

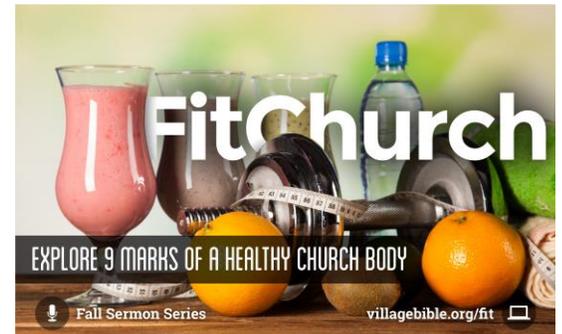


VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH
SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Headline from Heaven

FitChurch: 9 Marks of a Healthy Church Body, Part 3

Tim Badal | October 5, 2014 | Various Scriptures



Good morning, Church. My name is Tim Badal, and I serve as the pastor of preaching at Village Bible Church. Today, we are continuing our series that we've entitled "Fit Church." We've been looking at different attributes, or marks, of a healthy and Biblical Church. Last week, we looked at the importance of Biblical theology. What do we believe about God? What do we understand about Him, and how does that impact our lives? I appreciate Pastor Steve helping me out last weekend by presenting that to you. This is the third week in this series and today we are going to address the issue of the gospel. We are going to do something a little different this week. Instead of looking at one particular passage, we're going to look at all of Scripture. Our journey will begin in 1 Corinthians 15.

Some of you heard last week that I had the opportunity to be on one of the Chicagoland radio stations and be interviewed about the gospel. What is this gospel that churches talk about? What is this gospel that preachers proclaim? What is it and what effect does it have in your lives? One of you asked me what that experience was like. One of the hardest things about that interview was wearing the headset and hearing the producer saying all kinds of things like, "You've got a minute left." I learned something about radio that I hadn't known before. To end the session, the producer in another room will turn the music up louder and louder until you forget what you're talking about. This causes you to stop talking completely. After hearing this story, one of you jokingly told me, "We need to get that mechanism here at church so that when you're done, you're done. We'll just turn up the music in your headset and you'll forget what you're talking about and stop talking."

Today we want to invest our time looking at the issue of the gospel. This is a difficult task before me, not only this week, but in the next couple of weeks. This week we are going to talk about the gospel generically: what is the gospel and what effect does it have in our lives? Next week we'll talk about conversion: our response to the gospel. The week after that we are going to talk about evangelism: what is our mission with regards to the gospel? What are we called to do? What are we called to proclaim to the world around us? The gospel has been described as something shallow enough for a child to bathe in, but deep enough to drown an elephant. That is my task today. I want to show you that the gospel is simple enough for a child to understand, but I also want to help you recognize that the gospel is an ocean of truth. We are called to be gospel-centered people. What does that look like? I want to address that today, as well as how it affects our ministry. To do so, I want to focus our attention on 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 to hear what Paul has to say about the gospel:

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand,² and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.¹¹ Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

One of the first things that comes to mind as we address this issue of the gospel is that the gospel is the headline from heaven. We don't think about headlines much anymore with the advent of television and the Internet. Headlines were a big thing back in the day. When newspapers ruled the day, headlines would grip the nation with a few simple words. They described incredible acts of victory or terrible disasters. Young boys would stand on the corner, newspaper in hand, shouting headlines for events like President Lincoln's assassination, the Lunar Landing or the fall of the Berlin Wall. Who can forget 9/11 and the headlines from the New York Times saying that we had been attacked? In 1945, we learned through the newspapers that Hitler was killed. Some headlines are terrible tragedies, like the sinking of the Titanic. The New York Times was one of the first newspapers that began listing casualties from tragic events; people would turn to the newspaper to find out if a loved one was rescued at sea or lost forever. I remember when I was a young boy in school and the Challenger exploded. Who can forget when our teams have won championships? I tried to look for a White Sox World Series paper and I couldn't find one. There's no evidence that the White Sox ever won the World Series. So I went with the Bulls winning their sixth championship. Who can forget when Osama Bin Laden had been killed and justice had been served? I remember when Nelson Mandela was freed after years of imprisonment. We remember these events. Headlines are big news. What we report in our news is a commentary on our society.

