



**BETHEL**  
PRESBYTERIAN

# **MINISTRY OF THE WORD**

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## **The Gospel of God, Part 3**

*Vince Lombardi*

In the late '50s and early '60s a man by the name of Vince Lombardi became the head football coach of the Green Bay Packers, and football as America knew it would never be the same. Vince Lombardi became a coach when being a professional athlete meant that you didn't need

- Coaching.
- You Had Arrived.
- College was over; you were now a man! And you expected to be treated as such.
- You played essentially how you wanted.

Well Mr. Lombardi changed all of this. He held boot camp-like practices. If his team lost a game, they often times would wait for the crowds to leave the stadium and then go out on the field and practice. He imposed strict fines for those who broke the rules. And it worked. Though initially his players came close to revolting, within a couple of years they became one of the best football teams in the game.

What was the secret for His success? He stressed the fundamentals! His first day as head-coach, he pulled a football out and said, "This is a football. It is made of leather, etc..."

The result? He was given the nickname, “Mr. Fundamental.” Vince Lombardi took a bunch of rebellious, disorganized football players, and transformed them into a legend by stressing the fundamentals!

And this is what Paul is doing here: He is stressing the fundamentals of the faith! And how important this is for us today! If Christendom somehow lost from the pages of Scripture every reference to

- Child Rearing,
- The Husband/Wife Relationship,
- Government,

We would feel quite impoverished, and yet our faith would go on. But if Christendom somehow lost from the pages of Scripture what these two short verses teach us, EVERY MAN would die in their sins! Truly, Romans 1:3-4 is a summation — It’s THE ESSENCE — of the Gospel of God.

- What will it take for Bethel Presbyterian Church to be used by God to powerfully proclaim His name?
- What will it take for Bethel Presbyterian Church to be a legend?

### *The Essence of the Gospel*

A thorough grasp on the simple message found in this passage, the essence of the gospel.

Romans 1:1, 3, “Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called *as* an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God... concerning His Son...”

This is the essence of the gospel: Jesus Christ. As a missionary, what was Paul’s message?

1 Corinthians 2:2, “For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.”

In fact, notice the focus of Paul’s life.

Philippians 1:21, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

Galatians 6:14, “But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

In contrast to the ceremonial law, Paul wrote this:

Colossians 2:17, “...the substance belongs to Christ.”

Now this is a profound truth which is so important for us to understand. See, the gospel isn’t about...

- Our happiness.

- Our future.
- Our welfare.
- Money.
- Programs.
- Church buildings.
- Committees.
- Exciting worship.

Rather, the gospel revolves around the person and work of Jesus Christ identified in Romans 1:4,.

Romans 1:4, "Jesus Christ our Lord."

Here Paul uses Christ's full title. Jesus: refers to Christ's historical identity, the One who came to "save His people from their sins," (Matthew 1:21). Christ, means "Messiah." The one anointed by God as King in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies which foretold of a righteous ruler whom God would send to govern His people in righteousness (Jeremiah 23:5-60).

Our Lord is a title indicating "Sovereign Ruler." Indeed, Christ has been exalted to the Father's right hand and there exercises all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:19).

The essence of the gospel, that which makes the gospel of God truly GOOD NEWS, is God the Son, identified here as Jesus Christ our Lord. Now...

- How is it that Christ is the epitome of the Gospel?
- What is it about Christ that makes Him the Essence of the Gospel?

Paul answers this with the contrast he makes regarding Christ's humanity and His deity; notice the two parallel statements.

Romans 1:3, "...according to the flesh..."

This is in reference to Christ's humanity.

Romans 1:4, "...according to the spirit of holiness..."

This is in reference not to the Holy Spirit<sup>1</sup>, but to Christ's divine nature, to what He is as the Son of God. And so, that which makes the gospel good news revolves around Christ's humanity and His deity. Notice Paul's first point.

### *Jesus Christ is a Man*

Romans 1:3, "born of a descendant of David according to the flesh."

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1. To establish the contrast between Christ's humanity ("according to the flesh") and Christ's Divinity ("according to the spirit"), and yet to avoid any reference to the Holy Spirit and human spirit, Paul qualifies "Spirit" with "holy" which means "perfect", "complete", "set apart". Now the word "holy" is never used in the Bible in reference to the Spirit of God, and yet it is unable to be applied to man.

This has reference to the incarnation and therefore to that which Christ became in respect to his human nature, He is Man. And yet, with the mentioning of Christ's lineage we note that the emphasis here is on the fact that He is of the Davidic line.<sup>2</sup>

Why is Paul stressing Christ's lineage? Because according to the Bible, the promised Savior would be born of the household of David! To appreciate this, we need to be aware of the Scriptural background. When God created man, He entered into a covenant with him.

Genesis 2:16-17, "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.'"

