

The Meaning of the Gospel

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We call Christian preachers *ministers of the gospel*. Ordinarily we claim that the Church preaches the gospel. To a large extent this is known among men as "glad tidings." The world does not really know what the gospel is. The gospel is not what the world thinks it is.

What does the average person expect to happen in the Church? What do they think the Church is going to do? What does the word *preaching* mean to the average person? Often, it means the person is *harping on what ought to be*.

Now take the popular notion that the aim of the Church is to make people good by telling them that they ought to be good. If the persons in that church harp on this theme – you ought to be good – then we would count that as preaching. Let me tell you right now, *that's not it at all*.

What do you think is the average person's idea of what he thinks the Church ought to do? Don't most people have the idea that the Church ought to work to improve the world or to rescue casualties of life? Here is somebody who has had a personality breakdown – send him to the Church. Here is a person whose character has deteriorated until he has become useless to society. Well, the Church ought to do something with that person! Restore the casualties. This makes out of the Church a kind of Red Cross unit on the battlefield of life. Somebody ought to take care of the people that get hurt! Well, the Church will do that. And if there is anything positive in addition to taking care of those who get hurt, the Church should work to change conditions in the world. Again let me tell you that's not the meaning of the gospel.

Of course some will tell you right now the Church is a failure. Look around, it's been preaching for two thousand years and men still sin. That would be just as sensible as saying that the boats on the lake are not successful because they have been using those boats for years but the storms still come. Or somebody might say that doctors are not any good because we still have sick people. Again somebody may say an ambulance doesn't do any good. We have had an ambulance in our community ten years, and we still have accidents.

How foolish it is to say that because men still sin the Church has failed. We need to have a correct view as to what is the meaning of the gospel. The gospel is given to men who are in trouble, promising them rest. The gospel is given to men who suffer; promising them peace. The gospel is given to men who are weak, promising them power. And the gospel is given to men who are lost, and it offers to them a Savior. How this is done we will find in the Bible. And so we turn to the Bible to find out the meaning of the thing that is called *the Christian gospel*.

When you open the Bible to see what God would have to say to man, you'll find that the Bible teaches both law and gospel. That which is put under the word law tells what God requires of man, what He will accept and what He will reject. In general the law says that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

The law is used in the Bible very much like traffic signs along the highway. They are very important because they warn you about the dangers that are peculiar to a particular area. But the traffic signs, while they will help you, they themselves cannot do anything for you. These traffic signs can be true. They can be honest and they can be fair. But if you don't go like they say, you'll have problems.

The Bible also teaches the *gospel*. When you use the word *gospel* you can think of the grace of God. It tells us that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Almighty God gave His own Son for sinners. This is what you find in Luke 19:10 when the Lord Jesus said, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." And in Matthew 20:28 you will read that the Lord Jesus Christ said that the Son of man, or the Son of God, did not come into the world "to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." In other words, in the gospel you have the promise that God has actually arranged to bless us in spite of the fact that we are sinners.

So that in the Bible both law and gospel are set forth. The law reveals what is right and tells us we will suffer penalty if we do wrong. The gospel tells us that God out of His love, mercy and grace will do for us everything that is needed in saving us from our failure to keep the law.

But there's still more that is true. The gospel which is going to help you is not a repair job. It is a *replacement*. We do not improve nor adjust that which is imperfect. We have installed a new unit that is better than the original.

The gospel will not only arrange for your deliverance from danger and peril but will actually change you in such a way that you can do differently and better than you ever could have done before. This is not a matter of restoring me and reviving me so that I can go ahead and do like I did before and try to make a better job of it. It will actually bring me into something new and different.

What does the gospel mean? Well, in the light of the fact that God is holy and that His law is eternal and that man is a sinner and is doomed to destruction, the gospel comes in to tell man that Jesus Christ came to save him. Man needs help, God cares enough to help him, and Christ Jesus comes and is able to do it.

We are told with reference to the gospel and its effect in the world, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." That involves more than just one act. When you receive the Lord Jesus Christ: 1) He *forgives* you the sin that you have committed. 2) He *redeems* you from the situation in which you did this, and from the associations you have there. He delivers you, He sets you free from any habits or any background in helping you to do what you are to do. 3) He *regenerates* you. Receiving the power to become the sons of God involves regeneration. 4) He gives the *Holy Spirit* to you. He indwells you. When you receive Him, you receive Him to dwell in your heart by faith. 5) He *comforts* you. He says, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." This is spoken to Christian people. 6) He *guides* you. This the Holy Spirit will do, showing you the things of Christ, and so through the gospel you'll actually get guidance for your daily life. 7) He *intercedes* for you. When you receive Jesus Christ as your Savior you have a living Lord who prays for you. 8) And He will keep you and take you to Himself to be with Him.

