

Isaac Bennett
Forerunner Church
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Overview of the Gospel of Grace

Good morning. It's good to see all of your smiling faces this morning, most of you. Romans chapter one. Turn to Romans chapter one. The teaching notes are available online at ForerunnerChurch.com/live if you'd like to download those or follow along during the message. This morning, we're going to talk about the Gospel of grace. Romans 1:16-17. I'll read this passage for us first, and then we'll pray.

I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, this is Romans 1:16. For it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes. The Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith as it is written, the just shall live by faith.

Father, we love You. We honor You. We honor Your Son. We honor Your Word, and we ask, Lord, for a spirit of wisdom and revelation this morning. We ask that You would remind us of these foundational truths, that You would spark and awaken in us just a fresh understanding, a fresh passion, a fresh joy in the gospel of truth, that You would be with us in our midst this morning. Lord, I ask that You would help me, that You would help me to speak well of You, well of the gospel of Jesus Christ and well of the gift of righteousness that's available through the cross. We love You, Lord. In Your name we pray, amen. Amen.

Well, I have three general goals for this message. I want to read them to you. Number one is that we would be as a people, as a church, vibrant messengers of the gospel of Christ, that we would understand the truth of God's word, that we would communicate it with passion, that we would communicate it consistently, that we would communicate it thoroughly to those that we share the faith with, to those that we disciple.

Number two, that we would live confident in God's love. We are going to examine this morning some foundational truths to the doctrine of grace. These truths are to awaken deep and passionate love for God on the inside. That's the reason that we're aiming for them. It's not just so that we would be doctrinally accurate and that we would have all of our T's crossed and all of our I's dotted, so we would feel some sort of doctrinal superiority compared to other people. The idea is that the truth of God's word, the truth of this gospel, would light a fire, ignite our hearts to be more passionate and more in love with Jesus, who fervently is passionate and desires us.

Number three, number three goal is that we would be empowered to walk in victory over sin, victory over sin, and the gospel of grace that we're gonna look at here this morning gives us information that is to embolden us to walk in a greater measure of victory over temptation and over sin in our own lives. And the key point is this, it's confidence in God's love. The gospel awakens confidence within the heart of the Christian so that we run to God in our times of temptation, in compromise, in sin. We don't run away from Him. We don't draw back from Him.

We're gonna look at that more in depth this morning, but that is a critical part. There are many people, professing Christians, and they feel that they are losing the battle in their life over sin and

temptation. And one of the reasons why is because the core foundational truths of God's word has not taken root in their hearts and minds, and they believe God is angry at them, and they must go pay penance to God. My buddy use to call it spiritual time-out. When you sin, when you compromise, maybe that happened yesterday or this morning, whatever it was. There's this wrong belief that we have to put ourselves in spiritual time-out to punish ourselves so that God will be appeased, and say, "Wow, they're really hard on themselves, so yeah, I guess I'll forgive you again for that thing that you did," and that is a completely wrong idea. That is an idea and an activity that is beyond the foundation of God's Word. It is beyond the gospel. Nowhere in Scripture will you find that as an acceptable behavior to go put yourself in some sort of purgatory, even in this life so that God will finally accept you because you're so sorry and you promise really hard to never do it again. That never happens. You find that nowhere in the Word of God. I just want to state that very clearly.

Well, today, many of you may know this. Today is what's called reformation Sunday. And Reformation Sunday commemorates the beginning of the protestant reformation 500 years ago. Martin Luther, in 1517, he nails the 95 theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg, in Germany, and begins what's known as the protestant reformation. And Luther, during that time, he challenged the authoritative structures of the Roman Catholic Church, and what had happened to Luther is that he had had an encounter with these verses, well, with the Lord, but through these verses, Romans 1:16-17 about three years prior to the beginning of the protestant reformation. And that so notably marked him and set him on fire that it ultimately led to him writing the 95 thesis and da da da da. And basically, the 95 thesis are Luther's appeal for the body of Christ to return to the truth of the gospel, to understand their justification and acceptance in God, and to understand the priesthood of all believers, not just authoritative structures that had been set into place.

And so, what he began during that time, or he was one of the reformation fathers, the fathers of the reformation. What he began bears upon us today because the same temptations that set into place authoritative structures that resisted the truth of God's Word, those same temptations are at work today within, inside and outside the body of Christ and within our own hearts. Those same tendencies to religion and power, those same temptations of the licentiousness and a false gospel, those powers are still at work even within us today.