These headlines remind us of the greatest headlines. Not the assassination of a president, not disasters at sea, not a championship win, but headlines from God Himself. During human history, God has announced over and over and over again a headline that He doesn't want us to miss. The greatest headline is the gospel of Jesus Christ. He wants to remind us that Jesus Christ has come to save sinners through His death, burial and resurrection.

What is the headline that the Scriptures call the gospel? The word "gospel" is used 95 times in the New Testament alone. The Bible makes it a big part of the Church's life. The word "gospel" comes from the Greek word, "*euangelion*," which literally means, "good news." Here the gospel is God's great news to humanity. He has come to save sinners and redeem them back to Himself. The Bible says in Romans 1:16 that the gospel, "*is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.*" If the gospel is the good news that God has as His headline, if it is the power of God that saves people, shouldn't we know what this gospel is and how it affects our lives? Healthy churches come to this realization. They understand what the gospel is and strive to clearly teach it to the world around them.

In order to do this, we must:

1. Recognize the dilemma facing the world today

There is a dilemma facing the world regarding the gospel. You might think, "Isn't the gospel pretty clear?" Yes. God announced the coming good news from the beginning of creation and throughout human history, but we have an enemy who distracts people from the gospel and dilutes its message. The devil distorts its requirements and destroys its effect on people. While the devil will never win the ultimate victory, he wins battles along the way. He has deceived people into thinking the gospel is something other than what it is. People have been misled.

Turn to Galatians 1:6-9. This deception is true in our day just as it was true in Paul's day. People thought they knew what the true gospel was, but Paul tells them that they were pursuing a different gospel.

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—⁷ not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

Paul says two things:

1. You can fall prey to different gospels. Just because you say you believe in the gospel doesn't mean that you have a full understanding of what the true gospel is. You might be deceived.
2. If you find yourself preaching a different gospel, you are accursed. That's not a good thing. Being cursed is not a positive or a good thing. As a healthy church, we better know how to preach and proclaim the true gospel.

There are a lot of gospels out there today. Here are some counterfeit gospels to help you understand that not all things with the label "gospel" are truly the gospel.

Prosperity gospel

The prosperity gospel concept in the last century came out of the Pentecostal movement. It holds that believing the gospel of Jesus Christ entitles a person to spiritual and physical well-being. They say that the spiritual and physical existences of a human being are inseparable realities. They focus on personal empowerment by promoting a positive view of the spirit and body. What does that mean? It means that because you have been made in the image of God, you now have power—as God does—to create things through your words. If you speak ill of yourself, you will be ill. If you speak words of poverty, you will be poor. If you speak words of brokenness, you will be broken. Likewise in the Word of Faith movement, if you speak words of wealth, you will be wealthy. If you speak words of empowerment, you will be empowered. If you speak words of health, you'll be healthy. Your amount of faith will determine whether you're healthy, wealthy and happy.

When you turn on Christian television today, many of their programs will be proponents of this prosperity gospel. They believe that words have power, and in the prosperity gospel movement you become a gospel unto yourself. You no longer need Jesus. You, being an agent of God, can speak words of redemption into your own life. To quote John Piper, "The prosperity gospel is crap." I like that. I like it when guys get a little racy with his language. That's what it is. They take this stuff and transport it over to Africa and Asia. They proclaim this stuff and say, "You want things? Take Jesus!" Anyone would take Jesus if it meant getting a new car and a new house and staying healthy while the Ebola virus eats everyone else alive. That is not the gospel.

Program-Oriented gospel

This can also be labeled social gospel. This is the false gospel that places its emphasis on social programs that alleviate the suffering of those around us. The social gospel was prominent at the end of the 19th century through the end of the 20th century. It was adopted by most denominations. Its intentions were good. It sought to apply ethics from the Sermon on the Mount to alleviate social problems like: poverty, poor living conditions, poor nutrition, poor education, alcoholism, crime and war. It put hands and feet to the heart of the gospel. Alleviating the hardships of those around you is loving your neighbors as yourself.

