

## Sharing the Gospel series part 3

### The Gospel

Good morning. Have you considered what your last words are going to be? Until this week, I haven't really spent much time thinking about what my last words will be. However, in preparing for today's message I have thinking about it. Our last words should be something profound, right?

In trying to come up with some great last words, I did a little research. I want to share with you some famous last words.

(show each quote one separately as I read them)

I owe much; I have nothing; the rest I leave to the poor.  
François Rabelais, writer, died 1553

Either that wallpaper goes, or I do.  
Oscar Wilde, writer, died 1900

I should never have switched from Scotch to Martinis.  
Humphrey Bogart, actor, died 1957

They couldn't hit an elephant at this dist. . . .  
General John Sedgwick, Union Commander  
Quoted right before he died in battle during the Civil War

Last words? Maybe I haven't thought much about my last words because really I won't have any last words. None of us will have any last words. Why do I say that? Because the bible teaches we will live forever. There is no finality to life. We might die physically, but spiritually all of us in this room are going to live forever either in heaven and eventually the new earth or in hell and eventually the Lake of Fire.

Do you want to spend eternity with God? Or do you want to spend eternity separated from God? At the end of my message this morning, I am going to ask you to make an informed decision. The source of this information is the Bible.

Today is the conclusion of a 3-part series on sharing the gospel. Let me briefly recap what we have discussed.

In part one of our series, we discussed reasons that hold many of back from sharing the gospel. These reasons include:

Fear of embarrassment

Fear of ruining a relationship

You can't make an impact in 2 minutes, so why even try?

It's not my gift

As we discussed these reasons, we have learned we can overcome these obstacles.

In part 2 of our series, we discussed an easy way to crack the ice that could lead into a discussion about the gospel with a lost person.

We discussed how to ask leading questions that require a person to think deeply about their answer. Questions like:

Where would you go if you died tonight?

Is it possible to be 100% certain that you will go to heaven?

If God asked you, "Why should I let you into heaven?" what would you tell Him?

When you die, what do you think is on the other side?

These leading questions require a person to think deeply about their answer. If the person is lost, you will quickly learn. After several leading questions have been asked, hopefully, the lost person will realize they don't know all the answers about eternal life. Hopefully, should they reach the point of realizing they don't know what the Bible teaches about eternal life, they will want to find out.

OK! The stage has been set. The person we are speaking with is now ready to hear the gospel. But to properly share the gospel, first we must learn to clearly communicate the gospel. But what exactly is it?

Many people claim that they are preaching the Gospel, yet they all seem to have different messages. These messages include:

Say a Sinner's prayer  
Repent and be baptized  
Come forward and confess Christ publicly  
Make Christ the Lord of your life!  
Ask Jesus to come into your heart  
Turn from your sins to God  
Make a personal commitment to Christ  
Pray to receive Christ

Why do we hear so many different messages today? Is there more than one gospel? What really is "The Gospel" according to the Bible?

**What is the Gospel?**

The word "Gospel" means "good news". By sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ you are sharing the good news about what Jesus did for us. It is the good news of how a person can have a loving, personal relationship with God that gives meaning and purpose to this life, and at the same time, gives a person the certainty that they will spend eternity with Him.

**SIN**

To understand the good news of how the relationship between God and man must be restored, one must first understand how the relationship fell into ruin. The Bible teaches us:

**...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God... Romans 3:23**

Calvin Coolidge, the 30<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, returned home from church one Sunday and was asked by his wife what the pastor had talked about. Coolidge replied, "Sin". When his wife pressed him as to what the preacher said about sin, Coolidge responded, "I think he was against it."

Based upon his response, I'm not sure if President Coolidge really knew what sin is. But we shouldn't be too hard on him. Many of us don't know what sin really is.

Because many don't realize what sin is, many can't admit to being a sinner. You see, many of us equate sin with only really bad stuff like stealing or murder. But sin is much simpler than that. Adam and Eve sinned by simply eating a piece of fruit.

