

## FORMATION AND FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH

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Gracious and merciful God, we come to you as our King, because you are the only one who can pardon our sin. We come to you as our Father, because you are the one who provides our daily materialistic needs. We come to you as the Son who redeemed us, and the Holy Spirit who protects us from the evil one. We trust, Lord, that what you have ordained for us on this day will come to pass, that your name will be hallowed, your Kingdom will come, and that your will will be done. We pray this for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Continuing our study of Formation and Function of the Church, the word “church” is the word assembly or ecclesia, gathering. We've been looking at that historically from the biblical text of what that means. We're on lesson 4 on your notes, and that basically is how does one enter into body.

We've talked about how the development of the body was created. We saw that in Ephesians 1. The body was created. The formation of the church, the method God used to form the church body, the gathering, was the doctrine of election. The object of God's election was us, those who are in Christ Jesus. The time of the formation of body, as we've seen, was before the foundation of the world. The purpose of the formation of the body was to be holy and blameless before him; in other words, so that we would be in a position to have fellowship with him.

The motive of the formation of the body was in love. That was the reason God formed the body was because of his love for us in Christ. The result of the formation of the body was that we were adopted as sons. And finally, the goal of the formation of the body was to the praise of the glory of his grace. You'll find that all on lesson 3.

As we move into lesson 4, both Don and I have been talking about chapter 2 of the book of Ephesians, verses 1-10, about how does one enter into the body. Don, last week, did a wonderful job of helping you understand the difference between what you were and what you are now in Christ. That's a critical, critical thought pattern for us, brothers. The real battleground for us, really, is who do you believe? Do you believe what the world says about you? Or do you believe what God says about you and what Don taught us last week from the book of Ephesians, verses 4-7? Who is that God says you are and who do you believe?

If you believe what the world says you are, then you're going to move in that direction. But if you have the courage and the faith and the stamina to believe who God says you are, which is radically different than what the world says, then you'll move in that direction. Remember there are only two kinds of people in the world—those who operate according to their nature, their redeemed nature or their sinful nature. There are only two kinds of people. You never see in the Scripture God spiritually defining people by race, nationality, ethnic background, sex or education.

If you'll go to Romans 8, turn there with me, verses 5-12, “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh,” that's one group of people, “but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit,” that's the second group of people. There are only two kinds of people in the world. You're either thinking about the things of the flesh, or you're thinking about the things of the spirit.

Verses 6-7, “<sup>6</sup>For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup>For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.” The reason it cannot is because they're operating out of their nature. Their nature is that they

have their minds set on things of the flesh. Verse 8, “Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” That’s a powerful statement, “Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

Now we may do things that culturally will say, “Well that’s a good deed.” But remember good is defined by God, so the best that a person whose mind is on the flesh can do is a good bad deed. They can’t do a good good deed because we already see here that they can’t do anything to please God. So if they build a hospital wing, it’s a good thing in the eyes of the world, but to God it’s an offense because it’s not done by faith. It’s not done for his glory and it doesn’t have the right motive.

So we see right away that there can only be two kinds of people—those whose mind is set on the flesh, and those whose mind is set on the spirit. Verse 9, “You, however…” Notice the contrast. “You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the spirit if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.” The word “dwell” there is the Greek word that literally means to abide. It means to take up your residency and feel at home with. In other words, the Holy Spirit has taken up his residency within you. 2 Corinthians 4:7 would be companion verse, “We have this treasure in earthen vessels to show that the all surpassing power comes from God and not from us.”

You see, God has taken the most precious commodity in the universe, the life of his own son, and he shares his life with us. If you want a good definition of a believer, it is a shared life experience. Christianity is a shared life experience. God shares his life with us.

<sup>9</sup>You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup>But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.” (Romans 8:9-12) Notice the number of times it says “dwells in you.” The Holy Spirit has taken up his residency within you because of God’s saving grace, and that is how one enters into the church. That is how one is brought into the ecclesia. That is how one is brought into the gathering, the assembly of God’s chosen people.

You see, there are only two kinds of people in the world—those who are walking in this direction, whose mind is on the flesh, interrupted by occasional acts of social goodness, versus those whose mind is in the spirit, and they’re pursuing holiness interrupted by occasional sin. There are only two kinds of people in the world.

Now we need to understand that it is through the process of our salvation that we are brought into the ecclesia, we are brought into the gathering, we are brought into the body of Christ. If you go to lesson 4, we’ve touched on this before, but just a quick review. We are saved from our sin. Notice verse 4. Let’s go to Ephesians 2:1-5, “<sup>1</sup>And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup>in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—<sup>3</sup>among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. <sup>4</sup>But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup>even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.”

