

The Protestant Reformation What It is and Why it Matters

A Study

Part 5- The Re-Discovery of the Exclusivity of Jesus Christ- “Solus Christus”

February 01, 2015

Romans 5:1-11

1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;

4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;

5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.

8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath *of God* through Him.

10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

11 And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

To the Glory of God

Now the key to understanding this fifth part of the Protestant

Reformation lies in grasping the magnitude of verse 1 and the first part of verse 2- so let's read those verses again together:

1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand...

Now here in verse 1- the Apostle Paul is teaching that vile and wicked sinners are "justified" before God. And wrapped up in that term "justified" are two aspects that we need to keep in mind:

1. We are forgiven of all our sins- past, present, and future
2. We are made to be "just" (righteous)

And Paul goes on to teach here in the first verse that we *obtain* this amazing Justification "by faith". And by the tense of the verbs that Paul used here- we see that he meant "by faith *alone* (Sola Fide)". And so as we found over the last several weeks- the glory of the Biblical Gospel- that which makes the "Good News" very "Good", indeed- is that undeserving sinners are forgiven and made righteous, and we are made right with God; we are made fit for Heaven- by faith and by faith alone. So we are justified by *believing* and by *trusting* and *not* by partaking of the Sacraments and *not* by doing religious things and *not* by working hard to try to make ourselves attractive to God in some way.

And now notice what this Justification produces *for* us and *in* us- look at the next part of verse 1:

... we have peace with God ...

And notice that this "Peace" is *not* a peace that you get from there being an absence of a natural war or the absence of danger- because Jesus promised us that we would be persecuted and be at odds with those who are not saved- even those within our own families.

And notice that this is *not* the peace that people have when all is well with them, or from an absence of trouble or suffering- because our Savior- the Man Who bought our sins and purchased our souls- has promised us trouble and suffering in this life.

No, this is a “**peace with God**”- meaning that you are no longer at war against God and the things of God. You are no longer an enemy of God by virtue of your Salvation, and the Wrath of God that was against you because you *were* an enemy and because you were at war against God has passed from you and has been averted.

And this is where the term “*He made his peace with God*” comes from. So this is an *eternal* peace with the Owner and Creator of the Universe while those who refuse to bow and who refuse to bend and who refuse to surrender continue to shake their fist into the face of the Almighty and are storing up Wrath against themselves in the day of Wrath.

But now notice what the Apostle taught was the “catalyst” or the “origination” of this “justification by faith” that brings about this peace- that we call the Gospel. Look again at the last part of verse 1 and the first part of verse 2:

**1 ... through our Lord Jesus Christ,
2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand...**

.. and then notice what verse 6 says:

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

.. and verse 8

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

... and then verses 9-11:

9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath *of God* through Him.

10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

11 And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

So, we see that while it is true that we are saved "By Grace alone" and "through Faith alone"- we see here that this Grace and Faith comes by way of the Lord Jesus Christ alone- in His sinless Life and in His substitutionary Death on the Cross, and was made viable through His bodily Resurrection. And so now we see that the equation for Salvation looks like this. We are saved:

- ✓ By Grace alone
- ✓ Through Faith alone
- ✓ In Jesus Christ and by His Finished Work alone

... and the Latin phrase that was used 500 years ago to illustrate this part of the equation was:

Solus Christus- by Christ alone

Now as we have seen over the last four weeks about all the other facets of the Biblical Gospel- the Protestant Reformation of 500 years ago didn't *create* this Truth- it merely *re-discovered* it. And the "method" or the "means" or the "cause" by which the Biblical Gospel was re-discovered was because God used these weak and frail men- these "Reformers"- these "protestors" to rip the sacred Scriptures out from the place of hiding and obscurity that the ecclesiastical leaders of the visible Church had put them. And for the first time in a long time- anyone who was able to read- could cast his eyes on inspired, inerrant, infallible, and eternal Words that were breathed out by God Himself as He moved upon 40 writers over a 1400 year time frame.

