Section: Doctrine of Christ (Christology)

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**TEACHING NOTES**

**Q68. What is the gospel?**

The gospel is the good news of the grace and power of God to redeem undeserving sinners to eternal life through Jesus’ perfect, sinless life; substitutional, sacrificial death; and victorious resurrection from the grave. These sinners are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone from the eternal wrath they deserved, and they are reconciled into an eternally secure relationship with God.

**Intro.**

What is the Gospel?

Evangelion [the word we translate as gospel] is a greek word , signifying good, merry, glad and joyful news that makes a man’s heart glad and makes him sing and leap for joy. ~William Tyndale

William Tyndale was so moved by this good news that he sacrificed his life and died a martyr’s death for making the Bible – and the good news it contains- available in the English language. He is just one of many well known and not known at all Christians throughout history who have joyfully given their lives for the sake of the gospel.

Not every Christian is given the opportunity to die as a martyr for the sake of Christ and His gospel, but every Christian who has heard and truly believed this gospel is committed to die for the sake of the gospel. That is the kind of good news this is! It is life altering news that completely transforms the lives of those who truly receive it. It is impossible to believe the gospel and not be radically transformed by it.

Jesus compared the prize of the gospel to a pearl of such great price that a merchant who knew it’s worth went and sold everything he owned in order to have it. (Matt. 13)

The gospel is news of such great treasure that nothing else compares – there is no price too high to pay in order to have it – there is no sacrifice that wouldn’t be a joy to make in order to obtain it.

We cannot add anything to the gospel to make it better news, but we can grow in our knowledge and understanding of the gospel. We can increase our ability to see more and more of its beautiful facets. The gospel message never changes but as we gaze into the beauty of the gospel and grow in our knowledge of it, **we** are changed and given a greater appreciation for its powerful and unchanging beauty.

The opposite is also true. The gospel cannot be trumped by any other good or bad news, but in our sin, we are capable of losing sight of all its beauty. I pray that the teaching tonight helps all of us to grow in our understanding and appreciation of the gospel that leads to a greater love for our savior, or if you have not believed the gospel that your eyes and ears would be opened so that you might repent and believe and be saved.

Let’s pray and then we’ll dig into our lesson.

PRAY

What is the gospel?

Look at our answer with me:

**The gospel is the good news of the grace and power of God to redeem undeserving sinners to eternal life through Jesus’ perfect, sinless life; substitutional, sacrificial death; and victorious resurrection from the grave. These sinners are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone from the eternal wrath they deserved, and they are reconciled into an eternally secure relationship with God.**

**The gospel is the good news**

The gospel is good news. I want to emphasize the important point that it is news. It is not a way of living, it is not something that is communicated through our actions, it is not communicated through pictures. It is communicated through words. It is the special revelation of God given through the mouth of His prophets and apostles.

When asked by Jesus if the apostles wanted to leave along with many other disciples who had fallen away, Peter famously said in John 6:68 “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life”.

When people make the mistake of thinking that the gospel is something that we can communicate by the way we live, they turn the gospel into salvation by works. That is not good news for anyone. Not for the one observing or for the one being observed. The good news of the gospel is what empowers us to live lives of holiness and service unto our king. When we sin, it is the good news of the gospel that reminds us that our forgiveness is found in Christ alone. But if we have reduced the gospel to the way we live, then what happens when we sin is that we end up believing the lie that we just need to live better lives, we just need to try harder.

Let me wrap up this point by saying this. If you are unable to tell others the good news of the gospel, if you are not confident that you can communicate the gospel with words, then whatever it is you are telling yourself in your moments of temptation, fear, sorrow, or doubt is probably not the gospel. Or even if it is, you are probably not as confident that it is as you should be.

Christian, you NEED to be able to communicate the gospel message with confidence if you are going to experience its power at work in your life. So with that let’s keep moving.

**The gospel is the good news of the grace and power of God to redeem undeserving sinners to eternal life through Jesus’ perfect, sinless life**

We cannot discount the centrality of grace as a major component of the gospel. We see this clearly in Paul’s farewell address to the Ephesian elders in:

**Acts 20:24** But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to *the* *gospel of the grace of God.*

Paul summarizes the good news as the “gospel of the grace of God.”

This good news of grace is about and for the benefit of undeserving sinners. It is not for deserving sinners and it is not for those without sin (not there is such a person). Grace is not grace if it is deserved or owed. Grace is only grace when it comes from an unobligated giver to an undeserving recipient. Only those who know that they are undeserving sinners will hear the news of God’s grace as Gospel Good News.