Now notice we are saved from our sin. We’ve talked about this. Just let me give you another way of looking at the condition of an unsaved person, a person who is operating out of their natural nature, which is the nature that has its mind on the flesh. There’s a good correlation between Romans 8:5-11 and what we just read in Ephesians 2:1-4, because there are only two kinds of people in the world—those whose mind is on the flesh and those whose mind is on the spirit.

Let me ask you a question before I get into Ephesians. What's your default setting for your mind? You know what the default settings are on a computer. It's a set that everything just works basically. What's your default setting in your mind? Here's another way of looking at it. What do you think about when you're not thinking about anything? What do you think about when you're not thinking about anything? Where does your mind go? Paul tells us your mind is going to in one of two directions. It's going to go in the flesh, and you're going to pursue the things of the flesh. Or it's going to go toward the spirit, and you'll pursue after the things of the spirit. Where does your mind go when you're not thinking about anything?

I'll tell you what, that has been very, very convicting to me because I see the number of times that the system of this world kind of forces us to go that way. That doesn't mean that we're going to be perfectly spirit-minded people all the time. I'm not saying that. That would be the sinless perfection which you and I do not have. That's a struggle. Paul talks about it in Romans 6 and 7. He talks about the battle of the mind. But the real battleground, which was so important from what Don taught us last week, was this. Who do you believe? Do you really believe that "but God" made us alive in Christ, or do you really go along with what the world says that you're enough is not enough?

You've heard me say this numerous times. The only thing that a resume reveals is what you've not accomplished. It's all it does. It never reveals what you have accomplished; it reveals what you haven't. The world will always say your enough is never enough. You don't have enough experience, you don't have the right education, you don't have the right background, you don't have the right skill set. You don't have.

What Don taught us last week is you do have. Who do you believe? The real battleground for us, guys, is you and I are going to act out how we think. Remember thoughts become our words. What you think about you're going to talk about. Jesus says in Matthew 12:34, "Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks." Why do you say the things you say? Why do you respond to somebody when they irritate you the way you do? What phrases do you use? When your wife irritates you, what do you say? What's your motive behind the thought?

You see, that's all part of Paul is teaching us about the mind that is set on the flesh is going to move in that direction. Your battleground is the mind. You and I really have to fight that. How you and I think, what we think about is what we're going to talk about. If you want to know somebody's spiritual maturity level, listen to the words and the conversations they have and what they talk about, because that's the basis of a reflection of the overflow of the their heart. You're going to find out a person's spiritual level by listening to their conversation.

That means we have to ask ourselves and be honest, brothers, we've got to ask ourselves, where does your mind go when you're not thinking about anything? Where does it go? Our thoughts become our words, our words become our actions. What you think about, you're going to talk about. What you talk about, you're going to act out. And those actions become your habits, and those habits become your character, and your character reveals your destiny. It all starts right here.

Paul says, "Do not be conformed to the system of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." The battleground is in our mind. That's why it's so important that you understand what Don and I teaching you about Ephesians 2, to help you understand where am I, and if I'm over here and being led by the spirit, do I really believe that and am I acting that way and am I thinking that way? One of the ways which will help us think that way is to continue to have our mind in the Scripture, to be fed. That's why it's so important that we are here on Fridays, so that we can give each other the mindset that we need to know how to think in a right situation, so that we will act in a right situation.

**Brian:** *I was going to say to go along where you say we have to be warrior like...*

Correct.

**Brian:** *2 Corinthians 10:4-5 really go into that, where we have to take our thoughts captive.*

Please read it.

**Brian:** *“<sup>4</sup>The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. <sup>5</sup>We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5 NIV 1984) So when our minds go down a path that sometimes they go, we have to take them captive, I mean they have to be and act of [UNCLEAR] for us to do what you’re talking about.*

Absolutely. Let me go to Philippians. I asked you the question what’s your default setting? How about let me offer you this for your consideration. Philippians 4:8, I would offer you this for consideration, to ask the Lord to have this be our default setting, “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” That’s exactly what Brian is suggesting. We have to take battle of that, take responsibility for how we think.

Now God gives us the grace...remember, God never requires of us something that he doesn’t equip us to do beforehand. Notice the contrast in Romans 8, “If the spirit of God dwells in you,” then you think this way. Now therefore, he equips us to think correctly. How does he do that? He does that by bringing us into the body of Christ, into the gathering, into the assembly, by our salvation. It is our salvation that changes the way that you and I think. That’s what grace does. That’s why it’s so important that we understand what we used to be and what we now are.

