

# Gospel of Salvation

*Easter*

By Frank Jones

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**Bible Text:** 1 Corinthians 15:1-5  
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1 Corinthians 15 and as I mentioned earlier, we're going to be here with this passage and here in the Galatian passage and probably most of our attention will be there in the Galatian passage, and I want us to call our attention in really sober reflection, serious reflection on the Gospel. What is the Gospel? Is the Gospel something that demands our utmost pursuit in seeking after? What about all the different gospels that are out there, including many different types of gospels even within so-called broad evangelicalism, even broad fundamentalism. There are different gospels that are being presented out there. I think most of us are probably familiar in the so-called prosperity Gospel that says you can serve Jesus, your whole life is going to turn out well. So if you have a failed marriage, he's going to heal it. If you're not making enough at work, he's going to give you more. If you need more clothes, more fun, more pleasure, more self-satisfaction, he's there to give you all that. That's not the Gospel.

So in 1 Corinthians 15, we'll read the first five verses here where Paul is speaking to a church that had gotten away from the implementation of the Gospel, specifically in the area of sanctification. Brethren, I just want to remind you that if you're off in the usage of the Gospel in sanctification, it won't be many years or maybe one generation away from where you'll be wrong on the Gospel on justification also. So here in 1 Corinthians 15 in verse 1,

1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also you have received, and wherein you stand; 2 By which also you are saved, if you keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain. 3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: 5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

My approach toward this resurrection day was one of really reflection and understanding that more than likely most of the people, if not all of the people who would attend our services here this morning whether they be member or guest or attendee, would probably have one sort or another a profession of being a believer. Especially down south, I still

think there is a majority of people who you talk to them, even if they're not a member of a church and haven't been a member of a church for decades, they'll still tell you that they are believing people, that they are a Christian. I've seen some surveys that say as high as 80% of Americans claim to be in one form or another adhering to the Christian faith and that's an astronomical number of people who profess that and I think by that high a number and the condition of our nation, it's self-evident that not all of those upward to 80% of American citizens really do know the Lord. So as I approach this message, I thought to myself, "Well, probably most if not all the people who would attend this day probably would profess to be a believer, a Christian in some form or another."

Secondly, I think that it is also an acknowledgment, at least I hope that you are aware of this, that even though you may be attending a Bible-believing, Bible-practicing church, the world's beliefs are being pushed on us. They are being pushed on your children. I think it's a mistake as a parent to think no matter how good or what type of profession that our children are adhering to or talking about or attending, the world is pushing their beliefs on them. As many of you are aware, I teach a Bible study in one of the local areas here around Richmond and every one of those people attending the Bible study have attended churches either inconsistently but regularly or consistently and regularly, and I'll just tell you some of the things that I have heard in this class.

Here is a world belief: that God is big enough to accept all sincere believing people regardless of religious affiliation; that we all serve the same God whether you are Muslim, Roman Catholic, Baptist, Presbyterian, Buddhistic. We all serve the same God, he just has different names so one person may call God Allah, another person may call God Jesus, another person may look at a representation of Buddha and call God by that name, but we are all serving the same God just by different names. That's what the world pushes on us and I hope you're saying within your mind right now, "That's not right. It's not biblical."

The second thing I hear from people a lot today is that God is a God of love, that he's not a God of wrath or judgment. "You know, that's the God of the Old Testament. We live under the God of the New Testament and Jesus talked a lot about love. He's the God of love." And yet it is true, isn't it brethren, that the Bible says in Romans 1 that not only has God revealed the righteousness of God in the Gospel, he has also revealed his wrath. God is a wrathful God. He is a God of justice and judgment but people really don't believe that. They really hold to a type of universalism where, "You know, at the end of the day it really doesn't matter what I believe or whatever. I'm just calling him by a different name and God is a God of love and, you know, he kind of overlooks what I do." The New Testament doesn't teach that nor does the Old Testament teach that.

