



Research article



THE GOSPEL IN ALL OF SCRIPTURE: PREACHING THE NATURE AND CONTENT OF THE GOSPEL WITH CLARITY, CONSISTENCY, AND CONVICTION

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ABSTRACT



The gospel encapsulates God's comprehensive plan and proclamation across the universe. It lies at the core of the Bible and should be central to all preaching. Scripture serves as either a preparation for, a presentation of, or participation in the Gospel. It chronicles God's actions from before creation to the ultimate restoration. The Bible fundamentally documents God's redemptive acts and furnishes us with a clear record of the redemptive acts of God (who God is, what God is like, and what God has done through the person and work of Jesus Christ). Its purpose is not to supply us with a compendium of timeless truths but to tell us what God has done. Gospel-driven preaching, then, reveals the revelation of God's work for fallen humanity.

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Preaching the Gospel Through All of Scripture

The purpose of the Gospel is to reveal to humanity what God has done. It is not an unabridged collection of ethical and religious maxims but a chronicle of God's repeated interventions on behalf of man. God reveals Himself in redemptive activity, which reaches its supreme climax in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Here, God's self-disclosure bursts forth with unexcelled and unprecedented clarity. This clarity should drive preachers to desire to reveal these truths whenever they enter the pulpit.

The revelation of God's actions must be revealed if life transformation will occur. Revelation cannot take place in a vacuum. There is no such thing as a true self-disclosure apart from its apprehension by another.¹ William Temple speaks of revelation as consisting of "the intercourse of mind and event."² Emil Brunner concludes, "The fact of the illumination is therefore an integral part of the process of revelation."³ The nature of proclamation and revelation intersect as they partake of the same nature. God reveals Himself in His actions, and the redemptive activity of God in Christ Jesus is at the very heart of the kerygma. At this vital point, revelation and proclamation become one. Preaching is revelation.⁴ According to John Knox, "Preaching does more than recount and explain the ancient event. The Spirit makes the ancient event in a very real sense, an event even now transpiring, and the preaching is a medium of the Spirit's action in doing so. In the preaching, when it is truly itself, the event is continuing or is recurring. God's revealing action in Christ is, still or again, actually taking place."⁵ The essential nature of preaching, then, is the connecting of God's redemptive actions through the person and work of Christ, combined with or to human awareness of these actions and works.⁶

The essential nature of the Gospel message is often hindered by human rebellious actions and lack of desire to hear the message, not necessarily the incapacity to grasp the absolute need for the saving message. It is not so much a question of not being able to understand as it is of not having the desire to understand. God speaks, but man stuffs his fingers into his ears. Communication is a theological problem.⁷

Proclaiming the Gospel message of forgiveness, redemption, acceptance, recovery, and restoration is a high and lofty calling and responsibility, which requires understanding the

¹ Carl F.H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway 1999), 69.

² William Temple, *Nature, Man, and God* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2003), 235.

³ Emil Brunner, *Revelation and Reason: The Christian Doctrine of Faith and Knowledge* (London: The Westminster Press, 1946), 33.

⁴ Robert H. Mounce, *The Essential Nature of New Testament Preaching* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2018), 152.

⁵ John Knox, *The Integrity of Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1957), 92.

⁶ Mounce, 153.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 157-158.



theological issues surrounding such calling. The depth of responsibility in proclaiming this Gospel message is unmatched in all of humanity, as the proclamation is not of self but the reiteration of what God speaks.⁸

Preachers should understand that eternity hangs in the balance every time they stand in the pulpit, as the eternal destiny of every listener should be examined and worked through. Messages that fail to highlight God's rescuing power and redeeming action can leave the hearer without any hope or possibility of redemption. The responsibility and calling of the preacher, then, is to herald the Gospel message so that the hearer can experience a redemptive encounter with the holy and loving Redeemer.⁹ Preaching is more than mere obligation only. The measure of responsibility is also the measure of privilege. According to James Stewart, "When all is said and done, the supreme need of the church is men on fire for Christ. Men who in the truest sense of the word are heralds of God."¹⁰ The commission to preach, while a solemn trust, is also the greatest honor that can be bestowed upon a man.¹¹

Defining the Gospel

Definitions of the gospel abound in all circles of Christianity, and rather than try and bring a new definition of the term, 'gospel'¹², it seems more pertinent to identify what other great scholars, theologians, and preachers have determined as effective means to define this great word, idea, and message. According to Jared E. Alcantara, "The gospel is an announcement and a call from God through Jesus Christ that welcomes us into covenantal relationship."¹³ According to the Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, "The gospel is the joyous proclamation

⁸ Ibid., 158.