Let me give you another summary of what we used to be. If you’re in Christ today, and God has granted you saving faith through the person and work of Christ, then let me tell you what you were, once. Ephesians 2:1, you were dead. Now we’re talking spiritually. We’re not talking physically. We know you’re alive physically. We’re talking about can you respond to anything spiritually? The answer is no. Can a dead person to respond to anything spiritually? No. If dead means dead, it means you can do as much as you want, but the person has no responsibility. They have no ability to respond. So first of all, prior to becoming in Christ, you were dead. (Ephesians 2:1)

You’re also blind. (2 Corinthians 4:4-6) You were blind to spiritual truth. You can’t grasp them. You can’t understand them. You can’t even see them. You have no intention of even desiring them.

And then in Luke 15, the whole chapter talks about being lost. Prior to coming to Christ, friends, you were dead, you were blind, you were lost, and one more thing. John 3:18, you’re condemned. You’re condemned. That’s the condition of a person whose mind is in the direction of the flesh and who walks that way. They have no ability to respond to anything spiritually because they’re dead, they’re lost, they’re blind and they’re condemned.

In John 3:18, we need to realize what that condemned means. You and I are not criminals on trial waiting a trial. We are the convicted waiting execution. There’s a difference. We are not a criminal waiting trial; we are the convicted waiting execution, and God in his grace, through his mercy toward us, saves us according to his own purpose of his own will. We need to understand what we were.

Let me give the other side. Here’s what God’s solution to our condition is. Our condition is that we’re

dead, blind, lost and condemned. Here's his solution for those who are in Christ, where the spirit dwells. First of all, he loved us from eternity. Now grasp that, guys. Remember what you were. You were dead, you were lost, you were blind, you were condemned, and his solution to that condition that you and I had spiritually, is this, "Bruce, I loved you from eternity." You'll find that in Jeremiah 31:3, "I loved you from eternity." Guys, if that doesn't melt the hardness of your heart, I don't know what else will.

Then he sent Christ—Romans 5:8—which we just read. He sent Christ to be the one to save us by his grace. And then we notice, I want you to see this, that the spirit pursues us. Why is it the Holy Spirit pursues us? It's because God has loved you individually from eternity, and therefore, the Holy Spirit does his job description, which is to guide us into all truth. That's means the Holy Spirit's going to pursue you. He's the heavenly hound, if you want. He pursues us.

Let me show you some verses. Go to John 16. Notice, talking about the Holy Spirit, the paraclete, the one who will come, the work of the Holy Spirit. John 16:8-11, "<sup>8</sup> And when he comes (the Holy Spirit), he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment." The very first thing the Holy Spirit does in pursuing you is to convict you, convict you of the fact that you were dead, lost, blind and condemned. You develop a sense of conviction of my spiritual condition.

<sup>8</sup>And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: <sup>9</sup>concerning sin, because they do not believe in me." The word "believe" there means to depend upon, adhere to, rely upon and trust in. It doesn't mean give mental assent about some facts. It means you're depending upon the person and work of Christ, and he says you can't do that, because you're dead, you're lost, you're condemned, and you're blind. <sup>9</sup>Concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; <sup>10</sup>concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; <sup>11</sup>concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged." That's the way the Holy Spirit pursues us, through the proclamation of the Gospel.

Here's how it works. The Holy Spirit convicts us, then he convinces us of our sin. You never convince unless you're convicted. You'll see here in John 16 that he convicts us and then he convinces us of our sin, and then he converts us from our old way of life, and then he comforts us in the new way of life. The Holy Spirit works in you. That's his pursuit of you. It all starts with this guys, "I loved you from eternity." "I loved you from eternity." We've seen that in chapter one of Ephesians. When did you become a believer? Before the foundation of the world; when God was pleased, out of his own love for you from eternity, to ordain the fact that you would come to saving faith, through his grace.

The mind that is set on the flesh will have no absolute ability to understand what I just said. It's going to be absolutely mind boggling and confusing. And to even those of us who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, it's still confusing. But that's okay. You believe it. You see, we base our life not upon the fact of what we agree with, not what we understand; we base it upon the fact that God has said that, because God cannot lie. We base it upon the true nature, character and attributes of God himself.

How about another verse? Look at John 6:44-45, "<sup>44</sup>No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. <sup>45</sup>It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me." The keyword there is that little verb "can." "No one *can* come." The word "can" has to do with ability. The word "may" has to do with permission. Notice it doesn't say no *may* come to me. No one *can* come to me.

I gave the illustration a couple of weeks ago, when you're in first grade and you have to go to the bathroom. You say to your teacher, "Miss Ice can I go to the bathroom," and she says, "Yes, you can, and yes you may." You see, there's a difference. You have the ability to go to the bathroom, and you have my permission to go to the bathroom. There's nothing here about permission. It's all about ability.

You don't have the ability. Why is that? Because you're dead, you're blind, you're lost and you're condemned.