Here is where the social gospel became a false one: It adopted a mindset of sociology. It changed people by leaving out the gospel of Jesus Christ. Sin, heaven and hell, salvation, the future Kingdom of God were downplayed to the point of extinction. The gospel was reduced to only loving your neighbor as yourself. Serving in soup kitchens and providing clothing for people was the only requirement. A person's tangible needs are the only needs a person has. It fails as the true gospel because people need more than a full belly and a shirt on their back. If you think that physical needs are a person's most pressing issue, you deceive yourself. The most pressing issue is that people are in need of a Savior. Whether they have a belly full of food or a shirt on their back, they need Jesus. We need to proclaim that and the social gospel neglects it.

Pluralistic gospel

You could also call this politically correct gospel. Oprah Winfrey is this gospel's high priestess. She once said that all views of religion make their way to heaven. She described going to heaven like this, "We're all walking up the same mountain; we're just coming at it from different sides. What we will discover--the Hindu, the Buddhist, the Jew, the Christian and everyone in between--at the top of the mountain is that while we were pursuing different things, we were pursuing the same god." Here's the problem: Jesus says, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* (John 14:6). Peter and John said, *"There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12). That is the Name of Christ Jesus. "So, Oprah, I'm sorry to tell you that what you are saying is not the gospel."

Here's the problem: the reason why this is such a popular gospel in our culture is because it allows us to be tolerant of one another. "What you believe is okay. You'll get there. We just use different means to get there, different names, different gods. In the end we'll all get to heaven." We are all tolerant. If you watch daytime TV shows, the host will bring out a guest who is a Satan-loving, cat-sacrificing and dog-food eating individual. People just clap and say, "Oh, that's so wonderful. Thank you for coming." But then Tim Tebow comes on and says, "I love Jesus Christ," and the hissing begins. People start shouting, "Who are you? Why would you say such a thing, you intolerant individual!"

We are intolerant, not because we like it. We are intolerant because the Bible is utterly exclusive. Apart from Jesus Christ there is no hope for humanity. If we miss that truth, we will adopt this pluralistic mumbo-jumbo that says, "I'm okay. You're okay. We're all okay." The only thing it's going to do is land a whole bunch of people in hell. Be careful of that mindset. It's not the gospel.

Psychological gospel

There's also a pragmatic gospel. You might say, "We're preaching the gospel. We're doing well." Let me bring something closer to home. Within the Evangelical circles, there are churches that will claim to preach the gospel. But instead of preaching Christ crucified, buried, and raised for a changed life because of God's grace, churches are preaching sermon upon sermon of self-help. "Let's talk about money. Let's talk about marriages. Let's talk about parenting. Let's talk about being good employees. I'll grab a Bible verse for you and show you how to be better at those things." People walk in and say, "I'm struggling with my marriage. The preacher gave me advice on how to be a better spouse..." "I'm struggling with my pocket book. The preacher gave me a verse that helps me be better with my money...or helps me be a better employee or helps me have better relationships." Here's the thing: the Bible talks about all of these things, but at the end of the day, you will not be a good husband, wife, employee or have good relationships apart from Jesus Christ. You have to have Jesus. Recognize that you are a sinner in need of God's grace. Apart from that you can do nothing. You will never be the spouse, parent or follower of Christ that God wants you to be unless you get beyond this self-help attitude toward the gospel.

Patriotic and Political gospel

Now we're getting close to home. The bombs are getting closer. This one thinks that the greatest need for our country is the need for a new President or a new majority in the House of Congress. It is more concerned about polls than the precepts of God. It is more concerned with the Washington Beltway than people bowing the knee to Jesus. This kind of gospel over-esteems the U.S.A. It believes that the United States alone is God's nation and the only hope for humanity. It believes that our country is the main mechanism for redemption. It views the American dream--life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness--as its end and democracy as the means to a fulfilled human existence. This is not the gospel. It maybe a good way to organize government, but it's not the gospel.