And even within Christian circles, we have come to accept an individualization of our beliefs concerning Jesus Christ. We have individualized the Gospel. We have relativized God. I mean, it may be okay that, "You know, you believe something that is not entirely scriptural but, you know, that's okay and, you know, if what I hold to I think is scriptural and what you hold to you think is scriptural, and even though they are contradictory to one another, you know, that's okay because, you know, this is helping you and what I

believe is helping me and we're all serving the same Jesus." I hope you know that that is not scriptural either.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is not relativistic. It is the way, right? Jesus said he is the way. The way, not a way. He is the way and there is a set of dogma by which we can judge things right and wrong and that is number 4 here in this kind of world belief that is being pushed on us and being taught in commercials and radio and media and social media and Facebook and Twitter, and really between people. The fourth thing is that there is no absolute dogma by which things are judged right or wrong. "I mean, what really matters," and I've actually heard this from teachers in Christianity, "what really matters is that we all love Jesus." Doesn't that sound warm and fuzzy? But when you define what that means, we don't want to define what that means, it just means whatever you want it to mean. Just as long as you love Jesus, that's what matters. Now, brethren, it is true that we all love Jesus, right? But it does matter what you mean by that.

These are some of the things that are being pushed, pressured, it's in the air, and for us not to hold to such thing such as God is big enough to accept all sincere believers or everybody is serving the same God, he's just going by different names, I mean, as long as we believe that or we don't say anything against that, then you're okay. But if you say something contrary to that, then the world is going to put pressure and shame on you to try to force you to change your beliefs either by changing them explicitly or by forcing us to be quiet.

Within this past year during the religious seasons which in Christianity there are two, there is what? Christmas and Easter. The New York Times newspaper has been asking prominent people within our nation, and when I mean prominent people, I mean people who are prominent and who profess a Christian profession, to answer some questions and you'll see some of this pressure as I go through these articles. The two people that I have here and if you'd like to have the website, I certainly can give you that, but one of these was a couple of days ago, April 15, in which the New York Times author had an email conversation with ex-President Jimmy Carter, asked him some questions and regardless of what you think politically or even religiously about our former President Jimmy Carter, the fact is he is a prominent person in our nation and he does profess a Christian profession.

In Christmas of last year, December 23 of last year, 2016, they had another email conversation with another prominent, this time a prominent evangelical by the name of Pastor Tim Keller. Tim Keller is Presbyterian in his outlook. From what I can tell in most instances he has an orthodox belief. He started a church in New York City, actually almost downtown New York City, and it seems like the Lord is prospering that ministry there. We'll see how things go but he is a conservative evangelical. President Carter is a Southern Baptist. He has always been a Southern Baptist. He was raised in Southern Baptist arenas. He's been a Sunday school teacher there for a long long time teaching there in that church.

The New York Times writer, speaking of former President Jimmy Carter described him this way, quote, "He's a longtime Sunday school teacher and born-again evangelical but of a more liberal bent than Tim Keller." He's referring back to the Christmas interview that he had with him. So, here's an email conversation. I just want to point out some things in this conversation that I think would be interesting.

He was asked this question. You can think how would you answer this question knowing that this was going to be plastered on a national newspaper. The author asked,

*"How literally do you take the Bible, including miracles like the Resurrection?"*

President Carter: "Having a scientific background, I do not believe in a six-day creation of the world that occurred in 4004 B.C., stars falling on the earth, that kind of thing. I accept the overall message of the Bible as true, and also accept miracles described in the New Testament, including the virgin birth and the Resurrection."

So you'll see by my emphasis there he is saying, first of all, he's judging the Bible miracles by science. Okay, so that's how he's making his judgment, not by revelation but by science. And he does accept the overall message of the Bible but there would be things in the Bible, what? That he does not agree with and he doesn't accept miracles as described in the Old Testament but only where? Only in the New Testament.

So the author goes on and pushes him a little bit since it's Easter. He wants to push him on the resurrection and then he goes in and this question was asked, quote,

*"What about someone like me [this is the author speaking] whose faith is in the Sermon on the Mount, who aspires to follow Jesus' teachings, but is skeptical that he was born of a virgin, walked on water, multiplied loaves and fishes or had a physical resurrection? Am I a Christian, President Carter?"*

You see how the world is going to push you into that corner, right? Here is President Carter's answer,

"I do not judge whether someone else is a Christian. Jesus said, 'Judge not, ...' I try to apply the teachings of Jesus in my own life, often without success."