And once the common man *possessed* the Word of God- once the average farmer and miller and tailor and soldier and housewife could read and understand and comprehend Divine Truth- every man-made doctrine, every false teaching, every heresy, every abuse, and excess that had been perpetrated on the masses by "popish persons"¹ was exposed, and they were weighed in the balances and found wanting. And once the people begin to see what Biblical Christianity really was- what the Gospel really was- what the Truth of God's Word really was-

¹ The term used by the editors of The King James Version of the Holy Bible in the preamble written to King James in 1611. "So that, if on the one side we shall be traduced by Popish persons at home or abroad, who therefore will maligne us, because we are poore Instruments to make GODS holy Trueth to be yet more and more knowen unto the people, whom they desire still to keepe in ignorance and darknesse..."

their eyes were opened and the Light of God entered in where the Darkness of tyranny and apostate religion had enslaved them, and this Light engulfed a continent and literally traveled around the globe and changed the course of History.

So when you hear me use the term "Distinctives" don't think about "*niche branding*". Don't think "*exclusives*." I don't even like the word "Distinctives" because it seems to say that we are trying to be unique or different so that we can somehow stand out among all the other churches and that is the *furthest* thing from my mind.

I have no desire to be doctrinally different from others simply for the sake of being different. My mindset is exactly the opposite. I am very suspicious of being different from the historic, orthodox teachings of the historic Church. The last thing I want is to preach is new doctrines that are exclusive to us. My effort is simply to adhere to the Biblical Commandment given by the Holy Spirit through the pen of Jude when he wrote in **Jude 3**:

... I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

So that is my hope and prayer: to be faithful and relentless to contend earnestly for the "Once for all handed down to the saints- Faith". Not create new doctrines, not chase after new revelations, not ride new waves, not seek after new things- but to seek after the *first* thing, the *original* thing, the *first and the last* thing- the Christian Faith- historic, orthodox, Biblical, Christianity.

And that is harder than it sounds because there is compromise on every side that if you are not diligent and focused and single minded- you will become part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

You see, I really believe that we are living in a time of a great falling away; Spurgeon called it "The Downgrade Controversy" where the frightening prophecy of the Apostle Paul would come to pass when he wrote in **2Timothy 4:3&4** that the people of the Church would get to such a terrible condition that:

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,

4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

And Paul then gave the answer, the solution to this problem in the very next verse. So when we see the visible Church get like it says here in verses 3&4- we are to do what it says in verse 5:

2Timothy 4:5

But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

And we are to do this by following the Divinely inspired Prescription that the Apostle gave in verses 1&2:

2Timothy 4:1&2

1 I solemnly charge *you* in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom:

2 preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

So when I talk about "Distinctives", I mean those Biblical Truths that are defining and shaping and precious. So while I absolutely *do* seek to believe and teach things that separate and set us apart from the "compromising and lukewarm visible church" that cannot endure sound doctrine- I do *not* seek to believe or teach things that separate or set us apart from Jesus Christ or the Words of Jesus Christ or the Words that were inspired by the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

And this is real hard work. And so to those who would counsel us to "*slow down*" and "*take it easy*" and "*loosen up*" and "*lighten up*", I would respond by Holy Scripture from **Ephesians 5:14-21:**

14 Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you."

15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise,

16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil.

17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,

19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;

21 and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

So we are always testing our interpretations of the Bible by looking back into Church History. And if we can't find our interpretations there- we would be very slow to preach them in this pulpit. Cults and sects are born in the minds of leaders who crave to simply stand out- to be different. Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, the Unification Church, Christian Science (which is neither "Christian" nor science"). All these false and destructive religions were born in the minds of false teachers- who wanted "new revelations" and "fresh interpretations and insights" and to "think outside the box". They were restless and discontent with the limitations that the Holy Bible and its historic understandings placed on them, and so they rebelled and invented their own. Paul said that these people:

... will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

And so what we see happening today as the visible Church is caught up in great compromise and celebrating sin and seemingly has no idea how to combat false teaching- this has all happened before and it will *a/ways* happen when two things are missing from the Church:

- A. Strong Biblical Preaching and Teaching
- B. An honest examination of beliefs in light of Scripture

As God has been Good to bring us this far- we must take heed to ourselves and always be willing to start or stop anything that we become convinced is contrary to the Holy Scriptures and does not bring Honor and Glory to the Lord Jesus Christ.

500 years ago- the visible Church was awash in great sin and great compromise and false and man-made doctrines. The Holy Scriptures were not taught and were actually hidden and kept away from the masses.