The solution to that is this. When we were God's enemies, God was pleased to reconcile us to God through the person and work of Christ. Who do you believe? Who do you believe? You've got to understand both sides of the coin. The difficulty in what we have today in our culture is in proclaiming the Gospel of Christ. We don't like to talk about what I just talked about because people will say, "That's not fair." Well fairness is not one of God's 28 attributes. I'll tell you what's not fair, brothers. It's not fair that Christ paid for my sins. It's not fair. Why should somebody else pay the penalty of my sin? Remember, I am not a criminal waiting trial; I'm the convicted waiting execution. And somebody says I'm going to be executed in your place. That is not fair. Now it's righteous, and it's just, according to God's law, but it is not fair.

A lot of times in evangelism, we don't like to talk about this aspect of it because people are not going to respond well because they don't understand it. They have to be taught. That's where the Holy Spirit comes in—to convict, convince, convert and comfort.

Now often times, in modern evangelism, when we preach the Gospel, we think we're preaching the Gospel when what we're talking about are the benefits of the Gospel. We talk about the benefits, not the Gospel. The Gospel is this, "You're dead, you're lost, you're condemned and you're blind—that's the Gospel—and Christ has paid for your sins. Now repent and believe." It's the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the person and work of Christ and repentance and faith. That's the biblical gospel. When we go evangelize, what do we say? Would you like to have eternal life? That's a benefit. It's not the Gospel. Would you like to have joy? Would you like to have peace? Would you like to have happiness? Contentment? Freedom from your guilt? That's not the Gospel at all. That's the benefits of the Gospel. Those are consequences. The Gospel is this, brothers—you're dead, you're lost, you're blind and you are condemned, but God loved you from eternity, and he sent Christ to pay for your sins.

Let me explain that to you. You see that's the Gospel, and that's what Paul says in Romans 1, "I'm not ashamed of the Gospel." He doesn't say, "I'm not ashamed of the benefits," he says, "I'm not ashamed of the Gospel." We've got to make sure that when we're proclaiming Christ, we're proclaiming a biblical gospel not a culturalized, American vision which says, "Let's talk about the benefits." Now there are magnificent benefits, and we spend the rest of our life enjoying and understanding and studying the benefits of the Gospel. But when you're presenting Christ, you don't talk about the benefits. You might allude to them, but you don't talk about them per se. The person needs, first of all, to be what? Remember the Holy Spirit's pursuing them? What's he going to do first? Convict. Convict and then convince, and then convert.

*Ian: I have a hard time genuinely appreciating all the benefits until and unless I understand fully the Gospel.*

No question. Absolutely.

*Ian: So not only is it maybe misleading to, it's a terrible way to put it, but sell the benefits...*

*No, no, it is misleading. No, that's a good word, Ian. I agree. I think...*

*Ian: [UNCLEAR]...*

Yeah, whatever you want to say.

**Ian:** *But it's not, it's not cause and effect thinking, [UNCLEAR] experience the joy to the degree that you might unless you appreciate the Gospel.*

Absolutely, and you see, in the Gospel, you hear about the cost—the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the person and work of Christ. Why should somebody pay for my sins? I'm ready for execution. I'm ready to be executed, and somebody steps up and says, "I'm going to do that for you." That's a huge cost. Until you understand that, you're never motivated by gratitude.

**Smitty:** *If somebody receives or hears the benefits and responds to that rather than [UNCLEAR] Gospel, are they truly saved?*

You have to ask the Lord when you see him. Here's the answer, to the best of my ability, on that question. God will take any amount of truth that is necessary to bring that person to saving faith because Jesus said this, "I will lose none of the ones you gave me." If that person was chosen before the foundation of the world, yes, they will be in Christ. The real issue is not necessarily what level of doctrine do they believe, but how has the Holy Spirit brought them to a point of conviction, convincing them and converting them. So yes, it's very possible that that can happen, because the Holy Spirit will use whatever amount of truth that's necessary to bring that person be he's pursuing them. The real issue is this. If they're one of God's elect, they will come to saving faith. They will. It may be that they may have come to saving faith at that very micro level, and over time, they will grow in Christ as they're exposed to the Scripture. But that even micro level might introduce them to have the desire to, "I want to learn more about the Scripture." So it's very possible.

**Audience Member:** *I like what you've said about preaching or emphasizing the benefits and the American phenomenon. I mean, if you're living in the Sudan or in China or places around the world where there's constant persecution, you don't experience the benefits as we would perceive the benefits. Your life may be absolutely miserable, but you still have the joy of Christ. It's easy for me even to say that because I haven't experienced what these people have. So that's why I'm just saying that, yeah, what you said is true, that it's an American phenomenon where we have to emphasize the benefits rather than the cross.*

**Ted:** *Would you just please repeat the points of the Gospel. The first one is that you're dead, blind, lost and condemned, and then the next one was...*

The solution to that. I'm just saying the solution is that God loved you from eternity. That's Jeremiah 31:3. And then he sent Christ because of his love for you from eternity. That's Romans 5:8. And then the spirit pursues you, and then would be John 16:8-11 and John 6:44-45.