All of this is involved when you read: "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." This is what the gospel is about. It is to relate you to God, so that you will receive from God what He has planned for you in Christ Jesus and so that you will be resting in Him. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The believer walks with Him here in power to overcome sin and lives with Him there in glory and in love. We are brought into knowledge about the Lord and introduced into fellowship with Him so that we might indeed walk with Him and rejoice with Him. The meaning of the gospel, then, lies in pointing us toward the Lord as our personal Savior.

The Meaning Of The Cross

In Gethsemane the Lord Jesus Christ in agony prayed, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." We get the impression there that the matter of dying on Calvary's cross was very real sorrow, grief and distress to Him. On another occasion, however, we read that the Lord Jesus said, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Also, "No man taketh it [my life] from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." The Lord Jesus Christ showed Himself to be sovereign and to be in control of His own conduct. He did freely what He wanted to do. To understand the meaning of the cross, we must remember that this is what He was born to do.

Some glimpse of the meaning of the cross can be seen in this passage in the Book of Hebrews (chapter 2, verse 9): "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." Notice that the Lord Jesus came for the suffering of death. And in verse 14 we read, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." And so we are drawn immediately to see that in death on Calvary's cross the Lord Jesus Christ did something that overcame Satan in his purposes. The dying of Jesus of Nazareth was one of the things that was involved in accomplishing His work.

This dying was not an unhappy incident. It was actually a planned affair. He went to the cross for the purpose that He might die, be raised from the dead, and open the way for others to escape from our sinful nature through the resurrection into the very presence of God. The dying of Jesus of Nazareth was actually one of the necessary elements in the plan in which the Lord Jesus Christ works, strives and suffers to gain our salvation.

The whole world recognizes the cross as the symbol of Christ. And it is a matter of historical record that Jesus of Nazareth was executed as a condemned criminal by the Roman soldiers, in keeping with their traditions. When the Lord Jesus was crucified, two criminals were crucified on the same day, one on either side of Him. Now when the Scriptures speak about the death of Christ, they use the phrase "the blood of Christ." Whenever you see that phrase used it is speaking of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The world sees this death of the Lord Jesus as a pathetic, tragic, unfortunate thing that happened to a good man. In order to understand the meaning of the cross we again need to remind ourselves that this is why He came. This is why He was born. This is why He needed to have a human body. He needed to have a human body so that He could die in it. The cross is a voluntary act on the part of Christ.

I would remind you of this passage in Matthew 26: 53,54 "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" The cross of Calvary in itself was necessary. It had to be done in order to accomplish the things that God had in mind. So in Luke 24:26 we find the Lord speaking to those disciples going home to Emmaus and saying to them: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"

Fulfilling the Scriptures was not only that He should die for our sins, but that in His dying, burial and resurrection the way should be opened for us to pass through dying unto self, burial from self and then resurrection and newness of life. We thus actually become the Father's children and belong to Him. When the Christian is asked to accept and understand about the dying of the Lord Jesus he should have in mind that the Lord Jesus died so that He would be raised from the dead and live in the newness of life. The reason why all that was done for us before our eyes here in human form was because through faith we are to do the same thing. Believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the precious promises of God, we can

actually move on into the very will of God. By yielding ourselves to Him and dying in the flesh we can be raised in the Spirit. The Christian gospel points the believer forward into the newness of life.

The rich young ruler came to the Lord Jesus Christ with a very common question when he said, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" But he asked the wrong question. The right question that we should ask is not what must I do in order that I might live, but how may I die in order that I might be raised into the newness of life. This came out in Luke 9:23, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." Here is the pattern for us. You come after Him by denying yourself, taking up your cross daily and following Him. This is the way which is promised to bring us into blessing. The Lord Jesus Christ denied Himself and allowed Himself to be arrested. He took up His cross. He willingly accepted the judgment of Pilate and went out to be crucified. We are to follow him.

"Let him deny himself." Here is death to self, or death to the ego. Our self, our personal ego, is the center, after all, of all our problems. We are trying to work things out in a way that would be good for us. Our present culture is featured by status seeking. We have people always trying to be somebody extra. That is encouraged in our school systems, for instance. We have the competitive spirit in our sports. Everything we do seems to involve some sort of competition where some win and others lose. We always keep hoping we will be among those who win.