⁹ Mounce concludes, "This is a matter of awesome significance because it involves the eternal destiny of mankind. If God, in redeeming power, be not present in the proclamation of the gospel, man will be swept into an eternity without God and without hope. The fearful responsibility of the Christian herald is so to proclaim the gospel that "The Miracle" takes place, God is there confronting men in judgment and offering divine deliverance. To fail in this crucial obligation is to betray both God and man." Ibid., 158.

¹⁰ James S. Stewart, *Heralds of God* (Vancouver, B.C.: Regent College Publishing, 1946), 220.

¹¹ Mounce, 159.

¹² Michael F. Bird, *Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 490.

Karl Barth explains, "The gospel speaks of God as He is: it is concerned with Him Himself and with Him only. It speaks of the Creator who shall be our Redeemer, and of the Redeemer who is our Creator. It is pregnant with our complete conversion, for it announces the transformation of our creature likeness into freedom. It proclaims the forgiveness of our sins, the victory of life over death, in fact, the restoration of everything that has been lost. It is the signal, the fire-alarm of a coming, new world." Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 37-38.

¹³ Jared E. Alcantara, *The Practices of Christian Preaching: Essentials for Effective Proclamation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 2019), 15.



of God's redemptive activity in Christ Jesus on behalf of man enslaved by sin."¹⁴ The Savior is the content of the gospel and salvation is the goal of the gospel.¹⁵

What the Gospel Is

In the Forward to JD Greear's work, *Gospel: Recovering the Power that Made Christianity Revolutionary*, Dr. Tim Keller explains, "The underlying conviction in my preaching, pastoring, and writing is that the gospel—this eternally fascinating message—can change a heart, a community, and the world when it is recovered and applied."¹⁶ The change in a person's heart and life once they have come to an understanding of and experience with the gospel is amazing, as both are necessary for transformation to occur.¹⁷ Through Christ, God calls humankind out of sin, death, and destruction into repentance, faith, and transformation. Although we wrestle, struggle, fall, and fail, we do so grounded in a gospel of grace and mercy that summons us out of our penchant for self-destruction.¹⁸

The gospel is the good news¹⁹ that God has done something, something for those who could never do something for themselves. According to Mark 1:14-15, "Now after John was

¹⁴ Walter A. Elwell identifies, "The English word 'gospel' (from the Anglo-Saxon *god-spell*, i.e., God-story) is the usual NT translation of the Greek *euangelion*. According to Tyndale, the renowned English Reformer and Bible translator; it signified 'good, merry, glad and joyful tydinge, that maketh a mannes hert glad, and maketh hym synge, daunce, and leepe for ioye (*Prologue to NT*). While his definition is more experiential than explicative, it has touched that inner quality which brings the word to life." Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 1984), 472.

¹⁵ Bird, 494.

¹⁶ Timothy Keller explains, "The gospel is life-giving, because it generates changes that are received only by grace through faith. This foundational truth, however, gets bypassed, obscured, and forgotten, because, as Martin Luther noted, religion forms the default mode of the human heart. It is essential, then, that we distinguish religion from the. Religion, as the default mode of our thinking and practices, is based upon performance: 'I obey; therefore, I am accepted by God.' The basic operating principle of the gospel, however, is, not surprisingly, an about-face, one of unmerited acceptance: 'I am accepted by God through Christ; therefore, I obey.' To truly understand this paradigm shift at a life-altering level requires that the gospel be explored and 'looked into' at every opportunity and in regular, systematic ways." See the Forward in, JD Greear, *Gospel: Recovering the Power that Made Christianity Revolutionary* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), XIV.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, XV.

¹⁸ Alcantara, 16-17.