**Ted:** *But you [UNCLEAR] four points to the Gospel. This is the Gospel.*

Oh, okay. The holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the person of Christ, the work of Christ and repentance and faith. Six elements. You start with the holiness of God.

I had the privilege of speaking two weeks ago at a Christian camp. There were about 200 people in the audience who came to my seminars on leadership excellence. I asked them the question—I really enjoy asking this question—and I said, "Do you have to be perfect to get to heaven?" Do you realize 90% of them said no? They said no. At a Christian family camp. Ninety percent of them said, "No, you don't have to be perfect to get to heaven." Really? What does the Scripture say? God doesn't grade on a curve just because you're an American. Absolutely you have to be perfect to get to heaven. Why do you think Christ paid for your sins? You get credit for his sinless perfection and perfect obedience. That is the person and work of Christ. The person is his sinless perfection. His work is his perfect obedience. That's

what is required to get to heaven. Do you have that? Can you do that? Then you need a Savior. You need a Savior. It's really simple. You need a Savior. If you're not absolutely perfect. I had so many people come up to me and say, "Bruce, I never heard that. That's not what I've been hearing." I said, "You're right." The ones who did say that, said thank you for saying that because we've been duped to thinking that God accepts us the way we are. God never accepts you the way you are. If he did that, he wouldn't have paid for your sins and redeemed you.

*Don: That's what I wanted you to clarify. You said that when you're presenting the Gospel to a person, you said you're dead, lost, blind, and God loved you from eternity. See, what I would think [UNCLEAR] that person, "[UNCLEAR] God love me from eternity. I have nothing to worry about. Why should I accept Christ if God loved me from eternity?" Could you just clarify that...*

Sure. No, it makes sense. That is true if they're elect.

*Don: Right.*

Now we don't know that at the moment you're giving them the Gospel. You give them the truth. The Holy Spirit is going to take that and guide them into all truth. If they're the elect, they're going to say, "Thank you." If they're not, they're going to say, "Oh, whatever." You see, the real response to the Gospel is repentance and faith. There has to be a human response, and response is repentance and faith. That's where the Holy Spirit guides us into all truth. You can say that because it is true, that God loved you from all eternity, if you're one of God's elect. Now you may not necessarily say if you're one of God's elect at that point because that may just blow them out of the water. As Spurgeon says, "You've got to take people to the college of repentance and faith before you do the doctrine of predestination and election."

*Don: Should we say to them, though, there are Scriptures that that you're at enmity with God.*

Sure. I would take them to say, "Do you realize you're God's enemy?" Romans 5:10. There are all sorts of way of doing that. All I'm saying is we proclaim the truth. Let the Holy Spirit be the one who convicts, convinces and converts. It's not our job to manipulate or coerce or to mislead somebody just to get a response. We teach them the truth, and let the Holy Spirit...the Holy Spirit's job description, guys is different than yours and mine. You and I are the mouth; he's the power. He's the one who guides us into all truth. We need to be sensitive of how we say the truth and be ready to answer any of those questions. Somebody might say, "Well if God loves me, then I don't have to do anything?" Then you have to go into some deeper truths about what it means for God's election and so forth.

*Audience Member: I think, at least this country as a culture, is so focused on the immediate...*

Yes.

*Audience Member: ...that [UNCLEAR] really lost focus that we all have an eternal ending—either heaven...*

Exactly. Everybody has an eternal life.

*Audience Member: And that Jesus is basically turned into a focus on how can you help me today, how can you help me feel good today [UNCLEAR]...right here as opposed to his purpose was in regard to our eternity.*

Yes. Exactly. That's a good illustration of what I'm saying about, because the Gospel we preach deals



with benefits—the benefits of the Gospel—and that’s what do I get today. What happens to me today? Am I going to get a better job? Am I going to be happy? And so forth. That’s an excellent description of the difficulty we have. That’s why I’m trying to help us recognize, guys, the power of the Gospel in its truth in preaching.