**Mark 2:17** And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

The news of a cure for those who aren’t sick (or don’t know they are sick) will not be heard as good news. The news of God’s grace towards undeserving sinners will also not be heard as good news for those who do not see themselves as undeserving sinners.

I began by making the case that the gospel is good news, the greatest news that could ever be heard, so why do so many undeserving sinners reject the gospel as good news?

**1 Corinthians 1:18** For the word of the cross [the gospel message] is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

The good news of the gospel is only good news to those who are being saved by it. To those who are not being saved it is foolish. They are too in love with their sense of self-reign to see any good news in King Jesus reigning over them. They are too in love with their own thoughts and feelings to see any good news in being given a new mind and heart in accordance with Jesus’. They are too in love with their pride to see any good news in humbly admitting their unworthiness. They are too in love with their sin to see any good news in the death of their sin.

Charles Spurgeon is credited with saying “Too many think lightly of sin, and therefore think lightly of the Savior.”

For those who know the wretchedness of their sin and the desperate place they are in because of it, the message of God’s grace and redemption is incredibly good news.

To redeem means to pay the debt for. It is when something or someone is bound by a debt they owe and cannot be unbound or set free until that debt is paid. The price of the redemption is in direct correlation to the value of the debt. So, when you take a diamond ring to a pawn shop in exchange for money, you are basically putting the ring up for ransom and incurring a debt in the form of principle and interest. If they give you $100 for the ring it is going to cost you $100 plus interest to redeem the ring.

All sinners are in need of redemption by another, they need someone else to pay their debt, because the debt they owe, the penalty of their sin, is the eternal wrath of God. RC Sproul defined sin as cosmic treason. Sinful humans want to define sin as imperfection, making a mistake, or doing a boo-boo. We want to dumb it down to some kind of unintentional lapse in judgement. But sin is very deliberate treason against the God who created us and everything else. It is the finite creature flipping the finger to the infinite creator and saying I do not need you or want you as my master, I will be my own master. This sin that we have all been guilty of comes with the penalty of eternal separation from God’s loving presence to the only place that is left, the place where God’s eternal wrath and fury toward sin and sinners is – Hell.

It is impossible for a finite human being to pay an infinite debt. And no one who is already in debt can pay the debt of another. The only way someone can pay another’s debt is if they have enough credit on their account to cover the debt. Only a perfect, sinless life can pay the debt of a life stained by sin. God’s standard of perfection is beyond our comprehension – let alone our ability to achieve it. The person who has only sinned one time in their life doesn’t even come close to being able to pay for the debt of someone who has sinned a million times. They are both sinners who have fallen short of the glory of God. And along with that, because of our inherited sin guilt from Adam - we are BORN corrupted by sin, full of hate towards the perfect God who created us.

Jesus alone was born without the guilt of Adam because of His virgin birth and He obeyed God perfectly through every temptation known to man.

For 33 years Jesus experienced all of what it means to be human living in a world corrupted by sin. Think about that in comparison to Adam’s sin. Adam was placed into a perfect world without sin and only had one law to obey and yet he failed. Jesus was born under the Old Covenant laws of Israel. All of the applicable moral, ceremonial, and judicial laws were perfectly obeyed by Him throughout His entire life.

**Hebrews 4:15** For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

If Jesus had committed a single sin, He would be required to die for His own sin and therefore couldn’t stand in the place of another and die for their sin.

**Hebrews 2:10** For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.

Jesus’ perfection was not just something He was born with, it was tested and established through real suffering.

The value and worth of Jesus and His perfection is infinite. He is perfectly lovely, without spot or stain or wrinkle. He had NO sin.

Part of the reason it is so difficult for us to comprehend the fullness of the beauty of Jesus’ perfection and sinlessness is that in our flesh we are still incapable of always seeing the hideousness of sin. We still struggle daily with the temptation to view sin as something of value to us. In our flesh, we are still prone to give into the lie that sin is the better option at times. For us to fully appreciate the beauty and value of Jesus’ perfection and sinlessness we have to fully see the filthiness and ugliness of sin – especially OUR own sin.

The more we see and understand the filthiness and unworthiness of sinners, the more we will understand the magnitude of God’s love for us.

**Romans 5:8** God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

God’s redemption of these sinners is not just undeserved, it’s the opposite of what we deserve. It’s just one of the many reasons we call it Amazing Grace!