Today we see all about us a lot of agitation, confusion and conflict in the social scene. If you look at the bottom of it you'll find that a great deal is inspired by pride, by personal self interest. And to this day, because all this is true, the gospel seems pathetically out of order. In a society where we all favor the man who goes out and gets somewhere, the person who wins, we are actually interested in his ego and we contribute to his pride. The Lord Jesus Christ, in calling us to Him, puts the cross right in front of us and tells us plain as day, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

Now let us look at this phrase, "take up his cross daily." This is a voluntary thing. You don't have to have it happen to you. It's not coerced. You yourself actually take up the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now taking up one's cross includes the idea of dying to self. It has the very definite element of self denial and self crucifixion. The Lord Jesus faced this in Gethsemane, "Not my will, but thine, be done." So He yielded Himself to the needs of our salvation. However, He was conscious that God can raise the dead, and confident that God would raise the dead. He went into this temporary separation from the Father that the Father might restore Him again to Himself. You will remember at the close of suffering on Calvary, just as the time came for Him to die, He said, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit." Taking up the cross is a matter of denying one's self unto death and accepting the will of God.

The third phrase in the verse is "follow me." This involves personal submission. It's like the Apostle Paul says in Galatians, "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." This is what following Him means. You know that, so far as He is concerned, in following Him He will lead you straight to the cross. But He will lead you to the cross in order that you might be saved, that you might be raised from the dead in the newness of life. So, "follow me" is a matter of calling for personal submission, and yet it always has the promise in it: "Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

There is one example set for men by the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter talks about it in I Peter 2:21-25. Here you are told clearly what He is to be an example of. The Lord Jesus set that example for you and me about how to go to the cross. We deny ourselves and yield ourselves into the will of God and let it happen to us.

Incidentally this cross that we go to may be inflicted by others. It isn't always something we do to ourselves. We yield ourselves into the will of God, and God takes us to other people. In themselves doing what they think is right, they will actually hurt us, even to the point of making us feel as if we were being crucified. So was the case of Stephen. Stephen was following the Lord, and as he was following he had

the experience of being done to death by the people. Like the Lord, Stephen could ask the Father to forgive them: "Lay not this sin to their charge." This is the call of the New Testament to any of us who would want to have the blessing of God that comes through Jesus Christ. And we are called to follow Him to the cross and then at the cross to die in ourselves.

There is another very interesting passage I would like to draw to your attention to show you how the meaning of the cross is actually carried on in people's lives after they are Christians. That is found in John, chapter 21. The Risen Lord gave Peter a personal assignment that he should yield himself to what other people would do to him, even though they would, as it were, kill him by the things that they would do. So He said (John 21:18), "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. [That is to say to Peter, 'Peter, as you mature in your spiritual life you will more and more get to the place where you will just put up with what people are doing to you.'] This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me."

As we are following the Lord Jesus Christ it may be that we will be led through the experience of self-denial and suffering. It may be that we will pass through the experience of yielding to the cross. We may actually pass through that in order that we too might walk with Him. This cross is not something you go out and invent. It isn't something that you set up. It's something that will happen to you. The big thing is our willingness to let it happen.

You are humanly speaking a natural person. That human, natural person must deny himself or herself. The common way in which to do it is just to yield yourself into the will of God with no interest in your own personal ego. He, then, takes over. This yielding yourself to Him may mean that you'll accept the situation that you're in even though it is very hard on you personally. You will accept it, knowing that it can only put you to death personally. You'll be raised from the dead, in the power of God. Living in Christ will result after you have suffered unto death and been raised from the dead.

This then would be the meaning of the cross. He died in order that, being raised from the dead, He might live forever. And so far as we're concerned, He leads us through the crucifixion in order that having been crucified and the body of sin thus being destroyed, we should be raised from the dead in the newness of life and be able to walk with Him.

The Meaning Of The Resurrection

Living in Christ, being a Christian in one's daily experience, the resurrection is much more significant than the cross. You see, the cross is very significant with reference to your sins, and to your past life. But the resurrection is significant for your present life and your future.

When you put the two together and think about the cross and the resurrection, you will learn to see that the cross was accepted only because the resurrection was sure. The Lord Jesus Christ said that they would take His body as a temple, destroy it and He would raise it from the dead in three days. You read in the Book of Hebrews that He, "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." The truth of the matter is that the cross was actually accepted and endured because it was the entrance into that experience which came out as the resurrection, and opened the way for us. That Christ died for our sins is true, but the whole story includes that He was raised again for our justification.