I find it so strange on this day that so many in the modern Church will actually cancel their regular evening service tonight so that lukewarm and unsaved men can watch the Super Bowl. And then to

add insult to injury they will call this time “fellowship” to try to sanctify it. Let me say that this is *not* an example of our great spiritual progress- it is a sign that the modern Church needs another Reformation.

I just wonder what all those who suffered and who were tortured and who gave their lives so that we could have a Bible in English would say as they behold Church after Church canceling Bible Studies to hold pottery classes; cancelling Prayer Meetings to offer motorcycle riding clubs, and telling Jesus to go sit in the corner as they turn off the lights of the Church to worship the god of sports.

Now there is a lot of healthy and warranted warning these days about “historical hero worship”. Warnings about inordinate and uncritical admiration and imitation of historical teachers like Augustine, Calvin, Luther, the Puritans, Edwards, Wesley, Spurgeon, Barth, Chesterton, Martyn Lloyd Jones, etc. But we should be careful not to overdo this criticism. People with great historical heroes tend not to think of themselves as heroes. They're too busy learning from them. Which means that, for all its dangers, admiring a great line of historical heroes will at least keep you from starting your own cult.

My instincts are much more in that direction. Our twelve-year theological “trademarks” are not new, they're not distinctive to us, they are not a niche, they are not exclusives, and they are not eccentric. They all have wide and deep foundations in the Holy Bible and deep roots in the history of God's people. And if any of them ever deserved to be guarded from the distortion of novelty- it is today's trademark, namely the Gospel of Jesus Christ. So if we are to pray for and enjoy another Reformation in our day- it will be a re-discovery of the Biblical Gospel

Now John Calvin was born in France on July 10, 1509. And just as he passed his third birthday- his mother died. At 24 years of age- Calvin was saved after God used the concepts of the Reformation that was seeping France at that time and the details of the Book of Romans to bring conviction into his heart. Before he passed his first year of Salvation- at 25 years of age- John Calvin wrote the first manuscript of his life's work, “The Institutes of the Christian Religion”. Now as you take this all in- think back to when you were 25 years old and think about what you were doing and what you were writing.

So after repeated begging from both his family and friends- Calvin, very reluctantly, entered the Ministry. At 27 years of age- he

became the "Pastor in Charge" of St. Peter's Cathedral in Geneva, Switzerland, because everyone who knew him and heard him said that nobody preached the way Calvin preached.

But John Calvin lived in a time when age mattered and so he was repeatedly maligned and ignored because of his youth. And he lived in a culture where being "home grown" mattered, and so he was maligned and ignored because they said he wasn't from Geneva and for years- the city records of Geneva didn't even list Calvin by name- but called him, "that Frenchman".

He had twice refused to be the Pastor of the Cathedral in Geneva and yet the people begged for him, and so he reluctantly agreed to come and yet when he got there- his preaching so infuriated them that they refused to pay him anything or supply him with place to live or even provide him with any food for his first 8 months.

Early on in his ministry- Calvin got a toothache that eventually went into his jaw and infected his mouth so severely that speaking for long periods of time plagued him until his death. Think about this- the man who spoke more than anybody around him- hurt all the time he was speaking.

In the Cathedral- Calvin was preaching through the Psalms and after two years of continual strife and conflict with the Church- Calvin was voted out. Then, in 1537- the city council of Geneva also voted to expel him from the city and so he was banished to Strasbourg. After his ouster- Calvin got married and when his first child- his only child was born- he died as an infant. Calvin's wife was debilitated by repeated illnesses and spent the majority of her married life in bed- unable to even cook or clean. So think about this- for almost the entire time of his ten year marriage- after he had exhausted himself in studying and teaching- Calvin came home and waited on his wife and bathed her and cooked for her. And just before their tenth anniversary- Calvin's wife died.

After Calvin had been gone for three years- Geneva became overrun with Roman Catholic teaching and no one was there who could withstand the doctrines of Rome- *biblically*- and so the city elders begged Calvin to return, and He was re-instated in the very same position in the very same Church with the very same people who had cast him out three years earlier. And as he entered the same pulpit on the first Sunday morning after he came back- Calvin opened the Bible

to the very same Psalm that he left three years ago- and he began preaching from the very next verse.