***Audience Member:** In the last step of the six steps of faith, we choose to believe in the dark, talking about the definition of belief, so we acknowledge Christ as our Savior, but we also have to acknowledge that there’s more, and that’s where a deeper study of Scripture shows exactly what that means.*

We need to understand that when you accept Christ, and the Holy Spirit has convicted you, he’s convinced you, and he’s in the process of converting you from the mind of the flesh to the mind of the spirit, we accept Christ on his terms, not on ours. In other words, we don’t say, “I’m going to trust him as Savior and I’ll make him Lord later.” He already is Lord. God has beat you to the point. He’s made him Lord. So you can’t separate the two. And yet somebody says, “Well she accepted Christ 35 years ago; she just never made him Lord. That’s why she’s never grown in grace.” That’s a false conversion, because there’s no evidence. How many times do you hear that? “Well he accepted him as Savior, but never made him Lord.” That’s just an excuse for sin. It’s an excuse for having a false conversion. We’re saying you can separate his saviorship from his lordship? God’s already made him Lord We accept him. That’s what the truth does, and that’s why we’ve got to be so careful, brothers, that when we’re proclaiming Christ, we’re giving a biblical gospel not just the benefits of it.

***Bill:** American version of the Gospel it seems lately, the word repentance is never used.*

Yeah, the word repentance is something...I was with a group of believers here recently talking about this very issue. One of them said this, a pastor, “Well maybe we shouldn’t use the word repentance because it may be too convicting. {LAUGHTER} Maybe we just ought to say turn from because it would be more acceptable.”

***Audience Member:** You said that was a pastor [UNCLEAR]?*

Yes. The pastor said, “Maybe we shouldn’t use the word repentance because it may be too convicting. We ought to change that to make it more palatable, more digestible for the congregation and say just turn from your sin.” That’s where we’ve come.

***Audience Member:** You said we give them the Gospel, the truth, if they are elect, thank you; if not, see you later. As far as the timing, you share the Gospel, see you late, ten years later...*

They may come to saving faith. Remember this. Whenever you proclaim the Gospel of Christ and you teach it with truth, you are successful because you may just be at that point, a seed planter, and ten years later, somebody else may come along and say additional truth on that seed that you planted 10 years ago. The Holy Spirit’s pursuing. Remember this, guys. It is the Holy Spirit who pursues us. That may take some time. It may not happen the moment you’re proclaiming Christ through to Gospel. Then sometime later, another five or ten years, somebody may harvest that. Whenever you proclaim the Gospel, you are successful. Don’t think that you have to do it to get a response. You do it to be faithful in proclaiming truth. The Holy Spirit will then take the work over.

***Ian:** Can you just [UNCLEAR] maybe you can comment on...you said earlier that repentance and faith is a human response, [UNCLEAR] said that it’s a human response, but born exclusively of grace.*

Absolutely.

**Ian:** *And to me that talks to some of what we just [UNCLEAR].*

I'm going to get into that in a few minutes. This is all introduction for what I am going to say today. {LAUGHTER} We're going to get into that because we're going to see that faith is a gift. If you're dead, what faith do you have? Zippo! You don't have any. If you have some, somebody gave you a gift when you were dead. We're going to see that, Ian. We're going to get to that.

**Audience Member:** *So is that how you explain the confession, "Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief"?*

Absolutely. Absolutely.

**Ted:** *But the person wouldn't say, "I believe," unless they have been elect.*

That's correct.

**Ted:** *I've been thinking about this, the images, [UNCLEAR] accusation is [UNCLEAR], that those of us who believe in the total depravity of man and the total sovereignty of God are God's election, this is our, our [UNCLEAR] evangelism. But think our approach is more that those of us who believe that are treasure hunters. The treasure is already out there. We just don't know where it is yet. Those who believe that man has the ability, natural man, in his own strength, has the ability to see Christ, in his own ability, are more like alchemists. They believe they can take lead and turn it into gold by the correct incantation. That just occurred to me.*

Evidence of what Ted is saying is this. How do we evaluate evangelism? By the numbers of raised hands? The number of people who walk forward? Number of people who said a prayer? That's because we think that they can make a choice on their own. We evaluate it by saying, "Oh, ten people came forward," rather than saying, "Truth was proclaimed."

You see, the only way that you can evaluate pure biblical ministry is was truth proclaimed? That's it. Because if 500 people reject, that's to the glory of God, they rejected him because his holiness, his justice, and his righteousness is put on display. God is glorified by their rejection. God is also glorified by their acceptance when they come to him because he's overcome them with his love, his mercy and his grace. You see, any time God's nature is put on display and his characteristics are put on display, God is glorified. He's glorified in their rejection just as much as he is in somebody else's acceptance.

Now if you believe that they have the human ability to choose to do that, you're going to do something to make sure that I get the ten to come forward. That's manipulation. That's the misleading that we've fallen into perhaps. So we've got to be very careful about that.