Our Lord said with reference to the resurrection from the dead that this would be the only sign of

His work. He called it the sign of the prophet Jonah and went right on to say that like Jonah was three days in the belly of the whale, so the Son of man should be three days in the heart of the earth. Paul speaking about this goes so far as to say that this is the one event in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ that a person must believe to be true in order to be saved: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

In my own experience I can testify that believing in the resurrection was perhaps the most difficult thing for me to do. It didn't seem to me that anybody could seriously mean that a body which had been three days dead could be revived and live again. One of the ways I had of thinking through to where I was able to accept the idea of the resurrection was in asking myself why I couldn't believe it. What was there about it that I couldn't believe? When I was ready to say that I just can't believe that a body that has been dead could live, then suddenly I began to ask myself if I believed that a body is ever alive. Am I alive? Yes, I'm alive. Then, where did I come from? Where did I get my life? And the easiest, simplest and truest way to put it is that God made me. So God made me. Well, did He have me before? And the answer to that is no. So the truth is that God made me the first time out of nothing. And you know suddenly it wasn't a very difficult thing for me to understand how, if God had the power and strength to make me out of nothing, He could remake me a second time. That didn't seem very difficult. That eased my mind past what I thought was a logical impossibility and opened it to the possibility that if God wanted to raise the dead, who is going to stop Him? I learned to think in my own mind that the word salvation when implying resurrection is like creation. It is a work of God.

What then is the meaning of the resurrection? This is what I want especially to talk about. What are the consequences? What difference does it make whether or not a person is raised from the dead and whether or not Jesus Christ was raised from the dead? Why is it so important?

Now the raising up of the body from the dead, so far as you and I are concerned, is directly related to the raising up of Jesus Christ. Just as He was raised from the dead, so are we to be raised from the dead. What will be true for us is exactly what was true in the case of the Lord's resurrection.

I want to draw your attention to one aspect of this and I think it is an aspect that is often overlooked. The body, when it was raised, was different in nature from the body that was put to death. The Apostle Paul in writing about this in I Corinthians 15:44 says, "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." A natural body is a body that is responsive to the processes of nature. A spiritual body responds to the processes of the Spirit. You can apply that immediately to yourself in this whole experience of becoming a Christian. As you yielded yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, you came in a natural way as a natural person. You came and yielded yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ according to the nature that was in you. But when you were then, as it were, raised from the dead, when you were given a newness of life in you, the new life you had in you was not your natural life. It was the spiritual life. It is responsive to the Holy Spirit. As one who was dead in trespasses and sin you were not sensitive to the things of God. Yet you were alive in nature, so to speak. Then He made you alive spiritually and you came and committed yourself to God. He made you sensitive and responsive to spiritual things. The big point here is that by the resurrection you're a different kind of person than you were before. Before, you were the kind of a person that went by natural human things. Afterwards you're made the kind of a person that goes by spiritual things, by the things of God.

Now let us look at the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ itself a bit more closely and see how it shows first the power of God – God can raise the dead. God will raise the dead. God does raise the dead. My reason for emphasizing that is that He can, will and does raise you and me insofar as we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. We say that God did raise Jesus of Nazareth to show His power. He can do it, and He can gain our confidence that way. Also, the raising of Jesus Christ from the dead confirmed the claims of Jesus of Nazareth to be the Son of God. Also, this would demonstrate the new creation. This is the way the new creation is to be done. It is to be raised from the dead of the old creation. The old creation

is taken to death and the new creation raised from the dead. There is a very real sense in which Jesus Christ in His resurrection was the first fruits of the new creation. One could say about this whole matter that this is how souls are saved through Jesus Christ.

The total career of the Son of God as Jesus of Nazareth is actually a revelation of the new creation. Consider for example His birth. We call it *the virgin birth*. In John's language we can say that it was "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." This is exactly what our regeneration is like. It is not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Then consider the life of the Lord Jesus Christ here upon earth. He said this amazing thing about Himself: "The Son can do nothing of Himself." And He said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." This is a demonstration of how we are to live in the Spirit.

