

## Message 2,3

Many, many years ago, about 35-40 to be exact, I recall going to a nursing home with my father. It was a nursing home that he went to quite regularly, and I assume that it was part of his duties of being a pastor at a local church. It was at this same nursing home that my dad would have me tell the elderly people there time and time again about my salvation experience. Had I not recited it so many times, I don't know that I would be able to recall it today, but it went something like this: I knew that I wanted to go to heaven when I died, so my dad and I knelt by my bed, and I asked Jesus into my heart. Then my dad would say, "Now tell them how old you were when that happened," and I would gleefully say, "three years old." Invariably, and without fail, that comment would always solicit a gasp of joy from whoever was listening to the story.

Now that was my salvation experience growing up. No memory of the actual event, but I believed that I was saved because my dad told me that I asked Jesus into my heart at the age of three. Interestingly enough, about a decade later my dad learned of the doctrine of grace, and no longer did I find that I was telling that story. Now most of us, if we were involved in churches years ago, have some sort of similar story which I am sure they can relate. Perhaps it would involve some sort of experience you had, or maybe a prayer that you said, or an aisle you walked down, and you truly believed that you were alright with God.

Now if I had stayed in the churches, especially a big church, then I would have hundreds of people reminding me weekly of what a great Christian I am, and I would never doubt whether or not I were ever even saved, and that is a pity. Brethren, I am going to quote the Lord Jesus Christ, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul" (Matthew 16:26). Beloved there are many today that are losing their soul and have no idea that they are doing so. I know that I sound like a broken record, and have stated this a hundred or more times, but please listen again for the one hundred and first time – the very first verse God ever used to reveal the truth to my soul was, "For by grace are ye saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8).

I love, absolutely love telling believers of my conversion experience. I don't care to tell it to a religious person because it is meaningless to them, but all of us, if you are a believer today, can remember when we first began to fall in love with Jesus Christ. It was not due to a prayer of ours, not due to joining some denomination, but it was the Word of God which caused us to do so. If that is not your case today, then you might question your salvation. Oh, you may not be able to pinpoint an exact time or moment, but I am certain of this – if you are a believer today, then you hold the Scriptures in the highest of regard, for they are what saved your soul.

"For by grace and ye saved through faith," I knew nothing more than that. I was raised in the church, raised in a religious home, but all I had was head knowledge, and nothing more, until that night on July 29, 1992, when the words, "for by grace are ye saved through faith" became so simple to me. I immediately wondered why would I then have to say the sinners prayer, why then do I have to live a moral life, why then do I have to join their church, if I am saved by faith through the grace of God. Now at that time, I had nothing to place my faith in other than that verse, but over the course of time, and of study, I began to have more and more to place my faith in.

We may all believe various things regarding the Scriptures, and we may not all agree on all things, but be certain of this one thing – believing the gospel is what saves your soul. The first time the word "gospel" is ever used it is in accordance with the gospel of the kingdom in Matthew 4:23. This was preached during the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ therefore it was imperative to believe the good news of the coming kingdom on earth. No mention here of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, just the good news of the kingdom.

But after the death of Christ, the word "gospel" continues to be used in the Scriptures, and a careful study of this word will show that only in one place is the gospel defined. In other words in the eighty five times the word is used after the four Gospels, in only one case does it define what the gospel is. Therefore, without this one instance, had the Holy Spirit not written this, we would be hard pressed, very hard pressed to have chapter and verse regarding what we believe the gospel to be. I think that any Bible student could study, especially the book of Romans and clearly understand what the gospel is, but to leave no doubt, Paul

penned these words, *“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; **by which also ye are saved**, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures”* (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

I believe that everyone seated here today knows and believes that Jesus Christ is our only hope. You know that it is the gospel that saves your soul, but you also know that this is not a one time thing. You do not believe something and then that's it. Your Christian experience is a life long experience from the moment you receive life from God until the moment you die. A true believer can never tire of hearing the truth. The gospel is what saved your soul, and therefore if I do not preach the gospel, if I do not remind you of that which saved your soul, I am not doing my duty.