We call this the Covenant of Works. Accordingly, from the beginning, mankind enjoyed a relationship with God predicated upon their obedience. Now we know that Adam, our representative, violated this covenant.

Genesis 3:6, "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate."

Though thousands of years and so much history separate us from the Garden of Eden, nevertheless on account of this original covenant of works...

- Every individual relates to God on a legal basis.
- Every person stands before God as either covenant keeper or covenant breaker.

And thus, every person who goes to hell ultimately goes there because he is guilty of violating this covenant with God!

Romans 5:18, "So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men..."

1 Corinthians 15:22, "...in Adam all die..."

Now on account of His great love for us, God promised to send a Savior who would deliver us from the punishment due us on account of our violation of this covenant of works.

Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel."

**\*\*and thus we read\*\***

Romans 5:19, "For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous."

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2. Both Mary (Luke 3:23, 31), Jesus' natural mother, and Joseph (Matthew 1:6, 16; Luke 1:27), Jesus' legal father, were descendants of David.

That is why the coming of Christ was heralded with these words:

Luke 2:11, "For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

How are we to know who this "savior" is? What is it that would identify this "savior" for us?

While there are many answers to this question, one of the most fundamental marks of the Messiah/Savior is that He would be a descendent of David.<sup>3</sup> And that is why we are not surprised to read this:

Matthew 22:41-42, "Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, 'What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?' They said to Him, 'The son of David.'"

And so, when Paul gives us the essence of the gospel in the terms of Jesus being born a descendent of David he not only is making a strong case for Jesus being a man but he also is proclaiming with a loud voice that the gospel is centered around THE Davidic King who would fulfill the covenant of works on our behalf!

Matthew 1:21, "And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins."

### *Jesus Christ is God*

This is what makes the Gospel Good News: As a man, Jesus Christ is Messiah, the Savior of His people. As such, He descended to our prison, broke the chains that bound us, and so delivered us. Only THE Descendant of David could do this! And yet, this is but half of it. Notice also that Jesus Christ is God.

Romans 1:4, "who was declared<sup>4</sup> the Son of God with power."

We could literally translate this as, "who was marked off by bounds to be the son of God with power." The focus of this statement is on the deity of Jesus Christ. Notice:

John 5:18, "For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God."

And so, not only is Jesus a man, but in His coming He revealed Himself to be God! Now again, notice that Christ did this in a rather "powerful way." See, throughout His earthly ministry, Christ purposely concealed His identity. In fact, He chose as His favorite Messianic reference a title which was unknown

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<sup>3</sup> Compare 2 Samuel 7:12-1, 15-16; Psalm 89; Amos 9:11, Ezekiel 37:21-25; Jeremiah 23:5-6

4. τοῦ ὀρισθέντος; to mark off by bounds. From this term we get our English word *horizon*, which refers to the demarcation line between the earth and the sky. Thus, Christ was "marked off by bounds," or better yet, "shown to be..."

to the established religion of His day, "Son of Man." When He cleansed the leper, He said this:

Matthew 8:4, "See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest..."

When His brothers mocked Him and told Him to show who He really was, we read this:

John 7:8, "Go up to the feast yourselves; I do not go up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come."

Now the reason Christ did this is found in such passages as this:

John 6:14-15: "When therefore the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, 'This is of a truth the Prophet who is to come into the world.' Jesus therefore perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force, to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone."

And so throughout His time on the earth, Christ purposely hid his true identity. And yet, when it came time to reveal His true nature to the world, it was done WITH POWER with much force and conclusiveness, for it was demonstrated:

Romans 1:4, "by the resurrection from the dead."

The resurrection is used in the New Testament as proof of Christ's deity.<sup>5</sup> How does the resurrection prove Christ's deity? Because, among other things, Scripture tells us that Christ raised HIMSELF from the dead.

John 2:19: "Jesus answered and said to them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'"

Christ, speaking of his life.

John 10:18, "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

When Christ died and then broke the power of death.

Ephesians 4:8, "...He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men."

1 Thessalonians 4:14, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus."<sup>6</sup>

See, at the time of Christ's resurrection, many others throughout church history had been raised from the dead. Yet when we look at Christ, we discover that HE HIMSELF broke the power that Satan held

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<sup>5</sup> Compare Acts 17:30-31

<sup>6</sup> This is reflected in such credal statements as the Apostle's Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the WSC #28.

over death<sup>7</sup> That is why after Thomas saw Christ resurrected, we read this:

John 20:28, "Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!'"

No one said this to Lazarus, Tabitha, or the widow's son! It is this truth that makes the gospel good news! And yet how so? How is Christ's deity an essential element of the Good News?

Once again we need to be aware of the context. When Adam and Eve fell from the Garden of Eden, there were many lessons to be learned. And yet, of the many lessons which emerge from the fall, this certainly is one of them.

