

**Privilege of the Gospel***The Nature*

**Introduction:** Week #2 of the Privilege of the Gospel (Last week: The Wonder)

**NOTE:** Helpful to review

1. What do we mean by “The Gospel?”-“The Good news of God at work in Christ, taking on Himself the likeness of humanity, laying down His life on the cross in our stead, becoming sin for us and taking the penalty of death that was due us, then rising again to conquer forever sin and death for those who embrace and by faith receive that Good news as theirs.”

- God’s work completely
- Our reception by faith as ours is still necessary

2. This is what Paul had given his life to:

- Not ashamed of the Gospel (Romans 1:16)
- Some try to pervert it (Galatians 1:7...still happening)
- Paul knew he was called to share it

3. Jesus said much about it as well

- Go into all the world and preach it (Mark 16:15)
- Must be preached to all the world before the end comes (Matthew 24:14)

4. Other Pauline statements refer to the Gospel

- New covenant
- Ministry of the Spirit (not Law)
- Ministry of righteousness (not condemnation)

5. Last week the WONDER of the Gospel (the Good news)

- Ever intensifying glory (second hand not all we get, His presence can be known and gets sweeter as we grow)
- Makes possible and emboldened witness to a broken world (Great boldness of speech because His Spirit is poured out in us)
- Imparts an ongoing transformative power (changed from glory to glory...is it showing through?)

Today: The Nature of the Gospel (important to be reminded of a few things about Paul's context)

- His authority and his integrity has been challenged by the people in Corinth
- The Gospel is being perverted (Corinthians were some of the biggest abusers)
- Yet, he will not back down (it is his call and he is not ashamed)
- Today the Gospel is under attack (especially the true nature of the Gospel we will address)
- It is the message that compels him and must compel us as well

What is the Nature of this Gospel?

Six Aspects of the Nature of the Gospel

**I. The Gospel provides believers a relentless passion and a robust hope in a world of hopelessness.**

***“Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart.” II Corinthians 4:1 NKJV***

- A. No matter how severe the opposition and however, intense the conflict, Paul is compelled by a passion to make known Jesus as the one who has worked to bring salvation.
  - 1. These are eternal riches that he shares
  - 2. He has received mercy himself
  - 3. There can be no backing down or quitting
- B. The Gospel still provides us a robust hope
  - 1. Our world is full of a sense of hopelessness (depression, despair)
  - 2. The Gospel says all is not lost (we don't faint, lose heart)
  - 3. No one's life is beyond the point of transformation (that is the Gospel message, no one too bad, too lost, too broken)
- C. That reality makes us (compels us to passionately tell others)
  - 1. Dick Brogden and Live Dead
  - 2. No believers, no messenger
  - 3. \$1 per 100 earned by Christians goes to send missionaries
  - 4. Less than 1/10 of one penny per \$100 is spent on unreachable people
  - 5. Yet we have the good news
- D. If you really know his mercy...you are compelled
- E. To whom much is given (privilege, much is required)

## **II. The Gospel is a free gift and must never be used for selfish gain.**

*“But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” II Corinthians 4:2 NKJV*

- A. Paul’s concern and his argument
  - 1. There is no craftiness or misuse of the Word of God (The Gospel sesame in him)
  - 2. Craftiness=parnourgia-readiness to adopt any scheme or trickery for the achievement of ends which are selfish and for personal gain
  - 3. Paul said I didn’t do that...wide open book, commended ourselves to everyman’s conscience
  - 4. Even a higher responsibility...in the sight of God
- B. The Gospel has been horribly perverted in the American church
  - 1. Been treated as a means to an end
  - 2. Get stuff, jets, fame, fortune, notoriety, numbers
- C. The Gospel is a GIFT not a tool for our success
  - 1. Acts 3-Silver and God have I none
  - 2. Acts 10-Simon wanted to buy it...your money perish with you
  - 3. 2 Kings 5 (Naaman, Syrian general with leprosy, servant girl for his wife, from Israel told about Elisha, Syrian King sent letter to Israel’s king. Elisha dip 7x in the Jordan, anger but relented, healed. Tried to give a gift. Elisha declined. Gehazi tried to collect, he was struck with leprosy.
  - 4. The Gospel is a FREE gift!

## **III. The Gospel is tragically not clear to unbelievers.**

*“But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.” II Corinthians 4:3-4 NKJV*

- A. Paul concedes that many (possibly the majority) of those who have heard the Gospel have yet to perceive its glory and embrace it. (One of charges against him)
  - 1. The problem (or inadequacy is not in the Gospel)-those who are perishing are blinded.
  - 2. The Gospel is foolishness to them (1 Corinthians 1:18)
- B. Paul knew firsthand this experience (On His way to Damascus to kill more Christians, defending God...blinded, when the scales came off he saw the glory of the Gospel-Acts 9)
- C. From that point on he wanted to give his life to help people have their eyes open

*“But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.” Acts 26:16-18 NKJV*

D. Those we try to reach with the Gospel often reject. They are blinded.

1. Certainly Satan
2. Also love darkness

*“This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.” John 3:19-21 NIV*

E. Reaching those who are blind

1. Why proclamation is important

*“Since God in his wisdom saw to it that the world would never know him through human wisdom, he has used our foolish preaching to save those who believe.” 1 Corinthians 1:21 NLT*

2. Often a crisis (was with Saul/Paul)
3. Praying for eyes to be open (Ephesians 1:18-“...that the eyes of your understanding would be enlightened.”)
4. Encountering Jesus (His presence...worship is so important...who He is I don't know but I was blind and now I see).