When Calvin turned 50- he suffered horribly from gout and intestinal worms, and in the winter of his 50th year of life- John Calvin contracted tuberculosis.

And during the last few months of Calvin's Ministry- he was literally in so much pain- that he had to be carried into the pulpit to preach and then carried home afterward. And Calvin spent the last few weeks of his life bedridden- in horrendous pain and he died at home at the age of 55.

Now the reason why I gave you this particular information is because when the testimony of John Calvin is usually given- you hear about his great studies and his great gift of being able to render the Scriptures in a manner that made them clear. You mostly hear about Calvin's immense grasp of deep and profound theological issues and you hear about how he compiled his teachings in his grand Work- *"The Institutes of the Christian Religion"*- which should be required reading for everyone who names the great Name of Jesus.

Most of the time that the great Reformer John Calvin's life is studied- you will learn about his lengthy discussions about a single word in a single verse of a single paragraph, and you will learn about his participation in the capital punishment of the heretic, Servetus, and you will hear that John Calvin was perhaps one of the greatest Christian thinkers and preachers that this world has ever known.

But you usually don't hear about his great suffering or his deep sorrow or the repeated injustices that was thrown at him. You usually don't hear of the many persecutions both from within and without the Church.

Now I believe with all my heart that John Calvin would faint- he would be furious and absolutely mortified to learn that the system of theology that best details what the Holy Bible actually says about the Grace of God in saving unworthy sinners has been named after him- because he fought so hard his entire life against the very thing that the label "Calvinism" puts forth- a crime that we- as the modern heirs of the Reformation should fix.

John Calvin is both praised and vilified to this day for his teaching about Predestination. And while many people want to pretend that Predestination is a myth that Calvin *invented*- the truth is that John

Calvin never uttered a word about Predestination that Martin Luther had not said before him. But we need to know that Luther never uttered a single word about Predestination that Augustine had not said before him over a thousand years earlier, and on a completely different continent. And yet we need to understand that Aurelius Augustinus never spoke a word about Predestination that the Apostle Paul had not written at least 350 years before him in sacred and inspired Scripture.

But we can't even stop there because Paul didn't create Predestination either- but the Apostle *received* what he wrote about this powerful and Biblical issue from direct Divine Revelation from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. And yet Jesus Himself simply repeated the very same logic and the very same Truth about Predestination that God gave to Moses 1500 years before God took on human flesh and became Man.

So while many today want to simply *ignore* Predestination- it *is* a Biblical Word. It is *in* the Bible. The Holy Scriptures teach it repeatedly and clearly in almost every single Book. And so if you're going to even attempt to be honest about being Biblical- you have to deal with the issue that God, and not Man, has "free will", and that God, and not Man, is the decisive Force in everything- including Salvation, and that God's Choice- not Man's choice, is the ultimate end as to why some are saved and others are not.

I find it absolutely breathtaking how that so many people today who hang their hat on uplifting the Bible as being the Word of God as they decry the Roman religious system for not honoring and adhering to what the Bible actually says and promoting man-made doctrines- and then these very same people turn right around and teach and promote aspects of Church life and Salvation and even Christianity itself that are also not in the Bible and have never been in the Bible, and which are wholly and entirely the fabrication of Man. And we need to say that there isn't a dime's worth of difference between Rome doing this and anybody else doing it.

And when you point out the fact that some of the most widely believed and cherished teachings in the modern Church are completely unbiblical- most of these so-called "protestants" will cling to their man-made doctrines just as fervently as the Romans cling to theirs. So we are in great need of a new and fresh Reformation in our day.

Now, even though many of us marvel at how God used John Calvin to hammer out many of the Reformed tenets that we hold to today- and while many of us greatly admire and respect him- I don't believe that very many of us would "sign up" for the life of hardship and suffering that God gave to John Calvin.

We know that the men whom God used to bring about the Reformation were men who could laugh deeply and run hard after God and enjoy life to the fullest. But I think it is also very important to know that these men were men of great sorrow who went through great injustices, and tasted of great agonies and great persecutions, and so as you hear their laughter- I beg you to also hear their weeping.

