

THE GOSPEL THAT SAVES

By Pastor Art Watkins

Part 4

Every church, denomination and even the cults profess to believe a gospel today, but many are still lost. Why? They believe the wrong one. You can believe in a gospel and not be saved, if the gospel you believe is the wrong one. Here along the Gulf Coast there are many shipyards and their specialty is building custom made boats. You tell them what you want and they will build a boat according to your taste, appeal and pocketbook. In the religious world the devil has a gospel for every taste, appeal, appetite, ego, religion and pocketbook. If you can't find a gospel you like, he will build and customize one especially for you.

The Bible says the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. (Romans 1:16) This tells us we must believe the right gospel to be saved and the right one is the one God told us to believe. There is only **one Gospel** that has the power to save us from sin and hell today, but what is it? In Galatians 1:8-9 Paul wrote: ***But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than ye have received, let him be accursed.***

The only Gospel that has the power to save us from sin, hell and the wrath of God, is the one Paul preached. All other Gospels are false and according to Paul, those who preach them are accursed. The Gospel that Paul preached is called the **Gospel of God** according to Romans 1:1-2. God has one gospel today and he put his name on it and it's the one you must believe to be saved. There are four outstanding facts about the Gospel of God.

The Gospel of God declares that men are saved by faith alone without works in the death and shed blood of Christ

Read the following verses and notice carefully what they say about faith and works.

Romans 4:5 says; **But to him that worketh not but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.**

Titus 3:5 says; **Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.**

2 Timothy 1:9 says; **God hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.**

Ephesians 2:8-9 says: **For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.**

These verses tell us over and over again that we are saved by faith alone in the Gospel of God. Works have no part in gaining or keeping salvation. Our total faith is in the work Christ did for us on the cross, where he suffered and died to pay the full penalty for our sins.

But, what about works today? Recently at a funeral that I preached, I emphasized the fact that we are saved by faith and not works. A man walked up to me and said bluntly: *“faith without works is dead”* and walked off in a huff before he would let me answer him. He quoted part of a verse in James 2 that is greatly misused today by those who preach salvation by works. Here is what James said:

14 What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,

16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?

17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

Many well meaning people today assume these verses are teaching us that we are not saved by faith only, but by faith and works. But, we have just read that we are not saved by works, but by faith only. Read these verses again:

Romans 5:4 says: **But to him that worketh not..**

Titus 3:5 says: **Not by works of righteousness which we have done..**

2 Timothy 1:9 says: **God hath saved us, not according to our works..**

Ephesians 2:8-9 says: **It is the gift of God: Not of works..**

The Holy Scriptures tell us over and over again we are not saved by works, but by faith. We also know God did not send Paul and James to preach conflicting doctrines and gospels. God would never do that. So what does James mean when he says that faith without works is dead? It simply means that real genuine saving faith produces good works; not to be saved, but as proof and evidence of being saved.

Listen to what James says: **Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, (You can't because faith is invisible) and I will shew thee my faith by my works.**

What James is doing in these verses is challenging people to show him their faith without works. It can't be done for faith is invisible. True saving faith is shown, demonstrated, revealed, exposed by the works we do after we are saved. Faith is invisible, but faith is made visible by the works we do in the Christian life and in James 2 it is helping out the truly poor saints in verses 15-16.

The point James makes is that true faith produces good works and if a man says he has faith in Christ and does not have the works to back it up, his faith is dead. It is not real.

As a matter of fact, faith without works is the same faith the devils have according to James: He said: ***Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.*** All the devils believe in God, but it was these same devils that crucified Christ. This shows us their faith was a vain useless faith. The faith that some people have to today is like that of the devils; they say they have faith in Christ, but their works prove otherwise.

(Paul said the same about faith and works in Galatians 5:6)

We are not saved by works: our works is the evidence and proof of our faith. Don't be confused about this issue of faith and works because the eternal destiny of your soul is at stake. We must believe the right gospel to be saved and the Gospel of God tells us over and over again, we are saved by faith and not works. We must get saved by the Gospel of God and not the gospel of man or some church. The Gospel of God declares over and over again we are not saved by works, but by faith alone in Christ. It's the work Christ did on the cross that saves us and not ours. The good works we do in this life cannot atone for our sins. Christ death on the cross is the only atonement God will accept as payment for our sins. Living a so called good life will not and cannot possibly atone for your sins.

Let's illustrate it like this: Suppose a man murders someone in cold blood. He is caught and put on trial. He is found guilty and he is sentenced to death. But then he says to the judge; if you will let me go free I promise I will live a good life and never harm anyone for the rest of my life. Will the judge let him go free? No. Why? He can't, because his job is to uphold the law. The law says if you are guilty of murder, you must die for what you did. Living a good life will not atone for the sin of murder.

This is a good analogy because you and I are guilty of murder. We are guilty of every sin the law of God condemns. We have broken all of God's commandments. Living a good life and good works will not atone for one of the commandments we have broken. The sins we are guilty of have condemned us all to hell and the only atonement God will accept is the one Christ made for us when he died in our place. His death and shed blood atoned for every sin we have committed and every law we broke. And it's by faith and faith alone in his death and shed blood we can be set free from eternal condemnation in hell. No amount of good works can atone for one sin we have committed. The only payment God will accept for our sins is the one Christ made for us. That is why the Gospel of God says that salvation is by faith alone without works, for no work can possibly atone for one sin we have committed, much less millions of sins.

