen to be horribly short: And death reigned. But when Jesus Christ got through with that problem, the teeth of death were pulled, and life eternal reigned instead.

The basis of salvation (the basis of the gospel) is the grace of God. It is based entirely upon God treating us in a way we don't deserve to be treated. Grace is not only undeserved favor. We usually define grace as undeserved favor, but grace is the opposite of what you deserved. It's even more than that you just didn't deserve. It is the opposite of what you deserved. You deserved something totally different. Because it's all of God (its basis is entirely the grace of God) – that's why it’s secure.

In John 10:28-29, Jesus says, "And I give eternal life to them (to those who accept Him), and they shall never perish." It does not say, "They shall never perish unless they go to bad movies, or unless they say bad words, or unless they stay up late watching the late movies, and don't go to school the next day." What are all the terrible things that you could do to lose your salvation? None: Jesus says, "I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish. No one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than everyone, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."

Isn't that something? Do you see the image? Jesus says, "Here you are. I put you right in My hand, and I close My hand around you. And then I take My hand, and God the Father closes His hand around the Son." Now, who's going to get in there to take you out of that secure place? Who's going to get in there to take you out of that double-coverage so that you've lost your salvation?

When you know what the Bible says, you can see how absolutely stupid people are when they come up with their own ideas about the matter of going to heaven.

The nature of the gospel is that is powerful. The nature of the gospel is that its author is God. It is not a human invention. The nature of the gospel is that it's based upon the grace of God, and therefore, an act of God alone.

1. **The Appeal of the Gospel is to Everyone**

The final thing you should remember about the nature of the gospel is its appeal. Everyone is urged to receive it. Everyone is told to consider it. 2 Corinthians 5:20 expresses that when Paul says, "Therefore, we (we Christians) are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating us, we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." That, folks, is your mission. I don't care whatever else you do in life, this is your mission. You know that in military parlance, the mission comes first. Our mission as ambassadors of the living Christ is that we walk around through our day with our spiritual eyes roaming the field to see someone that God raises up for us to give a word of testimony to. I mean that God raises you up and directs you. Do not misunderstand me.

I'm not telling you to walk out of here; go to El Chico's; mill around that waiting crowd; walk up to somebody; and, say, "Are you going to heaven?" They may say, "No, and I don't care." And you could reply, "OK, you're going to hell. How about you? Are you going to heaven?" I'm not telling you to go out there, and like a bull in the china shop, knock it all over. No, I mean that when God has prepared a prepared listening ear for your prepared message. That is the way God works.

However, His appeal is quite rightly that you should be a person who says, "I've been sent by God to appeal to you to be reconciled to Him." Reconciled means that you get on track; you get in tune; and, you get in sync with God's righteousness. God does not have to get reconciled to us. The palms of God and man were together. When man sinned, he turned his back upon God. God never turned his back upon man. We are the ones who need to be reconciled. You never say that we appeal to God to be reconciled to us. That would be quite wrong. It is that we must turn around and face Him, and be reconciled to His standard. We are the ones who are off – not God. When you call the time-and-temperature number, you listen to the time that they give, and then you adjust your watch. What are you doing? You're reconciling it to the absolute standard. How in the world is a sinful human being going to respond to this appeal to get reconciled to the absolute standard of God's righteousness? There is only one way – through accepting Christ as Savior, and the gift of absolute righteousness.

It is obvious that, apart from this good news message of the grace of God, there is no gospel. Its appeal is that it is a message from God. 1 Corinthians 9:16 says, "For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion, for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel." And those of you who get on track with the Lord Jesus Christ; who walk with the Holy Spirit; who are filled with the Spirit; in the inner circle of temporal fellowship; and, who walk with Him because your sins are confessed – those of you who walk like that will feel a compulsion to tell the gospel. No one's going to have to shove a hand in your back and say, "Why don't you tell this person about the Lord?" You will be keeping an eye open for an opportunity, and you'll be like Paul. You'll said, "I'm not ashamed of this. This gospel is a powerful message. It's going to keep you from going over the cliff into the lake of fire. It's going to enable you to spend eternity in a much better place."

Unless you tell the gospel, it cannot have an appeal. And 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 reminds us that when you do tell the gospel, you're telling it to a person who is spiritually blind. That's how everyone is: "Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing."

In another place, in the book of Romans, the apostle Paul says, "There is none righteous; no, not one." Well, we can understand that. But he also says, "There's none that seeks after God; no, not one." That's a little hard for us to accept. But that's true. There's no one by birth going to heaven, and there is no one by nature who looks for God. The only time you begin paying attention to God is when He you taps you and says, "I want you. Take the blinders off, and then you see. That should give you a deep sigh of relief. You should breathe immediately a word of enormous thanksgiving: "Why me?" Out of the mass of humanity, He has unveiled your eyes. Our gospel is veiled. It is veiled to those who are perishing: "In whose case the God of this world, Satan, has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God?" It is Satan who has blinded all these religions to the glory of Jesus Christ, the God-man, who has paid for their sins on Mount Calvary. Instead, Satan gives them a gospel that has a twist to it. Then, instead of taking them into heaven, it takes them into the lake of fire.