That was his answer. Now, first of all, just in case you're watching or listening to this, the correct answer to that question is that, yes, we are not a judge, but "judge not" is not the right passage, but we do know someone who has already judged, right? God has already revealed in the Bible his judgment about this so we're not the judge as if we come up with our own original judgment or our own original speculations, but when things are so plain

that they end up contradicting the Scriptures, then we are not giving our judgment, we are giving whose judgment? Jesus' and that's way different in the ballgame.

So in the article, he goes on and he asks this question again, quote, author,

*"One of my problems with evangelicalism is that it normally argues that one can be saved only through a personal relationship with Jesus, which seems to consign Gandhi to hell. Do you believe that?"*

That's a pretty direct question, isn't it? Of course, does everybody know who I'm talking about with Gandhi? He was a religious teacher in India. Supposedly he lived his life by the Sermon on the Mount but he did not believe in Jesus Christ as divine and human, the Lord of all. He would have denied that. Here is President Carter's answer, quote,

"I do not feel qualified to make a judgment. I am inclined to give him (or others) the benefit of any doubt."

Now, brethren, people are going to read this on Easter and they're going to say, "You know, that sounds reasonable to me."

At Christmas, the same author asked Tim Keller the same questions, some in a little bit different form but basically the same question. He says to Tim Keller, I'm only going to give you the last question here. Quote, the author writes,

*"So where does that leave people like me? [The one who is believing on the Sermon on the Mount and all this.] Am I a Christian? A Jesus follower? A secular Christian? Can I be a Christian while doubting the Resurrection?"*

That's a pretty explicit statement, isn't it? Here is Tim Keller's answer, quote,

"I wouldn't draw any conclusion about an individual without talking to him or her at length. But, in general, if you don't accept the Resurrection or other foundational beliefs as defined by the Apostles' Creed, I'd say you are on the outside of the boundary."

And I would say that that's a lot more on target and a lot more direct than what President Carter said. And I think we have to agree that Pastor Keller wasn't Moses on top of Mount Sinai throwing lightning bolts with this statement either. In fact, at the end of the article with Pastor Keller, the author wrote, "In spite of the fact," I'm not quoting him, "but in spite of the fact that I don't agree with you on some things, this I do believe in," quote, "Merry Christmas." Whatever that means.

Now, brethren, this is the type of thing that is being fostered as the Gospel on people and what's important as we come to the Gospel is to understand that the Gospel is not a toy

that we play with.<sup>1</sup> The Gospel is something that we are to take seriously. The Gospel is not something that is relative. It doesn't mean one thing over here and another thing over here and another thing back there in the back and another thing across the street as long as you mentioned Jesus somewhere in the picture of it. And I want us to take our Bibles and I want us to turn back to our Scripture reading, the book of Galatians, and I just want to emphasize to you the seriousness of understanding the proper Gospel. The gravity of what we say that we believe in is serious beyond our comprehension. The urgency of the Gospel is only matched by the penalty of not believing it.

If you look in Galatians 1:8 and 9, you'll see that, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be," what? "Let him be accursed." The word "accursed" there means "to be devoted to destruction." We could word it this way, Paul would say, "Let him go to hell." That's pretty strong language, okay? I think in a Christian congregation, in a Christian worship service, for me to even say that sentence kind of does something within our spirit but this is what Paul is saying. He's even going to go on and say in the book of Galatians concerning these teachers that are teaching Jesus plus circumcision, he says, "Let them be castrated. Let them be cut off." That's pretty strong language. Try that next time in a preaching session.

This is serious, isn't it? He repeats it in verse 9, he says, "As we said before, so say I now again." Now, I don't know if he is referring to verse 8 as he has already said this before, or what I believe more than likely he actually taught this to the Galatian churches. "As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed." So whether he is repeating it for emphasis or whether this is something that he taught the congregation, it is part of his regular teaching ministry and, brother, that makes it pretty serious, doesn't it? In fact, if you think about the year in which our Lord died and was buried and rose again, which depending on your chronology is somewhere around 30-33 A.D., if you see that and understand that this book was probably written in the early 50s, what we're talking about – now please hear me – is that within 20 years there were so many gospels out there, false teaching, that it was actually leading churches astray.

He says here in verse 6, "I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto," what kind of Gospel? "Another gospel." Now, is there another Gospel? Answer: no. There is no other Gospel. There is only one, what? But there are multitudes of ways that people call gospels. And brethren, I just want to remind you as a believer, and sometimes you look around this globe and you are just so frustrated with the saturation of false teaching that is going on, I want you to know that within 20 years of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Paul is dealing with a multitude of false teachers. You say, "Well, I want to be just like the early church." We are. We are a believing remnant within a sea of false teaching and Paul is writing that back to them. There was a multiplicity of false Gospels.