¹⁹ Bird explains, "The words 'gospel' and 'salvation' go naturally together. In Isaiah, the good news that God is going to show his kingly power and deliver Israel from exile is given in the jubilant words: 'How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, Your God reigns!' (Isa. 52:7). Jesus taught that following him meant saving one's life: 'For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it' (Mark 8:35). Paul's main theme in Romans is this: 'I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile' (Rom. 1:16). In Ephesians, the apostle celebrates the evangelical experience of his audience with these words, 'And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation' (Eph. 1:13). In the Pastorals, Paul states that the grace appearing in Jesus Christ has made Christ the one who 'has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel' (2 Tim. 1:10). In Acts, salvation is linked to gospel preaching (e.g., Acts 2:21, 40, 47; 4:12; 11:14; 16:31), and Paul climactically tells



arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.’²⁰ The gospel is newsworthy because it offers new life for those dead in their trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1-10), freedom for those held in captivity (Isa. 58:6-7; Luke 4:18-19), and the promise of a new reality for a world bound to powers of an age that is passing away (John 3:17; Rom. 2:1-2; Eph. 6:12).²¹ According to JD Greear, “The gospel, and the gospel alone, has the power to produce love for God in the heart. Paul calls the gospel ‘God’s power for salvation’ (Rom. 1:16). There are only two things that Paul ever refers to as ‘the power of God.’ One is the gospel; the other is Christ Himself. As the story of this is proclaimed, the Spirit Himself makes the heart come alive to see the glory and beauty of God revealed in it. As we behold the glory of God in the face of Christ, Paul says, we are transformed into glory (2 Cor. 3:18-4:14).”²²

What the Gospel Is Not

The gospel is not a suggestion, advice, or something we do for ourselves. The gospel is something that has been done for us by God through the person and work of Jesus Christ,²³ which requires a response. What has been done? Rescue.²⁴ The gospel message in the New Testament shows that we are rescued from “the coming wrath” at the end of history (1 Thess. 1:10). But this wrath is not an impersonal force—it is God’s wrath. We are out of fellowship with God; our relationship with him is broken.²⁵ This broken and fractured relationship that

the Corinthians: ‘By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you’ (1 Cor. 15:2). All of these verses show that our entry point into salvation must pass through Jesus Christ and the gospel that communicates his saving work. The New Testament knows of only one form of salvation: given in Christ, proclaimed in the gospel, and appropriated by faith.” Bird, 494.

Barth further explains, “The Gospel speaks of God as He is: it is concerned with Him Himself and with Him only. It speaks of the Creator who shall be our Redeemer and of the Redeemer who is our Creator. It is pregnant with our complete conversion, for it announces the transformation of our creature likeness into freedom. It proclaims the forgiveness of our sins, the victory of life over death, and, in fact, the restoration of everything that has been lost. It is the signal, the fire alarm of a coming, new world.” Barth, 37-38.

²⁰ According to the ESV Study Bible, “These verses summarize Jesus’ preaching ministry. The gospel is the “good news” that the kingdom of God is at hand, meaning that God’s rule over people’s hearts and lives is now being established, and people should repent and believe in the gospel (on repentance and faith, see notes on Matt. 3:2; Acts 2:38). The kingdom is more than simply the rule of the Spirit within people since the kingdom will ultimately include the restoration of all creation (Rev. 21:1). However, Jesus has not yet revealed the fact that the kingdom will come in stages. How Jesus relates to this kingdom will be seen in the following chapters. Initially, he is the one who proclaims the coming saving rule of God.”

²¹ Alcantara., 16.

²² Greear, 18.

²³ Saint Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo* (Fort Worth, TX: RDMc Publishing, 2005), 319-320.

²⁴ Mark Driscoll, *Vintage Jesus: Timeless Answers to Timely Questions* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 115.

²⁵ Timothy Keller, *Shaped by the Gospel: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 28.



humanity has caused must be remedied and can only be remedied by a great God with an amazing message.

The gospel is not about something we (all humanity) can do anything about on our own, as we are helpless. The gospel is something that has been done for us by an amazingly loving, faithful, generous, and caring God. While the gospel is about what has been done for us through the person and work of Jesus Christ, the gospel does, in fact, also result in a whole new way of life. The gospel, its results, and its implications should be carefully related to each other—neither confused nor separated.²⁶ But just as faith and works cannot be separated or confused, so the results of the gospel must never be separated from or confused with the gospel itself.²⁷ Through actions, works, and deeds apart from the gospel, humans have created an impossible gap between their relationship with God. The gospel, however, points humanity to the cross of Jesus Christ as the means by which God (because of his great love for us) restores the relationship humans have disrupted. The cross is where we see that the love of God is not merely sentimental but also efficacious.²⁸ The love of God is shown at the cross, as God reconciles all of humanity through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