Performance gospel

This mindset is manifest when you go up to an individual and ask, "When you die and stand before God, why will He let you into His heaven?" The response is usually, "Well, you know. Let me tell you the things that I've done. I was a Boy Scout leader for a long time. I walked a bunch of mature ladies across the street. I was a good father. I was a good husband. I served in my community. I did a lot of good things. God will weigh my good and bad, and the good will outweigh the bad. I'll be all good."

Another manifestation of the performance gospel is the teaching that, "the way you get to God is by doing a whole bunch of good works." So people pour out good works. They come to church. They participate in church activities. They are baptized and partake of the Lord's Supper. They think that when they get to heaven God will say, "Wow! You really stayed on top of things. That merits you heaven and glory. You will now enter into the presence of Almighty God." That is not the gospel. That is far from it.

The question then is: What is the pure gospel? The gospel is not in competition with these things. Those things fall short of what the pure gospel is. The best way to understand the pure gospel is through a definition. I've done my best to put together what I think is the best definition of the gospel:

The good news that God, Who is more holy than we can imagine, looked with compassion on people, who are more sinful than we could possibly admit, and sent Jesus into history to establish His Kingdom and reconcile people and the world to Himself. Jesus, Whose love is more extravagant than we can measure, came to sacrificially die for us so that by His death and resurrection we might, through His grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, repent and trust Him as our Savior and Lord, so that we might be restored to God and to the community of Christ-followers and become partners with God on His mission of restoration both in this life and the one to come.

That, the Scriptures tell us, is the gospel. Anything less than that is taking away from the purity of the gospel.

2. Celebrate the defining moments of the gospel

As we look at that definition, we need to remember key moments of the revelation of the gospel. The gospel wasn't something that God invented between the pages of Malachi and Matthew. It's not as if God was angry in the Old Testament and then He wakes up on the right side of the bed in the New Testament and says, "Hey, I'm going to help people now. I'm not going to destroy them in My wrath and anger." The gospel has been part of the heart of God since the beginning of human history. Notice the progression.

Presented by God in the Garden

Turn to Genesis 3. If you are new to the Bible, Genesis is in the beginning. Turn all the way to your left. In Genesis 3 we have some things happening in the Garden of Eden. God created Adam and Eve in perfection and they have been living in a right relationship with God. They have been walking and talking with God, enjoying God's perfect garden. They now have made a choice to pursue the deceptions of the devil to go against God's commands and eat from a tree from which God had forbidden them to eat. They've eaten the fruit and find themselves under the wrath and judgment of God. They run for their lives. They hide themselves. They try to cover up their nakedness and shame because of this sin. They no longer have a right relationship with God.

God comes in and pronounces judgment on each one according to their own sin. He starts with the serpent, then moves to the woman and finally the man. In Genesis 3:15, God conveys the gospel without even uttering the word "gospel." It says, "*I will put enmity between you (speaking to the devil) and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.*" What God says is, "Hey, because of your fall—your sin—we have a problem. Here's my answer to this problem. Devil, you're going to do everything in your power to bring destruction to this man and woman and their offspring. I'm going to produce in them and through them an offspring. He's going to kill you, Devil, and you're going to injure Him." In human history, the devil works to seek and destroy the Promised One Who is going to come. The devil is infatuated with the birth of boy babies throughout the Old Testament.

The devil is part of a chess game with God and is perpetually ten steps behind. God is telling the devil that He will checkmate him in 15 moves. "I already know that I'm going to beat you. I already know how I'm going to beat you. We're going to play 15 more moves and in that 15th move, you're done." In the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned, God presented the gospel saying, "There will be One Who will once and for all deal with sin and death."

Prophesied by the Old Testament Saints

We move out of Genesis to the life of Abraham, then to Israel as a nation and then finally we come to the prophets. In 1 Peter 1:10, Peter says:

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully,¹¹ inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.¹² It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.

Let's stop there for a moment. According to Peter here, when Isaiah talks about the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53, Isaiah is thinking, "I wonder Who it is. I wonder when this will be fulfilled. Prophecies are pointing to the coming of Christ. They are pointing to the Messiah Who will come and redeem us from our sins and take care of the sin and death that holds us in bondage." Prophets kept prophesying about the Messiah, wondering when their prophecies would come to fulfillment. We see it over and over again in the Levitical Law: the sacrificial lamb, the scapegoat, the mercy seat. These things pointed to a time when Jesus would come and make all things new.