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<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Dr. John Piper's message on this section in Galatians that reinforced and strengthened the text in my own mind.

Again in verse 6, "I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." So, brethren, what we know here just reading this superficially looking at the gravity and the seriousness of this, that the devil's way is not just to come to people and say, "Deny the Gospel." The devil's way is to take the Gospel, the genuine Gospel and pervert it so that that perverted Gospel comes to us like it is the real Gospel but it isn't.

The other thing that I think we need to note here is that these people that were perverting the Gospel of Christ, that were leading the churches of Galatia away from the grace of Christ, were professing Christians, right? They are in the churches of Galatia. They are teaching this. If you went up to a person like this and you asked them, "Are you a Christian?" they would say, "Yes." So if you brought them forward, you know, and you asked them, "Do you believe in Jesus?" they would say, "Yes." Do you love Jesus? "Amen." Do you believe he died, was buried and rose again? "Yes." What's the problem? They added to the Gospel. And brethren, I want to remind us from this passage and I want to remind you as you deal with people, a deviation of some seemingly insignificant way such as adding circumcision, is a perversion of the Gospel and it brings down damnation on the person that is teaching it and on the people who are following it.

Now, we can add all kinds of things to the Gospel, can't we? We can say in this book itself, in the book of Galatians, you have an issue with Peter that is over foods. Is Peter a believer? Is he being swept away? He says, "You are not walking uprightly according to the Gospel." Paul confronted him. It could be something as simple as foods. It could be something like this, it could be, "Well, I believe in Jesus plus my baptism." There are people today who believe that a person is justified when they are baptized, so believing in Jesus and the Gospel and the fullness of what that means, "Well, I've got to add to that something I do. I go down in the baptism waters, I get sprinkled, I get christened as a baby, and that this is what instills the grace of Christ inside of me." That's in a lot of denominations and a lot of so-called organizations in the world. In the Roman Catholic system, you are regenerated when you are baptized. They say it explicitly. The Church of Christ, some Church of God, many Baptists. I run into Baptists all the time, "Well, are you saved?" "Yes." "Well, how do you know you are saved?" "Well, I was baptized on such and such a day, whatever." Well, I'm glad you were baptized but what has that got to do with the Gospel? Baptism is for those who have already received the Gospel.

Not only baptism, foods, church membership. This is a real danger with children. "You know, I grew up in a Christian home, therefore I am a Christian. I go to a Bible-believing church, so I'm a Christian. I've been a member there." Good deeds, universalism, all kinds of things that you can add to the Gospel, right? And Jesus through the Apostle Paul gives Jesus' judgment about this, right? This isn't Paul's judgment, this is Christ's judgment, the living Son of God's judgment on this. "Let him be," what? "Let him be accursed."

Now, in this passage, you'll note that he introduces this passage by saying, verse 1, that Paul is an apostle, that he's not a man called apostle, "not of men, neither by man, but by

Jesus Christ, and God the Father," now note what he writes here, "who raised him from the dead; And all the brethren which are with me," so there must have been a number of brethren, not just Timothy or Silas or Titus, a number of brethren that were with him, "unto the churches of Galatia," and he desires for God's grace to come to them through belief of this epistle and it is "from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ." Now note verse 4, "Who gave himself for our sins," that's substitutionary atonement for this purpose, "that he might deliver us from this present evil world." Did you note that? In other words, there is a justifying belief and there is a sanctifying belief that is part of the Gospel. Jesus gave himself for our sins so that we may be delivered, rescued from this present evil world. That's salvation, isn't it? And all of this is "according to the will of God and our Father: To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Now, Paul gives three categories of people of whom we are told that they are accursed. First of all, it is given to us in verse 9, "As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed." Now, brethren, what that means is that this includes not just men, but who? But women too. If anyone preaches any other Gospel than what Paul has given to them, let him be accursed. Let him be assigned to destruction. Let him go to hell. Now, again, here's the point this morning: is that serious? That's pretty serious. What if we get it wrong? So the first category is anyone or any man as the King James translators had it, "man" is in italics, it's really "anyone."