Now guys, please understand, we're not Bible bashers. We need to do this with grace and truth. Remember whenever you see truth in the Scripture, it's always accomplished by that little phrase, "grace." Now I'm talking to you with some passion today because I trust you and you trust me and we've been together for 16 years. So we're talking in a different depth level, an intimacy level, that I would not talk to somebody if they said, "Would you give my friend the Gospel." I would not necessarily use the same intensity. I would really say, "Lord, give me the grace to accompany the truth that I know I need to tell them." So guys, we've got to be careful. Please understand that what we're doing here ourselves is our training ground. This is where we're teaching each other. We're training each other. We've got to take to the world and be gracious.

Philippians talks about beautifying the Gospel. Make the Gospel attractive. Literally it means to make it beautiful. How is when you can take the truths that we're learning and how can you make that beautiful

to somebody? That requires grace.

Brothers, when have the chance to share Christ, to proclaim Christ, make sure you say, “Lord, give me the grace, give me the grace to proclaim the truth, so I will do it with sensitivity, and I’ll do it to the point of having it be attractive to the best of my ability without being manipulative.”

***Audience Member:** I just wanted to say when you talk to people who’ve never heard the Gospel, and you know, or should we be saying [UNCLEAR] shouldn’t say, “Oh by the way, [UNCLEAR]...”?*

Yeah. I think you have to be sensitive to the situation where you are. The Holy Spirit says don’t worry about what you’re going to say. The Holy Spirit’s going to lead us when you’re in that situation. We need to be...one of the leadership skills that I teach in my leadership series on what are skills of a leader, one of them is being a diagnostician. My wife is a pediatrician. She’s a diagnostician. Some of the best things that she does...I listened to Becky talk to a mother on the phone and she asks questions. She’s always asking a question, asking this question, “What’s going on? What’s happening?” Asking questions. You see, we need to be a diagnostician when we’re talking to somebody. You need to have some understanding of where that person is and be a diagnostician so you know how to approach them. You may not approach everybody the same way. You may not just whip out a tract and say, “Here it is,” if they’ve never heard the Gospel of Christ.

Last week, I had the privilege of being at this Christian camp with Ravi Zacharias, a marvelous, marvelous apologetic. He teaches apologetics. Apologetics would be that phase of Christian theology that attempts to overcome the intellectual hindrances to hearing the Gospel of Christ. Intellectual hindrances. I mean, this guy is up here. We had some wonderful time together, just talking about that. He was so very sensitive to saying you’ve got to know where the people are before...now he’s dealing with mystics and Eastern gurus and all sorts of people at a level that you and I don’t come in contact with. He’s dealing strictly at the intellectual level. But he’s also saying at the same time, you’ve got to know where that person’s background is just a little bit so you have some feeling of how to approach them, because the message doesn’t change, it’s the means of how you do it. So that’s a great point. We just need to understand where that person is to the best of our ability, do it with grace and truth, and trust the Holy Spirit.

***Audience Member:** Everything that you taught today, everything you teach us, comes from Scripture. One of the battlegrounds in attempting to communicate the Gospel to somebody is when you take them back to Scripture and they then go somewhere else...*

Yeah...Scripture plus.

***Audience Member:** Yeah.*

Or they’ll say, “That’s your interpretation.” First of all, you’re never going to convince anybody. Remember...how are you going to convince a dead person? So don’t argue with them. You’re never going to convince a dead person. All you can do is proclaim truth, not be defensive. The Holy Spirit then takes over because if they’re elect, he’s going to pursue them. If they’re not, he won’t. You and I don’t know that and won’t know that till eternity. But we do it with the same compassion, the same love, the same grace and truth, but we don’t change the message. We just don’t know.

***Audience Member:** I think it was Francis Schaeffer that said, I might have the numbers wrong, but someone asked him, “If you had an hour to share the Gospel with somebody, what would you say?” and he said, “I’d take the first 50 minutes to get to know them, to ask them questions about themselves, and the last ten minutes...”*

Yeah, that's being the diagnostician. You've got to know where they are.

**Audience Member:** *I'm thinking about all that you're saying about come across with grace. What comes to my mind is often times we pray for boldness when we really should be praying for both.*

Yes. Pray for love and grace. You know what you're going to say. I mean, the truth doesn't change, brothers. The truth never changes. The thing that changes is the receptivity of the hearer. They may not hear it right now, but they may hear it ten years from now. You proclaim the truth, you're successful in your evangelism. Let the Holy Spirit take over and convict, convince, convert and comfort.

**Bob:** Bruce, give us just a couple of quick guidelines...what are some of the more appropriate questions that we should ask—you're talking about questioning someone—what would you say are some of the two or three most important questions?