Purchased and Personified by Jesus Christ

When He comes on that night in Bethlehem, the angels announce to the shepherds, "Glory to God in the highest. Joy to the world. Let the earth receive her King." Messiah has come. Now He has come in the form of a baby. He has come, not only to personify the gospel, but also to purchase the gospel for His people, so that they might have a right relationship with God. Christ comes and does two things:

1. He does what we cannot do. He dies for us, taking our place, enduring the wrath and judgment of God so that we can be free to have a right relationship with God. Christ did that on the Cross. Rest in that. Be assured that when you trust Christ as Savior, your sins are dealt with once and for all. Praise be to God that the Second Person of the Trinity would enter into humanity, die on the cross on your behalf, enduring wrath that was supposed to be on you, enduring your judgment. He takes upon Himself all of that as the perfect God-Man.
2. He enables us to have a right standing with God through justification. He also shows us through His life what living the gospel looks like. He shows how gospel-living walks and talks. How it serves. His life demonstrates gospel-living by submitting to leadership and others in authority. It demonstrates forgiveness. Christ's life is gospel-living through and through. The gospel isn't something you only receive once at the point of salvation; rather it is the

picture of what your life ought to look like until the moment of your death. By God's grace and power, you are able to live that way because Christ has made gospel-living available.

Preached by the Apostles

In the latter half of the New Testament, this same gospel is brought to the rest of the world by the Apostles. Acts 2 records the first interaction of the Apostles with people from around the world. Peter gets up and says, "Let me tell you about this Jesus Whom you've crucified. He is now Lord and Christ. Repent and believe." On the day he preached that message, three thousand were added as followers of Jesus Christ because they recognized the gospel for what it was: that which brings dead men back to life.

The gospel ought to be preached in both good times and bad. In Acts 5:27-32, Peter and John are brought before the counsel who tells them to stop preaching the gospel. They respond, "We can't. We have to preach the gospel." This is a wonderful reminder of the calling that you have as a follower of Jesus Christ. No matter what culture thinks of you, you need to herald the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Pondered by the Angels

There are beings who have been watching this gospel unfold. The angels have been pondering this gospel. First Peter 1:12--the passage we looked at earlier--says that the gospel has been preached "*...to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.*" Why in the world would angels be involved in the gospel? Why would they care about the gospel? If you remember in eternity past, the devil and a third of the angels rebelled against God, His glory and His authority. This was, in a sense, the first coup against a government system. They failed miserably. God threw them into hell where they wait for their judgment, enduring all kinds of pain and suffering and anguish for all of eternity. Angels know what God does with sin. Adam and Eve did the exact same thing that the fallen angels had done. They rebelled. The angels in heaven may have been watching and thinking, "Oh, boy. Here we go again! God's going to kick them out. God's going to consign them to hell. They've blown it. God doesn't allow sin to go unpunished."

God blows their socks off. He doesn't consign us to hell. Instead He turns to the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ and says, "You're going to go and pay their penalty." I bet the angels thought, "Are you kidding me? The One we worship and adore is going to put skin on? He's going to make His dwelling among these people? They're not going to esteem Him as God. They're going to beat Him and abuse Him. They're going to insult Him and nail Him to a cross. God is going to pay for their rebellion and make them co-heirs to the Kingdom of God?" If angels, who are in the presence of God, ponder and are astonished by these things, shouldn't we also be astonished by the gospel of Jesus Christ? We don't have a clue as to how much grace God has showered upon us through the Person and work of His Son. We can't fathom it. This is what God has told us to do: not only receive it, but proclaim it to all who are around us.