The second category, look in verse 8, "But though we, or an," a what? "An angel." What would you think if you had an angel visit you? Joseph Smith said that he had an angel visit him, the angel even gave his name, Moriah. Not this Moriah, the angel Moriah. Joseph Smith is the founder of the Mormon religion and supposedly this angel enabled Joseph Smith to "recover the Gospel in North America." The Mormon religion believes that you are saved by baptismal regeneration, even to the place where you need to know your genealogy because you can be baptized on behalf of a family member no matter how long ago they have been dead and that baptism would release them or save them. That was supposedly given by an angel, and brethren, I want to remind you that Satan appears as an angel of light.

Now whether this angel that he's talking here is a literal angel or whether it is angelos, meaning a messenger, a teacher, either way the effect is the same and I think Paul would say that. Whether it be a human being who is masquerading as an angelos, a messenger of Christianity, or whether it be a literal angel, if they are given to you any other Gospel than what Paul has already preached unto you, let him be what? Let him be accursed. Let him be damned. Paul would say to that so-called angel Moriah, "Moriah, go to hell." That's pretty strong language. That's serious language.

If Michael the Archangel showed up in your home and he came to you and said, "Here's the Gospel. Here's how you can be saved. You need to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you need to be a good man. Follow him as a great example." What do you say to Michael the Archangel? This is what Paul is saying, you say, "Michael the Archangel, be accursed." That's pretty serious, isn't it?



Or what about this, note in verse 8 when Paul uses the word "we," does everybody see that word? We. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." I take that to mean the apostolic company. It's the verse 2, it's "all the brethren which are with me." Who might that include? It could include Timothy, right? It could include Silas. It could include Titus. It could include Archippus, Aristarchus. It could include John, James. Are you ready for this? Peter, you know, the so-called founder of Roman Catholicism. That's pretty strong. That would be like you saying, that would be like me getting up here and saying, "Look, if Pastor Jones preaches any other Gospel," and by the way, I believe this, "if Pastor Jones preaches any other Gospel except what is in the New Testament, go to hell," because that's where I would deserve to go, right?

Brethren, in the book of Galatians it says that Peter, James, John were all in harmony and unity with Paul concerning the faith. There was no difference between the church at Jerusalem and the Gospel they preached and Paul starting churches among the Gentile people and the Gospel he preached. They are the same. Paul went to them, explained the Gospel that he was preaching unto them. They gave him, Galatians 2, the right hand of fellowship. They agreed. And by the way, brethren, that's important and it's important because you can run across this as I did as I was sitting in a Bible-believing professing church and the minister got up and said that the Gospel for the Jew was different than the Gospel for the Gentiles. The very first thing I did after the message was over was go to one of the prominent deacons and say, "I want a meeting with the deacons and the pastor." So I explained. I went through Romans 10 with them, "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek. The same Lord over all. All them that call upon him." Showed him some of the passages and he said he didn't believe it. I said, "Goodbye." I said, "I resign my membership because if this is what this church is believing and teaching, I am to separate from that." Why? I pray he got saved but let them be, what? Accursed.

It doesn't matter whether it was Barnabas or Titus, Timothy, Silas, Peter, James, John, anybody else you want to add to that, if they add to the Gospel through the law or by human works, they are to be devoted to destruction. And I agree with one preacher who said this: the fourth category is probably, which is part of the third, is probably the most shocking and that is in verse 8, "But though we." Do you realize Paul is saying this about himself? This is Paul. He's saying here that, "If I, Paul, have a change of mind or a change in my teaching, if I would change my teaching or change my mind to such a place that I either deny the Gospel, I negate the Gospel or I change it in some fashion or form, I add to it, let me be assigned to hell." Now, it's one thing for me to assign you, it's another thing to say, who? Me. Do you think he believed that? He did believe that and, brethren, that heightens what I'm trying to get across to us here this morning. It heightens to me and to us the seriousness of what we're dealing with here. If Paul came back to that congregation and said, "You know, I got the Gospel a little wrong. Jesus wasn't divine, he was just a great man." If he went back to that congregation and said to them, "Well, you know, I'm not really sure Jesus was resurrected. I'm not sure I can handle that. I'm not sure that I really believe that he did those miracles and he raised people from the dead

and that he was deity in human flesh. You know, that's kind of up here." Then Paul is to go to hell.