And so, I love what Paul says in the book of Romans because sometimes we hear, you know, "oh, great," you know, "another message on the gospel. When are we gonna get to the deep stuff? When are we gonna get to the real stuff? Where's the secret riches of the knowledge of God that the inner circle understands?" You know. That's the stuff we want. But Paul, when he's writing the book of Romans, this letter to the Roman church, he's writing to the most deep, profound, powerful, notable people in the whole body of Christ in the known world at that time. It was the church in Rome. And he says, if you're looking at Romans 1 in verse 8, he says, "First, I thank God for Jesus Christ that because your faith, or your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world," I want you to understand what he's saying here. It's really notable. He's saying that the faith of the Romans is being proclaimed throughout all the world. They're the most famous Christians in the whole world. Okay? And then, go to verse 15, and look at what Paul

says. He says, "So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome." And Paul, in the book of Romans, in the letter to the Romans, he will give the most in depth analysis of the ramifications of the Gospel, it's bearing upon us as individuals. He will break it down in more depth than in any other letter. So, let me summarize why I think that's important.

Paul's going, here's the most fiery, notable people, the most notable Christians in the whole earth. He goes, I'm coming to them to host the conference. Verse 15, he says the conference is going to be on this, the gospel. And they're like, "Well, what else are we gonna talk about here?" "That's it. We're gonna talk about the Gospel." Imagine going to the most famous, persecuted, fiery, faith-filled church in the earth, writing the email beforehand, "Can't wait to see you all. Your faith is spoken of in the whole world. I'm coming to the conference. We're gonna talk about the Gospel. We're not gonna talk about anything. We're gonna talk about the core elements of the Gospel." This is a profound statement Paul is making. It would be like dorky me, going to the persecuted church in China, going to the persecuted church in North Korea or Iran, and saying, "Man, I can't wait to hang out with you guys. I have such insights to give you," "What are we gonna talk about?" "We're gonna talk about the gospel of Jesus Christ." They're going, you know, I don't know if they're actually doing that, but you get the point.

So, Luther is in this internal struggle within his own soul. He's a monk. He's devoted his whole life to the Lord, and he begins to describe, he writes about it, the inner battle of his soul, in terms of being able to receive the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I mean, he's way more... I'll say it like this. Luther, as a monk, is way more devoted than I am in prayer and fasting and discipline in his life and work given to the kingdom, way more than I am. And yet, even in spite of his piety and his devotion to God, he's still deeply conflicted on the inside. Listen to what he writes. He says, "In spite of my arter, in my heart, I was hindered by the unique word of the first chapter of Romans," He's referencing Romans verse 17. The righteousness of God is revealed through the Gospel, is what he means. He goes, "I hated the words "the righteousness of God" as I had been taught to understand it." As they put it or as he had learned about the righteousness of God, he says, "It was the formal or the active righteousness according to which God is righteous," meaning, He's right, and holy, and pure, and He punishes sinners and the unjust. That's how he understood the righteousness of God.

He says, "As a monk, I led this irreproachable life." He says, "I was so committed." I mean, he's, prayer, fasting, meditation on the Word, Scripture memory, reciting. I mean, his whole life is set in this, and his own soul is deeply conflicted. He says, "Nevertheless," and I have it in the notes, if you're following along with the handout. "Nevertheless, I felt like I was a sinner before God. I felt like I was dirty before Him. I didn't know that I was received or loved or enjoyed by Him," and I want to tell you that there are many just like Martin Luther, probably here in the room today, or watching on the webstream or whatever. They're in that same place. They're in the place of this conflict of their own soul. They don't know if they're received and accepted and enjoyed by God as they presently are. They wrongly imagine that they have to do several things, you know, and that they're acceptance through their religious life is far away in the future. I've gotta get these things lined up in my life. I've got to get my anger under control. I've gotta get my purity in check. I've got to fix my marriage. I've got to fix my finances. I've got to fix my family,

my kids, my bla bla bla bla. I have to do something in order to be fully accepted and enjoyed by God. This is the state that Martin Luther is in, and this is the state of many, many Christians that have been in churches, that attend Sunday services, go to conferences, you know, read all the books, this is the same conflicted state that many are in.