Proclaimed by Christ Followers

Mark 16:15 says, "*Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.*" Why? God tells us to. Why? It is the power of God that changes lives. The power to what? Give us riches? Take care of our earthly needs? Give us better lives and relationships? To give us standing before God? No. We preach Christ crucified and raised on our behalf so that we might, by His grace, experience new life in Christ Jesus. The old is gone and the new has come. We do this with gratitude in our hearts. We proclaim the same message that our Lord and Savior did in Mark 1:15, "*Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand.*" That's our job. If you're not preaching the gospel and proclaiming the gospel in some way on a regular basis, then you do not recognize the Treasure that you have. You have a Treasure before you. The reason why you don't evangelize might be because you don't understand the two dimensions of the gospel.

3. Understand the two dimensions of the gospel

There are two dimensions to the gospel. If you don't understand these, you may despair when people don't accept the gospel.

Heavenly Dimension

The gospel is not only the good news that saves you from your sin; it is also the good news that God is renewing the world for Himself. He is restoring it back to its rightful place. The Fall took a completed jigsaw puzzle and dashed it to the ground. God is

now putting that jigsaw puzzle back together into the beautiful picture that it is. There are times when you see that jigsaw puzzle all messed up and might think, "I see no picture. I don't have a guide to understand it." Know this: God, day by day, is bringing His Kingdom back into place. He is doing so through your life and the work of His sovereign hand.

You might ask, "Why does this heavenly dimension matter?" Because if God is sovereign enough to bring every molecule under His authority and renew it once and for all in the human dimension, then isn't He sovereign enough and big enough to save your friend? Isn't He big enough to save the vilest of sinners? Isn't He big enough to bring revival and restoration to a land that is so lost and in need of a Savior? The gospel is unchained.

Human Dimension

You need to release the gospel like the lion that it is to break down every barrier so that every individual may know that Christ is Who He says He is. When you understand that God is in control and is victorious, then you will be more victorious as you share the gospel with brothers and sisters around you. If you think people are bigger than God—that they can thwart the will and plan of God—then you should be scared of people when you evangelize. But if the gospel is the power (*dunamis* in Greek) of God (Romans 1:6), then remember that the same power that raised Christ from the dead is now at your disposal as a follower of Jesus Christ. Use it. There are people who need to hear and embrace the *dunamis* of God. God wants to use you to do it. Will you take the gospel to them?

4. Submit to the demands of the gospel

The gospel is a command. Every time Jesus proclaimed the gospel, it was a command. You have to do something. There needs to be a response. Yes, it's free. Yes, it's given by the grace of God, but there must be a response. You can't listen to the gospel and not respond. There are two responses. You can say, "No thanks. I'll do it my own way." Or you can say, "Lord, I get it." The gospel says to the world, "God is God, you are not. God is King, you are not. God is holy; you are not. God is Savior; you are not. God has life; you do not." God is announcing that He is and He has. People can either say, "Yes Lord, I agree," or "No Lord. I rebel." How do you respond? Response involves two things:

Repent of Your Former Way of Life

Jesus started His earthly ministry with a call to repentance. You cannot turn to God and receive the gift given at the Cross without turning from your sin. If you're living for sin, then you need to turn around and embrace Jesus as your only Lord and Savior. You need to get rid of the former things in your life. You can't take those things with you. God is not going to allow that. Repent of those things. Don't pursue those things; pursue Christ. As you turn from yourself and turn to the Savior, you receive the free gift of God in Christ Jesus. "*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Receive the Free Gift from God

We've talked a lot about the gospel. I know there are some here who have never bowed the knee to Jesus. Some of you have never received the free gift of God in Christ Jesus. Maybe you've played with religion; maybe you've gotten involved with it. Maybe you've thought your deeds were good enough. The Bible makes it clear: you are a sinner in need of God's grace. You must fall on your face and see Christ as the glorious One Who died, was buried and rose again so that you might have eternal life. If you have never done that, don't leave here without the opportunity to do that. It begins with a conversation with God, "I'm a sinner. I'm in need of a Savior. I repent of my sin. I want to follow You, Lord Jesus. I receive You as my Savior." That's not all of it, but it gets you on the road of what will be the greatest adventure of your life. If you're at that point, and you're thinking these thoughts, don't do it by yourself. Come to someone here and talk about what the gospel of Jesus Christ is and how it changes your life.

That's the gospel. It's shallow enough to allow a child to bathe in it, but deep enough to drown the largest elephant.