- The fall is NOT recorded to show us how foolish Adam and Eve were.
- RATHER, it is recorded to show that even a perfect man falls short of God's standards!

What is God's standard when it comes to Salvation? Perfection!

- Can man attain that standard?
- Could an angel?
- Could any created being?

The answer from the fall is, "NO!" For God's standards are as infinitely high as He is.

Matthew 5:48, "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

And thus, the ONLY One who could ever affect the salvation of any man is God Himself and God Alone! And thus we see the beauty and magnificence of the gospel. Because Christ is man, He could...

- Die in man's place.
- Be our sympathetic High priest.
- Fulfill the Old Testament promise of the Redeemer who would suffer to save His people from their sin.

Galatians 4:4-5: "But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."

Because Christ is God, He, and He alone, could fulfill the covenant of works!

Romans 8:3-4, "For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."

How should we respond to so great a salvation? We must be careful so as not to neglect it!

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<sup>7</sup> Compare Hebrew 2:14

Hebrews 2:1-3a, "For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away *from* it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?"

Oh family of God, let us not be as the Old Testament Israelites who had so much by way of salvific blessing: they...

1 Corinthians 10:1b-4, "...were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ."

And yet, nevertheless fell short of salvation as they had not the Giver of all these gifts. As the Jews of Christ's day who "believed" and yet fell short because their faith was not an "abiding" faith (John 8:31-32).

As the countless of thousands in our land, this land of...

- Bibles.
- Revivals.
- Churches.
- Bible Studies.
- Conferences and seminars.

Who on the Day of Judgment will fall short because they lack Jesus Christ! Do you understand...

- That your lasting obligation to God is perfect obedience?
- That one insignificant sin on your part will damn you to an eternity separated from God?
- The incredibly high standard to which you must attain in order to be saved?
- That hell is filled with...
  - The religious?
  - The good intentioned?
  - Theologians?
  - Bible study leaders?
- To whom or to what will you flee when the sin you have committed is uncovered, not just before everyone in this room, but before God Himself?
- What hope have any of us here this day of being saved?

Herein lays the good news:

Matthew 19:26, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Because Jesus Christ was "born of a descendent of David" He could and did represent us as Savior. Because Jesus Christ is God He, and He alone, could and did fulfill the covenant of works on our behalf!



How ought we to respond to so great a salvation? First, we must ask with the Philippian jailor:

Acts 16:30: "...what must I do to be saved?"

The answer simply is this, we must rely upon Jesus Christ alone- His work in our behalf and we will be saved. This means that we...

- Turn from any form of self-reliance...
- And go to God in prayer and...
  - Confess our sin.
  - Ask Him to forgive us.
  - Receive Christ's act of righteousness as our own.

He is the Lamb of God; let us lay our hands upon this sacrifice, confess our sins, and be healed! Secondly, as ones who have trusted Christ we must worship! Do a study sometime of what happens when men come to a fuller understanding of Christ. They worship! Christ's disciples in the boat did this.

Matthew 14:33, "And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, 'You are certainly God's Son!'"

When an entire city discovered who Christ was they were frightened.

Matthew 8:34, "And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw Him, they entreated *Him* to depart from their region."

When Peter got a greater glimpse of Christ's majesty, the disciple fell down and worshipped the Lord. Luke 5:8, "But when Simon Peter saw *that*, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!'"

Such must be our response this day. We must present ourselves to the Lord as a living and holy sacrifice.

Finally, we must preach "Jesus Christ our Lord." Let me close with the example of the Gadarene Demonic. After being delivered from the host of demons which possessed him, this child of God longed to follow Christ to the remotest regions of the earth. Yet what was Christ's response?

Mark 5:18-20, "And as He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was entreating Him that he might accompany Him. And He did not let him, but He said to him, 'Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and *how* He had mercy on you.' And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone marveled."

Such is the calling to everyone of us this day. Let us not necessarily "Go!" But let us share the glorious news of our Lord right where we live.

### **About Bethel Presbyterian Church**

*The Bethel Presbyterian Church Ministry of the Word* is published regularly. It is distributed via the internet.

### **VISIT US WHEN IN Broomfield, COLORADO**

Feel free to visit Bethel Presbyterian Church when in Broomfield, Colorado. Bethel Presbyterian Church meets at Broomfield High School, Eagle (10<sup>th</sup> Street) and Main, Broomfield, Colorado. The telephone number of the church is 303-469-6912. The worship services are at 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. each Sunday. Bethel Presbyterian Church is a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

All our sermons can be accessed via the World Wide Web. There is no recording for this sermon. The web address for all sermons at Bethel Presbyterian Church can be found out as follows:

<http://bethelpresbyterian.sermonaudio.com>

### **About the Preacher**

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on September 13, 2009. Greg is the preacher at Bethel Presbyterian Church.