

“The Essentials Of Our Faith”

Session XX

February 27, 2011

“JUSTIFICATION”:

The Person And Work Of Jesus Christ!

Nothing is more basic to Christianity than the **Gospel** -- the “Good News” of what God has done for rebellious mankind in and through His Son, **Jesus Christ!** (John 3:16)

But nothing has been more controversial or confusing than the questions, “**What is the Gospel?**” or “**What is saving faith?**”

As early as the first century of the New Testament Church, confusing, misleading, and even heretical “Gospel” messages were circulating throughout the infant Church. The problem was so serious in the Galatian region of Asia Minor (Turkey) that the Apostle Paul wrote one of his 13 Epistles (letters) to the Churches of that district in an effort to protect them from a “False Gospel”!

“Paul warned against the false gospel of the ‘Judaizers’ in Galatians 1:6.

(‘I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ,’ Galatians 1:6-7)

Their ‘good news’ or ‘gospel’ included the requirement to be circumcised as well as to believe in order for one to be saved. No gospel of grace was this, for a human work had been added – circumcision.”

--Charles C. Ryrie

“To hold up a standard against the flood of anti-Christian teaching sweeping the nation, Christians need a proper understanding of the Bible, and its doctrinal teaching. Unfortunately, many Christians believe that too much emphasis is placed on doctrine. ‘Doctrine’, they say, ‘divides people, but love unites.’ True, love must be emphasized within the Church, but not at the expense of correct doctrine. Such Christians are often weak and fuzzy in their thinking about what the Bible teaches. When asked to explain the doctrine of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, sin, grace, regeneration, justification, sanctification, or last things, they are hard-pressed to give an answer. Many are tossed to and fro with ‘every wind of doctrine’ and have fallen prey to the myriad of false beliefs proclaimed in some Churches and in the media.”

--David M. Levy

A Sober Warning about a Subtle Danger:

Dr. Charles Ryrie expresses a deep concern about a common problem among many evangelicals and the Churches they attend – the problem of “semantics” – the wording of the Gospel.

*“How often I have heard the retort, ‘It’s only a matter of semantics.’ In my experience it usually came from students using it as a defense mechanism to justify a poor answer to a question. And usually the question involved defining or explaining carefully the meaning of a Biblical doctrine or concept. ‘A matter of semantics’ was supposed to excuse fuzzy thinking and a poor, if not wrong, choice of words. . . . Semantics involves the study of the meanings of words; so if one uses words which do not convey the meaning he or she is attempting to express, then a **different meaning comes across**. . . . it seems to me that those who believe in the inerrancy of the Bible ought especially to be concerned with accuracy in communicating the truth. All the Bible is inerrant and important to us. But certainly how we as Christians express the Gospel ought to be our greatest concern **We do not want to confuse or short-change or obscure God’s good news of His grace – how He gave His Son so that we might have life through faith in Him. Semantics is key in understanding and communicating the Gospel.** . . . we must strive to use the words that give a clear witness to the grace of God. It is not that God cannot use an unclear message; doubtless He does more often than He would prefer to. But why should He have to? Why don’t we sharpen our understanding of what the Gospel is about so that we can present it as clearly as possible, using the right words to herald the good news correctly?*

--Charles C. Ryrie

Warren W. Wiersbe shares a similar concern in relation to a clear understanding of the Gospel on the part of Christians and Churches.

“Confusion about salvation means disaster, for the message of the Gospel is a matter of eternal life or eternal death. ‘What is the Gospel?’ is not an academic question. It affects the destiny of every lost sinner as well and the activity of every witnessing Christian and every soul-winning ministry. . . . In 1907, when R.J. Campbell published The New Theology, the British theologian P.T. Forsyth compared the popular but misleading book to ‘a bad photograph that was over-exposed and under-developed.’ Alas, there are many ‘bad photographs’ being published these days!”

--Warren W. Wiersbe

“The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth.”

II Timothy 2:24-25

I. A Clear Understanding of the “Gospel” Demands a Clear Knowledge of the “_____” of God → “_____ Proper”!

A. The Absolute Attributes of God: Those which pertain to Himself!

(Taken from The Moody Handbook of Theology, by Paul Enns)

1. Spirituality:

“God is spirit (not a spirit) who does not have corporeity or physical form, John 4:24. A body localizes, but God as a spirit is everywhere; He cannot be limited. The many references to God’s physical features (cf. Gen. 3:8; I Kn. 8:29; Psa. 34:15; Isa. 65:2) are anthropomorphisms – figurative language giving God human characteristics used to attempt to make Him understandable.”