#### **IV. The Gospel is unapologetically exclusive.**

*“For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.” II Corinthians 4:5 NKJV*

A. There is no good news outside of Jesus

(ILL) Steve O Eurf (Missionary to Sudan-Live Dead

- Muslim Friend... “No problem. All religions are one.”
- His Response: “I answered my Muslim friend with a smile, saying: “Well, you and I are the same in that we are both guilty before God. But only Jesus can take away your shame and

mine. Jesus came as much for you as He did for me. Put your trust in Him and He'll bring you to paradise." There's life in the truth of those words!"

- A. The Gospel is good news only because Jesus took the penalty of our sin by dying on the cross. No one else did and so we preach Jesus as Lord!

## **V. The Gospel is uncompromisingly clear that Salvation is of the Lord.**

*"For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."*

*II Corinthians 4:6 NKJV*

- A. It is not mental assent to a creed
- B. It is not signing a commitment to follow a new set of rules
- C. It is a life of transformation that only can happen when God is at work in us

*"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."*

*Ephesians 2:8-10 NKJV*

*Katrina Victims Didn't Want Rescuing*

*Helicopter pilot Iain McConnell, along with the rest of his air station crew, was summoned at 4 a.m. on the morning of August 30, 2005, to the Coast Guard Aviation Training Center in Mobile, Alabama. The Center soon became one of the first bases of operations for Hurricane Katrina relief. McConnell and his crew were told to keep five H-60 helicopters airborne on missions at all times, around the clock.*

*The first airborne relief teams arrived in the affected areas before any news crews, and were completely unprepared for the devastation they saw. A train track running parallel to the ocean had been pushed inland 15 feet off its gravel bed. A houseboat was floating down U.S. Highway 90. The entire city of New Orleans stood under water.*

*McConnell's crew got right to work, airlifting stranded people from their rooftops and out of windows, and delivering them to the Superdome helipad. To their chagrin, however, they were only able to help a relatively few amount of survivors. In an interview, McConnell shared why:*

*On our first three missions, we saved the lives of 89 people, three dogs, and a cat. On the fourth mission, to our great frustration, we saved no one—but not for lack of trying. The dozens we attempted to rescue refused pickup!*

*Some people told us to simply bring them food and water. "You are trying to live in unhealthy conditions, and the water will stay high for a long time," we warned them. Still, they refused. I felt frustrated and angry, since we had used up precious time and fuel, and had put ourselves at risk during each rescue attempt. I felt like they were ungrateful. But, in truth, they did not know how desperate their situation was.*

- Must know how desperate we are
- Must call out to God...Salvation is of the Lord

## VI. The Gospel will reveal the extraordinary-ness of God

*“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.” II Corinthians 4:7 NKJV*

- A. No contrast could be more striking
  - 1. A jar of clay (pottery lamp or maybe earthenware)
  - 2. The excellence and power of God’s glory
  - 3. Divine and the dirty
- B. When God uses our fragility, weakness, brokenness, and something happens, He is glorified. It must be Him!
- C. Out of brokenness His glory is most powerfully seen  
(ILL) Gideon’s and broken pitchers

*In the forward of his book, Inside Out, Larry Crabb writes this: “Modern Christianity, in dramatic reversal of its biblical form, promises to relieve the pain of living in a fallen world. The message, whether it’s from fundamentalists requiring us to live by a favored set of rules or from charismatics urging deeper surrender to the Spirit’s power, is too often the same: The promise of bliss is for NOW! Complete satisfaction can be ours this side of heaven.....*

*We are told, sometimes explicitly but more often by example, that it’s simply not necessary to feel the impact of family tensions, frightening possibilities, or discouraging news. [We are told that] life may have its rough spots, but the reality of Christ’s presence and blessing can so thrill our soul that pain is virtually unfelt. It simply isn’t necessary to wrestle with internal struggle and disorder. Just trust, surrender, persevere, obey.*

*“The effect of such teaching,” continues Crabb, “is to blunt the painful reality of what it’s like to live as part of an imperfect, and sometimes evil, community. We learn to pretend that we feel now what we cannot feel until Heaven.*

*But not all of us are good at playing the game. Those whose integrity makes such pretense difficult sometimes worry over their apparent lack of faith. “Why don’t I feel as happy and together as others? Something must be wrong with my spiritual life.” To make matters worse, these people of integrity often appear less mature and their lives less inviting than folks more skilled at denial. And churches tend to reward their members who more convincingly create the illusion of intactness by parading them as examples of what every Christian should be.*

*[But] beneath the surface of everyone’s life, especially the more mature, is an ache that will not go away. It can be ignored, disguised, mislabeled, or submerged by a torrent of activity, but it will not disappear. And for good reason. We were designed to enjoy a better world than this. And until that better world comes along, we will groan for what we do not have. An aching soul is evidence not of neurosis or spiritual immaturity, but of realism.*

**Conclusion:** The Nature of the Gospel?

1. It gives us boldness so we do not lose heart in a difficult world
2. It is a free gift we should never abuse
3. It is unclear and makes no sense to unbelievers without their eyes being open
4. It is unapologetically exclusive...only Jesus
5. It is uncompromisingly clear-Salvation is of the Lord
6. It will reveal the extraordinary nature of God (His glory in our brokenness)