This redemption not only frees us from the eternal damnation we deserve, it eternally reunites us with God. It doesn’t put us back in the garden for a second chance to try to earn eternal life through our obedience. It gives us the reward of eternal life as a completely free gift! Jesus takes our punishment for sin, and we are given His reward for righteousness. That’s what the next part of our answer is about.

Our answer continues:

“**The gospel is the good news of the grace and power of God to redeem undeserving sinners to eternal life through Jesus’ perfect, sinless life;**

**…substitutional, sacrificial death**

Jesus’ perfect, sinless life made Him the only one who’s life was valuable enough to pay the ransom due sinners, but He also had to be willing to sacrifice it by substitutionally standing in the place of those sinners He came to save. Jesus stood in our place as our substitute, taking on our punishment, bearing our guilt.

Because Jesus death was substitutional, because He died in our place, we no longer owe the penalty for any of our sin. There’s nothing left to be paid – Jesus paid it ALL. Our ongoing repentance for indwelling sin is not because we fear God’s wrath, it’s because we love Him and want to please Him by obeying all of His good commandments.

Jesus’ death was also sacrificial. To sacrifice means to give up something of value for the sake of another. Jesus’ perfect, sinless life meant that He had earned the reward of unhindered fellowship with God, never having to experience God’s wrath against sin, but Jesus sacrificed His life under the unimaginable wrath of God in order to redeem us. He tasted death under the wrath of God so that we could have the life He earned.

The 1689 London Baptist Confession states:

The Lord Jesus most willingly undertook this office [of mediator].21  To discharge it, he was born under the law22 and perfectly fulfilled it. He also experienced the punishment that we deserved and that we should have endured and suffered.23  He was made sin and a curse for us.24  He  endured extremely heavy sorrows in his soul and extremely painful sufferings in his body.25  He was crucified and died and remained in a state of death, yet his body did not decay.26  On the third day he arose from the dead27 with the same body in which he suffered. ~ 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith

Jesus didn’t sacrifice his life just to be an example for us or to make it a possibility that some might be saved. He died as a substitute in the place of the elect and actually paid the penalty for their sin. He truly paid the ransom. When He said “it is finished” He meant exactly that, that the work required of Him to redeem the elect was finished in His sacrifice on the cross.

Do you realize how good that news is? Our redemption has already been accomplished by the work of Jesus - we don’t have to work for it ourselves. We’ve been set free to live with Him and for Him. And living for Him is not some kind of arrangement for us to pay Him back – it’s part of the gift we’ve received. We’re no longer slaves of sin but slaves of righteousness. To be free from sin is a gloriously good gift!

Next our answer says: **The gospel is the good news of the grace and power of God to redeem undeserving sinners to eternal life through Jesus’ perfect, sinless life; substitutional, sacrificial death;**

**…and victorious resurrection from the grave.**

We saw this a moment ago in the confession “On the third day he arose from the dead with the same body in which he suffered.”

Jesus victorious resurrection from the grave is an incredibly important part of the good news.

**1 Corinthians 15:17-22** And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. 20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

**1 Corinthians 15:32** What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

Without the resurrection, there is no good news in the gospel. If Christ had not raised from the dead, there would not be eternal life for any of us. His victorious resurrection means our faith is not futile and our future in Christ is secure!

But, that doesn’t mean we are separated from suffering before our glorification. No, to follow Christ in this life is guaranteed to come with suffering. We may not be thrown into an arena with beasts and we may never face a martyr’s death like William Tyndale, but we will face suffering for Christ’s sake.

**John 15:20** Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master. ' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.

The teachings of Jesus become nothing more than a burdensome waste of time if there is no resurrection from the dead. Why would we pick up our cross and follow Jesus into a life of suffering if this life is all there is? Because we know that this life is NOT all there is!

**Matthew 6:19-20** "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

The good news of the gospel enables us to see that Jesus is the greatest treasure we could ever want or have, and that everything in this fallen world is temporary. Because we know that He has risen from the dead and is now preparing a place for those who love Him, to be with Him after we die, everything we have in this life – good or bad – is rubbish in comparison to what we know awaits us. We are able to be thankful for every good gift we have in this life as a blessing to be enjoyed to the glory of God, and at the same time we also rejoice in our sufferings knowing that God is glorified when we endure suffering for the sake of Christ.

This is what Paul is saying in

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

Jesus’ resurrection means that He completed His work to redeem His people. It is the evidence that God was satisfied with His sacrifice and that His wrath has been propitiated – meaning that Jesus satisfied God’s wrath due the elect based on His substitutionary atonement. God’s righteous anger towards those sinners who trust in Christ was poured out fully on to Christ, leaving them free from condemnation.