I believe that it is our duty to both mourn and rejoice in the death of Jesus Christ, that we not be passive in His death, but rather realize that it was our sin that nailed Him to Calvary. When we look to Calvary, we see the Godman hanging there on our behalf. We have a world out there that does not see the death of Jesus Christ as a personal thing,. They view the death of our Saviour as something that was done on the behalf of every living man, woman, and child, therefore it is not personal, and it does not cut to the quick. But brethren, you must see, and you must know, that every stripe He felt was on your behalf. All of the jeerings and mockings were done because of you, and because of His love for you, as one of God's elect.

All the way back to the garden of Eden, God reveals the effect of imputation. Imputation is an important thing to understand. A very, very important thing to understand. Adam sinned against God, he broke the one law that God gave him which was not to partake of the fruit of the tree. In doing so, Adam was declared to be a sinner. God told Adam, *“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”* (Genesis 2:17). I am quite certain that God had to explain to Adam what death was because Adam had no knowledge of it. As we know, Adam did disobey, and he did die. We know that a day is as a thousand years with God, and that Adam, nor anyone else ever lived for a thousand years, therefore God's promise was sure.

But a valuable lesson was taught here, and that is, that because of Adam's transgression we are all sinners. Paul states, *“For ALL have sinned and come short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23). David states, *“In sin did my mother conceive me”* (Psalm 51:5). But perhaps Paul summed it up best when he wrote, *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”* (Romans 5:12). In all of my years growing up I don't know that I was ever taught that I am a sinner because of Adam. I thought that I was a sinner because I had sinned, but because Adam's transgression was imputed unto me, therefore I was conceived as a sinner.

Now had I been taught this, I doubt that I would have grasped it anyway, but I wonder how many people today truly believe this. I am absolutely serious when I say that you ought to ask one of your religious friends that question. Ask them why they are a sinner. I am sure that they will state that it is because they have sinned, but most people in the churches today don't even like to acknowledge that much. In addition, it really shoots the theory of the age of accountability right out of the water. But I recall that this was something that stuck out about Dusty's preaching above everything else. He was the first person I ever knew that talked about sin in the life of a believer.

Now lets ask a question: what did you have to do in order to become a sinner? You didn't ask Satan to come into your heart. You didn't have to wait until you were old enough to sin. You didn't even have to sin in order to be a sinner, but you are a sinner because Adam was a sinner and his sin was imputed unto you, and unto all men for that matter. If you don't understand this matter of imputation to begin with, then you will not ever be able to have a proper concept for what the death of Christ accomplished on your behalf, nor how God can declare a sinner to be a saint through no work of their own.

Again, Paul sums it up best when he said, *“For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous”* (Romans 5:19). That *“One”* being the Lord Jesus Christ. Through His obedience, through His meritorious work upon Calvary, salvation is imputed unto

man. That leaves us with the question whether Christ's work upon the cross was imputed to ALL men, or just some. If His righteousness was imputed unto all men, then all men would be saved. All men would have a deep rooted love for Jesus Christ, a desire to be like Him, to know more of Him, to respect His Word, and this, of course, is not true. Therefore, the imputation of the righteousness of Christ differs from that of Adam, because it is selective.

Man does not select whether or not the righteousness of Christ is imputed unto him, and the proof lies in the fact that man did nothing to become a sinner, therefore he can do nothing to become a saint. Of course any Armenian would deny that, but that is not the case I am trying to make today. The issue before us today is "what must I do to be saved?" The answer was found, as we read earlier, in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, which is by believing the gospel.

Oh there is more, much more to your salvation experience, but without the believing of the gospel which saves your souls, there can be no imputation of Christ's holiness unto you. Just as Adam's human sinful nature was imparted unto you by no doings of your own, the righteous sinless nature of the Lord Jesus Christ is imparted unto you due to no action or merit on your part whatsoever. We do know clearly, and I mean clearly, from the Scriptures that God will have mercy upon whosoever He chooses to have mercy, which is found in Romans 9:18.

Yet anyone can believe the gospel. I think my aunt believes the gospel. I think that my brother-in-law believes the gospel, and yet I doubt that they have ever had a work of grace in their lives. But that is not for you or I to decide. I sometimes doubt whether or not I am saved, so I need to focus upon myself, and I do know that believing the gospel is the only hope that I have. If someone were to ask me today how do I know that I am saved, I would have to say "Because I believe the gospel." Now that would leave many people dumbfounded and questioning if I even knew what I was talking about, because most people expect to have some sort of feeling, or emotion, or experience, whereas God does not necessarily move in that manner.