I wonder how many people realize that actually, really, so far as Christian people are concerned, we are not to have interests of our own? Christian people have only the interests of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are not our own. We have been bought with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20). We can remember the words of the Apostle Paul, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh [the life for which people give me credit and call me Paul the Apostle] I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). We read in Romans 6 that like the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead and walked after He was raised, so we, having believed in Him, should "walk [live] in newness of life." The Apostle Paul in Philippians told how he gave all to Christ, "if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." He wanted to get into this condition of living before God as if he had been actually raised from the dead. And this is the promise of God for every believer. It is the will of God for every believer that Christ Jesus should raise that person up from being dead in trespasses and sin.

Next, consider the Lord Jesus Christ. Right now He is in the presence of God. We say in Biblical fashion that He is at the right hand of God. Concerning us as Christian people, it is said in the Scripture, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His son Jesus Christ." There you have a promise of the joy of our communion with God.

His coming again also belongs in here. Remember how Paul said to the Thessalonians, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." So you have a promise of the joy of communion with loved ones who died in Christ if you have your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then think about Him in His eternal home. He said, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." So the future for the Christian is bound up in the personal resurrection and the personal life of the Lord Jesus Christ in the very presence of His Father. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." That is the promise to believers in Christ.

We should recognize that the resurrection is real in the sense that: 1) Jesus is alive. That would be a great comfort to remember. You might remember Stephen saw Him. 2) Jesus is alive to lead me. Remember that Saul on the Damascus road saw Him. 3) Jesus is alive to bless me. Paul as a prisoner after appearing before the Council of the Jews was able to tell that the Lord stood by him that night.

There is another world. And every soul must meet God face to face. From the Bible we understand there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both the just and the unjust. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ actually opens the way to eternal life for us all. But this word is not for just anybody. It is for those who come by Christ and His cross. At Calvary sin and guilt are taken away. It's there that we are set free from sin. And believers can now live in the presence of God because the power with which He raised up Jesus from the dead is available for us. The actual meaning of the resurrection is that we should have a

changed nature in which we might live in the power of God and in His will by His Holy Spirit.

It is a wonderful thing to think that God has opened for us a way of living in Him that actually amounts to newness of life.

The Meaning Of Living In The Spirit

Do you realize that living for a Christian is on a different basis than living for anybody else? Living as a Christian brings you into the experience of being helped by the Lord. In other words there is no such thing as a Christian going ahead and living in his own strength and just doing the right and good things. That's not the way it's done. Living as a Christian is living in the power of God. It is that coming to know the Lord Jesus Christ personally brings us into a working relationship with God that we never had before.

Suppose I had been driving along in my car, and it runs off the road into the ditch and gets stuck in the mud. I can start up the engine, but the wheels will spin in the mud. I simply cannot get out of the mud. I am unable to do it. The Lord Jesus Christ coming to me is very much as if you brought a car with a tow rope and fastened this rope onto my car and pulled me out. I would be the same person, my car would be the same car, the mud would be just as deep and I would have been just as helpless in my own natural self. But I come right up out of that ditch just as though it couldn't hold me.

When we talk about living, we refer mainly to the choices we make. The way you and I live ordinarily from day to day we come into countless situations that call for decisions. You could turn to the right hand or the left. You can wear a hat or go without a hat. Normally speaking, throughout the day you must choose. You commit yourself to this instead of committing yourself to that. Now that's what living is like. And in this way we live, sometimes successfully, sometimes with failure.

Now natural living goes on within an environment that is known by the senses. You think of what you see, hear, taste, smell and touch. And you make choices accordingly. In spiritual living the Christian believer is conscious of two worlds. He lives in this world. He knows about this world through his senses. But he is also living in a world of revelation – the other world. And this puts the believer straight in front of a problem. He has to make his decision whether he is going to act according to the way he sees, hears, tastes, smells and touches or whether he is going to act according to what is revealed. The things that are revealed are not naturally sensed, as we shall see. Whatsoever is pleasing in the sight of men is an abomination in the sight of the Lord. (Luke 16:15). The fact of the matter in dealing with the things of this world is that the kind of things that people like are not the kind of things that God oftentimes wants for us.

The things of this world impress us through our senses. The things of the other world impress us through the Word of God. It speaks to our hearts. And just because the Word of God is not so vivid as our senses are – what you read in the Bible just doesn't impress you like what you feel and what you bump into – your consciousness of the spiritual can be weakened by doubt, by dimness, and by distance. You can't see it so well. You are some distance away from it. So, to help us remember that the spiritual things are just as real as the physical, to help us realize the spiritual things are just as close as earthly things, and to help us respect the spiritual as more important, God has given to us the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit brings to our consciousness Jesus Christ and the promises we have in Him.