So, as you study John Calvin's life and you rightly come to the conclusion that God indeed greatly used this man- and now that you know a little about his own personal heartache and tragedy- you have to ask yourself, *"Why would he go through all that? Why would he be willing to endure all that unjust treatment and physical and emotional turmoil? What motivated John Calvin to go on through it? What propelled him to endure? What gave him the will to carry on?"*

I mean, why didn't Calvin just give up? Why didn't he quit? He didn't ever ask or want to be the "Pastor in Charge" of the Cathedral in Geneva. The people begged him to take the position. And after he reluctantly took the position- the very people- who begged him to lead them- tried to starve him out, and eventually they were successful in firing him. So, what was it that sustained John Calvin as his wife and child died and he was left alone in great pain amidst great persecution and turmoil? One Reason; One Name- Jesus Christ.

You see, John Calvin really believed in what he was preaching, and he knew in Whom he had believed, and John Calvin believed and taught what was became a hallmark doctrine with him called "Union with Christ".

The Doctrine of "Union with Christ" has to do with the Work of Christ in our Salvation. And it goes on to say that as we are "united" with Jesus Christ through Salvation- we then become "joint heirs" with Jesus Christ into our inheritance in Heaven. So Calvin taught that Salvation was the result of two things that are similar but not the same:

1. The Work of Jesus Christ- in living a sinless life and dying a *vicarious* (substitutionary) death on the Cross and rising from the dead and ascending into Heaven itself
2. The Person of Jesus Christ- in Who He is as Lord and Master and Savior and God incarnate.

... and he took his doctrine from **Hebrews 4:15&16** that says:

15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin.

16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

So we have to understand that as the visible Church hid and obscured the Scriptures by all of the ecclesiastical rules and regulations that they developed- they had also hid Jesus Christ from the people as well. And Jesus Himself was no more well-known to the people of the Church in the early 1500's than was the Scriptures. And that distance from Jesus is always the result of being distant from the Scriptures- because as we discovered last week- we "see" the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ through our ears as we hear the Word of God preached and taught in an ongoing, consistent, day in and day out, systematic, line upon line and precept upon precept manner. The further away from Scripture you get in your beliefs and practices- the further away from Jesus you already are.

And so one of the hallmarks of the Protestant Reformation was that these men not only took us back to Scripture- but they took us back to Jesus Christ as well. And the Latin phrase that signified that sweet and precious union- not simply with the Church- but with the Person of Jesus Christ was "Solus Christus", by Christ alone.

So during the 300 years since Thomas Aquinas had muddied the waters of the Church and had brought in great confusion- the practice of beseeching dead saints became very common and widespread. And this unbiblical practice was made official in the visible Church by a man-made doctrine called "The Treasury of Heaven", or the "Treasury of Merit", which was like a heavenly bank account that had stored up the "excess merit" of those believers who had already died. And you

need to know that the leaders of the visible Church at that time just made up this doctrine of the "Treasury of Heaven" because there is absolutely no Biblical Truth to warrant it.

And so the Church taught that if you wanted these dead saints to help you- you had to offer prayers to them and beseech them to come to your aid.

And the logic was that since God was busy creating and governing, and since Jesus was also busy forgiving and helping- you could go to a lesser saint who had died and who had already made it through Purgatory and was in heaven, and you could pray to him or her and they would go over to Jesus and intercede or mediate on your behalf, and then Jesus would go to the Father.

Now since you never knew which saint had made it out of Purgatory- the visible Church at that time provide you with a list of saints that you could pray to for various reasons and causes. For example- you prayed to:

St. Adelard	Gardeners
St. Benedict	Homeless
St. Cecillia	Muscians
St. Dismus	Prisoners
St. Eligius	Jewelers
St. Francis	Animals
St. Giles	Beggars
St. Hubert	Dogs/Hunters
St. Ignatius	Soldiers
St. Jerome	Librarians
St. Kevin	Blackbirds
St. Lawrence	Cooks
St. Margaret	Pregnant Women
St. Nicholas	Bakers
St. Odelia	Blind
St. Paul	Snake Bite Victims
St. Roch	Knee Problems
St. Thomas	Architects
St. Vitus	Comedians
St. Wolfgang	Stomach Troubles
St. Yves	Lawyers

So just a few decades after Martin Luther had sought for the patron saint of the miners to come to his rescue during that thunderstorm as he cried, "*Help me, Saint Anne*"- because of the re-discovery of the Scriptures and the Biblical Gospel- the people of God no longer cried out for the dead saints to intercede on their behalf. They now understood that "Christ alone" would "mediate" or intercede between them and God because they had found that the Scriptures declared in **1Timothy 2:5&6:**

5 For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus,

6 who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony *given* at the proper time.