He says, "I felt that I was a sinner before God. My conscience was restless, and I could not depend on God being appeased." He says, "Not only did I not love, but I actually hated the righteous God who punished sinners." He's being completely honest with himself. He's having that truth talk on the inside that most of us are really too afraid to have. We passively resist God's Word. We passively resist the Gospel. We misunderstand it, but Luther, in writing this, I love it. He cuts straight to the core of what's going on. What he means is this, when we live out of a spirit of religion, trying to earn God's acceptance, trying to appease God's wrath for our own righteousness, what we're afraid to admit, but that Luther admits right here is that we actually hate the righteous God who punishes sinners. We hate Him. Because we feel that we could never be accepted by Him. There's nothing good enough that we could do.

He says, "Day and night, I tried to meditate upon the significance upon His Word." So, he goes into this whole season of turmoil, and if you watch the movie, Luther, I can't remember which one it was, but it really depicts this inner conflict. I mean, I watched the movie. It was years ago that I watched it, but it really troubled me. I was like, "That guy's kinda messed up. He's just like me. Perfect." But, uh, anyways. He's in this wrestle of his own soul. Then he gets, kind of this breakthrough moment, fast-forwarding. He says this. This is how he describes it, "Then finally, God had mercy on me, and I began to understand that the righteousness of God," meaning that state of perfection and cleansing and holiness, "the righteousness of God is a gift of God." It's something that He gives to us. It's something that He imparts into us. It's never something that we do or become through our own efforts. This is a huge point.

He says, "The righteousness of God is a gift of God by which a righteous man lives, namely faith," and that sentence, the righteousness of God that's revealed in the gospel is passive, indicating that the merciful God justifies us or makes us righteous by our faith in Him. Because Paul goes on to say that the righteous live by faith. Those that are accepted by God are accepted because of their faith in God, not because of their works for God. He says, "Now I felt as though I had been reborn altogether, and I had entered into paradise. Just as intensely as I hated the expression "righteousness of God," I now lovingly praised this most pleasant word. Because the righteousness of God for the born-again believer is like soothing water to the soul," because you know and you have confidence that when God looks at you, He sees you according to the righteousness of Jesus. He sees you according to the righteousness that is beyond your own flesh, your own activity, your own reach in devotion, your own piety, your own personal holiness. When you are righteous before God as a born-again believer, you know that you're accepted. You know that you're loved. You know that you're enjoyed, and in your times of need, in your times of desperation, in your times of failure, in your times of sin, and your times of compromise, you know that God has legally pronounced you, over you, that you are innocent, and that you will not come under His wrath.

And that's the transformation that Luther is talking about here. He's passed from the righteousness of God being this heavy burden that he could not bear. No man or woman could bear the righteousness of God. No man or woman can bear the wrath of God and repay it in a way that satisfies God. That's how great our debt is. That's how great the penalty of sin is upon our lives. And he says, "When I understood that the righteousness of God was not something that was acquired, but something that was gifted," He said, "I began to love it. I began to love the idea of this righteous Judge, this righteous, Just One, who has made me clean, who has accepted me and received me into His Kingdom and His family. I'm gonna live with Him forever, and I'm not disqualified." It is a powerful reality.

This is important in terms of where the church is at in the days ahead because the church, in the body of Christ even presently is constantly being pulled towards religion and constantly being pulled towards licentiousness, or what we kind of call greasy grace. The heart is constantly being pulled one of those directions. And we need, as the people of God, need to be plumb-lined to the truth of God - to war according to the truth of God - to look in the mirror and what comes to mind is Bible verses about our righteousness and our acceptance in Him, not just the long list of dirty laundry sins that we're all trying to get over.

Many people spend their prayer life, their devotional life in God, talking to God about their sin and their failure rather than hearing from God, His delight and His acceptance over us. It changes your devotional life completely. I think it's one of the reasons people may not enjoy their devotional life or fear the place of prayer, or fear coming on a Sunday morning into the worship time. Because that lie of the enemy that just perpetuates itself in our minds, "you're disqualified, you're dirty, you're sinful, you've gotta get this stuff together before you can even come in and lift up your hands and worship before God."

Some of the greatest challenges that we have is just being able to worship God through a free and flowing heart. And rather, we go, "Well, I really messed up. I really sinned. I really blew it, so I've got to take two weeks or more. I've got to get my life all right. I've got to do spiritual penance before God in order for Him to accept me back." And that is a completely wrong idea. I just want to say that. It seems noble and it seems humble, but it is absolutely rooted in spiritual pride and the spirit of religion. Absolutely.