All I can do is believe the gospel, and then after that, believe everything else that I can about the Lord Jesus Christ. The night I was quote-unquote saved, I don't necessarily think that I even knew what the gospel was. I think that that came later, but what I did know was that if God saved me that it would be through faith. I'm not even sure that I knew what I was to have faith in other than it was faith that secured my salvation, not the reciting of a sinners prayer. But somewhere along the line, the gospel was revealed to me through the Word, and I believed it by a gracious act of the Holy Spirit.

So in the time remaining, I must declare the gospel unto you. It is simple, but nothing about the life and death of our Beloved Lord and Saviour was simple. His life began just as it ended, hated by men, and men desiring His death. From Herod to Pilate, and all those in between, our Beloved Lord was a wanted Man all His life, because He was the Son of God, He was God Himself. One Who should have been born of nobility, but was born in a stable.

His very birth boggles the mind of the most astute and careful readers in all of history. Even the Jews of old could not understand the prophecy of Isaiah, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). Many supposedly wise Jewish men have devoted their lives to proving that this was not Jesus Christ, and that this child, their Messiah, has yet to come. Many a scientist has spent a lifetime trying to disprove that a virgin could ever give birth. And so here, even in His mother's womb, His Deity is challenged!

Brethren, I cannot explain how a virgin could give birth, but I believe it. I believe it more than I believe that the sun is going to rise in the east tomorrow. I am more certain that this was the Son of God, that this was Jesus Christ of whom Isaiah prophesied, than I am of the fact that I am standing here today. I am certain that this was the GodMan, the promised Messiah, the Alpha and the Omega, the One Who loved me enough to give Himself for me. I am certain that this was He!

Jesus Christ was born of a woman, not of man. How often do we read in the Scriptures, that Jacob was the son of Isaac, Isaac was the son of Abraham, and we are quite certain who they are the son of, yet of our

Saviour, it says He was “born of a woman” (Galatians 4:4). His earthly father was not important, and His earthly father was not needed in order for Him to be conceived. He was special, He was different, He was God Personified, and there has never, and will never be, another of Whom this could be said. The important part of this is that God our Father stated that it would be the seed of the woman, not the seed of the man, that would bruise the head of Satan!

*“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons”* (Galatians 4:4,5). Jesus Christ was made under the law. He was not made as Adam was before he fell, He was made under the law just as if He were a fallen man upon whom the curse of the law had fallen. That is important to understand, otherwise Jesus Christ could have lived His sinless life here upon earth and then gone to be with His Father in heaven, and He would never have had to die. But that was not to be, He was born under the law, subject to the law just as a common sinner was, Who had to die a death of a common sinner as well, and He had to do so in order to bear our infirmities. It began upon His very birth and being born under the law.

He showed in His birth what sin made us. Out in eternity, He was the Alpha and Omega, free from the law and the curse of the law, free to be that which He always was – the God of all creation. But when He took upon Himself to be man, He came under the curse of the law, and thusly it is written that He took upon Him the form of a servant, a slave to the law, and yet He was also the fulfillment of the law in every point, jot, and tittle. He achieved what no man before or after ever could, and that is complete harmony with the law, no violation at any time in any manner. Not a cross word ever came forth from His glorious lips, not an evil thought ever fled through His spotless, sinful, pure Mind. He was perfect. Pristine, without blemish in all manners, and yet we still deemed Him worthy of death. He was born in order to die, He came to this world to be a sacrifice. We read, “Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me” (Hebrews 10:5).

The time of His birth was very important as well, for He could have been born while the nation enjoyed its liberty, but rather He was born at the height of the Roman empire. Which further implied the servant form which He undertook. The glorious Son of God was full of humility as He was also born in poverty, instead of a palace. He had a stable, instead of a gold plated cradle. He had a manger, instead of costly apparel. Our Saviour wore rags, most likely hand-me-downs, and instead of being surrounded by servants, He was surrounded by beasts. All of this is but a small testament of His great humility. Of the fact that He cared not for Himself or His surroundings or His comfort, He was here to do the will of His Father. He was in the world, but never of the world. Yet look at how unlike Him we are. We could not dare to live in His shoes for one day, let alone thirty plus years. He was full of courage, honor, bravery, love, compassion, sorrow, meekness, kindness, and yea I can see why the Scriptures called Him the Altogether Lovely One.