Let’s look at the next part of our answer. The first part of our answer speaks to what Jesus has done and how He has accomplished our redemption. This next part is about how his work is applied to those who believe. It says:

**These sinners are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone from the eternal wrath they deserved, and they are reconciled into an eternally secure relationship with God.**

**These sinners are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone**

**Ephesians 2:8-9** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Grace is defined as unmerited favor (or an undeserved gift) given by an unobligated giver.

The grace of God, like the love of God, and the wisdom of God, and so on, is an attribute of His perfection. It’s defined in the WOTC as an attribute like this:

Grace (As God’s attribute): Grace is a perfection of the divine character, which is exercised only toward the elect. Grace is distinguished from “mercy.” God gives unmerited grace to the guilty and unworthy that He has chosen. This includes blessings such as regeneration, faith, reconciliation, sanctification, and eternal life.

Some people make the mistake of thinking that because God IS grace that He must be gracious to everyone. The problem with that thinking is that it dismantles the meaning of grace by obligating Him to be gracious. There are many on the path to Hell, in complete rebellion against God, who believe God will forgive them in spite of the fact that they remain unrepentant, because they believe that if God is truly a gracious God, He will most certainly show them grace. They believe that God is obligated by His grace to show grace equally to everyone.

If God is obligated for any reason to give grace, it is no longer grace. God is not obligated in any way to be gracious to anyone. God has every right to determine who, when, where, and how He chooses to be gracious. Every enemy of God rightly deserves His eternal wrath and there is nothing ungracious about Him choosing to exercise His just wrath against them.

To even ask the question “why doesn’t God save everyone?” is to completely miss the magnitude of His grace in sending His only son to die for even one undeserving sinner. The only reason we could ask that question is if we think for some reason that all people deserve to be saved. But if grace is deserved it is no longer grace. NO one deserves to be saved! Not me, not you, not any one!

When we truly understand this truth, the only question that remains is “why does He save anyone?”, which brings us back to the glory of His grace.

**Ephesians 1:6** says that all of what is accomplished by the gospel is done “to the praise of his glorious grace”. We will forever praise God for the glorious grace He has shown us in Christ.

Moving on it says:

We are saved BY grace THROUGH faith.

Faith in the gospel is the Holy Spirit worked MEANS God uses to save us. Faith is the result of the gift of grace we have been given by God. When we are enabled by the power and will of God, we joyfully and willingly turn from sin and trust in Christ Jesus alone. This is saving faith.

Far too many have been brought up to believe that faith is some kind of mystical power that we exercise in order to make something come true. It’s the Disney version of faith. “If you just believe, you can make all your dreams come true.” The power of this kind of faith lies in the person doing the believing, not in the object being believed.

There are men and women calling themselves evangelists who have made millions pitching this lie to people, telling them that they can be healed if they just have enough faith. It’s such an easy way to skirt the accusation that they’re a fraud when no one is actually ever healed. All they have to say is that the person didn’t have enough faith. These men are peddling lies and so it doesn’t matter how much people believe them, it’s not going to make it true. The mere exercise of believing something doesn’t make it true.

That’s not how faith works. God has not commanded us to make something true for ourselves by believing it. He has commanded us to believe what is true and to repent from suppressing the truth. (Romans 1)

John Owen in his book The Death of Death says this:

*Christ did not die for any upon condition, if they believe; but he died for all God's elect, that they should believe, and believing have eternal life.*

*It is nowhere said in Scripture, nor can it be reasonably affirmed, that if we believe, Christ died for us, as though our believing should make that to be which otherwise was not, - the act create the object; but Christ died for us that we might believe. Salvation, indeed, is bestowed conditionally; but faith, which is the condition, is absolutely procured. ~ John Owen*

What he is saying is that repentance and belief is not something we do to cause God to act on our behalf. Rather, it is the product of what God has secured for us in Christ and brings about in us. When Owen says “that we might believe” he doesn’t mean “so maybe we’ll believe”. The proper way to understand that phrase would be “that the impossibility of us believing would be effectually overcome.” Christ’s death and resurrection has secured for us the salvation which the Holy Spirit has applied to us by opening our blind eyes to see in such a way that makes us believe.