The word "sin" actually refers to an archery score. Let's say you lived 2,000 years ago and you are participating in an archery tournament. Any time you hit the center, you scored a "bull's eye". Anytime you missed the center, you scored a "sin". So if you shot 10 arrows and 3 hit the center and 7 missed the center, your score would be 3 bull's eyes and 7 sins.

Now still thinking in terms of archery, let's say that some of your arrows really missed the center and some of your arrows just barely missed the center. But whether they missed by a lot, or just barely missed, they are still called sins in terms of your score.

As it relates to man's relationship to God, we sin anytime we miss the target of God's standard. God doesn't lie. So when we lie, we have committed a sin. God doesn't lust. So when we lust, we have committed a sin.

A sin is anything that doesn't allow God to be God in your life. When you are awake and anytime you don't glorify God, you have sinned.

Is murder a sin? Of course. Is stealing a sin? Of course. Is thinking seriously about speeding, but not speeding only because you would be caught a sin? Yes, it is. Wait Joe did I hear you right? I can sin even when I don't actually break the law? Yes, because if you would be willing to break the law if you knew you wouldn't be caught, you have fallen short of God's standard.

In archery, some shots are worse than others. Some miss the target by several feet, and some miss by only a fraction of an inch. In a similar way, some sins miss the target of God's standard more than other sins. Murder misses the target more than having a brief lustful thought. But both lustful thoughts and murder are sins.

Everyday you and I miss the target of God's standard. Sometimes we just barely miss the target, and sometimes we really miss the target. It doesn't matter how far you miss the target. All that matters, according to God's

word, it that you missed the target. Because we constantly miss the target of God's standard, you and I sin constantly.

## Separation from God

The result of sin is clear:

...but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God...  
Isaiah 59: 2

Because God is holy and man is sinful, God cannot be in our presence. Because of sin, God's removes himself from us. Although He still loves us, God actually separates Himself from us because of sin. He has to, because He is holy.

The Bible teaches that even the smallest sin, like lying, is enough to eternally separate man from God. God cannot allow sin in His presence. He can't allow sin in his presence because He is holy.

## Our efforts are useless!

Down through history, man has experienced the pain of being separated from God. To try and restore the relationship, man has tried to develop systems to restore the relationship. Systems like:

Baptism  
Going to church  
Loving your neighbor  
Good works  
Obeying the 10 Commandments  
Sacraments  
Handing out religious publications

But the Bible says:

We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. Isaiah 64:6

To attempt to wash away your sins through your own works is as hopeless as trying to wash a dirty face using a dirty greasy rag. There is absolutely

nothing that you can do through your own efforts to erase your sins and cross the barrier that separates you from God.

OK – let’s review. We have all sinned. Because we have sinned, God has separated himself from us. We cannot restore the separation through our own efforts. It may seem that things are hopeless for man. And it would be hopeless, except for one very important fact.

### The Gospel

Since we can never come into God’s presence in our sins, God sent Jesus to die for our sins, and then raised Jesus from the dead on the third day.

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures...

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15: 1- 4

The Gospel is that Jesus died for our sins and rose again from the dead. Jesus removed the separation between us and God by dying for our sins, and rising again from the dead.

Many people believe that Jesus died and rose again from the dead, but what does the Bible mean when it says that Jesus died “for our sins?” How did the death of Jesus cure the problem and remove the separation between God and man? Allow me to explain the problem and God’s solution to the problem.

### The problem: God must punish sin

The Bible tells us that since God is holy and just, He must punish sin.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men... Romans 1:18

If God did not punish us for every sin, big or small, He would be a corrupt judge.

This is what many people expect God to do - overlook minor sins like the lying and only judge the major sins like murder. If God only judged the murderers, He would be a corrupt judge. Because God is a perfect judge, he must judge all sins including lying.

The good news is that although we deserve eternal punishment for something even as small as telling a lie, Jesus freed us from God's wrath through His own death. This can be explained in three steps.

### Step 1: Jesus took our sins upon himself

The first step in the redemption of mankind was for Jesus to bear the sins of the world. When Jesus hung on the cross, God took all the sins of the world (past, present and future) and placed them onto Jesus. Jesus is not a sinner, but Jesus did take on the guilt of sin in his body.