2. Self-existence:

“God’s self-existence means ‘He has the ground of His existence in Himself . . . God is independent in His Being, but also . . . He is independent in everything else; in His virtues, decrees, works, and . . . causes everything to depend on Him. Exodus 3:14 emphasizes His self-existence in His identification, “I Am Who I Am.” . . . He has continual existence in Himself.”

3. Immutability:

*“Immutability ‘is that perfection of God by which He is devoid of all change, not only in His Being, but also in His perfections, and in His purposes and promises . . . since God is absolute perfection, improvement or deterioration are impossible for Him. Malachi 3:6 teaches . . . ‘I, the Lord, do not change.’ . . . The value of this doctrine is enormous: since God does not change, His love and His promises **forever remain certain**. For example, He will never change concerning His promise in John 3:16.”*

4. Unity:

*“ . . . it emphasizes that God is **One** numerically. It was this belief that set Israel apart from her polytheistic neighbors . . . Deut. 6:4 . . . This statement was a declaration of monotheism, affirming that God is **One** in His essence and cannot be divided. It also affirmed Him as **absolutely unique**; there is **none other** that can be compared with Him (Ex. 15:11; I Tim. 2:5; I Cor. 8:6).”*

5. Truth:

“Truth means that the facts conform to reality; truth identifies things as they are. First, it means He is the true God in distinction to all others; there is none like Him (Isa. 44:8-10; 45:5); second, He is truth in that His Word and his revelation are reliable (Num. 23:19; Rom. 3:3-4; John 14:1,2,6; Heb. 6:18; Titus 1:2); third, He knows things as they are: He is the beginning of all knowledge and makes it available to man in order that man might have fellowship with Him.”

6. Love:

*“God’s love may be defined as ‘that perfection of the divine nature by which God is eternally moved to communicate Himself. It is not a mere emotional impulse, but a rational and voluntary affection, having its ground in truth and holiness and its exercise in free choice. The Greek term agape, translated ‘**love**’ . . . Jn. 3:16; 5:42; Rom. 5:5,8; 8:35,39; I Jn. 4:10,11,19; Rev. 1:4. Agape denotes a reasoned-out love, rather than an emotionally-based love (but not devoid of emotion) – one that loves irrespective of the worth of the object and even though the love may not be reciprocated.”*

7. Holiness:

*“The basic meaning of holiness in ‘set apart’ or ‘separation’ (Heb. Qedosh; Gk. Hagiazō). Many see holiness as the foremost attribute of all because holiness pervades all the other attributes of God and is consistent with all He is and does. . . . It has a **transcendent** emphasis, indicating He is absolutely distinct from all His creatures and is exalted above them in infinite majesty, Ex. 15:11. . . . It has an **ethical** emphasis, indicating He is separate from moral evil or sin. Holiness points to God’s majestic purity, or ethical majesty, Lev. 11:44, 45, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’ Because God is morally pure, He cannot condone evil or have any relationship to it (Psa. 11:4-6). In His holiness God is the moral and ethical standard; He is the law. He sets the standard.”*

B. The Relative Attributes of God: Those which pertain to His creations!

(Taken from The Moody Handbook of Theology, by Paul Enns)

1. Eternity:

“The eternity of God is usually understood as related to time . . . God is not limited or bound by time; with God there is no succession of events; He is above all temporal limitations . . . there is no distinction between the present, past, and future . . . Psa. 90:2; 102:12.” . . . While God sees everything as an eternal now, He nonetheless, in relation to man and creation, sees a succession of events in time.”

2. Immensity:

“ . . . that perfection of the Divine Being by which He transcends all special limitations, and yet is present in every point of space with his whole Being, I Kn. 8:27; Isa. 66:1; Jer. 23:23,24; Acts 7:48,49.

3. Omnipresence:

“ . . . God is everywhere present (this is contrasted with pantheism, which states that God is in everything). God in the totality of His essence, without diffusion or expansion, multiplication or division, penetrates and fills the universe in all its parts . . . Psa. 139:7-12.”