And the Lord wants to break us out of that. Why? Because the church, the nearer that we get to the day of the Lord, this foundation of the Gospel is gonna take such a root in the church. Let me describe just the way she's going to be before His coming. She will be in full agreement with the Spirit. Revelation 22:17. She will walk in the unity of the faith, the whole body of Christ will walk in the unity of the faith throughout the earth. That is a promise that is so far beyond, to me, the present reality. You've got a thousand denominations and you know, 800 being made every day. She is gonna walk in unprecedented power. She is going to walk in mature love before the day of the Lord. And the point is this, is that the body of Christ, with all of our reach for radical lives of fasting and prayer and the forerunner message, the thing that undergirds it all and sets us on the right foundation to pursue these things in the right spirit is the Gospel of grace according to the will of God.

We have to come back to it again and again and again. We've gotta plumb line our hearts. We've gotta get out. We've gotta shake off the spirit of religion. We've gotta shake off the temptation for licentiousness and lustful living. We gotta shake it off. We've gotta live in the Gospel truth. We need to call others to it. We need to call ourselves to it.

When we say the Gospel, what is it that we mean? Because if you ask different people, you get different answers. What is the Gospel? Some people say, "Well, it's the way we live as Christians. That's the Gospel." Others might say, "Well, it's the New Testament or it's the teachings of Jesus." The term "gospel" as many of you know, the term "gospel", actually means "good news. A pronouncement of good news." In other words, when you hear of news, when you go to a news source, what should be happening is that someone is testifying their witnessing of events that have taken place. Hello? Just the most fundamental understanding of what it means to report the news, to report the news means that you take the facts and what you understand and you pronounce it. You say it on TV, you say it on the radio, you say it through writing, you say it through all different ways. You're pronouncing facts that have taken place. This is the way in which we're to understand the Gospel of grace. The Gospel of grace isn't something that we primarily go do. The Gospel of grace is something that we are to believe. Certain facts and events happened.

A Man named Jesus of Nazareth who claimed to be God and worked mighty signs and wonders and miracles, suffered at the hand of sinners. He died on a cross, on the third day, He was raised from the dead, and over 500 people saw Him in His material body raised from the dead. He ascended to heaven at the right hand of the Father. He went up as a Man. And He's sat down at the right hand of God as a Man. And He's there waiting until His enemies are made His footstool. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the pronouncement of facts. The Gospel is not about winning an argument. It's not primarily about a lifestyle. It's not something that we're supposed to go do. It's something that took place that has bearing upon us that we are to believe. In other words, the Gospel is this, God came and did something to you. Will you believe it? The Gospel is not God did somethings so you got to go do some things now. The primary Gospel message is that God did something to you. He made a way for you. He reformed you. He cleansed you in a way that no one could, no one can, not even you. And will you accept and receive what He wants to give you. The Gospel is the proclamation of facts. It's good news. It should elicit within us good news.

Sometimes people in the body of Christ, well-meaning believers. They go to the unbeliever and they preach the so-called Gospel to them. And they go to their neighbor who's living with their girlfriend and they say, "Hey, you know, I'm a Christian and I go to church, and you shouldn't live that way. You should marry your girlfriend. You can't live together and not be married. You can't sleep together and not be married. Hey, you should stop drinking alcohol. Hey, you should stop ba ba ba ba ba..." All this different stuff. And they're parading what they believe to be the Gospel, but that is not the Gospel.

The Gospel is a pronouncement of what Christ did to the individual and made available to us, simply by faith in Him that He actually did it. That's why it's good news! Beloved, if Christianity is getting people to stop swearing, drinking, and smoking, that is not good news. There are a

thousand religions. Hear me. There are a thousand religions across the earth that try to get people to stop drinking, smoking, and swearing. That is not what sets Christianity apart. That's not even good news. That's not even a unique message. That's not even like cool or insightful. And I'm not saying that we want people to perpetuate those type of activities, because I believe they're self-destructive. But the point is this, is that what makes Christianity good news is that you get set right with God day one, not day 10,000. That's what makes Christianity such a unique and powerful belief.