There is also so much more that we could say regarding the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to simply overlook all of the humility, all of the shame, all of the enmity that surrounded His birth is to not know the Saviour. We ought to want to know all we can regarding the One Who loved us enough to give Himself for us.

As He grew, He did not play as other children do. He would sit amongst the physicians and talk of the work of His Father. Those that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and His answers. He Who baffled the doctors with His great wisdom came to this world to die, He came into this world for the sole purpose of offering Himself up as a sacrifice unto His Father, and He spent His entire life doing the will of His Father in heaven. At the time not many believed that this young boy was the promised Messiah, or the One that all the Scriptures prophesied. Believing this is all a part of believing the gospel, for if He at one time had a sinful thought, or a sinful action, He could not have been the Son of God.

His life is an open book, literally, open to our scrutiny. Looking at His life try to find any unkindness, any inappropriate words or thoughts, and you will find that there are none. He was pure, holy, undefiled, sinless, perfect in all aspects of His life, for God could not accept an offering with even the slightest of taint. I cannot help but wonder how many times it crossed our Saviour's mind during His sojourn here upon earth that He would die the death of the cross, and that He would be abandoned by both God and man while

at Golgotha. I suppose that would have consumed all of our minds and hearts throughout our entire lives, but we never hear any mention of it until the night before that most cursed, and yet most blessed day.

We know only a fraction of the things which our Lord both did and said while He was here upon the earth. John wrote, *“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen”* (John 21:25). But we do know that He was the promised Messiah. He said in the synagogues, *“And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears”* (Luke 4:17-21).

Now we must ask the question what does this have to do with the gospel? Because the gospel is how Jesus Christ died, was buried, and rose again from the dead according to the Scriptures. The Scriptures foretold of this, they foretold of Him, and the first and most important step in believing the gospel is to believe that He was the promised Messiah, that He was the One of Whom the Scriptures prophesied. And that is so very important. He was not a prophet, He was not a mere man, He was not even just a good man, He was God incarnate, for anything short of that His sacrifice would have been meaningless.

As He offered himself upon the cross, He had fulfilled all the prophecies regarding His life, and now regarding His death. Had but one of the hundreds of prophecies not have been fulfilled by Him, then I might have to question whether or not He was the Son of God. But upon His death, even the centurions said, “Surely this was the Son of God.” So believing the gospel begins with believing that He was the Son of God, and that He did have the power to forgive sins, and that through imputation God imparts the very same righteousness which Jesus Christ had unto you.

Names have great meaning in the Bible, and much can be told about the persons character from their name. Cains name meant “acquired,” or “gotten from God.” Seth means “appointed by God.” Jacob means “supplanter.” Noah means “rest or comfort,” and Immanuel means “God with us.” There you have even more proof that Christ was Who He said He was – God with us. God tabernacling amongst us was the meaning of His Name.

And still to this day, He is Immanuel. He is with us. He left His Spirit here to tabernacle with you and I. He did not leave us unto our own. He knew that we were but flesh and blood, and would take evil over good every time. Our sinful natures do not deserve this precious, dear, sweet Saviour to have perished on our behalf. We do not deserve to have Him still with us today, but He is. Jesus Christ is tabernacling here amongst us today if you are a believer. God gives His Spirit to those that believe. That is the only difference between you and your neighbor – the indwelling Spirit of God. He is with us, He is a part of us, He loved us enough to give Himself for us.

And He did give Himself for us. When we were unlovable, He loved us. When we were God hating, He loved us. Certainly there are a million times a million things about Him to love, but what was it in us that He found to love? Most likely, nothing, but He loved us with such passion that He gave Himself for us, and the Scriptures forever will remind us, “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). The Altogether Lovely One took our rightful place upon Calvary. There was nothing in Him worthy of crucifixion. There was nothing in Him worthy of death. There was nothing in Him unlovable, and yet He suffered the pangs of death on the behalf of you and I. And that, brethren, is part of the gospel, that He would love you enough on no merit of your own to give Himself for you.