Well, I think you need to find out a little bit about their background. I would think, "Tell me about your background as a family. What type of relationship do you have with your parents? How about your brothers and sisters?" I would want to find out a little bit about their background. I would want to find out questions about, "Have you had a church experience? Were you a church-going family?" Based upon those questions, then you pursue other ones. You only ask one question. You don't go in with a series of ten. You ask one question, and when you get that answer, then you go off in another tangent based upon what you heard. Your next question comes after the answer to the first one you ask. So don't go in with a whole set of ten questions. Basically go in and ask one question, and then just listen, and then based upon what you hear, that takes you to another question to ask. That's where we're trusting the Holy Spirit to guide us to be a good diagnostician.

**Audience Member:** *To your point, I was going to say [UNCLEAR] combat medic in the Army, the first question is observation, and in the enlisted rank [UNCLEAR] living the life of Christ. [UNCLEAR] questions. He's watching diagnosing primarily for heat exhaustion because people get [UNCLEAR] they have weapons and guns and tanks and stuff. His primary purpose is to evaluate the condition of the quad so that somebody doesn't get crushed under a vehicle [UNCLEAR]... So the first thing as a Christian is to observe [UNCLEAR]...*

Yeah. That's being a diagnostician.

**Audience Member:** *[UNCLEAR] testimony written in my Bible, James 5:13-15. In 1998, my father-in-law, who was a Catholic all of his life, had been staying with us because he had been sick. He observed, like you said, he observed, and he said, "Boy, you sure read the Bible a lot. You study, you pray." I was kind of new in walking with the Lord and studying. I had no idea, and [UNCLEAR] come to know Christ as I knew him. Day after thanksgiving 1998, he was taken to Mercy/Providence Hospital and at 5:30 went into a coma. Early the next morning, on Saturday morning, I was crying, I was taking care of some stuff, and I was crying and I said, "Lord, he's going to die in sin because he doesn't have what I have." He was this close, because I had an opportunity and I was so young then. I said, "I don't want to do, the right questions, right comments." The Holy Spirit said, "When you go over that this afternoon, you get and your knees and you get [UNCLEAR]," and she's crying, "Daddy!" Like he was yesterday, just he left hand sticking out of from underneath the sheet. After his priest gave him the last rites and all that [UNCLEAR], I got on my knees and I got a hold of my father-in-law's hand and I began to pray. I have no idea what I'm doing. I don't know what to say. I felt this power move through me. I've been shocked before [UNCLEAR] with electricity. I saw the power move through me. I knew what it was. I surely didn't understand it, and oh man, I cried and I said, "Lord, if possible, give me a sign." This man hasn't moved for a day," [UNCLEAR]... I know that my father-in-law was saved. When I reported that to my*

*pastor and my friends from my church, and I had a chance a week later to talk to my pastor, he smiled and I said, "I don't understand." About two years later, when my circumstances changed and I was able to really get into my Bible, I came across, in my studies in the book of James, and there it was. I wrote that all down [UNCLEAR] I was on the road as a driver and I came back and saw my pastor. He smiled, he said, "I knew. The Lord had to show you." I know my father-in-law is in heaven because he had a son [UNCLEAR]... And it wasn't me, but the Holy Spirit. I said, "I don't know what to do."*

Yeah, the Holy Spirit will do it.

***Audience Member:*** *He did it all.*

We know this. God will always do the right thing. Whatever that is. You won't know that, unequivocally, until you're in heaven. But you can know this—I know that God did the right thing. Whatever that is. Because he is righteous and he's just. God will always do the right thing.

Let me give you one verse. This is what I was going to talk on today. We've had 45 minutes of introduction. {LAUGHTER} This is where we will pick it up next week. Look at Ephesians 2:4. We have seen our entrance into the ecclesia, into the body of Christ, to the assembly, the gathering, is through our salvation. That's in verses 1-4, which we've been talking about. The next thing we want to look at is we are saved because of love. Look at Ephesians 2:4-5, "4But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive."

We're going to talk about that next week because I want you...we've just discussed the dismal condition of natural man, and then I want you to see the love of God, and you see that in that little phrase, "but God." In the court of God's justice, you're going to see the difference between justice and you're going to see righteousness and love all together. But the basis, "For we are saved because of God's love," and that's where we'll pick it up next week. We understand our condition. If you're in Christ today and God dwells in you, it's because God loved you from eternity past and we need to explore what it means that God loved us even in our sin. That's where we'll be next week. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for your mercy. We thank you for your grace. We thank you for your justice and your righteousness. We know, Lord, that you will always do the right thing. We may not know what that is, but we will trust that, believe that, depend upon it, and rely upon it, and that's because in your mercy, you were pleased to grant us saving faith before the foundation of the world, and the evidence of that is the benefit now of our belief in the person and work of Christ. And to that end, we thank you in Jesus' name. And all the Brave Men said...Amen!!!