So as they began to deeply study the newly uncovered Scriptures- the Reformers began to teach two things about Jesus Christ. They taught that Jesus was both:

- A. The *Price* of the Gospel
- B. The *Prize* of the Gospel

So "Solus Christus" was that *Jesus's finished Work* was the "Price of the Gospel" in that Jesus accomplished all three parts that were needed for the Gospel to exist:

1. His Sinless Life produced perfect Righteousness and fulfilled the Law.
2. His vicarious (substitutionary) Death on the Cross satisfied God's Justice against our sin.
3. His bodily Resurrection proved that God was pleased.

But "Solus Christus" also meant that Jesus Himself *Personally* was also "The *Prize* of the Gospel" because the Prize is the Person Who paid the price- which is *God in Christ*. In other words, the Gospel is the

² From the "*List of Patron Saints*", Roman Catholic Catechism; 1998

"Good News" that Jesus Christ paid the "price" of suffering God's Wrath for our sins so that we could have the "prize" of knowing and loving and enjoying God forever- through Him. So *God paid the Price of His Own Son to give us the Prize of Himself in His Son.*

And to unfold the meaning of this and to show just how truly Biblical it is- I think it will be helpful to take a snapshot of this Truth from two different places:

1. From **Romans 5**
2. From **1Corinthians 15**

.. so look again at **Romans 5** and keep in mind that the word "Gospel" means: *Good News*. And in this case it is God's "Good News" for the whole world. So what is the "Price" and the "Prize" of that Good News according to **Romans 5**? Here's the Price from **Romans 5:6–8**:

6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.

8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

So the "Price of the Gospel" is the Death of Jesus Christ. Verse 6: **"Christ died for the ungodly."** Verse 8: **"Christ died for us."** So God loved us while we were sinners and paid a "Price" so that we might have an infinite "Prize". And that "Price" was the Death of His Son. But what was the "Prize" that Jesus bought for us when He paid that "Price"? Look at verses 9-11:

Romans 5:9-11

9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath *of God* through Him.

10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

11 And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

So what did God purchase for us by the Price of his Son? Verse 9: **“We have now been justified by His Blood.”** And more. Verse 9b: Because of that Justification **“we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.”** So what do we need to be “saved” or “rescued” *from*? The Wrath of God. **“Much more... we shall be saved from the Wrath of God through Him”** (verse 9). And that is unspeakably glorious. But now we must ask, “Is our rescue from God’s Wrath the highest, best, fullest, and most satisfying “Prize” of the Gospel”? And the answer is, “No”.

Notice that verse 11 begins with something that is even better than being saved from God’s Wrath when it begins with the words, **“And not only this...”**. So verse 10 ends: **“We shall be saved by his (Jesus Christ’s) life.”** And then verse 11 takes it up another notch by saying:

And not only this, but we also exult in God...

So *that* is the final and highest and best “Good” of the Good News- exulting in God! Enjoying God! Delighting in God! Treasuring God! Finding the fullness of Joy and the fullest degree of satisfaction in God! So we see that the Prize of the Gospel- is God Himself! And then notice that Paul finishes his argument by repeating how we obtained that great Prize:

through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

So the end of the Gospel is **“we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”** So the highest, fullest, deepest, sweetest “Good” of the Gospel is God Himself through Jesus Christ- utterly enjoyed by His redeemed people.

And finally- the second snapshot of this comes from **1Corinthians 15**. And what I see here is that the Gospel has six elements, or six aspects- five of which are *explicit* in the text and one of which is *implicit*. Look at verses 1–4:

1 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand,
2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

Now in this Passage- we see six elements of the Gospel. In other words- if any of these six was missing- there would be no Gospel.