Now, you'll notice that nobody was that strong in the articles I read to you but that's how serious this is. So as we look at that and, by the way, brethren, just as a side note on verses 10 through 12 of this chapter, the reason why people pervert the Gospel is because they are men-pleasers. That's why. They want people to think well of them. They want to get a crowd. They want to get people patting them on the back. They want to build a big church. They want to have a large attendance. You see that in verse 10, "For do I now persuade men, or God?" Am I seeking to please man? If my aim was to please men, then I would not be a servant of, who? Of Christ.

And brethren, that tells us something else about the Gospel. The Gospel in its very presentation does not make people happy. It doesn't bring them pleasure when you tell them that Christ died for their sins and that they need to be delivered from their sins and they need to be declared righteous in the sight of God, and they need God's righteousness, not their righteousness, and if they are really saved, God is going to be continually be saving them from this present evil world. What kind of Gospel do people want? You know the answer to that. Do, in general, I realize there is more and more rejection today, but do in general people want to go to heaven? Answer: sure. Who wouldn't want to go to heaven? "I mean, if there is one, I want to go there."

What don't they want? They don't want to be saved from their sins. They want to go to heaven but they want to go their own way also and unfortunately that's the type of Gospel that is being preached out there. And folks, we are not saved because of any of our good works. I do want to tell you that when the Holy Spirit comes inside a person and they are regenerated by the power of God, there is such a change in their nature, this new nature. They have new desires, new want-to's and a new outlook on life that they never had before, and the word of God begins to work in their life and produce good works.

So, secondly, let me answer this question. Let me give you some things that the Gospel is not. So let's turn back to 1 Corinthians 15. Here are some things that the Gospel is not and I have six of them and there are more. The Gospel is not, 1: asking Jesus into your heart. Everybody hear me on that? That is not in your New Testament. Nowhere will you ever, ever find the apostles preaching in a sermon, "What must I do? Ask Jesus into your heart." Now, I'm not doubting the sincerity of somebody who is trying to appeal to children or whatever. I'm not doubting it, I'm just saying that's not the Gospel.

Secondly, the Gospel is not committing your life to Jesus. Now, when you get saved, there is an element of committing. He is your Lord and Savior, but there is a famous evangelist that in the invitation he says, "Come forward and commit your life to Jesus." That's not the Gospel.

Thirdly, it's not merely praying a prayer. I can't tell you the number of people who when I press them, they'll say, "Well, I know I'm saved because I prayed." Well, praying is good. Do we all agree with that? Okay, but let me remind you what Romans 10 says, "How

shall they call on him?" Do you hear that? "How shall they call on him in whom they have not," finish it. Not heard, "believed." In other words, you believe before you call on the name of the Lord, right? You don't call on the name of the Lord to get saved, you call on the name of the Lord because you believed. It comes out of a heart that has already believed. Sometimes we'll say this, "You know, if you walk an aisle, you're probably already a believer on the way down." People can't call on the name of the Lord unless they have believed. And then to back it up, "And how should they believe except they hear and then sent." So it's not merely praying a prayer, you call after you believe. You think about that, brethren, you know that's true. How can I pray to someone I don't even believe exists? It's ridiculous.

Then there are people, the Gospel is not believing in your faith. There are people whose object of faith is their faith and the world says that, "Just believe." We have a whole section in our newspaper called "Faith and Values" that hardly ever if you read this in the paper, hardly ever is it anything about faith as defined by the New Testament, just people believing in something. That's not the Gospel.

The Gospel is not merely making a decision for Christ. We are not born again by the will of man. It's not my decision, as it were, that makes me a Christian. Do I decide? The answer is: yes, but it's not my decision for Christ. The Gospel is not an insurance policy from hell while allowing me to remain in the world going my own way, doing my own thing.

And then, brethren, lastly the Gospel is not you merely confessing your sins and asking forgiveness. This happens a lot. Somebody says, "Well, I want to be a Christian." All right, tell God all your sins and ask him to forgive you. That's not the Gospel. First of all, there is no way you can confess all your sins and if that's the Gospel, what if I left out one? Folks, the Gospel is given to us in 1 Corinthians 15. It's given to us in 1 Corinthians 2:2. It's given to us again in 1 Corinthians 1:17. Over and over and over again we have been told what the Gospel is.

