

keep order in the province. This was what the natural Roman would think about Paul and his message. But Paul knew that he had good news which would bring salvation to every one who would believe it.

WHAT THE GOSPEL IS: We are fortunate to have a direct Scriptural statement of what the gospel is, but for the sake of clarity, and by way of amplification, we shall treat the question both negatively and positively.

NEGATIVELY:

1. The Bible is not the gospel. This is entirely too vague and general as a definition of the gospel. The Bible does indeed contain the gospel, but it contains other truths also. All Bible truth is not gospel truth. In the Bible there is truth about law and sin and death and judgment and numerous other things that are not the gospel. One may preach the gospel. Many think the Old Testament is the law and the New Testament is the gospel. But the truth is that both law and gospel are found in both Testaments. Some of the finest gospel texts are in the Old Testament, while some of the strongest law texts are in the New Testament. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is full of the gospel; from this chapter Philip preached Jesus to the eunuch and he was saved. Paul and others had only the Old Testament from which to preach the gospel.

The law should be preached, just as all the Bible should be preached. The law, properly preached, will reveal to men that they are sinners and slay their self-righteousness. For this purpose Christ preached the law to the rich young man (Matt. 19:16), and to a certain lawyer (Luke 10:25). By the law is the knowledge of sin. Paul did not know that he was a lost sinner until he saw what the law required (Rom. 7:9). The law tells man what he ought to do, the gospel tells the sinner what Christ has done. The law condemns the best man; the gospel justifies the worst man. The law makes demands; the gospel bestows blessings. The law deals in justice; the gospel deals in mercy. The law belongs to the covenant of works; the gospel belongs to the covenant of grace.

2. Baptism is not the gospel. Paul clearly differentiated between baptism and the gospel when he said, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (I Cor. 1:17). He reminded the Corinthians of the few he had baptized, and then to the church as a whole he said, "I have begotten you through the gospel" (I Cor. 4:15).

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are not saving sacraments, but preaching symbols. They do not procure salvation, but proclaim salvation through Christ. They are not saving acts, but contain a saving message in symbol or picture. Baptism does indeed wash away sin symbolically or figuratively, but the blood of Christ washes it away actually. Baptism has its place in the Christian life, but it must not become a substitute for the blood of Christ as an object of faith or trust.

3. The Church is not the gospel. Joining the church is not the same as believing the gospel. One should believe the gospel before joining the church.

4. The new birth is not the gospel. The new birth is an experience--a work

wrought in us; the gospel is the good news of something done for us. The gospel is objective light (II Cor. 4:4); the new birth gives subjective light so that the gospel can be savingly understood (II Cor. 4:6; John 3:3). The gospel is the story of what Christ did on the cross; the new birth is what the Holy Spirit does in us when He imparts life to us. Justification is the result of Christ's death for us (Rom. 4:24); regeneration is the effect of the Holy Spirit's work in us. Justification is life imputed; regeneration is life imparted.

5. Repentance is not the gospel. Repentance is what the sinner must do to be saved; the gospel is what Christ has already done for our salvation. "Repent ye and believe the gospel." Here repentance and the gospel are differentiated. No man is saved by faith in his repentance; he is saved by faith in the gospel.

6. Faith is not the gospel. The gospel is the object of faith. Saving faith is in the gospel. Faith does not save; it is faith in the gospel that saves. We do not have to have a perfect faith to be saved, but there must be a perfect gospel.

POSITIVELY:

1. The gospel is good news. The acid test of a gospel message: is it good news to bad men? The gospel is for sinners; it is the revelation of the righteousness God has provided through Christ for the unrighteous (Rom. 1:17).

2. The gospel is good news about a person, the Lord Jesus Christ. "For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Men are not saved by doing this and that, or going here and there; they are saved by coming to the Lord Jesus Christ, who so graciously said, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37b). Salvation is not a matter of geography. There is not a safe spot from the wrath of God anywhere. Salvation is not in bodily flight; it is in heart trust in Him Who is our passover, sacrificed for us.

3. The gospel consists of certain historical facts with a certain and particular theory or explanation of those facts. The facts are given us in I Cor. 15:3, 4: "...Christ died for our sins....; was buried, androse again...." Or as Paul puts it in Rom. 4:25: "Who was delivered for our offences; and was raised again for our justification."

Christ, the Son of God, died for our sins. What does that mean? Some claim that it merely means that Christ died on our behalf, but not as our Substitute. They insist that we should have no theory of the atonement, but with a little investigation we find that such people have a theory of the atonement. Let them tell us how Christ could die on our behalf--how His death could save us--unless He died as our Substitute to render satisfaction to Divine justice for our sins. For His death to save us, it must cancel our guilt before the law of **God**, and how could it cancel our guilt unless He suffered for the guilt that was ours? He suffered, the just for the unjust, and how could this be unless He suffered in our room and stead? Christ dying as a martyr for a good cause, or as a mere example of faithfulness unto death, or as a gesture of love to conquer the human heart, would in no sense redeem sinners from the curse of the law. Divine justice calls for Divine punishment, and the only way the sinner can escape judgment is for Christ to bear the punishment due the sinner. Those

who deny blood atonement worship a god different to that of the Bible, and practice a religion different to that of the Bible.

WHAT THE GOSPEL DOES: In a word, it saves all who trust it. And the gospel to be trusted is what Christ, the Son of God, did in laying down His life for our sins and taking it up again for our justification. Romans 1:16 is usually made to mean that the preaching of the gospel has power to convert sinners, that is, to make believers. But this is not what the verse says. It is the power of God to or for believers. It presupposes a believer. The gospel saves believers, but it has no power to make believers. The preaching of the gospel is the means of making believers, for faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. We repeat, that the preaching of the gospel is the necessary means to faith, for "how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" If sinners are saved, the gospel must be preached to them as the means to faith and resultant salvation. However, there is a difference between means to faith and the power for faith. The power to make believers is in the effectual call of the Holy Spirit. Paul preached Christ crucified indiscriminately to Jew and Greek. To the natural Jew such a gospel was a stumblingblock, and to the natural Greek it was foolishness; but the called, both Jews and Greeks, saw the wisdom and power of God in the plan of salvation through a crucified Christ.

Paul says, "To every one that believeth." The death of Christ does nobody any good who scorns it and refuses to trust it. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). Saving faith is something more than the mere assent of the mind to a proposition, however true; it is heart trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Saving faith is not being satisfied with self; it is being satisfied with what Christ did on the cross for our salvation. One who is once satisfied with Christ will never be satisfied with anything else.