Number one, it's right. Our God got out of the grave. Nobody else got out of the grave. Everybody else died and stayed in the grave. Every other religious guru and spiritual leader, they've come and they've gone. Our God, there is witness, a lot of evidence that He got out of the grave with the same body He went into the grave with. He claimed to be God, not just a way to God. He claimed to be God, and He went to the right hand of the Father in front of over 500 eye witnesses. He was on the earth for 40 days after the resurrection. And the uniqueness of Christian doctrine is that it puts our acceptance in God at the beginning not at the end. That's why it's offensive. That's why the world scoffs at it. That's why other religions discount it and disqualify it. Why? Because if you go to any other religion, it puts your acceptance by the deity at the end of your good works, at the end of your adherence to that moral code, to those ethics. And in Christianity, Paul is saying right here. He goes, "You receive your acceptance by faith in God day one."

Beloved, this is good news, but we don't live like it. We don't believe it in our hearts. And as I was preparing this week for this message, last night, you know, me and the kids, we turn on Rachel and Wallese Faggatu's song, Let My People Dance, let them dance right now. And I am just dancing around the house with my kids because of the truth of God's word. Yeah, we're having a fun time, but at the same time, God has made me righteous and given me the righteousness of God, and I'm gonna live forever with Him, today. That is the power. That is the power and the beauty of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We're not grasping for something. We're not trying to climb up this mountain where the deity resides, and we're on this long sojourn, you know, up the mountain, and ah, we've got to just try and it's hard, our life is hard, everything is falling apart, but hopefully at the end, when we get to God, he receives us and accepts us. The Lord's looking down and He goes, "You can't even get up this mountain." So, what did He do? He goes, "I'm gonna send My Son down the mountain to you. I'm gonna find you in the ash heap. I'm gonna find you in the grave. I'm gonna find you in the muck and the mire and the trash and the vileness of your life. I'm gonna take your life, pull you up, lay in your place, suffer the wrath of God, die your death, so that you can be accepted by God in one day. In one moment, where the heart is awakened in faith to God, your life is transformed. You become a new creation in Christ, you become the righteousness of God.

Guys, this is really, really good news. It's glorious news.

In the New Testament, the Gospel was something that was to be proclaimed. It was to be proclaimed. Why is that important? The actual word in the Greek for evangelize means that you are to announce, herald, properly proclaim a good message. You're just to proclaim it. You're just to say what it is that's true. I want to encourage you in your evangelism and your witness to the

lost. Your goal and aim is to not win an argument. Your goal and your aim is not to get all of your apologetics down and you know, all of your crustacean period of evolution, and bla bla bla bla. All of that stuff, that is not the goal of your evangelism, to get all the arguments right so that you can win some sort of intellectual argument. Your goal, Jesus says it in Acts 1 ver 8. He says, "You will be My witnesses. I will fill you with the Holy Spirit and power from on high, and you will be My witnesses to the ends of the earth. You're go to out, and you're to proclaim, to say what is true, to say what happened. Let the chips fall where they fall. Don't have to worry about getting to the argument of science versus religion. Don't have to worry about getting into the argument of faith versus Gnosticism and all these different groups of thought. Don't worry about that. Be bold. Proclaim what God has done and how it's changed you. Just say it. Witness to it. Let the chips fall where they fall. It's not your job to, to win the lost. It's Christ. You can't reform the human heart. You can't regenerate a human spirit. Only the Holy Spirit can. Let Him do His work.

What is the challenge of it? The Gospel? Romans 1:16. Paul says this. He says, "I'm not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. I'm not ashamed." We're gonna look at, why is it that shame is one of the major hindrances to the Gospel of Christ. And I'm gonna actually talk mostly about the internal realities of our own heart. Because there is a portion of shame outwardly where we feel intimidation and shame about the Gospel of Christ. But that's because probably we're trying to win an argument, not just say what we believe to be true.

Christians must be diligent with all fervor and attention that the Gospel message that we believe and proclaim doesn't err or become wayward from what is set forth in Scripture. The reason that we're doing this is not so that we have doctrinal purity, as I mentioned earlier, but so that we love Jesus in the deepest way. The Gospel of Christ is the only way forward into wholehearted love with Him. It's the only way forward. It is the foundation forward into loving God with the same passion in which He loves us, with the same devotion that He loves us. That's what He's after. The first and great commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind. And love your neighbor as yourself, right? Love the Lord with all that you are. He said that the only way you're gonna do this is by walking in the truth of the Gospel. You are accepted in God. Therefore, we walk together in faithful obedience. There is no other way that your heart gets from dull and cold to mature in love without the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That's why it's important.