What the Gospel Affects

The gospel affects all of life²⁹ because the gospel brings a new and regenerated life to all who respond to its message. The transformation that takes place is re-birth into the image of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote that we are to be transformed into the image of Christ and that the ultimate power source for this transformation is found in the gospel (2 Cor. 3:18). According to Jerry Bridges, “God has called all believers to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29). The process toward that goal is called by various names such as sanctification, growth in grace, or transformation (1 Thess. 5:23-24; 2 Pet. 3:18; 2 Cor. 3:18).”³⁰

Due to the importance of the gospel and its transforming power to broken, desperate souls, preachers should understand and embrace the gospel's truth and incorporate it into every message they preach.³¹ After all, what other message brings healing, restoration, reconciliation, and hope? If preachers preach general doctrine and ethics from Scripture, they are not preaching the gospel. The gospel is the good news that God has accomplished salvation for humanity through Christ, which brings us into a right relationship with him and

²⁶ Ibid., 30.

²⁷ Ibid., 31.

²⁸ Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears, *Doctrine: What Christians Should Believe* (Wheaton, IL: Crossways, 2010), 276.

²⁹ Abraham Kuyper, *A Centennial Reader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 488.

³⁰ Jerry Bridges, *The Transforming Power of the Gospel* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2012), 11.

³¹ Matt Chandler, *The Explicit Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 14.



eventually destroys all the results of sin in the world.³² The gospel should affect preaching. Otherwise, preachers can fail to share the good news with those who desperately need it and settle for a cheap copy of works-based religion. Preachers should remember that the idolatry in man's heart always wants to lead him away from his Savior and back to self-reliance, no matter how pitiful that self-reliance is or how many times it has betrayed him.³³ This truth is why the gospel should always be preached.

Preaching as a Faithful Steward of the Gospel

Knowing the audience helps preachers identify the type of message they should craft and the direction to go in. Age, race, culture, sexual orientation, and denominational affiliation are great places to start when preachers seek to know their audience, but preachers also need to dig deeper and simpler. At its core, every audience will supply two types of people—believers and non-believers—yet both need the gospel preached to them. For the non-believer, there aren't a million things they need to do. There is one: repent of your sins and believe in Jesus. That means recognizing the spiritual bankruptcy, acknowledging the complete inability to save oneself, and coming to Jesus as the only hope of ever being forgiven and right before God.³⁴ This is the gospel message that should be communicated clearly when preaching.

Because of Jesus and because believers are united to him by faith, redeemed humans can fight against the temptation to think salvation is somehow fragile or passing.³⁵ The assurance that the gospel brings to Christians can be preached faithfully because the cross of Jesus stands like a mountain of granite across all of life, immovably testifying to God's love for humanity and his determination to bring people safely into his presence.³⁶ It's as Paul said in Romans: "If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things" (Rom. 8:31-32)? The gospel of Jesus is perfectly clear; it is not vague, nebulous, or indefinite. The gospel is the particular message that was first preached by Christ himself, then faithfully preached by the apostles, and has been preached throughout the centuries. That is the specific message that we find in the Bible.³⁷ The Bible does not leave room for neutrality as C.S. Lewis writes, "Christianity is a statement which, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of

³² Keller, 33-34.

³³ Chandler, 14-15.

³⁴ Greg Gilbert, *What is the Gospel?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 116.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 116-117.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 117.

³⁷ Martyn Lloyd-Jones explains, "This must be preached as a whole. I have no right to take parts and ignore the rest. I either preach the gospel or I do not preach the gospel. The apostle Paul in bidding farewell to the elders of the church at Ephesus reminded them he had not failed to deliver unto them 'all the counsel of God' (Acts 20:27), and any man who preaches without delivering the whole counsel of God is a false prophet." Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *A Merciful and Faithful High Priest* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 17-18.



infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important.”³⁸ The gospel is a specific message every preacher should be about in their preaching today and for the rest of human history. Preaching is not merely instruction. Preaching is the instrument utilized by the Spirit to make us participants in Jesus’ obedience to the Father in our own social and historical context and—within that context—enabling us to trust in God, for: “we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Rom. 5:3-5).³⁹ Preachers should understand that they preach a three-fold gospel: offensive, hopeful, and transformational.