At this point we ought to remind ourselves that the Holy Spirit is not given to everyone. He is available for everybody. He is offered to all, but He is not given to everyone. "Without faith it is impossible to please him. " The person who doesn't believe in the God of the Bible isn't going to receive the Holy Spirit. A person must believe in the reality of God and His character. You must believe that God

is and "he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." You must believe in the work of Christ on Calvary's cross; Christ Jesus died for you. And you must believe in the gift of the Holy Spirit. If you don't believe, understand and see these things you won't receive the Holy Spirit. But to such believers this arrangement is made: the Holy Spirit will come into your hearts and help you.

And so the believer, the Christian, as he faces the crises of the day, when he is making his decisions, is always aware of God. When he makes his decisions in *faith* he thinks of God. He is aware of the *law* of God, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." He is aware of the *judgment* of God, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." He is aware of the *grace* of God, "Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." He is aware of the *sacrifice* of the Lord Jesus Christ, "The lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The Christian is conscious of the *forgiveness* of sins which he receives from Almighty God through the Lord Jesus Christ, and as he thinks on these things he goes away remembering that Christ died for his sins. He is conscious of *redemption*, "Our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people." He also would have a feeling about himself that he is seated in the heavenlies, as it says in the book of Ephesians. The individual Christian person can have personal fellowship with Almighty God, and with all these things true, he manages to live along with considerable strength. He understands all these things when he is living in the Spirit.

This living in the Spirit, then, has certain results. First of all, living in the Spirit means that the individual remains conscious of the reality of God. This makes for the peace, quietness and confidence in which shall be his strength. The Christian person hears the voice of God saying, "Be still, and know that I am God."

Also, the Word of God as it makes him conscious of the reality of God makes for expectation. The Christian really believes God is interested in his affairs. This would make various impressions upon him. It will begin by impressing him with the consequences of his conduct. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." God will see to it. This also will make for virtue, because he now knows that all things are naked and open in the eyes of God. If a person knows that everything is open and plain before God he is more inclined to do the right thing and walk in the presence of God in open daylight. And it makes for hope, because if he believes in God and is conscious of God, you can't keep him from inwardly in his heart hoping that the goodness of God endureth forever.

Then again, we could say that living in the Spirit will mean receiving of the *grace of God*. As Christian people we can't help but believe that Christ is working in us to will and do of His good pleasure. And through Him and through the Word of God we receive His grace. As Christians we certainly do not expect ever to be lost. We do not expect ever to be destroyed, because there is now no condemnation, no judgment, to them which are in Christ Jesus. We understand that Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. He found us, and we understand now that we belong to Him.

Also, when you are living in the Spirit you can see the hand of God in affairs. This is partly revealed to you in the Word of God. You have the Scriptures in hand and as you read them and see how God has dealt with others – Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, Daniel – you see something of the wisdom of God, and you learn to trust Him. You know that while the ways of God are unknown to men they are revealed to you. You know perfectly well that God is continually working with His own people to bring them nearer and nearer to Himself. This is part of the blessing which comes to us when we follow through on this matter of living in the Spirit.

If you are living in the Spirit, you will have the courage to act pleasingly to God. You'll be inwardly guided to this but you'll have the courage to do it, because the Word of God itself will speak to you and will say words like this: "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart." As a Christian you will find yourself able to do this very thing. You can actually encourage yourself and others to do the right thing because God is in control. Like Joshua said, "Be strong and of good courage," and

you'll have more strength and more courage when you need it. If you are living in the Spirit, as you go about your daily work you are conscious of God. As you face things you are conscious of God and His will. As you get into a place of power or position of authority, you will be trying to do something that will contribute to and encourage the people who put their trust in the Lord. You will be moved along with courage and confidence to believe that God will accomplish His purpose. And there will enter into your heart a certain hopeful expectation that "he which hath begun a good work in you" will complete it. Living in the Spirit will encourage you to believe God and His promises, even though you can't understand how you will work things out. You'll trust God in the situations you are in, because you will know that God knows all things and that He knows you. If you remember the eternal things you can handle the things of this world in their place in a proper way.

We have thus looked at the meaning of the gospel. We think of what God offers to do for us in Christ Jesus. In Christ He will make us new and different. He will bring us into a life of fellowship with Himself and in this new life He will actually perform His will in us by His Spirit. This is His purpose in us as believers and we are bought into this living in the Spirit through the cross and the resurrection.