The second reason is because Paul tells us in first Corinthians 13 that without love, that he is nothing. He says, "I could have faith," verse two. He says, "I could have all faith. I could move mountains." Imagine a Christian standing up with all faith and calling up the rocky mountains, Pike's Peak, and casting them into the sea. That would be a serious witness and some serious power. Paul goes, "I could possess all knowledge, the knowledge of angels, the tongues. I could have understanding into all mysteries, but he says, "If I don't have love, I am nothing. Not that I don't have nothing." He says, "I am nothing. I'm nothing before You."

There's so much debate that's raging across the body of Christ. There's so many arguments about who's in and who's out. Beloved, I believe that the Lord would call us as the body of Christ to boldly declare the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the way of salvation, to testify of Him, to not play

judge, jury, and executioner, but to come before the Lord in meekness and humility and tears within our own hearts, and say, "God, have a bride that's worthy of You. Let the Gospel witness truly go forth to the ends of the earth." We must have love.

Paul says that he's not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, and here, he's identifying a key strategy of the enemy. A key strategy of the enemy is the internal and external pressure that arises when the Gospel is spoken of. Even right now, even right now as we're talking about the Gospel, there is internal and external pressure that is assaulting your heart related to the truth's of God's word. Whenever I talk about this, whenever I teach on this, I can feel it, whenever I talk about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There's conflict. There's confusion. There's "But, but, but," but we can't just by faith be made righteous. We've got to do something else. These are the arguments that are constantly bombarding us. There's this internal turmoil, and it's in shame that's trying to cloak us in religion.

Let's talk about this. Paul addresses shame because shame keeps the individual in bondage so that they cannot approach God. That's exactly what the spirit of religion does. The spirit of religion that operates within the human heart is when the heart believes and cannot approach God in prayer. It cannot approach Him in worship. It cannot approach Him. Shame causes the heart to run away from God, to flee from Him.

But Paul says, "I'm not ashamed of the Gospel," because the Gospel and my acceptance in God causes me to run to Him in my time of need. I don't have to run from Him. I don't have to fear Him. I don't have to pay the penalties for my sin. He paid them for me. So, in my time of need, my time of sin, my time of compromise, the second after, I don't have to do spiritual penance. I run to Him. I throw myself on the altar of His mercy, and I say, "oh, God, would You wash me again. Would You make me clean. I'm Yours. I'm the righteousness of God." And in that moment, we are forgiven, cleansed. And we can't allow the barometer of our emotions dictate if we're in or out of the kingdom.

Many Christians believe they're in or they're out. They're dancing in that one week to the next week. I'm a Christian one week, I'm not the next. I'm a Christian on Sunday, but the rest of the week... not so much. I'm in and out. The truth of the Gospel is, you're either in or out. There's only one cross. There's only one payment of debt. There's only one Lord and one God. You can't earn your way back into salvation. You can't earn your acceptance before God. It's something to be believed and received by faith in God.

When the individual doesn't approach God, they cannot receive the riches of His mercy and grace that He longs to give. And so, what religion does is, religion, the spirit of religion comes, and it lies to you. It says your righteousness is what you do and who you are. So, the religious elite rise to the top because they're the holy ones. And in our own hearts, it's called self-righteousness, we rise to the top. And we get this confidence boost because we're so free from sin, and we're so free from previous failures, and it's been like three days. We're so free so there's this emboldened, confidence that we have in our heart, but it's not a confidence in God's grace and mercy. It's a confidence in our own work.

And that confidence is called religion. It is an inherent Gospel message to believe that within our own human heart, and so what happens is, when the religious falls, when they're tempted and they give in, then what happens is, shame sets in. Shame begins to wrap itself around. The spirit of condemnation comes and begins to lie to you and begins to tell you that you're a hypocrite, and that you're hopeless, and that God cannot accept you, and that God will not receive you, and if people knew about you, they'd throw you out of this church, and bla bla bla bla. How do I know that? Because that's what happens to me. That's what happens to me.

The spirit of religion is constantly tempting my heart into these false Gospel expressions, these false inherent, meaning wrong, filled with error beliefs about God and His ways and His mercy.