Preaching an Offensive Gospel

The gospel is offensive. The gospel exposes the truth of man’s fallen condition by nature and choice. The Apostle Paul says in Romans 3:23, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Just a few verses earlier, he says, “None is righteous, no, not one” (3:10). The gospel of Jesus Christ is full of stumbling stones, and this is one of the largest. To human hearts that stubbornly think of themselves as basically good and self-sufficient, this idea that human beings are fundamentally sinful and rebellious is not merely scandalous. It is revolting.⁴⁰

The gospel is an interruption. It interrupts our lives, our sinful habits, our selfishness, and our rebellion, redirecting our attention away from ourselves back to God and his work and Word. Sometimes, the gospel even interrupts our ways of “doing church.”⁴¹ There is no way around the offensive dimensions of the gospel. According to 1 Corinthians 1:23, in preaching Christ crucified, we preach a message that is “a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.” Those who take that message seriously will struggle with its divine summons and real implications. The gospel scandalizes our sensibilities by exposing our idols, interrogating our priorities, and calling into question our alliances. More often than all, it confronts our sin and rebellion, the root cause of our persistent idolatry, misplaced desire, and false allegiance.⁴² One of the most frequent temptations pastors and church leaders face today is to

³⁸ C.S. Lewis, *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 102.

³⁹ William R. Burrows, “Newbigin’s Theology of Mission and Culture After Twenty-Five Years.” in *The Gospel and Pluralism Today: Reassessing Lesslie Newbigin in the 21st Century*, edited by Scott W. Sunquist and Amos Yong. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 58-59.

⁴⁰ Greg Gilbert notes, “That’s why it is so absolutely crucial that we understand both the nature and depth of our sin. If we approach the gospel thinking that sin is something else or something less than what it really is, we will badly misunderstand the good news of Jesus Christ.” Gilbert, 51.

⁴¹ Jared C. Wilson, *The Gospel-Driven Church: Uniting Church-Growth Dreams with the Metrics of Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 76.

⁴² Alcantara, 19.



replace a steady commitment to gospel preaching and revival prayer with human ingenuity and industriousness.⁴³ The gospel is Offensive.

Preaching a Hopeful Gospel

The gospel is hopeful. While the gospel offends and pushes against the delicate sensibilities of the human condition, it also offers hope. The Bible has a supernatural power to address the human condition. Within the Scriptures is an essential message with the power to draw our focus to Jesus Christ and transform our hearts. The gospel is the power of God.⁴⁴ The gospel offers hope to humans through the person and work of Jesus Christ. In Christ, God chooses love over hate, adoption over rejection, and reconciliation over enmity. The psalmist declares that God is “compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love” (Ps. 103:8). God does not “treat us as our sins deserve” or count them against us (Ps. 103:10). God effects our deliverance through a person—Jesus Christ—the one whose death sets us free from death and whose resurrection sets us free for life. Hope resounds in a cross and an empty tomb.⁴⁵

We live in a world fractured by violence, poverty, prejudice, and war. The gospel speaks to these and many other realities as well. The Old Testament prophets announced hope in the promises of God, but they also told the truth about realities in the world.⁴⁶ The New Testament identifies the hope of the promises of God being fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ. After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples and told them: “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” There it was, laid out in crystal clarity for the disciples—God’s grand plan to save a people for himself. And then, stunningly, Jesus added: “You are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:46–48). God’s purpose was nothing less than the world’s redemption, and here was Jesus telling them that that purpose would be accomplished through them!⁴⁷ The gospel is hopeful.

Preaching a Transformational Gospel

The gospel is transformational. It has the power to change individuals, families, friendships, communities, and even nations.⁴⁸ As the gospel opens up wounds in the human condition’s inability to save itself, the gospel also offers hope in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins

⁴³ Wilson, 77.

⁴⁴ Wilson continues, “The gospel refers to the good news that God sent his Son Jesus to live a sinless life, die a substitutionary death, and rise from the dead so that sinners who repent and trust in Jesus will be forgiven and have eternal life. We can expand or shorten it, but this is the basic summation of the message we are called to share with others.” Ibid., 81.

⁴⁵ Alcantara, 19-20.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 20-21.

⁴⁷ Gilbert, 118-119.