Before we read chapter 15, go back to chapter 1 and look at verse 17 of 1 Corinthians. "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." Okay, Paul was sent – now follow me here – Paul was sent to preach, what? The Gospel. What was Paul not sent to do? Baptize. Does everybody see that? If that's the case, baptism is not a part of the justifying grace of God in the Gospel, right? Paul is preaching the Gospel, amen? He's not preaching baptism. Baptism is a result of coming to Christ through the Gospel. Baptism does illustrate the Gospel, death, burial and resurrection, but that is after a person is justified by his grace, regenerated by his power. Paul is not preaching baptism and that's huge. It's probably one of the clearer passages that you have in the New Testament that teach that. I use that all the time when people say, "Well, I'm trusting in my baptism," and that is not part of the Gospel.

What is the Gospel? Look in 1 Corinthians 2:1, "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of

God. For I determined not to know any thing among you," except what? "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." The Gospel is about Jesus.

So now we go to 1 Corinthians 15. And it's not about you and you'll see that. Look at verse 3, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received," so he got it by revelation, "how that," who died for our sins? "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures," verse 4, "and he," who is the "he"? Christ "was buried, and that he," Christ, "rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he," Christ, "was seen." So what's the Gospel about? You? It's about Christ, amen? It's about who he is, what he did, why he came. It's all about him. What about him? Well, how he died for our sins according to the Scriptures. That's what he did, amen? And he, verse 4, was buried. That's what he did. And verse 4, he rose again the third day according to the Scripture. That's what he did. And that he was seen. That's what he did.

Now, do you read anything in here about church membership? Yes or no? Do you see anything in here about baptism? Do you see anything in here about us doing good works? The answer is no. Why? Where are we in here? Our sins, that's where we're at. It's what Christ has done and the righteousness that he has earned for us, because in the Gospel, the righteousness of God is being revealed and, brethren, that is where our faith is to be. The response to such a message who Christ is and what he did on behalf of sinful people and that the righteousness of God is seen in him, that Gospel message only has one valid response: repentance and faith. Repentance is turning, amen? I'm going this way, I'm walking away from God, I'm walking in darkness, I'm walking this way, I stop, I hear the message, then I, what? I turn. I don't turn over a new leaf, I just turn and look to Christ and believe the record that God has given of his Son. And when there has been genuine repentance and genuine faith, then that person is converted. He's a believer and he doesn't make statements like, "I wonder if Jesus is alive? I wonder if he really did those miracles?" He's not a skeptic, amen? He is fully persuaded concerning the person and work of God the Father in his Son, Jesus Christ.

Now, let me just put a footnote here: it doesn't mean that you'll never have doubts but you're not going to go around and tell people this, you may tell people, "You know, I struggle with doubts," and all of God's people say, "I do too." But I don't go around and say, "I am really skeptical on whether Jesus really rose from the dead or not." If a person said that to me, wow, I would be giving them the Gospel. Wrestling with doubt is different from being a skeptic, that's unbelieving.

Repentance and faith in the risen Lord brings a new birth, hallelujah. It brings a new order in your life, hallelujah. It changes your nature, thanks be to God. It grants a new love and it brings one into a relationship with Jesus Christ. And in none of those things would you ever say you did it. You would say he did it.

That's the Gospel and, brethren, it is that Gospel that in Romans 10:9-10 Paul summarizes our response this way, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord," that concerns his person, right? That concerns what he did, why he came. "If you confess Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God the Father has raised him from the dead,

you're," what? "Saved." What happens when that genuine faith comes there? You call on the name of the Lord. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Calling on the name of the Lord is part of the evidence of being a believer.

So, brethren, as we close here, I want to ask ourselves: have you believed the New Testament Gospel? And then probably many of us, if not most of us, would say yes, then this is what I want us to consider: how serious is this? If your best friend adds to the Gospel, if an angel from heaven adds to the Gospel, if I twist the Gospel, let them be, what? Accursed. And because there is so much deception out there, it does matter what church you attend, it does matter what church you are a member of, it does matter what you believe and it does matter, brethren, that you get here in this book and find out what it says, and hopefully you're attending a church in which your pastor does that for you. May God grant his grace here this morning.

Let's pray together.