4. Omniscience:

“ . . . God has all knowledge . . . God knows all things actual and possible, past, present, and future, in one eternal act. (Psa. 139:1-6; 147:4; Matt. 6:8; 10:28-30; 11:21; Matt. 24-25; Rev. 6-19)”

5. Omnipotence:

“ . . . God is all-powerful. God is all-powerful and able to do whatever He wills. Since His will is limited by His nature, God can do everything that is in harmony with His perfections . . . His nature and Person. (Gen. 17:1; 28:3; Isa. 13:6; Ezek. 1:24; Joel 1:15; Matt. 19:26; Psa. 139:13-16; Jer. 32:17; Eph. 1:11) God cannot do things that are not in harmony with His nature. He cannot back up on His Word (II Tim. 2:13); He cannot lie (Heb. 6:18); He has no relationship to sin (Hab. 1:13; James 1:13). . . . God’s omnipotence becomes a source of great comfort for the Believer (Gen. 18:14; I Pet. 1:5)”

6. Truth:

“ . . . it is implied that God is all that He as God should be and that His Word and revelation are completely reliable. God is truth in His Person, Isa. 45:5. God is truth in His revelation, Psa. 110:5; I Pet. 1:25; Matt. 5:18. . . . Unlike a mortal, God cannot lie, Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18. . . . Since God is truth it means His Word to mankind is absolutely reliable and can be trusted implicitly. It means than He will never renege on a promise He has made.”

7. Mercy:

*“ . . . the goodness or love of God shown to those who are in misery or distress, irrespective of their deserts. The Hebrew word ‘hesed’ in the O.T. emphasizes ‘help or kindness as the grace of a superior.’ It stresses the **faithfulness** of God despite man’s unfaithfulness (Ruth 1:8; Heb. 4:16; Rom. 9:23; Eph. 2:4; Titus 3:5; I Pet. 1:3; Isa. 55:7)”*

8. Justice:

“ . . . God is entirely correct and just in all His dealings with humanity; moreover, this justice acts in accordance with His law. The justice of God, therefore, is related to man’s sin. Since God’s law reflects God’s standard, then God is righteous and just when He judges man for His violation of God’s revealed law, Isa. 3:10; Rom 2:6; I Pet. 1:17; Gen. 2:17; Deut. 27:26; Gal. 3:10; Rom. 6:23. Since God is just and righteous, the punishment of evildoers is fair because they receive the just penalty due them for their sin.”

“The various perfections of God are not component parts of God. Each describes His total Being. Love, for example, is not a part of God’s nature; God in His total Being is love. While God may display one quality or another at a given time, no quality is independent or preeminent over any of the others. Whenever God displays His wrath, He is still love. When He shows His love, He does not abandon His holiness.” (Ryrie)

II. A Clear Understanding of the “Gospel” Demands a Clear Knowledge of the “_____” of Man → “_____”!

The Biblical record alone gives us accurate information about the origin of mankind!

A. Mankind was Created by a specific “_____” of God, Gen. 1:27; 2:7.

“It did not involve any evolutionary processes that relate man to some sub-, non-, or pre-human brute form. That would mean that as far as the physical nature was concerned, man was derived from some nonhuman animal form into which God breathed the breath of life. Genesis 2:7 does not support this theory at all. Indeed, it reinforces the fact of special creation from materials that were inorganic; it does not lend support to the idea of a derived creation from some previously living form.”

—Charles C. Ryrie

B. Mankind was Created in the “_____” of God, Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1,3.

--**Meaning:**

1. A “_____” being, Acts 17:28-29.

“Refuting the belief that inanimate idols could represent the living God, he argues that since mankind is the offspring of God, and since human beings are living beings, God must also be a living Being.”

—Charles C. Ryrie

--**Key:** This was _____ life!

2. A living being with “_____” and “_____”, Gen. 1:28.

“... giving him the ability to make decisions that enable him to have dominion over the world.”

—Charles C. Ryrie

--**Key:** This was _____ life!

3. A living “_____” with the ability to have _____ with God Himself, Gen. 1:26-26; 3:8.

--**Key:** This was _____ -- _____ life!

--**Key:** This was _____ life!

C. Mankind was Affected by Personal “_____” against God, Gen. 3:1-7.

1. Loss of “_____” life, Gen. 2:17; 3:7,10.

--**Note:** God’s _____ → “_____”, Gen. 3:21.

2. Loss of “_____” life, Gen. Gen. 5:5.

3. Control by “_____”, Gen 4:1-8; Rom. 1:18-32; I Jn. 3:4.