⁴⁸ Alcantara, 18.



and reconciliation of man's fractured relationship with God. When confronted together, these two realities create an opportunity for the human condition to be transformed and regenerated into something spectacular. Notice that the gospel is not something we do but something that is done by the triune God – Father, Son, and Spirit – working together on a mission to redeem sinful, rebellious humanity and establish God's kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). The gospel of Jesus Christ should inform, influence, and drive everything we do.⁴⁹

Theologically speaking, transformation takes place in justification, sanctification, and glorification.⁵⁰ Justification means that in our standing before God, we are righteous in His sight. We are not righteous in our daily experience. But when by faith we trust in Him, God regards us as righteous because He has credited us the righteousness of Christ.⁵¹ Sanctification means to be "set apart." The Holy Spirit is the guiding force helping to make the believer "holy" and "spiritual" (to reflect the character of God).⁵² Jesus Christ fulfills God's grace and truth promises, and as John Calvin explains, "the whole substance of our salvation is not to be sought anywhere else than in Christ."⁵³ In doing so, we will desire to learn and grow in our understanding of the work of Jesus as we are continually being sanctified. Again, Calvin instructs, "By partaking of him, we...receive double grace: namely, being reconciled to God through Christ's blamelessness and purity of life."⁵⁴ In evangelical theology today, we are increasingly in need of careful work showing not only what the Bible says about sanctification but also about how to think regarding the element of Christian witness and its relation to other strands of scriptural testimony, such as the work of Christ, the gift of grace, and so forth.⁵⁵ Glorification refers especially to the time when, at the Parousia, those who died in Christ and the living believers will be given the resurrection of the body—a final and full "redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23), preparatory for and suited to the final state of the Christian believer.⁵⁶ In Jesus' death and resurrection, not only is the price of our sin paid and our life after death secured, but the eternal life of God has truly come to this cursed earth; with the coming of the King, God's kingdom has come into this world (John

⁴⁹ Wilson, 81-82.

⁵⁰ Alcantara, 18.

⁵¹ Bridges, 49-50.

⁵² Elmer L. Towns, *Theology for Today* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Group, 2002), 302.

⁵³ John Calvin, *Commentary of John 1–10*, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. T. H. L. Parker. (Edinburgh, UK: Oliver and Boyd, 1961), 73.

⁵⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), III.xi.1.

⁵⁵ Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain, *New Studies in Dogmatics: Sanctification* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 44.

⁵⁶ J.K. Grider, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. ed. Walter A. Elwell. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 1984), 442-443.



3:16; 5:24; 6:40; 2 Cor. 4:10-11). Because of King Jesus, there will be a physical life again after a period of physical death (1 Cor. 15:44-46; 2 Cor. 5:1-8).⁵⁷

Practically speaking, transformation occurs when disciples learn from and follow in a direction they would rather not go (John 21:18). Jesus said, “Follow me” to Peter at the beginning of his journey in discipleship (Mark 1:17). He said, “Follow me” to Peter at the end (John 21:22).⁵⁸ As Christians, we are a part of a family whose Father is God himself. We have been sent by the Spirit on a life-altering mission to see more and more people come to know Jesus and find eternal life and the peace that he offers.⁵⁹ Faith and Repentance mark out those who are Christ’s people, or “Christians.” In other words, a Christian turns away from sin and trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ—and nothing else—to save him from sin and the coming judgment.⁶⁰ God’s love transforms us, protects us, and perfects us. Receiving and giving God’s love is what we were created to experience. It is what our human hearts have always desired. And as crazy as this may sound, God’s ongoing goal is not to change us. He already has. His goal is to mature and empower us to establish a trusting relationship with him in all areas of our lives.⁶¹ The gospel is transformational.

Scripture clearly and distinctly focuses on humanity’s problem with evil. A crisis event confronts every human with this truth, which can be remedied by and through the preaching of the gospel, which is God’s action of offering broken humanity the opportunity to find rescue.⁶² The gospel message points humanity to the saving act of God and the genuineness of His love and forgiveness. This message should be centered on the person and work of Jesus Christ so that humanity can fully embrace the action behind God’s work. The process of action and response is preaching, as preaching creates the connection for humanity to be rescued from itself and its newfound liberation in the redemption offered by Christ’s life, death, burial, and resurrection.⁶³

⁵⁷ Driscoll and Breshears, 416.

⁵⁸ Alcantara, 18.

⁵⁹ Caesar Kalinowski, *Transformed: A New Way of Being Christian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 22.

⁶⁰ Gilbert explains, “Mark tells us that Jesus began his ministry by preaching, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel’ (Mark 1:15). That command—repent and believe—is what God requires of us in response to the good news of Jesus. Throughout the New Testament, this is what we see the apostles calling people to do. Jesus called on his listeners to repent and believe the good news.” Gilbert, 72-73.

⁶¹ Kalinowski, 33.

⁶² Mounce 154-155.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 155.



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