

The Prerequisite of the Gospel

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – the gospel is sufficient for salvation, but only upon the prerequisite work of the Spirit
2. aim – to cause us to pray continually for the work of the Spirit in those who hear the gospel
3. passage – 1 Corinthians 2:6-14

b. outline

1. The Sufficiency of the Gospel
2. The Prerequisite of the Gospel
3. The Conclusion of the Gospel

c. opening

1. a **reintroduction** to Chapter 20
 - a. this chapter addresses a **particularly unique issue** rising in the W which could/would have *devastating effects* on the propagation and value of the gospel (**i.e.** its extent)
 - b. specifically, the rise of reason and science (rationalism) leading men to think that they could “figure out” God: observing the natural world to “discover” God for themselves *and what he ought to be*
2. the first paragraph announces the promise of the gospel, the coming of a “last” Adam who would accomplish all that the first Adam failed to do, saving a people through repentance and faith
3. the second paragraph addresses the failure of general revelation to bring humans to a saving knowledge of God, thus demonstrating a need for special revelation by God in his Word
4. the third paragraph describes the extent of this special revelation, going out into the world *only* to those that God has sovereignly purposed to receive it
5. the final paragraph establishes a **prerequisite** to this special revelation: that the Word of God, although sufficient for revealing everything related to salvation, still requires a unique work of the Spirit of God to bring about salvation itself in the life of any given person
 - a. **note:** the paragraph is largely a repetition of chaps. 10 (effectual calling), 14 (faith), 15 (repentance) – however, it is included here to “complete the thought” of paragraphs 1-3
 - b. **i.e.** where *general revelation* is available to **all**, and *special revelation* is available to **many**, something else is yet necessary in order to save **any (a third kind of revelation)**

I. The Sufficiency of the Gospel

Content

a. the sufficiency of special revelation

“although the gospel be the only outward means of revealing Christ and saving grace, ...”

1. (**again**) a restatement of the point in paragraph 2: the salvation promised in the gospel is *only* revealed through the special revelation of Scripture (**i.e.** the “outward means”)
 - a. the details of salvation *cannot* be gleaned by “scientific” examination of the created world
 - b. **i.e.** general revelation can only reveal the *existence* of a Creator (and much about him), but it can *never* demonstrate how one can have a *relationship* with that Creator

b. the sufficiency of the gospel in special revelation

“... and is, as such, abundantly sufficient thereunto”

1. however, the gospel message (in *special revelation*) is perfectly capable of revealing all that is necessary for one to come to repentance and faith (**i.e.** a saving relationship with God)
 - a. the word that God has spoken “over” creation into the Scriptures reveals *everything* that is needed for humanity to know *about God* and his requirements (**sola Scriptura**)
 1. **e.g.** rejecting the (pre-modern) idea of Jeffersonian “deism” – only “some” of Scripture
 - b. **IOW:** no “additional” revelation is necessary *outside of Scripture* to “complete” the message
 1. **e.g.** rejecting the (modern) idea of “God spoke to me ...”
 2. **e.g.** rejecting the (very post-modern) idea of *subjectivism* – that what we know *spiritually* is based on our “feelings”; that we “decide” what we believe about God *from how we feel about him, ourselves, and others* (**i.e.** a “Jesus” formed from our feelings)
2. **principle: there is no gospel apart from Scripture – the Bible is not only authoritative as the revealed will of God in Christ, it is also fully sufficient to accomplish all that God requires for the salvation of the elect**

II. The Prerequisite of the Gospel

Content

a. the (limiting) nature of Scripture

1. but ... although the *special revelation* God has made is perfectly sufficient to save, its power to save does not come *strictly through the words on the page*
 - a. **i.e.** a fallen man, handed a copy of Scripture, *still cannot come to faith*, even if “understanding” it
2. what is needed is a **supernatural revelation**, whereby God not only reveals *truth* to the individual, but also *supernaturally* makes that truth *applicable* to that individual

b. the nature of humanity

“yet that men who are dead in trespasses may be born again, quickened or regenerated ...”

1. (**again**) a restatement of the *implications* of paragraph 1: the breaking of the Covenant of Works by Adam *condemned* the human race to **spiritual deadness (Eph. 2:1-3)**
 - a. an inability to *recognize* their Creator in nature or in the *Imago Dei* and worship him as God
 - b. a rebellion *against* their Creator in terms of his authority over them as God
 - c. an inability to *positively* affect their spiritual state towards any *real* good, or towards anything required by a holy God for relationship with him
2. **meaning:** in their *natural state* (regardless of their “knowledge” or “wisdom”), men are *incapable* of acting *in any positive sense* towards restoring the broken Covenant of Works
3. **in context:** the idea that the “Enlightenment” might make men capable of “discovering” new ways to God is *denied* by this chapter – in fact, the “Enlightenment” actually reveals *less* about righteousness and *more* about the **depravity of man**
 - a. **e.g.** technology (although useful for the work of ministry) is *more often* used for *sinful ends* – it becomes (in many ways) a new “god” in the lives of those who become *enslaved to it*

c. the prerequisite of regeneration

“... there is moreover necessary an effectual insuperable work of the Holy Spirit upon the whole soul, for the producing in them a new spiritual life”

1. effectual = capable; effective; a work that *actually accomplishes* its goal – **i.e.** the point of chap. 10
 - a. insuperable = impossible to overcome; irresistible; a work that *cannot be stopped* or mitigated
 - b. the work of the Holy Spirit whereby he acts upon the *inner heart* of a man (**i.e.** upon the “whole soul”) removing the rebellious nature that hates God (born of Adam) and replaces it with a new nature that loves God (born again) and seeks God through repentance and faith (**Ezek. 36:26f**)

“And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.”
 - c. **i.e.** the work of the Spirit to raise the spiritually dead person to *new spiritual life*, capable of *fully embracing* the *special revelation of God in the gospel*
2. **principle: the gospel that God has spoken “over” his creation becomes complete only as he exercises his power to apply that message to the hearts of those he has graciously chosen**

III. The Conclusion of the Gospel

Content

a. the summary of the chapter

“without which no other means will effect their conversion unto God”

1. there is a gospel promise, that promise is only available through special revelation, that special revelation goes out to whomever God sovereignly purposes to receive it, but ...
2. it can only be received by those who are *supernaturally* endowed to receive it

b. the conclusion of the gospel

1. so ... no amount of intellectual prowess or technological advancement or subjective feelings or spiritualities, religions, philosophies, sophistries, rituals, or traditions will ever change the *natural state* of human beings trapped in their own hatred of God and rebellion against his law
2. **i.e.** the gospel of Jesus Christ is a “*hidden wisdom*,” not visible to “smart men” (**1 Cor. 2:6-14**)

“Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”— these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. ... The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”

c. the responsibility in the gospel

1. **not:** attempt to “persuade” people to believe based simply on the evidence they see around them
2. **rather:** preach the word (speak the gospel from the Bible) and pray for the Spirit to empower it into the hearts and minds of those who hear it

- a. **IOW:** the power of our evangelism is not in artistry of form, but in the work of the Spirit *going before us* to open hearts and changes minds
- b. it is this power that *compels* us to preach – our proclamation will *always* be successful because the Spirit will do as *he wills* with our message
- c. **we do not need to be “persuasive” – we need to be obedient**