... and the LORD has laid on him (Jesus) the iniquity (sin) of us all.  
Isaiah 53: 6

### Step 2: Jesus died in our place

Since God must punish sin, He poured out His wrath upon Jesus in our place. Jesus became our "substitute." He was punished for our sins, and died in our place.

But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace...

Isaiah 53: 5

### Step 3: Satisfaction

Jesus' death paid in full for our sins, thereby satisfying God's anger and justice.

Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for sin, he shall prolong his days; the will of the

LORD shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied.

Isaiah 53: 10 – 11

No matter how much God loved man, he had to bring down the gavel and say, “The penalty of sin is death.” But God loved us so much that the judge Himself, in the person of Jesus, came down and paid the penalty for us so we don’t have to pay it. Jesus died in your place as your substitute!

When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

John 19: 30

The phrase “It is finished” was actually an expression used in Rome in the time of Jesus’ crucifixion when a debt had been paid in full. When Jesus shouted this just before he died, he was indicating that he had made a perfect, complete and final payment for sin.

You might be thinking right now about things in your past. Bad things perhaps. Maybe you have aborted a baby. Maybe you have cheated on your spouse. Maybe you murdered someone. No matter how big the sin is, no matter how far you missed the target of God’s standard, I am telling you the debt you owe for your sins has been paid in full by Jesus. It is finished. The debt is paid in full.

**Faith: Man’s Response to Jesus**

Jesus did all the work necessary to save man from his sins. However, before we can experience the benefits that God has provided through Jesus’ death on the cross, God requires that we believe in Jesus, and what he has accomplished for us that have faith through his death.

For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1: 21

Faith is the hand by which we reach out and accept the eternal life offered freely in Jesus Christ.

### Grace: A free gift

The word “grace” means something which is given freely...without cost of obligation. For example, if I gave you a bible and asked you to pay for it, could you still call it a gift? Of course not.

On the other hand, if I have wanted to give you a bible, but you insisted on paying for it, would it be a gift? Of course not. In fact, if I wanted to give it to you, but you insisted on paying for it, you would actually offend me.

Any teaching that implies you have to do something to earn your salvation (baptism, communion, good works, etc.) is offensive to God. Why? Because the moment you offer something in exchange for you’re your salvation, it is no longer a gift that God is giving; it becomes debt he owes you. Saying that God owes you salvation because you are baptized or because you go to church is an offense to Him.

Some of us, even after coming to faith in Jesus, find comfort in thinking that in case Jesus alone didn’t pay our debt, we also have the religious rituals we did to fall back on. Things like baptism, taking communion, doing good works, etc. This thinking is actual harmful to you. Why? Because God takes offense to it.

It’s kind of like this. Let’s say you get married. You have given yourself to another person. As you are moving in together, you find your “little black book” with all your old phone numbers. You could throw out the book; but you decide to keep it, just in case the marriage doesn’t work. If your spouse heard about this, would they not be offended? Of course they would. Why? Because you are not putting your complete faith into the marriage.

When we are holding on to beliefs about anything other than Jesus alone to save us, we are not putting our complete faith into Jesus.

It comes down to this. Are you a Jesus “period” person or are you a Jesus “plus” person?

Jesus.

or

Jesus +

A Jesus “period” person says Christ alone saves me. A Jesus “plus” person says that Jesus plus other things such as baptism, good works or daily repentance saves me.

You need to be a Jesus “period” person. When it comes to God’s grace, it’s all or nothing.

**Grace: It must be free**

When we attempt to gain eternal life through our own works such as baptism or daily repentance, we are no longer accepting God’s offer of eternal life as a free gift, that is, by “grace”.

**But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.**

**Romans 11: 6**

God offers eternal life as a free gift. We must either accept it as a free gift, or not at all.

**Repentance**

I want to talk about repentance. We have all heard that we must repent. But what does that mean?

Repentance is probably the most misunderstood word in the English language.

**Saving repentance is not being sorry for your sins**

**Saving repentance is not turning from your sins or reforming your life**

**Saving repentance is not the willingness to turn your life over to God so that He can direct your path.**

Saving repentance has absolutely nothing to do with regretting your sins or resolving to turn from them. God is willing to save you just the way you are. The Bible says:

**But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

**Romans 5: 8**

OK, we now know what saving repentance is not. So exactly what is saving repentance?