1. **The Gospel is a Pre-determined *Divine Plan*.** Verse 3b: “**Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.**” In accordance with the Scriptures written hundreds of years *before* He died. Which means that the Gospel was pre-determined by God long before it actually took place.
2. **The Gospel is a Literal *Historical Event*.** Verse 3b: “**Christ died...**” So the Gospel is not mythology. It is not merely ideas or feelings. It is an actual event. And without that actual literal historical event- there is no Gospel.
3. **The Gospel is the *Divine Achievements* through that Event.** And these are things that God accomplished in the Death of Jesus- long before we ever existed. Verse 3b: “**Christ died for our sins.**” And the phrase “**for our sins**” means that this Death had design and thought and purpose in it. It was not a random death brought about by evil men. No, this death was meant to accomplish something. And it accomplished three things:

- ✓ The covering of our sins (**Colossians 2:14**)
- ✓ The removal of God’s Wrath (**Romans 8:3; Galatians 3:13**)
- ✓ The purchase of eternal life (**John 3:16**)

... these are objective Achievements of the Work of Jesus Christ *before* they are actually applied to anyone.

4. **The Gospel is a *free offer of Christ for faith*.** Verses 1-2: “**... the gospel I preached to you, which you *received*, in which you stand, 2 and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you *believed in vain*.**” The “Good News” of God’s Achievements in Jesus Christ become ours “by faith”- by believing and trusting in them- not by us giving a performance or by deserving or by working. So what God has done in Jesus Christ- is

entirely free to all who will have it. And it is received and made real to that individual- by faith. And without the free offer of Christ for faith- there would be no Gospel.

5. **The Gospel is an *application to believers* of what God achieved in the Death of Jesus.** So when we believe we are forgiven for our sins (**The Acts 10:43**), we are justified (**Romans 5:1**), we receive eternal life (**John 3:16**), and dozens of other benefits. So the Gospel is the powerful personal application to us of what God achieved for us in Jesus Christ in His Life and on the Cross and raised up.
6. **The Gospel is the *enjoyment of fellowship with God Himself*.** And this is implicit in the word "Gospel," or "Good News".

So if you ask: *"What is the highest and best and deepest and most satisfying and most complete "Good" of the Good News?"* The answer is: *"God Himself- known and loved and enjoyed by His redeemed people through the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ."*

In summary then, "God in Christ is both the Price and the Prize of the Gospel." The Prize of the Gospel is the Person Who paid the Price. So the Gospel-love that God gives- is ultimately- the Gift of Himself! This is what we were made for. This is what we lost in the Fall, and this is what we miss in our sin. And this is what Christ came to restore.

Psalm 16:11

In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore

So I offer this to you on behalf of Christ alone. And all it takes is for God to open your eyes to see the Beauty of Jesus Christ alone and trust in Him as your Treasure and your Lord and your Savior. And this is what it means to "believe the Gospel". And to give you one final enticement- I will read the most beautiful description I have ever read of what I mean by "Solus Christus", and that the Love of God toward us is best expressed by the Gift of Himself through Jesus Christ alone. And it comes from Jonathan Edwards in 1731 when he was just 28 years old:

"The redeemed have all their objective "Good" in God. God Himself is the great "Good" which they are brought to the possession and enjoyment of by

Redemption. He is the highest “Good”, and the sum of all that “Good” which Christ purchased. God is the Inheritance of the saints; He is the portion of their souls. God is their Wealth and Treasure, their Food, their Life, their Dwelling Place, their Ornament and Diadem, and their everlasting Honor and Glory. They have none in heaven but God; He is the great “Good” which the redeemed are received to at death, and which they are to rise to at the end of the world. The Lord God, He is the Light of the heavenly Jerusalem; and is the ‘River of the Water of Life’ that runs, and the Tree of Life that grows, ‘in the midst of the Paradise of God’. The glorious Excellencies and Beauty of God will be what will forever entertain the minds of the saints, and the Love of God will be their everlasting Feast. The redeemed will indeed enjoy other things; they will enjoy the angels, and will enjoy one another: but that which they shall enjoy in the angels, or each other, or in anything else whatsoever, that will yield them Delight and Happiness, will be what will be seen of God in them.”³

Amen. Let's pray

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.

³ Jonathan Edwards, “God Glorified in the Work of Redemption, by the Greatness of Man’s Dependence upon Him, in the Whole of It (1731)” [sermon on 1 Corinthians 1:29-31] in: Wilson H. Kimnach, Kenneth P. Minkema, and Douglas A. Sweeney, ed., *The Sermons of Jonathan Edwards: A Reader* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 74–75.