Number two, the outward sense, shame silences the Gospel witness. It accuses the Gospel of being foolish, and it accuses the Gospel of being excessable. Number one, it accuses the Gospel of being foolish. I mean, from a scientific, non-faith based belief, the idea that a Jewish man was God, got out of the grave, and went to the right hand of heaven, is coming back to judge the entire earth is a foolish message. And Paul wants to reiterate to us that the message of the Gospel will always be foolish to the earth. It will always be foolish. It will always, because we don't know God by the outward whatever. We know God by faith in Him, by His Word, by our testimony in Him. I was blind, but now I see. They're going, "Well, who made you blind, why did He blind you?" I don't know. I was blind without Christ, but now I see in Him, and you can't take my testimony away. I know that He's God. I know that He forgives. I know that He died for my sins. I know that I'll be resurrected and live with Him forever. I was blind, and now I see.

First Corinthians 1:18, Paul says the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. What is more foolish than a cross? It's the Roman tool of execution and it's become the religious symbol of our faith, a cross. It's like hanging an electric chair in a building, and being like, "Wow, thank You, God, for the electric chair." I mean, it really is foolishness. It was a mockery. It was a distain. It was a sign of Roman subjugation and power. It was a sign that epitomized the evil of dictators. And it's become the symbol of our salvation. It's foolishness to the world, but to us who believe, it is the power of God.

We know that through that cross, our redemption is available. Through that cross, our healing is available. Through that cross, resurrection is available. Through that cross, eternal life is available in God.

Number two is that it's excessive. And I mentioned it earlier, but there's not another religious faith, at least not one of the main ones that puts justification at the beginning of your journey, that you're justified, that you're given the righteousness of God. Your granted clean robes and a clean turban and a ring on your finger. I mean, the parables all illustrate this. The prodigal son returns in Luke 15. He doesn't even get half of his repentance out and the father's already kissing him, accepting him, receiving him, and giving him a place of authority. It's a gift to be received. It's not something the son had to go earn back. It's not something that he had to do. He just had to show up. And that's what we do to experience the delight and the riches of God. We just show up. just here I am, Lord. Here I am. What do You think about me? What do You feel towards

me? And we become the recipients of this most outrageous, scandalous gift in all of the universe. Forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, sealed for the day of redemption, future, you know, future experiencers of the resurrection. It's unbelievable. We share in an inheritance in Him.

All perversions of the Gospel bear, ultimately, the fruits of shame. The enemy tries to tempt the believer into shame through a false Gospel. Every worldview that is not the Gospel or is even slightly off center, uses shame to motivate and uses shame to control. All of them. And you don't have to go outside the walls of Christendom to experience that. You experience it internally because it's not a power-based problem or an institution problem or just a leadership problem like, "Wow, the deacons are getting carried away here." That's not what it's about. The spirit of religion lives inside the heart. It's there. It has to be put to death by the power of the cross. It has to go into the grave. It has to die. And it's constantly trying to come back out of that grave and work within us to try to earn our favor and place before God.

I'll say it like this. It's not just a problem of the Pharisees. It's the problem that the Pharisee lives in my heart. We don't just have a problem with Pharisees and religious people out there. The problem isn't just out there. It's right here. We are prone to this. And that's why we need the Gospel. That's why we need the reminder. That's why we need the fresh revelation and the wind of the Spirit to blow upon our hearts through the Word of God so that we believe again what is true about us and about what Christ did.

The falseness of religion heaps shame upon the heart. It condemns the Christians. It condemns Christians through Christians. It says this, "You will never be received by God. You'll never be received. You've gotta go work. You've gotta earn it. You wanna earn My trust? You've got to go earn it back." That's not the way the Gospel works. It's not the way it works. He puts the end at the beginning. He puts your acceptance, day one. He puts your righteousness, day one. He puts your inheritance, day one. You have access to it all, day one. You pray the prayer at VBS camp and ask Jesus to be the Lord of your life, you surrender your life to Him, repent of your sins, boom. That day, you become the righteousness of God. We'll talk more about that in a moment. This is good news.

The falseness of licentiousness or greasy grace for those of you that are familiar with that term. It grants the Christian permission outside of the Word of God to engage in sin and compromise. The problem that it doesn't tell you is that what happens when you engage in sin and compromise over years and years and years, your love grows cold. You become dull. The Scripture describes your conscious there it is, being seared like an iron. I feel like when the lights are gonna come back on, everybody's gone. Be like, "Hey!" It's just me and you, online people. Some people will resist wanting to be obedient to God. Scripture tells us that the commands of the Lord are not burdensome.