Our faith is not in our faith. We don’t believe that we are saved merely because we believe -we are saved because of WHO we believe in. My faith doesn’t add anything to who Jesus is or what He has done for me. And my faith is not in addition to any good works that I might do. It is only through trusting in Jesus that I am saved. And it is only Jesus that I am trusting in. No one and nothing else has the power to save. Faith alone in Jesus alone means that I am betting my life on Him. I am putting all my chips on Him, there is no hedging my bet. The great thing about Holy Spirit empowered faith is that we know Jesus is not a gamble, He is the most sure and certain thing in the universe.

Next it says: **These sinners are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone**

**…from the eternal wrath they deserved**

**1 Thessalonians 1:10** …Jesus…delivers us from the wrath to come.

**Romans 5:9** Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

We’re saved from the eternal wrath of God! There is nothing in this life, no matter how bad it might be, there is nothing in this life that compares to the terribleness of God’s eternal wrath. Not a bad financial investment, not sickness, not a miserable marriage or rebellious children, not famine, or war, or even death. There is nothing in this short temporary life that we wouldn’t gladly endure to escape the eternal wrath of God, if we truly grasp its reality.

There are some who want to deny that it is God’s wrath we are saved from. The truth of God’s wrath is in contradiction to the idea that God loves everyone just the way they are. The truths of God’s holiness and justice require sinners to recognize that God is just in His wrath towards them in their sin and that it would be good and right of Him to condemn imperfect and unrepentant sinners to an eternity in Hell for that sin. But, that biblical message doesn’t sell, so they have to come up with something more appealing to be saved from. Usually they’ll say it’s Satan, and it’s true that Jesus defeated Satan and the power of death on the cross, but we have to be careful not to think that means that we were ransomed from Satan– that the price of the ransom was paid to Satan. The grace of God is magnified in the fact that the one who is owed the ransom is the one who pays the ransom. It is all of grace. If we deny that it is God’s wrath we are saved from we make light of how much He has done to redeem us.

The fact that Jesus has saved us from God’s eternal wrath should be good enough news for us to gladly serve Him and worship Him for the rest of eternity, but that’s not all He’s done.

**These sinners are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone from the eternal wrath they deserved,**

**…and they are reconciled into an eternally secure relationship with God.**

The reward of the gospel is often represented as an avoidance of hell, a chance to live forever, an opportunity to be reunited with loved ones, or the chance to be in heaven.

All of these are good and true results of the gospel, but they are not the ultimate reward and to paint them as such or to primarily focus on them is to undermine the supreme worth of Jesus and our restored relationship to God. God is the ultimate reward of the gospel. It is His good and just wrath that we are saved from and His blessed fellowship that we are saved to.

He didn’t just save us from the punishment of our sin, He has reconciled us to Himself as adopted children, co-heirs with Christ.

**Romans 8:16-17** The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Listen to how Paul speaks in Eph. 2:4-7 and see the centrality of our union with Christ in the good news of the gospel.

**Eph 2:4-7** But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

We don’t ever want to minimize the gospel but if you were going to sum up the gospel in one word it would be: Jesus. It’s all about Jesus. It’s all because of Jesus. We get Jesus! This is the good news of the gospel!

**Application**

There is so much more that we could say about what the gospel is and when you look at all of the epistles in the New Testament and see how much these letters are spent speaking to Christians about what the gospel is, it’s clear that we never get beyond our need to be growing in our knowledge and understanding of the gospel. We needed the gospel when we first believed and we will need it every day of our lives. We say in our Covenant Membership class that the gospel is not the ABCs of the Christian faith, it’s the A-Z. The gospel is our power for living every moment of our lives.

The power of the gospel is displayed in us by the way it changes our hearts and produces the fruit of righteousness which is displayed through good works that God has prepared for us to walk in.

**Ephesians 2:8-10** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

The good works God has prepared for us can only be done in Christ Jesus. There are no good works we can do apart from Christ, apart from the work of the gospel.

The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith is helpful for us to have a right understanding of good works and how they function in the life of a believer. It says:

“good works, done in obedience to God’s commandments, are the fruit and evidence of a true and living faith.3  Through good works believers express their thankfulness,4 strengthen their assurance,5 build up their brothers and sisters, adorn the profession of the gospel,6 stop the mouths of opponents, and glorify God.7  Believers are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works,8 so that they bear fruit leading to holiness and have the outcome, eternal life”.9 ~1689 Baptist Confession of Faith

Good works are those things we do in obedience to God’s commandments. If an action is in violation to even one of God’s applicable commandments it’s not a good work.