**Divine Righteousness is Distinct from Human Righteousness**

It is important for us to understand, therefore, that human and divine righteousness are two totally different things. People reason that the two are the same. Here's what the average person thinks: He thinks that his righteousness is the same as God's righteousness. He thinks he doesn't have as much as he needs. He thinks he's got, say, 60% righteousness, and that 40% that he doesn't have is taking him into the lake of fire. So, he goes to God to get that other 40% wrong. That is wrong. Human righteousness and divine righteousness are totally different. All human righteousness (all human good works) that an unbeliever does contributes to taking him into the lake of fire, because it all comes out of the sin nature. It comes out of the good side of the sin nature. It comes out of the altruistic side of the sin nature, but it is still evil. The more good work you do as an unbeliever, the greater will be the pile of judgment upon you.

**Various Grades of Suffering in Hell**

Please remember that in hell (in the lake of fire), there are there are various grades of suffering. The Lord was very explicit about this. Those who have the greater sin, guys like Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin, are going to be way up at the top. But along with them are going to be a lot of politicians who are shot-through with human good too, like a Supreme Court has says that it's alright to kill your unborn child. Can you imagine what those evil men will face when they get out there into eternity, and face that God with the enormity of the innocent blood that has been shed upon this nation by that single act, when they were in a position of power and authority to impose it upon a society? It is mind boggling. What they intended as a human good is going to add to the degree of their eternal punishment in a horrendous way.

So, human and divine righteousness are two different things. One is not an extension of the other. Since people think they fall short of making it with God, this is why purgatory was invented – to try to make it up on the other side. Divine and human viewpoint are not the same thing.

Note Romans 102:1-3. Paul says, "Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them (the Jews) is for their salvation. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God." You cannot accuse Jews today of not having a zeal for God, but notice the next line: "But not in accordance with knowledge;" not in accordance with doctrine. They do not have a zeal for God in accordance with God's point of view: "For not knowing about God's righteousness (which comes as a gift), and seeking to establish their own righteousness (which comes by their own works – their human righteousness), they did not subject themselves to the divine righteousness of God." In those verses, it is clear that there is a human righteousness and a divine righteousness, and the human righteousness is just not lacking all it needs, but it's a different kind of righteousness. It's no good at all. It's not anything that God accepts. God does His own saving on the basis of His own righteousness.

So, divine righteousness is a facet of God's nature which constitutes His absolute perfection. God cannot do even the slightest wrong thing. He has never done an evil, and He never will. God cannot ignore sin. He must exercise the judgment that His character and His Holiness demands.

On the other hand, while divine righteousness is a facet of the character of God, human righteousness is a facet of the sin nature. That's what we're trying to say. The sin nature, on the one side, is evil; and, on the other side, it is good. On the one side, you've got the kind of person who just, by every standard, is an evil person. That's the thing that is emphasized. But you also have the highly moral Mormon who is just as unsaved, and the strong side of his sin nature dominates. So, he's a very moral person, but he is not a person who has believed the gospel. Human righteousness originates in the sin nature. Therefore, it is evil. And human righteousness (the good stuff out of your sin nature) is what Isaiah 64:6 calls filthy rags. And that is very explicit language in the Hebrew.

No human being is right to any degree whatsoever before God. You have nothing whatever of merit that counts with God's. In Romans 3:10, Paul quotes and Old Testament passage: "It is written here, 'There is none righteous, not even one."

In verse 12, he quotes another Old Testament passage: "All have turned aside together. They have become useless. There is none who does good. There is not even one." You might say, "That's not true. I know a lot of people who aren't Christians who do good things." Do you see the difference? Oh yeah, they do good, but it's human good, and human good with God is evil, and He will punish you for all eternity for your human good. That is the meaning of do-good-ism, when we use that term. It is a terrible thing to be guilty of do-good-ism. What people call righteousness is merely human beings matching themselves up to one another.

When you look around this crowd, and we've got all kinds here. If you want to feel good someday about yourself, just pick out one of these lowlife types here, and compare yourself to them, and you'll just feel splendid how much better you are. But that is just the way one worm is above another worm. That's all. But people match themselves one to another. God says, "No, you've have to match yourself up to God." Absolute perfection is what counts with him, and that's what you have to come up to.

So, Paul describes these people matching themselves against people. In 2 Corinthians 10:12, Paul says, "For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves. But when they measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves with themselves, they're without understanding." This was Paul's nice way of saying, "They're dumb. They compare themselves with one another, and so they think they are something.

This gospel that this angel proclaims from the outer atmosphere one last time to the tribulation world is a gospel which does not save on the basis of people attaining some human righteousness standard, but by attaining the standard of absolute righteousness, which only God can provide through an act of faith in Jesus Christ as personal Savior.

**Mercy**

In Titus 3:5, here it is: "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness (human righteousness – old sin nature stuff), but according to His mercy." The word "mercy" refers to our misery that we need someone to help us with – our misery of being lost: "By the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit;" the washing of the baptism of the Holy Spirit that places us in Christ, and renews us spiritually, causes us to lead to spiritual life. That is the good news of the gospel of the grace of God, and that is the news that we proclaim.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1993

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