There's a propensity in the human heart and among Christians to go, "I am accepted, therefore I don't have to obey God. He's just gonna accept me no matter what." Paul addresses this all throughout the book of Romans, but the power of it is this. I heard one person say that, not one person. I read this many times, but in the old covenant, that there were six hundred and thirteen

laws that you had to abide by. Six hundred and thirteen dos and don'ts. That's a lot. Imagine trying to work that out in a marriage. Imagine if your spouse showed up and they were like, "Hey, I've been thinking, and I came up with six hundred and thirteen things I want you to do or not do, so follow them exactly or I'm out." "Oh, great. Thank you. I still need coffee this morning before I have this conversation." But, no, I've got good news and bad news. The good news is that the new covenant. God has made provision.

I was listening to David Pawson. He said, "The bad news is this, in the New Testament, there are over 1200 dos and don'ts." God's not trying to expunge our responsibility and remove our reach for obedience and holiness in Him. But what happens in the New Covenant is that a provision is made to actually walk those things out. Provision is made through the life of Christ Himself, and then provision is made through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit that lives in us. We actually want to do what is right. There's many many people that outside of the grace of God, they don't want to do what's right. They don't have to. They don't care.

And John tells us that, he says, "The commands of the Lord are not burdensome." He said, "God has made a way. He's portioned boundary lines for you to walk in with God." He says, "When you walk in God's ways, then the most fruit and the most joy, and the most, all the fruits of the Spirit, they blossom in your life in the deepest way, when you walk within His boundary line."

A lot of people get angry at the Word of God. They get angry at Scripture. They go, "I don't want to do this stuff. This is a huge burden to me." But the problem is is that their option is not doing it God's way and then being filled with demons. Being filled with depression and anger and rage and disfunction within their own soul, living not at peace with God, but under His wrath, under the wrath of God. That is the alternative to walking in obedience before God. I mean, I don't think His commands are bad. I would rather do that than be filled with demons. I mean, maybe I'm just a weirdo, but...

Paragraph E, if you're following along with the notes. A brief summary of the Gospel religion and licentiousness. Religion says this, "I obey, therefore I am justified." My acceptance in God is far away. Do you follow? That's what religion says. Licentiousness says this, "I am justified. Meaning, I'm accepted, but I don't have to obey because I'm already justified." And what it doesn't tell you, licentiousness, is that you're gonna end up with a cold, dead heart, with a seared conscience and wayward in your way. You will not love God if you continue down that road in five, ten years. You just won't. I've seen people in the body of Christ with a spirit of religion. I've seen people in the body of Christ with a spirit of licentiousness. It doesn't go well. It doesn't end well. The Gospel says this. It's different. It says, "I'm justified now, therefore I long to obey." I want to. It's actually within my heart to do it. It's the grace of God upon our lives.

The Gospel is the power of God to salvation. It's the righteousness of God. The righteousness of God has been imputed into us. It's been credited to our bank account. I invite out the worship team.

I'll end with this. The individual is either righteous or not righteous. There is no in-between. There's no half-way Christian. We're either justified by God or we are not justified by God. There's a preacher named Dr. Martin Loyd Jones, and he would use this investigative question to

see where an individual stood when it related to the Gospel. This is the question he would ask. He said, "Are you now ready to say that you are a Christian?" I'll say it maybe a little bit stronger. Are you now ready to say that you are accepted and that you are the righteousness of God? Can you say that today? Can you say that in your chair? Could you declare that with boldness and confidence to the person next to you, to a friend or whatever?

Jones notes that many would hesitate here and offer some response along the lines of, "I'm not sure that I'm good enough." This is what he wrote about it. The same guy. He said, "At once, I know that they are thinking in terms of themselves." Their idea is that they have to make themselves good enough to be a Christian. It sounds very modest, but it is a lie of the devil and a denial of the faith. The truth is that you will never be good enough. You can never be good enough. That can either discourage you or encourage you this morning. You will never be good enough. You either receive the gift of God or you try and present your own gift of righteousness, but who can match the righteousness of God? Who can possibly do that? Who can cross the void from the unholy into the holy? Who could cross the void of being created into the transcendent? Who can just go to heaven and show up and be like, "God, here I am according to my own righteousness. Now, let me in." There's no one. There's no one. No one can do that. The essence of the Christian salvation is to say, he continues on, is to say that "Christ is good enough, and I am in Him." Let's stand.