**Saving repentance is to stop trusting in gaining eternal life through religion, religious rituals, or obedience to God's laws.**

The word "repent" comes from the Greek word which means to "change one's mind." Those who believe that eternal life can be earned through good works are commanded in Scripture to change their mind or 'repent'. They are told to stop trusting in their works, and come to God on the basis of grace through in Jesus alone.

**If faith is the hand that accepts salvation through Jesus Christ, repentance is the hand that rejects salvation by any other means.**

And that is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But before we conclude, do you remember at the beginning of my message this morning, I talked about a decision I was going to ask you to make. We are almost at that time to make a decision.

But before I ask for your decision, I want you to know that since the time I began speaking this morning, approximately 3,000 people have died. In fact, since last Sunday, approximately 1,050,000 have died.

**1,050,000 people have died since last Sunday**

We know that tomorrow is never guaranteed. For all I know, this could be my last week on earth. I mean over 1,000,000 die every week. It is not

unreasonable for me to think I could be one of the 1,000,000 people that are going to die this week.

So let's say I die this week. This week I am going to appear before God. And God asks me this question:

**“Joe, why should I let you into heaven?”**

I then reply, “Your word contained in the bible clearly told me if I place my faith in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, I would have eternal life. Father, I placed my faith in Jesus “period”.

Father, may I ask you a question? May I have my inheritance?”

The Father will reply “Welcome home, Son. Enter into the joy of your master.”

Now I want to take you through another scenario. Let's say I die this week and God asks me:

**“Joe, why should I let you into heaven?”**

Well, Father, I placed my faith in Jesus. And I went to church every Sunday. And I said the rosary every day. And I was a good husband. And I was baptized. And I dedicated part of my life to being a pastor. And I hardly ever lied.

The Father will reply “Joe, look I love you. I created you. It was my desire that we spend eternity together. But you did not place your faith in Jesus. You told me all the good things you did. Yes, you were a good husband. Yes, you were a good pastor. Yes, you did say the rosary everyday. But you didn't do the only thing I require. You didn't place all your faith in Jesus. You placed your faith in you. Son, I am sorry, but because you really didn't trust in Christ, you will not live with me in paradise. You will spend eternity separated from me in hell.

Father! Wait! I admit on earth I really didn't trust in Jesus, but now I do! Please Father! Please! I don't want to go to hell.

The Father replies, “I’m sorry. I’m truly sorry.” But it’s too late. Good bye.

Today, you have a choice. Tomorrow it could be too late. Right now you can place your faith in Jesus. Jesus “period”. Nothing else. God’s word promises you eternal life right now if you place your trust in Jesus.

I am asking you today, to make a decision for Jesus. I am asking you to repent from any religious system that teaches Jesus “plus”. I am asking to become a Jesus “period” person right now.

Jesus said it perfectly when he was asked by Nicodemus how one becomes “born again”:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. John 3: 16 – 18

Yes, you can be forgiven and born again, but you have to take the gift that God has offered to you. The gift of Jesus. Are you ready? If so, let’s pray.

Dear Father - I know I am sinner. I have fallen short of your righteous standard. I accept that I could never earn my way into your kingdom. The only way I can become righteous is by believing that Jesus paid the price of my sins when he died on the cross and rose 3 days later. Thank you Father for the gift of Jesus. Thank you for accepting his shed blood and forgiving my sins. Amen.

If you said that prayer for the first time, I want to welcome you to the body of Christ. You are now part of His church. You are saved and there is nothing that can remove your salvation. You are forever eternally His.

Pastor Paul or myself would love to talk with you one on one about the decision you just made for eternal life with God. Please come up and see us, or contact us through the church office.

Before we finish, on a personal note, I just want to say that leading this series has truly been one of the highlights of my life. I have much appreciated the encouraging words and positive criticism that I have received. I know with your help, I am becoming a stronger teacher of God's word. I love you all so much! God bless!