But the gospel could never be complete without the resurrection, for had He not been victorious over the grave, we would still be dead in our sins. The Scriptures state clearly, “Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Romans 4:25). His victory over death signified that He was Who He said He was, the Son of God. His victory over death gave us hope beyond the grave, a hope in a

future resurrection. His victory over death destroyed Satan and the stranglehold which he had from the time of Adam. Until the resurrection of Christ, Satan held death over the head of all mankind, but our Blessed Redeemer wrestled that power away from the devil.

We can never underestimate the resurrection, or the power of it. The open tomb, and the words “He is not here, He is risen,” ought to cause our hearts to leap with joy with very thought that our Saviour defeated death once for all, and in doing so, we have a hope beyond the grave. We know that He will one day raise us up again and seat us in heavenly places with Him, because of His tender love, compassion, and mercy, yet it is due to the fact that He was raised again from the dead.

Beloved, there are earmarks of a true believer. A true believer will both think and talk glowingly of his Saviour. A true believer loves to hear others talk of Him as well. I cannot, do not, and will not, fall in love with the lord that is being proclaimed in most churches today. That is another Jesus, that is a person with whom I am not familiar, and do not want to be. That is a person who exists only in their imagination. I could not love a Saviour that died for no particular purpose or reason or other than to open the flood gates of heaven. I could not love a Saviour that loved everyone including those that would reject His open offer of salvation to all mankind. I could not love a Saviour that has no control over me, and was not Sovereign enough to keep me for all of eternity. I could not love that kind Saviour, but let me tell you about my Saviour in the remaining moments that I have this morning.

My Saviour is the One whom the Scriptures call the Altogether Lovely One. When it is said that He is Altogether Lovely, it excludes all unloveliness from Him. I went to the Smithsonian institute while in Washington with Kasey for her school trip several years ago, and saw what they call the hope diamond. It is the biggest uncut diamond in the world, but what made it so beautiful was its backdrop. The blackish color velvet added an even more brilliant reflection to it, and thusly it really added to its beauty. Whenever you go to a jeweler and they show you a watch, they do not simply hold it up, they place it over their wrists for a back drop. You do not purchase clothes without seeing how they look on you. All of these things have a certain innate beauty, but when something else is added, they become even more appealing.

This is true with everything except our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no back drop, there is nothing that can possibly add more beauty to Him even when He stands alone. Every angle is full of beauty, therefore only He is altogether lovely. John Flavel said, “He is a sea of sweetness without one drop of gall.” I know that each and every one of you here love the Lord Jesus Christ, but how glowingly do you speak of Him? When you teach, or when you taught your children, how highly did you regard Him to them? That matters, that matters greatly, because the God of the Bible deserves the highest admiration that we can give Him. He is the Altogether Lovely One.

Most believe that you can't get enough of a good thing, but that is not necessarily true. An over indulgence in anything is not good. Even something as healthy as exercising can turn into an over indulgence. I was watching a show on A&E not too long ago where this guy was obsessed with working out and staying healthy. He worked out an average of 6-8 times a day, that's right 6-8 times a day. He took some three hundred plus pills a week all in an attempt to stay healthy. I'm sure it did not start that way, but that's how he ended up, and not only is he obsessed with it, it is his idol.

And that is the danger with anything that you do to the extreme. It can become your god, and it is not healthy for you after a point. But our Lord and Saviour is the sole exception to the rule. It is not possible to get enough of Christ, to get enough knowledge, to have enough love, to know Him enough, for the more you know of Him, the more you want to know. He is altogether pure, honest, clean, sincere, lovely, and therefore there is no danger in holding more and more and more of Him.

The closer you draw towards something the more flaws you can find in it, but that is not the case with our Lord. I have never seen the Mona Lisa, but I have seen pictures of it. Those that have seen it say that the brush strokes are uneven, in some areas it is thick and others thin, and yet it is one of the most popular and beautiful paintings ever. Look at a butterfly sometime. From a distance they really are beautiful, but close up it is nothing but a caterpillar with wings. Look at the Hollywood movie stars. There are magazines published that exclusively show what they look like without their makeup.

There is nothing that truly looks more appealing the closer you get to it. The only exception is the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at Him, look at Him as closely as you can, and you will see only more and more beauty. The harder you scrutinize Him, the more beautiful He becomes. Examine His life as closely as you can, look for a blemish, even a mark, and you will not find one. Read every word ever written about Him, every word He ever spoke, and you will find nothing except pure kindness, love, compassion, and dignity. Only He could be called the Altogether Lovely One.