One of the things that can happen when we develop a wrong understanding of good works is that we begin to lower the standards of what God classifies as good. It’s easy to begin to think that haters of God are capable of good because we see what we believe to be the most critical component of what makes something good being done by them, whether that’s feeding the poor, caring for the sick, or fighting injustice in the world. We elevate the importance of the good things that the world agrees are good and we downplay or even disregard any of the other commandments that God calls good. In this faulty way of thinking it makes sense to compromise on some of God’s commandments that the world finds offensive in order to accomplish at least some of the commandments that God calls good.

The world view of those still dead in their sin is that people are inherently good, or at least that humans are born with the capacity to do good. But that is not the testimony of God’s word.

**Mark 10:18** And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.

**Romans 7:18** For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.

The message that humans are inherently sinful and that nothing they do is good is not a message the world can or will accept. The gospel is good news because it gives us the answer to the question all people want to know (or think they want to know), “what’s wrong with the world?” The rejection of the truth that the problem with the world is sin is a rejection of the gospel. There is no good news about God’s solution to sin if we don’t see that sin is our greatest problem.

The first use of the word gospel in the New Testament is Matthew 4:23 where Jesus is said to have been “proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom” throughout Galilee. That phrase is used several times in Matthews gospel and the kingdom of God is connected to the gospel in many other places. Central to the good news of the gospel was the declaration concerning the victory of the king and his sovereign reign over his kingdom.

So built into the gospel message is the truth that not only has Jesus defeated sin and death, but that He will rule and reign over an entire kingdom without sin. That is why the gospel compels us to obey the commandments of God. Not because we are trying to earn our way into the kingdom, but because we so love and long to live in His kingdom. We want nothing to do with living a life where Jesus is not the sovereign king. We are empowered to live righteously by the good news that Christ has set us free from the bondage of sin that once held us captive.

When the truth that sin is humanities greatest problem is rejected, sinful man comes up with alternative answers to the question. And those answers are all man-centered, they see man as the ultimate victim of what’s wrong with the world. So the solutions are all man-centered as well. The most important goal is to respond to the injustices against man.

In this broken ideology, there is no joy in knowing that God has provided a solution to the problem and consequences of my OWN sin. No, I cannot be happy unless the evil (what I perceive to be evil) *of others* is dealt with. My greatest problem is seen as the evil done against me (or against those I think are victims). In this, I, (and others I determine) - are victims, and the only way to fix my problem is to bring everyone else to justice (according to MY standards). This sense of justice is accomplished when they repent and stop offending me or others or when they have been punished and forcefully prohibited from offending me or others. It’s not about God’s justice and seeing Him as the offended party from sin. It leaves no room to rejoice in the grace of God that has fulfilled His perfect justice by condemning His own son to die for sinners such as I.

If we truly believe that the gospel is the solution to humanities greatest problem, we will not get sidetracked from the great commission by trying to fix the world through political protests or getting our unsaved neighbors to change their political views, or even their moral views. That is ultimately a very self-serving motive. This kind of motivation is not actually what’s best in God’s eyes, it’s what’s best in my eyes. If I can get everyone to just get along - the world will be a much better place. My motive is ultimately about making this life a more pleasant experience according to my own fleshly desires.

Americans have experienced an incredible amount of common grace by living in a country where we have an abundance of just laws and freedoms. Not all of our laws are just, but many of the ones that are have been good at curbing human suffering, but at the end of the day, all the laws in the world cannot change the human heart, no matter how well they’re enforced. Only the gospel can transform the human heart and cause people to genuinely love their neighbor. So our hope is not in human government or political activism, it’s in the power of the gospel to transform hearts and lives.

Our ultimate hope as Christians is not in this life. This is why Paul said in the 1st Corinthians 15 passage that “If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.” Because we are not living our best life now, we are taking up our cross daily, dying to ourselves, denying ourselves so that we can live for Him and His purposes, not our own.

We know that we are sojourners and that our hope is in heaven. As Christians we have committed our lives to follow Jesus, who came to earth and lived a perfect life, he committed no sin and yet he was treated more unjustly than any human being who ever has or ever will live. Jesus’ life death and resurrection compels us to live our lives for Him, enduring whatever hardships we might face in this life as an act of worship – to glorify Him.

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

So no matter what we experience here on this earth, in this life, the good news of the gospel causes us to endure it all for the hope of the glory set before us, just as our savior did to secure that hope for us. We live with the knowledge that we are eternally secure with Him and that we will not experience the fullness of what that is to be until we die. When our faith in the gospel empowers us to live this way, our lives then bear witness to the truth of the good news we proclaim.