The gospel of God declares that God forgives all sins and all sinners.

God invites all men to come unto him and be saved. In 1 Timothy 2:4 it says; that God ***will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.***

If God will have all men to be saved, then he must provide pardon for all men and forgiveness for all sins. For example: If I have a dinner and I invite 100 people to come, then I must have enough food on hand to feed 100 people. If I have just enough food to feed 20 people, then I could not invite 100 people to come.

If God will have all men to be saved, then he must provide a way to save all men and forgive all their sins. We know all men will not be saved, but if God invites all men to be saved, then he must be able to do it. He can, for in the same chapter where he says he will have all men to be saved, it says in the next verses: ***For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.***

Jesus Christ gave himself a ransom for all men in 1 Timothy 2:6, because it is God's will for all men to be saved in 1 Timothy 2:4. God invites all men to be saved and in view of his invitation his Son provided a ransom to redeem all men. When God invites you to his dinner he has more than enough food to feed you. If God invites all men to be saved he can and will save them no matter how vile or wicked they are. He can't turn any one down who come, for once he gave the invitation for all men to be saved, he must keep that promise and make no exceptions.

This means there are no unpardonable sins or sinners today. If God says he will have all men to be saved, then he must be willing to save all who come to him regardless of their background. Once he invited all men to be saved, he cannot turn any man down no matter how evil and wicked he may be. And if he invites all men to be saved, then he must be able and willing to forgive all their sins, no matter how many or wicked they may be.

The Gospel of God pardons all who come to Christ and forgives all sins without exception and distinctions. Once God said he will have all men to be saved he cannot limit salvation to some, but not all and he cannot limit forgiveness to some sins, but not all.

The Gospel of God declares that salvation is a present possession, not a future attainment.

Read the following verses and notice the tense of salvation.

John 5:24: ***Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath (present tense) everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; (future tense) but is passed from death unto life. (past tense)***

2Timothy 1:9: ***Who hath saved us, (present tense) and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.***

God saves sinners the moment they believe the gospel and not later. Salvation and eternal life are a present possession. But why?

Because of the atonement of Christ

Romans 5:11 says: ***And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.***

The greatest need of sinners is atonement for their sins. Once we receive the atonement, then we can positively say we are saved. No one can say they are saved, present tense, without atonement for their sins. This verse says we have now, present tense, received the atonement for our sins. This is why we can truthfully say we are saved now, present tense. We are saved now because we have now received the atonement for our sins.

Because of salvation by grace

According to Ephesians 2:8-9 in salvation by grace, salvation is a gift of God and because it is a gift, it is not a reward earned by works. A reward is something you earn only after you finish the work required to gain it. A reward is not yours, until you do the works necessary to obtain it. If I tell you that I will pay you \$50 to wax my car; the \$50 is not a gift and you will not receive the \$50 until after you finish waxing my car. But, if I offer to give you \$50 without any demands, then it is a gift and it becomes yours the moment you reach out and receive it.

God offers us salvation as a gift and it becomes ours the moment we reach out by faith and receive it. If you are not saved now, it's only because you have not reached out by faith and received it.

John said in 1 John 5:13: These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

John said we can know we are saved now. Was he being presumptuous? No. How did he know he had eternal life? Because he had received the atonement and was saved by grace.

The Gospel of God declares that all believers are unconditionally and eternally secure in Christ.

In John 5:24 Jesus said this about those who believe on him:

He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath (present tense) everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; (future tense) but is passed from death unto life. (past tense)

In John 10:27-30 he also made this promise: ***My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.***

The Lord said those who believe on him have eternal life now and will not be condemned in the future. He said no man can pluck his people out of his hands or the hands of his Father. You have heard Allstate insurance say; you are in good hands with Allstate; but you are in better hands with Christ. Allstate may insure your temporal life, but Jesus Christ insures and guarantees your eternal life. He says when you believe on him, you will not perish or suffer eternal condemnation.

How could he make such a promise? How does he insure his people against future wrath and condemnation? Because on the cross he suffered the wrath of God for our

sins. On the cross he was condemned for our sins. And when we believe the Gospel of God, his death is put to our account. Christ secured the salvation of his people eternally by dying for their sins and suffering the wrath they deserve for their sins. That is why he said he that believeth on me shall not come into condemnation.

These are four of the most important facts about the Gospel of God.

I believe that if you have truly believed the gospel of God you will believe these undeniable facts;

That salvation is by faith alone in Christ and not by works.

That salvation is the gift of God and not a reward earned by works.

That salvation is a present possession and not a future attainment.

That God forgives all sins and all sinners who come to him by faith.

That salvation is eternally secure because of the cross of Christ. Actually, it's the cross that makes all these things possible and a reality.

It Makes a Difference What We Believe

What we believe will determine where we will spend eternity. When it comes to salvation, sincerity doesn't count, **accuracy does**. The most important thing we can do in this life is to find out what the true Gospel is and then believe it, because it's the only hope we have of escaping hell and the wrath of God. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, so we must believe the right gospel to be saved and the right one is the one Christ and all the apostles preached. It's called the Gospel of God for he put his name on it.

Next: The Person Who Saves